

Sustainability 101 for Millennials

Learning about sustainable development in the age of Facebook Jason DC. Gavina



With the recent declaration of UN's Sustainable Development Goals, or "Global Goals", the role of young people in effecting change has become urgent. The relevant question is- how do we engage them?

At a time when young people spend most of their time glued to computer screens, one might wonder if they even find time to enjoy nature. The warm sea breeze, walks by the beach, trekking a mountain trail, fishing or simply watching the sunset are free, yet won't always be if we destroy our planet.

Inspiring our future generations to get involved with sustainability is important. We must find a way to start them young! How do you promote the concept of "sustainable development" to millennials?

A challenging question, indeed. Sustainability education is not something that we simply read in textbooks. It is a lifestyle that must be integrated into our daily life. It comes from values ingrained in us through life-experiences.

The Stone Soup Leadership Institute, a non-profit based in the USA, mission is to create a sustainable future by investing in young leaders. Founded in 1997, the Institute's 12th Leadership Summit was held on Martha's Vineyard from June 23-July 2, 2016. Others have been held in two countries and 3 islands. I was honored to be the first Philippine delegate to the Summit. Other delegates represented islands of Hawaii, Puerto Rico, Thailand, inner city of Holyoke, Massachusetts and Martha's Vineyard with youth from Brazil, Ecuador, Jamaica, St. Vincent & the Grenadines.

The Vineyard, as it is called, is a well-known summer island for Presidents and the elite. It is also where the famous movie *Jaws* was filmed. From Wall Street retirees' homes, to old English town buildings, it is perfect location for a beach wedding. To my surprise, it is also a place to commune with nature and learn about sustainability.

Believe it or not, our sustainability leadership Summit starts with kayaking. This is one of the most fun outdoor experiences. Beyond paddling the kayak, it served as an icebreaker for our diverse group of delegates. We spent the day at the Chappaquiddick lagoon that is managed by The Trustees of the Reservation, one of the longest-running conservation organizations in the Island.

The Hokule'a Worldwide Voyage

The Institute's 12th Leadership Summit was unique as it officially welcomed the arrival of the Hokule'a - a 3 year-Worldwide Voyage started in Hawaii that promotes sustainability around the world.

Hokule'a, meaning Star of Gladness, revives the ancient exploration tradition and culture that brought the first Hawaiians to their island.



VOYAGERS. Summit Delegates tour the Hokule'a

Hokule'a crewmembers Michelle Knoetgen, a teacher, and Mary Anna Enriquez traveled to the Summit to share about how the Voyage reminds people of their own history and greatness. "The gift of the Hokule'a is to remind us how interconnected we are," said Ms. Enriquez.

The Summit Delegates, with our freshly made Hawaiian leis, welcomed the crew upon their arrival at Martha's Vineyard.



WARM WELCOME. Hawaiian Delegate Elijah Anakalea-Buckley welcomes Hokule'a Captain Bruce Blankenfeld on arrival in Menemsha Harbor

Teenpreneurs

As a key component of the Summit's leadership training, delegates learn how to develop and pitch social entrepreneur ideas. With only a few hours, each one took part in developing a social enterprise that can be implemented on the island.



ELEVATOR PITCH. Vineyard youth Anya Vickers, Daniel Gaines, Skyler Cameron and George DeLana making their pitch about a sustainable island ecotourism project.

Design Thinking

Innovation is part of the Summit curriculum. As leaders we must learn to adapt to change and embrace the constant improvement. What better way to learn this but through Design Thinking?

Founded at Stanford University, the DT process highlights users' needs and focuses on empathizing with the user in order to create ideas for products.



PROTOTYPE. As an exercise, we were asked to interview a participant who shall use our ideal wallet. In ten minutes, we had to prototype the product and show it to the group.

I love the concept of rapid prototyping as a way to avoid having great ideas get stuck in planning process. By creating a Minimal Viable Product we tested if a product really has a strong market and make improvements before investing time and resources. Design Thinking applies to not only creating with user-friendly products, but also projects that are truly responsive to the community.

Best Practices for Sustainability

Each country delegate presented sustainable initiatives from their respective communities. This exercise provided a wider perspective as well as fresh ideas for our leaders. From social enterprises producing eco-friendly products, to renewable energy development, it is interesting to know how much each country can learn from one another.



ISLANDS OF HOPE. Hawaiian Delegate Juanito Moises (born in the Philippines) and this article's author, Philippine Delegate Jason Gavina shared best practices and sustainability initiatives.

Five-Year Plan



PLANNING. Delegates write down their five-year plans with support from mentors.

What is your dream for your life, for your island country and for our planet?

These were major questions we asked ourselves during the Summit. The workshop provides reflection time to align our efforts to our ideals.

To develop our career plans, we worked in small groups with mentors ranging from medicine, law, business and entrepreneurship.

For young people who were searching for their life purpose, or what they really want to do next month, the process of refining your dream into manageable goals was been a life-changing experience.

Dream Projects = Project Management

Once delegates drafted their 5-year plans, they were ready for my Project Management workshop. After all, creating our dream life, is basically working on our dreams- one project at a time. We used the Summit worksheets to review the basics of planning, managing resources and how to develop a team. Delegates then shared their own dream project.



DREAM BOARDS. Delegates Skyler Cameron and Anya Vickers with their Dream Boards.

From developing her new t-shirt line, teaching his fellow Wampanoag tribe members new language skills, teaching fellow Wampanoag tribe members new language skills, or responding to new refugees, everyone's faces looked much brighter when they talk about their dreams.

It may come as a surprise to some, but young people have dreams for their communities too. Given the right support and direction, it is amazing what we can all accomplish.

Moving forward, delegates develop community projects and 5-Year plans. The Institute provides them with mentor support after the Summit.

Beyond the Summit



GLOBAL FAMILY. Summit Delegates with newfound friends from around the world.

To reach more people, the Institute is building an online Global Leaders Platform where millennials, can learn new skills to propel them into the green economy – and mentor young people to join them. Through the integration of technology, fieldwork, mentorship and reflection the Certificate Program is a personalized educational experience that trains people in real-world situations. Together we can use social media to mobilize us towards a better future.



Sister Island Partnership Hawaii & The Philippines

I'm honored to serve on the Institute's first cohort for the Global Leaders Platform. As emerging leaders we envisioned innovative sustainability projects and a sister island project between Hawaii and the Philippines to build a global green workforce. Together our countries can inspire the world, and create a sustainable living planet.

Join the movement for a more sustainable future!
For more information: www.touchstoneleaders.com
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