CREAM CITY CONSERVATION
Interview Guide

2022
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Land Acknowledgement

We Acknowledge...

That Milwaukee, where Cream City Conservation is located, is on occupied Potawatomi, Ho-Chunk and Menominee homeland along the southwest shores of Michigami, North America's largest system of freshwater lakes, where the Milwaukee, Menominee and Kinnickinnic rivers meet and the people of Wisconsin's sovereign Anishinaabe, Ho-Chunk, Menominee, Oneida and Mohican nations remain present.

Why This Matters

For non-Indigenous communities, land acknowledgment is a powerful way of showing respect and honoring the Indigenous Peoples of the land on which we work and live. Acknowledgment is a simple way of resisting the erasure of Indigenous histories and working towards honoring and inviting the truth.

Inspired by the 94 recommended calls to action contained in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (now known as the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, or NCTR), land acknowledgements are a necessary first step toward honoring the original occupants of a place. They also help us recognize and respect Indigenous peoples’ inherent kinship beliefs when it comes to the land, especially since those beliefs were restricted for so long. Land acknowledgement also a first step in recognizing the attempted genocide of Indigenous peoples, which spans centuries—The NCTR’s recommendations help provide a solid framework for reconciliation for the injustices that have been carried out against Indigenous communities: broken treaty relationships, residential schools, the Sixties Scoop, and continued attempts by government (federal, state, provincial and territorial) and religious groups to control the Indigenous family unit, resources and access to services.
Our Big Idea & Mission

The Big Idea
We believe that to change the face of conservation, we need to change the culture of work within the environmental industry. We recognize that due to systemic inequities and sustained systems of oppression and privilege, the environmental sectors that receive the most publicity, funding and acknowledgement do not reflect the diversity of the current workforce, and frankly, never have.

In order to change the racially inequitable outcomes we see; we must change the systems that produce them and the individuals that participate (consciously or unconsciously) in maintaining them. We do this through a two-prong approach of fostering the next generation of environmental stewards through paid on-the-job training experiences and service to public lands, while simultaneously supporting the existing industry in recognizing and eradicating practices that are keeping them racially homogenous and empowering them to intentionally attract and retain a thriving, diverse workforce.

Company Mission
To inspire people, who inspire people, to live socially and environmentally just.
Our Story & Vision

Our Story

Cream City Conservation was officially founded in October 2016 by August M. Ball. After the unexpected cessation of a national conservation program she had managed in the state of Wisconsin for nearly a decade, August leveraged a social impact business model to support colleagues at various green organizations in creating more culturally responsive and equitable practices through consultations and workshops. The profits from the consulting were used to temporarily keep former corps members of the defunct conservation program engaged in service to public lands and waterways. While August never intended for her passion project to turn into an actual business, demand for her services grew beyond the Midwest via word of mouth. Cream City Conservation now serves clients all over world, including Toronto, Canada and South Africa. Profits, however, continue to be invested locally into the Milwaukee-based corps programs which train and employ predominantly Black, Indigenous, People of the Global Majority, Women and Returning Citizens for environmental careers.

Founder’s Vision

A city, a country, a world, filled with generations of planetary denizens and social justice advocates
About Us

Cream City Conservation is a two-prong social enterprise and certified B Corps, (in fact, we are the first Black-Owned Certified B Corps in Wisconsin). We help organizations attract diverse candidate pools and institute strategies that develop better teams and retain top talent, making their workforce stronger and smarter and their programs more sustainable and relevant. Simultaneously, Cream City Conservation Corps cultivates the next generation of environmental stewards by introducing and training traditionally excluded young adults in ecological and water sector career pathways.

Together, we are changing the face of conservation, and making Milwaukee, GREEN and EQUITABLE.

Our Logo

Our logo represents our founder’s favorite trail tool: The PULASKI. The Pulaski is used for constructing firebreaks, able to both dig soil and chop wood. It is also well adapted for trail construction and can be used for gardening and other outdoor work for general excavation and digging holes in root-bound or hard soil. Much like the Pulaski, Cream City Conservation takes an innovative, multifaceted approach to solving complex problems. The duality of the tool is equally manifested in Cream City Conservation’s two-prong approach to diversifying the environmental industry: through industry culture shift and individual career exploration. Our colors, GREY and GOLD represent foundational strength and courage and optimism and hope for the future, respectively.
Company
Values

Our (Company) Values

- **Life-Long Learning** – For us, this means that we celebrate failures as opportunities to learn, that it is safe to make mistakes and that we always come together from a place of dignity and mutual accountability for growth.

