



**PORTLAND PARKS & RECREATION**

Healthy Parks, Healthy Portland



# Diversity Assessment and Program: A Conscious Commitment to Inclusion

September 2005

We dedicate this report to the employees and customers of Portland Parks & Recreation—that, through respect and communication, we can draw strength from our differences. We appreciate the many employees who participated in our focus groups and otherwise offered their thoughts. We promised confidentiality so we cannot give attribution personally, but the participants have influenced our thinking, and we have used their voices in this report as much as possible.

*PP&R Diversity Committee*

## **Diversity Assessment and Program**

September 2005

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Those of us who benefit, really benefit unfairly from skin privilege in the case of racism or body privilege in the case of sexism, we really have the most responsibility—maybe the least motivation, but certainly the most responsibility—for supporting the elimination of those practices.

*David G. Allen, University of Washington's  
Chair of the Women's Studies Department*

Most people have more of a comfort level with someone who looks like them. We see others as being different, even though we don't see ourselves as being different. That's where a lot of the misunderstanding comes from.

*Harvey Fullwiley, Portland Parks &  
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You don't get to choose everyone you work with.  
What you have is a choice about whether and how to  
work together effectively.

*Sue Keil, Bureau of Environmental  
Services*

We reduce prejudice best by fostering a climate in  
which it is socially unacceptable to express prejudiced  
feelings toward another group.

*Anonymous*

## Diversity Development in Portland Parks & Recreation

### City Council Direction

In October 2001, the City Council created the Diversity Development/Affirmative Action Office and charged the office with creating a Citywide Diversity Development Coordinating Committee (CDDCC). The Council resolution also directed each bureau to form a bureau-level diversity committee and implement an action plan to encourage diversity development. The CDDCC requested each bureau to designate a representative to the City Committee, and develop a diversity assessment and program specific to its own needs by the end of FY 2004/05.

In response to the City Council's and CDDCC's direction, the PP&R Diversity Committee was created in December 2003 and spent a year developing this assessment and action program. The Committee decided to primarily involve bureau employees rather than rely on an outside consultant; we believe the end results have more authenticity and legitimacy.

### What are we trying to do?

1. First, we want to create an inclusive work environment, where all employees and customers are respected and where we will remove historical barriers to full inclusion—such as race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, and disability. This will increase our ability to work productively together and better serve the public.
2. Secondly, we want Portland Parks & Recreation (PP&R) staff to have the skills to be culturally competent—to communicate effectively and to build trust across a wide range of backgrounds.



*Debbe Hamada (left), Director of East Portland Community Center, interacts with citizens daily.*

3. Finally, we strive for a more diverse workforce—one that reflects the community we serve—in order to reach a balance in the areas of hiring, promotion, training, and work assignments.

### Why is it worth doing?

1. First, to ensure that the organization is effective in its internal operations as well as in its service to the public.
2. Secondly, to help address the problem of unequal opportunities in the larger society.
3. Thirdly, to broaden our community base of support in terms of funding and interest in our programs, services, parks, and facilities.

### How are we doing so far?

- The bureau established an outreach program in the fall of 2003 whose purpose is to offer activities specific to various cultures in our community, to assist PP&R staff in being more inclusive, and to increase participation of diverse cultures in PP&R's programs and services. The outreach team's efforts include offering Latino art camps and teen basketball and tennis camps, creating multi-language brochures, and forming advisory committees with teen, Asian, and Latino community members.

Cultural events developed by the outreach program include celebrations of the Asian New Year, Día de los Muertos, Cinco de Mayo, and Black Heritage Month.

- While our work environment is generally supportive of employees from all backgrounds, there are still incidents of insensitive behavior or comments that evidence a biased attitude.
- When insensitive behavior or comments occur, there is not always an effective means of communication to resolve the problem. The existing channels can be overly legalistic or fail to produce satisfactory results.
- We would benefit from more education about the wide array of cultural backgrounds that our employees and our customers represent.

- A significant percentage of employees feels that instruction in other languages—at least at a rudimentary level—will help them be more effective in their jobs.
- The racial and gender composition of our current workforce contains proportionately fewer Native Americans, Hispanics, African-Americans, Asian-Americans, and women than is found in the Portland Metro community.
- The bureau’s most recent hiring of full-time positions has moved us *farther* from a proportionate representation.
- The bureau’s most recent promotions into higher-level positions have moved us *closer* to a proportionate representation at the upper levels of the organization.
- There is too little outreach to and personal networking between staff and under-represented groups in Portland. This results in a demographically unbalanced candidate pool for vacant positions.
- The bureau does not address the barrier posed by the intricacies of the Civil Service hiring process. This process can be intimidating to people not familiar with the system.
- In a series of focus groups during the summer of 2004, supervisors and employees pointed to the lack of resources, time, and funds to improve diversity within PP&R. However, supervisors and employees supported efforts to address differences and promote respect for diversity within the bureau.

## How can we improve?

We have six primary recommendations.

1. Incorporate diversity development efforts and training in the performance evaluation criteria for managers and supervisors.
2. Provide team-by-team training which includes the importance of encouraging diversity, how to communicate effectively, how to treat the public and fellow employees, and how to respect and accept differences. This training could be developed by the Diversity Committee, including volunteer trainers from across the bureau, and with direction from the Diversity Development/Affirmative Action Office. We would also seek assistance from the Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization, Oregon

Council for Hispanic Advancement, Asian Family Service Center, Urban League, and Native American Youth and Family Center.

3. Establish an ongoing, informal mediation service in the event of disputes between employees over issues of diversity or worker relations in general. Members of the Diversity Committee and other PP&R staff would be encouraged to participate in the mediation program.
4. Engage in outreach efforts, such as job fairs, internships, and teen summer employment opportunities, to increase the number of under-represented groups and women—for non-traditional positions—in our candidate pools. An ad hoc team of supervisors and managers should develop a plan to implement these efforts, including ways to build personal relationships between hiring supervisors and people or organizations that are well connected to under-represented communities.
5. Explore and develop methods of providing some level of language training for employees who regularly work with non-English speakers.
6. Utilize the biweekly employee newsletter, PayDirt, to offer cross-cultural education and recognize diversity efforts within the bureau.

Other recommendations are described within this report, but these are the most significant and timely.

### Who is making these recommendations, and how were they determined?

This document is the result of a year-long effort by the Diversity Committee, comprised of PP&R employees from across the bureau. The committee was made up of one or more people who are white, Native American, African-American, Hispanic, Asian-American, foreign-born, male, female, lesbian, conservative Christian, Jewish, old, young or physically disabled—and who serve as managers or front-line employees from the Recreation, Operations, Planning, and Administration Divisions. In

developing this report, we relied on input from focus groups, which included part-time and seasonal employees as well as full-time employees, workforce diversity data, and many hours of discussion among committee members about goals and basic principles.



*Park permits and class registrations are made through the downtown Customer Service Center.*

## Next Steps

1. Develop content and detailed training plan for the team-by-team training. Conduct test training and begin training sessions.
2. The bureau director authorizes Diversity Committee members to play a non-binding mediating role in employee relation disputes as needed. The members of the committee receive training in mediation techniques.
3. Design and implement a concrete, measurable outreach approach to be incorporated into the performance expectations of each supervisor.
4. Research the possibility of “mini-courses” for employees to learn foreign languages—beginning with Spanish, Russian, Ukrainian, Chinese, or Vietnamese—to assist with service delivery efforts.
5. Prepare diversity articles for the employee newsletter.
6. The Management Team and the Diversity Committee meet every 12 months to report on the progress of their respective diversity efforts within the bureau.

We recommend that a \$15,000 allocation toward diversity efforts be included in the bureau’s FY 2005-06 budget; this amount would cover all of the training, except the language training which will require a separate estimate after further research. An allocation of time by supervisors, Diversity Committee members, and other employees will be necessary to carry out the team-by-team training and the mediation skills training, and to incorporate outreach efforts in the hiring process.



*Portland's Park Rangers, 2004*

# Introduction



PP&R is committed to creating an inclusive work environment and a diverse and culturally competent workforce. The PP&R Diversity Committee, comprised of both staff and management, has developed the bureau’s Diversity Development Program in order to achieve these goals and to meet the Mayor’s directive of developing and maintaining a diverse workforce.

One of PP&R’s strengths is the diversity of experiences, perspectives, and backgrounds of its employees and customers. Our differences help create an interesting and vital organizational culture, giving us the opportunity to learn from each other and to improve our services to the public. However, most people do not automatically place trust in someone who is different from themselves; that kind of trust must be cultivated. In order to carry out our mission effectively, we must develop, maintain, and recognize the diversity of our workforce in a more structured and sustained way.

## What do we mean by *diversity*?

Diversity, in the sense that we use the term in this report, refers to human characteristics that become relevant when experience shows that they are not always equally respected or have been used to disfranchise groups of people. We make a distinction between these characteristics and traits, such as handedness and hair color, which have had little or no impact on status or economic advantage. In our society, there are certain personal characteristics—things that are difficult or impossible to change—that have become associated with greater or lesser status and acceptance. Where these “marker” characteristics are viewed as negative or different from the mainstream, there is a risk that a person with these characteristics will feel isolated or be treated unfairly.

These characteristics are quite varied, and some of them lead to significant inequalities.

- Race is significant as a “social” marker. Generally, people of white European ancestry have more economic and social advantages than other groups, whereas people of African, Hispanic, East Asian or Native American backgrounds tend to be at a disadvantage.
- Women have historically been disadvantaged in the workforce—particularly in certain fields—and in pay equity.

## Introduction

- Anyone whose native language is not English or who speaks with a foreign accent is at a disadvantage.
- Anyone not born and raised in the United States and familiar with its culture can face barriers.
- Religion can also be a point of difference. Historically, Jews and Catholics have been mistrusted by many. More recently, Muslims have been the objects of fear or distrust. In the urban areas of Oregon, conservative Christian faiths are often disregarded or openly ridiculed.
- People who are obese or who have physical disabilities can also be subjected to ridicule or inconsiderate treatment.
- People who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, transsexual or transgendered are often met with disapproval or derogatory remarks.
- In the workforce, particularly in hiring decisions, older or younger employees can face biased attitudes about their ability or fitness for a job.
- In most organizations, there is distinctly different treatment for field employees as opposed to supervisors or managers. There may also be disregard for the knowledge or talent of people who lack formal educational credentials.
- Within PP&R, there is a noticeable difference in status and respect between permanent, full-time employees and people who are hired for seasonal work.
- Within the community, there is a demarcation between middle class and lower class, with more favorable treatment of individuals from the middle class. While the markers of class are not fixed, they generally involve income, education, and the use of Standard English; sometimes they include home ownership and stable employment in a well-respected type of work. Social scientists call it socio-economic status, or SES, and it affects how people are treated in school, in retail establishments, and in their jobs.

Some of these characteristics can be indiscernible, like religion or sexual orientation; others such as gender or race are highly visible. Some disadvantages have a clear historical cause, such as the legal slavery of African-Americans and the genocide of Native American populations. Other challenges—such as those faced by non-English-speaking immigrants or physically disabled people—do not necessarily result from historical injustice, but can still lead to isolation and unequal opportunities.

# Diversity Development—Reasons and Goals



## Why pursue diversity development?

Why is it worthwhile for an organization to deliberately promote respect for diversity in its employees and customers?

1. First, to ensure organizational effectiveness. In order to relate well to the increasing diversity of the Portland community and to work together productively, each of us must be able to trust others unlike ourselves and learn from our differences.
2. Secondly, to help address the problem of unequal opportunities in the larger society. We can contribute to a fairer distribution of opportunities in our community if we are committed to diversity development.
3. Thirdly, to broaden our community base of support in terms of funding and interest in our programs, services, and assets.

## What are our diversity development goals?

Portland Parks & Recreation has three goals regarding diversity.

1. First, we want to create an *inclusive work environment*, where all employees and customers are respected and where we will remove historical barriers to full inclusion—such as race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, and disability. This will increase our ability to work productively together and better serve the public.
2. Secondly, we want all PP&R staff to have the skills to be *culturally competent*—in this we mean being able to communicate and interact effectively in order to build trust and respect across a wide range of backgrounds.
3. Finally, we want to improve *workforce diversity*—that is, we want to move toward having a workforce that reflects the community we serve, without compromising the fairness of our employee hiring, promotion, training, or work assignments.

### *Inclusive Work Environment*

Why must inclusion be an organizational value? Because it takes a conscious commitment to inclusion to offset the effects of inequality in our society. This goal includes creating standards to prevent behavior that may be offensive to members of one group or another, establishing clear channels for resolving problems when offensive behavior does occur, proactively encouraging those who are at risk of being isolated within the mainstream culture, creating opportunities for cross-cultural education, and reinforcing the message of respect and acceptance of differences among both customers and fellow employees.

### *Cultural Competency*

In spite of people's good intentions, if they can't communicate effectively across linguistic and cultural barriers, they won't be able to have a productive relationship. This goal involves the development of basic language skills and enough cultural understanding to be able to communicate effectively to customers and fellow employees. We realize that being able to speak and understand a different language is only a part of cultural competency, but it provides the basis for cultural awareness and understanding.

### *Workforce Diversity*

This goal has two aspects. First, we must ensure that our process of hiring, promoting, training, and assigning work to employees is fair to all, irrespective of race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age or similar characteristics. The second part of this goal is specific to gender and race, two visible distinguishing characteristics that have been the basis for much historical discrimination. We intend to move the bureau toward having a workforce whose percentage of under-represented groups and women approximates that of the Portland community.

To deepen the candidate pool will require outreach efforts such as the development of apprenticeship programs and strategies to identify and encourage talented people from under-represented groups and women working in non-traditional areas. To the extent that we can fairly increase the proportion of women and members of under-represented groups working for PP&R, we will not only strengthen our own ability

to serve the public effectively; we will also be doing our part to solve a community-wide problem—the persistence of unequal opportunities due to race and gender.

