



Weaver's Guild of Minnesota

Three Questions: Why Equity? Why Us? Why Now

Equity Conversations—May 2019

—GUIDING COMPASS: SUMMARY VERSION—

What Do We Do and Why Does It Matter?

We preserve and advance the arts of spinning, weaving and dyeing. These activities are fundamental to human nature and have been throughout all of human history. They help us to meet core needs for survival, and they are necessary for clothing, warmth, contributing to shelter, and making our homes. In addition, these art forms help us to tell our history and share our stories and our cultures.

Why Equity?

It is important to us that we not only preserve but also advance these art forms. Every culture from every place on earth has these traditions. By sharing artistic and technical skills across and among cultures, we infuse these traditions with new vibrancy, energy, and innovation into the future. It is important that WGM reflect this global tradition and the many cultural contexts within which it is found.

Why Us?

We are one of the oldest hand weaving guilds in the country, and we are a leader in our field. We aim to serve as an exemplar in our community and field through our internal work examining equity, diversity, and inclusion within our guild and vision for future.

Why Now?

As the guild both approaches its 80th anniversary year and also prepares for an upcoming strategic planning process, it is entering into a time of reflection. It is looking back at what has made it such a successful guild and close community for the past eight decades, as well as looking ahead to collectively dream, envision, plan, and imagine a future being a vibrant, healthy, and relevant guild connected to community of people committed to the preservation and advancement of the arts of weaving, spinning, and dyeing.

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Three Questions: Why Equity? Why Us? Why Now

Equity Conversations—May 2019

— GUIDING COMPASS: FULL VERSION —

What Do We Do and Why Does It Matter?

We preserve and advance the arts of spinning, weaving and dyeing. These activities are fundamental to human nature and have been throughout all of human history. They help us to meet core needs for survival, and they are necessary for clothing, warmth, shelter, and home. In addition, these art forms help us to tell our history and share our stories and our cultures.

These forms of hand-work are a means of deep expression, individually and collectively, through the colors, patterns, materials, techniques and traditions we employ. They are both art and craft, and they are essential human activities. Doing this work cultivates attention, and brings inner peace, joy and satisfaction from working with our hands. At their core, these skills connect us with the essence of what it is to be human.

When we gather together to weave, spin, and dye, we form new relationships and community. Spinning, weaving, and dyeing together creates space for each of us to teach and learn and share – our skills, our tools, our stories, our cultures, our history, and our wisdom.

In a society that is increasingly disconnected, working with our hands in these simple meditative practices nourishes the spirit and the soul. In a time of industrialization, technology, and production, it is important that human beings remain connected to ourselves and to one another—that we connect with the fibers of our beings and weave our stories and our voices together.

At WGM, we create spaces for learning, teaching, and practicing. We create a community where people come together, form relationships, and share and enjoy the experience of exercising our minds, hands, and hearts. These arts are as essential as being connected to the food we eat, the air we breathe, the land we live on.

Without commitment from artisans, craftspeople, new learner, and community members willing to take up their looms and weave, to work with their hands, these skills would be lost. They pass from person to person. It is imperative that these skills are not lost, and that this knowledge is kept alive for humanity. We are doing great and important work, work that nourishes us and brings us joy.



Why Equity?

It is important to us that we not only preserve but also advance these art forms. By sharing artistic and technical skills across and among cultures, we infuse these traditions with new vibrancy, energy, and innovation into the future. WGM must reflect this global tradition and the many cultural contexts within which it is found.

We have a unique and amazing opportunity here in Minnesota to share skills, knowledge, and techniques among and between the many cultural communities and traditions present. Spinning, weaving, and dyeing are global art forms. To best preserve and advance the knowledge, traditions, and skills needed for this work, we must be a global society of weavers, teaching and learning from all cultures and traditions. This global practice is open to all. Creating more skills, more traditions, more weavers is the strongest way for us to preserve and advance these fundamental human activities for the future.

Why Us?

As one of the oldest hand weaving guilds in the country, WGM is a leader in our field. We aim to serve as an exemplar in our community and field in examining equity, diversity, and inclusion within our guild and in our vision for our future. We aim to build a strong foundation from which to develop and launch our new work and focus around equity, diversity, and inclusion; and to strengthen our commitment to welcoming all voices at the table who are interested in preserving and advancing the arts of weaving, spinning, and dyeing.

In a society that is becoming increasingly divided, we want to come together to share our cultures and traditions, sharing handwork and learning side-by-side, creating connections and relationships among people, contributing to a stronger, healthier, and more equitable community within our guild and in our wider community.

Why Now?

As our guild both approaches its 80th anniversary year and prepares for an upcoming strategic planning process, it is entering into a time of reflection—looking back at what has made it successful, looking ahead to collectively dream, envision, plan, and imagine the future.

We have the energy and leadership in both staff and board to hold conversations and do work around our relationship to race, culture and equity. We feel that now is the time to dream our guild forward, and build for the future. We dream of a guild that reflects the many cultures, voices, perspectives, and traditions present in our state, and we are ready to do the work to make our dream our reality.