- **Optimism** – In order for us to do our best work, we must hold fast to the belief that environmental justice is possible. That we can dismantle inequitable social structures, change hearts and minds with education and build a world where one's identity does not determine their ability to thrive.

- **Diversity** – Diversity is not just about the differences among us, but rather, how those differences inform how we experience the world and how the world interacts with us. We work to disrupt all forms of oppression and white supremacy culture. Our goal is to foster an environment of belonging, prioritizing those commonly excluded and marginalized. We borrow from the work of Karl Popper’s Paradox of Tolerance and do not tolerate intolerance.

- **Empowerment** – We believe that those impacted by the work, must have a say in the work. We empower our crews to establish expectations and agreements that meet their needs. We ensure our clients understand that we cannot transform their organizations for them, our role is to provide education and tools. It is up to them to apply them.
A few high notes along the way...

- Cream City Conservation was founded in October 2016 and ownership is proudly maintained by August M. Ball, a (mixed-race, multi-lingual) Black woman who has served as an appointee to Governor Ever’s Climate Action Taskforce and Milwaukee City & County Climate & Economic Equity Taskforce. In addition, August has served on the US Water Alliance’s Water Equity Taskforce, representing Milwaukee as a delegate.

- Cream City Conservation has received numerous awards and recognitions, including the YWCA Eliminating Racism Award, The Field Museum’s Parker Gentry Award, United Way’s Philanthropic 5, Wisconsin Conservation Voters Green Tie Awardee, WI Association of Environmental Educators Eco-Justice Award and was a 2-time finalist for WARF’s Force for Positive Change.

- Cream City Conservation has over 100 consulting clients from Milwaukee to Toronto to South Africa. We support government agencies, non-for-profits and private businesses.

- Cream City Conservation has trained and employed hundreds of Milwaukee teens and young adults in hands-on service to public lands

- We’re in the NEWS: https://flow.page/creamcityconservation
Things Employees Should Know

Paid Time Off (PTO) Policy

- Employees (crew members/participants excluded) who are hired to work 30 hours or more for at least 7 months are allowed 30 hours paid time off per calendar year. These days may be used for vacation, sick time, etc. and are available after the first 30 days of employment.

- Employees must notify their direct supervisor in writing for non-emergency usage of PTO at least 1 week in advance to allow for accommodations.

- Cream City Conservation operations close for all federal holidays. Special projects on federal holidays are optional workdays and paid at regular rate unless overtime (over 80 hours/pay period) is obtained. Overtime must be pre-approved by CEO.
Dress Code

Employees and participants must wear their uniform when working. In addition to the uniform (shirt, hoodie), employees and participants must also wear all leather workboots (above the ankle), safety gloves/goggles, jeans or work pants (Ex. carhartt’s/Dickies, etc.).

Prohibited Attire

We encourage employees and participants to express themselves through their clothing choices as they wish outside of work hours. The nature of our work exposes staff to hazardous plant matter, insect bites, etc. Therefore, sleeveless shirts, leggings, shorts, and jeans/pants that are excessively loose or tight, or have significant tearing pose a hazard to worker health and the worksite and are therefore prohibited. Shorts may be allowed on a case-by-case basis based on the worksite of the crew. Approval from CEO must be obtained.
COVID-19 RESPONSE

COVID-19 Policy

- Cream City Conservation requires all employees and participants to provide proof of vaccination or provide proof of negative covid test weekly.
- Should an employee or participant suspect exposure to covid-19, they must notify their supervisor immediately and get tested.
- If testing is required during work hours, employees and participants will be compensated for up to 3 hours to obtain an antigen, Rapid or PCR test.
- Employees and participants must show proof of negative covid test prior to returning to work. Should an employee contract Covid, they will be required to quarantine for 14 days and will be paid for up to 10 days of covid-19 sick leave provided they have shown proof of vaccination.

