

We save land.



We save rivers.

A Journey to Becoming a More Inclusive Organization



Alison Paul & Kyla Muhammad
The Conservation Foundation

Our Mission



501c3 since 1972
50 years

We improve the health of our communities by preserving and restoring natural areas and open space, protecting rivers and watersheds, and promoting stewardship of our environment.



- Sound Finances
- Ethical Conduct
- Responsible Governance
- Lasting Stewardship



Primary Service Area

Our core counties of work:

DuPage, Kane, Kendall, and Will Counties

We also have a presence in:

Cook, DeKalb, LaSalle, and Grundy Counties





Land Preserved

36,000 acres

Nearly 200 parcels

45 conservation easements

8 counties

40 staff



What We'll Cover



- Evolution of Conservation Movement & Why DEI is Important
- TCF's DEI Journey: Past, Present, & Future
- Lessons Learned and Tips & Advice

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Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & The Evolution of the Conservation Movement



DEI & Conservation

Evolution of Conservation Movement

Wealthy, white founders of the movement with racially discriminatory views

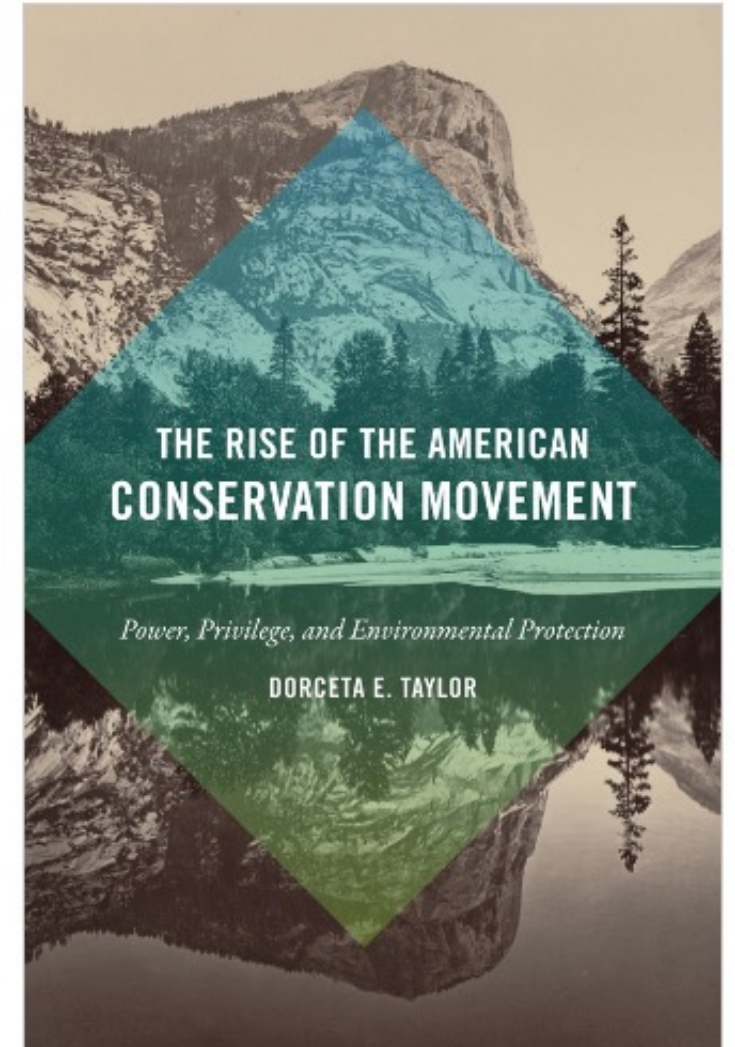
- Teddy Roosevelt/ National Park Service
- John Muir/Sierra Club
- John James Audubon/ National Audubon Society
- Save the Redwoods League

History of hostile land acquisition & management practices & policies

Philosophy of “Protect the land *from* the people” (Conservation 1.0)

Movement is shifting to Conservation 2.0 (Whole Communities Approach)

- Reconnecting people with the land
- “Community health is reflected in the health of the land” (Peter Forbes)
- Cross-collaboration to build healthy communities





