



# 2015 YOUTH LEADERSHIP PROGRAM REPORT

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## BIONEERS YOUTH LEADERSHIP PROGRAM (YLP) GOALS

- ▶ Create a safe, welcoming and inclusive space for every Youth Scholarship recipient at the National Bioneers Conference.
- ▶ Foster leadership development, alliance building and networking among youth and aligned groups.
- ▶ Provide youth leaders with the opportunity to engage in mentoring across generations.
- ▶ Provide nutritious meals to all scholarship recipients throughout the conference.





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## 2015 YLP DATA OVERVIEW

*This section celebrates the number and diversity of youth participants and the strength of the support we offered them.*

**YOUTH REPRESENTED NEARLY A QUARTER OF ATTENDEES** at the 2015 National Bioneers Conference. Bioneers awarded a total of **376 scholarships** to youth between the ages 13-23, continuing our significant year-to-year growth. We were able to increase the scholarship number to 376 thanks to the generosity of our food donors, who provided us with enough meals to feed over 380 youth on a daily basis. Furthermore, an additional 115 youth were able to attend Bioneers without financial support, bringing **overall youth attendance to Bioneers to 491**.

Out of the 376 scholarships, all but 35 youth attended as part of environmental organizations and/or schools. **A total of 26 organizations** brought 341 youth from different cultural and economic backgrounds to the conference, creating a vibrant and diverse space throughout the entire weekend. Below is a comprehensive list of all the organizations that joined the 2015 Youth Leadership Program at Bioneers.

- ▶ Saints & Seasons
- ▶ Youth Leadership Institute and the Marin County Youth Commission
- ▶ Ecology Center's Youth Environmental Academy
- ▶ Youth Impact Hub
- ▶ Credo High School
- ▶ Food, What?!
- ▶ Alpine Achievers Initiative
- ▶ Besant Hill School
- ▶ ECO Leaders
- ▶ MESA Program
- ▶ A.L.M.A.S. (Academics, Leaders and Mentors Aiming for Success)
- ▶ Alta Vista Middle School
- ▶ Global Student Embassy





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- ▶ Blooming Biodiversity Permaculture Tour
- ▶ Civic Center Watershed Restoration (CCWR)
- ▶ Khabele School
- ▶ The Semillas Project
- ▶ Sol Collective
- ▶ Bay Localize
- ▶ Laney College and WEAD
- ▶ Wildflower School
- ▶ Ceres Community Project
- ▶ Synergia Venture Learning
- ▶ The Singing Tree
- ▶ Weaving Earth
- ▶ Sierra Watershed Education Partnership (SWEP)

Although the majority of organizations came from **California**, many groups attended from other states, including **New York, New Mexico, Colorado, Arizona, Texas, Washington, Arkansas and Illinois.**

The cultural diversity of our youth delegation was impressive. 42% of those who provided an answer in our survey identified as people of color. However, it is important to keep in mind that only 64% of youth participants provided an answer to this question.

Over **70 Indigenous youth** attended the Youth Leadership Program on scholarships, a dozen more than last year. These youth represented 20 tribes, including 25 students representing the Navajo Nation, the largest participation from this tribe we have ever seen.

A total of **160 youth** attended orientation on Thursday night, a record number!

Thanks to the generosity of our food donors, we were able to serve both lunch and dinner every day at the youth tent. We were able to secure so many food donations that we estimate **2,500 meals** were served throughout the weekend, including feeding some in the larger Bioneers Community.



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## PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIONS

*Bioneers is blessed by a rich array of amazing collaborators. Here, we recognize them and their contributions to this year's program.*

**EVERY YEAR BIONEERS BRINGS TOGETHER** a wide range of organizations to co-create the overall Youth Leadership Program experience. The following organizations partnered with Bioneers contributing to a very successful program: **California Student Sustainability Coalition (CSSC); Earth Island Institute/Brower Youth Award Winners; RYSE/Earth Guardians; Ceres Community Project; Marin Community Media Center; Rooted in Community; Synergia Venture Learning; Weaving Earth (WE); David Shaw and the World Café; Laurie Marshall and The Singing Tree Project; Envirolution Club (Trashion Show); Women Environmental Artists Directory (WEAD).**



**The California Student Sustainability Coalition** is a non-profit organization that supports and connects students from across California to help them transform their educational institutions into models of sustainability. The Coalition, a recent partner organization, hosted two improvised college breakout sessions throughout the weekend. Although the breakout sessions had light attendance, given their spontaneous emergence, their engagement with the conference and the Youth Leadership Program is a great sign, as it represents an expansion of the program into the college and university student community in California.



**Earth Island Institute** is a non-profit, public interest, membership organization that supports people who are creating solutions to protect our shared planet. For 25 years, Earth Island Institute has been a hub for grassroots campaigns dedicated to conserving, preserving and restoring the ecosystems on which our civilization depends. Earth Island Institute sent their annual Brower Youth Award Winners to share their works as young activists to engage and inspire other youth. Some of the Brower Youth Award Winners showcased their work in the form of art, making the workshop they led truly remarkable.



**World Café** is a powerful social technology for engaging people in conversations that matter, offering an effective antidote to the fast-paced fragmentation and lack of connection in today's world. David Shaw, co-founder of the Common Ground Center at UC Santa Cruz, facilitated the space, where guest speakers such as Joanna Macy engaged youth.



**Ceres Community Project** transforms communities by restoring organic, local, whole foods and caring relationships to their place as the foundation of health through an integrated youth empowerment volunteer program. They sponsored Saturday lunch as well as a youth-led workshop on the Power of Food Choices.



**The Community Media Center of Marin (CMCM)** is a non-profit organization providing residents of Marin County with access to communication technologies, media training and the latest digital tools to create original content for cable TV and online media. This year Community Media Center of Marin captured the stories of our scholarship recipients a few months before Bioneers, as well as during the conference. Thanks to the efforts of CMCM, we were able to collect many videos and pictures that can be used in the future to showcase the program.



