

Welcome to Turning Conscience Into Action, the Earth Charter podcast. Join Mirian Vilela, Earth Charter International Executive Director, in her fascinating conversations with great thinkers, scholars and activists from around the world who are working in the fields of sustainability, ethics, education and social transformation. Our purpose is to generate new insights on how to face current global challenges and inspire informed action.

Welcome to our podcast's episode of today. I have the pleasure of welcoming Peter Blaze Corcoran to our conversation today here in the Earth Charter podcast series.

Peter is a senior advisor to the Earth Charter International and his research fellow at our Earth Charter Education Center that is located here on the campus of the University of Perpetua. Peter is a professor emeritus of the Florida Gulf Coast University and founder director of the Center for Environmental and Sustainability Education. He's editor of various publications that feature the Earth Charter and has done incredible work in scholarship with the Earth Charter. Thank you so much for joining us today, Peter.

Gracias. Thank you, Mirian. And people do occasionally call it Florida Gulf Coast University, but it's the Gulf Coast University. That's perfect. Thank you. I would like to begin, if I could, Mirian, by acknowledging the keepers of the land on which I'm working. The Seminole and the Mikosuke peoples have long cared for this land and the ancient Calusa before them. So I want to acknowledge them and to acknowledge all keepers of the land, recognized and unrecognized. And I also want to acknowledge you, Mirian.

I want to just say how important your work is. I've been watching some of the webinars and listening to podcasts and it's great work that you're doing. It's so important now in these dark times, too, that we have the kind of hope that education can bring. So thanks. Thanks for all that you're doing. And including scholarship. You know, I'm writing an article now and I'm using the book that you and Alicia edited for those of you who don't know it listening, it's voices of the Earth Charter Initiative responding to encyclical Laudato Si.

Pope Francis is wonderful. Encyclical, but it is about the resonance and the simpatico between the Earth Charter and Laudato Si. Very important work that you're doing there, Mirian. So thank you so much. I'm happy to be with you today. Thank you. Yes, with that book, it's part of our ongoing effort here to find synergies and bridges with the Earth Charter, with other things that emerge or movements. Certainly what the current pope is doing is amazing and certainly very progressive and very similar with the ideas that are articulated in the Earth Charter.

So, Peter, let me start by asking you about the message of hope. You have been offering some talks that you relate to the Earth Charter as an instrument that serves as a message of hope and about its role as aspirational in inspiration. Can you share with us what do you mean by that? Surely I begin by saying with regard to hope that it's absolutely essential that we have hope, that that we work from hope, that we give our students and our colleagues hope. It's especially in these very difficult times.

It's more important than ever. And I also come with the assumption, as I've written many times, that hope is not a given. That hope remains to be constructed. And so it's our job as educators and activists to create hope. And so where does that come from? I think that in these times, we need to all be in touch with the sources of our strength, whatever they might be. For some, that's a religious or a spiritual orientation. For some, that's the natural world. For some, that's their community or their family.

But I think that the Earth Charter is a message of hope that reminds us of the many point, it points us in in many directions in which we can find hope. The notion of ecological integrity, the notion of our broadening sense of self in the world. These are hopeful ideas. And so I find the Earth Charter itself hopeful. I find the process by which it was created still hopeful. You know, we have in my country, for example, now in the United States, we can't get anything done. We don't agree on. We can't agree to feed hungry people and help sick people.

The Earth Charter story continues to be hopeful. The fact that the Earth Charter exists at all and that it has created a vehicle for our aspirations and points us in in so many directions. And I've thought a lot, Mirian, about why the Earth Charter is aspirational and inspirational. I think a lot of it is a credit to the process. Again, the research that Stephen Rockefeller and Johanna Bernstein did, the fact that the Earth Charter is based on scientific principles from cosmology, from evolutionary biology.

The fact that so many human agreements, people's treaties and laws and softball were studied. It has a very strong foundation. And because it is so deeply grounded in things like the faith traditions, all of the faith traditions, of course, were incorporated in one way or another. And so it's a foundation to the Earth Charter and indigenous wisdom. So the Earth Charter is based in deep truths about the universe. And this is this is one of the reasons it's a fountain of of thoughtful, informed hope.

