

International Partnerships through Education and Collaboration

Mission Statement

IPEC will create peace by providing youths from diverse backgrounds the opportunity to build international relationships, learn the skills necessary for entrepreneurial success, and attain knowledge of the global condition. The means to this end will be a two-week retreat, in which participants will experience intense studies, discussions, and workshops. The retreat will culminate in participants designing their own localized projects, all of which will focus on common global issues to be determined by the participants. IPEC will therefore develop a complex web of productive international partnerships to create peace and sustainable social development.

Logistics

IPEC will require an application process to ensure the entire group is dedicated and diverse. Requirements will be simple; applicants must be 15-20 years old, a student of some sort, and fluent in English. Jessica Rimington¹, the president and founder of One World Youth Project, a youth-activist NGO, has committed to help IPEC connect with potential participants in North and Central America and Africa. Approximately ten participants will be selected in pairs from five schools (so each sub-project will have two organizers). Admission decisions will always be based on an applicants' potential and expressed determination to see the project's goals met. IPEC's aim is for this opportunity to be given to those who will best utilize the project in future application.

Upon admittance to IPEC, participants will receive preliminary study materials and prompts for brainstorming ideas. This will ensure the minds and motivations of participants are charged and ready to work towards learning and developing a project before they even meet their colleagues. In order for the participants to have the most time to prepare, the project will occur in early August.

The location of IPEC will be a cabin on a private lake in a remote area of the Limberlost Forest and Wildlife Reserve² in Northern Ontario, Canada. The manager of the property³ has confirmed that the cabin, which is often used by other youth-oriented NGOs, may be reserved at no cost for two weeks in early August. The isolation and rusticity of this location will produce an attitude of camaraderie and speed the development of friendships. There will be countless opportunities to exercise mind and body simultaneously (for example, the project will culminate in a three-day canoe trip through a chain of lakes), as well as a deficit of distractions. Most importantly, the unique location will develop an appreciation for the natural environment. Overall, participants will live the lessons being learned and will focus more effectively on the task at hand.

The procurement of visas for foreign participants will not pose a problem. Citizenship and Immigration Canada assures that visas are easy to obtain if the participants are invited by IPEC and the owner of Limberlost and if Canada has diplomatic relations with their homeland (which is the case for all the schools associated with One World Youth Project). Visas will be obtained with ease as long as IPEC has a two month window to make the arrangements before participants enter Canada.

During the retreat, food will be very simple and by no means the cause of any joy in the participants (rest assured, however, that it will be palatable and nutritious). The intention is to grow as much of the food, in the form of vegetables and corn, on the Limberlost property in the months preceding the retreat. The use of land for this purpose is condoned by the manager of Limberlost, who has also offered a reasonable number of fish from the lakes to IPEC if the participants are willing to catch them. In case there is a disaster or it is not possible to grow the food, a sufficient sum of money has been set aside to purchase discounted comestibles in bulk from the local farmers' market.

To ensure IPEC has a solid organizational structure and established leadership, the organizer (who has experience in organizing and leading youth) will reserve the final say in procedural matters. As a further moral and social guide, Don Aitchison⁴, the chaplain of Trinity College School, has committed to being present throughout the project to advise major decisions or soothe potentially harmful situations. Having said this, nobody will be in a visible position of authority over any other person. All opinions and motivations will be equally respected during the retreat, and participants will hold

¹ Jessica Rimington, One World Youth, 508-428-8460, jessica@oneworldyouthproject.net. It is to be made clear Ms. Rimington is neither the sponsor, nor guarantor, of the project's success; she is simply helping IPEC connect with participants.

² www.limberlostlodges.com

³ Jack Cockwell is the owner and manager of the property. Please contact him through his assistant: Diane Horton, Brookfield Asset Management Inc., 416-956-5144, dhorton@brookfield.com.

⁴ Don Aitchison, daitchison@tcs.on.edu

leadership responsibilities on a rotating basis. By this design, participants will realize their potential as leaders and the project will have a solid structure to rely on.

Designing sub-projects is the essence of IPEC. All studies will point in this direction, and participants will spend a part of each evening preparing their projects. Through discussions and presentations, they will critique each project to ensure they are targeting a common issue and are suitable for application. The process of designing projects will be efficient because participants will prepare for IPEC prior to commencement. In this way, participants will 'hit the ground running' when they return home.

A major effort will be made in networking the sub-projects. Before commencement and following completion, a website with an interactive forum will be created for participants to share ideas and knowledge in a fast, electronic manner. Sub-projects will be in frequent communication with IPEC headquarters, which will distribute a newsletter to each sub-project bi-quarterly. In this way, lessons and suggestions for the future will be shared regardless of participants' technological restrictions.

Educational Syllabus

The educational aspect of the retreat will be diverse in nature and composition. Current and historical events will be read, comprehended, and discussed. The participants will also read and discuss passages about government and causing social change. Because the educational materials will cater to the makeup of the group, a syllabus will not be finalized until the participants are confirmed. The building of a knowledge base will help participants plan their projects and understand the past and world as it is today, and aid them in the deliberate development of practical skills.

Participants will also meditate on what it means to lead a grassroots organization and the significance of changing the world. In addition to this, they will learn to fundraise and work with governments, the media, and other organizations, directly from those with firsthand experience. To achieve this, approximately four guest-mentors will visit and run workshops to share tips and pass on skills. There are two confirmed guest-mentors at this point, along with the commitment of the former Chairman of the Board of the University of Toronto to help IPEC contact potential guest-mentors at that University.⁵ The manager of Limberlost has also said that there will be an extra cabin open on the property to accommodate the guest-mentors. By offering them a free two- or three-day stay at Limberlost in exchange for running a workshop, it is certain that were the project to receive funding, at least five notable individuals with invaluable experiences and lessons to share would commit. The experiences of the guest-mentors will be as varied as the participants' and so a potpourri of valuable lessons will be shared during each workshop.

Because all work and no play makes for dull activists, the project will include plenty of educational 'book breaks.' These opportunities will allow participants to move around, have fun, and also to learn teamwork and develop relationships. Most importantly, by being in the pristine forests of Canada, participants will realize the importance of ecological conservation.

Justification

In my travels, work experience, and conversations with experienced philanthropists, I have seen two consistent themes. The first is that empowering people is the best way of helping them. People do not turn to violence from a love of war, but rather from desperation at not being able to help themselves. Therefore, IPEC will empower youth by cultivating valuable communication skills, and vast stores of knowledge from lessons and friends within participants. Most importantly, they will acquire leadership and management skills by designing their own projects, and thereby realize their ability to take their future upon themselves. The second theme is that sustainable and focussed efforts to affect change are superior to fractured and sporadic attempts. IPEC is designed to make efficient use of motivated youth by making them part of an international network of equally dedicated youth around the world. In this way, it is both far-reaching and long-term. By spawning sub-projects, and training participants to be managers of social movements, IPEC is a project that empowers youth in a sustainable way to change specific global issues.

Final Statement

If IPEC is funded, individuals and communities will experience the benefits of grassroots movements. Issues facing the world as a whole will be dealt with as a whole from many different fronts and places by the local sub-projects. And most importantly, peace and positive, sustainable, social development will be created by empowering youth, who will take control of their situations and effect change in constructive ways.

⁵ Dr. Wendy Cecil, University of Toronto, 416-606-4448, cecilwendy@hotmail.com.