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Report from Christy Tweedy

Visiting Facilitator from San Diego, California



After a summer visiting Vancouver Island and gathering more experience as an Inclusive Leadership Facilitator, I am amazed at the depth of the conversations and connections. I learned that being an effective Inclusive Leader is more about compassionately and actively listening to a group rather than attempting to manage group dynamics. I learned that being an Inclusive Leader is less about who talks the most, or who sways the group, but who is the one who is able to deepen their listening skills and able to be present with the individuals and the information that is being shared.

This summer proved to be a very important learning experience for me to grow through. I am incredibly thankful to have been surrounded by wonderful mentors who have been so willing and open to share their experience, education, and their home. Most importantly, I was encouraged to build on my curiosity and interests by asking difficult questions about topics such as ecopsychology, sociology, ecology, spirituality and more. This was crucial to my own personal growth and my leadership style as a community connector. By receiving this intensive training I have advanced my growth and maturity on a path to becoming a skilled advocate for social and ecological sustainability in the United States. I look forward to seeing how my path will unfold over the years. I welcome the opportunities on my journey to be able to put my Inclusive Leadership skills into action to promote a more socially and ecologically connected world.

I crossed paths with Inclusive Leadership last summer in 2014 while I was travelling across Canada. When I went to visit OUR Ecovillage to learn about inclusive communities and permaculture, I was amazed to find an Inclusive Leadership Gathering (ILG) prepping for their first day. As a community builder and adventurer in connection in the United States, one of the intentions for my travels was to be exposed to grassroots community building strategies. When I saw Linda and the other Inclusive Leaders buzzing around OUR Ecovillage I knew that I was meant to be there at that moment. When I returned back to the states I was able to immediately put my ideas, skills and growth I obtained at the Inclusive Leadership Gathering into motion as I facilitated various community events and adventures.

When I received an invitation to join the 2015 Annual Inclusive Leadership Gathering and stay on for the summer, I made the choice to quit my job and take the summer to explore some deeper learning and traveling. This appeased my inner voice that was yelling at me to follow an exploration of personal growth while finding ways to aid social and ecological sustainability. I knew that being on Vancouver Island and visiting with Inclusive Leaders Linda Hill and John Scull was a major part of that journey.

I arrived a few days before the 2015 Annual Inclusive Leadership Gathering, unsure of what my exact role would be for the next month and a half. Instead of being fearful of the unknown, I just trusted what was unfolding and absorbed everything that presented itself.

I was given the opportunity to facilitate my first Inclusive Leadership workshop on Connection Awareness. This was an experiential opportunity for me to gain insight into my leadership style and flow. I was delighted to have the chance to stretch my facilitator skills. But most importantly, it was an experience to collect individuals together to converse about connections to the self, to others, and the environment. We were able to collectively identify a barriers and solutions for enhancing these connection by first starting with the self.

I spent the majority of my time in BC focusing on the gift of deep listening and the leaders behind the scenes. I took many opportunities to sit with my thoughts. Sit with my awareness. Sit with openness to the moment that was naturally unfolding in front of me. This was a different role than I usually am in. Usually I am the very active one. The one who volunteers to coordinate others. The one who is planning events, networking, managing, organizing. But this summer it was different. As a visiting facilitator I was able to take the time to sit, reflect, and observe.

By being present with my own deep listening, I felt even more connected and genuine with my interactions I was engaged in. Through guidance and experience, I realized that compassionate listening isn't something we can force others to do. Instead we participate in being active listeners ourselves, modelling the listening behaviors everyone wants to receive. Compassionate listening is a gift which is meant to be given. Compassionate Listening is the key to sharing our abilities to connect and become fully present with the diverse individuals we have in our communities and the changes we want to see.