

Environment Base Camp 2018-19

Helsinki, Finland

30th March'19- 5th April'19



12 students along with two teachers of Delhi Public School Gurgaon embarked on their journey to the Environment Base Camp, Finland from 30th March to 5th April 2019. The camp was initiated by UNIC (United Nations Information Centre) in collaboration with Nordic Consult to develop knowledge, skills and values among young adults which they need to live and work in a globalized world, contributing both locally and globally.

The group reached the resort 'Illoranta' (happy beach) nestled in nature's bountiful arms in Hauho region of Finland. They were welcomed by the beautiful blue sky contrasting the flame red and yellow sun setting gloriously. Finland the way they experienced had a beautiful blend of wild beauty, contemporary designs and tradition. Its landscape covered with thick pine forests, rolling hills, a labyrinth of lakes complemented with warm and affectionate people!



DAY-1

Bracing the subzero (almost!) the group set out to experience the Natural History Museum, The museum guide walked them through Finland's ecosystem. Each section of the Museum became alive with the guide narrating stories, anecdotes to keep the group engaged. What struck was the statement by the guide '*each one of us here in Finland is an environmentalist.*' It was followed by a visit to the Sarkanniemi Amusement Park.



Natural History Museum

Evening brought another surprise, *Wood craft*-a traditional activity of Finland, with Mr. Hannu. He taught the group members how to smoothed raw wood with different tools and sand paper to give it a shape of a butter knife, the use of which is still prevalent in Finland. Mr. Hannu kept the interest of the young learners by bringing a competitive spirit into the activity.



DAY-2

The day started with a visit to the Hamme Castle at Hameelina. The members time travelled to the early 1600s as each room unfolded interesting stories about the lifestyle and the socio-economic structure of the society.



Next stop was the famous Iittala glass factory set up in mid 1800s and watching the intriguing process of hand blown glass. The clock work precision in which the experts were working left everyone speechless. It was pointed out that all glass was recycled and no waste was generated. Water and air filters ensured that no pollution was created due to this industrial activity. The glass museum had some interesting samples of glass artifacts. The warmth of the chocolate factory could not resist members to pick chocolates which were being made before their eyes in an open kitchen. ***Both the factories boasted of 'no wastage while production!'***



Back at Illoranta, a by home then, the group set off for a 2 km forest walk. The snow and fading skylight added to the drama and challenges for the *urban group*! Their first conversation with deep dense forest! There was a lot of camaraderie and laughter as many tumbled and struggled to maintain their balance on the slippery snowy trail.

The guide Mr. Hannu gave lot of inputs about Finnish forest .He gave the students the task of finding a safe place to hang a birdhouse. After several misses the ideal spot was located away from direct sun, safe from animals and near bushes. Mr. Hannu shared that

at the onset of summer it was a Finnish custom to put up birdhouse for the birds returning after winter.

The forest trail ended with survival lessons by Mr. Hannu a 75 year young at heart retired army officer.

*Every now and then let us answer the forest's call,
To come see life's beauty and the miracle of it all;
If we listen with our hearts as we walk among trees,
We may understand the message carried on a breeze,
For us to blend with the forest's spirit so it will beguile,
Us into walking under its lovely trees for just a while.*

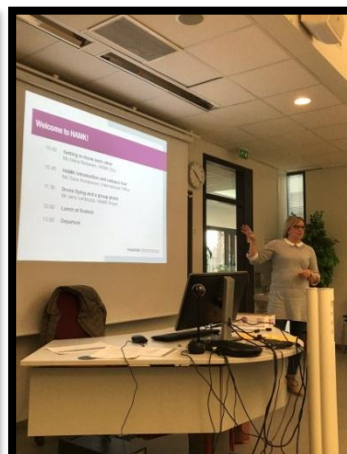
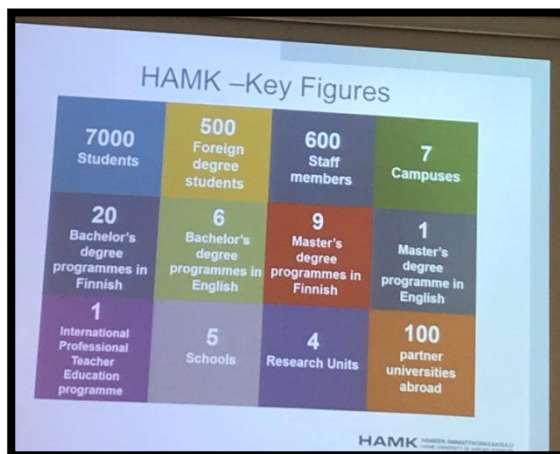
—Belinda Stotlet



DAY-3

It started with another academic engagement at HAMK (Häme University of Applied Sciences).

The spacious well-appointed buildings were appreciated by all. The Global Education Head Ms. Nana Niskanen along with the International Officer, Ms. Taina Hankavuon spoke about the various courses offered. They graciously answered queries put forth. The highlight of the visit was the state of art drone which was demonstrated. It generated a lot of excitement amongst the students.





