

**ASHLAND SOCIAL EQUITY AND RACIAL JUSTICE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES**

October 9, 2025

Otte-Peterson Conference Room at the Grove - 1195 East Main - 4:30PM

I. Call to Order and Welcome

The meeting was called to order at 4:30PM

Members present: Catherine Greenspan, John Tyler, Cassie Preskenis, Sean Smith, and Allison Mendel.

Staff present: Kerrick Gooden

Guests present: Kenwani Kravitz and Peter Finkle

1. Land Acknowledgment - We acknowledge and honor the aboriginal people on whose ancestral homelands we work -the Ikirakutsum Band of the Shasta Nation, as well as the diverse and vibrant Native communities who make their home here today. We denounce the egregious acts of the colonizers and government and recognize the horrific impacts that still exist today. We honor the first stewards in the Rogue Valley and the lands we love and depend on: Tribes with ancestral lands in and surrounding the geography of the Ashland Watershed include the original past, present and future indigenous inhabitants of the Shasta, Takelma and Athabaskan people. We also recognize and acknowledge the Shasta village of K'wakhakha - "Where the Crow Lights" - that is now the Ashland City Plaza

Preskenis read the land acknowledgment

2. Labor Acknowledgment - We also pause to recognize and acknowledge the labor upon which our country, state, and institutions are built. We remember that our country is built on the labor of enslaved people who were kidnapped and brought to the U.S. from the African continent and recognize the continued contribution of their survivors. We also acknowledge all immigrant labor, including voluntary, involuntary, trafficked, forced, and undocumented peoples who contributed to the building of the country and continue to serve within our labor force. We acknowledge all unpaid care-giving labor. To the people who contributed this immeasurable work and their descendants, we acknowledge their indelible mark on the space in which we gather today. It is our collective responsibility to critically examine these histories, to repair harm, and to honor, protect, and sustain their contribution to our society.

Mendel read the land acknowledgment

II. Approval of Minutes from 9.4.2025 Meeting

1. Approval of minutes from the 9.4.2025 regular meeting

Greenspan moved to approve the minutes. Preskenis seconded the motion. All ayes - motion passed.

III. Special Presentations

1. Kenwani Kravitz - Native Nations Liaison for SOU - Significance of Indigenous Peoples Day (October 13) and Native American Heritage Month (November)

Kravitz introduced herself as Southern Oregon University's (SOU) Native Nations Liaison and had come to speak from her heart regarding Indigenous Peoples Day (IPD). Indigenous Peoples Day will be recognized nationally on October 13. However, recent uncertainty at SOU paused planning for this year's local IPD event, which has pivoted to an event in honor of Native American Heritage Month on November 15 in SOU's Rogue River Room with Native dancers, artists, speakers, and food (see flyer attached). Kravitz reflected on her help organizing a citywide IPD celebration in Redding, CA and proposed a collaboration between SOU and the City of Ashland for a citywide IPD event in 2026. She visualized a parade and Native Artisan Market as part of the celebration that would draw folks to town and build bridges between communities. Kravitz clarified that she did not represent the local tribes, Grand Ronde and Siletz, and encouraged the committee to connect with them directly. She explained the concept of manifest destiny used to justify the killing and displacement of the original peoples of Ashland to the current reservations of Grand Ronde and Siletz, and explained how reparations could move beyond a land acknowledgment to more active recognition and inclusion of Native contributions to modern society.

The committee discussed the robust planning and turnout for the annual MLK celebration and the potential for something similar in honor of Native peoples. Discussion included the need for ongoing inclusion of local Native issues in future agendas and asked Gooden to reach out for appropriate contacts for Grand Ronde and Siletz.

2. Peter Finkle — historical significance of the 'Pioneer Mike' sculpture at the Ashland Plaza

Preskenis introduced Finkle as an advisor to the Public Arts Advisory Committee (PAAC) with extensive knowledge of the City's public art collection. She had invited Finkle to speak on the historical perspective on the statue known

as 'Pioneer Mike' in an effort to explore alternative views after a previous committee discussion explored questions about the statue: if it still represents Ashland or if a relocation to make room for a more representative artwork was in order.

Finkle explained that 'Pioneer Mike' was the first public art in Ashland, which currently has 63 works in its public art collection, and was donated in 1920 by the children of Henry and Harriet Carter who were active in local business. Finkle explained the statue is not a likeness of anyone in particular and was most recently replaced with a bronze replica made for Ashland in 2015.

