



SEPTEMBER 29, 2017

GROWING BEYOND GREEN  
A SYNOPSIS



*BY THE PUBLIC POLICY PROJECT AND AJB- CONSULTING*

On Friday September 29, 2017 Friends of the Mississippi River and The McKnight Foundation co-hosted a forum called Growing Beyond Green to explore diversity, equity and inclusion in the context of the environmental community and environmental justice. The forum was held at The McKnight Foundation and moderated by The Public Policy Project with the support of AJB Consulting.

The forum brought together members of environmental justice communities, members of environmental organizations, philanthropists, media, policy makers and grassroots community organizers concerned about environmental issues impacting their communities.

The goals for the forum were to:

- Create a space to have a conversation regarding diversity, equity and inclusion issues in the context of the Twin Cities' environmental community.
- Gain a better understanding of the barriers to, and urgency of, building a more diverse and inclusive environmental sector and achieving environmental justice.
- Learn from each other about how to remain relevant and enhance effectiveness.
- Create a call to action that sparks advancement.

Local stakeholders from an environment justice priority community sparked the conversation with important information about critical environmental issues happening in their communities and what needs to be done to address those issues. The key theme for the stakeholders is that: All issues are environmental issues and all environmental issues are ours.

Congressman Keith Ellison spoke words of reflection and challenged the participants to keep fighting at all levels and to collectively work together to address the challenges we all face with the environment.

Dr. Dorceta Taylor, James E. Crowfoot Collegiate Professor of Environmental Justice at the University of Michigan was the key note speaker. Dr. Taylor challenged everyone to be more intentional about increasing racial diversity across mainstream environmental organizations, foundations and government agencies.

After Dr. Taylor's powerful presentation, forum attendees participated in Spark-Ups Conversation with each other where they were asked: based on what you've heard and experienced this morning, what comes to you as a priority for dialogue right now?

The following Dialogue Framework was used to facilitate the interactive process:

- Current Patterns: Where are we now?
- Vision: Where do we want to be?
- Action: How do we get there?
- Ignite: What are our next steps?

This report is a synopsis of the creative energy and dynamic wisdom that arose from within those in the forum.

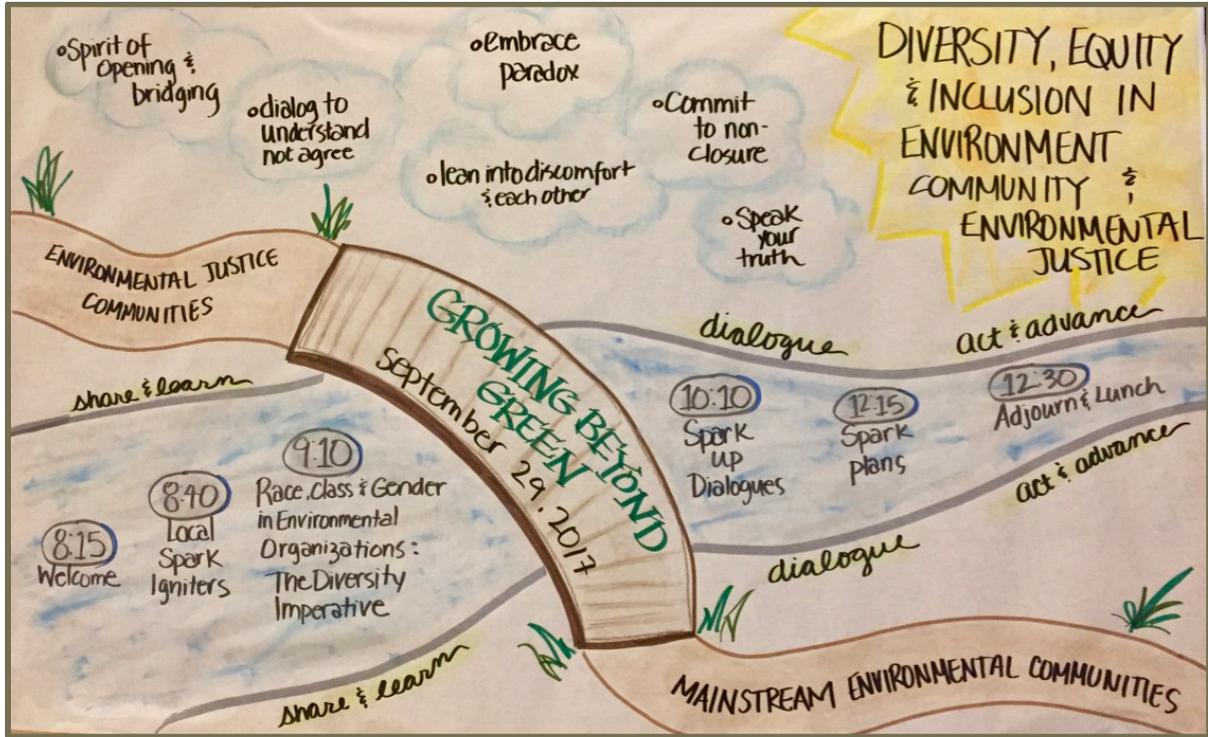
We greatly honor and respect the willingness of each forum attendee for: carrying a spirit of openness and bridging; being willing to understand each other; speaking their truth; leaning into discomfort and to each other; committing to lack of closure; embracing paradox; and to practicing intersection.