DEI & Conservation

Illinois Demographic Trends

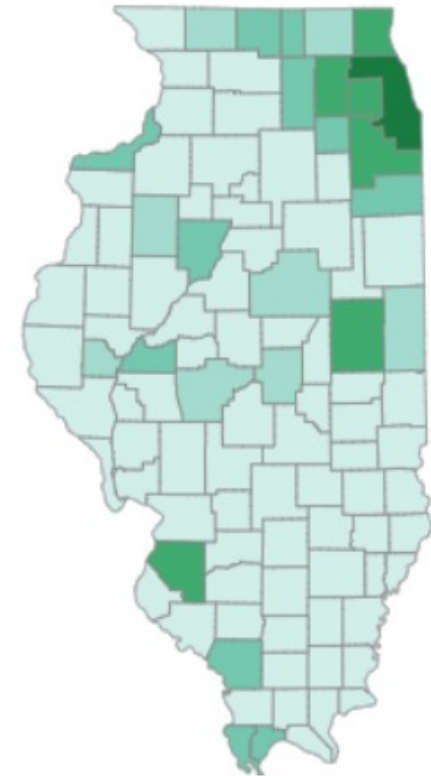
- **Race:** Diversity Index – 60%, +15% Latino population from 2010 (2020)
- **Ethnicity:** 14% of residents are foreign-born (2017-2021)
- **Disability:** 1 in 4 adults has a disability (2020)
- **Language:** 1 in 4 households speak a language other than English at home (2017-2021)
- **Income:** 12% of households are living in poverty (2020)

Projections show many of these vulnerable communities will hold steady or increase in the years ahead.

How will land trusts adapt to these demographic trends?

Diversity Index by County: 2020

Illinois: 60.3%





DEI & Conservation

Why DEI Matters

- To better meet the needs of all your constituents
- To strengthen your organization's work, resiliency, and relevancy
- To counteract the systemic inequities that impede access, participation, and benefit from marginalized communities
- To successfully recruit more employees, board, donors, and members
- The long-term impact of our work is contingent upon developing and supporting more environmental stewards



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Our DEI Journey: The Origin Story



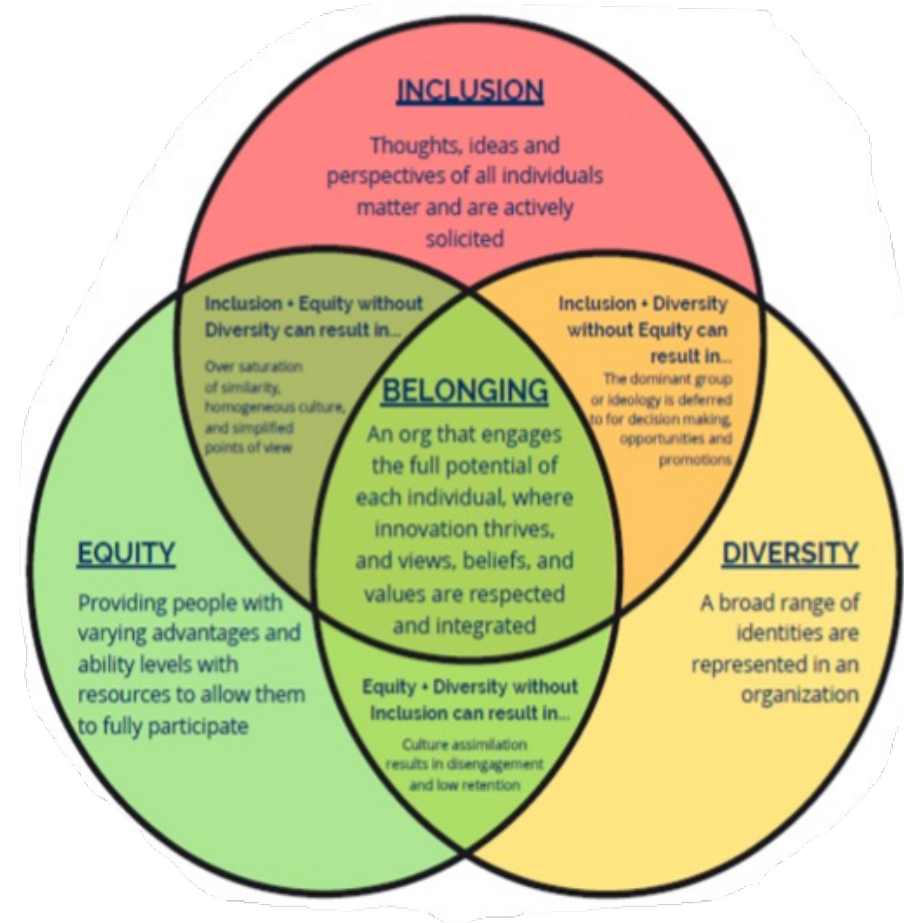
The Beginning

2017 Strategic Plan

- Diversity, equity and inclusion are factored into TCF's work to help ensure relevance and success in the communities it serves
- Started with diversifying the age of staff
- DEI Goal is developed

DEI Goal

The Conservation Foundation will be inclusive, equitable, accessible, dynamic and open to new and different perspectives to effectively meet the unique needs of the diverse communities we serve.



