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Design for Sustainability



Final Report

EDE July-August at La Cité Écologique



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Course Overview

Overview:

Our summer EDE course was, once again, a success! Offered by the C.A.P. Eco-Community team at the ecovillage *La Cité Écologique* in Quebec, the program ran from July 6th to August 6th. This month-long ecovillage immersive course optimally accompanied participants in the design of their project.

The students took part in this program wishing to be better equipped in realizing their dream of living in a new society. Several members of *La Cité Écologique* have greatly contributed by connecting the students with the host community. They offered workshops in their areas of expertise: organic farming, permaculture, education, sustainable forestry management, solar energy and so on. Other teachers from the region were invited to contribute to the curriculum objectives. As so, a Metis Micmac teacher talked about the reconnection with local traditions and funding members of a suburban ecovillage near Montreal shared their expertise. A new facilitator, Chloe Buzzotta, was invited from the US for the social week and part of the second week. Throughout the training, the concept of sustainability has been visited through practical workshops, theoretical classes and study time sessions. All learning was integrated into the development of a new ecovillage project: '*Coeur d'enfant*', a village for multigenerational learning activities and explorations.

We think we did our best regarding organization, the content of the workshops and the flow between the different facilitators. We made a last minute decision around welcoming a new English speaking facilitator and adding a visit to our sister community in the US. That was great and highly appreciated by the participants, but it did add some pressure regarding the schedule and made some workshop heavier due to translation from our mainly French participants to our English facilitator. Overall, we are really happy to have received our new facilitator, Chloe; she was helping the group dynamic and was adding precious content, comments, support and dynamism. For the visit, we are happy it could work due to our small group and it made it possible for two extra participants to join that part of the course.



The ecovillage *La Cité Écologique* is located in Ham-Nord in the region of Les Bois-Francs in Quebec. Its residents give priority to education, sustainable development and respect for life. Established thirty years ago, the community now counts 87 residents, ten businesses and an alternative school.



Participants:

Six participants joined the course from a range of one week to four weeks. As per EDE requirement we included the multigenerational relations topic. This year we were immersed in intergenerational living since our participants were between 25 and 55 years old. What a great experience! We also got to explore having workshop in French and English, a good challenge.

Diversity was also present in the various backgrounds. Our elder participant had been working as a journalist. The youngest one was a new dad. Also represented in our group was a postgraduate student in construction and a self-employed entrepreneur. For a week we also received a construction contractor and a fashion designer.



Regarding gender ratio, overall there was 3 girls and 3 guys, but just one male stayed the whole month.

Course rhythms:

The students had the opportunity to start the day with a yoga session. Then, meetings, participatory workshops and/or theoretical classes were offered. Informative games were organized to maintain a dynamic atmosphere. Lunches were served in the community hall, giving the ecovillage members a chance to meet and chat with newcomers. During the afternoon, classes continued focusing more on the practical skills and studio design time. In the evening, the students, the facilitators and the residents organized dinners and activities in order to go deeper in the exchanges. Open discussions ended the week allowing students to talk about their impressions and feelings, exchange on what they had learned and enjoyed or would like to adjust for the coming week. Overall, students dedicated 125 hours in workshops and lectures, 22 in study time and 25 in practical sessions. Furthermore, the participants had the opportunity to join optional field trips during the weekends.





Highlights & challenges of each dimension:

Overall, we are very happy with the unfolding of this fourth edition of the EDE. Once again, the closing ceremony was celebrated during *La Cité's* open-house day, this is a winner! Students then had the chance to discuss with nearly 160 visitors who were curious about ecovillages and the course. It was also the time when we chose to give the certificates and scholarships. This day and the meetings with previous EDEs graduates were the most powerful moments.

In the next lines, we are inviting you to look closer to the highlights of each week.