We thank you for your willingness to work together to make the environment better for all now, tomorrow and always.

# GROWING BEYOND GREEN MEETING SYNOPSIS

A forum exploring diversity, equity, and inclusion in the context of the environmental community and environmental justice

September 29, 2017



**SPARK UP DIALOGUES:** Based on what you've heard and experienced this morning, what comes to you as a priority for dialogue right now?

DIVERSITY AND HIRING PRACTICES			
Current Patterns	Vision	Action	Ignite
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognize we need to be more inclusive, hire diverse staff, but little to no follow through.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A future in which staff and board represent population, and inclusion is core to values expressed through environmental organizations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The key is to TAKE action and not accept anything less than great results.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Connect to networks that help us connect to diversity, and be honest and forthright about what we will realistically do (promising what we cannot deliver harms relationships).</li> </ul>

## RECLAIMING NARRATIVE OF POWER AND WEALTH & TEACHING OUR YOUTH AND ORGANIZATIONS

Current Patterns	Vision	Action	Ignite
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We are challenged by lack of understanding, a generational divide, shifting narratives, lack of funding to support a broader range of existing and emerging leaders from diverse cultures, and too much abstraction – not enough connective clarity in movement building.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We get resources directly to impactful, under-resourced orgs; shift the narrative on who is a 'expert'; sustain both funds and land base; and invest in the next generation of water walkers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Build environmental issues/ environmental justice into curriculums for all working with young people.</li> <li>Do constant leadership development.</li> <li>Build/leverage authentic relationships by weaving the common thread of justice.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage:                             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the Minnesota Departments of Health and Education in this</li> <li>the story-tellers who will help shape the narrative (with compensation)</li> <li>philanthropy in supporting our vision of 'the greater good' and 'green pathways to the future'.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>

## NEW ECONOMY AS ENVIRONMENTAL ECONOMY

Current Patterns	Vision	Action	Ignite
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We have an overall degenerative pattern that externalizes environmental costs and excludes the most impacted.</li> <li>We have allowed an economy based on externalities and exclusions to define too much of our lives, and now we have lots of bad habits among those of us striving to change the pattern that prevent us from being the change we wish to see.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Embody better habits now to better mutually guide systems transformation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a powerful legal action strategy.</li> <li>Do life cycle analysis for all public investments.</li> <li>Develop local and resilient distributive systems.</li> <li>Fight for and win both a Community Bill of Rights and the Rights of Nature.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(group did not get this far)</li> </ul>

## ACCOUNTABILITY AND WHITENESS

Current Patterns	Vision	Action	Ignite
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acknowledge history fully, including the story of how we 'got' this land and how our history has hurt people, cultures, the land.</li> <li>• Acknowledge that that right now it is both true that we don't know our history and run into resistance when we share it with people in our networks not prepared to hear it.</li> <li>• We have to take responsibility for the way our failure to fully account for history reinforces institutional and structural racism.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognize all our challenges as opportunities and collectively take on all the ways racism, social injustice and environmental injustice have and do show up in the world – in order to co-create a healthy future together.</li> <li>• We transcend 'manifest destiny' as sense of entitlement of whites to the land.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Admit our mistakes and limitations.</li> <li>• Do listening sessions to build authentic awareness and relationships.</li> <li>• White dominated organizations need to get resources to grassroots and volunteer-led organizations and movements in American Indian and communities of color.</li> <li>• We need to do a lot of dialogue with those with whom we have different perspectives to bridge the differences when able and possible.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make sure everyone has a 'next place to go' – start where people are at and keep acknowledging history, keep committing to action, keep taking risks and learning while building relationships across our divides.</li> <li>• Involve people most impacted by the toxic narratives we come to know as partners in transformation.</li> </ul>

## SOCIAL JUSTICE/ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Current Patterns	Vision	Action	Ignite
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lots of implicit bias running through non-profit industrial complex (stuck in 501 c 3 mentality).</li> <li>• We tend to fund what we know (what is in our comfort zone, rather than risk zone).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Broaden the channels for action.</li> <li>• Fund more pilot projects, more fellowships, offer stipends to individual leaders rather than running everything through organizations, constant leadership development.</li> <li>• Restore the ecological commons. WE must own the land (shift from private ownership to a more committed relationship with land, water, air, biodiversity, each other).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contextualize history.</li> <li>• Get more support to EJ organizations.</li> <li>• Coordinate social capital across environmental movements for common power and leverage.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Get uncomfortable and constantly engage in relationship building, listening, intercultural humility, leadership development and succession planning.</li> </ul>