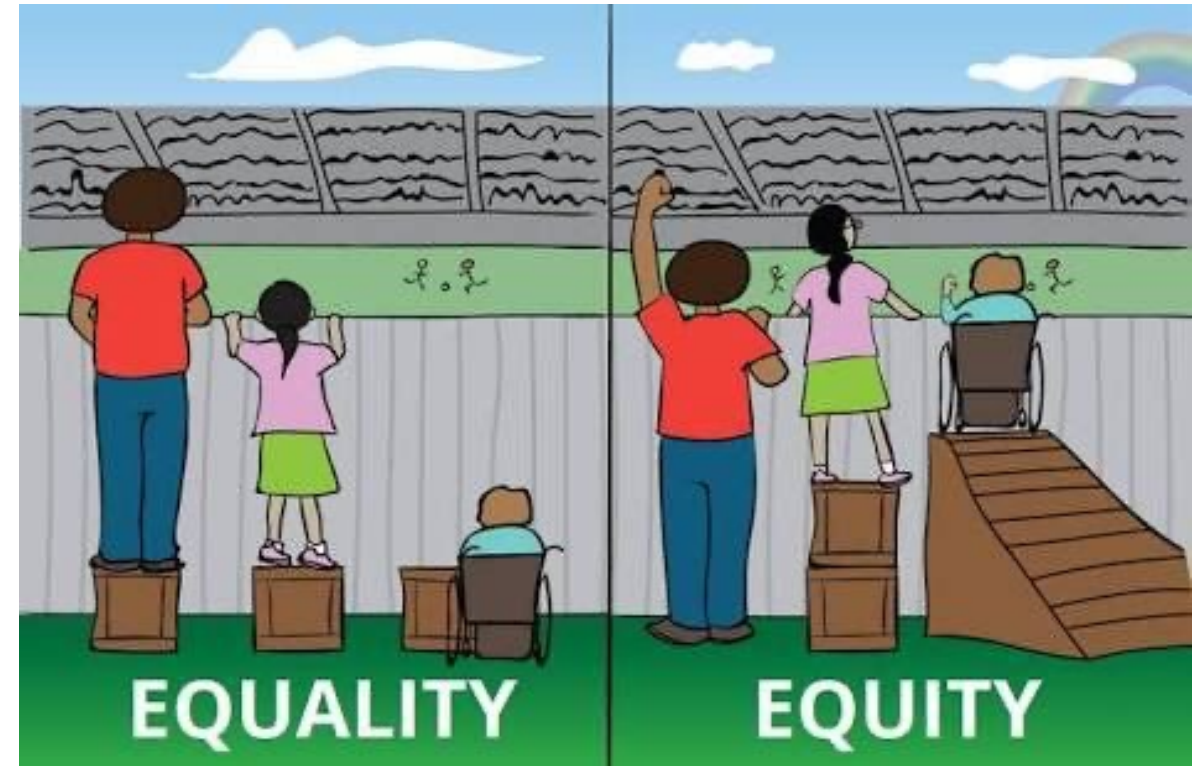
This is the organizational culture we seek related to how we work on our mission



2020: The Turning Point

Events of 2020 – Time to Get Serious

- Board/Staff committee created to discuss and develop a DEI action plan
- Board and staff trainings, conversations, readings and self-reflection
- CEO connected to executive director peer group for formal training/consulting
- Created draft DEI action plan reviewed by staff and board





DEI Actions 2021 & 2022

- Young Staff Leadership Council
- DEI Resource Folder on Teams (DEI Library)
- DEI glossary for internal communications, continue trainings and conversations
- Ongoing staff training opportunities
- Gender-neutral bathroom signage
- Honor cultural heritage months and events



DEI Glossary

Accessibility	Environmental Justice
Accountability	Environmental Racism
Advocate	Equity
Ally	Implicit Bias
Anti-racism	Inclusion
Belonging	Intersectionality
BIPOC/LGBTQIA+	Institutional racism
Color Blind	Microaggressions
Culture & Cultural Appropriations	Privilege
Diversity	Under-served/resourced Communities



DEI Actions: 2021 & 2022

- Revised hiring practices to be more inclusive, expansive search/language
- Hired more diverse and younger staff and interns
- Translated some materials into Spanish
- Next Gen, Inclusion Council, added diversity on board
- Land Acknowledgement Statement
- Staff DEI group
- Expanded capacity for community conservation work
- Website equity audit
- Wove DEI into the fabric of 2022 Strategic Plan



**NextGen Advisory
Council Members**



Why DEI is Important

WE BELIEVE...