**The Rooted In Community National Network** is a national grassroots network that empowers young people to take leadership in their own communities. They are a diverse movement of youth and adults working together and committed to fostering healthy communities and food justice through urban and rural agriculture, community gardening, food security and related environmental justice work. In collaboration with Bioneers Restorative Food Systems Program Director Arty Mangan, Rooted in Community hosted the pre-conference intensive youth workshop "Just Us for Food Justice."



**Weaving Earth** offers a relational model of education, holding authentic connection to nature and the cultivation of an innate love of learning as primary mandates. All of their programs are highly experiential, held in a community context, facilitated by invested mentors and based in natural learning rhythms. This "Relational" model of education encourages healthy development, natural intelligence, an innate sense of belonging, individual genius and authentic connection to self, others and earth. Weaving Earth coordinated the YLP Community of Mentors Program, connecting youth with elders and other environmental leaders.



**Synergia** offers experiential education programs to people of all ages and backgrounds. Serving youth and families, school classes through the university level and professional staff teams, Synergia Learning Ventures is a Northern-California-based 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. In every Synergia program, the learning objectives are for students to learn more about themselves and their relationship to the world—the natural world and the world of human culture and social interaction. The learning includes inquiring deeply into one's sense of purpose and contribution, one's capacities to live a meaningful life, and how to manifest



those things to change the world. Synergia Learning Venture has been a great ally of the Youth Leadership Program for many years. Every year, they produce powerful and moving clips to help showcase the program. A favorite is their “Eyes on the Future” video, which portrays young activists and their vision for the future.



**The Singing Tree Project** by Unity Through Creativity helps transform violence in schools by restoring young people’s natural affinity to create and collaborate. They answer the question, “How can we beat the odds so the next generation will thrive?” by turning odds into advantages through the power of creativity and community! The Singing Tree Project brought a participatory mural to Bioneers, to which YLP participants contributed.



**Truckee's Envirolution Club** is a group of High School students (with adult support) who are working to help their local community “keep it green.” They educate people of all ages on what we can do to help make our community a greener place, like banning Styrofoam cups and remembering to always unplug appliances (e.g. computers, phone chargers) that aren’t in use. These are only a few examples of things they educate people about. At Bioneers, the Envirolution Club created a trashion show to demonstrate that unique and beautiful clothing can be made out of our own trash! Envirolution wants to empower people to make a difference while being creative and artsy, acting locally but always thinking globally.



For the second year in a row, **Earth Guardians** founders Xiuhtezcatl Martinez and Itzcuahtli Martinez have presented at Bioneers, performing Earth Guardians music and delivering speeches. In 2015, they also conducted a RYSE youth training and hosted the Poetry Slam.



**Women Environmental Artists Directory**, focusing on women’s unique perspectives, collaborates internationally to further the field and understanding of ecological and social justice art. This year, Andrée Thompson and Carol Newborg, WEAD board members and artists, installed artwork by incarcerated youth in the Youth Tent, turning it into a beautiful and inspiring space.



PHOTO © JAN MANGAN

## FOOD DONORS AND LOGISTICS

*Bioneers YLP partners with local food growers, preparers and sellers to nurture each YLP participant's body and senses as well as the spirit and intellect during our annual conference.*

WITH THE INCREDIBLE SUPPORT OF LOCAL STORES AND NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS, we were able to secure nutritious meals and snacks throughout the conference for our youth and other attendees on a very limited budget. All the food served was vegetarian, local and mostly organic. All youth were encouraged to bring their own utensils, cups and plates to reduce waste, and we set up dishwashing stations for their convenience. Coordinating meals proved to be a time-consuming yet rewarding process that required the support of several capable volunteers.

The following organizations sponsored dinner on Thursday and lunch on Friday and Saturday free of charge:



Because of the generosity of these two organizations, we were also able to serve leftover food for dinner on Friday and Saturday to our youth and other conference attendees who were hungry. The presence of healthy food contributed strongly to the harmonious and dynamic space in the youth tent. Working with Ceres Community Project and Lotus Cuisine of India was a wonderful experience. Both organizations were very easy to communicate with before and during the conference, and did an amazing job to ensure that all meal logistics went smoothly.





Thanks to the efforts of Bioneers staff and the Resilience Collaborative team, the following organizations agreed to generously donate healthy snacks and/or gift certificates to keep our attendees sustained and energized throughout the weekend:





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## 2015 YLP PROGRAM AND ACTIVITIES

*In this section, I share my reflections, and those of others, on the activities the Youth Leadership Program organized and hosted this year.*

### Thursday Orientation, Community of Mentors, and WE Mentoring Circles

In collaboration with Shay Sloan and Will Scott of Weaving Earth, we hosted the largest Youth Orientation to date, with 160 youth in attendance, a record number!

### Just Us For Food Justice (JU4FJ) Pre-conference Intensive

*“Bioneers Youth Leadership and Restorative Food System Programs in partnership with Rooted in Community National Youth Network (RIC) convened the annual Just Us for Food Justice day-long experiential intensive at the Walker Creek Ranch in West Marin.*

*This year’s program worked with the theme Resilient Roots, Rising Action, using the 5 Elements of Hip-Hop as a vehicle for social change. Youth leaders and their adult mentors from the Semillas Project in Salinas, Food What?! in Santa Cruz and Bay Area Localize in Oakland engaged in sessions on food justice, health equity, cultural healing and agri/culture projects.*

*Facilitated by Gerardo Marin, Beto Fuentes and Verence Portela of RIC, the day was designed to provide youth and their adult mentors with an enriching experience to help launch them into the Bioneers conference while nurturing their leadership skills.*

*Youth experienced a wide range of activities designed to fuel the mind, body and spirit, along with strengthening skills in creative messaging, holistic leadership and movement-building practices.”*

~ ARTY MANGAN, DIRECTOR, BIONEERS RESTORATIVE FOOD SYSTEMS PROGRAM





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## Interactive Living Mandala Art Project

Aaron Ableman, in collaboration with youth participants, created a beautiful large-scale collective art piece (shown above) with seeds, flowers, gourds and shells outside the youth tent.

