

# Connecting Generations: Building the Bridge

## Evaluation Report 2011-2012

This report presents the evaluation findings from **Connecting Generations: Building the Bridge** – a project designed to bring together employers, adults, and youth on the Gulf Islands with the goal of addressing the lack of local employment opportunities for youth.



connecting  
generations



School District#64 (Gulf Islands)

Prepared by Sarah Hook-Nilsson

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November session and youth interviews

## Connecting Generations - Building the Bridge:

### Executive Summary

#### Introduction

Connecting Generations: Building the Bridge was a 5 month 2011-2012 pilot project led by School District #64.

Funding for the project was provided through a grant from Service Canada's Youth Awareness program and a grant through the Ministry of Education's Growing Innovation program.

Connecting Generations – Building the Bridge aimed to address the shortage of employment opportunities for youth on the Gulf Islands.

The project had two key objectives.

1. To promote awareness of self-employment and
2. To encourage the practice of the skills and competencies needed by youth on the Gulf Islands in order to become self-employed.

#### Identified community needs

The project was inspired by the results of 2 independent reports, both of which highlighted the challenges that local youth face in today's job market:

#### Evaluation of the Bridging the Gap project

The report included a survey of youth, employers, and interested adults (e.g., employees, sole entrepreneurs) which was conducted to provide a baseline study of the attitudes of local youth and adults towards employment opportunities for youth on Salt Spring Island. These surveys offered insights into youths' perceptions of work, challenges, aspirations, resilience, and key skills and qualities deemed important for the world of work. Employers and working adults described their perceptions of young employees, their opinions regarding requirements for success in the workforce, and the characteristics of highly valued employees.

#### Key findings

- Youth and adults benefit from having a chance to dialogue.
- Youth need opportunities to work on interpersonal skills.
- There is a potential for powerful experiences through mentoring, job shadowing and long term volunteering.

#### Recommendations

1. Provide workshops with ample practice opportunities in the area of interpersonal skills as this is an area of overwhelming need identified by youth.
2. Continue to assist youth in seeing careers as a journey in which different jobs and experiences will add to their skill toolbox.

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3. Continue to build on the mentoring, job shadowing, and long-term volunteer opportunities for youth.
4. Continue to provide opportunities for youth to dialogue with adults about various careers.
5. Provide youth opportunities to learn more in depth about career skills, knowledge and education requirements.

### *Connecting Generations-Bridging the Gap Evaluation Report 2010-11*

#### Report of the Salt Spring Literacy Society

*“You’re not really a Salt Springer until you have held four jobs simultaneously”*

A recent survey of the local labour market, conducted on behalf of Salt Spring Literacy, had as its goal the collection of data that would identify strengths and weaknesses in the employment market in general, and the collection of data that would identify strengths and weaknesses in the labour pool. Although not specifically targeted at the situation of island youth, the report indicated that there is a lack of available work opportunities on Salt Spring.

#### Key findings

- the importance of social contact in finding employment on the island
- the key role that self employment holds as “a strong strategy” for the island

#### Recommendations

Recommendations to support self employment included:

1. the development of programs supporting the innovation of small business
2. “business buddies”: “a bank of seasoned entrepreneurs who wish to give back by mentoring new businesses”

*“You’re not really a Salt Springer until you have held four jobs simultaneously”*

<http://www.saltspringliteracy.org/links.html>

## Project Activities

In order to meet the objectives of the project, the Connecting Generations project coordinator organized a series of events held during the first half of the 2011-2012 school year. These events included 6 focus group sessions, several shorter meetings and a market research for “Plugged-In”, a possible business opportunity in which students and youth would offer assistance to adults in computer skills and/or social media.

2 youth, both university graduates, were given the tasks of creating a web site and a brochure for Connecting Generations. They were required to participate in an interactive collaborative process in which they were mentors for students and other youth. In turn

they were mentored by adults including local graphic artists, photographers and web site designers

### 1. Focus Groups

The focus groups afforded youth and adults the opportunity to work together collaboratively. The first 2 sessions, held as part of Small Business Week, explored possibilities for starting a business locally. Subsequent sessions were held in order to brainstorm ideas for a website and brochure for the Connecting Generations program. Together with local graphic artists, photographers and website designers, youth were encouraged to learn the steps required for website and brochure creation and to reflect on some of the skills needed for self employment.

Each focus group had a structure that guided the event (For focus group notes, see Appendix D).

#### Evaluation

Directly after each of the website and brochure focus group sessions, all participants (youth and adults) were invited to give feedback about their experience of the event. In addition, one of the focus group sessions was recorded by video.

#### Data Analysis

Analyses are based on qualitative data which was content analyzed for emerging themes.