### Social Inequality

Unequal treatment originates, in part, from the human tendency to generalize about individuals based on stereotypical characterizations of entire groups. For most of us, looking only at someone’s race or gender—or even clothing—allows us to simplify our judgments; it is easier to adopt a preconceived set of assumptions about a person rather than consider unique characteristics or suspend judgment. This tendency to rely on broad categories to evaluate people, combined with another natural human tendency—to trust people who are more like us—leads to a society in which inequality is perpetuated.

However, because some behavior comes naturally, it doesn’t mean it is right. Cultivating respect for diversity may be difficult, but it is worth the effort. The current level of inequality—particularly when based on race and social class—constitutes a serious and persistent problem in our society.

It is important to recognize society’s inherent disadvantages for some people and do our best to offset those disadvantages. If individuals view things differently than a given group, we need to make an extra effort to reach out to them and learn from them. In some situations, such as hiring and promotion decisions where only one applicant can get the job, there is built-in competition. But in most areas of our work life, cultivating respect for diversity results in a win-win situation.

### Human Relations

Dealing with diversity issues is a matter of applying good human relations practices. The basic concepts embedded in all diversity efforts—fair treatment, respect, and communication—have applications far beyond issues of race or gender. The ability to speak respectfully, but clearly; to say “I’m sorry—I goofed” or “That’s okay—I understand” or “Thank you—I appreciate that”; to see another person’s point of view and question one’s own assumptions—these are the basic skills of good human relations.

## Differences of Opinion

Respecting diversity does not mean requiring that everyone have the same opinions. In a large and complex organization like PP&R, there may be differences of opinion, including between groups of people who each may feel marginalized for varying reasons. What does “tolerance” mean when people have contrary views which may be hurtful to others? What kind of behavior should the organization expect from its employees in these cases?

The clearest example of this—particularly following the November 2004 election in Oregon—is the difference in viewpoint between gays and lesbians and those whose religions teach that homosexuality is wrong. The practice of homosexuality is offensive to some religions, while at the same time, the teachings of some religions are offensive to gays and lesbians. In the focus groups conducted during the summer of 2004, some employees commenting on gay and lesbian issues agreed that there is discomfort in talking about these issues—implying that the change over the past couple of decades consists mainly of agreed-upon silence, not acceptance.



*Instructor at Matt Dishman  
Community Center teaches boxing  
fundamentals to teen girls.*

Perhaps this agreed-upon silence is simply a result of people with differing opinions being courteous and should not be interpreted as negative. With some issues—such as homosexuality and religion—there may be enough honest disagreement that the best approach in a diverse organization might be to make sure that discriminatory treatment or derogatory labels are not permitted against gays and lesbians nor against those whose religions are critical of gays and lesbians.

In regard to certain issues, employees may be encouraged to exercise self-restraint in discussions. Self-restraint does not necessarily mean censorship. It means simple courtesy; people of good will with differing views choose—for the sake of positive relationships in the workplace—to limit their comments on a sensitive topic to structured group discussions or educational

settings where they are confident that they won't give offense. Since a person's views about religion or sexual orientation are rarely a work-related topic of conversation, there is no loss to the organization when employees voluntarily restrict their comments on those subjects and remain mindful that discriminatory treatment and derogatory labels are unacceptable.

Courteous behavior is necessary in the workplace. Courtesy by itself doesn't resolve underlying tensions or disagreements, but it helps keep situations from escalating before substantive issues can be addressed productively. To the degree that we are aware of sensitive subjects and treat each other courteously, we are creating an inclusive work environment. Ultimately, our direction must be toward acceptance rather than mere tolerance.



*Swim Instructor - Matt Dishman Community Center*

## Section 2

# How Are We Doing?



The Diversity Committee evaluated the bureau's performance in the areas of inclusive work environment, cultural competency skills, and workforce diversity. Most of the data gathered is primarily from the focus groups that were convened in June and July 2004, but this evaluation is also informed by a review of the workforce data contained in Appendices 1 and 2. The quantitative summary is scored on a scale of 1.0-3.0, where 3.0 means "pretty good," 2.0 means "okay, but not great," and 1.0 means "needs a lot of work."

It should be noted that we received excellent cooperation from supervisors across the bureau in convening the focus groups. That cooperation is a positive indicator of their support for the bureau's diversity efforts.

*Inclusive work environment: How are we doing at creating a work environment where everyone feels respected as part of the team?*

The average score for this category was 2.0. This is higher than the average scores for the other two categories—cultural competency skills and workforce diversity.

The most favorable finding was that there were good opportunities for employees to learn about others who are different from themselves. Regarding the frequency of offensive treatment due to race or similar factors, the focus groups made it clear that even though offensive comments are not commonplace, they do occur. The committee felt that even an occasional, hurtful comment damages workplace relationship and is not acceptable. Our efforts at proactively encouraging those who are from non-mainstream backgrounds could likewise use much improvement. However, the weakest aspect of our performance with respect to inclusiveness is the lack of good channels of communication when a problem occurs. There is a need for someone who can serve as a mediator when employees do or say something that is perceived as disrespectful of the diversity represented by our employees and customers. There also is a need to build the skills of all of our employees to enable them to talk about these issues in a constructive way that does not diminish either party.

This goal—providing an inclusive work environment—is the broadest goal when it comes to the types of characteristics we are dealing with. The third goal—workforce diversity—is primarily concerned

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How Are We Doing? Portland Parks & Recreation Diversity Assessment Scores		Scoring Key: 3=pretty good; 2=okay but not great; 1=needs a lot of work.
These scores reflect voting by six Parks Diversity Committee members after reviewing the data and attending focus groups.		
Average Score	Area of Assessment	
2.0	<b>1. Inclusive work environment-How are we doing at creating a work environment where everyone feels respected as part of the team?</b>	
1.8	a) How prevalent is offensive treatment resulting from race, gender, or similar characteristics?	
1.7	b) How well do we proactively encourage those who are most at risk of isolation due to these characteristics?	
1.3	c) Do employees have an unthreatening opportunity for communications if they feel that there is a problem in this area?	
2.3	d) Do employees have good opportunities to learn about others who are different from themselves?	
1.3	<b>2. Cultural competency-To what degree do our employees have the skills needed to communicate effectively with customers or other employees of different backgrounds?</b>	
1.2	a) How are our employees' language skills, compared with job needs?	
1.7	b) How are our employees' informal communications skills (e.g., dialects, non-verbal language), compared with job needs?	
1.7	<b>3. Workforce diversity--Is our hiring, promotion, training, and work assignments fair? Are we moving toward a workforce that reflects our community?</b>	
1.5	a) Is the current workforce representative of our community in its racial and gender composition?	
2.2	b) Does recent hiring and promotion move us toward or farther from having a representative workforce?	
1.8	c) How are we doing in establishing relationships with potential job candidates who are non-traditional but well qualified?	
1.3	d) Is the employee recruitment and selection process fair to all candidates?	
2.0	e) Are training and work assignments given to employees based on their merits and potential?	
1.3	f) Overall, how are we doing in working effectively with diversity in our employees and customers?	

with race and gender, and the second goal—cultural competency skills—is largely concerned with non-English speaking citizens and, to a lesser extent, under-represented racial groups. However, the goal of inclusiveness means being respectful of all diverse characteristics, including sexual orientation, religion, age, weight, and physical disabilities. For example, jokes nowadays about obese people are far more common than jokes about racial groups. One participant in a focus group noted that people in the bureau sometimes make “cheap shot” remarks about Republican political views, assuming that everyone within earshot is a Democrat. Assuming uniform political views is another example of insensitive behavior that erodes work relationships. Similarly, in the focus group with temporary part-time

and seasonal workers, it became clear that the comment “you’re just a seasonal” is commonly heard, and that their opinion about how best to do their job is discounted because of their temporary status as employees. So it’s not just conflict over race or gender that gets in the way of an inclusive work environment.

In order to achieve the goal of creating an inclusive work environment, the emphasis needs to be on respect for everyone, whether we agree with them or not. As former PP&R Director Charles Jordan once said, “I don’t have to be best buddies with someone in order to be respectful and do business with them.”

*Cultural competency skills: To what degree do our employees have the skills needed to communicate effectively with customers or other employees of different backgrounds?*

The average score for this area was 1.3, the lowest of the three evaluation categories, because employees felt that their language skills were not sufficient. In the focus groups, about a third of the participants said that speaking a language other than English—at least at a rudimentary level—would help them do their jobs better. The primary language mentioned was Spanish, but there was interest in learning Russian, Vietnamese, Ukrainian, and Chinese as well. In evaluating our communication skills, the committee felt that informal skills such as understanding dialects and non-verbal signals could be improved, but more work was needed in developing basic capability in languages other than English.

*Workforce diversity: Is our hiring, promotion, training, and work assignment fair? Are we moving toward a workforce that reflects our community in race and gender?*

The average score for this category was 1.7, slightly above average. Our current workforce does not match Portland’s population in gender and racial composition. Women make up 36% of our full-time and permanent part-time workforce, but represent 51% of the population. Under-represented groups as a whole comprise 12% of our workforce, but make up 25% of Portland’s population.

Are we moving closer or farther from that goal? Examining PP&R’s hiring and promotion statistics over the past 18 months gave us a mixed result. In hiring new full-time or permanent part-time workers,

## Section 2 How Are We Doing?

we are moving farther from the goal. We do offer an apprentice program in maintenance through our Operations Division. The Eagle program gives at-risk high school students a chance to work at our golf courses and compete for college scholarships, however, this program may not continue to be funded. In the summer of 2004, we sponsored the Transition to Trades (T3) program for young, at-risk workers. While beneficial to the apprentices and youth involved, these programs don't necessarily lead to permanent employment with PP&R. In order to improve the percentage of under-represented groups and women in non-traditional jobs, we need to be more deliberate in our recruitment strategies when permanent positions in PP&R do become available.

We are moving closer to our goal in the area of promotion. When we do hire women and members of under-represented groups, there are opportunities for training and work assignments that qualify them to compete successfully for higher-level positions.

The long-term trend in PP&R shows that we have increased the percentage of women in the total workforce, in non-traditional jobs, and in supervisory and management positions. The more pressing challenge for us is to increase the percentage of under-represented groups; we've had no progress in that area over the past five years.

It is clear from the average scores that there is more confidence in the fairness of our training and work assignments than in the fairness of the initial recruitment and selection of employees. Some of that perception may be due to the competitive nature of the selection process. Part of it comes from the perception that the Civil Service process differentiates job candidates not only on actual job skills but also on insider knowledge of the system. In other words, the recruitment and selection procedures we use now are not good predictors of who would actually perform best in a given job.

### Recruitment and Selection

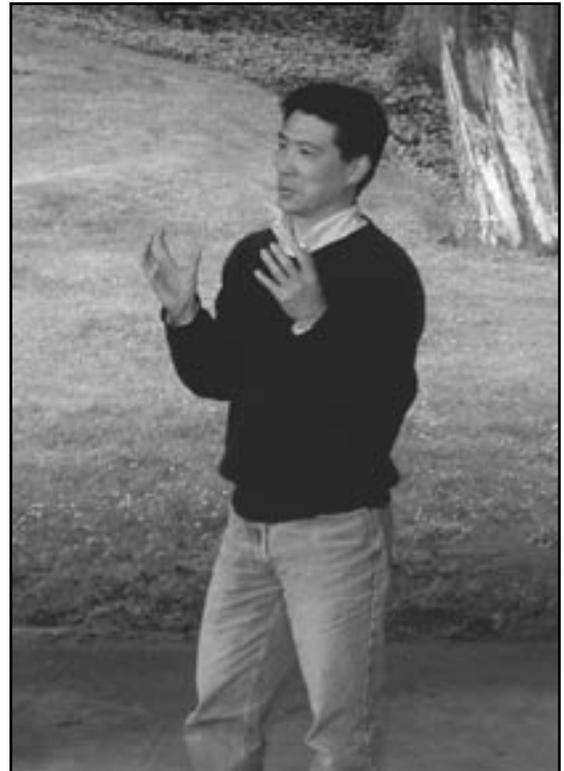
The proportion of under-represented groups and women hired cannot be controlled directly—a quota system would be unfair to other groups and undercut the credibility of the very people we are trying to hire. However, the bureau can take actions that will improve opportunities for under-represented groups and women without hurting the integrity of the process.

The hiring process has two stages, recruitment and selection. Recruitment can target under-represented populations without compromising the integrity of the overall process. Many recruitment efforts already rely on word of mouth; current employees mention job openings to their friends or acquaintances. Developing outreach methods or targeted apprenticeship programs is another way to create a candidate pool of under-represented groups, or women for non-traditional jobs, because targeted outreach merely levels the playing field. Our goal is not to find under-represented employees who are unqualified; we are looking for talent. We know there are qualified, talented people out there, but we have not yet developed the means to access them.

Selection, on the other hand, must be neutral to race and gender. When diversity-oriented practices are part of the selection process—such as having at least one member of an interview panel representing the viewpoint of under-represented or non-traditional applicants—it helps to ensure that the selection discussions are not biased against those applicants. The purpose is not to override the performance-related selection criteria, but to reinforce that they are applied.

We could also develop a mentoring relationship with some of the cultural student groups at Portland State University, Portland Community College, or Mount Hood Community College—colleges often have a good pool of talented people not yet firm in their career direction. By creating more opportunities for internships and partnering with student projects that involve our park system, we would not only gain valuable assistance on short-term projects, but also build bridges that could lead to possible employment with PP&R after graduation.

Our volunteer program offers a wide variety of opportunities that can enhance work skills and provide experience for under-represented groups. Occasionally, a volunteer position can lead to part-time or seasonal employment. Once employed, the biggest jump for an individual seems to be moving from part-time or seasonal employment to permanent, full-time employment. To help bridge that gap, perhaps we could provide more personal encouragement for current seasonal and part-time employees who are interested in applying for full-time positions.



*David Yamashita, PP&R  
Landscape Architect, addresses  
citizens on the development of a  
master plan for their local park.*

## Section 2 How Are We Doing?

Will these efforts make a difference? A useful analogy is how our efforts to improve safety in the workplace have been successful. Because safety measures are preventative in nature, we are not certain which particular safety training session might mitigate certain worker injuries. But we can judge the results—our worker compensation incidence rate in 2004 was less than half what it was in 1995. We can conclude that our safety efforts in general are having a good effect. That is what we hope to achieve in the area of workforce diversity. If we make it a priority and implement these methods, we should be able to see significant progress overall.



