

# Socially Just Conservation Best Practices

**Goal:** Integrate marginalized populations into Vermont's progressive conservation agenda.

1. Begin with a mutually agreed upon project between a community and researcher or organization.
2. You, the researcher or organization, will eventually leave the community. Your role is to facilitate, not tell. To participate, not direct.
3. Do your prep work. A lot of background research is needed before you integrate into the community. For example, read the Town Plan and identify key individuals and institutions within the community.
4. Show up at any and all events you are invited to. Get to know people in the community. Build relationships. Expect to spend 6-8 weeks doing this. Actively integrate this time into your work plan. Anticipate your time spent to be 75% on people and 25% on ecology.
5. Listen (this is your gift to other people). Be patient. Be open. For example, if you are asked to buy a gallon of maple ice cream, do it.
6. Find out what sparks joy for other people. Hold onto that. Harness that.
7. Be ethical and effective throughout the project. Every organization should develop a framework for this within their mission. Have a system of checks and balances to make sure your work maintains and improves this framework. For example, create a Community Advisory Board and/or hire consulting anthropologists and geographers for projects.
8. Make decisions together. Embrace the themes and language generated by the community through interviews, surveys, focus groups, and events.
9. Create deliverables that contain action items people are capable of doing. Be realistic and avoid jargon.
10. Let go of the outcome.

*Note:* It took me a year to get to the point of developing this list; it is incomplete and always will be.

