NWSI DEI ASSESSMENT

Summary Report
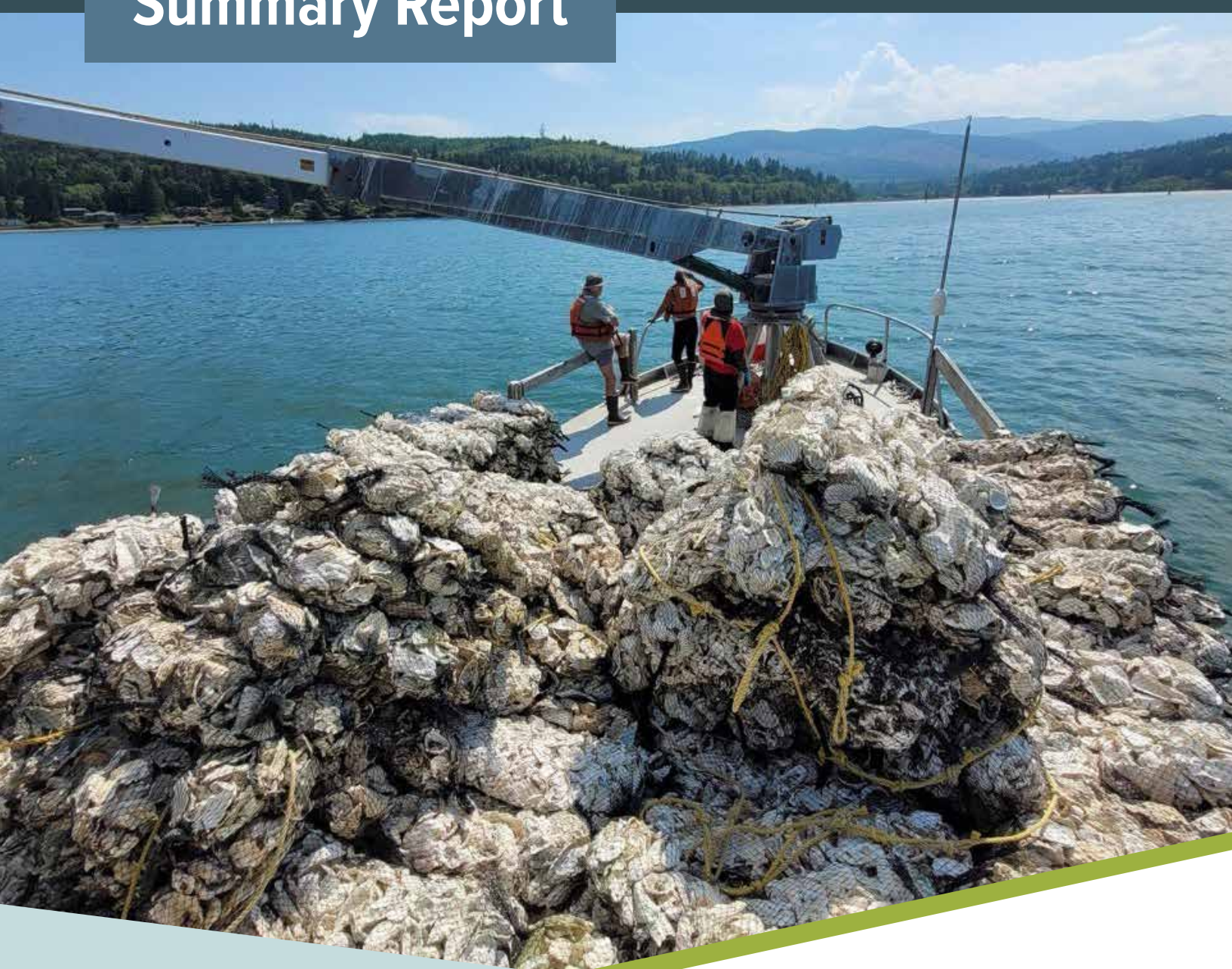
Northwest Straits
INITIATIVE

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Cover photo by Neil Harrington

Acknowledgements

(Photo Credit: Jessica Owens)

Definitions

Anti-racism: Anti-racism is a process of actively identifying and opposing racism … rooted in action … taking steps to eliminate racism at the individual, institutional, and structural level. [1]

Belonging (ness): Belonging, as extensively explored by psychologists, primarily focuses on one core necessary tenet, belonging is to fit in. How one fits in, where one fits in, what one fits into are all key questions that differ according to the context of the discussion. Central to Belonging is an individual's relationship with the external world, emphasizing the importance of understanding personal and social inclusion and exclusion. Furthermore, belonging encompasses the consideration of one's well-being and the ability to influence and assign meaning to societal structures. It transcends mere tolerance and respect for differences, demanding that everyone be genuinely welcomed with full membership and agency in society. Such a sense of belonging is essential for a thriving community, guiding both distributive and restorative decision-making. [2] [3]

Power: The ability to decide who will have access to opportunity and resources; the capacity to direct or influence the behavior of others, oneself, and/or the course of events. [4]

Privilege: Privilege is any unearned benefit, position, power, right, or advantage one receives in society because of their identity. In the United States, privilege is prevalent in the following areas: Ability privilege; Age privilege; Christian privilege; Cis Privilege; Class or economic privilege; Hetero privilege; Male privilege; National origin; and White privilege. [5]

Racism: Two elements are required for racism to exist: Racial Prejudice and the Institutional Power to codify and enforce this prejudice into an entire society. With this definition we wish to make it clear that racism stems not just from individual prejudices but from institutional systems of power, such as wealth and privilege. Additionally, use of this definition is intended to place emphasis on looking at racism in terms of community and not the individual. [6] [7] [8]

Representation: The fact of including different types of people, for example in movies, politics, or sports, so that all different groups are represented; a person or group that speaks or acts for or in support of another person or group. [9] [10]

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[1] Cherry, Kendra. "What is Anti-Racism?" Accessed October 22, 2023.

[2] Price, C.A. and Applebaum, L. (2022), Measuring a Sense of Belonging at Museums and Cultural Centers. Curator, 65: 135-160.

[3] "Belonging (ness)." Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion -Glossary of Equity-Related Terms. Version 3.2. Office of Financial Management. Accessed October 1, 2023.

[4] "Power." Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion -Glossary of Equity-Related Terms. Version 3.2. Office of Financial Management. Accessed October 1, 2023.

[5] "Privilege." Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion -Glossary of Equity-Related Terms. Version 3.2. Office of Financial Management. Accessed October 22, 2023.

[6] Sivanandan, Ambalavaner. Communities of Resistance: Writings on Black Struggles for Socialism. New ed., Verso, 2019, p. 99..

[7] Rothenberg, Paula S. Race, Class, and Gender in the United States: An Integrated Study, 6th ed., Worth, 2004, p. 127.

[8] Libers, Abigail. "How to Unlearn Racism." Scientific American, 1 October 2020. Accessed October 21, 2023.

[9] "Representation." Cambridge English Dictionary, Cambridge University Press. Accessed October, 19 2023.

[10] "Representation." Britannica Dictionary. Accessed October 19, 2023.

(Photo Credit: Jessica Owens)

Introduction

Northwest Straits Initiative (NWSI) is a federally authorized marine conservation program authorized in 1998 (Public Law 105-384). The NWSI is a community-led collaboration working to protect and restore the marine environment of northwest Washington. Encompassing over 140 participants, the NWSI carries out work through seven county-based Marine Resources Committees (MRCs), the Northwest Straits Commission (NWSC), and the Northwest Straits Foundation (NWSF).

NWSC and MRC staff drafted a Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion (DEI) vision and goals statement. The vision and goals outline intentions and create alignment for DEI to be integrated into regular operations. The vision and goals are based on goals and objectives in the current 2019-2024 NWSI Strategic Plan. The stated result in the Engagement and Partnership goal of the NWSI Strategic Plan 2019-2024. is that "the Initiative serves everyone who inhabits the Northwest Straits." To ensure this result and others in the NWSI Strategic Plan are met, the NWSI will need to make a concerted effort to intentionally address institutional deficiencies and to ensure a focus on DEI is evident across the entire Initiative.