*Portland Parks & Recreation  
appreciates the efforts of its many  
citizen volunteers.*

# Summary of Focus Group Results



In order to assess employee perceptions about the bureau's performance with respect to diversity issues, the PP&R Diversity Committee convened seven focus groups in June and July 2004 comprised of employees across the bureau. This section describes those focus groups, which provided the "raw data" on which the committee based the majority of its evaluation of the bureau's diversity efforts.

## Background on Focus Groups

One focus group was a test group, deliberately selected to represent a cross-section of races, genders, and backgrounds. Three of the focus groups were randomly drawn from the entire pool of full-time employees. Another group was randomly selected from a pool of full-time employees who were members of under-represented groups or were women working in non-traditional jobs. Another group was a random sample of supervisors and managers. The final group was a sample of part-time and seasonal employees—not randomly drawn, but spread widely across the bureau's functions and work areas. Participants who had been randomly selected were moved from one focus group to another to ensure that people from the same work unit were not part of the same focus group.

Each focus group had 8-10 participants, in addition to the Diversity Committee members. The committee members primarily listened, took notes or moderated; occasionally they participated in the conversation. The setting was informal—all group meetings, except that of the test group, were held in a basement classroom at the Community Music Center.

In the group comprised of participants drawn randomly from the general population of full-time employees, 60% of the people who were initially invited actually attended; the remaining participants came from an alternate list (also randomly drawn). Reasons for declined invitations were not documented, but most were due to legitimate schedule conflicts, including scheduled vacations as well as work conflicts. In a few cases, the employee declined to attend without giving a reason. As a result, the focus groups may have had some self-selectivity bias in the participant pool, though we don't believe the impact of that bias was great.

## Section 3 Summary of Focus Group Results

The supervisors of the invited employees were supportive of these focus groups and made the necessary arrangements for their employees to be able to attend, including paying for the time of the part-time and seasonal workers who participated. Their cooperation was greatly appreciated. The strong support of the supervisors for these focus groups signaled the importance of this issue; it is an encouraging sign that the bureau will be able to make further improvements in its diversity efforts. Another indication of the supervisors' interest in diversity is the fact that eight of the ten supervisors initially invited were able and willing to attend—a response rate that was higher than that of the general population of full-time employees.

### Summary of Focus Group Comments

Following is a summary of the questions asked in the focus groups and their responses. All of the participants were promised confidentiality, so this summary will omit names and any identifying details. The discussions were lively and revealing, though the particular points of emphasis varied from group to group. We began each group discussion by describing what our goals are as a bureau in addressing the diversity of backgrounds in our employees and customers. General observations are shown as bulleted statements; indented paragraphs indicate examples that people gave to illustrate their general observations. Most of the observations and examples cited below are from focus group participants, not from Diversity Committee members.

### Goal 1: Inclusive Work Environment

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1. *Within your work at Portland Parks or with Parks and Recreation employees, have you observed what you felt was different treatment—either negative or positive—because of race, gender, or any of the other characteristics we described earlier? Can you think of some examples? Have you experienced negative treatment—treatment that made you feel unwelcome or uncomfortable—because of any of these characteristics?*
- 

#### Race

- Yes, not all the time, but it happens.

I was with a white co-worker working near a community center in North Portland, when the co-worker started talking about black people, saying, “These people are just so

messy!” I said, “Wait a minute—I’m black, too.” He said, “Oh, but you’re not like those people.” In this case, the person didn’t even want to be working there.

- Some staff people are afraid to deal with people of color. When people of color come to a community center, the staff wants to call security.

A group of ten young African-American girls came to one of our community centers, where they were scheduled to practice for debutante ball. They approached the staff desk, asking questions (talking all at once, the way kids do) about where they should go. The staff person looked alarmed and said, “Who are you? Who is the adult? I’m not talking to you.” Their leader approached, got clarification on which room they were to use, and gave feedback about the staff person’s response to the kids, saying that it was offensive. As part of her response to the leader, the staff person said, “You know how you people can be.”

- Park visitors often think that an African-American person working in the parks is not a “real” employee and cannot be trusted with a question or a complaint. “Where’s your supervisor?” or “You don’t work here.”
- Sometimes minority kids are not welcome on trails in natural areas. “Why are they in our park?” It’s more often unspoken than spoken, but people give off vibes when they are afraid.
- Sometimes the disparate treatment can consist of having lower standards for members of a minority group.

Sometimes there are problems with race. In our work unit, there’s a minority employee who thinks he doesn’t have to work as hard because he is a minority. He is not confronted because of fear of raising a potential discrimination issue, but not confronting him is a kind of discrimination, too. He uses it. It affects morale a lot.

- Sometimes people are well meaning but thoughtless.

Saying to a Native American man, “Hey, Chief, how are you doing today?” can be a friendly greeting or it can be offensive, by taking credit away from the real authority of what a Chief is. You don’t know how he feels about it if you don’t ask. If you don’t have enough of a relationship with the person to be able to ask, it’s better not to say it.

## Section 3 Summary of Focus Group Results

- How we treat others who are in a vulnerable or disadvantaged position sends signals about our attitudes about others as well.

I watch how my co-workers treat our seasonals, and that lets me know what he probably thinks about me as a person of color. I have a co-worker who treats our Mexican-American seasonal worker worse than he treats us full-time workers. That lets me know what his true colors are—I know not to trust him.

### Gender and Sexual Orientation

- Getting accommodation for women in non-traditional jobs has been a long, slow process. One example has been how hard it has been to get equipment adjusted so that it fits the physical size of women operators.
- There has been progress in sexual orientation issues; a few people who commented on it said that there isn't overt discrimination against people thought to be gay or lesbian, as there was one or two decades ago.

[From a woman working in a non-traditional job]: Personal experience with negative treatment? Not me personally. Over 20 years, there is also increased acceptance of different sexual orientation in the workplace. It's a generational shift. It has been a long time since I've seen them discriminated against face-to-face. But there are certain people to avoid in the workplace—for gays or for women working outside their usual roles. Derogatory comments? Not lately. Nobody is blatant any more but there is sometimes an attitude.

- Everyone who commented on gay and lesbian issues in the focus groups agreed that there is a lot of discomfort talking about it.
- Members of the public sometimes make inappropriate remarks to women employees.

One customer I was interacting with in my job—an older man—would make remarks such as “I'd take you in the back seat of my car anytime.” At first I tried to send hints in a joking way that I didn't appreciate those kinds of comments. After two years of it, I finally said, “I do not have to work with you, if you treat me this way.” The sexual harassment training was very clear—if you let them know, then they have to stop, even if it's a member of the public.

- Some female employees have made inappropriate remarks to male employees.

Over the last 15 years, sometimes female co-workers would call me “honey” or “sweetheart.” I spoke up one time, when it got past the point of tolerance. It doesn’t get better by postponing it.
- Some male employees resent having a female supervisor; there can be a lot of “bitching and moaning” among the male employees when the female supervisor is not present. Also, some employees are noticeably less respectful when dealing with women co-workers than with men.
- There have been a few uncomfortable experiences with transgender individuals—one applying for a position and another asking to use the restroom at a community center. In one case the staff was quite uncomfortable and didn’t know how to respond; in the other the staff made an accommodation—inviting the customer to use the employees’ bathroom—that was still not satisfactory to the customer. Some training in this area would be helpful so that our staff can be prepared.

### Other Differences

- An assumed uniformity of political views can also lead to offensive, “cheap shot” remarks. Not everyone who works for PP&R agrees with Democrats, but at times that seems to be the assumption.
- Training in dealing with people who are homeless or mentally ill, or both, would also be helpful.
- Whereas disrespect in relation to race or gender is generally unspoken or infrequent, disrespect toward job class—supervisors to line workers, full-time workers to seasonal workers—is both more common and more overt. “You’re just a seasonal” seems to be a common attitude. Yet seasonals and part-time employees are the ones with a large share of the bureau’s direct public contact.
- In the field, seasonal workers are treated worse in general—by co-workers and especially by the public. Seasonal workers who are black or Hispanic have two strikes against them, in terms of being respected.

### Section 3 Summary of Focus Group Results

- Part-time workers in the recreation field generally expressed more contentment with how they are treated than the seasonal maintenance workers. Their attachment to the bureau is more limited—they may come in and teach their class one or two hours a week and then go home. In general, they feel respected for the particular knowledge that they are able to share with their students.
- Our focus groups contained Hispanic employees, but not Hispanic maintenance workers in the field. However, based on the experiences described in the focus groups by seasonal workers or African-American or Native Americans in Park Operations, we believe that Hispanic workers in the same kinds of jobs face similar challenges, sometimes in addition to a language barrier.
- The Park Operations work culture accounted for the majority of the anecdotes we heard. The Recreation Division seemed to have less friction relating to gender or race, with one significant exception—relationships between Recreation employees and African-Americans, both their customers and their fellow employees.
- Many of the focus group participants who are in a position where they could experience disrespect—for instance, under-represented employees or women supervisors—said that they had not personally experienced negative treatment or that they had not experienced it to a degree that they felt they couldn't handle by themselves. The above comments should not be interpreted as meaning that negative experiences happen all the time or with anyone who is different from the mainstream. None of the focus group participants said that the organizational culture in PP&R is any worse than the surrounding culture in the community at large, and several said that it was better. However, negative experiences happen often enough that many of the under-represented employees—particularly African-American or Native American participants—could easily recall examples of negative treatment from co-workers as well as customers. The many types of experiences they recounted convinced us that PP&R falls short of being a truly inclusive organization.

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2. *If you were concerned about this type of treatment that you either experienced or observed, would you feel comfortable discussing it with your supervisor? Is there someone else in the bureau with whom you would feel comfortable talking about this type of treatment?*

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- Many—though not all—employees said yes, they feel comfortable talking with their supervisor. In many cases, they have a long working relationship with their supervisor, and talking to him or her is no problem.

One time, someone made an anti-Semitic remark in a staff meeting. Our supervisor talked to him right away.

- Sometimes the communication channel is open, but it doesn't help the situation.

I feel comfortable talking with my supervisor, but he doesn't follow up. Up the ladder, back down the ladder. "This is the best I can do."

- The majority of the time, the different treatment is subtle—an unconscious expression of attitude through something that is said or a certain type of look. The employees in the focus groups who had experienced this type of offense said that most of the time, they decide to ignore the slight, choosing to chalk it up to ignorance or thoughtlessness, not bad intent. They said that you can't speak up about every little thing, or you won't be able to get along with your work group. But these experiences are still noticeable.

Yes, I have observed different treatment. Color should be immaterial, but in a work situation, you can't avoid it. It's the way people talk to you—it's subtle. You get treated like a stepchild by people in authority. But sometimes it's better to ignore it and consider the source. I believe that the best in people will come out eventually, if you treat them right.

- Sometimes the decision to not speak up has to do with the lengthy, overly legalistic process for addressing workforce diversity complaints.

Most of the time I just have to take it with a grain of salt and move on. If I complain, there will just be a lot of paperwork shuffling with nothing changing, and it changes your relationship with the other employees.

### Section 3 Summary of Focus Group Results

- Several participants felt that supervisors could use more training in dealing with these issues. Another area where training might help supervisors is with drug and alcohol problems.
- One participant mentioned an example where approaching the supervisor is hard because there is a sensitive medical condition involved.
- In the focus group with supervisors, it was noted that supervisors routinely face a lot of general “whining,” and it can be hard to differentiate that from the legitimate issues, particularly when union agreements complicate communication with employees. Also, confidentiality requirements can make it impossible to meet even an obvious communication need—for example, “closing the loop” by informing a complainant what has resulted from his or her complaint about somebody else’s behavior. It can be frustrating for supervisors, too.
- The seasonal workers participating in the focus group all agreed that they could not say *anything* critical about a full-time employee to their supervisor, not if they had any hope of getting a full-time job or even if they wanted to return the following summer.
- Most participants agreed that if the relationship with the supervisor is not good or if the supervisor is part of the problem, it is hard to find someone else in the bureau to talk to who can help solve the problem. For example, employees in Districts have to get approval from their supervisors in order to leave their district; that makes it difficult to go downtown to talk to a Human Resources person if they’re having a problem involving their supervisor.

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3. *Have you ever had the experience yourself of treating someone else differently because of race, religion, gender, or some of these other personal characteristics? Can you think of some examples? Do you think that you were being hurtful?*

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- Many participants acknowledged treating people differently in some situations. However, most of the examples they gave appeared to be an appropriate accommodation to differences in the interests or abilities of customers or co-workers, and they didn’t seem hurtful—in some cases, they were quite helpful.

### Section 3 Summary of Focus Group Results

Yes. With non-native speakers, I try to slow down my speaking. I have a tendency to talk too fast, and with people who don't understand English too well, it can be confusing.

Homeless people sometimes come into the front desk where I work. Lots of times they just want someone to talk to. They have strong smells. I try to be nice, but sometimes I have to hurry them along if someone else is waiting to be served also.

For a long time, the custodian at our site didn't talk to us—never said anything. Even if we tried to start a friendly conversation, he gave only a minimal reply—he just did his job quietly and left. Then one day my boss started asking him about boxing, and the custodian got really interested and had all kinds of things to say—he really knew a lot about boxing. After he left the room, I said to my boss, “I didn't know that you liked boxing—why haven't you mentioned this before?” He replied, “I don't, really. I was trying to come up with something that he would talk about.”

You can notice differences in people and try to adapt, but it should not make a difference in how respectful you are to them.

[From a seasonal worker]: No, I don't treat anybody differently. When I come to work, I come to *work*. [In response to a question from another seasonal worker about what he would do if he were to come across a drunk person sleeping in a shrub bed]: Well, there are times when I feel like I just want to yell at them. It would be good if we got a little more direction on what the proper procedures are in dealing that type of situation.

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4. *Have you ever felt afraid to ask questions or say something about race, ethnicity, or similar characteristics because of fear of offending someone?*
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- Most respondents nodded their heads or stated that this had occurred to them.

