

Over the last three years the Council has invested significantly in exploring what diversity, equity, and inclusion mean for the soul of our watershed community, and our mission. We have had meaningful dialogue with partners, staff, board, community members, foundations and donors, and have explored deeply why these principles are foundational to the health of the communities we serve in the Long Tom, and to our work.

The truth is that it should not be that complicated, because our message to Black, Indigenous People, and People of Color in our watershed community is so simple: **we see you, we need you, we support you, we can't do this without you.**

Our watershed needs diverse voices from all people leading and participating in conversations about watershed health. That cannot happen when some voices are routinely and systematically excluded, suppressed, or silenced. Black, Indigenous People, and People of Color are disproportionately affected by poor air and water quality, negative health outcomes and chronic illness, and racially biased police brutality. These injustices, including recent incidents impacting Black Americans recreating in the outdoors, are directly connected to our mission and affect our Long Tom community.

In 2019 board and staff came together to develop the council's equity statement:

"We believe the health of the watershed is dependent upon the contributions of all people. The Long Tom Watershed Council recognizes the disproportionate impacts systems of oppression continue to have on People of Color and Indigenous People. We believe the organization's strength depends on breaking down implicit, systemic inequities. We strive to create an inclusive and welcoming environment that grows our collective wisdom. "

But these are just words, and must be backed up with action. In an age of hashtags masquerading as action, we feel it is important to share where we stand, and that we are striving to show up differently for the most vulnerable in our communities every day.

So what are we doing?

In 2017 we began working with the Center for Diversity and the Environment to deepen our team's understanding about equity and why it is essential for our mission. Together we began building a foundation for exploring the challenges of incorporating diversity throughout our work. In 2018 we reached out to partners and community members like you, and you told us loud and clear why leading with equity is important to you. Today we are putting your money to work on what you care about. We are supporting our staff and Tribal partners to learn from Indigenous people and support them in leading land management dialogue and activities. Additional dollars have been committed to directly support voices and expertise from Communities of Color to guide and strengthen our mission. **Together we are addressing the systems that exclude, and rebuilding anew with all voices involved.**

This letter is about demonstrating how we are showing up for our community so that we can be held accountable. We have made mistakes. We will make mistakes again. But this journey is long and we need your help. Compared with the scale of challenges our nation faces together these actions are small. **But working together we can make a real change for the communities we serve, and the health of the communities we serve is essential for the health of this watershed.**

We will need your support for this equity work and all our efforts. **But right now we urge you to give generously in support of these and other local organizations addressing racial injustice today:**

[NAACP of Lane County](#) | [Civil Liberties Defense Center](#) | [Black Led Action Coalition](#)



Clinton Begley | Executive Director



Shelly Miller | Board Chair

"Until you dig a hole, you plant a tree, you water it and make it survive, you haven't done a thing. You are just talking" - Wangari Maathai (Nobel Peace Prize, 2004)