

 **Explore Fund Council**

Practices that power an inclusive future for exploration.



The North Face created The Explore Fund in 2010 to help increase outdoor participation across the country.

Ahead of the fund's 10th anniversary we asked ourselves two important questions: How can we better reflect and support the variety of ways that people explore? And what needs to happen for The North Face to embrace and create space for all explorers to be seen?

Those questions led to the formation of the 2020-2021 Explore Fund Council—a group of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color experienced in creating spaces and opportunities for more equitable systems, both in and outside of the outdoors.

Explore Fund Council



Jimmy Chin



Lena Waithe



Shanée Benjamin



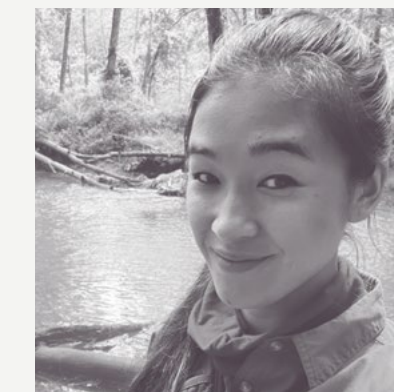
Chris Dean



Dr. Myron Floyd



José G. González



Liz Kleinrock



Jody Potts



Hakim Tafari



Dr. Rae Wynn-Grant

To make the outdoors more welcoming to BIPOC communities, we're committing to...

1. Celebrating the wide range of outdoor experiences in communities we haven't adequately supported.
2. Telling the stories of the ways we're all connected through exploration.
3. Partnering with communities through the Explore Fund Council to jointly redistribute decision making and reinvent our non-profit work.

We believe these goals will help us support the future of outdoor recreation and the outdoor industry. The council has been an opportunity to bring the voices of community members into the decision making process while increasing participation of communities of color in the outdoors.

“There’s so much incredible work that’s already being done. We’re not here to reinvent the wheel or to do things by ourselves, but to use the position and power and privilege we have to amplify and elevate the work that is already happening.”

- Liz Kleinrock, Explore Fund Council Member

As the council worked together to identify change-making organizations in the field, seven practices emerged as ways to support a more inclusive future for exploration. Created from our collective experiences and learning, these practices guided our program. And now, we're using them to develop a broader idea of what exploration looks like, deepen the understanding of how identity informs experience and encourage exploration in its highest expression.

The Practices

These seven practices were developed in partnership with The Explore Fund Council to promote more inclusive exploration. They are intended to supplement to existing bodies of work focused on equity in the outdoors and are by no means comprehensive.

Whether you are a person on the trail, an outdoor program instructor, brand leader or foundation manager, they are designed to support continued work towards a more inclusive future in the outdoors for Black, Indigenous and People of Color.

Truly inclusive exploration will center the truth, experiences and vision of BIPOC groups in the outdoors. This can be achieved by celebrating the ways people explore, promoting traditions and creating dedicated places for discovery, joy and connection.



①

Apply a learner's mindset.

Experience joy in discovery, question the status quo, acknowledge bias, and explore new possibilities.

When it comes to enabling more equitable outdoor exploration, it's important to learn about outdoor culture and its long and expansive history.

Recommended Actions:

Become aware of bias and privilege - Awareness of ingrained stereotypes and associations is important in being able to address them. If you close your eyes and picture an "explorer," who do you see?

Listen, learn, reflect - Investigate and understand the influence and impact that systemic racism and white supremacy has in society and how it manifests in the outdoors.

Expand liberated and safe spaces for joy, healing, discovery, and connection.



2

Open the aperture.

Broaden the focus from mainstream exploration and illuminate a more truthful picture of the world.

People and communities have been on the land and exploring long before there was a definition to outdoor culture. Acknowledging this is a first step. Committing to recognizing, accepting, and celebrating the many ways people connect with the outdoors and exploration is another. There is no end to the ways people explore and connect with nature.

Recommended Actions:

Celebrate underrepresented voices - There is power in both understanding cultural experiences from identity groups other than our own, and exchanging stories with the many groups of people historically excluded from outdoor leadership.