Yes. I often am afraid of saying the wrong thing, so then I don't say anything at all.



*Staff dresses for the 2004 Halloween Carnival in NE Portland.*

### Section 3 Summary of Focus Group Results

[One participant]: The word “colored” is not good. “African-American” or “black”—that’s okay. [Another participant, responding]: Why is “people of color” okay when “colored” is not? [A third participant, who is Hispanic]: Where I come from, we never consider ourselves to be “people of color.” When I came here and participated in a workshop, the moderator asked all the people of color to stand over here, and I didn’t understand that she meant me, too. It can be confusing.

Yes, I’ve had that experience. Everybody is different, and some people can take normal things the wrong way.

A while ago I had an experience that was disappointing for me. I was talking to a friend at work who I know is gay. It was casual conversation, along the lines of “How was your weekend?” I knew that he had been on a date that weekend, and I thought to ask, “How did your date go?” just the way I would have asked a heterosexual friend the same question, just to be friendly. But I felt awkward about asking that question of someone who was gay, so I didn’t ask it. I now wish I had—it was a missed opportunity to be nice to a friend, but at the time it felt kind of strange, and I didn’t do it.

- In the focus group with supervisors only, the answer to this question was especially definite. The fact that people can take things the wrong way and any comment can be the subject of a labor grievance, an HR complaint, or worse makes it hard for supervisors to converse about sensitive issues, even those issues that really should be brought up. The result of not being able to talk about certain things is that too often they have to make assumptions, but assumptions can also be a dangerous thing. Even when communication is hampered by uncertainty about sensitive topics, supervisors still have to make decisions every day. Too often what looks like “sensitivity” is really just silence and guesswork. In some situations, that can result in poorly informed decisions.

## Goal 2: Cultural Competency Skills

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5. *Now let's talk about communication skills. In your experience, what are some examples of potential miscommunications related to different cultures or different languages? What ideas do you have for helping the bureau improve its employees' ability to communicate across different cultures or languages?*

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- Language barriers with those who don't speak English is an obvious source of miscommunication, and several participants—particularly in Recreation—offered examples.

In my part of Recreation, it's often hard to understand Spanish speakers and hard for them to understand me, especially the seniors. They live in big family groups, so asking them how much money they have—for the purpose of determining eligibility for scholarships—is complicated anyway, and the language makes it that much harder. Russians will usually bring a child in their family to translate. Scholarships? Well, if they can't all go as a group, they won't go, so the scholarship policy doesn't fit. Our whole procedure for registration and scholarships—which is based on individuals—doesn't fit some people, who rely on the comfort zone of their surrounding group to want to participate.

- Communicating effectively with homeless people in the parks is also a challenge. Trust and respect are important ingredients in communication, and homeless people don't get much of either. It's hard to know when someone wants help versus wanting to be left alone.
- At one of our golf courses, they have had success with translating instructions for workers into Spanish—how to operate the big machines, golf course etiquette, and safety procedures. It helps all of the employees better understand their equipment, know their job, and stay safe.
- Sometimes there are misunderstandings between supervisors and their crews—what someone intends when they say something may be different from what the listener thinks he hears. This isn't a matter of a second language; instead, it results from different assumptions, and it depends on the particular background of the supervisor and the workers.

### Section 3 Summary of Focus Group Results

It is not only the understanding languages that needs work. It is also understanding the cultural differences; we need to build relationships in order to understand them.

- It's important to take the time to make sure that people understand, particularly when giving directions. Misunderstanding directions can be a real safety risk in some situations.

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6. *Are any of you in the kinds of positions where knowing a foreign language would help you do your job better? For those who are, if you had the chance to receive some kind of help from the bureau in learning a foreign language, would you be interested in putting in the time to study and practice?*

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- We did not take an exact count in all the focus groups, but in four of them we did. For those focus groups where we kept count, 13 out of 38 employees, or about a third of the participants, felt that a second language would be helpful in their work and also expressed a willingness to put in the time to learn another language if the bureau could help with the cost of instruction.
- The most frequently mentioned language people thought would be useful is Spanish. Depending on which part of town they work in, though, participants also expressed interest in knowing Russian, Ukrainian, Chinese, and Vietnamese. In addition, at high-volume tourist destinations such as Pittock Mansion, French and Japanese would be valuable.
- For some languages, it may not be practical for an employee to learn them well, but at least some instruction teaching basic concepts and vocabulary would be appreciated. It's not necessary to learn every language really well, because new immigrants usually speak some amount of English. But our limited-English customers are very grateful for whatever efforts we make to connect with them in their language. It not only improves the odds of successfully communicating whatever information needs to be conveyed; it also sends another, powerful message to them—that they are important to us.
- Someone mentioned that the Police Bureau has offered “mini-courses” in Spanish; perhaps such a course could be adapted for parks and recreation personnel as well, emphasizing the typical interactions we might have with our customers.

## Goal 3: Workforce Diversity—Hiring, Promotion, Work Assignments, and Training

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7. *Another goal of the Diversity Committee is to look at the process by which we hire, promote, assign work, and offer training to employees. Do you feel that you have a fair shot at getting good assignments, training opportunities, or promotions with Portland Parks & Recreation? Have you observed what you felt was favoritism toward or against particular groups of people in hiring or promotion decisions?*

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- The strong perception among line employees is that there is favoritism in selecting people for jobs, that many promotions or open positions go to people who are already known to be well liked by whomever is doing the hiring.
- Several participants also mentioned what one of them called a “favorite son” approach, in which the same people tend to get what few opportunities there may be for training or other professional development.

Here’s what we do. We hire people of color, and then we marginalize them. We assign them to deal only with other minorities, but we don’t include them in our mainstream decision-making. We value them in one way—their ability to understand the communities they come from—but we don’t pay attention to their other skills. And that limits them.

- Not only is favoritism perceived among those who are already employees, but there is built-in bias in favor of those who are friends and acquaintances when it comes to filling positions from the outside.

How are positions filled? The e-mails are sent out, asking supervisors to pass on to their employees current openings and asking them “Do you know someone?” qualified to fill a certain position. In reality, a lot of the recruitment process rests on the question “Do you know someone?”

For African-Americans, not much has changed over the years. We’re still a handful out of 300 full-time employees. It’s hard for us to get through the door. No training, mentoring, internships if they’re just starting out in this line of work. For Caucasians, it’s easier to start out—for instance, you can come on board for the summer if you

### Section 3 Summary of Focus Group Results

know this person or that person. When African-Americans apply for full-time jobs, it seems that “experience” is needed, but the type of “experience” needed is unobtainable.

- In order to increase our hiring of under-represented groups, the most effective thing we can do is outreach—to build relationships with more of the people who we feel are under-represented. Only when they know someone who works for the bureau—or know someone who knows someone, even indirectly—are they more likely to learn about the job openings, go to the effort and risk of applying, get to know the “ins and outs” of the Civil Service process, and have a proportionate chance of becoming an employee.
- Participants—both supervisors and line employees—feel that the civil service hiring process puts up barriers to recruiting, especially for some groups that are already under-represented and therefore do not have acquaintances working for the City.
- Sometimes the official job skills listed in the civil service information don’t reflect well what skills are really needed for that job.

Look at who is on the interview panel. It is very subjective. I have seen people who have great qualifications on paper, but who don’t know how to deal with a diverse community.

Is a person who gets this job really going to have to carry a 100-pound pack up a tree?

One person who did get the position had no people skills. He was good at data and reports, but not people.

- Some participants mentioned that hiring from the outside when there appears to be a qualified person already in the organization is demoralizing. Also, because some jobs are naturally harder for employees to keep doing as they get older, it would be good to have a landing zone to keep good employees.
- Part of the problem, noted by several employees, is the limited opportunities in general. There simply aren’t a lot of promotions available, and not enough training dollars to go around. It’s harder to feel like you have a fair shot when there simply aren’t very many opportunities to shoot.
- Seasonals in particular don’t get many training opportunities that would qualify them for full-time positions.

### Section 3 Summary of Focus Group Results

- Some participants spoke highly of their own supervisors in this area, saying that they give everyone equal opportunity and work well with accommodating employees' individual needs and interests. One employee noted that he feels that the City of Portland makes a lot more effort than the private sector does, as far as opportunities for employment.
- While the environmental factors are discouraging to minorities, several participants perceive the actual selection process as favoring minorities and women applying for non-traditional or supervisory positions.

[Female seasonal worker, giving her concluding remarks]: I just think there should be more fairness in hiring. Sometimes you go for a job and you already know who's going to get it, because they know somebody. [After she was asked, "Is it harder for women?"]: No, right now I have an advantage—it's the white males who are discriminated against. [Two or three male seasonal workers nodded their head in agreement.] But it would be better if it was more fair to everyone.



*Carolyn Lee, Public Affairs,  
and Michelle Harper, Outreach  
Program Coordinator.*

I was just hired after a frustrating job search, and I appreciate that the City of Portland was open-minded and willing to consider me for the position. I had put in over 21 applications, and I had good qualifications. With the Port of Portland, Multnomah County, and many other places, I felt that the overriding thing is that I am approaching 50 years old and I am a white male. That fact was like a wall that I ran into over and over again. It gave me a lot of sympathy for what African-Americans and other minorities have been going through for all these years.

- There are no simple answers in this question of fair hiring, because what helps one person hurts someone else. When it comes to getting a job, not everyone can win at the same time. The bureau's effort, then, needs to focus on combining

### Section 3 Summary of Focus Group Results

two things: (1) a proactive outreach to under-represented groups, and (2) a carefully neutral selection process. Honest, respectful communication with job-seekers is also important for the credibility of the process. Supervisory attention to the development and potential of existing employees is important, with an eye for not only what an employee *can* do at present, but also what he or she *could* do if given a chance. Supervisors should consider carefully who they choose for training and special assignments, sometimes looking beyond the obvious choices in favor of the “diamonds in the rough.”

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8. *For our final question, do you have any other observations or comments that might help us as we evaluate the bureau's performance in this area?*

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- Several employees in more than one group stated that there is a major need for training in this subject matter, both for supervisors and for all employees.
- In training, bring in concrete resources and examples.
- Make sure that interview panels include someone who can represent the perspective of non-dominant races and genders.
- Make sure job specifications really are tied to what the person would need to do. Be alert for unnecessary requirements or overloaded descriptions.
- Help create pathways (including lateral moves) for aging workers. Also, free access to PP&R fitness facilities can help aging workers stay healthy.
- Work to create volunteer opportunities for under-represented groups. Volunteering can prepare for part-time or seasonal employment, part-time employment can prepare for full-time employment, full-time employment can prepare someone for supervision. We need to “grow our own” racially diverse workforce by paying attention to entry-level opportunities, including volunteer opportunities.
- [Separate comment from a minority participant]: Emphasize apprenticeship programs—on-the-job training is the way to go.

### Section 3 Summary of Focus Group Results

- Don't forget to let people be individuals. Racial and gender categories are powerful influences, but most of who we are comes from experiences and choices that are specific to individual people.
- The most blatant discrimination that used to be noticeable in upper levels of management is no longer there.
- Lack of action to known problems is very frustrating. Supervisors seem reluctant to deal with these issues.
- Improving in this area takes a lot of communication back and forth. Most people's hearts are in the right place, but they see things quite differently.
- The hiring process should be reworked to incorporate more community outreach.
- Learning is painful, but it is valuable.
- PP&R is a nicer place to work than other places.
- The human spirit needs respect.
- In implementing a diversity strategy, we need to plan and review. Being cautious is necessary, so that things don't backfire. We don't want to set up people for failure.
- We need more education to promote the understanding of cultural differences.
- We should make sure we have programs for all people, including people with physical limitations and people with health conditions.
- Language classes should be readily available.
- A good diversity program will help us over the long run.

*No Ivy Day Volunteer in  
Forest Park*



*Young teen volunteer works with  
future Picassos in the summer day  
camp program.*

# Section 4

## Recommendations



Following are recommendations developed by the PP&R Diversity Committee. Because time and resources are always scarce, we have separated our recommendations into two groups: Top Six Recommendations and Other Recommendations.

### Top Six Recommendations

1. **Manager and supervisor requirements**—Diversity development efforts need to be incorporated in the performance evaluation criteria for managers and supervisors. These efforts should be defined and measurable.

*Next steps:* Develop performance evaluation criteria.

*Responsible party:* Diversity Development/Affirmative Action Office

2. **Team-by-team training**—Training is a key need identified repeatedly in the focus groups. Employees and supervisors alike need to know what is expected of them, and some of the insights that we feel employees should have are best conveyed through group discussion.

Our recommendation is to organize a series of training sessions across the bureau with an emphasis on discussion within each work team. By recruiting interested volunteers from the initial training sessions, we would develop a group of employees capable of conducting the training for other work units.

The specific format and content of the training need to be developed by the Committee. Section 1 of this report—which describes the reasons and goals for PP&R’s diversity development—is a starting point. Also, a question & answer component should be included.

*Next steps:* Develop the training curriculum.

*Responsible party:* PP&R Diversity Committee, with assistance from the Diversity Development/Affirmative Action Office



*Dunetchka Otero-Serrano (left), Latino Outreach Coordinator, celebrates Cinco de Mayo with the community at University Park Community Center.*

## Section 4 Recommendations

- 3. Ongoing role for Diversity Committee**—In addition to the Diversity Committee’s role in developing and implementing this program, we recommend that members of the Committee be asked to play a non-binding, mediating role in disputes within a work team over issues of diversity or employee relations in general. With some training in dispute resolution techniques, Committee members could serve as a resource to supervisors or, if a supervisor is directly involved in the dispute, to higher-level managers. Their role would be to see that the perspectives of all parties in a dispute are taken into account. They would become involved upon invitation and their mediation role would be informal. It could open avenues of communication that now are being stifled by the formality and legalism of existing channels.

*Next steps:* Authorization from the Bureau Director to allow Diversity Committee members to serve in an informal, mediating capacity.

