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Report from the Youth Ecovillage Summit 2016

The third annual Youth Ecovillage Summit (YES) was held at La Cité Ecologique in the beautiful rural hills of Quebec, Canada, from June 9th to the 12th, 2016. Over 30 years ago, La Cité began as a summer camp for children. The youth saw that another way of life was possible and convinced their parents to join them. Today this "Green City" is the largest ecovillage in Canada, with its own school for village youth, several thriving ecologically minded businesses, and acres of organic food gardens. Given the community's history and youth-focused mission that is strong to this day, it was the perfect location for YES. The setting was a continual reminder of what is possible when we come together with intention.

Although the weather was colder and wetter than we'd hoped, this was no challenge for the high energy and enthusiasm of this year's YES. Over 30 participants joined in three days of inspiration, connection, and ecovillage immersion. With a wide range of ages and demographics – from 3 months up to 56 years old, both Americans and Canadians, both French and English speaking – the diversity provided a special "global village" feel. We shared deeply with each other through workshops focused on transformative communication and community building, workshops such as Drumming Up Mindfulness and Expand Your Box. We grew our understanding of the "movement-of-movements" during sessions about the ecovillage network and integrated sustainability, a study of sustainability across four dimensions: the social, the economic, the

environmental, and the cultural. These four dimensions were well represented in the weekend's activities and conversations.

Interaction with the La Cité community was a valuable part of this gathering, with many residents joining the Summit workshops, a resident yoga teacher offering morning sessions, and many meals shared in the community's main hall. It is amazing how deep friendships form in just a few days. Near the end of our time at La Cité we held a tree planting ceremony in the community orchard. Singing through the rain and wind, residents and Summit participants circled around the elder and child who tossed in the first soil to fill the tree's hole. One by one we tossed in our handfuls, offering loving intentions for the cherry tree's roots. Some residents commented that the YES weekend felt like the beginning of a shift for the community and others shared that gathering reminded them that they are part of a larger, fully alive, ecovillage movement; a reminder that they are not alone.

The Summit opened with a ceremony for participants to state their intentions for the weekend and, in the closing ceremony, for what they want to carry into the future. Given the special words that were spoken and the supportive container that held them, there is little doubt that this group of individuals has incredible gifts for the world. With each year of YES, its community of alumni grows. Past participants connect with the new, some re-attend another year's Summit, and all build a network of support for the strengthening of the ecovillage movement in North America. Thank you to La Cité for hosting us this year, thank you to the team of organizers for the love you bring to your work, thank you to participants for showing up with openness, and thank you to all those who support the intention of YES in anyway. We hope to see you next year!