Personal Hygiene Expectations

For personal health and courtesy to colleagues, all employees are required to follow the following protocols: The following hygiene requirements are applicable to all employees:

- Maintain personal cleanliness by bathing regularly and washing hands frequently
- Oral hygiene (brushing of teeth) required.
- Use deodorant/antiperspirant to minimize body odors
A Menu of Services

The consulting firm known as Cream City Conservation & Consulting LLC, earns revenue through speaking engagements, conducting equity audits and inclusion assessments to organizations and a suite of educational workshops to increase racial literacy and capacity for cultivating belonging in the workplace. The profits from this work support the Cream City Conservation Corps program expenses that are not covered by fee-for-service work.

Cream City Conservation Corps provides paid training and employment experiences for teens and young adults in the Milwaukee area. Corps programs range from trail building, invasive species management, green infrastructure installation and maintenance and urban agriculture. Worksites are typically on public land and waterways.
Pro Bono Conservation Services

Cream City Conservation operates a two-prong social enterprise in which we provide consulting services to help environmental organizations attract and retain diverse talent, while also nurturing the development of diverse talent through our Conservation Corps programs. Conservation Corps programs cultivate the next generation of land stewards and nature enthusiasts by engaging traditionally underrepresented Milwaukee youth in conservation projects and environmental career pathways.

Our Conservation Corps programs may be fee-for-service or pro bono projects: Fee-for-service projects occur in which a partner conservation program contracts Cream City Conservation to develop and administer a conservation project at a set fee;

Pro bono projects are projects for under-resourced conservation organizations who may be unable to engage us at a set fee, but who are able to access pro bono support that is cross-subsidized through the profits from our consulting arm.

From the perspective of Conservation Corps crew members, both opportunities result in the same wage and development opportunities to crew members.

As a general rule, the CEO will be responsible for securing and maintaining relationships with pro bono clients. However, we also welcome and encourage team members to bring forward potential pro bono clients to Cream City Conservation. Pro bono commitments will be reviewed on a quarterly basis to track progress against our goals.
Office Location

Our official office location is inside of Escuela Verde, located at 3628 W Pierce St. Milwaukee WI 53215 on occupied Potawatomi, Ho-Chunk and Menominee Lands.

We share office and storage space with this Milwaukee Public Charter School. We frequently share tools, camping gear, etc with one another and there is mutual understanding of the care and value of maintaining this relationship with the school. The CEO also serves as a community board member of the school, participating in restorative practices should student issues arise. Employees are encouraged to connect with Escuela Verde’s volunteer/mentor opportunities.

This Silver City location connects us to other environmental organizations in the Menomoniee Valley including the WI Bike Federation and Urban Ecology Center. Cream City Conservation has conducted significant pro bono work along the Hank Aaron State Trail and Three Bridges Park. The school is also a priority recruitment base for participants.

Employees however are rarely expected to report to the office (especially during the covid-19 pandemic) and instead typically meet their crew in the field. Staff meetings typically occur virtually or over a shared meal at a local establishment.

Consulting typically occurs virtually or in-person at the clients offices/place of business.
Lingo

Employees = Crew Leaders, Project Coordinators

Participants = Crew members, apprentice crew members/corps members

Newbies = First time crew members

Returners = participants who have been in a C4 program before

Partners = Organizations/People who are mission-aligned (may pay for C4 services or provide in-kind support or bartering of services.)

Clients = Organizations that are paying customers (may or may not be mission-aligned) Ex. Ad Agencies, Tech Companies, Government Agencies.

C4 = Abbreviation for Cream City Conservation & Consulting LLC and Cream City Conservation Corps

Therapy Thursdays = These are weekly/monthly staff meetings held over either beverages or food at a local establishment. At minimum, the first round is always on C4’s expense!
Human Resources

HR Contact Info

Cream City Conservation uses Gusto to process payroll. Payroll is ran on a bi-weekly basis. Once hired, you will be able to access your W2 and paystubs via the Gusto Platform.
Interview Questions

Why We Provide Questions In Advance

Cream City Conservation believes in promoting equitable practices. Providing interview questions in advance supports applicants who

- Have general anxiety disorders
- A non-native English Speakers
- Have auditory accommodation needs
- Etc.

We do not judge applicants based on how fast they can think on their feet. We encourage thoughtfulness of answers and therefore want to give applicants time to process questions.
Here Are Some Questions You May Be Asked, In No Particular Order

1. Why do you want to crew lead?
2. What’s the most constructive criticism you’ve received and how have you leveraged that in your life?
3. How would you describe your leadership and communication styles?
4. How might you approach teaching a skill that is new to you?
5. What are your strengths and areas of growth?
6. What conservation, construction, gardening, etc projects have you done in the past?
7. What do you want your crew members to walk away with at the end of the program?
8. How will you build community and trust 1. with your co-leader, 2. with your crew members?
9. Why are you the best person for this crew leading job?
10. What do you hope to gain from this employment experience?

