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# Heritage Organizations for Rural Social Equity (HORSE)

Advancing human dignity and social equity  
through Oregon's rural GLAMs

# Housekeeping

- 75 min session
- Please feel free to get up and walk around
- Y'all holler if I'm going too fast!
- After a presentation there will be an open discussion session and plenty of time for Q&A etc.

# Housekeeping (cont.)

WE ARE ON INDIGENOUS LAND

THANKS TO THE NATIVE PEOPLES OF THIS PLACE

PRESENT AND PAST:

- Burns Paiute Tribe
- Warm Springs
- Others

# The Problem

- Society is divided
- Marginalized people are vulnerable to oppression
- Rural communities lack attention, investment, social engagement
- They are the frontlines of some of our country's most pressing social issues (diversifying demographics, climate instability, armed violence, loss of local economy etc.)

# Why GLAMs?

(Galleries, Libraries, Archives, Museums)

oregon  
HORSE

- They are reckoning with greater public accountability, including serving as sites for social action
- Traditional visitor and funding bases is declining and new programmatic models are needed to appeal to younger, more diverse audiences
- Call to be more reflective of the communities they serve (socially, politically, ethnically, etc.)

# Who Else is Doing this Work?

- MASS Action
- AAM Facing Change Initiative
- NCPH/AASLH's Inclusive Historians Handbook
- #MuseumsAreNotNeutral

# Why Rural GLAMs?

- They are always left out of so-called “field wide” movements and “national” conversations
- They are most at risk of closures, marginalization of vulnerable people, inaction, and lack of professional development resources
- There are already powerful local grassroots organizations leading social change whose impacts could serve as a model more broadly

# Background

- When small and rural museums participate in social action...
  1. It is rooted in collaboration with other community institutions
  2. The direct service they provide is meant to be a mutual investment in the community and in their own institution
  3. They determine success based on noticeable reductions in the local problems they've identified

(Stocks, 2014 – University of Washington)

Working backwards, I used these findings to create a replicable model for small and rural museums to collaboratively develop mutually beneficial programs and policies that lead to measurable differences in specific local issues.

# Oregon HORSE

Oregon Heritage Organizations for Rural Social Equity (HORSE) is a self-sustained grassroots network of rural museums and heritage organizations across each region of Oregon, whose member institutions acknowledge their role as a representative of local heritage and values, and leverage this power to support the health and well-being of its community and its residents.

# How Sites Participate in HORSE

1. Take the Pledge
2. Develop Organizational Equity Policies
3. Display the HORSE Welcome Sign
4. Program for Local Social Change

# #1. Take the HORSE Pledge

“Our institution, as an organization committed to preserving local history and representing local heritage, affirms our belief that rural museums in Oregon can, and should:

- Be active participants in local efforts to organize for positive social change.
- Empower, stand up for, and challenge their communities to take action on shared local issues.
- Amplify the powerful service work already being done by relevant local organizations and individuals.
- Create welcoming and safe environments for all residents of Oregon’s rural counties to gather, especially those from the most vulnerable demographics.
- Reflect diverse community members’ lived experiences in its programming.
- Collaborate and support other organizations in their efforts to develop more diverse, equitable, inclusive, and accessible practice, ensuring sustained success and equal access to funding opportunities, professional development, and emerging best practices.

# #1. Take the HORSE Pledge (cont.)

In order to move our institution further toward this vision, we as a staff pledge to participate in the following work with the support of local leaders, non-profits, businesses, and volunteers:

1. Develop internal policies to hold ourselves accountable to the highest possible standards of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility.
2. Communicate an institutional commitment in support of vulnerable local populations and affirm the human dignity of all people.
3. Present responsive community programming that catalyzes action on shared local social issues.

We will hold ourselves and each other accountable for meeting these objectives, as we work with our visitors and local stakeholders to build more vibrant and socially engaged communities anchored by our museum."