## REFRAMING ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE EDUCATION AS ABOLITION FRAMEWORK

Current Patterns	Vision	Action	Ignite
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We act as if environment is 'extra' in relation to social and racial justice issues, which are also treated as 'extra' in the context of a socio-ecological degenerative social structure.</li> <li>• The environment is for privileged people to enjoy, and this population is blind to the realities of those in environmental injustice overburden communities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognize ALL issues as EJ issues.</li> <li>• Recognize and engage our power and be responsible to make the necessary changes according to our vision of healthy, equitable, inclusive and ecologically sound future for all.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make sure marginalized voices are at the table and leading.</li> <li>• Recognize this EJ work as anti-racism work.</li> <li>• Be uncomfortable and think/act outside the box.</li> <li>• Check your white privilege and focus on systems change.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lots of one to one conversations with each other and most affected populations to build relationships in context of movement building.</li> <li>• Hold ourselves accountable.</li> <li>• Ensure environmental justice lens is considered.</li> </ul>

## COMPENSATION FOR YOUTH AND PEOPLE OF COLOR TO ENGAGE IN EJ WORK

Current Patterns	Vision	Action	Ignite
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mainstream environmental organizations are not diverse and there is no clear pathway for youth of color into environmental organizations.</li> <li>• We rely on unpaid labor and this does not help us heal the divides.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create and fund explicit pathways for youth of color into environmental field, with new norms of fair compensation established and invested in.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn from and develop a model that embodies much of Dr. Taylor's design in Michigan.</li> <li>• Leverage funds from local and national sources for major investments here.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organize the career pathways as a priority, with internships, stipends, and fellowships as what we can start with now.</li> <li>• Raise funds to align and support pathways strategies.</li> </ul>

**SPARK PLANS:** Participants invested time and thought in considering what they will do differently personally, and also on key questions and issues discerned through a democratic sorting process. This synopsis provides a quick summary of key insights emerging from personal action and topic groups.

In terms of personal action, the key take away is that this event, and Dr. Taylor's presentation in particular, provided a 'gut-check'. Participants are more aware of the depth of the divide of frames on the environment, which sets us up to work in silos and at cross-purposes.

### **Personal Action**

- **Relationship building** with people and organizations of color working on social justice, racial justice, environmental justice issues. Go to their events. Invite them to our events (such as Women's Congress).
- **Hire** – Diversify my organization.
- **Follow rather than (or as a way of) lead(ing)** – Begin to live in dialogue with communities under-represented in our work and follow what they suggest so that our work supports what makes sense.
- **Connect-the-dots/Build a common frame** – Environmental issues and EJ issues have been considered separately, and we need to bridge environmental, environmental justice, social and racial justice issues together. Integrate DEI into mission, vision, and day-to-day work of our organization/s.
- **Education** – Keep educating myself, my organization, our constituencies on the connection of all these issues and lead with a connective rather than a divisive frame.
- **Policy Change** – Develop and implement a STRONG EJ policy agenda.
- **Funding** – Connect this work to investment (secure substantive funding support for EJ work.)

### **FACILITATORS' RECOMMENDATIONS**

The current patterns described above all indicate that:

- a) Our mainstream environmental organizations have low connectivity to environmental justice communities;
- b) We largely live and act in two different worlds of environmental action (environmental quality and enjoyment of environment as distinct from EJ communities engaged in day-to-day realities of surviving in EJ overburden communities and seeking alliances to realize the well-established principles of EJ);
- c) There is a lack of funding and others forms of support for EJ organizations and leaders (who may or may not be attached to formal organizations);
- d) We have separate 'stories' and thus organize our lives in separate ways. The point of the exercise summarized above was to notice the pattern, and set conditions, through dialogue, to change it.

A stream of visions is expressed in the above. As a general rule, groups did not define a specific ultimate vision. Most of the language around vision expresses what they hope to see now or next. We ought to find effective ways to build on that and work to define a common

bridge vision for MEOs and EJs.

The Action and Ignite steps defined indicate a robust level of commitment to ACT NOW, and yet the question is also on the table – “where will the money come from” to support such work? Dr. Taylor provided some useful tools for MEOs to use to diagnose and improve diversity and organizational culture. Many were impressed with her approach to building the leadership, capacity and network of students of color and the funds she has successfully raised to support her approach. There is broad agreement that Minnesota needs to design and elevate a model appropriate for here that can incorporate key aspects of her model. Given how often the goal of career pathways and relationship building were mentioned, we certainly hope and expect that the McKnight Foundation, Friends of the Mississippi River, The Public Policy Project and AJB Consulting will continue to discuss how we may mutually support the full operationalization of what was expressed at this historic gathering.

Collectively we see a weave here of three patterns:

- a) a common commitment to move on and invest in a connective frame on environmental issues that embodies an EJ lens;
- b) a sense of knowing how big the divide is across perspectives and some trepidation, intimidation and some resentment, frustration about the difficulties and dangers of bridging the divides; and
- c) an appreciation of space created to ‘start from RIGHT HERE, right now. In that regard, we look forward to the BIG We, all those who convened and have engaged in any or all parts of this process to step-in and step-up TOGETHER to grow and environmentally just, environmentally healthy future for all Minnesotans, privileging NOW what we have marginalized in consideration for far too long.

Sincerely

Andrea, James and Sam