



Report from the Youth Ecovillage Summit

The first-ever Youth Ecovillage Summit in North America took place during the 24-27th of April 2014. The event was hosted by NextGEN and held at Sirius Community, a 35+ year-old ecovillage in Massachusetts, U.S.A. An educational event, the Summit brought together some of the most exciting activists, educators, and students inspired by the ecovillage as a place to live, learn, and share. Over forty individuals from across North America attended, including a dozen from Canada and two from as far away as California. Although a mixed group, the majority was comprised of our target audience of university students and twenty-somethings from the East Coast. The diversity helped conversations flourish around the dinner tables. In their evaluation forms, participants gave high reviews and all said they would like to attend a similar event in the future.

The focus of the gathering was placed on learning about integrated sustainability, the ecovillage model, and how to participate this movement. Guest speakers included pioneers who have founded long-established communities, to millennials starting their own land-based projects. Giovanni Ciarlo from Gaia Education, also the co-founder of Huehucocoyotl Community in Mexico, gave a powerful presentation, as did members of Generation Waking Up, and the Valhalla Movement. NextGEN Educators, Nick Joyce, Caroline Cohen, Nebesna Fortin, and Cynthia Tina presented the developing NextGEN Curriculum throughout the event. On Sunday, a panel discussion was held featuring five sustainability leaders from the local area. Participants learned both theoretical sustainability solutions and how practical action can be taken to create the regenerative world of the future.

Participants also had the opportunity to experience first-hand communal life and sustainable design, as they worked and dined with the residents of Sirius Community. Participants lived on site, had a tour of the ecovillage grounds by the co-founder, and volunteered during community workday on Saturday. Shared meals, meditations, and more gave these young people an immersive experience in ecovillage life. Participants were able to see how the topics discussed in presentations and workshops could be directly applied as real world solutions. By staying connected through various communication channels, we are providing a support network for Summit attendees as they integrate their newfound knowledge and experiences with school and home life. We are inspiring them to continue to collaborate and take action in the world – working together to make it a more interconnected and sustainable place of the future.