#### Youth and Adult Involvement

- October 17<sup>th</sup> 23 youth, including 8 out of school were present for the two sessions offered by the School District during Small Business Week.
- November 15<sup>th</sup> 13 students, 5 youth and 8 adults including 3 website designers, 3 photographers and 2 graphic artists attended 2 sessions held concurrently, focusing on the creation of a website and the design of a brochure for Connecting Generations
- December 13<sup>th</sup> a group of 10 youth and adults, including 3 local web-site designers, met to discuss in depth the website for Connecting Generations.
- January 9<sup>th</sup> a “Work Party” of 3 students, 1 youth and 1 adult met to confirm some of the details of the website
- January 17<sup>th</sup> a group of 13 youth and adults, including 3 website designers, 3 photographers and 1 graphic artist met to work on the website and to hold a ‘photo shoot

#### Youth attendance

- 1 student attended all 6 events
- 3 youth have been to 4 out of 6 events
- 3 youth attended 3 out of 6 events
- 2 youth have been to 2 out of 6 events
- 9 students/youth have been to at least 2 events

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- 9 youth/students attended only the November sessions

### Adult attendance

- 3 adults have been to 4 out of 6 events
- 2 adults have been to 2 out of 6 events
- 5 adults have been to at least 2 out of 6 events
- 3 adults attended only one session

In addition, the following events took place:

- December 8th the youth who is working on the Connecting Generations web-site consulted with a local web-designer who had offered to help on a one-to-one basis
- January 9th a “work party” was attended by 3 students, 1 youth and 1 adult to discuss details of the website

## 2. “Plugged-In”

As part of the exploration of viable business opportunities for local youth, “Plugged-In” presented an opportunity to begin the market research for a service that could offer private coaching to adults seeking assistance with social media and computer skills. As a first step, students and youth were encouraged to participate in coaching sessions in order to gauge the level of adult interest .

- November 23<sup>rd</sup> 2 adult volunteers and one youth employee of Salt Spring Literacy coached 4 students on how to teach adult learners
- December 15<sup>th</sup> 5 students and 1 youth coached 7 seniors on the use of social media and computer applications

The project is in its initial stages, but early reports indicate that there is significant interest on the part of local adults, especially seniors.

## Feedback Forms

A total of 27 youth and 12 adult focus group feedback forms were completed. The numbers of forms completed at the sessions in December and January were decreased as several adult and youth participants had to leave the events early. Most of the youth and adults attended more than one event and therefore they would have completed more than one feedback form during the project.

## Key Findings

- A collaborative process works well as a means of generating ideas, sharing knowledge, practicing skills and creating a feedback loop for a project of this type
- Youth and adults benefit from the opportunity to dialogue and to work as members of an intergenerational team
- Building a team encourages “buy in” and ownership

## Report Overview

The findings from the project are presented in the following sections:

### Events

Small Business Week

Focus group sessions November, December and January

### Focus group Feedback

### Reports

Project Coordinator's report

Project facilitator's report

Youth web-designer's report

Youth brochure designer's report

### Appendices

Focus group notes:

1. First focus group session October 17<sup>th</sup> 2011
2. Second focus group session October 17<sup>th</sup> 2011
3. Focus group sessions November 15<sup>th</sup> 2011
4. Focus group session December 13<sup>th</sup> 2011
5. Focus group session January 17<sup>th</sup> 2012

Links to video recordings of November session and interviews with youth

# EVENTS



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## Connecting Generations: Building the Bridge

Small Business Week  
October 17<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> 2011

Small Business Week was organized in collaboration with the Salt Spring Chamber of Commerce and the local branch of the Island Savings Credit Union. Connecting Generations: Building the Bridge was responsible for the design and facilitation of the first 2 events of the week:

“Why Not? Inspiring Business on Salt Spring Island”

and “From Dream to Drawing Board: Turning Your Ideas into Reality”

An interactive format, both in small groups and with the whole group, with time for reflection, gave participants the opportunity to make connections and to hear each other’s stories. The week’s events were attended by 23 youth, including 8 out of school.



Other seminars offered during the week included “Developing your Business Plan”, “Marketing your Business” and “How To Finance your Business.”

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### November Focus Group Sessions

In November 2 group sessions, focusing on the creation of a website and the design of a brochure for Connecting Generations were held concurrently. 13 students, 5 youth and 8 adults brainstormed ideas in small groups which they then shared with the larger group:

1. *What is the website/brochure for?*
2. *Who do we want to reach?*
3. *What do we want people to do when they see the web-site/brochure?*

Ideas were recorded in the small groups, then shared in the larger group. Reflection on the collaborative process focused on the question:

*What was the value for you of working today with people older or younger than yourself?*

*It has made me aware that it is important to brainstorm ideas with people of different ages. (web site designer)*

*After this group work I think I will look differently at working with adults because it was a lot of fun (Grade 10 student)*



## Connecting Generations: Building the Bridge

### December and January Focus Group Sessions

Group sessions held in December and January were smaller and more focused on the details of the web site design. A loyal core of participants, attended both sessions, despite the pre-Christmas bustle in December and unfavourable weather conditions in January. Several members of the groups arrived late or had to leave early, but both adults and youth engaged in lively discussions on the detail of web site construction. Both the “Work Party” held at the beginning of January and the focus group session and ‘photo shoot held the following week attracted students particularly interested in graphic design, photography and website design. Those involved have taken ownership of “Our” website and refer to themselves as “The web site team”!