NWSI DEI Vision: We envision a broad, diverse, and inclusive group of individuals engaged in the health of their local ecosystems to ensure a thriving, resilient, and healthy Salish Sea. Our hope is that pursuing an equitable approach to marine conservation will engage, empower, and benefit all who inhabit the Northwest Straits.

Goals

- Achieve NWSI membership and engagement that is representative of the diverse communities within each county.

- Deliver projects that are meaningful to and benefit the diverse communities within each county.

- Create equitable and inclusive career opportunities in marine conservation through NWSI staff, internships, and staff support (consultants, etc.) positions.

- Have inclusive and relevant messaging for the diverse communities in the Northwest Straits region to ensure information and materials are accessible to all.

(Photo Credit: Jessica Owens)

Project Summary

Purpose

The purpose of this comprehensive, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) assessment report is to:

- Capture the current state of DEI sentiments
- Document learning to guide NWSI through its next phase of DEI efforts
- Share the top issues impacting DEI, setting a precedent for actionable change and continuous learning within the organization while expanding its reach within communities

This summary provides a succinct overview of the assessment's scope and methodology, key findings, and recommendations.

Assessment Scope & Methodology

The consultant team completed a scope of work consistent with the three major tasks outlined below.

1. Development of Key Questions

The Athena Group and NWSI planning team co-created key questions that formed the basis of this assessment. *Appendix 3*

2. Engagement and Facilitation

After an initial review of survey responses, the consultant team and NWSI planning team scheduled and facilitated four data 'sense-making' discussions with a focus on NWSI affinity groups: NWSI Board members, volunteers, staff, and one meeting open to all.

3. Analysis and Reporting

The consultant team reviewed all engagement notes to discern predominant themes, emerging ideas, sentiments, and nuanced observations. The team also worked with staff to develop next actions at a virtual presentation and workshop held on June 25th, 2024.

Key Findings

Key findings in this section are divided into three parts, current state of DEI sentiments, top issues impacting DEI within the Northwest Straits Community, and actions to move forward.

Current State of DEI Sentiments

- **Northwest Straits Initiative participants (MRCs, Commissioners, Board members, volunteers, and staff) have varying levels of comfort, knowledge, and experience with DEI.**
  - *This assessment may not have captured all of the current DEI initiatives happening within the Northwest Straits Community because of varying levels of comfort, knowledge, and experience with DEI concepts and key terminology. For example, this assessment finds that some projects, practices, or initiatives are consistent with DEI but aren't referenced in the same way by participants.*
- **There may be a participation gap in DEI programs or efforts across NWSI.**
  - *Survey responses show that more people know about DEI programs or efforts than those who are actively engaged with, or participating in, DEI programs or efforts. Appendix reference survey question #3*
- **NWSI has internal resources that can be leveraged to support DEI goals.**
  - *Several NWSI participants are actively engaged or participating in DEI efforts and shared many successes which others can learn from or expand on.*
- **NWSI participants are ready to support the expansion of DEI efforts.**
  - *NWSI participants who were involved in this project were open to discussion, sharing, and providing feedback on ways to expand or improve DEI efforts.*

Top Issues Impacting DEI within the Northwest Straits Community

1. Tools and resources for engagement with communities or individuals who have been historically marginalized or underrepresented in the field of marine conservation.
2. Supportive frameworks or structures that align DEI efforts across the Northwest Straits Community.
3. Training and forums for discussion on DEI, equity, antiracism, belonging, and implicit/explicit bias with a focus on how NWSI can apply learning across the organization.

(Photo Credit: Jessica Owens)

Actions to Move Forward

NWSI participants convened for a 2-hour virtual project presentation and workshop. The session aimed to share findings from the DEI assessment and to facilitate movement towards action. During the meeting, participants collaboratively established norms for courageous conversation (an adaptation from the work of Glen E. Singleton). Following the project summary presentation, participants identified the top 2-3 actions to advance DEI efforts. The tables below summarizes the grouped responses on next actions and progress towards NWSI Norms for Courageous Conversations.

Grouped Responses: 2-3 Actions to Move Forward

Training	DEI Planning	Engagement	Forums for Dialogue
• Training and self reflection • Training for staff/ volunteers to make sure everyone has gotten some training. And continued training over time • Training to get current MRC members on the same page AND a plan to train future members as they onboard • How does income factor into all of this?	• Equity & Inclusion at project development stages • Creating a sustainable foundation before trying to reach goals that may not be tangible in the current moment • We discussed the idea of the MRCs adding DEI reporting related to projects reporting to NWSI. • Commnuication strategies	• Engage different generations • Welcoming diverse groups (outreach-plus) • Collaboration with partner tribes during planning stages, NOT as a checkbox for access/permissions when a plan is already made • Recruit to MRC across broader spectrum than just: county districts, potential for successful term fulfillment, ecology, science, business, tribe metrics	• How to have hard conversations and learn to be comfortable being uncomfortable, step away from taking things personally, and engage in communication and feedback without emotional decision making • Talked about how to engage the MRC to review the report and talk about DEI at an MRC meeting

NWSI Norms For Courageous Conversations

Norm 1	Norm 2	Norm 3
• "You are going to make mistakes and that is ok." • "Often people tend to filter themselves in public settings, and their biases can go unspoken but are still there." • "We also talked about generational differences in how things are perceived and reactions."	• "Understanding intent vs impact." • "Intent vs impact: the difference between hello vs why are you here."	• "When you see a microaggression happen to others and are able to gracefully stand up or help correct the situation for others. And how hard it can be to do it gracefully." • "If you see or hear something, do something. Follow through when you are in a situation you can speak up." • "Calling others in" (i.e., question the uncomfortable questions 'what do you mean by that statement?') • "Calling someone on an experienced microaggression can get them to stop and rethink their actions/words, and gives them an opportunity to learn." • "Embrace Confrontation." • "The most important conversation is the one you aren't having."

Norm 4	Norm 5
• "Don't assume: that 'different' is bad/wrong/less valuable, or that 'sameness' is better/right/more valuable." • "Don't assume that the success or best approach to a project is shared by all partners with their different perspectives/experience." • "Take your time and learn to listen to others." • "Make sure interview questions are job-related." • "Don't internalize someone else's assumptions."	• "Understanding the importance of the intersection of environmentalism and social justice, and how they are inherently interconnected." • "Understanding that Tribal communities/nations do not all operate/work in the same way." • "Getting back to the basics! Start with making sure everyone is on the same page with definitions etc."

Recommendations

Recommendations in this section were co-created with NWSI participants.

Volunteer and Community Engagement Strategies

The NWSC, NWSF, and MRCs can establish or affirm DEI sentiments, policies, and practices. Examples of how this can be done include:

- Assess the current demographics of volunteers to measure progress.
- Enhance engagement and outreach to racially and linguistically diverse groups.
- Strengthen engagement with individuals from different generations.
- Integrate accessibility as a core component of equity.

Internal DEI Strategies

The Northwest Straits entities, although not structured as a single organization and each having its own leadership framework, recognized several opportunities to support DEI initiatives which are summarized below:

- Enhance clarity, transparency, and accessibility in organizational communications
- Centralize DEI resources to support consistent understanding and application of DEI concepts and key terminology
- Maintain thorough records of DEI initiatives
- Establish processes that prioritize community input and perspectives in decisionmaking (including equitable compensation for collaboration in this way)
- Review and adjust field work priorities to align with DEI goals and values
- Provide training on belonging, anti-racism, environmental justice, implicit/explicit bias, harm accountability, and intercultural competence to build a more inclusive and informed workplace
- Align recruitment and grant awarding procedures with DEI objectives

Community Engagement Initiatives

Community engagement emerged as a priority throughout the project and the following initiatives were highlighted as central to future DEI efforts:

- Develop a feedback loop process with communites
- Strengthen reciprocal partnerships with Tribal members and communities
- Establish standard processes and tools for equitable community engagement *Appendix 1*

Photo Credit: Allie Simpson

Conclusion

In our experience, the long-term success of DEI initiatives requires leadership that actively and explicitly supports a culture of continuous learning and growth. Each member of the Northwest Straits community-led collaboration brings unique lived experiences and training to DEI efforts. This diversity underscores the importance of curiosity and open inquiry regarding the project's foundational questions. Leaders play a vital role in building the collective capacity to practice equity within the community.