Every person, regardless of where they live or their social-economic status, deserves clean water, clean air, and safe access to nature as a way to be healthy and happy.

Our current strategic plan aims to:

“Be more inclusive, impactful, and relevant to people and communities by growing and adapting our conservation programs to local needs.”

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What's Next on our DEI Journey?

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion & CCC

Individual

Internal to the
Organization

External to the
Organization

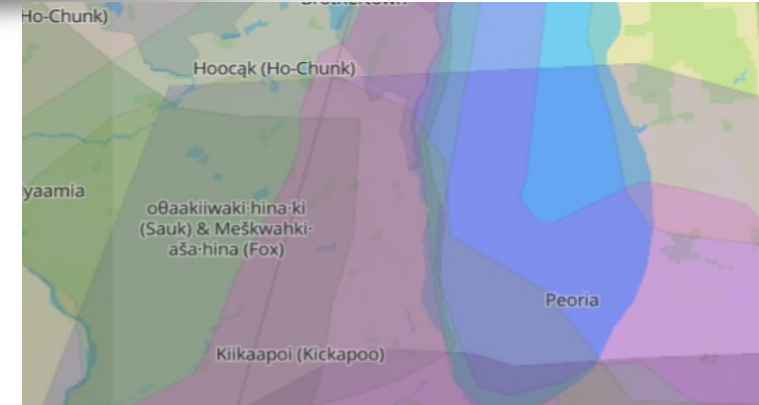
Community-Centered Conservation
Pre-Work

**Community-
Centered
Conservation**

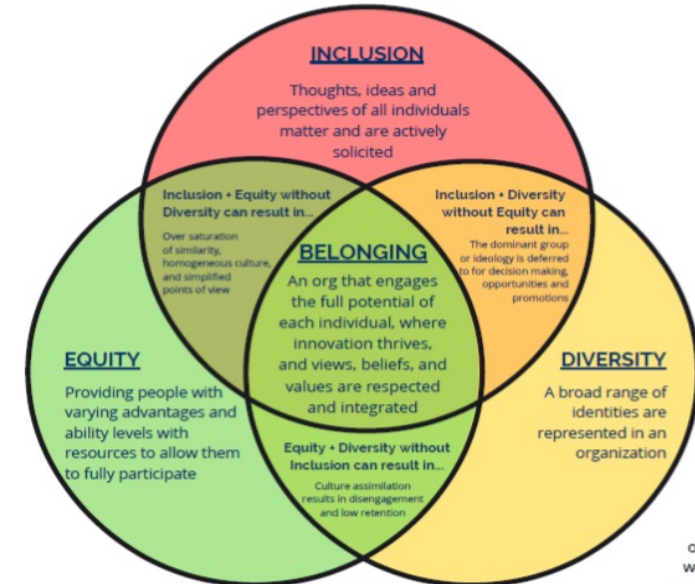
Internal Actions



- Staff DEI Group Formed
 - Pros/Cons
 - Aim: support each other and the inclusion work
- Adding to List of DEI Actions
 - i.e. Activating our land acknowledgement
- Building Capacity
 - Educator Training Grant
 - Whiteness @ Work
 - Lunch n Learns
- Addressing Organizational Culture Issues that may Contribute to an Exclusive Office Culture
- Inclusion Council



Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion



This is the organizational culture we seek related to how we work on our mission.



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External Actions



Current Strategic Plan Priority 1:

Be more inclusive, impactful, and relevant to people and communities by growing and adapting our conservation programs to local needs.



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How will we do that over the next 5 years?

- Evaluate, **grow and adapt** current programs and ensure they meet the changing needs of residents, partners, communities, and nature.
- Create **new pathways** for people to connect to nature and TCF by integrating programs into an inter-connected web of local engagement opportunities.
- Develop partnerships with a diverse set of stakeholders in communities with the highest need for nature-based programming, and pilot new community engagement programs that **address local barriers to nature and are responsive to community needs.**



So how do we understand local barriers, pathways to engagement, and what are current community needs?