## LGBTQ Talking Circle

Kristin Rothballer created a safe space for youth to open up and share issues relevant to the LGBTQ community. Attendance was between 15-20 people. As YLP coordinator, I had the chance to talk with some of the youth who attended the talking circle, and they shared their heartfelt appreciation towards Kristin for creating such an inclusive space. Their only recommendation for next year is to find a younger voice to co-lead the session.

## Brower Youth Award Winners

2015 Brower Youth Award Winners shared stories, challenges and successful strategies for environmental justice. Attendance was between 20-25 youth. I found the workshop to be engaging and inspiring. All the speakers used art and other interactive tools to capture youth attendees' attention and imagination.

## Generation RYSE

Xiuhtezcatl Martinez, an Indigenous youth activist and eco-hip hop artist, led an organizing meeting for Rising Youth for a Sustainable Earth (RYSE).

This was by far the most successful workshop with over 100 youth attending. Xiuhtezcatl and his co-leaders were able to encourage so many youth to take action to respond to climate change! Several youth were determined to establish Earth Guardians Chapters in their local neighborhood after the workshop:



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*“One thing that connects me back to Bioneers is when I look around at my exceptional classmates and hope arises inside me. We are the generation that will rise up and face challenges without the influence of greed. We will speak louder than the corporations and the industries by slapping humanity with the truth. The first step we’re taking is teaching those around us, spreading the information and, soon, interconnecting the people’s brilliant minds by starting a local Earth Guardians group.”*

~ ROWAN LYFORD, COLORADO

By the end of the workshop, the Youth Tent was overflowing with passion, music, and enthusiasm.

## Youth of Color Caucus

The Youth of Color Caucus, facilitated by Luisah Teish with the help of one of our work exchange participants, Jasmin Vassar, was attended by approximately 80 youth.

Luisah is an incredible asset to the youth leadership program. She is a cherished mentor and a driving force for positive change.

## The Trashion Show

Despite a few drops of rain, the Trashion Show was an incredible success!

*“Not only was the conference educational, it was also filled with fun and adventure! There were so many different booths and tents to explore, healthy Organic Valley food to eat and entertainment all day long! Through many of the events, I met interesting people with powerful stories and innovative ideas, like the girls who put on the Trashion Show – I love the idea of recyclable style. Bioneers was a cool venue with lively energy pulsating from person to person.”*

~ ROWAN LYFORD, COLORADO

**[Here is a video](#)** made by Sierra, one of the Envirolution students at the Bioneers conference.





## The Power of Our Food Choices

Ceres Community Project Teen Leaders explored with other youth how healthy food is not just what we put in our mouths, but all the steps that the food took to get there. They shared tools for organizing and educating, mapping the food system and effective ways to connect our community through food. 15 to 20 people attended the engaging and interactive workshop. The youth who led the workshop did an incredible job, and it would be valuable for Bioneers to host them again next year.

Below is a poem by Hannah Pieh, one of the Ceres Community Project Teen Leaders. Her poem was inspired by the conference:

*Movers, shakers, change makers  
We are the future  
We know what has to be done  
We know that we cannot do it alone  
Consciousness of connectedness  
What a gift  
But with this gift comes a responsibility  
To speak your voice  
To speak for those who cannot speak  
for themselves  
To advocate for what is right  
You cannot address one part  
Without addressing the whole  
You must water each plant  
For a garden to grow*

*So grow with me  
These planted seeds  
Will spread between  
Generations*

*They'll scatter into the fertile soil  
And feed entire nations  
Some say the dream is dead  
But I think it's just changing*

*I think that together  
We have the key  
Some parts lie inside of you  
And some inside of me*

*Here, we meet  
Here, we plant seeds  
In people's minds  
Here, we grow gardens*



## Poetry Slam

The Poetry Slam was the most exciting and moving activity at the youth tent! Hundreds of people attended and the youth tent was so crowded that people had to sit outside. One of the reasons the Poetry Slam drew so much attention this year is because it was hosted by Xiuhtezcatl. Although it was his first time leading an activity like this, he was able to rally a great diversity of young poets!

Many youth felt so inspired and reinvigorated by the energy in the room that they wrote and performed poems right on the spot.

MC Radioactive, an accomplished hip-hop artist, also performed at the slam to encourage the youth to take action.

## Transforming Inspiration Into Action

This 2-hour improvised workshop by NuMundo aimed to help youth transform newfound insights from the conference into tangible, inspired action. Bryan and Shayna, the two facilitators, did a really great job engaging those youth who attended. I found the content of the workshop both relevant and useful to young minds full of inspiration that may need some support to turn their ideas into concrete actions.

## Open Mic

Our amazing work exchange volunteer Jasmine Vassar volunteered to host the Open Mic session on Sunday. About 20 youth performed on stage, with most offering music and spoken word pieces. There were approximately 50 attendees.





PHOTO © LAURIE MARSHALL

## The Singing Tree Project

Laurie Marshall and her students amazed us this year as well! The interactive art mural she brought and tended was a great addition to the overall art exhibit.

## Wiser Together Café

David Shaw of UC Santa Cruz Common Ground Center and guest host Joanna Macy hosted World Café this year as well. He facilitated intergenerational dialogue on key themes emerging from the conference, as well as Open Space sessions where participants could determine the topics that mattered most to them. The Friday session had 80 participants, and the Saturday session attracted 120 participants. Both were record numbers!

## Digital Storytelling

Tom and Debra Weistar of Synergia Venture Learning brought their Mobile Interactive Classroom. Just as in previous years, their presence next to the youth tent contributed to creating a very vibrant space. Their youth filmed and captured stories of Bioneers attendees that will be portrayed in their movie "Eyes to the Future." Prior to the conference, I provided Debra with a detailed schedule of speakers and relevant workshops and activities that she could film, and I believe she found that very useful. Working with Synergia, particularly with Debra, was a gratifying experience, and I encourage Bioneers to continue this wonderful relationship.