An important question to consider is: What responsibility and accountability does Northwest Straits have to ensure that all community members communicate and act in ways that respect everyone's humanity, address power and privilege, and promote representation, anti-racism, and belonging?

Since deeply rooted challenges cannot be resolved quickly, the consultant team recommends prioritizing sustainability in the work ahead. This means making time for important discussions, understanding that DEI is not an add-on, but a crucial part of the job, trying new approaches, and leaning on those who have been in the work for guidance and partnership. Environmentalism has a long history of ties to people who may find themselves far from the decision-making table. Those voices and perspectives must be centered to foster change and inclusivity.

Appendix

A1: Discovering & Connecting with your Community

Community Connectivity Analysis (CCA)

To create an inclusive community engagement strategy, it's crucial to engage with individuals beyond your immediate network. This effort involves actively seeking perspectives from those with direct experience in the issues your organization is addressing. Employing a community connectivity analysis can be instrumental in identifying and connecting with diverse viewpoints. The Athena Group uses a modified version of the Orton Family Foundation's Community Heart & Soul™ process, originally developed by the Orton Family Foundation. This tool itself is an adaptation of various similar tools created by others. If the version presented here doesn't align with your specific requirements, you'll likely find a more suitable alternative online. Additionally, you have the flexibility to customize this tool to better meet your needs.

Community Connectivity Analysis Instructions

1. **Guidelines:** Conducting a community connectivity analysis is most effective when done collaboratively. Assemble your team and collectively work through the Excel worksheet provided. Follow the detailed instructions for each stage as outlined below. Be aware that each step-by-step instruction corresponds to the numbered columns in the worksheet.
2. **Identifying Community Groups:** Start by brainstorming a comprehensive list of characteristics representing different segments of your community potentially interested in or affected by your project. This should include groups traditionally overlooked in decision-making. Utilize resources like U.S. Census Bureau community profiles to gain insights into your community's diverse demographics. Go deeper than surface-level categories; consider various ethnicities, generational residents, newcomers, economic backgrounds, educational levels, etc. For example, expand your view beyond general Hispanic or Latino/a/x groups to include specific nationalities, income types, and educational backgrounds.
3. **Affinity Group Networks:** Affinity groups are connected through networks, which can be formal organizations (like non-profits, religious institutions) or informal gatherings (like patrons of a specific business or community place). Explore each community group from step 2 and identify at least one significant affinity group network within each, taking note of their organizational structures or communal connections.
4. **Network Connectors:** Connectors are key individuals within networks who are trusted and can effectively link people together. They may be known as trusted advocates. Analyze the networks from step 3 and identify at least one connector per network. These could be community figures like a youth minister or a local business manager. Include contact information if possible. If unknown, delegate someone from your team to obtain it.

5. **Communication Channels:** Identify the primary sources through which each network receives information. This step is crucial for effective communication planning. Specify the channels for each network, such as social media pages, local newsletters, or community gatherings, noting the preferred platforms and times for each group. Be as specific as possible, such as the local veterans' writing group's Facebook page, weekly LGBTQ+ newspaper, WhatsApp groups, verbal announcements at parent meet-ups on Wednesday mornings, etc.

6. **Engagement Opportunities:** Engagement opportunities are known ways to reach people where they are and in a format that feels comfortable to them. Think of and list all known locations where networks identified in steps 1-2 typically gather. Again, be as specific as possible, like weekend drum circle at the east-end park, grocery store coffee shop at 9th and Pine, Friday Facebook events, etc. Some of this may be repeated from step 2, when the identified network and the gathering place are the same thing. This data will assist in planning effective engagement activities in relevant locations.

7. **Linked Networks:** Explore connections between networks based on past collaborations, common connectors, shared affinity groups, or similar communication channels. Utilize various tools like mapping software, sticky notes, or whiteboard diagrams to visualize these connections. In your communication and partner development plans, prioritize networks, connectors, channels, and opportunities that are most common across groups. However, also focus on those that require targeted efforts to reach, especially those usually underrepresented, to ensure inclusivity in your engagement strategy.

Initial Outreach Questions (for people or organizations new to NWSI)

- What do you know about NWSC/NWSF/county MRC? How does it show up for [specific segment of community you are trying to reach/engage]?
- What does your connected community care about?
- Would they want to collaborate with NWSC/NWSF/county MRC?
- What is the best way to reach people?
- What would people need to participate and feel that their time is valued? (language access, food, stipends, childcare, meeting times, etc.)
- Where would be the best place for us to hold a meeting or event?
- What would you hope is different for [specific segment of community you are trying to reach/engage] through partnership with NWSC/NWSF/county MRC?

Additional Questions (context dependent):

- How do you recommend that we reach folks to let them know about this opportunity and to invite them to participate?
- Would you be willing to help us in the same way, assuming you think this will be of value to the folks you're serving/representing/supporting?
- Do you have a newsletter or bulletin board that we could add to?
- Are there individuals you can think of that you would be willing to invite or introduce us to?
- Is there a Facebook group or similar platform that you would be willing to share info to?
- Other suggestions/support you can offer?
- How can we make this a great experience for the group of folks we want to engage?
- Are there any community/cultural norms that we should plan to build into the process/practices/ways of working together?
- What potential barriers to participation should we be prepared to address?
- Do you have suggestions on effective ways to overcome these barriers?

Photo Credit: Patty Mulcahey

A2: Online Survey Questions

- Do you know about ongoing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) programs or efforts within the Northwest Straits Commission, Northwest Straits Foundation, or Marine Resources Committees?
  - *Please describe the DEI programs or efforts you are aware of within the Northwest Straits Commission, Northwest Straits Foundation, or Marine Resources Committees.*
- Are you currently involved in any initiatives or projects focused on supporting communities or individuals who have been historically marginalized or underrepresented in the field of marine conservation (within the NWSI or outside the NWSI)? This includes groups that have been marginalized due to factors such as ethnicity, gender, disability, socioeconomic status, or geographic location.
- Do you have any suggestions or ideas for improving or expanding DEI initiatives within the Northwest Straits Commission, Northwest Straits Foundation, or Marine Resources Committees?
- Anti-racism: Anti-racism is a process of actively identifying and opposing racism … rooted in action … taking steps to eliminate racism at the individual, institutional, and structural levels. Imagine your organization as an authentically antiracist organization. What is different from now?
- What DEI resources or knowledge do you feel are most needed within your organization? (please select all that apply)
  - *Training programs*
  - *Educational Materials*
  - *Tools for Community Engagement*
  - *Forums for Dialogue*
  - *Other - write-in*
- If the DEI resources you identified were available, what do you feel your organization could do better as a result?
- What types of demographic data do you believe would be most valuable for understanding trends in DEI within Northwest Straits communities? (please select all that apply)
  - *Race and Ethnicity*
  - *Education Level, Income Level*
  - *Age*
  - *Profession*
  - *Housing Status (homeowners and renters)*
  - *Language preference, Geographic location (by ZIP Code)*
  - *Family size*
  - *Other - write-in*

- Do you know of any individuals or organizations we should contact to gain a better understanding of DEI trends within Northwest Straits communities?
  - *Which individuals or organizations should we contact?*
- What county do you mostly work or live in?
- Are you open to participating in a follow-up meeting with the consultant team to discuss your responses?
  - *Please provide your name and contact information if you are willing to participate in a follow-up discussion. Your contact details will remain confidential and will only be used for this project. Your survey responses will remain anonymous.*

