



## **2024 Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Commission Annual Report**

### **A Year of Progress:**

Throughout 2024, the Commission embarked on a transformative journey, culminating in a series of impactful initiatives aimed at fostering community engagement, equity, and inclusivity in Ellensburg. The year began with the adoption of a comprehensive spending plan, providing a robust framework for the Commission's activities and priorities.

As part of its commitment to inclusivity, the Commission updated the questions for its Listening Tours, ensuring that they resonated with the diverse voices within the community. These tours facilitated meaningful conversations with various populations, enhancing the Commission's understanding of local needs and aspirations. Listening sessions included community members from the Disability community, the 2SLGBTQ community and the Nepalese community, in all approximately 30 to 40 people shared their personal experiences of living in Ellensburg. Comments shared during these sessions included common themes around "more cultural events," "more resources for finding and connecting with others," "more visibility reflecting the diversity of Ellensburg," and "more emphasis on all are welcome here."

Collaboration was one of the cornerstones of the Commission's approach. Partnerships were strengthened with key organizations, including Central Washington University, the Ellensburg School District, the Kittitas County Historical Museum, the Ellensburg Downtown Association, and more. These collaborations not only enriched the Commission's outreach but also resulted in a vibrant Juneteenth celebration that brought the community together to honor Black history and culture.

In its commitment to support local projects, the Commission developed a grant process for 2024 and awarded \$6,000 to seven deserving applicants. The grants funded a range of projects, including the Ellensburg Bail Fund's video project addressing the history of bail funds and their role in dismantling racism, and the Eastside Opportunity Center's "What's Cooking" classes aimed at promoting healthy eating on a budget. Other recipients included the Kittitas Environmental Education Network, CWU EthicsLab, Gallery One, Trout Unlimited, and Helen House, each of these community programs contributing uniquely to the community's growth and inclusivity.

The partnership with Helen House helped fund the Pizza Klatch program at Ellensburg High School, providing pizza, refreshments, and a safe and inclusive space for SOGIE (Sexuality, Orientation, Gender, Identity, Expression) youth and their allies. With attendance ranging from 20 to 30+ students a week, and an average of 27 students weekly over the year, this partnership highlights the Commission's commitment to youth engagement.

The Commission also took strides in recognizing the importance of diverse heritages and identities through the creation of multiple proclamations recognizing monthly observances. Celebrating significant months such as National Black History Month, Native American Heritage Month, 2SLGBTQ Pride Month, and Disability Employment Awareness, the Commission sought to honor the rich tapestry of the community. Additionally, social media posts highlighted observances like Martin Luther King Day and Indigenous Peoples' Day, fostering awareness and dialogue among residents.



In response to a request from City Council who was dealing with Zoom bombings at council meetings, the Commission discussed the establishment of a rapid response team and advocated for the restoration of virtual public comments on non-agenda items, ensuring that every voice could be heard. This commitment to transparency was complemented by the onboarding of two new members, enriching the Commission's diversity and perspectives.

In April 2024, the Commission co-hosted World Café: Campus & Community Dialogue at Central Washington University, bringing together approximately 25 attendees to share insights and foster collaboration.

Members also contributed to community events by serving on subcommittees, such as the Unity Park Grand Celebration Planning Committee, Unity Park Grand Opening Celebration, and the Transportation Safety Action Plan Vision Zero Task Force, reflecting the Commission's dedication to holistic community well-being.

As 2024 drew to a close, the Commission's efforts culminated in support for the fall Human Library event at Hal Holmes, partnering with CWU EthicsLab to facilitate storytelling sessions that deepened community through real-time connections.

The narrative of the Commission's 2024 journey is one of growth, collaboration, and a steadfast commitment to building an inclusive community. Through its various initiatives, the Commission not only enhanced the lives of individuals but also forged a path toward a more equitable future for all in Ellensburg.