*Responsible party:* Bureau Director

- 4. Outreach efforts in preparation for future hiring**—We recommend that the Bureau improve outreach efforts to increase the number of under-represented groups and women working in non-traditional areas in our candidate pools. The specifics of this effort should be developed by a team of managers and supervisors. One approach should be that each hiring manager or supervisor becomes personally acquainted with several people who are connected to Portland’s under-represented communities and who can recommend candidates. Another approach is for representatives of these groups to be invited to staff meetings or for PP&R managers to visit their offices. This effort can also include participating in job fairs and other methods of outreach. If we are creative and determined to develop our networks, we will have contacts in the community who can help us get the word out when we have positions to fill.

*Next steps:* Develop a concrete, measurable, performance expectation for supervisors to increase outreach efforts to under-represented populations. For instance, each supervisor could be expected to make at least one relevant outreach contact each quarter. Potential outreach efforts could include the supervisor’s participation in minority job fairs, contacting college students, and meeting with representatives of chambers of commerce and other non-profits that serve under-represented communities.

*Responsible party:* Ad hoc committee of supervisors headed by the Workforce and Customer Support Manager

- 5. Language training**—We recommend that the bureau explore ways to provide at least some rudimentary training in other languages—such as Spanish, Russian, Vietnamese, Ukrainian, and Chinese—for employees who regularly work with non-English speakers. This effort could start small; for example, focusing on minimum-level Spanish courses. We should also explore what support we could give to self-motivated employees who want to achieve a higher level of competency in one of the target languages that is relevant to their jobs. We don't know what may be required to learn another language, but it clearly would take a serious commitment on the part of both the employee and the Bureau. Being able to speak another language is a vital skill; if we can't communicate verbally, it is difficult to provide adequate customer service or convey safety information. Our experience has been that non-English speakers are grateful for even clumsy attempts to speak their language, because the effort to reach them through their language signals that they are important to us.

*Next steps:* Research the possibility of mini-courses for employees in selected foreign languages, beginning with Spanish, Russian, Ukrainian, Chinese, or Vietnamese.

*Responsible party:* Staff person to be designated by Workforce and Customer Support Manager

- 6. Employee newsletter articles**—We recommend that periodic, educational articles be included in the employee newsletter to acquaint us with the history or background of some of the cultures found in Portland. Not only can this be interesting and informative for those outside a given culture, but it also validates the culture being featured. Another way to use the newsletter as an awareness tool is to publicize the efforts of individuals and work groups, and include profiles of individual employees to learn more about each other's backgrounds.

*Next steps:* Begin to prepare articles.

*Responsible party:* Diversity Committee

## Other Recommendations

- Develop a list of educational resources (videos, articles, posters, etc.) that deal with diversity issues and distribute it to employees.
- Ensure that job interview panels include someone who is able to advocate for under-represented candidates and who can monitor decision-making that appears to be biased against applicants from these groups.
- Develop a formal policy to clarify the expectations of supervisors in fostering an inclusive work environment. For example, a supervisor is required to take action when insensitive behavior is reported.
- Review class specifications to eliminate any requirements that are unnecessary or may reduce the hiring odds for women or under-represented groups.
- For each appointment, require the hiring manager or supervisor to report on the steps he or she took to make contacts with under-represented groups to find applicants for that particular recruitment.
- Continue and, to the degree possible, increase our use of apprenticeship positions and temporary training programs, including developing a mentor relationship with one or more minority student associations at Portland State University or other local colleges.
- Develop a one-hour session, aimed at specific entry-level jobs, to help prepare potential job candidates for the Civil Service exam process. The class should be open to all, but particular effort should be made to publicize it through organizations and publications of under-represented groups. This class would be distinguished from the class currently offered by the City in that it would be tailored to particular job openings with an emphasis on recruiting under-represented candidates to attend. In concept, this class would be similar to a pre-proposal meeting with consultants prior to their submissions in response to an RFP, or to a pre-application meeting that developers have with planning officials before they submit a land use request, or even like the pre-trip meetings that our Outdoor Recreation staff convene prior to a mountain climb or similar outdoor class. These sessions should include materials in Spanish or other languages—or translation should be provided.

- Study other bureaus and local governments to find examples of successful recruitment of under-represented groups and women and learn how they prepare their employees to serve a diverse public.

*Next steps:* The Diversity Committee and Management Team should meet at 12-month intervals to report on the progress of each other's diversity efforts within the bureau. The primary assignment for the Diversity Committee members over the next 12 months should be the development of team-by-team training; the primary focus for the Management Team should be on outreach efforts by supervisors and managers.

*Responsible party:* Diversity Committee and Management Team

## Funding

We recommend that a \$15,000 allocation toward diversity efforts should be included in the bureau's FY 2005-06 budget. We expect that amount would cover all of the training except the language training which will require a separate estimate after further research. In carrying out the team-by-team training, the mediation skills training, and especially the outreach efforts by supervisors and managers, the biggest financial commitment the Bureau can make is time—the time of its supervisors, Diversity Committee members, and other employees.

*Responsible party:* PP&R budget staff and Bureau Director

Section 4 Recommendations

**ACTION STEPS**  
**FISCAL YEARS 2005-2006**  
**DIVERSITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM BASELINE REPORT**  
**Portland Parks & Recreation**  
**September 2005**

Carolyn Lee, Diversity Development Coordinator

503-823-5076

Area of Focus	Planned Actions	Person(s) Responsible	Intended Purpose
Organizational Development	Publish <i>Diversity Assessment and Program</i> document	Carolyn Lee	To provide print copies for staff to review/share
	Put document on ParkNet	Glenn Raschke	To provide electronic copy for staff to review/share
	Diversity Development Committee meets monthly	Carolyn Lee	To keep initiatives moving forward
	Create Diversity Development Coordinator position (.5 FTE)	Workforce and Customer Support Manager	To focus on diversity development program
Employee Development	Set up diversity program awareness celebration with educational component	Diversity Committee	To promote the program goals of inclusive work environment, cultural competence, and workforce diversity
	Research and write one article per month in employee newsletter	Carolyn Lee, Diversity Committee, and staff	To increase awareness and understanding of diversity issues in the community
	Team-by-team training and mediation training	Workforce and Customer Support team with assistance from Diversity Development/ Affirmative Action Office	To increase staff cultural competency and inclusive work environment
	Offer introductory Spanish language lessons	Dunetchka Otero-Serrano	To prepare employees for future Spanish language classes

**Section 4** Recommendations

<b>Benchmark Activities</b>	<b>Projected Start/End Dates(s)</b>	<b>Required Resources</b>	<b>Outcome Measures</b>
150 copies printed and distributed  Summary printed	September 2005	\$1,000 diversity budget	Copies delivered and distributed
Document available on ParkNet	October 2005	Minimal	
Monitor progress on action steps and problem solve	Monthly through 2006	Minimal	Goals reached and evaluated
Person is dedicated to fulfilling diversity goals	July 2005	\$30,000 general fund budget	Staff person is hired
10% of staff attend	November 2005	\$300 diversity budget	Minimum 50 employees attend
Articles available on ParkNet	September 2005 through June 2006	Internet access for research and employee contributions	Ten articles published
Designated group of core staff develop and implement training(s) to help foster cultural competency and an inclusive work environment	Begin in June 2006	Commitment from managers/supervisors	Six to ten staff chosen and receive training to train staff in cultural competency and mediation.
Employees learn basic Spanish words and phrases for customer relations	October 2005 through June 2006	Minimal	50 staff (20 permanent employees) know key phrases in Spanish

**Section 4** Recommendations

**ACTION STEPS  
FISCAL YEARS 2005-2006  
DIVERSITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM BASELINE REPORT  
Portland Parks & Recreation  
September 2005**

<b>Area of Focus</b>	<b>Planned Actions</b>	<b>Person(s) Responsible</b>	<b>Intended Purpose</b>
Workforce Diversity and Community Relations	Identify key groups to partner with for diversity outreach in employment	Workforce and Community Support Manager, other bureau managers/supervisors	To increase diversity in our workforce
Management Practices	Managers/supervisors receive 4-hour training about PP&R's diversity program and action steps	Diversity Committee	To ensure that managers/supervisors are aware of the program and their role in achieving program goals
	Add diversity development goal on all manager/supervisor performance reviews	Workforce and Community Support Manager, other bureau managers/supervisors	To motivate management to further diversity development every year
	Managers/supervisors take cultural competence management training	Diversity Development/Affirmative Action Office	To enable managers/supervisors to interact more effectively with diverse staff and customers

**Section 4** Recommendations

<b>Benchmark Activities</b>	<b>Projected Start/End Dates(s)</b>	<b>Required Resources</b>	<b>Outcome Measures</b>
Ten groups become partners in recruiting staff	Key groups in place by June 2006	Annual review of diversity percentage of workforce and meet with partners to assess progress	PP&R partners with at least ten key groups from under-represented community organizations
All Tier 1, 2 and 3 managers/supervisors attend training	Training takes place January 2006 through June 2006	\$100 diversity budget	Managers/supervisors receive a copy of diversity program document and begin to incorporate program goals in their work plans
All managers/supervisors have diversity development goal on annual workplan	Initiate in January 2006	Assistance from Diversity Development/ Affirmative Action Office	Managers have written goals for diversity development; goal attainment is tracked/ reported to Mgmt. team
All Tier 1, 2 and 3 managers/supervisors attend training	Training begins June 2006		Managers understand importance of cultural competence and that it will be part of their annual performance evaluation



*Kurabu, the Japanese Immersion Summer Camp Program offered by Portland Parks & Recreation SUN Community Schools, teaches students about Japanese culture as well as the language.*

## Findings from Workforce Diversity Data

Following is a summary of the findings from five measures of workforce diversity for Portland Parks & Recreation: (1) a comparison of our workforce with the available labor pool; (2) a comparison of our workforce with the community we serve; (3) a review of recent hiring of full-time employees; (4) a review of recent promotions; and (5) a long-term trend that includes temporary/seasonal employees as well as full-time or permanent part-time employees.

### 1. Workforce Composition—Comparison with Labor Pool

The City collects data on employee gender and race using federal Affirmative Action definitions and prepares a utilization analysis each quarter. In this analysis, for a wide variety of job groups, the actual percentage of employees from several racial minorities (Black, Asian-American, Native American, and Hispanic) and the actual percentage of women employees is compared with the percentage available in those demographic categories.

The availability percentage is a weighted average of internal and external availability. The internal availability percentage comes from an analysis of the “feeder” classifications for a particular job group. In other words, if Accounting classifications are considered to be feeders for the Financial Analyst classifications (part of the Professionals—Financial job group in the Affirmative Action database), then the percentage of minorities and women now employed by the City in the various Accounting classifications serves as the internal availability percentage for the Professionals—Financial job group. The external availability percentage is based on the percentage of minorities and women in the population of the designated recruiting area for a given job group. For example, if the Professionals—Financial job group is assumed to have a statewide recruiting area (as opposed to nationwide or just in the Portland metropolitan area), then the external availability percentage is simply the percentage of women or minorities living in the state of Oregon, according to the most recent census data. The two kinds of availability are blended into a weighted average, based on an educated guess about what percentage of the City’s positions in a given job group are filled from outside appointments versus internal promotions.

## Appendix A

If the number of actual employees in a given job group is less than the number that would be predicted by the availability percentages by at least one whole position, then that “protected class” (that is, either Black, Asian-American, Native American, Hispanic, or female) is considered “under-utilized.” Furthermore, if the discrepancy between how many protected-class employees we actually have in a given job group and how many we theoretically could have is especially great (that is, a standard deviation of more than 2.0), then the under-utilization is considered to be “statistically significant.” This is important, because discrepancies that are not statistically significant could be the result of random variation, whereas the larger, statistically significant discrepancies are more likely to reflect a pattern of systematic discrimination.

Where there are few employees in a given job group, this comparative analysis is not likely to yield meaningful results. That is because under-utilization is only declared when the actual employment is less than the available employment by at least one whole position, which can only occur when there are enough positions in a given job group and there is a high enough availability percentage for the protected classes. In practical terms, this analysis is most useful for job groups of at least 14 positions.

### Portland Parks & Recreation Results

For Parks, there are seven job groups with at least 14 positions. They are summarized below.

Job Group	# of Positions	Under-utilized?					
		Black	Asian	Native Amer	Hispanic	Total Min	Female
Officials & Administrators/Parks & Recreation	14	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Professionals/Parks & Recreation	110	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
Paraprofessionals/Parks & Recreation	21	No	No	No	No	No	No
Administrative Support/Office Support	14	No	No	No	No	No	No
Skilled Craft/Botanic	42	No	No	No	No	No	No
Skilled Craft/General Maintenance & Trades	25	No	No	No	No	No	No
Service & Maintenance/General Maintenance & Trades	115	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	No

Within these seven job groups, there are three where protected classes are underrepresented. The remaining job groups and classes are adequately represented according to this data.

- **Officials & Administrators/Parks & Recreation—**  
This category is best viewed as part of the larger Officials & Administrators category, which consists of the 17 top management positions in the bureau. The notable fact about the bureau’s current group of top managers is that none of them represent racial minorities within the federal Affirmative Action definitions. (The bureau director, as a native-born Iranian, is in fact Asian, but the federal definitions do not count that in the “Asian” protected class.)

Looking just at the 14 people in the subgroup of “Officials & Administrators” makes it appear as though there is also under-utilization of women within the bureau’s top management, but when we adjust the data to include the other three Officials & Administrators positions, we see that 7 out of the 17 positions (41%) are occupied by women which is close to the 42% availability percentage for that category. (The 42% is a weighted average of the four subgroups.) When we take into account the fact that five out of the seven members of the bureau’s Management Team are women, it is clear that women are not under-utilized in the bureau leadership. Minorities, however, are.