A3: Survey Results

1. I am… (please select all that apply)

- Affiliated with a Marine Resource Committee (64.1%)
- A Northwest Straits Commissioner, or staff (23.4%)
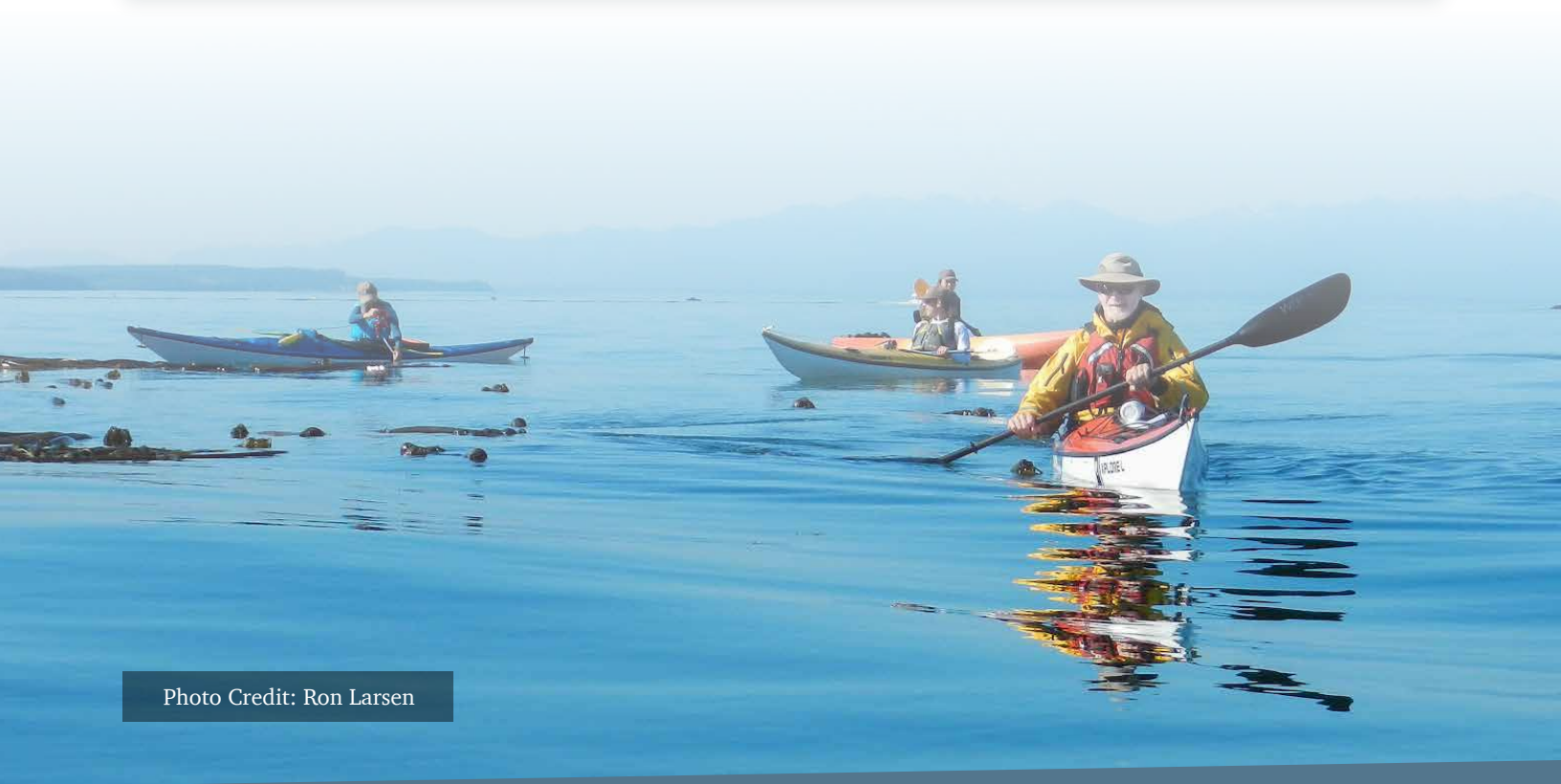- A Northwest Straits Foundation board member or staff (20.3%)
- Other (4.7%)

| Value	Percent	Responses
Affiliated with a Marine Resource Committee as a volunteer, or staff	64.1%	41
A Northwest Straits Commissioner, or staff	23.4%	15
A Northwest Straits Foundation Board member, or staff	20.3%	13
Other - Write In (Required)	4.7%	3

Photo Credit: Ron Larsen

2. Do you know about ongoing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) programs or efforts within the Northwest Straits Commission, Northwest Straits Foundation, or Marine Resources Committees?

- Yes (57.8% - 37 Responses)
- No (42.2% - 27 Responses)
- 64 Total Responses

Value	Percent	Responses
No	57.8%	37
Yes	42.2%	27
		Totals: 64
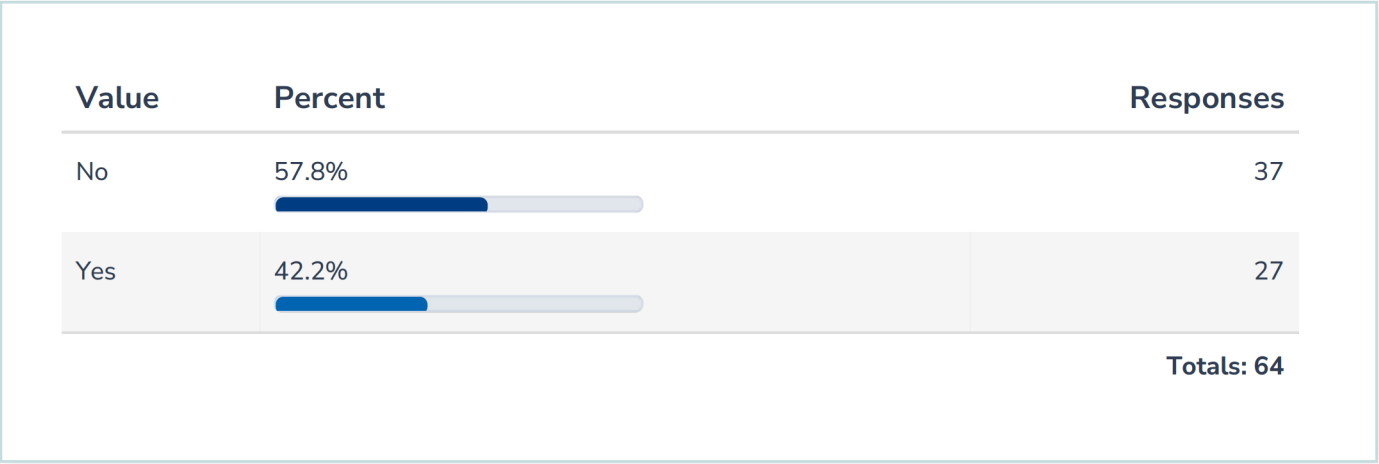
3. Please describe the DEI Programs or efforts you are aware of within the Northwest Straits Commission, Northwest Straits Foundation, or Marine Resources Committees.

- DEI work at the Northwest Straits Initiative
- DEI Program development at Skagit MRC
- DEI work at Jefferson MRC
- DEI work at Island County MRC
- Work with Northwest Tribes
- Land Acknowledgement development
- Northwest Straits DEI goal development
- Inclusion guide for internships
- DEI consultation and reporting (provided by Usawa)
- DEI work at Snohomish County MRC
- DEI resource sharing with the Washington State Department of Ecology
- Consultation on Tribal representation within MRCs and signage language
- DEI considerations in outreach
- DEI consultation (this project)
- Meeting accessibility accommodations
- Guest speakers on treaty rights (provided by Cecilia Gobin)
- Inclusion of early career scientists in Commission projects
- Examining policies and procedures with a DEI lens
- Work with Tribes on removing derelict vessels and restoring Olympia oysters
- Work towards comprehensive policies and practices related to hiring, contracting, personnel, and DEI strategy
- Youth outreach and engagement to support committees

4. Are you currently involved in any initiatives or projects focused on supporting communities or individuals who have been historically marginalized or underrepresented in the field of marine conservation (within the NWSI or outside the NWSI)? This includes groups that have been marginalized due to the factors such as ethnicity, gender, disability, socioeconomic status, or geographic location.