PHOTO © SAM GROSS

## Strategic Energy Innovation (SEI) Internship Program

This year I had the great pleasure to work with two interns from the Marin School of Environmental Leadership: Selena Khisa and Julietta Saccardi.

Selena and Julietta greatly enriched the Youth Leadership Program by taking on creative projects while supporting the overall conference production. Prior to the conference, the three of us discussed their passions and strengths, and we collectively decided that we were going to create projects for them that valued their strengths. With this in mind, Julietta and Selena embarked on a journey to create a youth-led community mural to be showcased during our Saturday Night Dance Party. Julietta and Selena took this opportunity to create an intergenerational project by inviting all Bioneers attendees to co-create the youth-led mural and engage in conversations surrounding the effects of drought and wildfires and the role each individual can play to effect positive change. The mural turned out to be very successful during the dance party.

In addition to creating the mural, Julietta and Selena supported the conference production by helping with the following:

- ▶ Led scholarship recipients interviews with Community Media Center of Marin
- ▶ Coordinated meal logistics
- ▶ Helped with volunteer management
- ▶ Acted as runners to fulfill any unexpected tasks
- ▶ Coordinated prizes for poetry slam
- ▶ Helped with tent set up and clean up
- ▶ Helped with art decoration
- ▶ Acted as liaisons with Synergia Venture Learning





Below are Julietta and Selena's reflections on the conference:

*"...It turned out to be an awesome experience being on the 'inside' of Bioneers as a 'staff' member along with my fellow intern, classmate and friend, Julietta. Our Coordinator, Roberta, is young, energetic and inspirational! She guided us through the conference, helping us understand Bioneers' goals and inspiring us to want to be a part of it.*

*"Our journey took place over three and a half days. We started with an orientation at the site of the conference, the Marin County Civic Center. Julietta and I were to be floaters at the youth tent, filling in wherever needed and making sure the volunteers and youth were supported and had what they needed to enjoy the experience.*

*"The first day of the conference was really overwhelming for me. I had never encountered anything like it. I was on an 'overload' of outgoing niceness from people. It almost seemed insincere and I really wasn't sure what to think of it. Participants were obviously excited to be there and the energy was high!*

*"The second day I was more acquainted with my volunteer group and was able to begin to enjoy the energy. I started really enjoying the sense of community that was building as well.*

*"By the second night our mural outline was ready to be shared and worked on by the community. As we watched people working on it together, we realized that each person interpreted the piece in their own way and added something unique and different. Julietta and I had had some preconceived notions about how it would turn out, but it was wonderful to watch as it unfolded in its own way. It was a true demonstration of community effort coming together to create something positive.*

*"I feel a strong connection to community in my life. I believe that a sense of connection with one another enables us to work better together and make positive things happen. The Bioneers staff was so nice and welcoming and treated us as equals rather than teenagers. This went a long way toward creating a strong bond and sense of community. Staff, volunteers and participants felt passionate about being there and there seemed to be a great diversity of people in every sense. I ended up feeling that the niceness I had perceived at the beginning as possibly insincere was genuine after all. I think people felt a real sense of connection with one another. I guess that was the true goal of the conference – to help to create that sense of community among people. Because without that sense of connectedness with one another, how do we stand a chance of creating positive change in our world?"*

~ SELENA KHISA, 2015 YLP INTERN



*"...The environment has been a concern of mine throughout my life as it has been expressed through school programs, my parents, etc. However, where I live, it all seemed still somewhat superficial. There was something missing: humanity. We talked about numbers, facts, what's not working, but no one ever emphasized how important it was to come together as a group to fix these issues, or the power of community as a whole. In fact, the mindset was that as an individual one can make a difference. Although empowering, even that takes away from a focus on community building. Even something as small as gestures towards one another can build a sense of community that is essential for changing the world.*

*"This sense of community was present at Bioneers. At first, I have to admit that I did not embrace it. In fact, I rejected it. I found it bizarre and almost uncomfortable how kind everyone was, and how people were not afraid to speak their mind, or touch, or argue without being unkind. I described it later as sort of a culture shock. As I began to fulfill tasks here and there at the youth tent, this feeling disappeared. It was as if I was being sucked into this new world of not just environmental awareness, but the power of social justice and kindness. In fact, the only workshop I had time to attend was the Art of Empathy, and it was completely packed. It provided a lot of wisdom on how to communicate with others effectively by simply understanding. It gave me a lot of insight on how the solutions of the world do not revolve around science and technology, but bringing social justice to light, bringing people together, with an end goal of peace and harmony.*

*"At the youth tent, all of the workshops, especially the poetry slam, were inspiring. Seeing all of these youth who have a general aspiration to make a difference in the world was intense. It was so different from the small-minded high school mindset I am used to: people worried about what they look like, worrying about what college, what test score, etc., with no aspiration to make anything out of all the beautiful knowledge they're learning. That's what I found most inspiring about Bioneers: the facts we learn give us credibility, it's the movement that pushes us forward.*

*"I feel truly humbled to have been able to participate and attend such an event. I really enjoyed watching everyone help out and contribute to the mural Selena and I put together. It was amazing how people really turned it into their own and used it as a space to be creative with one another. That was another enlightening aspect of Bioneers: the love for art. Every dance, song, painting, collage was embraced by everyone there, and you could really feel the powerful energy put into every art piece at Bioneers, whether it be moving or still.*

*"As for the remainder of my internship, I plan on working with Selena in the future to get more local high schoolers involved with not only potentially Bioneers, but this movement of love, justice and the environment. Thank you to everyone who made this event possible, and I hope to see you all next year!"*

~ JULIETTA SACCARDI, 2015 YLP INTERN





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## OVERALL YOUTH PRESENCE AND FUNDRAISING

*Scholarships sustain the Youth Leadership Program's core commitments to diversity, accessibility and privileging the many voices and hands we need to heal the earth.*

NEARLY A QUARTER OF ALL 2015 BIONEERS CONFERENCE ATTENDEES WERE YOUTH under the age of 23, a huge accomplishment unprecedented since the creation of the YLP program.