I like that metaphor, fountain of thoughtful hope, especially in the current times. I think the young generation, and sometimes I talk with students and I can feel how how much they have been losing hope and it's even difficult to think of a hopeful future. So it's very important to link that and help people to raise their vision to a hopeful future and work towards that, of course. Yes. OK, Peter, you have worked for so many years with the Earth Charter, especially in bringing it to the curriculum and in through your research, the research work and the many books you have to help to put together at FGCU.

Can you share with us some practical example of what you have done with the Earth Charter in higher education?

Well, with as we think about sustainability in university education, there are broad ideas and deeper ideas. So at Florida Gulf Coast University, we have some very deep ideas like there's a whole course on living the Earth Charter where you can focus throughout the entire semester on the relationship of the Earth Charter to your own learning, your own life. Did you create that course, leaving the first charter? No, let me give credit to Dr. Maria Raca for that course. It was inspired by all of the work that we're doing, but we wanted something where students could go deeper, where we have gone broad.

But I think in a very significant way is that students are introduced to the Earth Charter. They give a critical analysis, a critical reading of the text in the course, the university colloquium, a sustainable future. Now, the thing that's extraordinary about that course is it's required of all students. And as far as we know, it's the only university course in the world that's required for graduation of all students. It's amazing. And that's going on for several years. Several years, I understand.

From the beginning, we talked about sustainability when we started that course in 1997, it's a new university. But even then, I had heard a bit about the Earth Charter. You were coming to the end of the drafting process and we began to use it. But in 2000, it was introduced as a required reading. So all teachers who are teaching the course introduced the Earth Charter and a couple of things about the course just to create a context for how the Earth Charter is discussed and introduced. First of all, the classes are small.

They used to be limited to 15. Now it's about 22, but small enough for discussion and sharing. And the Earth Charter is introduced. Not we don't proselytize about the Earth Charter, but we we we ask students what they like about it, what they disagree with, how it resonates with them personally and to think about how the Earth Charter might be used in their own learning. This is a very important point because sometimes people think that the way in which we can do values based education or use the Earth Charter as a reference is by imposing, that's not certainly not the case.

Surely. And so we we we approach it as environmental education professionals would approach any controversial subject, which is with freedom of expression. Many of our students find the Earth Charter. You know, they go online and they find all these things about how it's a communist plot or, you know, here, here we are in Florida, right? Where socialism is a dirty word and and people can be subject to the weaponizing of certain kinds of ideas. So it's even more important in a context like that, a conservative context to give students freedom of of thought and expression about the Earth Charter.

And but the important thing is that they all get the opportunity to read it and think about it. And now 30,000 students have taken that course. It's an important number of people over the years, right? Yes, to think. I mean, the we all know that a course can change, a single course can change our lives. And I know that course has been life changing for many, many students. They've changed their majors, they've changed their lifestyles, they've changed their one of the things the Earth Charter does is it broadens the view so much.

A lot of our students are are inherently provincial. You know, we're a regional university in a in a little corner of the Western Everglades, but it's so important for students to develop a global view, of course. And we we tie it in. The courses also includes experiential education. They go to places of their interests. We live in a beautiful part of the world and a unique part of the world. The Everglades, there are no other Everglades, as the famous book says. So we tie it in with a lot of opportunity for students to find themselves in the world.

And as I said, in answer to your last question, this expanding sense of self that the Earth Charter gives us, that our concern goes beyond ourselves, to our families, to our community,

to other forms of life, to the larger living world, as the Earth Charter puts it. That's one of the most important things, I think, to find your place in a complex and challenging world at this point in time. So we approach the Earth Charter through research, through curriculum. We've created opportunities such as our Earth Charter meal, where students have a chance to mail, what is that meal is a project?

You source the food with care from places that are sustainable, have an opportunity for blessing of the food in keeping with the gratitude that's inherent in the Earth Charter. It's just it's just an exercise, an educational exercise to take understanding of the Earth Charter to to a deeper level. We put all the Earth Charter principles on cards, on the table, so that people can reflect on them. So we've we've tried over the years. It's an exercise, a practical exercise you you developed in which you invite students to think about and reflect about their food, the way they eat, what they eat, through the lens of their exact.