- No (57.8% - 37 Responses)
- Yes (42.2% - 27 Responses)
- 64 Total Responses

Value	Percent	Responses
No	57.8%	37
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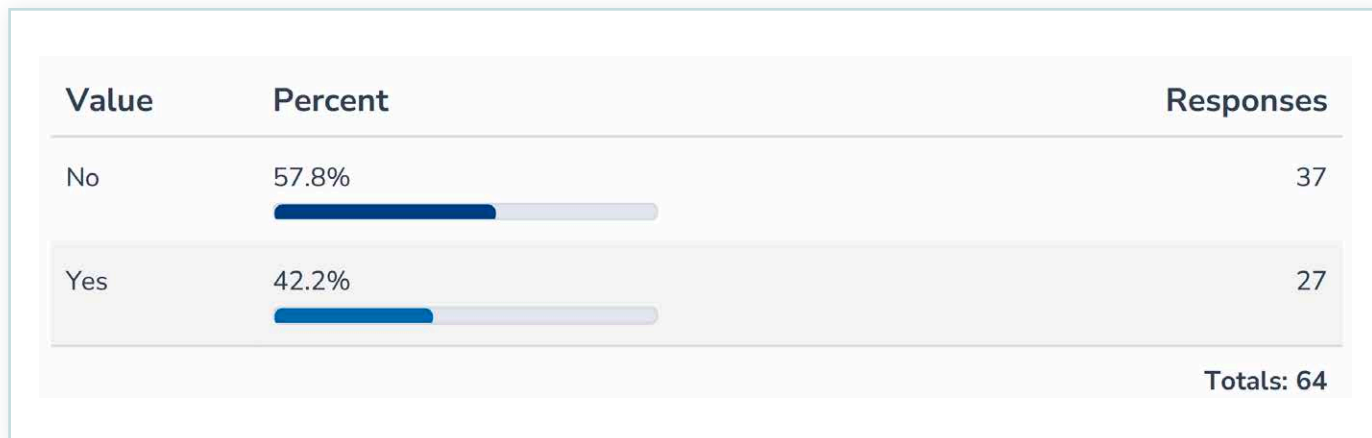
5. Please share more about your project

- Projects with Tribes
- Fidalgo Bay Day's 20th Anniversary at Samish Indian Nation's Fidalgo Bay Resort
- Samish Nation sponsorship to the Skagit MRC
- Recruitment for additional Camano representatives and Naval personnel
- Incorporating art and culture initiatives including emotional and scientific learning
- Outreach to outer islands in the San Juans to participate in the great islands clean up
- Identification of women, people of color, lower income individuals, and Indigenous peoples for engagement and participation in marine conservation, scholarships, internships, and educational outreach programs
- Document, meeting, and website accessibility
- Volunteering with Kids on the Beach Program and the Salish Sea School
- Work to include local Indigenous groups in projects such as the National Marine Educators Association Conference and the Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan
- Work with Veterans Conservation Corps (internships for veterans to gain experience in marine conservation)
- Consultation on federal and state food and agriculture policy
- County and departmental DEI
- Teaching at the University of Washington's Friday Harbor Labs
- Work with the 20 treaty tribes of Western Washington providing policy support for tribes in the protection and implementation of their treaty reserved rights and treaty reserved resources, of which encompass both marine waters and resources therein.
- Work across various types of organizations to support application of an environmental justice lens in everything they do
- Work with veterans on the European Green Crab Project
- Provision of fieldwork and learning opportunities in marine conservation for young adults through the Washington Conservation Corps Program
- Participation on the WRIA 8 DEI subcommittee
- Work on grants that support DEI through hiring speakers of languages other than English
- Support that ensures jobs are posted in diverse communities
- Work with non-profit boards on how they can improve DEI achievements

6. Do you have any suggestions or ideas for improving or expanding DEI initiatives within the Northwest Straits Commission, Northwest Straits Foundation, or Marine Resources Committees?

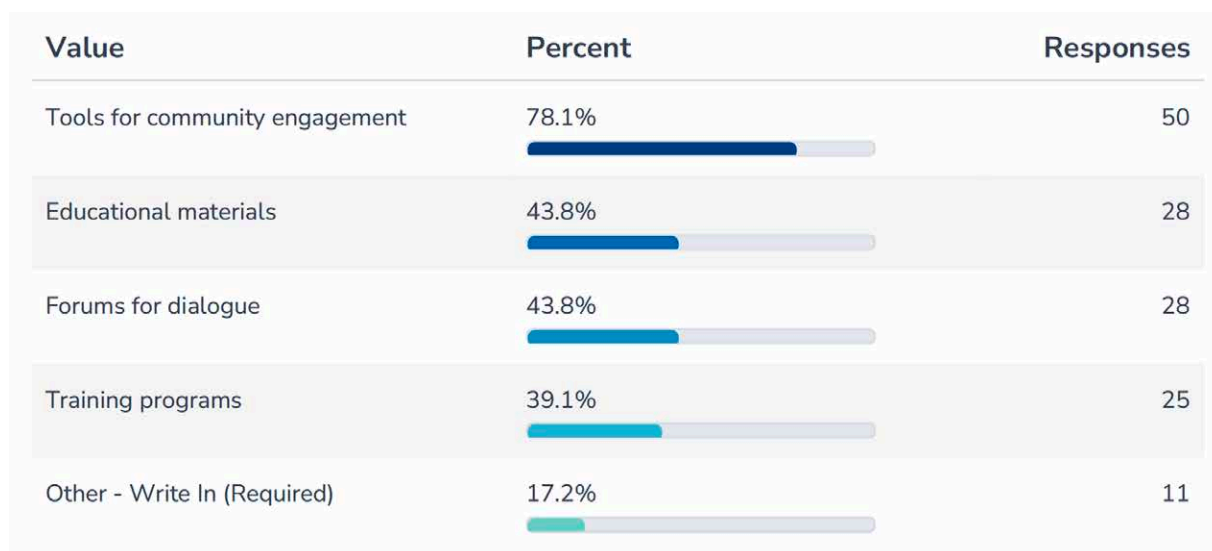| Increasing Diversity Efforts	Internal Organizational Work
• Demographics of volunteers • DEI policy/protocols • Engagement and outreach to racially and linguistically diverse groups • Engagement with people from different generations • Focus on accessibility	• Communication strategies (clarity, transparency, accessibility) • Shared DEI resources • Documenting DEI efforts • Inclusion of community perspectives in decision-making • Consider equity in relation to how field work is prioritized • Training (belonging, antiracism, environmental justice) • DEI objectives considered in hiring and awarding grants

Photo Credit: Dana Flerchinger

7. Anti-racism: Anti-racism is a process of actively identifying and opposing racism... rooted in action... taking steps to eliminate racism at the individual, institutional, and structural levels. Imagine your organization as an authentically antiracist organization. What is different from now?