Examine existing narratives. Who is controlling them, who is in them, how are they presented, and who is excluded? How does this perpetuate existing inequities? How does this impact who feels a sense of belonging in the outdoors?

Showcase underrepresented activities - In addition to encouraging more diversity and representation around mainstream activities, what might it look like to expand the definitions that validate activities like stargazing, cultural gatherings, gardening, or other ways people spend time outdoors?



3

Honor community knowledge.

Recognize that there are practices, connections, and ideas beyond what's in the mainstream.

People closest to the experiences or issues have important information, truth, and solutions. Share, empower, and represent these perspectives and ensure these voices inform key decisions.

Recommended Actions:

Amplify what exists - When it comes to ideas around racial equity and inclusion in the outdoors, ensure representation is at the table and seek ways to build from this space. Surface, elevate, and amplify these voices and perspectives.

Embrace a spirit of allyship - Whether it's sharing stories, cultural practices, artifacts, or a point of view, listen deeply to community leaders with an intent to learn, understand, and take action. Find ways to uplift others and recognize when to step up and when to step back.

Build towards cultural relevance - Stay intensely curious and commit to self-education towards understanding cultural identity and experience.



4

Embrace complexity.

Expect to learn and adapt. Lean into discomfort with a curious mindset and openness for dialogue.

Whether it's analyzing your own privilege, reconnecting with past trauma, or acknowledging and taking action against harmful structures, justice work is complex and emotional.

Recommended Actions:

Recognize the need for safety - Many people still experience hostility and harm in the outdoors. With this recognition comes an opportunity for collective solutions, reconciliation, and healing. What role might we each play in creating safe places? How might we contribute to the existing work currently underway?

Practice empathy - Empathy is a powerful tool for listening, understanding, and inspiring action. Discomfort is the birthing ground of personal growth and growth increases one capacity for change. Hire a professional facilitator or explore resources to help you structure empathetic dialogue.

Realize limits of understanding - There is much to learn. Give yourself grace when learning takes longer than you expect. Mistakes are expected and should be acknowledged but it's all part of the process.



5

Build co-powered relationships.

Understand and acknowledge power dynamics and commit to shifting them.

To support inclusive exploration, it's important to understand power. Power dynamics at all levels, whether intentional or unintentional, perpetuate inequity. These power structures exist in all spaces.

Recommended Actions:

Examine relationships - How are current relationships structured? What is the justification behind this and is it connected to power?

Challenge exclusionary mindsets - How can one work "with" communities instead of "for/from" them? How can one shift language embedded in "us/we" and "them"?

Consider how power dynamics show up - Who has the decision-making power? When you are in a position of holding space and power, how might you expand it and invite others in?



6

Seek universal values.

Discover, connect, and uplift the human values that bring us together in the outdoors.

The benefits of exploration affect humanity no matter who we are. Our brainwaves settle, our senses heighten, and it benefits our emotional and physical health. While everyone brings a unique social identity and cultural lens, there are still uniquely human elements shared across exploration, including joy, wonder, discovery, reflection, and connection.

Recommended Actions:

Look to shared human experiences - How can exploration or one's desire to dream serve as a way to connect with others?

Step away from binary thinking - Rather than classifying something as either true or false, how might we hold multiple truths at the same time?



7

Commit to action and follow through.

Implement the systems and accountability needed to enact real change.

Without commitment, actions will not materialize. An inclusive outdoor future requires plans and structural change to dismantle the harmful systems that perpetuate inequity. These types of changes call for concrete resources including attention, time, skills, and effort in order to impact outdoor culture.

Recommended Actions:

Articulate commitments - Speak them and make them actionable. Put plans into place and resource them.

Work with the community - Seek work already being done and ways to contribute or lead. Create conditions for collaboration, shared learning, and progress towards shared outcomes.

Put accountability structures into place - Success against this vision requires new practices and strategies and a commitment to taking responsibility for commitments toward action.