*Pete Zoltanski, Carpenter, introduces teens to job opportunities in the Trades.*

## Appendix A

- **Professionals/Parks & Recreation**—This category consists mainly of Recreation Coordinator, Recreation Supervisor, and Park Maintenance Supervisor positions. According to the most recent Affirmative Action Utilization report, the number of Black, Asian, and Native American employees in this job group is at least as high as the number that would be predicted from the availability percentages, but the number of Hispanic employees is disproportionately low—only three employees compared to five that would be available. However, the recent appointment (since the date of the report) of two Park Maintenance Supervisors who are Hispanic would seem to remedy this finding of under-utilization. Of course, these recent promotions may have also reduced our positive findings in the “Skilled Craft-Botanic” job group, from which those two promotions were made.
- **Service and Maintenance/General Maintenance and Trades**—This job group includes 115 employees, including Park Technicians, Mowers, Greenskeepers, and Maintenance Workers. In this job group, the number of both Black and Hispanic employees falls short of the number that would be predicted by the availability percentages. In this job group, the bureau employs 2 Black employees (as opposed to 4 that would be predicted) and only 6 Hispanic employees (as opposed to 11 that would be predicted). Even though the other two racial categories partly offset this finding, the overall employment of minorities in this job category is still below a proportionate level.
- **Other job groups**—For the other job groups, either the bureau’s employment reflects workforce availability or the number of positions in the category is too small to tell. In none of the categories are the findings statistically significant; in other words, even in the above cases where there appears to be under-utilization, the discrepancy is not so great as to suggest an intentional pattern of discrimination.
- **Summary**—For those job groups where there are enough positions to draw conclusions, the bureau’s overall workforce composition seems to reflect the labor market reasonably well. However, there is a notable under-utilization of Hispanic and Black workers in the front-line park maintenance positions, and there are no racial minorities among the bureau’s managers.

## 2. Workforce Composition—Comparison with Local Population

A less optimistic view of our employee diversity is to compare our employees’ gender and race not with the labor pool but with the local population. The following table shows this comparison, using census data for a simple demographic profile of the City of Portland.

The table shows that while 21.2% of Portland’s population consists of racial minorities, only 12% of PP&R’s full-time and permanent part-time employees are racial minorities.

This data conforms to information provided by the Diversity Development/Affirmative Action Office. We acknowledge there are certain groups who are under-represented on census reports, particularly from Native American populations.

<b>Full-time and Permanent Part-time Employees Portland Parks &amp; Recreation</b>				
27-May-04				
	<b>Total Employees</b>	<b>Percentage Employees</b>	<b>Percentage Portland Residents</b>	<b>Employee % More/Less than Population</b>
Total females	151	36%	50.9%	<b>-14.9%</b>
Females working in non-traditional jobs	36	8%		
Racial minorities:				
Asian-American	10	2%	6.7%	<b>-4.7%</b>
Native American	5	1%	1.1%	<b>-0.1%</b>
African American	20	5%	6.6%	<b>-1.6%</b>
Hispanic	15	4%	6.8%	<b>-2.8%</b>
Total racial minorities	50	12%	21.2%	<b>-9.2%</b>
Either racial minority or female working in non-traditional job	82	19%		

And while over half of the population is female, only 36% of our permanent workforce is female, and only 8% consists of women working in non-traditional jobs. While the labor pool is our best estimate of the people that could most realistically be brought into our workforce, it is important to note that the labor pool itself is not a proportionate representation of the community we serve.

### 3. Recent Hiring of Full-time Employees

Another type of measure is to look not at our current workforce composition, but at the people hired recently—that is, the incremental change in the workforce composition. The results (shown on the following page) are disappointing, particularly with respect to racial minorities.

Of the 49 full-time employees hired from the beginning of April 2003 through the middle of October 2004, only four were racial minorities—and three of them were hired explicitly to perform outreach work to teens or the Hispanic and Asian-American communities. The third was Native American. Since Native Americans constitute 1.1% of Portland's population, hiring one Native American employee during that period (or 2% of the hires) is at least proportionate. However, Hispanic, Asian-Americans, and African-Americans are 6.8%, 6.7% and 6.6%, respectively, of Portland's population. Of the 49 employees hired, 22 (or 45%) were women, which is a higher proportion than the bureau's current percentage of women employees (36%). However, only three of them (6% of the new hires) were in non-traditional job areas, compared with 8% of women currently in non-traditional jobs. All in all, the most recent year-and-a-half's hiring of full-time employees did not move us closer to the goal of having our workforce racial and gender composition reflect the community we serve.

### 4. Recent Promotions

We also looked at promotions during that same period, approximately eighteen months. Here the results were more encouraging. Of the 28 employees who were promoted to higher classifications during that period, five (or 18%) were racial minorities. This is still not as high as the 21.2% figure for Portland's population, but at least is higher than our current workforce, which is 12% minority. Four of those promotions were African-American and one was Hispanic. In addition, 14 of the 28 promotions (or 50%) were women, in line with Portland's population and more than the current work force. Ten of the 28 promotions were to supervisory or management-level positions, of which two (20%) were racial minorities and seven (70%) were women. In short, our recent record of promotions does move us closer to the goal of reflecting more proportionately the community we serve.

Appendix A

Full-time Parks Employees Hired From April 1, 2003 through October 15, 2004					19-Oct-04
NO	HIREDATE	JOB CLASS	RACE	GENDER	JOB LOCATION
1	10/11/04	Utility Worker	W	M	Northeast District
2	08/12/04	Maintenance Mechanic	W	M	Equipment Section
3	07/29/04	Community Outreach Info Asst	W	F	Downtown Office
4	07/22/04	Community Outreach Info Asst	W	F	Downtown Office
5	07/15/04	Maintenance Worker	W	F	PIR
6	05/20/04	Recreation Coordinator 1	B	M	Teen Services
7	04/19/04	Recreation Coordinator 1	W	F	Dishman Pool
8	04/05/04	Outdoor Rec & Env Educ Prog	W	F	Outdoor Rec
9	03/15/04	Horticulturist	W	M	Hort Services
10	03/15/04	Horticulturist	W	M	Hort Services
11	03/15/04	Horticulturist	W	M	Hort Services
12	02/23/04	Recreation Coordinator 1	W	M	Mt Scott Pool
13	12/04/03	Utility Worker 1	W	M	Downtown District
14	12/01/03	Property Acq & Service Mgr	W	F	Downtown Office
15	11/25/03	Park Technician	W	M	Downtown District
16	11/24/03	Park Technician	W	M	SE District
17	11/20/03	Utility Worker 11	AI	M	Equipment Section
18	10/23/03	High Climber	W	F	Urban Forestry
19	10/01/03	Bldg/Landscape Designer 1	W	M	DCU/Downtown
20	09/29/03	Utility Worker 1	W	M	Equipment Section
21	09/29/03	Utility Worker 1	W	M	Structures Section
22	09/29/03	Recreation Leader	W	F	Outdoor Rec
23	09/15/03	Recreation Coordinator 1	W	M	Parkrose CS
24	09/08/03	Recreation Leader	W	M	Mt Scott CC
25	09/08/03	Recreation Coordinator 1	HIS	F	St Johns CC
26	08/28/03	Recreation Leader	W	M	East Portland CC
27	08/28/03	Utility Worker 1	W	M	Hort Services
28	08/28/03	Horticulturist	W	F	Hort Services
29	08/14/03	Office Support Specialist 1	W	F	Mt Tabor Yard
30	08/11/03	Office Support Specialist 1	W	F	Mt Tabor Yard
31	08/11/03	Recreation Coordinator 1	AA	M	East Portland CC
32	08/04/03	Office Support Specialist 1	W	F	Mt Tabor Yard
33	07/21/03	Recreation Coordinator 1	W	M	Montavilla CC
34	07/21/03	Recreation Leader	W	F	St Johns CC
35	07/17/03	Carpenter	W	M	Structures Section
36	07/17/03	Utility Worker 11	W	M	Equipment Section
37	07/17/03	Carpenter	W	M	Structures Section
38	07/01/03	Recreation Coordinator 1	W	F	Lane CS
39	07/01/03	Recreation Coordinator 1	W	M	Urban Forestry
40	07/01/03	Recreation Coordinator 1	W	F	East Portland CC
41	07/01/03	Recreation Leader	W	F	Fulton CC
42	07/01/03	Recreation Leader	W	F	Disabled Citizens Rec
43	07/01/03	Recreation Coordinator 1	W	F	Centenial CS
44	07/01/03	Recreation Coordinator 1	W	M	Sport Dept/Downtown
45	06/19/03	Recreation Leader	W	F	Hillside CC
46	06/02/03	Utility Worker 11	W	M	East Delta Complex
47	06/02/03	Parks & Rec Division Mgr	W	M	DCU/Downtown
48	05/13/03	Comm Outreach & Info Asst	W	F	Downtown Office
49	05/01/03	Assistant to Bureau Director	W	F	Downtown Office
Total Full-time Hires in Last 18 Months			49	100%	
Summary by Race:					
	W-White		45	92%	
	B-Black		1	2%	
	AI-American Indian		1	2%	
	AA-Asian-American		1	2%	
	HIS-Hispanic		1	2%	
	Total Racial Minority		4	8%	
Summary by Gender:					
	F-Female		22	45%	
	M-Male		27	55%	
	FNT-Female in non-traditional job		3	6%	

# Appendix A

Parks Employees Promoted to Higher Job Class From April 1, 2003 through October 15, 2004							19-Oct-04
NO	DATE	OLD	NEW	RACE	GENDER	JOB LOCATION	
1	08/26/04	SMW	Park Technician	W	F	NORTHEAST DISTRICT	
2	08/26/04	SMW	Maint Mechanic	W	M	Equipment	
3	08/12/04	SMW	Maint Mechanic	W	M	Equipment	
4	08/12/04	Turf Maint Tech	Maint Mechanic	W	M	Mowing/Turf	
5	06/09/04	Community Outreach	Recreation Manager	B	F	Downtown Office	
6	05/06/04	Horticulturist	Parks Maint Supv	HIS	M	South District	
7	05/06/04	Rec Leader (4320)	Utility Worker 1	W	M	Hort Services	
8	03/11/04	SMW	Utility Worker 11	W	M	Equipment	
9	03/11/04	Horticulturist	Parks Maint Supv	W	F	NORTHEAST DISTRICT	
10	11/20/03	Rec Coord 1	Rec Coord 11	W	M	MT SCOTT POOL	
11	11/20/04	Maint. Worker	Utility Worker 1	W	M	NORTH DISTRICT	
12	08/21/03	Rec Coord 1	Rec Coord 11	W	M	CMC	
13	07/31/03	Maint Mechanic	Parks Maint Supv	W	M	NORTHEAST DISTRICT	
14	07/31/03	Horticulturist	Parks Maint Supv	W	F	DOWNTOWN DIST	
15	07/31/03	Horticulturist	Parks Maint Supv	W	F	EAST DISTRICT	
16	07/11/03	Rec. Leader	Rec Coord 1	W	F	DELTA SPORT COMP	
17	07/01/03	Rec Coord 1	Rec Coord 11	B	F	DISHMAN CC	
18	07/01/03	Rec Coord 1	Rec Supv 1	B	F	UPCC	
19	07/01/03	Rec Coord 1	Rec Coord 11	W	F	MT SCOTT CC	
20	07/01/03	Rec Leader	Rec Coord 1	W	F	GREGORY HEIGHTS	
21	07/01/03	Rec Coord 1	Rec Coord 11	W	F	EPCC	
22	07/01/03	Rec Leader	Rec Coord 1	B	M	MT SCOTT CC	
23	11/06/03	SMW	Utility Worker 11	W	M	Equipment	
24	07/01/03	SMW	Utility Worker 11	W	M	Equipment	
25	07/01/03	Rec Assistant	Rec Leader	W	F	Senior Leisure Serv	
26	07/01/03	Office Support Spec	Recreation Supv 1	W	F	Peninsula	
27	06/04/03	Horticulturist	Parks Maint Supv	W	M	NORTH DISTRICT	
28	04/05/03	Parks & Rec Div Mgr	Parks & Rec Dir	W	F	DOWNTOWN	
Total Promotions in Last 18 Months				28	100%		
Summary by Race:							
	W -White			23	82%		
	B-Black			4	14%		
	AI-American Indian			0	0%		
	AA-Asian-American			0	0%		
	HIS-Hispanic			1	4%		
	Total Racial Minority			5	18%		
Summary by Gender:							
	F-Female			14	50%		
	M-Male			14	50%		
	FNT-Female in non-traditional job			5	18%		

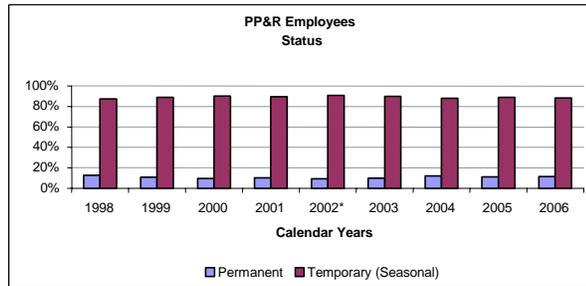
## **5. Long-term Trend in Permanent and Temporary Employees**

The following four pages are an April 2007 update from the original September 2005 Diversity Assessment and Program report. An analysis of racial composition for represented and non-represented employees has also been added since the 2005 report.

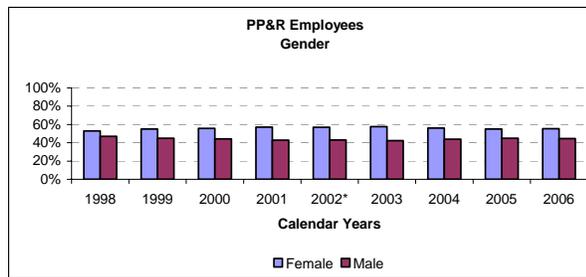
The original report analysis focused primarily on full-time or permanent, part-time employees. The analysis in this appendix expands that to look at temporary or seasonal employees and the long-term trends of our workforce racial and gender composition. The following pages examine our workforce race and gender since 1998, using a slightly different data set than what was used in the bulk of the report (though the differences in data are not significant).