Social Dimension

As our main facilitators for this first week, we had Nébesna, Chloe and Marianne. Nébesna is the main organizer and hostess. She is sharing her passion for collective lifestyle and her experience of growing up in an ecovillage. Her main focus of interest is the interconnection and balance between each dimension of sustainable living. During the full month she was facilitating the sessions connecting together all classes. With her overview vision, she also presented different ways of implementing the 4 aspects and drew ideas from the 25 communities she visited (including Findhorn Foundation in Scotland where she followed her EDE training). Chloe currently is the co-director of the Austin Permaculture Guild and recently a coordinator at the Global Ecovillage Network of NA. She recently graduated with a BA in Permaculture and Ecovillage Sustainability. She also has gained accreditation via multiple permaculture trainings and an EDE in Netherlands (2017). During the social week, she co-facilitated workshops around decision making, facilitation tools, group agreements, community building, and community cycles. Marianne's passion includes dynamics among groups and between different communities and networks. She focuses her studies around personal and interpersonal communications and relations skills. She explores the concept of different perspectives based on fundamental values. Dynamic, funny, profound and artistic are the qualifications of her workshops. She is also the co-host of the all courses and stays with the team all through the month offering her conflict resolution consultations and cooking superpowers.

Our most impactful moment of that dimension was the workshop on conflict resolution.

Included in this dimension we covered: team building, the 7 keys of success, the cycles of communities, conflict resolution, positive communication and collaborative governance. That week, each participant presented their dreams and projects and we built the working groups for the Design Studio.



"I loved the relevance and subject matters. Plus, the tree main facilitators are creating a great team. Thanks!!!"

- Alexandre



Economic Dimension

Social entrepreneurship, international and local economic mechanisms, alternative local currencies, cryptocurrency, laws and land management, storytelling marketing and more – what a full topic! Our second dimension was probably the most intense since we have to spread the content throughout the month due to our trip to the US. Even if the participants really enjoyed going to our other community, they indicated to us that the economic aspect could have been covered better. We will have to consider that in our next edition of the EDE. The highlights of this dimension were: Land management, LETs and local money.

In this dimension we visited alternative and complementary economics, we explored land management and legal aspects to build ecovillages in Québec, we shared information about businesses registration, we explored promotion and tools to share the project's vision with stakeholders and we visited social enterprises.



" The workshop about alternative economies opened my eyes to new possibilities."

- Corinne

Ecological Dimension

As our main facilitators for that last week, we received Dr Christian Gueymard a professional solar energy consultant. For the permaculture and organic farming aspects, we met with Gloria who is studying and volunteering on farms for the last five years. Born at the ecovillage, she is now exploring sustainable food production wishing to eventually become our main gardener. We also played and worked with Jean-Raphael, our professional seed keeper and Charles one of our main farmer. Once again we visited our local green buildings and shared a PowerPoint presentation about all eco-architectural visited by our facilitators. As one participant and his partner where studding building we also had a great talk about Earthship, green plant based water treatment and wind mill power. The ecovillage latest research project is a solar passive greenhouse cultivated in aquaponic, so that was also a topic highly appreciated by the participants. Plus, during our visit in the US, we got to build a rocket stove which was so cool!

During that week, we took some time to go back in each dimension to fully integrate the whole system approach. It was also the moment we prepared ourselves for the closing ceremony and the project presentation for the open house day.



" The sustainable forestry workshop was fantastic !!!"

- Jérémie



Worldview Dimension

Our main facilitator invited for this worldview dimension was Riel. He is a Metis Micmac presenting the cultures of different nations living in harmony with the Forest. He presented the dynamics of social life in those communities, the governance, the education, the building systems and the villages design. Wow! Amazing, he is an example of living traditions, of patience and of humility. He truly inspired the participants to reconnect with this rich heritage of ancestry.

The highlight of this week was the birthday celebration of one of our participant; everyone had dinner together and we ended all dancing around a fire! So much fun ☺

The other workshops and activities included were: arts, socially engaged spirituality (through participatory facilitation with the four elements), reconnection with Nature and diversity talks. Plus, we added a workshop on Mayan astrology that was highly appreciated. Over all, that week allowed more private time and personal reflection moments – which is always needed at that point in the course.



"The workshop on Mayan astrologie was really good, it truly gives me interest to deepen the subject."
- Stéphanie

Design Studio:

Here is a brief presentation of our Design Studio Case developed during the program. We are looking forward to hearing more from them the team and maybe collaborate in future trainings there!

'Coeur d'enfant' is an ecovillage-learning center that as for mission to live, learn and create in an intergenerational eco-collective environment.

The larger project unfolds around the following 3 axes:

- Education through playing games
- Living in symbiosis with nature
- Valorization of creativity





The aim is to help people reconnecting with Nature while finding their child's heart. Why and how?