You will also have the chance to ask questions of the interviewees.
Interview: What to Expect

- You will be interviewed by either one or both of the following women: August M. Ball and Karina Gonzalez (details on next page)
- The Interview will take 45 minutes
- The interview will be virtual. You will receive a calendar invite with a zoom link.
- Please be in a quite, well-lit area and use a computer with video and sound capacity. (Please familiarize yourself with your technology in advance.)
AUGUST BALL

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KARINA GONZALEZ
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Thank you for considering joining our team!

The next portion is an excerpt from our Crew Leader Handbook. It highlights expectations of Crew Leaders to help you decide if C4 would be a good fit for you.
CREW LEADER EXPECTATIONS
Thank you for joining Cream City Conservation Corps! With your help, we will change the narrative for many Milwaukee youth and help our city become the thought leader for environmental justice work.
Leading a C4 crew will probably be one of the most demanding and rewarding jobs you will ever undertake. The skills you need to lead your group of members range from performing technical trail work, habitat restoration, establishing urban food systems to managing complex logistics, mentoring, report writing and teaching environmental stewardship.

C4 sets several goals for you and your crew to achieve simultaneously during your crew program:
First and foremost is that you and your crew be safe in everything you do.
Second, you are required to facilitate a positive working and learning environment for your members to the best of your ability.
Third, you will be directing the completion of a work project. The completion of this work in a quality way is of the utmost importance.
Fourth, C4 requires that you report the progress toward the above goals in a complete, accurate and timely manner.
Finally, we anticipate that you and your crew members all have fun and leave the program with positive, life-changing memories of the experience.

CREW LEADER TARDINESS
You MUST be on time OR EARLY. As a role model and leader, you absolutely must model good job-readiness and leadership qualities. If, however, you are going to be late due to an unavoidable circumstance, follow these steps:
- Immediately call/text the program coordinator.
- If applicable, contact your co-leader immediately.
Crew Leader Expectations

CREW LEADER ABSENTEEISM/DAYS OFF
We will do everything we can to accommodate requests for days off. The sooner you let us know, the better equipped we can be to support you. That being said, crew leader absences do put significant strain on the program and can impact quality of experience for members and partners. As much as possible, please plan personal appointments/events outside of work hours/days. In the event of an emergency absence, get in touch with the program coordinator immediately and then notify your co-leader (if applicable.)

CREW LEADER WORK ATTIRE
Please follow the proper PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) requirements of your position. This includes your Uniform, workboots, gloves. Shorts are permissible on extremely hot days, but please make sure they are appropriate for the work and professional image we aim to maintain. If you are unsure, please ask the program coordinator. Otherwise, we ask that you wear work pants (such as carhartts, etc.) that can handle a lot of movement such as crouching, kneeling, etc. and dirt.

CO-LEADER CHECK INS
If you have a co-leader, you are expected to check in with them daily. Maintain a bird’s eye view by establishing in advance what the most critical aspects are that need your attention. Travel arrangements, timesheets, ice breakers, environmental education activities, reports, photo uploading, behavioral concerns, worksite issues, etc. should be discussed. Notify the program coordinator about any deviations from plans. When in doubt: ASK!
BE GOOD TO YOURSELF
Self-care is group care. You and your co-leader are going to be working in a dynamic physical and emotional climate. It is important you are prepared to do so. Take the time to recharge when you need it. Make sure you are physically and emotionally caring for yourself, eating well, drinking water, staying warm and dry.

Below are some self-care strategies we have learned help with the emotional side of self-care.

- Figure out your priorities and manage based on those.
- Involve your corps members in activities they can assist with and let them help.
- Express your needs.
- Ask for help when you need it.
- Don’t let the small things slide. Address issues as they arise, for yourself and others.
- Take advantage of your co-leader and share responsibility where appropriate.
- Recognize and accept when you make mistakes. Then move on.
- Laugh. At yourself, with your crew; often and hard.
- Know that you are making an impact on members and the land. This is important work.
- Trust yourself and your judgement.