Age Range	# of Attendees	% of Total
≤23	489	22%
24-34	173	8%
35-44	123	5%
45-54	146	6%
55-64	191	9%
65≥	210	9%
N/A (likely >23)	915	41%

In addition to the 376 scholarships that were awarded, about 50 youth were also able to attend Bioneers by engaging in fundraising campaigns with the help of Bioneers Staff, and over 60 youth purchased their own tickets, bringing **overall youth attendance to Bioneers to 491**. For example:

- ▶ The Student Environmental Resource Center at UC Berkeley co-authored a grant with the YLP Coordinator and successfully raised enough capital to pay for 21 students to attend Bioneers
- ▶ Laney College, with the help of the Development Director at Bioneers, engaged in a peer-to-peer fundraising campaign and paid for 10 students to attend the conference
- ▶ Earth Guardians NY Chapter engaged in the same fundraising campaign and sent 3 youth to Bioneers
- ▶ Likewise, Khabele School, engaged in a grassroots fundraising campaign and paid for 5 additional youth to attend the conference

## PARTICIPANT TESTIMONIES

*We invited participants to share responses to their Bioneers YLP experience.  
Their responses were heartfelt, and I share some selections here.*

*"This year I was given the incredible opportunity by Ceres Project and my high school to attend the conference for three full days. The first year I experienced Bioneers, I attended one day, the second I came for two days. This senior year, it was incredible to be filled to the brim with meaningful and inspiring content. By the end of Sunday, I was tired, but my brain was alive and firing, processing the weekend as a whole: each idea, expression, quote and theme that had contributed. I attempt to share the energy I gain from the Bioneers community with everyone I know, but it is hard to define.*

*"This year the thread weaving through the weekend was tangible: the efforts of the social justice and environmental movements must be connected because the nature of the issues fundamentally are. To heal the wild world we must heal our communities, and to heal the wounds of our cultures we must heal the roots of the natural world. This was brought into focus through dance, art, music, projects and storytelling. Bioneers rejuvenates me to pick up my thread and take action.*

*"I would love to have a way for youth of Bioneers to connect past the workshops together. It feels like there is a need for some time or space allotted to create those moments of sharing what we do and where we come from. I would like to tell the story of us youth at Ceres Project and hear others' stories. We are agents of change for the future, and we need help in breaking away from our groups and all banding together through thoughtful connection."*

~ JESSIE BRANDT, CERES PROJECT TEEN LEADER AND YOUTH BOARD MEMBER

*"Thanks for a great conference experience! Here is my exit report:*

*Here is a picture and poem describing my experience. They are meant to be seen together, they were both inspired by my experiences at Bioneers. The spiral is a shape of beginnings and endless continuation, movement building, growing, becoming something stronger and more beautiful as we join together. This was my first time at Bioneers; thank you for a great first experience!*

*Our movement, the new deal  
Pulses, PULSES, pulses  
Women leading the way,  
We are the keepers of the water  
Our world is pulsing, "world pulse"  
We are connected  
We are the people of the trees  
We are united  
Crossing borders in the name of Earth, making  
Friends in the name of Earth, making ART  
In the name of eARTh!  
Now is the time to be unapologetically  
Yourself, in unity, in solidarity,  
Taking action from the heART."*



~ SOPHIE SCHULTZE-ALLEN, SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT





*"Even though this was my third time attending Bioneers, I was constantly blown away by the influx of new experiences and inspirations. I was grateful this year to be part of the Youth Leadership program, where I was surrounded by motivated young adults to change the world. The dire state of our planet is often scary and overwhelming to think about, but the capacity of humans and our ability to collaborate on solutions keeps me hopeful. That is why I love Bioneers. Not only are there incredible speakers who bless the stage in the morning and awesome workshop panelists who blow my mind, but there is an entire community of attendees that create change all over the world."*

*"This year, I was especially excited about exploring the topics of Green Chemistry, Biomimicry and education. I am involved in the Green Labs at UCSC, a student-run program where we encourage labs to become more sustainable through behavior change – including waste reduction, energy efficiency and procurement. I am passionate about Biomimicry and using nature's designs to solve human problems, and Green Chemistry is the basis of this model. The workshop at Bioneers called Green Chemistry and Biomimicry in Education provided more information and inspiration to take back to UCSC and implement into Green Labs. From this workshop, and discussion with the speakers afterward, I am planning a Green Chemistry lecture series at UCSC for lab directors, student researchers and anyone else to come and learn about this new model for sustainable chemistry and the science of Biomimicry!"*

*"I can't wait to come back again to Bioneers next year as a graduate and continue my learning journey. Who knows, maybe one day I will get the opportunity to speak at Bioneers!"*

~ LILY URMANN, STUDENT, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SANTA CRUZ

*"This year, I was most touched by the sense of community I felt. Being away from the Bioneers for a year can feel very disheartening, especially for a young woman trying to voice opinions about issues surrounding minorities and the environment. It's easy to feel like accomplishing anything is a drop in the bucket, but when I'm surrounded by so many activists at the conference, my strength is renewed."*

*"I will use the contacts I made at the conference to encourage me throughout the year. Already, I've been able to fall back on some of these contacts due to a discrimination issue that's arisen at my alma mater, University of Colorado at Denver. A good friend, who also attended Bioneers, was told he couldn't participate in parts of a school trip because he is openly gay. When he told me this, I was enraged, and called upon my Bioneers friends to find lawyers and contacts to help my friend fight the school on this antiquated and discriminatory decision. He is now in the midst of a legal battle with the school administration, receiving support from the title 9 offices and from a local LGBT lawyer, who is offering her services pro bono based on a call from a fellow Bioneer. Before this conference I think I would have been too nervous and shy to reach out and call out this type of injustice. Because of the support of the Bioneers, big change is happening."*

~ CAT HEARD, SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT



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*"This is my second time attending Bioneers as a parent chaperone for the Envirolution Club from Truckee, California. I really enjoyed the opportunity to see so many people so passionate about the environment and social justice. It's great for myself and our young people to get inspired about what we can do as individuals and collectively to improve the world around us whether it be a large things or small things.*