## #2. Develop Organizational Policies

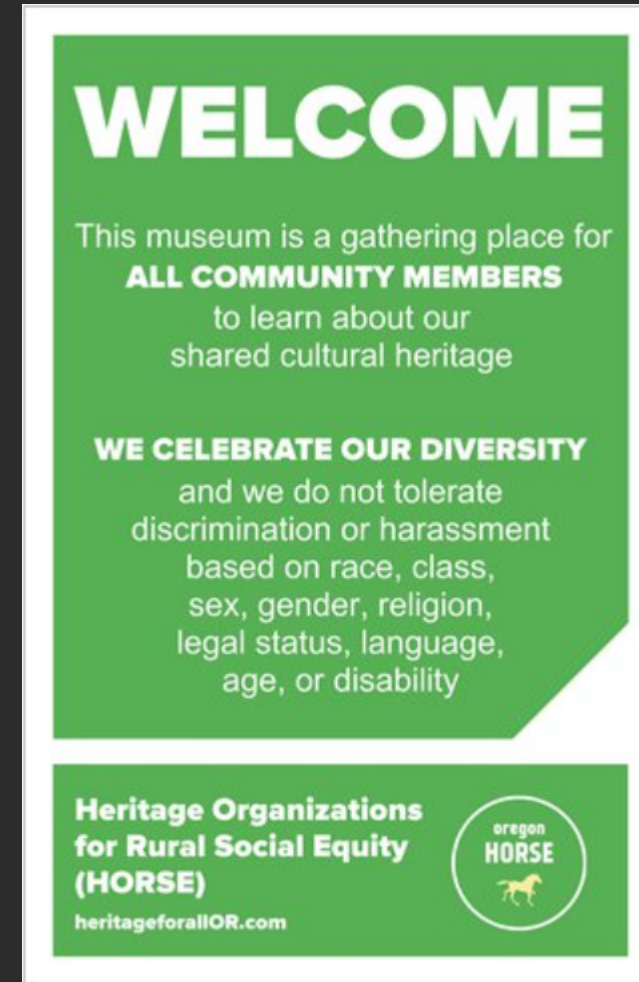
- Create a DEAI (diversity, equity, accessibility, inclusion) policy.
  - This is an internal document to hold staff accountable to standards for equitable practice
- Create an Equity Statement
  - This is an external document to make clear to audiences that this is a place that values and strives for equity

## #3. Display the HORSE Welcome Sign

This window/wall sign is displayed publicly by all participating sites:

“WELCOME, This museum is a gathering place for ALL COMMUNITY MEMBERS to learn about our shared cultural heritage.

WE CELEBRATE OUR DIVERSITY and we do not tolerate discrimination or harassment based on race, class, sex, gender, religion, legal status, language, age, or disability.”



## #4. Program for Local Social Change

- At least once per year, invite the public to the museum for a program concerning a specific local social issue
- The issue to address is up to each site
- The goal of your programming should be to A.) create a safe, non-combative space for conversation and information (ie: “raising awareness”) and B.) resources and follow up towards resolving/minimizing the shared issue (ie: “taking action”)

## Oregon HORSE (cont.)

HORSE is a self-guided framework. I am providing remote mentorship/encouragement and acting as a web master, but ultimately adherence to each of the model's steps is for the participating sites to hold themselves accountable to.

Sites will give to their own capacity and work to build inclusive practice through the steps in their own time and in ways that are reflective of their mission and the community's specific needs.

The only limit is that sites *MUST* affirm their commitment to the dignity and wellbeing of all community members and make space for them to celebrate shared local heritage through their institution.

# 2019 Participating Museums

- Clatsop County Historical Society (Astoria)
- Coos History Museum (Coos Bay)
- A. R. Bowman Museum (Prineville)
- Columbia Gorge Discovery Center (The Dalles)
- Maxville Heritage Interpretive Center (Joseph)

# 2019 Participating Museums

## Clatsop County Historical Society (Astoria)



Working to address the local opioid crisis with a two-part lecture series addressing historical and contemporary addiction.

# 2019 Participating Museums

## Coos History Museum (Coos Bay)



Creating a new local memorial plaque for downtown history walking tour, marking the site of Oregon's only documented lynching of an African American. Will have an accompanying ceremony with soil collection and literary reflections from local high school students

# 2019 Participating Museums

## A. R. Bowman Museum (Prineville)



Developing a workshop for local residents to build knowledge and skills around wildfire preparedness, as their community is Oregon's most wildfire threatened. Workshop sessions will be offered in both English and Spanish.

# 2019 Participating Museums

## Columbia Gorge Discovery Center (Joseph)



Making international outreach to local Latinx communities for the first time through Latin American Heritage Month program series.

*Fri. Oct. 11 6PM & Thu. Oct. 24 6PM  
Please attend!*

# Sustainability

As sites participate in the four steps of HORSE, I am developing the following tools for sustained practice:

- A HORSE Handbook outlining the four steps and why they matter
- The HORSE website ([heritageforallOR.com](http://heritageforallOR.com))
- Downloadable templates for Equity Statement, DEAI Policy plus readings
- Inviting other museums into the Oregon cohort

# Lessons Learned

- Staff turnover is REAL
- People are busy and communication is hard
- Technology is not always the answer
- Everything takes longer than you'd expect

# How YOU Can Help

- Patronize the public programs of the participating HORSE museums in your region
- Offer your expertise and social organizing to inform other site's program
- Invite rural museums into your communities of professional practice
- Join HORSE! (Designed for small and rural heritage museums, but model is applicable for any GLAM)