Exactly. And one of the things we've tried to do is to keep the pedagogy consistent with the philosophy so that, you know, it's our work is very duet, where it's based on the critical importance of experience. And so an experience like that with its ritualistic elements and its opportunities for reflection and interaction with others, not to mention eating, which everyone loves to do, you know, gives an experience that takes one's understanding to a deeper level. How wonderful. What a what an experience you have created there in Florida using the Earth Charter in higher education, in the higher education setting.

Peter, I have followed the work you have done over the past 20 years. And I I'm certainly an admirer and appreciate deeply appreciate the work you have done. And one of them has been several books, research such as this one called intergenerational learning and transformative leadership of course, sustainable futures. And I have seen that you have a special interest on the theme of intergenerational justice and responsibility, which is of course an idea that is clearly articulated in the Earth Charter.

Can you share with us what is your understanding of that? What do you think that means and why is that so important? And how can we make that happen? Yeah. Well, the Earth Charter in principle for captures the essence of sustainability. You know, if we go back to grow Harlem, Bruntland and the the Commission's report, the World Commission on Environment and Development, Sustainable Development is development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

So this whole notion of of intergenerational equity, while that term is not used in the Earth Charter, it's the it's the longstanding principle of intergenerational equity spoken so beautifully in principle for and the supporting principles A and B. That the to me, it's the heart of sustainability. To me, it's also the heart of the Earth Charter because we're thinking about creating a just, peaceful, sustainable world for whom, for the generations to come. And so the Earth Charter is very well thought out on this matter.

And what I've tried to do, I was inspired, Mirian, by the Earth Charter, really from the beginning in 2000 to change my given where I was in my career to change my scholarship and my teaching to think about the next generation. So, for example, in the book that you held up, not only is the book about intergenerational learning, the book is written by many

young scholars, written by intergenerational teams of scholars, tried to have parts of the world that are often underrepresented in English language scholarship. So we have scholars from Ethiopia and Fiji and all sorts of places that are not the usual United States and Europe and so on in terms of scholarship.

So I was inspired a generation ago to lift up young scholars to try to focus also on intergenerational solidarity, if you will, intergenerational collaboration as a living example of intergenerational equity.

Well, that's certainly at the core of the idea of sustainable development and certainly the way in which the Earth Charter has been articulated. But probably it's one of the things that we need the most to cultivate and nurture in the current young generation to stimulate that sense of responsibility and care with current and future generations. And, Mirian, go ahead. Sorry, it takes work. You know, it's not easy. Our culture's globalized culture is very segregated by age. And many of our institutions are segregated by age, too.

You know, it depends on the church, but, for example, in the United States, most churches are not multigenerational. Schools are inherently intergenerational because you have older teachers and younger students, so it may be a bit easier for us in education. But it's something that needs to be created. Let me put it that way. And so I I'm always trying to find ways for older people to reach out to younger people, to invite them, to listen to them, to find ways to work with them. And likewise, I'd counsel young people to insist and ask and reach out to older people to create opportunities for collaboration and solidarity.

Yeah, because there could be so much learning. If there is more exchange among different generations and really value. The young generation to value the old generation in vice versa. Absolutely. And particularly going from the young to the old, there's so much that we have to learn now. And so the the intergenerational tradition is more the older, the elders passing on knowledge and we hope wisdom to younger. And that certainly is critical in indigenous cultures and in many cultures. But it's also the reverse that there the way that knowledge and wisdom is changing.

We need to learn across generations and inter intergenerational. Now, let's let's talk a little bit about higher education. Sure. Many people say that higher education is so difficult to to change, to innovate, especially with the fact that we live in a world that we live in a world of communication, revolution, innovation and so many other innovations and higher education seems to be stiff. I know that you have done a lot of work on ESD, education for sustainable development in bringing that into higher education and also using their shadow in that field.

So can you speak a little bit about that in terms of why is that important? How do you think that can be done? If you can share some other examples, as well as the challenging of opportunities to bring ESD into higher education? Surely, surely. By the way, this is my graduate Tuneberg button. Yeah, talking about generation, giving voice for the new generation. I've learned a lot from her. So I still, even though it's difficult to prove the thesis, I still believe that one of the most important points for the turning of the larger culture towards sustainability is to turn higher education towards sustainability.

