



# Thorne Nature Experience Inclusiveness Plan 2013-2015

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# Executive Summary

2010-2012 have been some of the most outstanding years in Thorne Nature Experience's 60-year history. All three of Thorne's signature programs the Field Trip, In-School Programs and Summer Camp have year over year achieved record-breaking numbers of youth participation, resulting in more than 10,000 youth being served annually. In 2012, summer camp scholarships were doubled to more than \$40,000 and the number of youth of color in the after school program increased from 35% to 55%.

As Thorne continues to thrive, it is making a commitment to stay relevant and further its mission to build earth stewardship by connecting youth to nature through joyful, hand-on, place-based environmental education experiences through the creation and implementation of an inclusiveness plan.

Sixth Sun Consulting was hired to provide leadership, guidance, and expertise to Thorne while developing its inclusiveness plan. Strategic priorities for the inclusiveness plan were identified through a research process that included a review of internal documents, interviews with organizational stakeholders (executive director, parents, staff, board members and teachers), and regular monthly meetings of Thorne's inclusiveness committee.

The inclusiveness plan outlines strategic priorities to expand Thorne's capacity and strengthen Thorne's position as an up-and-coming leader for inclusiveness in environmental education. Thorne's Board members and staff recognize that inclusive excellence is not an end destination, but instead an ongoing journey of change and transformation. As such, successes, failures, and opportunities will be carefully tracked and the plan will be revised every 2 years.

# Introduction

In 2012, Thorne began developing its inclusiveness plan. The development process included three phases: 1, information gathering; 2, training with board members and staff; and, 3, monthly meetings to develop inclusiveness plans.

After nearly one year of careful crafting, Thorne is launching its inclusiveness plan in 2013. Sponsored by The Denver Foundation's Inclusiveness Project, the plan serves as an organizational map to outline strategic priorities, goals, and the tasks associated with them.

## Purpose and Rationale

Thorne is keenly aware of three key trends within Boulder County:

- increasing Latin@ population,
- declining household income,
- and, growing awareness of the immediate need for earth stewardship.

These trends, combined with an understanding that diversity and an interdependence of relationships are required for all ecosystems to grow and thrive have set the stage for Thorne to become a leader in inclusiveness work within the field of environmental education.

In 2002, The National Association of Environmental Education adopted its first diversity statement to promote diversity and inclusion. Thorne recognizes that following NAEE's lead will enable innovative ideas, greater capacity for engagement, and more opportunities for community partnerships. Going beyond diversity, Thorne believes that by addressing social disparities and creating greater access for participation, all young people can be active in Earth stewardship.

In April of 2012 Thorne initiated its inclusiveness work, making significant gains and also recognizing there were more areas in which to grow. After undergoing a staff and board inclusiveness training, an inclusiveness committee was formed to develop an inclusiveness plan for the organization. Thorne's Inclusiveness Committee comprised of 7 participants including representation from Boulder Valley School District and Thorne's Board, staff, partner organizations, and parents. Working together, members of the committee in partnership with Sixth Sun Consulting and Thorne's Board of Trustees developed an Inclusiveness Statement, Inclusiveness Goals, and an Inclusiveness plan.

## Methodology

Goals and tasks for the inclusiveness plan were developed using a mixed method of qualitative data analysis supported by quantitative data analysis. The areas of measurement included: 1, review of organizational materials; 2, meetings with stakeholders; and, 3, collection of program demographics.

Thorne Nature Experience is finalizing a marketing campaign and has recently produced some incredibly vibrant and informative marketing materials. These new materials, along with former marketing materials, program curriculum, a strategic plan, annual reports, budgets, and the website were all reviewed to determine inclusiveness and how resources were being allocated to create equity within the organization.

One of Thorne's greatest assets is the people who make up its Board, staff, and community of supporters. Eleven individuals who hold various roles within Thorne were interviewed to evaluate the vision of the organization, strengths and challenges, and personal desires for Thorne as they relate to inclusiveness. An interview tool developed by Sixth Sun Consulting guided each interview (See appendix A). Stakeholders interviewed ranged from staff, heads of partner organizations, parents, former and current board members, and the executive director.

