



The Environment & Diversity Project

The Environment & Diversity Project is a four-year collaborative initiative designed to help the Ontario environmental NGO community consider, develop and implement strategies to better reflect and engage under-represented communities.

Most ENGOs today have very little ethno-cultural and aboriginal diversity in their staff and board of directors, and have difficulty delivering programs that are inclusive and representative of the communities in which they work.

In order to play a central role in helping to bring about required behavioral and policy changes to maintain a healthy environment in Ontario, ENGOs need to understand the needs, desires, strengths and limitations of Ontario's population and reflect that reality.

The Environment & Diversity Project will help ENGOs address diversity by helping organizations and program participants to gain new skills and develop stronger, more stable organizations that are better able to meet their missions and achieve the environmental outcomes we all seek.

For over 10 years, the Sustainability Network has provided environmental nonprofit leaders with the skills that are needed to become more effective, efficient, vibrant and self-reliant. Environmental leaders access experts, learn from their peers and explore ways of strengthening their organizations. We increase the capacity of environmental organizations and help them lead, manage and strategize. The Sustainability Network is well placed to facilitate this collaborative project. We have the skills, experience and credibility to host these potentially complex conversations.

The Sustainability Network is collaborating with the following six organizations to jointly plan, oversee and evaluate the project:

- Ecojustice (Justin Duncan, LLB, Managing Lawyer)
- Wildlands League (Janet Sumner, Executive Director)
- Community Environment Alliance (Ranjana Mitra, Executive Director)
- Clean Air Partnership (Gabriella Kalapos, Director Outreach Programs)
- Sierra Club of Canada - Ontario Chapter (Dan McDermott, Executive Director)
- Bay Area Restoration Council (Jim Hudson, Executive Director)

The Environment & Diversity Project will:

a) train, support and inspire ENGOs interested in diversifying their audience

In order to understand relevant issues and audiences, a research scan will be undertaken in 2009. This scan will provide the foundation for future work. Ongoing throughout the project, one-on-one and/or group diversity training will give ENGO leaders an opportunity to understand, question and challenge the status quo and, possibly, embrace a more comprehensive organizational change process. Core collaborative members, an extended Advisory Council membership and the ENGO community as a whole will have opportunities to participate in diversity training. In 2010 and 2011, organizations will have the opportunity to apply for mini-grants that will assist them with their efforts diversity efforts.

b) place young professionals from under-represented communities into six ENGOs to help them focus on reaching new audiences

Six core collaborative organizations will undergo preparations (project planning, fundraising) in 2009 to host emerging leaders from under-represented communities for 10-month internships in 2010. Internships will focus on implementing diversity strategies within the host ENGO. Interns will have access to targeted leadership development or skills building opportunities; social opportunities will also be created in order to help interns build strong networks amongst themselves and with established environmental leaders.

c) create networks by facilitating links between numerous NGO diversity resources and the ENGO community.

The creation of a broader Advisory Council will provide the project collaborative with advice and resources. Meetings of this group will also help build networks between groups to share learnings at a larger scale. Each year, the Sustainability Network will also organize a sector-wide sharing session, or forum for ENGOs to reflect on successes or limitations of the project and to consider wider implications within the sector. We anticipate bringing in key speakers and resource people and providing a platform for project leaders to share their accomplishments and inspire others to undertake similar work. Comprehensive yearly evaluations and a final evaluation will also be conducted to ensure learnings are well documented. A communications plan will ensure that learnings from our evaluations, as well as other periodic reports and resources are communicated to the ENGO sector.

For more information about the Environment & Diversity Project, please contact:

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