- More involvement and support for marginalized and underrepresented communities
- Strengthened reciprocal partnerships with Tribal members and communities
- A feedback loop with community
- More effort to engage across difference (age, race, and income level)
- More uncomfortable conversations and challenging of the status quo
- More discussion on implicit/explicit bias (how it shows up in our language, actions, policies, practices, culture, and how to mitigate)
- Policy statements and training to set expectations
- Increased diversity at all levels
- Measurable goals that address institutional racism and achieve equitable outcomes
- A clear vision for environmental justice
- Increased education at all levels

8. What DEI resources or knowledge do you feel are most needed within your organization? (select all that apply)

- Tools for community engagement (78.1% - 50 responses)
- Educational Materials (43.8% - 28 responses)
- Forms for dialogue (43.8% - 28 responses)
- Training Programs (39.1% - 25 responses)
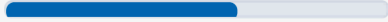- Other (17.2% - 11 responses)

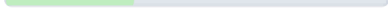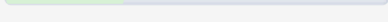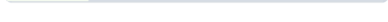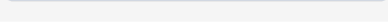| Value	Percent	Responses
Tools for community engagement	78.1%	50
Educational materials	43.8%	28
Forums for dialogue	43.8%	28
Training programs	39.1%	25
Other - Write In (Required)	17.2%	11

9. If the DEI resources you identified were available, what do you feel your organization could do better as a result?

- Become more educated and aware of the intersections between environmentalism and social justice
- Develop more inclusive projects
- Acknowledge systemic issues and address white supremacy
- Have greater diversity at events
- Increase public meeting accessibility
- Understand and integrate community interests in our work
- Engage in ongoing training
- Expand hiring, contracting, internships, volunteerism, and community engagement
- Locate appropriate communities to engage with
- Have more time for honest discussions
- Achieve wider engagement across age, race, education, and other identity markers
- Identify and address inequity (especially those we are unaware of)
- Improve/sustain action over time
- Achieve a broader demographic of donors
- Build tools for inclusion (language access, training, and guides)
- Restructure to centralize DEI efforts

10. What types of demographics data do you believe would be most valuable for understanding trends in DEI within Northwest Straits Communities?

- Race & Ethnicity (84.4% - 54 Responses)
- Age (60.9% - 39 Responses)
- Education Level (57.8% - 37 Responses)
- Income Level (56.3% - 36 Responses)
- Language Preference (56.3% - 36 Responses)
- Geographic Location (50% - 32 Responses)
- Housing Status (34.4% - 22 Responses)
- Profession (31.3% - 20 Responses)
- Other (20.3% - 13 Responses)
- Family Size (20.3% - 13 Responses)

Value	Percent	Responses
Race and Ethnicity	84.4%	54
Age	60.9%	39
Education Level	57.8%	37
Income Level	56.3%	36
Language Preference	56.3%	36
Geographic Location (by ZIP Code)	50.0%	32
Housing Status (homeowners and renters)	34.4%	22
Profession	31.3%	20
Other - Write In	21.9%	14
Family Size	20.3%	13

11. Do you know of any individuals organizations we should contact to gain a better understanding of DEI trends within Northwest Straits communities?

- No (87.5% - 56 Responses)
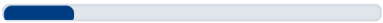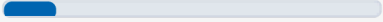- Yes (12.5% - 8 Responses)

Value	Percent	Responses
No	87.5%	56
Yes	12.5%	8
		Totals: 64
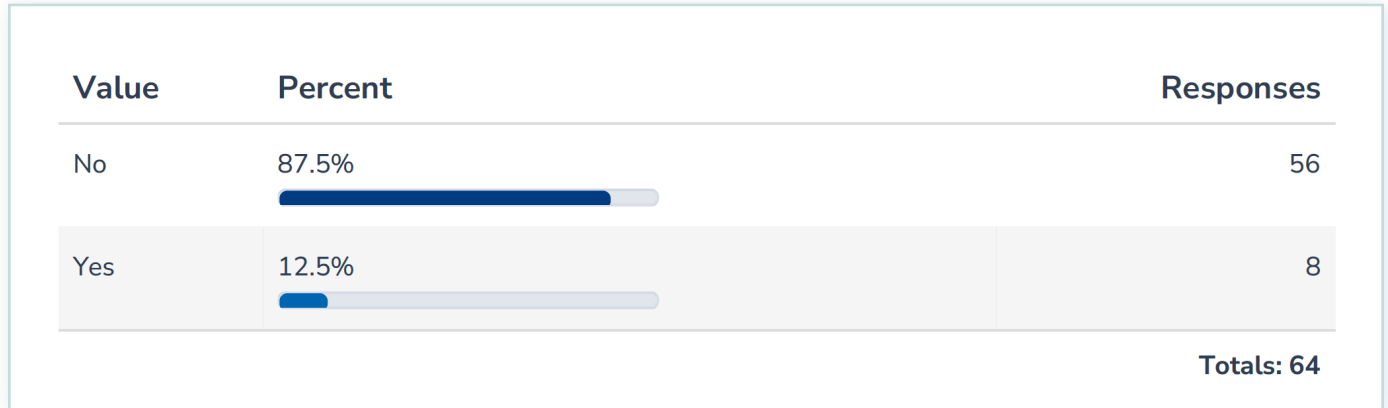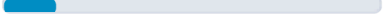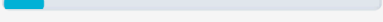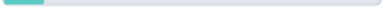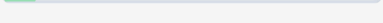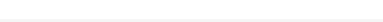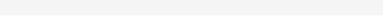
12. Which Individuals or organizations should we contact?

- Tribal communities: Swinomish, Tulalip, Samish, Lummi, Duwamish
- Consultants: Distinctive Voice, Ethos
- Organizations/Institutions: Bellingham Technical College, Whatcom Community College, Skagit Community Foundation, the Northwest Indian College, Peninsula College, regional food banks, Nurturing Roots, Puget Sound Sage Got Green, Seattle Duwamish River Cleanup Coalition, Urban Wilderness Project, intersectional environmentalists, Front and Centered, the Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife

13. What county do you mostly work or live in?

- Whatcom County (18.8% - 12 Responses)
- Jefferson County (14.1% - 9 Responses)
- Snohomish County (14.1% - 9 Responses)
- Skagit County (10.9% - 7 Responses)
- More than One County (10.9% - 7 Responses)
- Clallam County (9.4% - 6 Responses)
- Other Counties in Washington (7.8% - 5 Responses)
- San Juan County (4.7% - 3 Responses)
- Island County (9.4% - 6 Responses)
- 64 Total Responses

Value	Percent	Responses
Whatcom County	18.8%	12
Jefferson County	14.1%	9
Snohomish County	14.1%	9
Skagit County	10.9%	7
More than one county - Write In	10.9%	7
Clallam County	9.4%	6
Island County	9.4%	6
Other county in Washington - Write In	7.8%	5
San Juan County	4.7%	3
		Totals: 64

14. Are you open to participating in a follow-up meeting with the consultant team to discuss your responses?

- No (57.8% - 37 Responses)
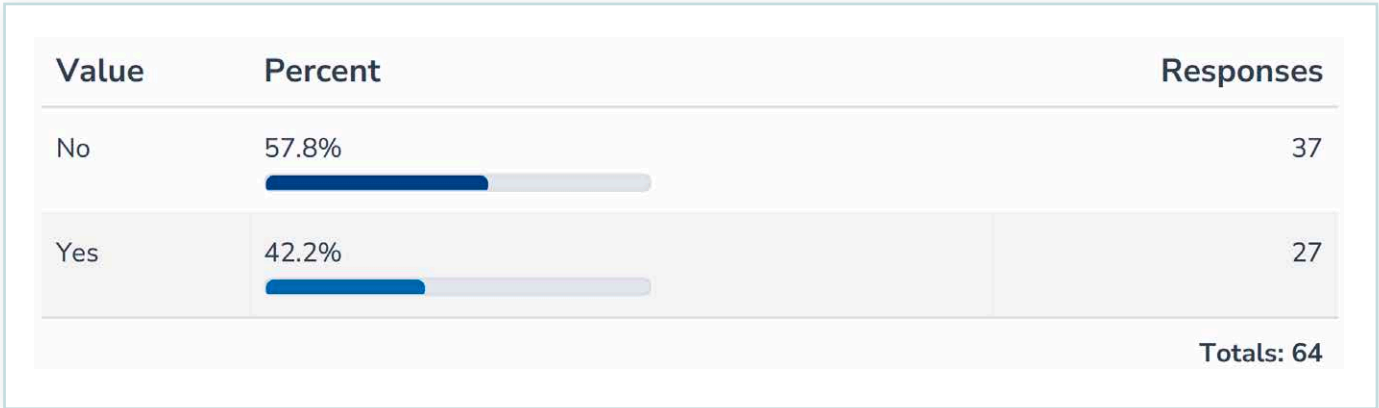- Yes (42.2% - 27 Responses)
- 64 Total Responses