Higher education prepares the leaders and can play a pivotal role in the larger cultural shift. The problem we face in creating a just, peaceful, humane, sustainable future is creating examples of that, having ways in which we can experiment with doing that. If we're going to turn the larger culture, we have to turn smaller institutions and that we hope that governments and corporations can make that turn. And they are beginning to and some are. But higher education is a global and somewhat similar phenomenon.

Higher education plays a consistent role now in a globalized culture across the world. And because we're preparing those people who will go into government and those people who will go into corporations, higher education is a natural place to do it. And I also have argued, as you know, Miriam, and continue to argue that not only is that the right, not only is that a practical thing to do, it's the right thing to do. We have a moral responsibility. Higher education enjoys a very privileged position in the larger culture.

We have we have resources. We have the opportunity to do research. We have we have we have many ways in which to think about and bring into being a sustainable future that we need to use well. So how do we do that? Given that we believe we ought to do it and that we have the resources to think about and experiment with how to do it. Going back to my experience at Florida Gulf Coast University, one of the most useful things with regard to the Earth Charter was that we use the Earth Charter as the institution wide definition of sustainability so that when there was a question, we have environmental sustainability.

Institutional wide definition of sustainability for the whole university. How did you manage that? To make that happen? Well, we were we were blessed by the fact that our founding mission. This is pre Earth Charter 1997, 1996, when the legislation was created. So public university, it serves an ecologically fragile part of the state with very precious resources and the legislature in Florida. Recognized the importance of place in this university. It was an area that was underserved in higher education, but also it served a larger responsibility to an ecologically fragile environment.

So it was built into the founding of the university that ecological sustainability would be a pillar of our mission. So.

The legislation didn't and the founders didn't define environmental sustainability, so we defined it in action over the years. And we always wanted to define it very broadly. We have a commitment at Florida Gulf Coast University to civic responsibility. All the students volunteer time in the community. So civic and that now totals millions of hours in the over over these years of the university. But back to the point, we wanted to adopt a very broad definition of sustainability. And of course, the Earth Charter is perfect because it includes not just ecological integrity, but democracy, nonviolence and peace, economic and social justice.

And we've always followed Wangari Matthais logic that you won't have democracy, nonviolence and peace unless you have economic and social justice and you won't have economic and social justice unless you have ecological integrity and you won't have ecological integrity unless you have a sense of responsibility, moral responsibility to that larger world. So it's been very useful as a definition that brings in so many dimensions of

what's important now, particularly in the United States at this time, but more broadly in terms of social justice.

And so so one good example is to use it as a definition. And I'm sure sustainability. Exactly. For the university. Yes. And FGCU has been an important good example of how an institution of higher education can embrace the vision of sustainability using Earth Charter as an instrument, as a reference, but not only to incorporate it in the curriculum, but also in its operation. Surely into institutional practice and so on. So, for example, we we can turn to our founding mission of environmental sustainability and we can turn to the Earth Charter when there are questions, practical questions.

For example, all of our buildings need to be lead certified, need to be certified as environmentally correct construction codes and so on. So, for example, the building in which the Center for Environmental and Sustainability Education was was a platinum certified science building, which is very rare. They're very it's science buildings are tough because of all the systems and so on. But that's a commitment that the university made. And now all of the buildings, they don't all need to be platinum, but they all need to be certified at some level of sustainability.

So the definition has practical dimensions in terms of food systems and many systems. And of course, it's aspirational. We haven't we haven't achieved all these things. But but the Earth Charter helps us see the way. This is a good point. So the university has a vision, has the commitment and has been making special efforts to incorporate the values and principles of sustainability, not only in its curriculum, but in its operations, understanding that it's not doing 100 percent, but it's doing the past again.

And but with that aspirational vision, right? Well, right. And and I'm working, I've continued to work with other schools that have used the Miami Dade College here in Florida. So do you have other examples such as when you just mentioned about higher universities or institutions of higher education that are doing that? Miami Dade College, for example, is very interesting. It's the largest. It's here across the state, across on the other side of the Everglades over there. It's the largest higher education institution in the United States.