Finkle had put together a consideration of BIPOC-related, BIPOC-created, and/or BIPOC-welcoming art in Ashland (see attached). The committee discussed briefly the composition of the current public art collection as well as the current cultural climate, and considered when would be the best time to bring up this topic again for consideration.

IV. Public Forum

none

V. Unfinished Business

1. Belonging Survey - review of draft in Survey Monkey and decide on timeline

The committee discussed that the final version of the Belonging Survey is ready to launch through Survey Monkey and discussed its timeline. The committee decided to launch prior to the upcoming Housing and Human Services Resource Fair on October 20th so that paper survey responses can be gathered. Gooden will work with the City's communications officer on a news release, publicity, and timing for the launch and let the committee know when it goes live. The committee discussed keeping it up through the fall holiday season, and may request a second publicity effort depending on the level of response. Paper versions can be printed by Gooden for committee members to use in gathering responses during various upcoming community events from community members that may prefer that method.

2. Planning for wide distribution of Belonging Survey

Gooden will e-mail the committee when the Belonging Survey launches. The Committee discussed adding a QR code to the printed survey that will link to the online survey and discussed gathering responses at local events and locations. Gooden can print paper surveys as requested by committee members prior to anticipated events. Mendel will staff the Housing and Human Services Advisory Committee's Resource Fair on behalf of SERJAC on October 20 and have printed surveys available.

3. Update - Letter to the Editor of Sneak Preview has been published to the October edition

The committee discussed this was published.

VI. Liaison Updates and Reports

1. Update from current liaison assignments:
Greenspan – Planning Commission
Tyler – Climate and Energy Policy Advisory Committee
Preskenis – Transportation Advisory Committee
Simon – Public Arts Advisory Committee
Mendel – Housing and Human Services Advisory Committee
Smith -- Parks

Greenspan shared that the last Planning meeting included a training - nothing substantive for discussion.

Tyler shared that CEPAC talked about electric rate charges and discussed the decrease in federal funding for initiatives.

Preskenis shared that transportation discussed that bus routes have been reduced due to funding issues and will be considering how to manage high responses to SeeClickFix reports.

Preskenis also shared that PAAC has had issues meeting quorum, but the big news is that Micah Blacklight's project (Ancestor's Future: Crystallizing Our Call) has received an anonymous donation of full funding! PAAC discussed plans for a playwright plaque by artist Betty LaDuke that will have a matching plaque placed in Guanajuato as one of Ashland's Sister Cities. PAAC will be proposing artwork for Ashland's entrance on the south side of town.

Mendel shared HHSAC had a presentation by a tech worker at OSF regarding how difficult it is to live in Ashland, discussed changes to the HUD contract language, and discussed housing as everyone's problem. HHSAC's staff liaison Linda Reid will come to SERJAC's November meeting to discuss collaboration on the Housing Equity Plan. Mendel also shared that the monthly meeting of committee chairs (CoCoConvo) talked about BlackLight's project funding, art in parks, and ADA parking and access going in at the Japanese garden.

VII. New Business

VIII. Announcements and Events

1. **Ashland Pride Parade**
Saturday, October 4, 2025 - 10:00am - 2:00PM

2. **An Evening with John A. Powell**
Monday October 6, 2025 - 6:30-8:30PM - Agnes Bowmer Theater - Oregon Shakespeare Festival
3. **Indigenous Peoples Day**
Monday October 13, 2025

IX. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 6:00PM

Native American Heritage
Month
Celebration
at
Southern Oregon University

**Saturday
November 15, 2025**

**Stevenson Union
11:00AM-4:00PM**

Native Artisans Market, Food,
Dancers and Speakers

Everyone is welcome!

For more information contact:
Kenwani Kravitz
KRAVITZK@SOU.EDU
(541)552-6937



Volunteer Sign up



Vendor Sign up



BIPOC-related, BIPOC-created, and/or BIPOC-welcoming art in Ashland

list created by Peter Finkle
October 2025

Introduction: Our built environment, including art, has an effect on all of us in so many ways. Trying to describe art through a social justice and racial equity lens is an impossible task, but we try anyway. I find it frustrating and presumptuous to try to determine what art is "BIPOC-related, BIPOC-created, and/or BIPOC-welcoming," but I hope my list will have some value for this group.