Back at the resort, another traditional art of wool spinning was taught by a research scholar Ms. Laura. All followed her instructions and all managed to spin some yarn. As a teacher it was heartening to listen to students comparing THIER yarn spinning legacy with Gandhiji's charkha and the wooden spindle in Laura's hands. They learnt about sheep rearing too!

The day ended with enjoying the traditional smoke sauna and a dip in the ice cold (frozen!!) lake specially arranged for the first ever Indian guests at Illoranta.



Wool Spinning

DAY-5

Another academic engagement at the Hanko Comprehensive School. It was interesting as students got an opportunity to interact with Finnish students with whom they could exchange ideas and discuss the difference in the education system of the two countries. The curriculum in Finland is flexible and is set by the Ministry of Education. After class IX students have a choice to go to an academic oriented high school or a vocational school. The Headmaster of the school took the members around and shared their learning practices.



The group learnt the rules of the floor ball game which is played with a hockey like stick. It was very entertaining to see both sides giving their best. At the resort Mr. Hannu who by now was everyone's favourite was ready to teach the students some basic forest survival skills; How to measure the track if one has to retrace one's path when one loses one's bearings and how to light a fire and boil water.

Through the visit it was time and again highlighted that no man made thing even biodegradable ones should be left on the forest floor...even matchsticks should be thrown into the fire. Importance of proper extinguishing of fire was emphasized. The interest of children was kept as a competitive element was introduced. 'What does not belong to the forest should not be imposed on it!



DAY-6

The morning started with the visit to the High School Kalu. The special point of interest was how the art room was being used to correlate STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) with Art from STEM to STEAM. The concept was captivating and students were apprised how this was being undertaken. The organic graffiti on the school tarmac was a good collaborative effort which helped students to interact and know more about the school life in both countries. Traditional games of throw ball, rope skipping and floor ball brought out the competitive spirit in each participant.



Back at the resort, everyone tried their hand at baking sticky buns on the camp fire. Patience and steady hands yielded the tastiest buns.

Felt making craft work was diligently taught by Laura. Nice tidy samples were made by the young students to her utter delight. As it was the last night everyone lingered over the dinner table reminiscing over all the lovely moments of the last few days.



The group was impressed to see that in all the schools the students were not only playing the modern games but were also enjoying and conserving the traditional Finnish games.

Last day was a bit heart tugging as they said their goodbyes to the Illoranta team, promising to meet again, The group set off for Helsinki for a city tour. The Parliament, Senate square, the new City Library, old University blocks, Opera House, the sea front as well as various churches were quite engaging and mesmerizing.

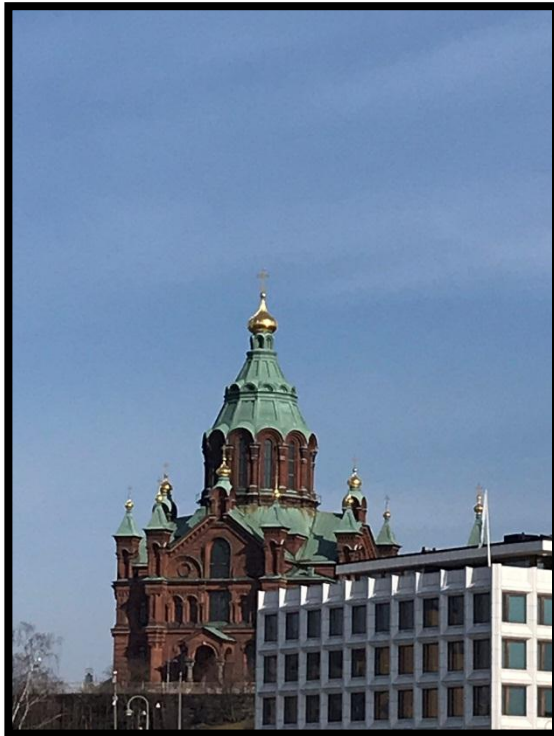


The attractions of the main city were the Historical Centre, the Parliament Buildings and the Opera House. The members then visited places of tourist interest throughout the day starting with Helsinki Central Library Oodi, one of the most beautiful pieces of architecture in Finland so far. It was as peaceful and as aesthetically pleasing as it could be.

A short walk to the Finlandia hall, which is famous for various concerts and other shows, a small sightseeing ride of the captivating city, round-and-about the dock and the rock church filled the rest of the day.



Helsinki Capital of Finland



The entire trip, every part from triling in the bountiful forests and learning survival skills, carving butter knives, weaving, going to a sauna and jumping in to the frozen lake and running back inside to visiting the Finnish museum of national history, shopping, the schools, HAMK university and visiting the other attractions in the city, all of it summed up to a week of unlimited fun and learning. While departing all the members had only one wish, to stay a bit longer. Finland is a heavenly place with an enriching culture and warm people.