*"I really liked the herb walk. I grew up in the Bay Area and never knew how useful (and delicious) plants that are under our feet and over our heads can be. I have a new respect for the plant world!*

*"Having the hotel so close by is wonderful! It eliminates having to drive in every day and we can get more out of the time that we are there.*

*"Thank you so much for supporting Envirolution. The kids really look forward for to their trip to Bioneers every year and putting on their Trashion show to an appreciative audience. They really come home excited to change the world!!"*

~ DIANNE KAMENETSKY, PARENT, TRUCKEE, CA

*"This year the conference had a very strong presence of Indigenous speakers, panelists, youth scholars and attendees and I am both honored and proud to say that I was one of the Youth Scholars.*

*"Each year Bioneers strives to offer Indigenous youth scholarships to attend the national conference, to further inspire and inform youth's work.*

*"For me this opportunity has been invaluable. The main focus of my work in my fellowship at Resource Media is to learn how to authentically and respectfully amplify the voices of Indigenous communities, thus learning more about various movements and meeting leaders and organizers was such a gift. However, putting my professional life aside and speaking as an Indigenous woman, this year's conference impacted me on a much more personal level.*

*"Growing up I experienced conflicting and confusing feelings about my culture. There were times where I struggled to feel proud about my Indigenous roots, so I hid them. And there were also times when I felt guilty and ashamed that I wasn't 'Native' or traditional enough because I attended non-Native schools and eventually left the community for college. I still work with this internalized oppression, however, there are moments when someone or something frees me from that, and that's what happened at Bioneers..."*

***(Read Jade's full reflection on our blog.)***

~ JADE BEGAY, INDIGENOUS YOUTH SCHOLAR





*“The Marin County Youth Commission really enjoyed Bioneers and was incredibly grateful to have had the chance to attend on scholarships. This group has a lot of youth who love to soak in new information, so even if a particular topic wasn’t something their Advisory Committee is currently focused on, they still appreciated a place to learn and absorb new things.*”

*“This was the first time that any of our 18 commissioners have attended a conference and it proved to be an eye opening experience for them. It gave them a chance to see different people speaking about multiple topics, how communities are mobilizing to protect their environments, possible solutions for different issues in the world and inspired them to think critically about their own communities and possibilities.*”

*“The youth had many takeaways – they are already youth advocates since they represent the voice of youth in Marin, but they walked away with a better sense of youth advocacy in general. They learned how to be more effective in strategies of getting people engaged with their existing work. The Food Justice Advisory Committee was incredibly inspired by Malik [Yakinij]’s presentation and workshop about Farmer’s Markets and healthy food incentives as well as Saru [Jayaraman]’s work on wages and tipping. And many of them were incredibly inspired by the Oakland Restorative Justice workshop as the presenter painted a clear picture of actual results so they got to see how it worked in a different community. Plus, ‘heart warrior’ came up as a term that resonated with them in the work that they are currently doing or have been doing in their communities.*”

*“The emphasis on storytelling also really stood out to them. As Commissioners, they have to listen to youth in the county and be able to understand what it is that they need to advocate for. I think hearing numerous stories in a way that resonated for them helped the commissioners understand that, when they are listening to other youth in the county, that they are actually listening to them share a piece of their story. A different aspect of storytelling was the youth-focused area. Many of the commissioners spoke highly of the poetry slam and said that it really ‘upped the ante’ to be around other youth.*”

*“The youth did have some constructive feedback. The keynotes were very long to have them back-to-back with only one break. More options to get up and move were requested since it was a very long time to have them sit. They wanted more opportunities to do youth-to-youth interaction where it was more intentional to get youth to come together and network better as well as do some peer-to-peer resource sharing. Having other youth lead workshops or sessions versus just the hip-hop duo was another suggestion.*”

*“Overall, the MCYC left inspired, challenged, overwhelmed (in a good way!), and thinking critically. They all said they would like to return again next year, and I know many of them feel inspired by the conference to continue to make change in Marin County. It also inspired them to have a conversation regarding adding another advisory committee that focused specifically on environmentalism – this wouldn’t be able to be*



*voted on until later this year, but the conversation has been percolating and this is due, in large part, to attending Bioneers.*

*"Thank you for your generous gift of giving MCYC scholarships to attend – YLI would not have been able to make this event possible if it weren't for your donors committed to youth involvement and leadership."*

~ MARIN COUNTY YOUTH COMMISSION, YOUTH LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

*"As a young person in the time we are living in I have always held a fear towards the future – attending the 2015 Bioneers Conference changed my whole perspective. Prior to attending Bioneers, whenever I heard about climate change there was this doom and gloom mentality behind the huge statistics and everything else said. It was as if everyone were brainwashed to fear what is happening to the point of numbness, and so the topic is passed around nonchalantly. When I heard people speak, they always talked about action on climate change like some futuristic possibility only attainable for the next generation. This is the most infuriating thing someone can say to a younger person, 'we'll keep on making trash and someday you'll pick it up.' People who say it is up to the next generation to fix everything are just as bad as the large corporations who are pushing aside the hidden costs for someone else to pay for someday. Through all of the lecture halls, workshops and group discussions I saw how all of the generations were there making a difference now and that for me was a huge perspective change that Bioneers made. It inspired me in many ways because I now am excited to 'pick up the trash' and create a better world, but I know now that there are people who are acting now and it does not rely solely upon the next generation's shoulders, it's just that the next generation will be dealing with the consequences if we don't act.*

*"At the Bioneers Conference, after I had my perspective changed, a huge weight was lifted off of my shoulders, because at that point I knew that I wanted to help and do the work that Bioneers was doing. It cleared away the indecision of what to do with my life. I knew then that, no matter what I do as a profession, I will always work to solve climate change. Now when I think of climate change I think of the amazing opportunities it is giving us and I am no longer afraid of what might happen because I know that we will join to prevent any such possibility from happening and create a better world in the process.*

