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## **Report from the Youth Ecovillage Summit 2015**

The second annual Youth Ecovillage Summit was held at Earthaven Ecovillage, near Asheville in North Carolina, from October 8<sup>th</sup> to the 11<sup>th</sup>, 2015. Under the colorful leaves of autumn in the mountains, this year's YES participants came together from a diversity of places and backgrounds (some as far away as Texas, Costa Rica, and Brazil) to share in a weekend of powerful connection. Compared to the 2014 YES, this gathering was significantly smaller, with six participants, three facilitators, and a few folks at Earthaven joining in occasionally. The low turnout was likely due to a late start on promotion and to hosting the Summit in a region where we had few previous contacts. These are some lessons we are learning so as to improve promotion of the 2016 YES.

The more intimate gathering seemed to foster a real coming together, deepening of connections, and kept the load more relaxed for facilitators. The quality of experience shared by all was very high, as the results of our evaluation forms confirmed. Conversations ran deeper, feelings were more openly expressed, and everyone left transformed in large and small ways. One participant wrote in her evaluation form that the most engaging part of the Summit for her was “all of the group dynamics, especially those that encouraged us to dive deep into our truth, our feelings, and our unity.”

The Summit kicked off with an opening ceremony and presentation of NextGEN as part of the Global Ecovillage Network and the recent development of the GENNA Council. Several Earthaven elders joined us for the evening, a special way to launch a youth focused event!

Friday opened with a Drumming Up Mindfulness workshop, followed by a tour of the Earthaven grounds, and an afternoon exploring the subjects of integrated sustainability and deep ecology. A community Fish Fry for dinner was an excellent way to connect with Earthaveners and highlighted three days of delicious all-local meals!

Saturday morning was spent volunteering alongside community members. Even the light rain could not deter us from having a blast as we planted flowers and chopped wood together. We spent the afternoon learning and experimenting with tools in transformative communication and then chatted away the evening by the bonfire.

Our weekend ended with a very special closing ceremony in the form of a gifting circle that evolved into a circle of deep interpersonal reflection and meaningful feedback. Although our circle is now open, we know it remains unbroken.

Many thanks to our gracious hosts at Earthaven for sharing their home so we could make the Youth Ecovillage Summit 2015 a reality. And many thanks to our participants and facilitators! Each one of you helped make our time together unforgettable!



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