Program demographics were collected and used to develop goals and tasks as well as support qualitative data analysis. The most recent data (from 2012-2013) was used to identify how many low income youth and youth of color were utilizing Thorne's three core programs in comparison to middle and wealthy youth and white youth, and identify where gaps existed (See appendix B).

## **Key Findings From Research That Highlight a Need for Inclusiveness Work**

### **Timing is Good to Undertake Inclusiveness Work**

1. Thorne stakeholders are greatly inspired by the mission, staff, and youth participating in programs.
2. A desire for more programming, and especially programming for underserved populations, exists within the community.
3. Thorne's financial and programming capacity is the strongest it has ever been.

### **Thorne Stakeholders Do Not Have an Understanding of Inclusiveness**

1. There is an overall lack of understanding about inclusiveness and why it is important to organizations.
2. A large gap of inclusiveness and its concepts exists between people of color and white people with exposure to inclusiveness work in the capacity of ally-ship versus non-allies within the organization.
3. Many saw inclusiveness as obligatory rather than as a method for transformation within the organization.

### **Conditions Present That Underscore a Lack of Inclusiveness**

1. Thorne is expanding the depth of its work with underserved populations. While many stakeholders value this, there is a growing fear that the organization will get "too big" to sustain itself.

2. Thorne does not have strong relationships or organizational partnerships with low income and communities of color.
3. Thorne has lacked marketability in the past with low income and communities of color, specifically with Spanish speakers.
4. The social environment within Thorne is not welcoming to low income people and communities of color, especially Spanish speakers.
5. With the exception of a few, Thorne stakeholders lack an overall vision of how inclusiveness can strengthen the work and further the mission.
6. Strong relationships resulting in monoculturalism exists within the staff and board of Thorne.

#### Stakeholder Fear and Challenges of Engaging in Inclusiveness Work

1. There is a fear that being inclusive will result in reduced excellence in overall programming instead of enhancing it.
2. A strong fear of not being “politically correct” and making errors exists to the point where people choose not to engage.
3. Monoculturalism within Thorne has resulted in a discomfort about discussing race and class.

# **Inclusiveness Statement**

Thorne believes that, to remain relevant as an organization and ensure access to joyful, hands-on, place-based Environmental Education experiences for all youth, its programs, leadership, and participants must reflect the range of diversity, culture, and unique differences in our community.

## **Inclusiveness Goals**

1. Build and maintain an understanding of the importance of inclusiveness work amongst Thorne's Board and staff.
2. Build and maintain a Board, staff, and volunteer corps that reflect the range of diversity, culture, and unique differences in our community.
3. Build and maintain programs that are inclusive and whose participants reflect the range of diversity, culture, and unique differences in our community.

# Inclusiveness Plan

## **Goal 1 - BUILD AND MAINTAIN AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE IMPORTANCE OF INCLUSIVENESS WORK AMONST THORNE'S BOARD AND STAFF**

**Tasks 1:** Host one inclusiveness training incorporating how to communicate openly and effectively about inclusiveness related topics for the board and staff during the first quarter of each year (close to when new member have joined the board.)

Responsibility: Executive Director  
Deadline: Ongoing beginning 1/1/14

**Task 2:** Quarterly, one member of Thorne's Board or Staff attends inclusiveness learning opportunity and reports back to Board and Staff

Responsibility: Board and Staff  
Deadline: Ongoing beginning 7/1/13

**Task 3:** Review progress in implementing the Inclusiveness Plan annually at a board meeting

Responsibility: Board  
Deadline: Ongoing beginning 6/1/14

**Task 4:** Board will annually assess its effectiveness in communicating openly and effectively with regards to inclusiveness related topics

Responsibility: Board  
Deadline: Ongoing beginning 1/1/14

**Task 5:** Program Director and Executive Director's annual review will include an assessment of their ability to engage the organization in meaningful inclusiveness work, including creating a culture for open dialogue around inclusiveness related topics

Responsibility: Board and Executive Director  
Deadline: Ongoing beginning 6/1/13