*"Through all of my perspective changes and my brain being stuffed full of knowledge the thing that made Bioneers truly special for me was the absolute unity of everyone. Although we came together from all around the world, we all sought in one form or another to solve the major problems that are harming our world. This is so unique to gather several thousand people that all have the same desire to help, that is all we need to solve the problems of our world."*

~ QUINCY MEISMAN, SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT





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*"This year was my first encounter with Bioneers. Though I did not know what to expect, I had a sense that the conference would be inspiring and transformative for me. I was right. The gathering together of awake people from all creeds, generations, nations, walks of life, genders and races created a powerful field of deep introspection as well as a sense of communal activism and coming together in these terribly challenging times. I felt as though I was bearing witness to a much-needed weaving together of narratives of social justice and environmental stewardships, arts, feminism, spirituality, indigeneity, science and technology in a Big Story that recognizes that we are all connected.*

*"To hierarchize one 'way' or 'solution' as 'the only one' is to fall victim to the individualism and Story of Separation that has, if you trace it carefully enough, committed a deep violence to the Earth and all living things. So Bioneers, for me, was a breath of fresh air, a moment in which all voices felt present and welcomed, and diverse perspectives were not only invited, but celebrated.*

*"I found myself moved to tears on many occasions – tears of anger for the insane injustices committed against people of color, our country's indigenous peoples, against women; tears of grief for our thoughtless ignorance and confusion as a species; tears of joy and gratitude for the audacity to keep on, to continue to live for truth, for life, for beauty. For so many different pockets of peace to continue to cultivate what the mainstream culture has deemed impossible.*

*"I carry a deep gratitude for this experience that Bioneers provided me as a young woman to really feel as though my intuition, my way of knowing the world, matters. I was so struck by the real call for the sacred feminine, in sync with all things alive and wild, to take its rightful place at the center of leading a revolution in human existence on the planet. I was moved by the many men who stood up and then stood back to make way for the women of the world who are ready to lead with their bodies, their hearts, their deep knowing of this earth, their capacity to heal and to be seen.*

*"Rachel Bagby's (R)evolutionary Voices workshop, the Council Tent and the Community of Mentors Circle were moments where I could really feel the coming together of the personal and the planetary, the unique and the universal. I was so grateful for the spaces that allowed for intimacy in such a busy and sometimes overwhelming conference atmosphere.*

*"There is always more to say of any experience that makes us come alive. Bioneers made me come alive in such a way that I belonged deeply to myself and to this world. I was reminded that I belong to this small spinning water planet and that my work is to continue to serve this Great Turning in any way I can. That we all – every living thing – have work to do to feed and to feel that belonging. Thank you for reminding me of this."*

~ JUSTINE EPSTEIN, SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT



*"At the Bioneers conference, I learned about new ways to approach environmental issues. At this time in the world, the main goal should be to bring together individuals in the world so they can also be aware of the injustices occurring to the environment. Paul Hawken brought to my attention that the way we address climate change is important. Rather than call it climate change, the alterations to the environment are part of the climate disruption. The project he and his team are working on, Project Drawdown, aims to put together a list of solutions that can bring carbon emissions down. Some of the solutions are simple activities that individuals can apply to their everyday lives. Individuals' actions can collectively make a huge difference in solving climate disruption.*

*"The conference brought to my attention the diverse groups with similar interests that truly can have a major impact on society and the environment. Seeing all the people share and exchange ideas renewed my hope that we will be able to figure out how to aid our planet and our home. The conference was a transformative experience where new ideas were embraced by the crowd. I will continue to implement these values in my everyday life and share what I have learned.*

*"Before I attended the conference I was focused on sharing the scientific data hoping that people will realize the need to change their actions in order to lessen their impact on the earth. However, perhaps we need a new approach to gathering supporters to make a difference. The facts are all there and have been available for years. Now it is time to build upon these facts with emotional appeals to keeping our home beautiful and clean. Now it is time to institute an emotional approach. Share stories of the hardships large portions of the population face as a result of environmental degradation and lack of resources. Pull at the heartstrings of citizens worldwide. Then, perhaps, we can begin to make collective decisions as the citizens of Mother Earth to better our environment."*

~ LILA KUBLER-DUDGEON, SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT

*"My experience at Bioneers was one that I do not think I will ever forget. As a college student and a County of Marin citizen I was very proud and excited to hear that San Rafael was hosting such an event and was not only able to share my home town to my fellow peers but to also show them the many accomplishments and community involvement in the city. After hearing so many speakers touch base on so many topics such as global climate change to the racial injustice in different work forces, it brought new light to me that, not only as a student but someone who is also looking for a career in the field of business, there will always be a type of obstacle as a female of color. But over all I was astonished by the support and awareness to such topics that I instantly became so involved when I returned back to San Jose State. With Bioneers I was able to gain great awareness and leadership skills to help many others become aware of different topics as well as hope to be able to change some of the obstacles many face today."*

~ MARITZA REYES, SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT





PHOTO © MICHELLE GRAMBEAU

*"When I first arrived to the complex in San Rafael where the Bioneers conference was to take place I was admittedly nervous about what the day and the event would hold in store for me. Upon entering into the main auditorium I was immediately washed over with the deep sound of drumming and the swaying, jumping movement of bodies moving along to its rhythm. My first thought after seeing the spectacle of the drummer and people dancing so early in the morning, was what have I gotten myself into, some sort of hippie convention? I am glad to say that my initial assertions and reservations about the Bioneers conference were completely proven wrong. The speaker that I found to be most impressive and that left me with the most inspiration was Henk Ovink. Ovink is a special envoy for international water affairs. His idea was that we needed to take a better approach to how we manage and use our water in modern cities and countries. Ovink's speech was comprised of how the Netherlands were able to integrate the institutions of solar, water, energy and infrastructure. The accomplishment wasn't that these institutions were integrated but that they assisted one another in making their respective fields more efficient. Mr. Ovink's main claim was that the earth is more than  $\frac{2}{3}$  covered in water, and that nearly 90% of all crises are water-related. Essentially water is the most important/dangerous component that our planet is made up of. He urges that we should not take water lightly, that if we build our structures with water in mind we can be better prepared to handle future crises. Ovink's main theme is that we need to take collaborative measures in both private and public sectors. He claims there is a disconnection between the government and people on the issue of water, we need to be more inclusive and attempt to emulate the Netherlands where water is part of the culture.*