It's huge. It's a it's what we used to call a junior college or a community college. It has 120,000 students or something, nine campuses in the county. And there they have within the university an Earth Ethics Institute, which adopt has adopted the Earth Charter and the work of Thomas Berry as its unifying principle. And I just did within 10 days ago, I did a workshop on the Earth Charter for faculty members and they've incorporated it into a whole complex system. They've been working at it for quite some time.

So one of the good things is that over time, you find ways to to really integrate sustainability. For example, courses, all the courses have a just they have a marker on them. If a student is interested in sustainability, she can track a course that has sustainability as a component in it. And so they've really worked hard over there to bring the principle of sustainability broadly writ and the Earth Charter in particular into the into the curriculum. And I'm working with another university now, where I'm just beginning they have a president who's very committed.

He did his his doctoral dissertation on sustainability in higher education. But they haven't used the Earth Charter. And I'm my my proposed work with them is to is to find ways that the Earth Charter can enrich what they're doing in sustainability in higher education. So I still find the Earth Charter very valuable. This is amazing, the examples you just shared with us. And also helps us to think of so many possibilities to make use of. What do you think are the challenges? Could I could I mention one more?

Sure. This is something very new, leading edge, Mirian. I don't know if you have it in Latin America or other places, but some universities in the states now are developing centers for compassion. And for example, the University of Southern Maine has a new center for compassion. Florida Gulf Coast University has a new center. And these will be a very good place to use the Earth Charter. And both of those places, for example, are are thinking about how the Earth Charter Stanford University in California, a very fine university, has one of the first of them.

So this sounds very interesting. Why is this particular interest emerging? Well, I think it's the need for the need for ending our indifference to others, you know, especially in the United States at this time, we're in such a crisis. And I think I think you're going to give me the chance to talk about that in just a second, the crisis that I mean, we have a crisis of of of indifference and complicity with all sorts of things that are wrong. And I think that compassion. And I've been thinking a lot about caring and compassion because listeners of this podcast who know the Earth Charter will know that caring is the concept that's mentioned most often in the Earth Charter.

It's mentioned five times and it's it's it's really at the heart of what the Earth Charter is all about. And so I think finding ways for higher education to speak to the need for compassion and caring is what's causing these to come into being. Wonderful. That's very nice. Very well said. So in terms of higher education, what do you think are the major challenges and opportunities for higher education institutions to really embrace ESD and make use of the Earth Charter? What could be those those challenges and opportunities?

Well, I couldn't begin an answer without acknowledging the tremendous suffering with the COVID-19 pandemic right now that is affecting higher education, but every aspect of of of our lives. And as we think about preparing our students to go out into into this world, whether they're going to be nurses or whatever they're going to be.

I just want to acknowledge that that that suffering and sort of this this apocalyptic moment, at least in my country. You know, we have a health crisis, an economic crisis, political crisis, a crisis of democracy. Your recent webinar with Sam Crowell and David Orr brought these themes up a lot of the challenges with democracy. And of course, these these are also crises for higher education. And one of the things that I think we must think about as educators, particularly going back to this thesis that higher education plays a critical role in the larger culture that we've talked about.

Preparing people for roles, including leadership roles. Is that we failed? You know, I don't think you can look at the situation as anything other than a failure. And I'll speak just about my country now. As a failure of science education. My goodness. People. Don't accept the most fundamental scientific truths about what's happening. It's just remarkable.

Almost inexplicable. But it it's a failure of civics education. It's a failure of and, you know, when we went back to the basics in the United States, we thought, well, science education, we better not worry about that.

We won't worry about civics education. Well, you know, we're going to make the boat go faster. We'll toss them overboard. And of course, this is a bitter harvest now to mix a metaphor. This is a bitter harvest of our failure. Of. Citizenship education in some ways, environmental education. Certainly of science education. And so this is a very deep crisis because we're preparing citizens who don't know what it means to be a citizen. We're preparing we're preparing scientifically illiterate. A. Sit a scientifically illiterate citizenry.

I mean, that's the worst case. One could argue that it would be a lot worse if we didn't have environmental education and so on. But I think we really have to think about a new way to think. You know, for example, just talking as we did about compassion and caring, we have to move from indifference to caring and we really need to rethink in a sort of post humanist way, think in a more broad way about how how how to do that and how in higher education to continue the creative struggle. I mean, higher education is a place where we can bring these things into being, where we can exercise our.