**Task 6:** Create a resource link on Thorne Web site for Thorne's Inclusiveness Statement and Inclusiveness Plan

Responsibility: Marketing Coordinator  
Deadline: by 12/31/13

**Task 7:** Develop an Inclusiveness section in the board member’s handbook with readings and articles

Responsibility: Executive Director  
Deadline: by 12/31/13

**Goal 2 – BUILD AND MAINTAIN A BOARD, STAFF, AND VOLUNTEER CORPS THAT REFLECT THE RANGE OF DIVERSITY, CULTURE, AND UNIQUE DIFFERENCES IN OUR COMMUNITY.**

**Task 1:** Ensure that race, ethnicity, and income diversity are prioritized during the Board’s annual nominating and recruitment process

Responsibility: Nominating Committee  
Deadline: Ongoing beginning 9/1/13

**Task 2:** Ensure that Thorne’s Board is comprised of a membership that is at least 20% Latin@

Responsibility: Board  
Deadline: by 12/31/14

**Task 3:** Ensure that Thorne’s Board is economically diverse

Responsibility: Board  
Deadline: by 12/31/14

**Task 4:** Develop a plan for reaching out to diverse audiences when advertising/recruiting new members of the Thorne staff

Responsibility: Executive Director  
Deadline: by 9/30/13

**Task 5:** Ensure that race, ethnicity, and income diversity are prioritized during the advertising/recruitment and hiring of Thorne staff

Responsibility: Executive Director and Program Director  
Deadline: Ongoing beginning 6/1/13

**Task 6:** Strive to increase the percent of Thorne’s staff that are Latin@

Responsibility: Executive Director and Program Director  
Deadline: Ongoing

**Task 7:** Ensure that at least one of Thorne’s Full-Time Paid Educators is bi-lingual speaking both English and Spanish with a high level of proficiency

Responsibility: Executive Director and Program Director  
Deadline: by 12/31/13

**Task 8:** Develop a plan to cultivate interest of Thorne students to choose careers in Environmental Education thereby creating a pipeline of potential future applicants of color for Thorne staff positions

Responsibility: Program Director  
Deadline: by 12/31/13

**Task 9:** Implement Thorne’s plan to encourage students to choose careers in Environmental Education

Responsibility: Program Director  
Deadline: Ongoing beginning 1/1/14

**Task 10:** Develop a plan for reaching out to diverse audiences when advertising/recruiting volunteers and interns

Responsibility: Marketing Coordinator  
Deadline: by 9/30/13

**Task 11:** Ensure that race, ethnicity, and income diversity are prioritized during the advertising/recruitment of volunteers and interns

Responsibility: Marketing Coordinator  
Deadline: Ongoing beginning 6/1/13

**Task 12:** Ensure that at least 20% of Thorne’s volunteers and interns are Latin@

Responsibility: Executive Director and Program Director  
Deadline: by 12/31/15

**Goal 3 – BUILD AND MAINTAIN PROGRAMS THAT ARE INCLUSIVE AND WHOSE PARTICIPANTS REFLECT THE RANGE OF DIVERSITY, CULTURE, AND UNIQUE DIFFERENCES IN OUR COMMUNITY.**

**Task 1:** Revise existing Thorne publications to be more inviting to communities of color

Responsibility: Marketing department  
Deadline: by 12/31/13

**Task 2:** Complete a thorough review of all paperwork required by program participants and ensure they are appropriate for clients with different levels of literacy and when reasonable create a Spanish language alternative

Responsibility: Marketing department  
Deadline: by 12/31/13

**Task 3:** Create a Spanish language brochure for Summer Camp

Responsibility: Marketing department  
Deadline: by 12/31/13

**Task 4:** Create Spanish language brochure for general organization, including basic information on all programs and day use of Marsh

Responsibility: Marketing department  
Deadline: by 12/31/14

**Task 5:** Develop a Spanish language web site

Responsibility: Marketing Coordinator  
Deadline: by 12/31/13

**Task 6:** Place materials in community centers and schools within communities of color

Responsibility: Marketing Department  
Deadline: Ongoing beginning 1/1/14

**Task 7:** Annually assess (internal and external) marketing materials and tactics to ensure Thorne is communicating in culturally competent ways, both verbally and nonverbally