*"The other panel that I found to be very interesting was the panel on race in the workplace. The main discussion of the panel was how Race can affect every aspect of society. It mainly talked about how people felt that people of color were not as worried about the environment and the planet as their white counterparts. The panelists claimed that this was just not the case. If people view people of color as being less passionate about the environment or other social issues it is done purposely. The reason why people of color might be seen as less than willing to fight for environmentalism is due to the fact that they are already busy trying to push for the social struggle of equality in race. Race affects all other social movements and people of color are as vigorous to make social changes as any group, the only problem is that they are born into a system that constantly brings them down the social ladder. It is up to all groups to work together to bring equality, and once people are born into a system of true equality then it will be possible to make significant environmental change.*

*"I think my favorite portion of the conference were the panels on race. I think it is very important to understand that racial discrimination is a type of cancer to society. As long as racial discrimination is encouraged and prevalent in our society then we as a country will continue to degrade. I believe that it is only through understanding and unity that we as a people will be able to make our country great again.*



PHOTO © JAN MANGAN

*The Bioneers conference for me reinforced the idea that we are in it together and we need to stop dividing ourselves. Collaboration, innovation and integration are essential elements needed to create change within our society. I hope to be able to attend the full conference soon in the future so that I am able to soak in more of the beliefs and ideals that the Bioneers champion. I think it is a great organization that more people need to be aware of. It was definitely a eye-opening experience for me and one that I will not forget anytime soon.”*

~ MIGUEL GARCIA, SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT

*“What about Bioneers don’t I like? As an artist, I feel that there is abundant representation of the creative pursuits that make humanity a beautiful, soul-centric collective. As a scientific mind, I love the precision and specificities that stimulate dense clouds of thought. As an agriculturist, I believe there is exactly the right emphasis on the importance of food production. As a member of the ‘youth,’ I appreciate the inclusion of my peers’ voices. As a learner, I revel in the teachings of my elders. And as an educator, I’ve found myself truly inspired to continue weaving the strands of thought that Bioneers brings to the table – and sharing them with the rest of the world. I am many other things, and Bioneers delivers in virtually every department, but education seems like the ultimate purpose underlying all of our activities there.*

*“I wanted my exit report to contain a fully formed outline of something I’ve been feverishly working on since I left the conference, as a testament to the inspiration of which I speak. Unfortunately, I am not satisfied enough with its structure to reveal just yet. But I will describe it to some extent.*

*“The final day of Bioneers left me with a head swelling full of ideas and conclusions and a handful of new connections. I quickly realized that I needed to put a spout on this head to share some of the processes and revelations that have changed my view of the world, before I explode. Well, since I’ve already designed curriculum and been a facilitator at my old high school – I know some of what goes into creating a course of classwork. I’ve wanted to get back and teach another one at some point, and the vision of just what it would look like came with immense clarity that Sunday in San Rafael.*

*“Having a permaculture background, I’ve heard one response from people fresh out of their various ‘Permaculture Design Certificate’ courses quite a few times. It goes like this: ‘Permaculture is cool and I learned a lot, but it’s too bad I won’t get to use it because I don’t have any land – or enough money to buy land. Oh well, maybe some day.’ Being a Systems Thinker, this response is entirely unacceptable to me. Permaculture is a label we put on a system of design that can be applied anywhere and everywhere, and should not be thought of as merely hugelkultur beds, swales and heirloom vegetables. I think we need to advance permaculture beyond land design, and show people that you don’t have to be in the agrarian sector to utilize it. In fact, it doesn’t matter what discipline you want to build your life around – a basic understanding of permaculture principals and systems design should be a part of every person’s education.*





*“That’s where my class comes in. I want to spread the ideas and processes that ‘the p-word’ represents to the younger generation, starting at school. This will not be a normal PDC, nor will it be a series of tips on small steps to ‘green’ your home. This will be a ‘how do I fit these principles into the structure of my career’ think tank. I want this to be about critically approaching every issue, not just doling out one-size-fits-all solutions to complex problems. This is not about buying organic or taking shorter showers. This is a class that prepares students to connect the dots and come to conclusions on their own. If that includes buying organic produce, then so be it, but the emphasis will be on seeing problems within the context of the system they are a part of – and addressing them in the most holistic way possible.*

*“How often do visitors at events like Bioneers remark about the need for this type of content to reach beyond the fringe? I think we’re getting there, but it is our collective duty as participants to find ways to integrate these world-changing teachings throughout our lives – and build on them. Bioneers is not only an event. It is not only a group of people, or a media outlet. To me, Bioneers symbolizes a collective consciousness, with a conscience that’s caught up with us. There are no spectators here. I’m figuring out how I fit in, and what a glorious journey it is.”*

~ CAL HUSS, SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT

*“I have been coming to Bioneers for three years, and each year it is inspiring in a million different ways; however, what really sets Bioneers apart is the spectrum of ways they address issues. I have sat through speeches full of statistics and numbers, trying to gain a deeper understanding in that way, and I have sat and listened to the stories of people who are out there fighting for their rights or the rights of others and the planet. Often we look up to the people with the numbers, people who have done the math, to answer our questions. I love how Bioneers brings in the other side of it: the storytellers, the poets, the drummer and the people who are directly being affected by issues we all care about. Bioneers realizes that we need everyone to make the world a better place. We need that collective intelligence, that immense power that is formed when we realize we are all human. If there is one lesson that I have learned from Bioneers, that sticks out above the rest, it is that bringing people together is one of the most powerful things that we can do.”*

~ LILY LEVEQUE-EICHORN, SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT



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