

## Ethnicity and Participation in Environmental Action

Changing Landscapes Conference  
Swansea 12th April 2005  
Presentation - Judy Ling Wong OBE  
Black Environment Network

## Black Environment Network

*Mission Statement:*

*Establishing full ethnic participation  
in the built and natural environment*

*There is no such thing as a pure  
environmental project*

A so called pure environmental  
project is one that has rejected its  
social and cultural context

### The Scope of Strategic Development of Ethnic Environmental Participation in North Wales (Research March'04)

#### **A. The Context**

- Legal requirement to promote racial equality
- No initiative in North Wales enabling ethnic environmental participation
- Need to attend to areas of sparse ethnic presence
- The social benefits of engaging with ethnic communities has brought forward organisations and community groups new to this field
- Environmental, social, cultural, and economic outcomes are linked

### **B. The engagement of organisations with ethnic environmental participation**

#### **ii. Degree of involvement**

Of the 19 organisations taking part:

- 58% had a Race Equality Scheme
- 53% had an outreach programme
- 37% had experience of work with people from BME backgrounds, but 60% of these were under 1 year old and only 20% had one which was over 2 years old

### **B. The engagement of organisations with ethnic environmental participation (cont.)**

#### **iii. Information and skills**

■ The need for sharing and mutual support:

- information
- knowledge
- experience
- skills

#### **iv. Training and developmental services**

- They felt that the desire for action is being hampered by lack of knowledge, skills and development support and that there is a need for training and development support.

### Training and services related to internal systems and policy:

- *Awareness raising* 76%  
Knowledge to develop activities that are socially and culturally relevant.
- *Understanding needs and skills* 92%  
Facilitation of contact with ethnic groups, skills that enable staff to work relevantly and effectively with ethnic groups.
- *Developmental support* 88%  
Advice to fine tune/plan programmes of work to include ethnic groups.

### Training and services relating to external systems/front-line staff working in or with communities:

- *Assessing activities for relevance* 68%
- *Assessing educational/promotional for suitability* 80%
- *Advice on consulting and involving BME communities* 92%
- *Advice on planning cultural events* 80%

### v. A network or forum



- The idea of setting up a network, forum or co-ordinated joint support group was agreed to be 'significant' by 99% of the individuals and organisations interviewed.

### vi. Partnership with BEN



- All the organisations interviewed felt that partnership with BEN would be beneficial

### C. The views of ethnic community representatives

- Other than knowing about the work of BEN across the UK and having environmental knowledge relating to their own interests, none of the participants knew of any specific environmental projects involving BME groups.
- There are environmental areas of concern to which the life concerns of people from BME communities are connected.
- BME groups and individuals want to get involved

### C. The views of ethnic community Representatives (continued)

- The interviewees were not new to the concept of BEN as a catalyst for environmental participation and felt that BEN can play a key role. They felt BEN needed to:
  - Highlight itself in North Wales
  - Communicate the environment as a whole in a way that is relevant to BME communities
  - Create and facilitate opportunities for environmental contact and participation

## D. Recommendation 1

### - Set up a network or forum

A network or forum focused on ethnic environmental participation should be set up to support organisations wishing to involve ethnic communities in environmental participation.

### The forum or network should aim to:

- enable organisations to
  - share information
  - share good practice
  - pool resources as appropriate
  - provide mutual support
- co-ordinate work, consultations and research on common themes
- act as an overall link to ethnic community representatives
- provide a focus for policy and working practice development
- act as a stimulus to partnership working and joint initiatives or projects

## D. Recommendation 2

### - Set up a developmental project

- BEN should set up a developmental project in North Wales to support the development of ethnic environmental participation.

### The developmental project should aim to:

- **provide training and developmental support to environmental and other organisations** wishing to involve ethnic communities
- facilitate contact and **support the development of working relationships** between ethnic communities and environmental / other relevant organisations
- **support ethnic communities** undertaking environmental projects and / or working in partnership with environmental organisations
- **track developments and to represent** the needs, concerns and wishes of **ethnic communities** in relation to environmental participation
- **spearhead the development of methodology** for working effectively to enable ethnic environmental participation in an area of sparse ethnic presence

[www.ben-network.org.uk](http://www.ben-network.org.uk)

- Information
- Training and consultancy services
- Examples of good practice
- Resources (free downloads)

n Membership note : Free to community groups  
and individuals

n [ukoffice@ben-network.org.uk](mailto:ukoffice@ben-network.org.uk) 01286 870 715