

Sustain- ability



WITH ROBIN RAYMOND

Awakening The Dreamer

How do you change the thinking of the entire modern world? The Awakening the Dreamer workshop at Canterbury University aimed to provide some answers.

The workshop focused on how to create a socially just, spiritually fulfilling, and ecologically sustainable society. It used a combination of videos, personal experiences from the co-ordinators, and audience participation.

It began with a partnership between an indigenous Ecuadorian tribe and a group of North American anthropologists. It first ran in New Zealand last year, where it was picked up by the university's sustainability advocate, Kate Hewson.

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The presentation had an emphasis on inspiration as well as information. Orthodox clergyman and director of the Sustainable Community Development Research Institute Rev Dr Keith Morrison helped co-ordinate the event. He said the workshop was “a very powerful tool to spark people’s motivation.” At the start of the event he told participants “We’re not only going to be discursive in our thought but also engage our hearts.”

Organiser Johnny Platt said, “It’s quite hard to present sometimes, because some of the stuff is quite moving,” although he admitted he did not always agree with some of the ideas in the video presentations.

As part of the audience involvement participants were asked to identify underlying assumptions of society. These included statements like “growth is good” and “the earth is a resource”. They were then encouraged to challenge these statements.

A sense of hope and community was also high on the agenda. The workshop’s video presentation highlighted huge changes in world history like the American civil rights movement and the end of apartheid in South Africa. It pointed to the huge numbers of people involved in sustainability and social justice organisations worldwide.

Participants were told that everyone’s actions had far reaching consequences affecting society and the earth. They were encouraged to take a personal responsibility but also to act in community.

Rev Morrison said he wanted people to take away “a sense of the work that needs to be done, but hope that they can do it and with others.” Many participants described the event as moving, inspirational and challenging, although a few participants were sceptical. Master student Andrew Phillips admitted to being unsure about a practical exercise he described as “just walking in circles”.

Ms Hewson said she hoped participants would gain a new perspective on what could be done to address issues like climate change. “I hope it gives them a sense of hope and inspiration that they are part of this massive global social movement.”