Responsibility: Marketing Department  
Deadline: Ongoing beginning 1/1/14

**Task 8:** Target a minimum of 2 Latin@ organizations to partner with to offer relevant and meaningful environmental education experiences for youth and or families

Responsibility: Program Department  
Deadline: by 12/31/14 (potentially ongoing or revised task based on quality of outcomes)

**Task 9:** Build a relationship with 3 Latin@ organizations to increase the pool of intern candidates

Responsibility: Marketing and Executive Director  
Deadline: Ongoing beginning 1/1/14

**Task 10:** Participate in 2 meet and greet events (i.e. tabling at community events) with local Latin@ organizations (possibly faith based)

Responsibility: Marketing Department  
Deadline: Ongoing beginning 1/1/14

**Task 11:** Host an open house for Latin@ families to visit Sombrero Marsh site

Responsibility: Marketing Department  
Deadline: by 12/31/15 (potentially ongoing or revised task based on quality of outcomes)

**Task 12:** Expand Summer Camp to Longmont

Responsibility: Program Department  
Deadline: Ongoing beginning 6/1/14

**Task 13:** Annually assess opportunities to improve transportation to/from Summer Camp to ensure Summer Camp is as accessible as possible for all audiences

Responsibility: Program Department  
Deadline: Ongoing beginning 9/1/14

**Task 14:** Expand After School Programs to schools with greater than 50% low-income and/or students of color

Responsibility: Program Department  
Deadline: Ongoing beginning 1/1/14

**Task 15:** Offer childcare at meetings to reduce barriers for participation on Board and Committees

Responsibility: Executive Director  
Deadline: Ongoing beginning 6/1/13

## **Conclusion**

With a healthy budget, an amazing staff, board and executive director, growing partnerships, and a commitment to inclusiveness Thorne has the right timing and conditions to see this plan flourish. On a larger scale, as the concept of inclusiveness continues to spread throughout environmental education and earth stewardship is seen as a vital component to our existence on this planet, Thorne's inclusiveness work can be a model for other organizations to follow.



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**Thorne Nature Experience Stakeholder Interview  
For Inclusiveness Initiative**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Position \_\_\_\_\_ How Long with Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

1. How did you become involved with Thorne Nature Experience?
2. What inspires you most about Thorne Nature Experience?
3. What do you envision Thorne Nature Experience to look like 5 years from now?
4. How do you generally define inclusiveness?
5. What would inclusiveness look or feel like at Thorne Nature Experience?
6. Do you have any fears or challenges pertaining to inclusiveness? What are those?
7. What are you looking forward to the most about the inclusiveness work at Thorne Nature Experience?
8. Are there specific aspects of inclusiveness work you are particularly interested in learning?
9. How would you like to be engaged with the inclusiveness work (ie. trainings, additional readings or supplemental resources)?
10. What are your primary styles for learning?

## Appendix B

### Program Demographics for 2012-2013

#### In-School Program

- # Schools – 23
- # Students - 6403
- % People of Color – 53%
- % Free/Reduced Lunch – 52.5%

#### After-School Program

- # Schools – 3 (2 semesters each, 2 classes each semester)
- # Students – 157
- % People of Color – 52%
- % Free/Reduced Lunch – 52%

Nature Experience Field Trips (This includes only the Public Schools we work with. Occasionally, we will fill an open date with a private school or Girl Scout group.)

- # Schools - 9
- # Students - 790
- % People of Color – 28%
- % Free/Reduced Lunch – 28%

#### BVSD 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Field Trips

- # Schools – 23 (of 34)
- # Students - 1768
- % People of Color – 28%
- % Free/Reduced Lunch – 23%

#### Summer Camp

- # Students –961 Regular campers without duplicate registrations, 146 participants from partner school groups
- % People of Color – 12% in regular camps (based on 152 survey responses of regular camp parents)
- % Low Income – 3% below 40,000/year; 9% below 60,000/year in regular camps (based on 116 survey responses of regular camp parents; not related to family size)