Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Kate Robertson Shares One Young World's Blueprint for Global Unity

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Picture this: At the 14th annual One Young World Summit in Montreal, enormous video screens illuminate the Bell Centre in Montreal as Kate Robertson scans the packed auditorium. More than 2,000 young leaders, or ambassadors, from over 190 countries fill the seats, their faces glowing with anticipation, alongside them 6,000 guests from across the city of Montreal. For Robertson, who **co-founded One Young World** with David Jones, this moment represents the culmination of a dream sparked by an unlikely exchange back in 2007.

"Someone came to tell me I should set up a conference," Kate Robertson recalls with a laugh. "I said, 'Well, if we had a conference, given that we are the youngest network, it would only be for young people.'"

That moment unexpectedly planted the seed for what would become One Young World, now the premier global forum for young leaders. Robertson's Olympic-inspired vision of bringing together youth from every nation has transformed into a movement that transcends borders and challenges conventional wisdom about leadership.

The Power of Authentic Leadership

Robertson's philosophy is deeply rooted in her experiences as a youth in apartheid South Africa, where she witnessed the power of collective action and the extraordinary impact of singular leadership. "The wider Black struggle for justice and equality laid the foundation for the seismic changes that reshaped our society," **Kate Robertson reflects**. "Within that context, Mandela's voice stood out as transformative — he channeled the resilience and aspirations of millions, changing the arc of history. I was always struck by how his leadership amplified and united the collective struggle into a global movement for change."

Robertson believes better leadership could solve many global problems, from climate change to conflict resolution. "For me, the vision is when the leaders of the G20 are One Young World ambassadors, things will be better."

Kate Robertson with the late Desmond Tutu, and One Young World co-founder, David Jones. Photo: One Young World

Kate Robertson's Blueprint for Building Unity

The organization's approach centers on action over rhetoric. "Don't judge, deliver," Robertson states firmly.

Robertson points to One Young World's many scholarship programs — which allows attendees the opportunity to attend the summit — as a concrete example of this philosophy. Currently, one-third of attendees receive full funding to participate, with ambitious plans to reach 50% by 2030. "These amazing people around the world are absolutely determined to get themselves into this network," she notes, citing 74,832 applications for 490 scholarship places in 2024.

The forum attracts global luminaries who share Kate Robertson's commitment.

"This gratitude mindset. But it's something that we take really seriously and honestly in this community, and you'll see when you come and spend time around here in this community," Kate Robertson remarks. "I see these young leaders and how much they care about their people and what they're trying to do in often unimaginable circumstances."

Seeing Beyond the Summit

Robertson notes One Young World's impact extends far beyond its annual summit. The organization hosts approximately 140 meetings worldwide throughout the year, from intimate gatherings with local prime ministers to conferences drawing hundreds. "That's what I always say about this network — it's valuable, and it's vital, and it actually lives," Kate Robertson explains. "A significant part of me believes that even without our presence, much of this momentum will persist, as it has taken on a life of its own."

During its Montreal summit, young trailblazers had a chance to not only absorb life-changing speeches by everyone from activist Sir Bob Geldof to Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to singer Cher, but also got a chance to meet with people face to face from nearly every country on Earth.

One Young World ambassador Veronica Torres shared on LinkedIn how she was "incredibly honored to be selected as a 2024 One Young World United Way Delegate" and how she was "empowered by ongoing professional development trainings, preparing for the 2024 One Young World Summit in Montreal."

Loor Masri, another One Young World ambassador and co-founder of *LaCom Magazine for YoungPreneurs*, an Arabic magazine that aims to connect young leaders with established business mentors, wrote about her summit experience on LinkedIn.

"Watching young women from the MENA region come together to drive economic empowerment is a powerful reminder of what can be achieved when women take the lead. It's always inspiring to witness women breaking barriers and paving the way for others to succeed."

"It also restored my faith in youth," Masri stated. "We often tend to isolate ourselves within our work, forgetting that what we do actually matters. We have a voice and we can make a difference. I'll go home with a lot of fresh energy to work even harder."

It's groundbreaking youths like Masri that keep Robertson focused on expanding One Young

World’s reach while maintaining its core mission of nurturing better global leadership. The 2025 summit will take place in Munich, bringing new voices into the conversation.

“We’re honored to play a part in the phenomenal journeys of these motivated young leaders,” adds Kate Robertson. “We regularly get ambassadors dropping into our office and getting in touch, even a decade after they originally were introduced to us. We’re excited to work with them for years to come.”

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