Value	Percent	Responses
No	57.8%	37
Yes	42.2%	27
		Totals: 64

Photo Credit: Frances Robertson

A4: NWSI DEI Assessment Presentation & Workshop

June 25, 2024

[NWSI DEI Assessment Presentation and Workshop Agenda.pdf](#)

[NWSI June Presentation 2024.pdf](#)

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NWSI DEI Assessment Presentation and Workshop Agenda
June 25, 2024

Objectives and Discussions for the Day

- Provide an overview of the NWSI DEI Assessment Project
- Share back learning from the online survey
- Workshop norms for courageous conversations and action planning
- Discuss what's next

Agenda

Time	Agenda Topic and Details
2:30 pm 15 min	**Welcome and Introductions** o Welcome from the NWSI Planning Team o Small group check-in (breakout rooms)
2:45 pm 5 min	**Review Meeting Objectives** o Overview of the NWSI DEI Assessment Project o Share back learning from the online survey o Workshop: shared norms for courageous conversations and action planning o Discuss what's next
2:50 pm 25 min	**Project Overview** o Review survey responses
3:15 pm 10 min	**Short break**
3:25 pm 35 min	**NWSI Norms for Courageous Conversations** o We will discuss a prompt in breakout rooms and share out with the group
4:00 pm 30 min	**Action Planning** o Based on what you learned today, what action(s) would you like to see move forward across the Northwest Straits Community? (breakout rooms) **What's next and close-out** o Phase 2

NWSI DEI Assessment Presentation and Workshop

Date: June 25, 2024

Presented By: Tevin Medley, Edline Francois & Chris Porter

Agenda

- Welcome and Introductions (small group check-in)

- Review Meeting Objectives

- Project Overview

- Review Online Survey Results

- Workshop: NWSI Norms for Courageous Conversations and Action Planning

- What's next? And Close-out

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2

Reflective Check-in (small groups)

How are you showing up today?
- Distractions
- Thoughts
- Concerns
- Questions
- Ideas
- Emotions

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Meeting Objectives

- Provide an overview of the NWSI DEI Assessment Project

- Share back learning from the online-survey

- Workshop: shared norms for courageous conversations and action planning

- Discuss what's next

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4

Project Overview

- This project's purpose is to develop and implement a comprehensive DEI assessment framework for NWSI, designed to capture and analyze the current state of DEI sentiments.

- By engaging partners and volunteers with diverse lived experiences, this initiative will not only guide NWSI through its next phase of DEI efforts but also empower MRCs to evaluate and enhance their own practices, aligning with NWSI's core values and mission.

- The goal is to identify and address the top issues impacting DEI, setting a precedent for actionable change and continuous learning within the organization while expanding its reach within communities.

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What have we learned so far?

As we share back survey responses, **please take notes** on your:

✓ **Reactions**: Words that may describe how you are feeling about the data (excited, disappointed, surprised, etc.).

✓ **Reflections**: Anything that stands out to you as needing more time for serious thought or consideration.

✓ **Recommendations**: Anything that stands out as a clear next action based on what you are observing in real time and in your work.

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Who did the project reach?

In the initial phase of this project, the following groups participated in the DEI Assessment:

- Marine Resource Committee Affiliates
- Northwest Straits Commissioners and Staff
- Northwest Straits Foundation Member and Staff
- Elected Officials
- Northwest Straits Alternates
- SAC Members

Value	Percent	Responses
Clallam County	10.0%	6
Island County	10.0%	6
Jefferson County	13.3%	8
San Juan County	5.0%	3
Skagit County	11.7%	7
Snohomish County	13.3%	8
Whatcom County	18.3%	11
Other county in Washington - Write In	8.3%	5
More than one county - Write In	10.0%	6
		Totals: 60

Survey Results

64 Total respondents

Value	Percent	Responses
Affiliated with a Marine Resource Committee as a volunteer, or staff	63.3%	38
A Northwest Straits Commissioner, or staff	23.3%	14
A Northwest Straits Foundation Board member, or staff	21.7%	13
Other - Write In (Required)	5.0%	3

- Over half of the respondents were affiliated with an MRC as a Volunteer or Staff Member.

- 40% were Northwest Straits Commissioners or staff/ Northwest Straits Board Members or Staff Members.

- This piece of data suggests that the NWSC project is reaching it's intended target groups in phase 1.

What was asked?

Do you know about ongoing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) programs or efforts within the Northwest Straits Commission, Northwest Straits Foundation, or Marine Resources Committees?
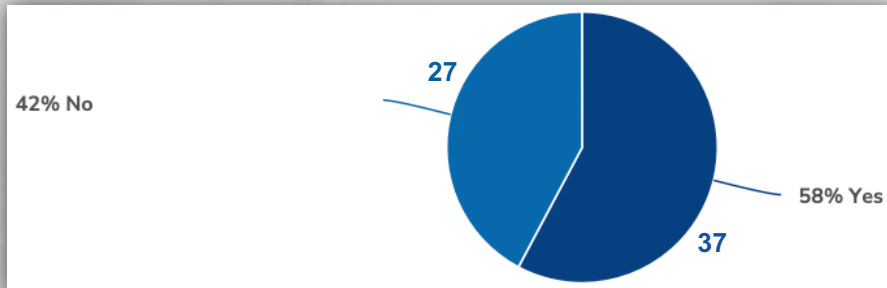
- More than half of the survey respondents report that they know about ongoing DEI efforts within the NWSC, Foundation, or MRCs.

- 10 of the "Yes" responses referenced only this project.

What was asked?

Are you currently involved in any initiatives or projects focused on supporting communities or individuals who have been historically marginalized or underrepresented in the field of marine conservation (within the NWSI or outside the NWSI)?
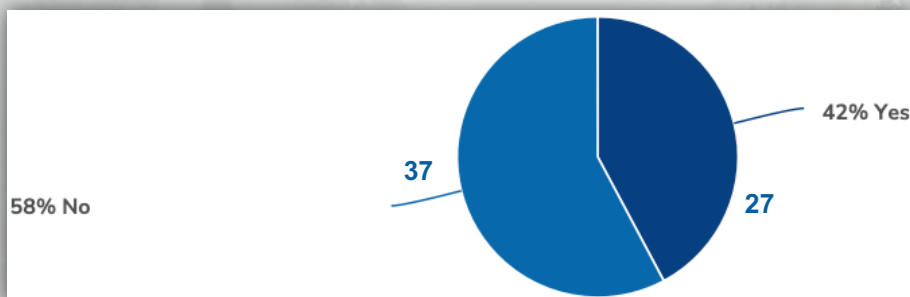
- More than half of respondents are not involved in any projects that support individuals from marginalize communities.

- This data may suggest that there is an intention to engage in DEI work but the follow through is not quite there.

- Current DEI projects and initiatives included: Work with Tribes, Schools and school age children, work with veterans, outreach to Latinx students, and outreach to women, people of color, and lower income individuals.

What was asked?

Do you have any suggestions or ideas for improving or expanding DEI initiatives within the Northwest Straits Commission, Northwest Straits Foundation, or Marine Resources Committees? **41 Responses**

Increasing diversity efforts
- Demographics of volunteers

- DEI policy/protocols

- Engagement and outreach to racially and linguistically diverse groups

- Engagement with people from different generations

- Focus on accessibility

Internal organizational work
- Communication strategies (clarity, transparency, accessibility)

- Shared DEI resources

- Documenting DEI efforts

- Inclusion of community perspectives in decision-making

- Consider equity in relation to how field work is prioritized

- Training (belonging, antiracism, environmental justice)

- DEI objectives considered in hiring and awarding grants

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What was asked?

