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# 'Waking Up' The Public to Environmental Stewardship: Lessons from the Pachamama Alliance Program in Australia

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## **'Waking Up' the Public to Environmental Stewardship: Lessons from the Pachamama Alliance Program in Australia**

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The Pachamama Alliance (PA) keystone program, the “Awakening the Dreamer, Changing the Dream” (ATD) symposium, was designed to educate, inspire and empower individuals, organizations and communities on the path to creation of an “environmentally sustainable, spiritually fulfilling, and socially just future” (see <http://www.pachamama.org/engage/awakening-the-dreamer> for a brief video profile). More complex than simply Mother Earth, *Pachamama* is a Quechua word meaning “the sacred presence of the Earth, the sky, the universe, in all time” (PA, 2015). The program was designed in 2006 on invitation from the indigenous Achuar people of Ecuador, in collaboration with U.S. partners. Since inception, there have been 225,000 symposium participants at 4,000+ symposiums delivered in 80 countries. Over 4,100 worldwide facilitators have been intensively trained to put on symposiums, which utilize a combination of small group process, video with scientific and expert commentary, and written material to spur individuals to move from concern to action. There are also ATD variants for the business community, youth and online learning. The author, an academic and trained ATD facilitator, will present evaluation findings from three events with 110 Australian participants, as well as outline participant conceptualizations of the sustainability crisis humanity faces.

ATD has one of the most extensive global transformational networks open to the public, yet delivery and outcomes are little-studied, with the exception of recent dissertations on environmental leadership (Scheele, 2012; Sugihara, 2015; Warm 2011). It is a value-rich conversation that activates people to engage, using the metaphor of waking up from a trance, as other transformational programs do (Prentice, 2012). The symposium sections will be profiled: 1. Where are we now?; 2. How did we get there?; 3. What is possible?; and 4. What is your unique commitment? To avoid leaving participants in debilitating despair the final three program components build optimism and shift the paradigm (Macy & Johnstone, 2012). The second program component looks at the role each of us play in perpetuating the status quo; a plethora of unexamined assumptions generated by the audience are shared. Examples of these assumptions include the bigger/better/faster treadmill, image construction through consumption, societal politeness means not discussing the big issues, ‘what can one person do?’, ‘some things are free,’ and ‘I deserve convenience.’ The core of ATD is in the third section that outlines a new story of human and biosphere oneness, and thus caring and compassion.

The session will outline for uninitiated members of the public the participant profile and marketing strategies. Evaluation outcomes provide ideas for program tweaking, although the satisfaction score of 4.9 (on a 5-point scale) illustrates the program can be individually transformative. The long-term goal of ATD is to build a connected, passionate community of people – volunteer groups, councils, youth, local food production advocates, friends of parks, transitions movement, and the tourism industry - who act for PA’s sustainability vision. Consequently, the presentation will wrap up looking at ways ADT events have spurred the formation of hubs/community circles, built on principles of behavior change, that work locally to generate hope for the global future and provide an impetus to act at home and in the workplace and community.

## References

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