Passion of of of imagination to create new ways of of being. We need to engender a sense of universal responsibility, which is what the Earth Charter is all about in order that people will carry that into their work as nurses and economists and teachers and so on, so that these moral principles will make change in the larger society. So it's a very sober moment for higher education. Yeah, I think that one one one of the challenges to do with these silos and fragmentation of education, because whenever people talk about scientific education, nature, ecosystem, this is only for those who are studying natural science, right?

So we have a number of people studying business education, engineering, law, that don't think that these topics are for them, although they will be making a lot of decisions that have a huge impact on science, right? So I guess one of the challenges has to do with breaking these silos and walls between areas, disciplines. Absolutely. And in the meantime, there needs to be there are two two ways to approach what you just said, you have to get sustainability into the silos. So you need to have that engineering course be involved.

The principles of environmental engineering, the impact of engineering decisions and so on. So there has to be education in the silos. One of the things I loved about the colloquium is that the classes were organized heterogeneously so that the engineer was sitting next to the nursing student was sitting next to the mathematics student was sitting next to the finance student. And the question we always asked in the in the class was, what does it mean to be an ecologically literate engineer? What does it mean to be an ecologically literate nurse?

What does and students always find the connections? I loved working with the nurses. They understand the ecology of caring. They understand what it means to care for another person and therefore to care for the larger living world. So it has to be across all disciplines. And as you said, interdisciplinary, and it has to be within the disciplines themselves,

because higher education is very conservative, very hierarchical, very discipline oriented in spite of decades of us working against that.

That seems to be a challenge that needs to be addressed in the next few years. So as we look at the future, the futures of education, UNESCO has been making a call inviting people to think about the futures of education that's currently going on a conversation within UNESCO to generate new ideas and thoughts about how we envision the futures of education. So I would like to ask you to share with us your thoughts on the current education challenge, but really towards looking at how would you envision ESD, maybe even the role of the Earth Charter, this new vision of the futures of education?

Well, I think that this moment of chaos in education and in the larger world is a moment of great possibility. I am, if not optimistic, I am hopeful about that. I think that we are seeing the birth of a new way. Now, some of that is happening outside of education, as it always does, and we can bring it in. But I think there are a lot of cultural indications of new perspectives on sustainability. And I think that we need to create space, as I said a minute ago, for the imaginative possibilities to work themselves out within education.

I've always been a great supporter of working at the margins for offering alternatives, you know, so that now sometimes good ideas become mainstream. I would use the colloquium course as an example of that. But we have to show that things can be done differently. And ecological education, environmental education has always been marginalized. But there can be interesting things happening at the margin that can show a different way. Changemaking in these educational systems is very difficult. We have to be persistent.

We have to we have to continue to to work hard. We do know better ways to do things. And I think sometimes the worst that the larger the crisis, the more the opportunity is to make change at that moment, because people may be more ready for it. We have to take some risks right now. Or we know that what we're doing is to some large extent not working the traditional ways. And I want to say that for me, a generation on and I know for others, the Earth Charter continues to be a shining light that can show us that can show us the way.

Peter, if I would invite you to be the principal of a new school, I would invite you to be the principal of a new school, and give you all the resources and freedom to do that. What would you do there in that new place with all the resources and freedom to make it a special place for learning? Well, I I had that opportunity in my life. When I was twenty four years old, I was the principal of a public elementary school and I had the opportunity to create a school that answers your question in a way.

And the first thing that we did was to engage all of the stakeholders of the school, the parents and the children, the people who worked at the school in the development of a written philosophy to to bring together children can be very philosophical, of course, and to bring together the best ideas that they had about what they wanted the school to be and what they thought, you know, John Dewey's famous essay on what education is. It's a his creed. It just says, I believe so.

The first thing that the students believed the most, the idea that that was the most important was that they believed that education should be fun. And so we had we had a lot of fun.