# Portland Parks & Recreation Employment Demographic Summary

## Update to September 2005 Diversity Assessment and Program Report – Appendix A

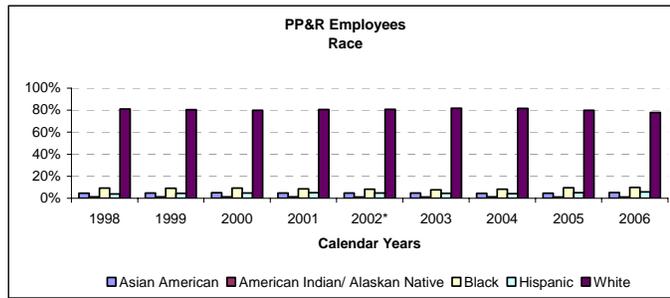


		Calendar Year									% Change in Workforce Representation since 2002*
		1998	1999	2000	2001	2002*	2003	2004	2005	2006	
<b>Permanent</b>	Employees	386	398	411	424	408	429	411	407	395	
	Percent	13%	11%	10%	10%	9%	10%	12%	11%	12%	24.6%
<b>Temporary (Seasonal)</b>	Employees	2,699	3,222	3,796	3,676	4,005	3,920	3,023	3,213	3,034	
	Percent	87%	89%	90%	90%	91%	90%	88%	89%	88%	-2.5%
<b>Total Employees</b>		<b>3,085</b>	<b>3,620</b>	<b>4,207</b>	<b>4,100</b>	<b>4,413</b>	<b>4,349</b>	<b>3,434</b>	<b>3,620</b>	<b>3,429</b>	

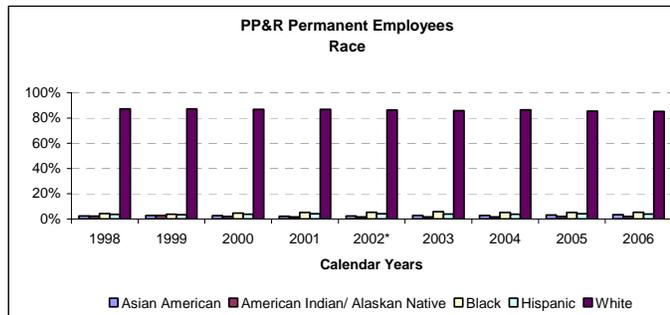


		Calendar Year									% Change in Workforce Representation since 2002*
		1998	1999	2000	2001	2002*	2003	2004	2005	2006	
<b>Female</b>	Employees	1,634	1,998	2,348	2,342	2,518	2,505	1,923	1,993	1,895	
	Percent	53%	55%	56%	57%	57%	58%	56%	55%	55%	-3.1%
<b>Male</b>	Employees	1,451	1,622	1,859	1,758	1,895	1,844	1,511	1,627	1,534	
	Percent	47%	45%	44%	43%	43%	42%	44%	45%	45%	4.2%
<b>Total Employees</b>		<b>3,085</b>	<b>3,620</b>	<b>4,207</b>	<b>4,100</b>	<b>4,413</b>	<b>4,349</b>	<b>3,434</b>	<b>3,620</b>	<b>3,429</b>	

\*Year Council requested Diversity Action Plan from each bureau

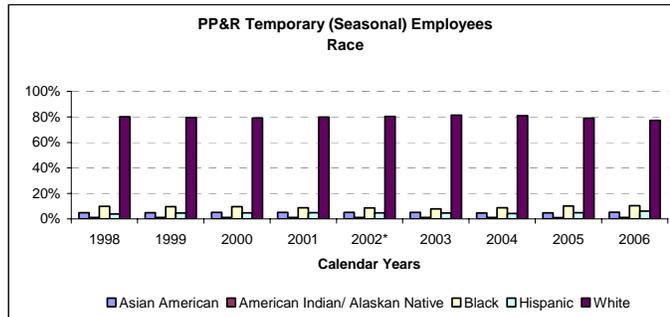


		Calendar Year									% Change in Workforce Representation since 2002*
		1998	1999	2000	2001	2002*	2003	2004	2005	2006	
Asian American	Employees	142	172	207	195	213	211	153	168	175	
	Percent	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	4%	5%	5%	5.7%
American Indian/ Alaskan Native	Employees	39	50	53	52	54	50	43	42	41	
	Percent	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	-2.3%
Black	Employees	286	325	384	347	366	335	286	344	338	
	Percent	9%	9%	9%	8%	8%	8%	8%	10%	10%	18.9%
Hispanic	Employees	120	163	201	202	212	196	148	178	200	
	Percent	4%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	4%	5%	6%	21.4%
White	Employees	2,498	2,910	3,362	3,304	3,568	3,557	2,804	2,888	2,675	
	Percent	81%	80%	80%	81%	81%	82%	82%	80%	78%	-3.5%
<b>Total Employees</b>		<b>3,085</b>	<b>3,620</b>	<b>4,207</b>	<b>4,100</b>	<b>4,413</b>	<b>4,349</b>	<b>3,434</b>	<b>3,620</b>	<b>3,429</b>	



		Calendar Year									% Change in Workforce Representation since 2002*
		1998	1999	2000	2001	2002*	2003	2004	2005	2006	
Asian American	Employees	10	11	11	9	10	12	12	13	14	
	Percent	3%	3%	3%	2%	2%	3%	3%	3%	4%	44.6%
American Indian/ Alaskan Native	Employees	9	11	8	7	7	7	7	8	8	
	Percent	2%	3%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	18.0%
Black	Employees	17	15	19	22	22	25	21	21	21	
	Percent	4%	4%	5%	5%	5%	6%	5%	5%	5%	-1.4%
Hispanic	Employees	14	14	16	18	17	17	16	17	16	
	Percent	4%	4%	4%	4%	4%	4%	4%	4%	4%	-2.8%
White	Employees	336	347	357	368	352	368	355	348	336	
	Percent	87%	87%	87%	87%	86%	86%	86%	86%	85%	-1.4%
<b>Total Employees</b>		<b>386</b>	<b>398</b>	<b>411</b>	<b>424</b>	<b>408</b>	<b>429</b>	<b>411</b>	<b>407</b>	<b>395</b>	

\*Year Council requested Diversity Action Plan from each bureau



		Calendar Year									% Change in Workforce Representation since 2002*
		1998	1999	2000	2001	2002*	2003	2004	2005	2006	
<b>Asian American</b>	Employees	132	161	196	186	203	199	141	155	161	
	Percent	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	4.7%
<b>American Indian/Alaskan Native</b>	Employees	30	39	45	45	47	43	36	34	33	
	Percent	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	-7.3%
<b>Black</b>	Employees	269	310	365	325	344	310	265	323	317	
	Percent	10%	10%	10%	9%	9%	8%	9%	10%	10%	21.6%
<b>Hispanic</b>	Employees	106	149	185	184	195	179	132	161	184	
	Percent	4%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	4%	5%	6%	24.6%
<b>White</b>	Employees	2,162	2,563	3,005	2,936	3,216	3,189	2,449	2,540	2,339	
	Percent	80%	80%	79%	80%	80%	81%	81%	79%	77%	-4.0%
<b>Total Employees</b>		<b>2,699</b>	<b>3,222</b>	<b>3,796</b>	<b>3,676</b>	<b>4,005</b>	<b>3,920</b>	<b>3,023</b>	<b>3,213</b>	<b>3,034</b>	

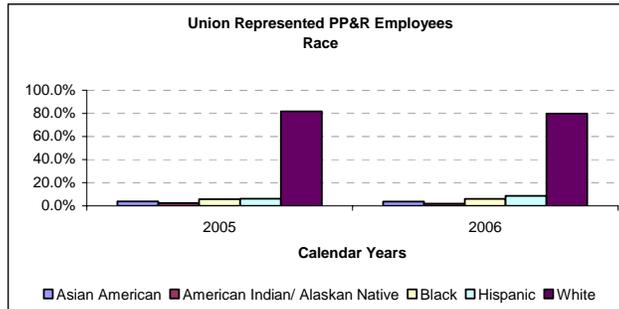
\*Year Council requested Diversity Action Plan from each bureau

NOTES:

This data includes all employees: currently active, inactive, and terminated, in order to give the most complete picture of employment diversity patterns.

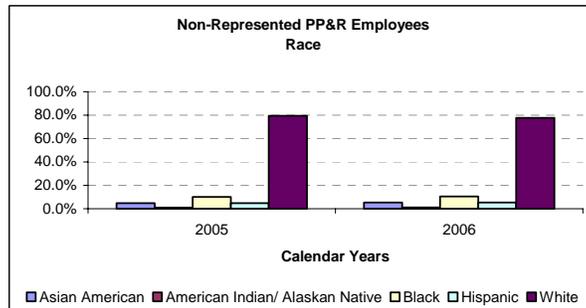
Each column represents all persons on the payroll file as of that pay period, whether currently active, inactive, or terminated. Because Portland Parks & Recreation employs so many seasonal, temporary employees who are terminated or made inactive each year, this shows the most complete picture of Parks & Recreation employment demographics.

# Portland Parks & Recreation Employment Demographic Summary For Represented and Non-Represented Employees



**PP&R Represented Employees**

		Calendar Year	
		2005	2006
Asian American	Employees	17	18
	Percent	3.8%	3.6%
American Indian/ Alaskan Native	Employees	11	10
	Percent	2.4%	2.0%
Black	Employees	26	30
	Percent	5.8%	6.0%
Hispanic	Employees	28	44
	Percent	6.2%	8.7%
White	Employees	367	402
	Percent	81.7%	79.8%
<b>Total Employees</b>		<b>449</b>	<b>504</b>



**PP&R Non-Represented Employees**

		Calendar Year	
		2005	2006
Asian American	Employees	151	157
	Percent	4.8%	5.4%
American Indian/ Alaskan Native	Employees	31	31
	Percent	1.0%	1.1%
Black	Employees	318	308
	Percent	10.0%	10.5%
Hispanic	Employees	150	156
	Percent	4.7%	5.3%
White	Employees	2,521	2,273
	Percent	79.5%	77.7%
<b>Total Employees</b>		<b>3,171</b>	<b>2,925</b>

**NOTES:**

This data includes all employees: currently active, inactive, and terminated, in order to give the most complete picture of employment diversity patterns.

Each column represents all persons on the payroll file as of that pay period, whether currently active, inactive, or terminated. Because Portland Parks & Recreation employs so many seasonal, temporary employees who are terminated or made inactive each year, this shows the most complete picture of Parks & Recreation employment demographics.

### Overall Evaluation of Workforce Diversity

There are some caveats about our workforce data. First, most of the data focuses only on full-time employees. However, the one data set we had that included part-time employees reinforced the conclusions from the other data. Secondly, the data available to us only touches on two characteristics of our employees—race and gender. We don't have information on the number of gay employees, or Jewish employees, or employees who are non-native speakers of English, or employees facing physical disabilities. However, race and gender are visible traits that have led to much disparate treatment in the past, so attention to women and under-represented groups as “protected classes” is still worthwhile even though they don't reflect the full range of diversity that matters to us in the workplace.

What does the data tell us about our workforce composition?

1. In matters of employment, the data shows no evidence of deliberate or systematic discrimination against women or under-represented groups. Comparisons between our workforce and the available labor pool—where the categories are large enough to discern any patterns at all—show that there is under-utilization of under-represented groups in certain job classes, but the under-utilization is always within the statistical margin of uncertainty. For most types of jobs and most under-represented groups, our workforce matches up reasonably well with the labor pool.
2. The labor pool itself does not reflect the demographic profile of Portland residents. Our workforce has significantly smaller percentages of both under-represented groups and women than the population of Portland as a whole. To merely reflect the existing labor pool is no credit to us as an organization; it means that we are still living with past mistakes—the decades of discriminatory treatment that led to the unbalanced opportunities that we see in our community today. Our goal should be for our workforce to reflect the community we serve, and we are still far short of that goal.
3. Our most recent 18 months of promotions helped move us closer to proportionate representation in higher-level classifications, but our most recent 18 months of new hiring moved us farther away

from proportionate representation in the total workforce. On the one hand, that reflects an organizational commitment to the “grow your own” strategy, which is commendable. But on the other hand, it shows inadequate outreach to under-represented groups at the point of entry into the organization.

4. The disparity in employment numbers is less acute for women than for under-represented groups, and over the last six years, women have grown in representation in our workforce, whereas under-represented groups have not. While most of our women employees are in fields that have traditionally been friendly to women (such as recreation programs), about 8% of our employees are women in non-traditional jobs. There are now or have been one or more examples of women working successfully as Maintenance Supervisors, Forestry High Climbers, Carpenters, Greenskeepers, Welders, and Mower Operators—not a proportionate number, but enough to set a precedent in most types of jobs, including Bureau Director.
5. In general, racial minorities are under-represented (compared to Portland’s population) among our temporary and seasonal employees, but they are even more under-represented among the higher-paying full-time and permanent part-time positions.



*Music—a multi-cultural,  
muti-generational enjoyment.*

## Findings from Recreation Diversity Survey

The survey, conducted in 2002 and updated in 2004, was a modified version of an assessment tool prepared by the Diversity Development/Affirmative Action Office. A total of 79 full-time Recreation employees (out of 115 total positions) completed the survey. Following is a summary of the major groups of questions and the survey responses.

- **Diversity development planning**—The first seven questions dealt with whether PP&R has a plan for diversity development and what that plan contains. About 57% of the respondents felt at least somewhat sure that the bureau has a diversity development plan. However, when the survey asked more detailed questions about the content of the plan, awareness of the plan dropped off to about 22% of the respondents.
- **Policies against bias**—Three questions dealt with policies against bias. When asked whether the Recreation Division had a policy against bias-based behaviors, 86% said yes. However, only 57% felt that the policy stated clearly the consequences of such behavior and the method for reporting incidents, and only 38% felt at least somewhat confident that the policy is regularly publicized and consistently enforced.
- **Bias-based behaviors**—92% agreed that staff members do not use language that contains overt or covert racial, ethnic, sexual, and other slurs. However, most respondents agreed that the Division does not routinely collect data regarding incidents of cross-cultural friction.
- **Diverse workforce**—When asked if the Recreation Division has an appropriately diverse workforce, 59% answered positively. Similarly, two-thirds felt that the Administrative team of the Recreation Division has a vision of the agency as multicultural and diverse and routinely communicates that vision. Only about a third, though, saw the Administrative team itself as a reflection of the economic, ethnic, racial, and cultural diversity of the community, and only a quarter felt that the Administrative team routinely meets with different groups in the community to create dialogue about the vision. Similarly, the large majority of respondents agreed that there is not a multicultural group with

clearly stated goals and authority advising the Administrative team about issues of organizational development.

