Young Adult Dialogue on Climate Action

Convened by: International Institute for Child Rights & Development
October 14, 2018
Pender Island, BC, Canada
We started by talking about climate action in our lives and work.

We shared stories of moments that catalyzed our awareness of climate change at a personal & visceral level.

We shared feelings of pain, despair, profound concern, depression, anxiety.

And a sense of commitment, not to fall into apathy or immobilization.

“No matter what group I’m working for, Creator is my boss.”
We discussed the necessity of Indigenous leadership in climate change movements.

- Indigenous approaches, especially as taught by elders, healing and traditional governance are important sources of land-based wisdom.
- Women as leaders in particular was mentioned, based on traditional and social-spiritual roles as protectors of water and life-giving.
- It was also brought up that for many non-white, non-Indigenous settlers in North America, e.g. people of Asian descent, other values or ways of knowing also need to be considered and included for a broad movement.
We talked about Indigenous worldviews that speak not so much about “rights” but about “sacred responsibility.”

Enacted through ceremony, ensuring vibrancy of land & body, considering the 7 generations.

And the need to interrogate/situate climate change as a process of on-going colonial violence against lands and bodies.

This is about considering one’s relationship to land, and one’s ancestors relation to place.
“The eagle told me to do it.”

★ We acknowledged that our emotional, philosophical and cultural backgrounds impact the words we use, the way we feel and think about climate change and climate action.

★ We wondered what that means for respecting different strengths and how to genuinely invite the beauty of different perspectives. How to be a bridge-builder and not just try to change other people’s minds to our way of knowing.

★ We also talked about getting past “us” vs “them” mentalities and helping people connect at a human level.
We talked about the path of connection.

★ How in the end the wellness of people is directly connected to the wellness of the planet.
★ How people who work in land and sea, i.e. fishers and farmers, see the changes first.
★ How good it is to feel joy and healing by connecting to earth, and cherishing traditional ways.

“I had the assignment to hug fifty old growth trees. By the end I was euphoric!”

★ And how great despair and pain is also there when we are connected.

“Every time I see the beauty, I also feel despair because I foresee its destruction.”
...cause we see disconnection as the root of the problem.

- Colonial institutions (hospitals, reserves, Indian Residential Schools) served to disconnect Indigenous people from old teachings, land, community and culture.

- In old European history similar trauma and disconnection occurred with the rise of patriarchal military economic elites, and violence against “pagans”, and later the Enclosures and the Women's Holocaust (aka witch burnings & inquisitions) all created.

- Kinship with land and others, reclaiming heart-centred ways is therefore key.
To: Climate Activist
Re: awesome random thoughts

★ With young people we talked about making memes - super short impact messages, using humour.
★ How to bring joy and humour into climate action, so that it is more widely engaging and an enriching process not just anger, despair and always serious (even though it is very serious!)
★ Even within the same cultural group, use of “academic” language can be alienating. How to translate between contexts?
★ Also, each of us has a unique gift which is a responsibility to bring forward or a role we can play. For young people support to find our “callings” or “purpose” may be a big part of our journey in climate action.
★ Also - stories! Ask people for their moments of realizing climate change is for real. And good stories of action.
In summary...

★ Relationship building was a key theme - between people within the movement, across differences, with the land, with culture and community, etc.

★ Storytelling, dialogue and communication are both difficult and essential. And not just from the “head” - there are so many feelings and traumas here to see and work with.

★ Action - let’s do this! But wisely, and informed by our bodies, lived experience and cultural teachings

★ “old ways made new again”
4 Necessary Strategies for Meaningful intergenerational participation within Climate Action
By: Erynne Gilpin

1. **In depth interrogation with underpinning colonial legacies** both historically and contemporarily and how they inform international economic, political and social practice, value systems and relationship to Land and Water [by-product is DISCONNECT: anxiety, trauma, grief and guilt]

2. **Meaningful Indigenous leadership (intergenerational)** in order to restore balance amongst ALL RELATIONS and re-establish accountability to self, others, spirit and Land/Waters. Recognize authority of knowledge keepers across diverse territories who maintain treaty relations and protocol to Land - necessary to restore balance amongst all relations (Canadian Settler State, allies, communities and beyond) [by-product: transformative relationship within political, economic, social and spiritual landscapes and value systems]

3. **Spiritual Integrity**: Acknowledgement of spiritual vacancy within neoliberal capitalist projects and Indigenous world-views recognize interconnectivity as sacred governance.

4. **Kincentric Relationship Paradigms**: Transcending beliefs that Land/Waters are material resource for extraction towards an Indigenous understanding and embodied relationship to Land and Water (and animals) as relatives. **Requires substantial paradigm shifts both personally and politically**

**Barriers:** Lack of Political Will, Lack of Diverse Representation within powerhouses (academia, politics, education etc). Imbalance of Position and Power, Lack of Accountability, Financial barriers