Imagine your organization as an authentically antiracist organization. What is different from now?

Responses to this question indicate an opportunity to define antiracism from a NWSI perspective.

A reflective quote for this meeting comes from How to Be an Antiracist by Ibram X. Kendi:

The opposite of racist isn't 'not racist.' It's 'anti-racist.' What's the difference?

- One endorses either the idea of a racial hierarchy as a racist, or racial equality as an anti-racist.

- One either believes problems are rooted in groups of people, as a racist, or locates the roots of problems in power and policies, as an anti-racist.

- One either allows racial inequities to persevere, as a racist, or confronts racial inequities, as an anti-racist.

There is no in-between safe space of 'not racist.'

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What was asked?

Imagine your organization as an authentically antiracist organization. **What is different from now?**

- More involvement and support for marginalized and underrepresented communities

- Strengthened reciprocal partnerships with Tribal members and communities

- A feedback loop with community

- More effort to engage across difference (age, race, and income level)

- More uncomfortable conversations and challenging of the status quo

- More discussion on implicit/explicit bias

- Policy statements and training to set expectations

- Increased diversity at all levels

- Measurable goals that address institutional racism

- A clear vision for environmental justice

- Increased education at all levels

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13

What was asked?

What DEI resources or knowledge do you feel are most needed within your organization?

Value	Percent	Responses
Training programs	39.1%	25
Educational materials	43.8%	28
Tools for community engagement	78.1%	50
Forums for dialogue	43.8%	28
Other - Write In (Required)	17.2%	11

Write-in resources included:

- Clear policies, protocols, and commitments

- Expert advice on engagement with communities for decision-making

- Clear directives on action

- Research that supports DEI goals

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14

39

What was asked?

If the DEI resources you identified were available, what do you feel your organization could do better as a result?

- Become more educated and aware of the intersections between environmentalism and social justice

- Develop more inclusive projects

- Acknowledge systemic issues and address white supremacy

- Have greater diversity at events

- Increase public meeting accessibility

- Understand and integrate community interests in our work

- Engage in ongoing training

- Expand hiring, contracting, internships, volunteerism, and community engagement

- Locate appropriate communities to engage with

- Have more time for honest discussions

- Achieve wider engagement across age, race, education, and other identity markers

- Identify and address inequity (especially those we are unaware of)

- Improve/sustain action over time

- Achieve a broader demographic of donors

- Build tools for inclusion (language access, training, and guides)

- Restructure to centralize DEI efforts

15

What was asked?

What types of demographic data do you believe would be most valuable for understanding trends in DEI within Northwest Straits communities?

Value	Percent	Responses
Race and Ethnicity	84.4%	54
Education Level	57.8%	37
Income Level	56.3%	36
Age	60.9%	39
Profession	31.3%	20
Housing Status (homeowners and renters)	34.4%	22
Language Preference	56.3%	36
Geographic Location (by ZIP Code)	50.0%	32
Family Size	20.3%	13
Other - Write In	21.9%	14

The top 5 options selected were:
- Race
- Age
- Education level
- Income level, and
- Language preference

Write-in responses included:
- Gender identification
- LGBTQ+ affiliation
- Time in-state
- Disability
- Religion, and
- A suggestion that data be sourced from community-based organizations

16

What was asked?

Do you know of any individuals or organizations we should contact to gain a better understanding of DEI trends within Northwest Straits communities? **8 "Yes" responses.**

- Tribal Communities
- BIPOC Youth
- Local and state agencies
- Local Consultants
- Community colleges and community-based organizations

Revisiting Responses

Do you have any suggestions or ideas for improving or expanding DEI initiatives within the Northwest Straits Commission, Northwest Straits Foundation, or Marine Resources Committees? **41 Responses**

Increasing diversity efforts
- Demographics of volunteers
- DEI policy/protocols
- Engagement and outreach to racially and linguistically diverse groups
- Engagement with people from different generations
- Focus on accessibility

Internal organizational work
- Communication strategies (clarity, transparency, accessibility)
- Shared DEI resources
- Documenting DEI efforts
- Inclusion of community perspectives in decision-making
- Consider equity in relation to how field work is prioritized
- Training (belonging, antiracism, environmental justice)
- DEI objectives considered in hiring and awarding grants

NWSI Norms for Courageous Conversations

Introduction to Microaggressions

"Microaggressions are the everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership." – Derald Wing Sue, Ph.D.

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Introduction to Microaggressions: 2 Points

- Racial, gender, and sexual orientation microaggressions are active manifestations and/or a reflection of our worldviews of inclusion/exclusion, superiority/inferiority, normality/abnormality, and desirability/undesirability.

- Microaggressions reflect the active manifestation of oppressive worldviews that create, foster, and enforce marginalization.

Reflection Activity

- ✓ Think of a time when you experienced a microaggression in a work setting.

- ✓ In your breakout, share what happened if you are comfortable doing so. (high-level)

- ✓ If you could go back in time to give words of wisdom to the person who created harm, what would you tell them?

- ✓ When we come back, we will put our words of wisdom into the chat and share out.

NWSI Norms for Courageous Conversations are Taking Shape!

Norm 1: TBD	Norm 2: TBD	Norm 3: TBD	Norm 4: TBD	Norm 5: TBD
• "You are going to make mistakes and that is ok." • "Often people tend to filter themselves in public settings, and their biases can go unspoken but are still there." • "We also talked about generational differences in how things are perceived and reactions."	• "Understanding intent vs impact." • "Intent vs impact: the difference between hello vs why are you here."	• "When you see a microaggression happen to others and are able to gracefully stand up or help correct the situation for others. And how hard it can be to do it gracefully." • "If you see or hear something, do something. Follow through when you are in a situation you can speak up." • "Calling others in (i.e., question the uncomfortable questions 'what do you mean by that statement?')." • "Calling someone on an experienced microaggression can get them to stop and rethink their actions/words, and gives them an opportunity to learn." • "Embrace confrontation." • "The most important conversation is the one you aren't having."	• "Don't assume: that 'different' is bad/wrong/less valuable, or that 'sameness' is better/right/more valuable." • "Don't assume that the success or best approach to a project is shared by all partners with their different perspectives/experience" • "Take your time and learn to listen to others." • "Make sure interview questions are job-related." • "Don't internalize someone else's assumptions."	• "Understanding the importance of the intersection of environmentalism and social justice, and how they are inherently interconnected." • "Understanding that Tribal communities/nations do not all operate/work in the same way." • "Getting back to the basics! Start with making sure everyone is on the same page with definitions etc."

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Grouped Responses: 2-3 Actions to Move Forward

Training	DEI Planning	Engagement	Forums for Dialogue
• Training and self-reflection. • Training for staff/volunteers to make sure everyone has gotten some training. And continued training over time. • Training to get current MRC members on the same page AND a plan to train future members as they onboard. • How does income factor into all of this.	• Equity & inclusion at project development stages. • Creating a sustainable foundation before trying to reach goals that may not be tangible in the current moment. • We discussed the idea of the MRCs adding DEI reporting related to projects reporting to NWSI. • Communication strategies.	• Engage different generations. • Welcoming diverse groups (outreach-plus). • Collaboration with partner tribes during planning stages, NOT as a checkbox for access/permission when a plan is already made. • Recruit to MRC across broader spectrum than just: county districts, potential for successful term fulfillment, eco, science, business, tribe metrics.	• How to have hard conversations and Learn to be comfortable being uncomfortable, step away from taking things personally, and engage in communication and feedback without emotional decision making. • Talked about how to engage the MRC to review the report and talk about DEI at an MRC meeting.

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Thank You!

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