



Statement of our commitment to address issues of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) in our community

*During 2019, The Lower Nehalem Community Trust (LNCT) board of directors, staff and key associates set out to learn about inequities in our community and larger society. We investigated our roles as individuals, as an organization and as a community embedded in the systemic racism and inequality that burdens all our lives. The following document is a statement of our current understandings and of our commitment to address DEI in the work of our organization.*

## INEQUITIES

### Historical inequities

The Lower Nehalem Community Trust (LNCT) acknowledges that the area we now call the Nehalem Valley, particularly the Nehalem river coastal estuary, have long been home to the indigenous Nehalem/Tillamook people. The name we still use for this valley, the watershed and community we strive to protect, “Nehalem,” is a Chinook term meaning a place “where the people live.”

Indigenous Nehalem/Tillamook people lived in harmony with the natural environment that provided resources for their life and health. Their permanent and seasonal homes along the river were chosen to be near sources of food and materials for making the shelter and tools for domestic life. The Nehalem/Tillamook people utilized a wide variety of marine life, land animals and plants from the forests, ocean, meadows and marshes.

Beginning with 18th century European exploration of the North American west coast, indigenous life ways in this region have been threatened. Intensified settlement of mostly European Americans during the 19th century resulted in the nearly complete disruption and diaspora of native peoples. Social and economic disruption still affect tribal communities and individuals today. Agricultural practices, resource extraction and economic models established by settlers who displaced the indigenous Nehalem/Tillamook people and their way of life here have resulted in the current need for environmental restoration of lower Nehalem watershed lands by organizations such as LNCT.

### Current inequities

Lower Nehalem Community Trust recognizes that our region’s current economy, based largely on tourism and industrial-scale resource extraction, threatens the health and well-being of both local ecosystems and the people who live here. Threats to water quality and to fish and wildlife habitats affect quality of life for all. Residents who rely on low-wage and seasonal jobs bear a disproportionate burden of economic and resource pressures. Lack of affordable housing, and of steady, family-wage jobs creates systemic inequities. As in the United States as a whole, racial and cultural attitudes operate as tools for oppression and to maintain the status quo.



Our community includes people who make a living in diverse ways, such as farming, community and medical services, creative arts, fisheries and vacation services. Outdoor recreation is a common leisure interest across the economic spectrum. Involved in these enterprises are people who hold diverse perspectives, rooted in each individual's economic situation, cultural and personal background, and experiences. Among groups commonly identified in our area are: long-time resident families, many with pioneer roots; those engaged in resource-based occupations such as farming, fisheries and logging; Latino families working in all industries; retirees with professional backgrounds who more recently located here from other places.

As with many of the non-profit organizations in the area, participants in and supporters of LNCT activities are predominantly retired white professionals.

## ROLE

LNCT's purpose in preserving and restoring natural areas is intended to benefit the broadest spectrum of humanity, inclusive of all race, ethnic, economic or other groups, recognizing our commonalities as well as our differences.

Further, we believe *all* living things depend on each other and on connection to natural, complex, unaltered or restored environments to support health and life.

## WHY

In order to foster trust and credibility within the community we serve, LNCT aspires to enact its beliefs that support diversity, inclusion and equity. New ideas, solutions and opportunities are revealed when many voices are included in our governance and programs. When we welcome participation by all who are interested in our mission, we build trust, and create a more healthy, just and sustainable lower Nehalem region.

## COMMITMENTS

To assure organizational sustainability, creative problem solving and to promote equity in our community, LNCT strives to include people who hold diverse perspectives in our activities, policies and decision-making.

LNCT commits to partner with other organizations and individuals for the benefit of our DEI goals. We commit to demonstrating a willingness to listen, learn and collaborate.

We know that becoming a diverse, inclusive, equitable organization is a long-term, ongoing process. By committing to take our first steps, we move towards achieving diversity, inclusion and equity in our work. Through this effort, we expect to learn, improve, and grow as individuals and as an organization.