The teachers wanted the school to be in the spirit of John Dewey, democratic. Dewey always argued that we wouldn't have democracy if we didn't have the opportunity in education to be participants in a democratic culture. And of course, schools have turned out to be the least democratic institutions in some ways in our society. So we created the democracy in the school and the rules, for example, that the students lived by were developed in a democratic setting. It was called Big Meeting in the Hall and everyone had one vote, whether you worked in the kitchen or you were a first grader, little child coming in, we didn't have grades, but a young one or an old one or the principal.

We all had one vote. And so we got to experience the challenges and the difficulties of democracy. But the school was based on the arts and nature. And the idea here was that the creative imagination, that a deep, passionate connection with the natural world inspires the creative imagination. And if we're going to envision imaginative possibilities for a better world, we need to have sources of that creativity. That's the fountain. And so we put those principles first. We had outdoor classroom, literally outdoor classrooms.

We spent a lot of time outdoors. We took the children everywhere to all of the natural environments. So it was, I think if I would answer your question, it would be to stay very close to ecological integrity, as defined in the Earth Charter. It would be to stay very close to this identification with the larger living world that develops from time in nature, but also comes from indigenous spirituality. It comes from religious attention to faith traditions to let the spirit within the child, within the learner develop.

So one could, I think if I had it to do over again, I would have the Earth Charter this time as a guide. Wonderful, wonderful. Well, that sounds very inspiring. It's good to have that as an example. And you just outlined so many key elements, no? A school or learning process that it's fun, that it's participatory, outdoors. It's certainly what I also envision as essential elements for ESD or for Earth Charter Education. Thank you so much, Peter. Last question. How did you get involved in Earth Charter and why that sparked your interest?

When and why it sparked your interest? Yes, picture a very cold winter day in Paris, walking toward UNESCO. And I was privileged to walk with the great ones. Kamla Chowdhury was there in her sandals and her sorry freezing cold. And Steven Rockefeller, Princess Basma, we it was I was privileged to come in at the very moment when you all agreed to the final wording, you were dotting the eyes and crossing the T's. And as a statement, you all had decided, Mirian, I think you were certainly involved in this, decided that the first thing to do after the Earth Charter was adopted, was to give it as a gift to the world for education and culture.

So we walked we walked from the hotel to UNESCO and we met. I was privileged to be one of the education educators who was invited to that to that first meeting. And it was really my introduction to the Earth Charter. So I had a very special opportunity to see and hear the roots of the Earth Charter and the coming back to what I said a while ago, the the integrity of the Earth Charter. It's built on such a strong foundation and these great leaders

like Kamla Chowdhury, it was a living document for them. And I had the tremendous opportunity in 2000 to see that before it was even launched publicly. Remember, we gave it to UNESCO as a gift for education. And I think it's great that you're continuing the relationship with UNESCO. They've they've recently reaffirmed their their commitment to the Earth Charter.

Is that correct? Yes, UNESCO adopted the resolution November 2019, 2019, in which they sort of recognized the important boulder can play in the new ESD for 2030 framework.

Wonder what has launched this year. Well, thank you so much, Peter. I really appreciate and I'm grateful for the work you have done over the past 20 years in research, training, with regards to the Earth Charter, but also ESD, especially in higher education and also so many publications that you took the leadership role. Thank you so much also for joining us today. It's an honor. Thank you, Marian. You invited me to speak at the Earth, an Earth Charter plus 20 conference at the University for Peace at your wonderful building, your center for education for sustainable development.

And as part of that speech, I wrote a little benediction. So here at the end of my conversation with you, if I may, I'd like to share a little Earth Charter benediction. Yes, please go ahead. All right. May we have in our work the power of the original instructions of the life originating principles of indigenous people. We offer gratitude for the blessing of life giving Earth Charter ethics. May we do the work of moving minds and hearts to unity, of constructing radical hope, of creating world affirming spirituality, of building intergenerational equity, intergenerational collaboration and intergenerational solidarity.

May we hold a vision of our work as a meditation or even as a prayer for co-creating a future that is peaceful, just, sustainable, humane. And finally, may we hold a vision of our work as an expression of unconditional love for Mother Earth that does not depend upon her condition. Thank you.

If you like this episode, please share it and support our movement by making a donation. This podcast is developed by Earth Charter International as part of our work as UNESCO chair on education for sustainable development with the Earth Charter. For more information, visit our website at earthcharter.org.