We start with....
A Community Engagement
Listening Tour





Community Engagement Listening Tour

Objectives

- Build **trust** and relationships with new and existing stakeholders
- Identify **common themes** that will inform how we make our community conservation work more inclusive
- Lay the groundwork for emerging new partnerships and **pilot** programs
- Discover the ways in which TCF may be able to leverage its resources and nature-based solutions to **support other organizations**

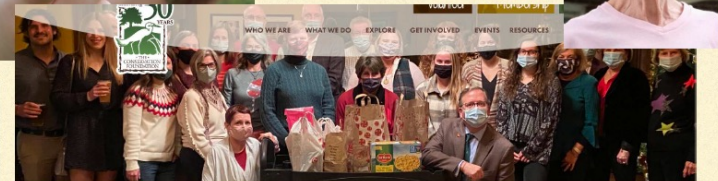
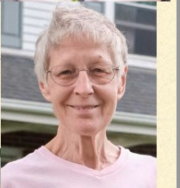
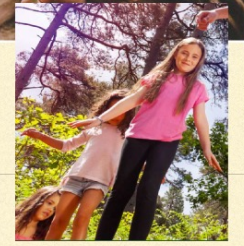
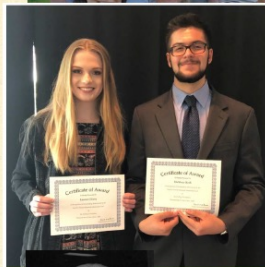


Website Review



WEBSITE
A review and ana

WHAT STORY IS THE IMAGERY TELLING?



Who is the past, present and future of TCF?



What We've Learned So Far

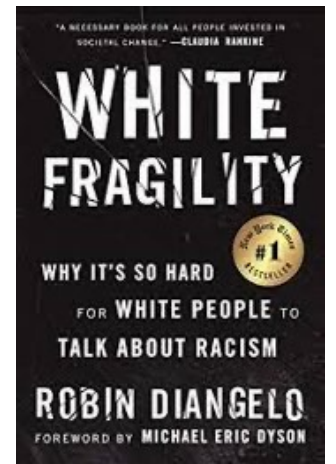
- Get started! Keep Going. Make mistakes. Don't get stuck.
- It takes time, we're 5+ years in and our DEI work is still in its infancy
- Buy in from key stakeholders takes time, and some may never buy in
- Strong leadership, authenticity, and commitment to DEI by management and board is key
- Building a shared understanding of why DEI matters and shared language is foundational to success
- Internal processes and systems have to be formalized to promote equity and inclusion

Inclusion And Belonging

Stop Making the Business Case for Diversity

by Oriane Georgeac and Aneeta Rattan

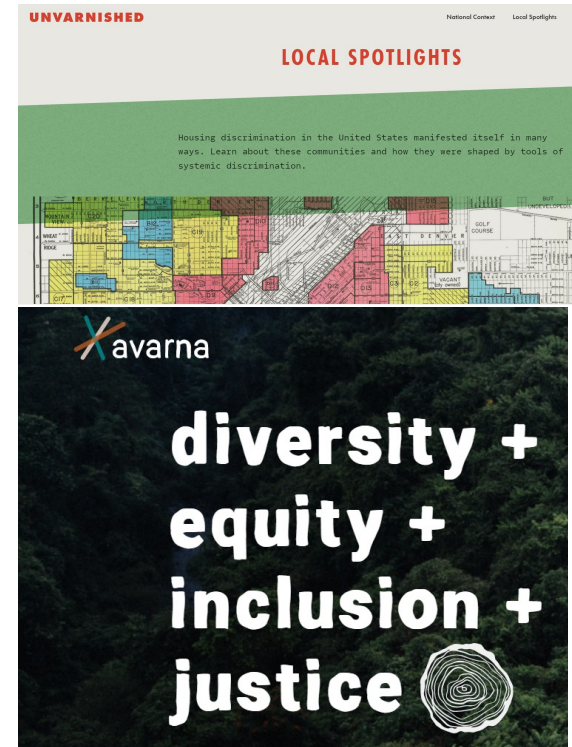
June 10, 2022





What We've Learned So Far

- No cookbook, no instruction manual, each organization is different, hard work and figure our best path
- Be specific about what you mean by diversity
- Prioritize learning and listening
- Focus on those excluded → prioritize their voices
- Be comfortable with the uncomfortable
Be uncomfortable with the comfortable



<https://theavarnagroup.com/>

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Questions?

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