

Ocean Heroes Bootcamp, Vancouver, Canada, June 28-30, 2019
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My weekend at Ocean Heroes Bootcamp was overall an amazing experience. It was so great because it included young people from all across the globe who came together to share ideas about one common goal - beating plastic pollution. I live in Red Hook Brooklyn, NY and for the past couple of years at my old elementary school, I worked with Cafeteria Culture on many problems and they taught us so much about the threats of plastic pollution. A few months ago they told me about the Ocean Heroes Bootcamp in Vancouver Canada, and encouraged me to apply to attend.. They told me what it would be like and I was immediately amazed and wanted to be a part of it. I applied with a few of my friends from P.S.15, and we traveled together to Vancouver. Vancouver Canada is a beautiful city and is a place that has done a lot to protect the environment. When we arrived, I took a breath of air, it felt so fresh and clean.

Over the weekend at Ocean Heroes Bootcamp, we did so much and we were always busy. On the first night of Ocean Heroes Bootcamp, we had the opening ceremony, along with dinner, where the Bootcamp leaders and founders talked to us about what it was like last year and how it will be this year. Ocean Heroes Bootcamp has happened for two years and last year, it took place in New Orleans. The year before, they only had 60 participants, but this year there were 300 participants between the ages 10-18.. After the ceremony was over, we were split into groups and were assigned a squad leader for our group. Me and my friends were in the same squad, and I shared a dorm with one of them at the University of British Columbia. We walked with our squads back to where the dorms were and settled down for the night.

The next day we took a school bus and went on a trip to the aquarium. At the aquarium we had many fun and interesting activities. An organization called Litterati, spoke to us about how a small amount of litter picked up by each of many people, makes a big difference. In the app that they created, when you see a piece of litter, you take a picture of it and make a caption, showing what it is. It automatically posts the picture and creates a map showing what specific litter is found in specific areas. These maps can be used to collect data to present to companies whose products are ending up as pollution. My group went out into the park picking up trash and in just 10 to 15 minutes, we recorded more than 200 pieces of litter picked up. Later that day we had a few lessons about how to use social media to present ideas and get people to be influenced by posts. We were taught that no matter how many followers you have, you still have a platform to spread and make ideas public. We had a few more lectures that day and then we went back to our dorms.

On the last day of the Bootcamp I also had a lot of fun. On this day we had a bunch of lectures and lessons. The lessons were about different things, like advocacy, and another one was about how to make a pitch and how to present pitches. A pitch is a way of presenting your idea to the target audience in a very short amount of time - usually just a minute or 2. In this lesson we learned that there are two types of pitches: a personal story pitch, and a general, factual pitch. We also learned that when you

speak with emotion, people tend to listen to you more. These are just a few of the many things that we learned but the list goes on.

I left Vancouver feeling honored to be a part of this amazing experience. I met new friends, and learned so much in a fun and exciting way. I know that this experience will help me in taking on the challenges of protecting our environment. I can't wait for next year's Bootcamp!