- Faced with the energy crisis... We invite you to discover and be trained in renewable energies.
- Faced with food crisis... We introduce you to permaculture.
- Faced with disconnection with emotions... We invite you to reconnect with your intuition for a better knowledge of oneself.
- Faced to a compartmentalized education system... We offer you an open classroom where everyone can learn from everyone.
- Faced to a system that separates generations... We value the wisdom of seniors as well as children.
- Faced with a world where the Cartesian mind is valued to the detriment of esthetics... We invite to find beauty in everything through art.
- Faced to a life expectancy decreasing, as the consumption of drugs increases... We value prevention by creating with you a healthy lifestyle.

Find the full presentation of the project in French [here](#).

Lessons Learned:

What could help future EDE's? Here is a list of our observations from our experience that can help other EDEs and our next ones.

Our four-week challenges

We have to say that a large part of our challenges were related to our small group. Even though that gives us a lot of latitude, it restricted our working budget to invite more professional teachers (example for the economic week) and it limited the design studios teams... On another note, one of this year's challenges was the language. We will have to take the time to consider if we still what to offer to course in French and English simultaneously and if so, we will work on our translation support.

A great idea for the closing ceremony

We closed the EDE course with a celebration with the whole community. Participants were invited to present their learning, projects and journey with the ecovillage members and with visitors of the open-house-day. Nearly 200 people were present that day and assisted to the EDE overview presented by Nébesna. The day ended with the delivery of the certificates of completion. That made the participants so proud and created lots of enthusiasm around the EDE.



Certificates of competition and bursaries given at the closing ceremony



Notes for future benefit

As mentioned in the challenges paragraph, we will need to look closely at the schedule for the next years. We will definitely keep our partnership with Riel for the worldview week. We will keep some workshops shorter, but will have more documents to share or extra time for those that want to learn more. If there are some English workshops, we will have translated handouts. A participant noticed that some documents were dating from last year, so we will be sure to up-date all our materials.

We will work on promotion to be sure to have a higher participation. A great discussion with the participants and some volunteers was done and some are willing to support by sharing videos of their experience so new participants can better relate.

Key trends from our evaluation forms

Everyone agreed that the course was relevant, interesting and offering solutions for day life afterwards. Most participants agreed that the information, material and introduction at the beginning were good. Otherwise, classes content was highly appreciated and all workshops have a high score rate regarding interest and presentation. On the side of constructive feedback, we will be sure to better frame our economic week and adjust some workshops in order to fit different learning styles among participants.

The most appreciated aspect was the facilitators, teachers and interveners qualities such as professionalism, adaptability, listening skills and giving and receiving feedbacks.

Best projects and activities

Here are the two best activities we did each week:

- **Social**; conflict resolution workshop and presentation on cycles of life in a community
- **Economic**; money game and visit to a local market
- **Cultural**; reconnecting with local indigenous culture and walk to the village's waterfalls
- **Ecological**; land management workshop and visit of the solar passive aquaponic greenhouse



Our donors supporting the bursaries



Participant Quotes:

Here are some of our participants' comments after the course:

'The EDE course offers an extremely complete and diversified content to deepen the 4 pillars of sustainable development. It is a great way to start with many tools to apply in any project environmentally oriented where the place of the human is central.'

Thank you
- Stéphanie

'Thank you very much for this generous knowledge sharing. Thanks for the transparency in your answers. I leave transformed by the experience.'

Thanks
- Corinne

'This experience allowed me to explore new elements that I did not know. I thank you very much for that. Also, living the course in this most welcoming village was wonderful. I think I could even take it again in a future year! You allowed me to explore my social side as never before.'

I infinitely thank you!!!
- Jérémie

Conclusion:

All the C.A.P. Eco-Community team and the members of the ecovillage are very proud of this powerful month. We are already beginning to prepare a next EDE for the summer of 2019.

We are giving a huge thanks to all those who participated to this success; the facilitators, the volunteers, the participants, the members of the community that received the participants during the ecovillage exploratory sessions and all the members of *La Cité Écologique* in Québec and in New Hampshire.



Congratulations Jérémie, Corinne and Stéphanie!

A special thanks to Alexandre, Michael, Sophie, Anabelle, Steven and Hatim.

It was a pleasure meeting you, we are sure our roads will meet again and may we fly together soon!

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