This list is one person's attempt to give the members of the Social Equity and Racial Justice Advisory Committee an overview of art in Ashland as it relates to the focus of your committee. If committee members find this list useful (or confusing), I would be glad – at a future meeting – to expand on why I have included each artwork on the list.

City of Ashland Public art collection

Rio Amistad Artist: Sue Springer and Karen Rycheck Date: 2005
Gift Artist: Wataru Sugiyama Date: 2009/2012
"We Are Here" Artist: Russell Beebe, Jack Langford Date: 2013
Seasons of Gratitude Artist: Denise Baxter Date: 2014
Las Calles de Guanajuato Artist: Loreta (Laura Rangel Villaseñor) (assisted by Denise Baxter and others) Date: 2016
BIPOC Celebration Mural Artist: Isa Martinez Moore Date: 2021
Golden Connections Artist: Jennifer Corio and Dave Frei Date: 2022
Otterlifter Canoe Artist: Gray Eagle, George Fence, Ivan Otterlifter Date: 2022
Ashland's Chinatown, bronze sidewalk plaque Designed by: Public Art and Historic Preservation sub-committee Cast by: Masterworks Plaques Date: 2023
Walking Upstream Artist: Glory Nylander Date: 2024
Lorraine Hansberry quote, Playwrights Walk bronze sidewalk plaque ("One cannot live with sighted eyes and feeling heart and not know or react to the miseries which afflict this world.")
Date: 2025 Designed by: Micah BlackLight Cast by: Jack Langford

In this very rough overview below (again, one person's perspective), you can see that the city has made a strong commitment in the past five years to increase the amount of what I am calling artworks with a BIPOC-related, BIPOC-created, and/or BIPOC-welcoming theme.

Total public art collection, as of 9/1/2025 – 63 total

Public artworks with a BIPOC-related, BIPOC-created, and/or BIPOC-welcoming theme, as of 9/1/2025 – 11 total **(17%)**

Public artworks dedicated, from 2021 to 2025 – 14 total

Public artworks with a BIPOC-related, BIPOC-created, and/or BIPOC-welcoming theme, from 2021 to 2025 – 6 total **(43%)**

Art at SOU and other schools (not in the public art collection)

Ashland Middle School - Christie Boyd, Grizzly mural with Wilma Rudolph quote, 2020.

SOU Hannon Library -

Russell Beebe, "We Are Here" wood carving, 2006 (moved to Hannon Library 2012)

Russell Beebe, Bear bench, 2012

Russell Beebe, Salmon bench, 2012

Russell Beebe, Cougar bench, 2012

Meera Censor, sculpture busts of humanitarian leaders

Mahatma Gandhi

Kasturabai Gandhi

Martin Luther King, Jr.

Mother Teresa

H.H. The Dalai Lama

Cesar Chavez

Danilo Dolci

Meena

Peter Berenson

Mairead Corrigan McGuire

Betty Williams

Albert Schweitzer

Dr. Marshall Rosenberg

Albert Einstein

John Muir

Nelson Mandela

Desmond Tutu

Sister Chan Khong

Tariq Khamisa

Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo

Father Gregory Boyle

Dr. Catherine Hamlin

Betty LaDuke – many paintings

Thalden Pavilion at SOU –

Russell Beebe, Anishinaabe Teaching Pole, wood carving, 2018.

Betty LaDuke, Sunflower, painting on wood, 2020.

Betty LaDuke, Tomato pickers, painting on wood, 2020.

Betty LaDuke, Grape pickers, painting on wood, 2020.

City Parks (not in the public art collection)

North Mountain Park –

Mural in lobby by Sarah Cribb, 2002 (Native American theme)

Full-room mural in Exhibit Center by Jenna Kesgen, 2010 and 2015 (Native American cultural elements)

Elders' Tale by Cheryl Garcia, 2012 (Native American theme)

Lithia Park –

Japanese lantern by Wataru Sugiyama, 2020

Ashland Library (not in the public art collection)

Collection of art from Guanajuato, Mexico

Betty LaDuke: Cherry Harvest, 2008.

Betty LaDuke, family and sun

Neighborhoods around town (not in the public art collection)

"Adenika" mermaid mural by Micah Blacklight (2024; paint on composite garage door)

East Main Street

"Bonding" by Wataru Sugiyama (2016; marble)

Clear Creek Drive

Wataru Sugiyama small stone sculpture (carved stone)

Augusta Court

(and probably many more I am not yet aware of)