- **Staff development**—77% of the survey respondents felt that staff members communicate with colleagues and community people from diverse groups representing the various cultures in the community. Similarly, 62% felt that staff members talk about how bias and bias-based behaviors impact the work environment and services. Just over half of the respondents, 53%, felt that staff at all levels in the agency receive training on cultural diversity.
- **Services to the public**—The employees responding to the survey generally gave the Recreation Division higher marks—between 65% and 89% positive—in this group of questions. 78% felt that the Division has a variety of programs and services designed to encourage the participation of our diverse patrons. 89% stated that the atmosphere in the Recreation Division acknowledges and welcomes people from diverse backgrounds. 80% felt that the Division acknowledges and celebrates the important events of the cultural groups in the community, and 76% felt that the staff can accurately name the major demographic groups in the community. A somewhat lower percentage, 65%, stated that all patrons receive similar services appropriate and relevant to their cultural and language backgrounds.

### Minority Views

The survey was designed with a 1-5 Likert scale, with an additional response of “unsure.” Most of what is described above as a “no” response was actually in the “unsure” category. However, there were some questions that drew a larger-than-average number of actual “no” answers (1 or 2 on the Likert scale), even if the majority answer was positive. These are questions about which there is divided opinion, and the higher-than-average percentage of people answering 1 or 2 is an indicator of a notable minority views.

Three questions fell in this group. One was whether the Recreation Division has an appropriately diverse workforce. 59% said yes, but a substantial minority, 31%, said no. Another question had to do with whether staff at all levels receive training on cultural diversity. 53% said yes, but 30% said no. The final question which elicited a divided opinion was whether all customers receive similar services appropriate

and relevant to their cultural and language backgrounds. On this question, 52% of the respondents said yes, while 29% said no.

## Overall Evaluation

In general, the strongest positive area in this survey had to do with the diversity and cultural appropriateness of our offerings to the public, although the approval percentage dropped off when the question specifically mentioned language as well as cultural backgrounds. The respondents were in widespread agreement that staff members avoid offensive language regarding race, ethnicity or gender, and the policy expectation is clear that they must do so.

The findings are much weaker where it comes to formal organizational procedures—keeping records, developing plans, promulgating policies, maintaining advisory committees, and offering staff training. A majority felt that the Division has an appropriately diverse workforce, although there was a substantial minority view about that question.

The survey had a three-level overall evaluation, based on how many questions were answered with favorable or unfavorable scores. The largest group of employees, 57 out of 79, had their overall rating fall in the middle-of-the-road category, with the following summary by the survey producers: “You have some elements that are needed to create a positive pluralistic culture, but you still have a ways to go.”



*Stained glass class at East Portland  
Community Center.*

## A Personal Analogy

### White Males—from Outrage to Education

by Gordon Wilson, a former PP&R manager

An important audience for this report is a group we will call the Well-intentioned White Male, a group that we believe includes the majority of the supervisors in Portland Parks & Recreation. Members of this group are unlikely to think that women or racial minorities are inferior; in fact, they are unlikely to notice gender or race very much in their work interactions. They may agree philosophically with the bureau's goals of diversity development, but that agreement is more intellectual than personal; when it comes to actually attending a multi-cultural training session or attending a job fair aimed at minority candidates, it may not compete well with other pressing work priorities. When the subject of disparate treatment of minorities or women comes up in news articles or conversations, the Well-intentioned White Male may feel that the individuals complaining about how they have been treated are a little bit too touchy, that they misinterpret actions taken for other reasons as being motivated by race or gender bias. He may be, on the whole, reasonable and fair in his treatment of people. Upon reading the diversity literature or attending the occasional diversity training session, some may feel unfairly blamed for things they don't agree with and would never do.

In addition to the Well-intentioned White Male, there may be Distrustful White Males, who find the whole diversity development effort to be threatening. They may watch TV news, for example, and hear some sports executive make what sounds like a clumsy attempt at a generalization about minority athletes, and—boom!—that sports executive is out of a job. The climate feels threatening because the sensitive subjects seem so random—after all, nobody fires a minority person for making a critical generalization about white people. The message is clear to Distrustful White Males: when it comes to race or certain other touchy subjects, just shut up—it's too dangerous and unpredictable to say anything. It's not a very long step for this observation to lead to resentment, the feeling among some white males that they are the ones not being treated fairly. Within an organization, competing resentments are not a healthy thing, particularly when communication is shut off.

## Appendix C

To the Well-intentioned White Males, particularly those who are supervisors and managers, we offer the following list of observations.

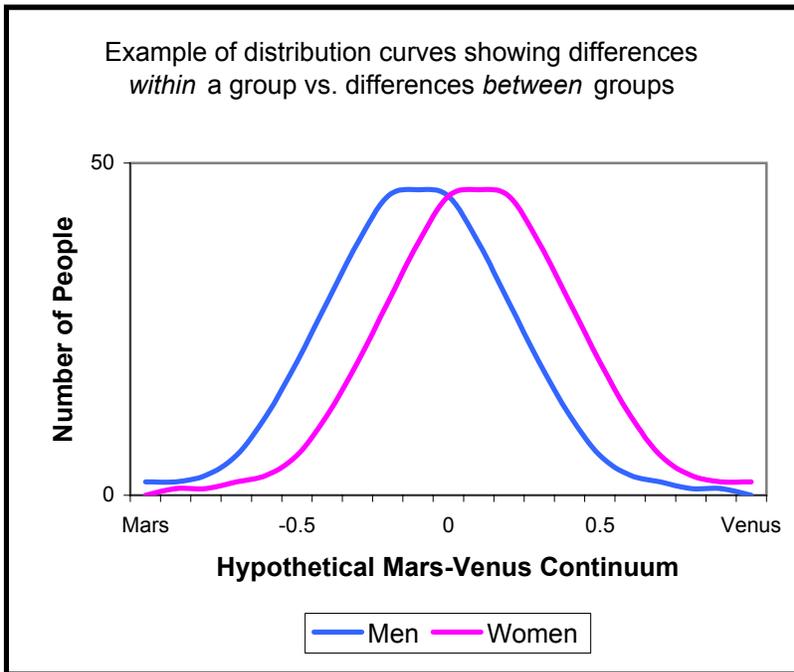
- You probably underestimate the degree to which you generalize about people based on race and other things you know about them. It is good to be skeptical of your assumptions and how you may apply them to individual people.
- Regarding what looks like the “touchiness” of minorities: reactions that seem too touchy when focusing only on an immediate situation make a lot more sense when viewed in the context of a long history of similar experiences. That’s true for you, too—experiences are cumulative.
- Fear is a powerful motivator. Many of the most hurtful actions occur when otherwise nice people are fearful of something.
- Learning about the lives and backgrounds of people different from yourself can be richly rewarding. Films, books, training sessions—those are all good, but there’s no substitute for getting to know the people around you.
- People—all people—need encouragement in order to do their best work. If you are in a situation where the people around you expect you to fail, how does that affect you? People at work who come from non-mainstream races or genders have already demonstrated a certain kind of toughness—a strength of character—to be where they are; with additional encouragement, their effectiveness and working relationships could become even better.
- Don’t discount the impact of simple numerical minority. We live in a working world in which “white, male, Standard English” is often the definition of “normal.” If you were to spend your whole working life in a world in which one of your primary identifying characteristics was (as in the case of racial minorities in Portland) less than 10% of the general population, you would probably feel differently than you do now. You would probably be more conscious of yourself as a member of a different group, and you would notice a tendency on the part of people to associate you with others who share that identifying characteristic with you. Being a small percentage of the population is like having a magnifying glass on you—any generalizations that people may apply to your group have greater force on you personally than they would if your group was larger. In the social inequalities of other countries, the minority race

is sometimes the one with greater economic and educational advantages; numerical minority in those countries still has a “magnifying glass” effect, but it magnifies the perception of power or status. In the United States, the “magnifying glass” has a negative effect: numerical minority combines with historical discrimination to make the stereotypes even more hurtful and harder to solve.

A stereotype is a hurtful generalization, and that is true whether or not the generalization is valid. Many common generalizations are not accurate; they are simply wrong. But even if a generalization about a group is accurate—that is, even when there really is a group tendency in the direction of one trait or another—the nature of human diversity is such that differences *within* the group usually far outweigh the differences *among* groups. For instance, it may be convenient and popular to say that men are from Mars and women are from Venus (*Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus—A Practical Guide for improving Communication and Getting what you want in relationships*—by John Gray, published in 1992 by J.G. Productions, Inc.) In reality, though, there is a whole continuum stretching from Mars to Venus. Even if the frequency distribution of males tends somewhat toward Mars-like behavior and females toward Venus-like behavior, each distribution curve is broad enough that there are plenty of males and females at any given point of the spectrum. The difference *within* each curve is far greater than the difference *between* the curves. For that reason, even if you think a particular generalization is insightful and even helpful in a general sense, applying that generalization to specific individuals can be inaccurate and hurtful—that is, a stereotype. For that reason, it is important to be wary of group generalizations—especially those that could be perceived as negative or that involve people that have been on the receiving end of unfair and inaccurate generalizations in the past.



*Trail maintenance near Hoyt Arboretum completed by Natural Areas and volunteers.*



- It is true that you are not personally to blame for the social inequalities that exist, even if you have been the beneficiary of them. You may hear things sometimes that seem to point the finger of blame to you personally. To someone on the upper side of a social inequality, “oppression” and “disadvantage” and simple “numerical minority” look quite different, but for someone on the underside of a social inequality, it all feels the same. When you hear women or racial minorities describe their experiences critically, don’t feel personally attacked; just feel responsible to act. “I didn’t do anything wrong” may be an accurate statement, but so is the statement, “Clearly, something is wrong here.” Regardless of who you are or what your personal history is, it is still important to recognize the inequalities that exist, realize that they are wrong, and do what you can to remedy them.
- Sometimes you need to stick up for someone who is different even when you can see some traits that really do make it harder for others to work with them, simply because disadvantageous traits are not always under a person’s control. The concept of “reasonable accommodation,” which comes from the Americans with Disabilities Act, is a useful concept here—a good organization should be willing to stretch a certain amount

simply to accommodate the individual traits of its workers and customers. The “reasonable accommodation” standard makes sense in plenty of situations not having to do with physical disabilities. For instance, one of the members of the Committee was approached some years ago about difficulties caused by the strongly accented English spoken by one of the employees in the Committee member’s work group. The employee (whom we’ll call Sergei) was productive and valuable in other respects, but he was not born in the United States, and sometimes it truly was hard to understand him. Even though the ability to communicate effectively is a legitimate work-related characteristic—and yes, it does affect a person’s working relationships—in this case, the Committee member’s response was, “Well, maybe the rest of us just need to listen more carefully when we’re talking to Sergei. His English *is* the way it is, and he’s good at the things that we mostly depend on him to do, and it’s okay for the rest of us to make an extra effort when we talk with him. That extra effort is worth it because he can contribute a lot to this organization.”

- Any job recruitment depends to a large part on word-of-mouth—a potential applicant knowing someone who already works in that field or works for that organization. That fact creates a built-in tendency for new recruits to reflect not the community but the existing workforce. An effective outreach effort to non-traditional populations is needed simply to level the playing field when it comes to learning about possible jobs.
- It is also important to be honest about the sense of risk that a hiring manager faces and how that affects the selection process. The tendency to trust people most like ourselves is particularly noticeable when a hiring decision is being made, because hiring decisions have high stakes for the work group and the supervisor, and because the information about each candidate is so very limited. This tendency, though, can be unfair to candidates who are talented and valuable but who may be outside our typical comfort zone. When you are on an interview panel and you hear phrases like “not a good fit” or “wouldn’t work well here,” it is important to push the discussion toward more concreteness, toward identifying exactly what about a candidate would not be a good fit or exactly which traits would not work well here. A bit of skepticism and clear thinking can help make our hiring choices more effective *and* more fair.

## Learning From Each Other

Thinking about the Distrustful White Males who may have learned to “just shut up” about this subject, we recommend that the terms of discourse move from outrage to education. It has been a generation since legalized discrimination was largely discredited among the American population, and the remaining vestiges of bias reside in attitudes, not official actions. Attitudes are not directly susceptible to lawsuits or governmental edicts or even organizational policies; to the degree that attitudes are hurtful, they must be addressed by education—the sharing of views. Education, particularly in such a sensitive subject, requires some allowances for the clumsiness of people’s expressions and some trust in their good intentions. Leonard Pitts, Jr., a columnist for the *Miami Herald*, described earlier this year an unintended racial insult that he received once, as well as his correction of the speaker. He observed that in this case, “The insult had indeed not risen from malice, but from ignorance—which is not a character flaw, but a simple lack of knowledge. That means it can be cured by information. And most people are willing to accept information, provided it’s offered in a way that doesn’t make them feel six inches tall.” (*The Oregonian*, April 25, 2004) What we are suggesting is that we learn to talk about this subject and explore our different experiences and views without making others feel six inches tall.

To the degree that we succeed in discussing our views calmly and thoughtfully, we won’t need as much self-restraint—avoiding certain topics entirely—when there are predictable differences of opinion. There is a difference between *courtesy* and *mutual respect*. Courtesy is an “interim” virtue; it buys us time and helps keep misunderstandings from getting worse, but its value isn’t long-term. Our long-term goal is mutual respect, which is what helps people to *learn from each other’s perspective*.

Learning from each other is particularly valuable in the workplace, because innovation and empathetic thinking are key to effective organizations. In the broader society, many of our interactions—with a store clerk, for instance, or a person we pass on the street—are one-time occurrences, never to be repeated again. But in the workplace—as also in families and among neighbors—we get repeated interactions with other people. Those are the settings in which we get a lot of opportunity to practice the skills of communication—listening with openness, sharing views with calmness and thoughtfulness. And those are the settings in which it is especially valuable to progress beyond mere courtesy, toward mutual learning and respect.

*A reflection of our community—  
happy patrons of Portland Parks  
& Recreation*