Some of Our Web Site Team At Work



# FOCUS GROUP FEEDBACK



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### FEEDBACK FOCUS GROUP SESSIONS

What were the most valuable parts of the focus group for you today?

Group	Theme	Number of comments	Comments/Examples
ADULTS	<b>Collaboration</b>	8	"Rapid input of ideas from a cross-section of people." "Round table conversation." "Feeling that I had info to share that was helpful." "Sharing ideas, fun, enthusiasm."
	<b>Hearing other's ideas</b>	6	"Listening to what others had to say." "Interesting to hear other's feedback." "Listening to photographers and how they develop their ideas."
	<b>Intergenerational connection</b>	5	"Youth and adults working together in a focused creative way." "Interaction with both adults and youth."
	<b>Learning opportunity</b>	3	"Good to learn from the students I was working with." "Discussion around people's different takes on various words/items." "Further defining website navigation."
YOUTH	<b>Collaboration</b>	16	"Sharing ideas, being social." "Brainstorming with new people." "It was interesting to talk with people I've never met about a similar interest." "Having the opportunity to co-create within a group full of people with many gifts to offer." "I really liked when we were all together in the large group because people could express their ideas in an easier way, and others were able to ask questions." "Practicing collaboration."
	<b>Learning Opportunity</b>	11	"New knowledge." Website and design ideas, trends to expect. "We learned some very important details that are essential for a good brochure." "Hearing the trade tips and tricks." "Getting into a deeper conversation about our website." "I always enjoy finding out more about the process."
	<b>Intergenerational connection</b>	6	Meeting new adults. "Loved that youth could interact with adults." "Working with older members of the community" "New knowledge." Website and design ideas." "We learned some very important details that are essential for a good brochure." "Hearing the trade tips and tricks." "Getting into a deeper conversation about our website." "I always enjoy finding out more about the process."

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Because of this focus group are there things you plan to do differently?

	Theme	Number of comments	Comments/Examples
ADULTS	<b>Collaboration</b>	2	"It has made me aware that it is important to brainstorm ideas with people of different ages." "I would consider more collaborative projects."
	<b>Critical thinking</b>	2	Websites: "Take a second look at my website and see if it fits my ideas well."
	<b>Technical</b>	2	"Will look for more specific Word Press template." "Give photographers more time to pre-plan."
YOUTH	<b>Critical thinking</b>	4	"I have a new look on what a website should look like." "I will look at a website more thoroughly and see how it's eye catching or unappealing" "What's important, what's not as much. It is not about our interests, it's the readers."
	<b>Collaboration with Adults and Intergenerational Awareness</b>	3	"After this group work I think I will look differently at working with adults because it was a lot of fun." "Think about age difference and people that may not have access."
	<b>Technology</b>	3	"Learned a few things about Word Press, may apply to web sites I'm working on." "I believe I will start to work with Scott on helping him with the web site and I'm hoping that these skills will help me in the future." "Use of social media, layout of main page."
	<b>Communication Skills including intergenerational communication</b>	2	"I plan on working on my interpersonal skills." "Talking to the older generations."
	<b>Creativity</b>	1	"It shows that I am creative in different ways."
	<b>Reflection on Process</b>	1	"Critical thinking ...produces amazing, deep ideas/thoughts."

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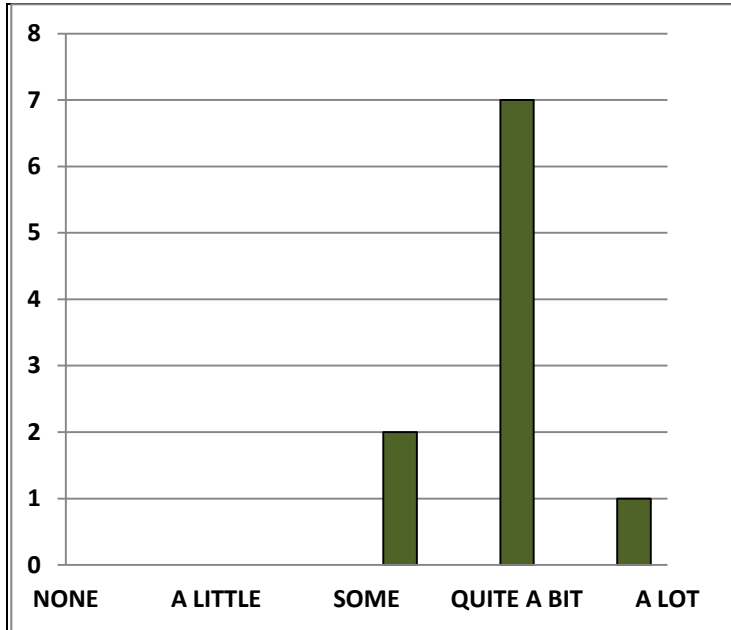
How can we improve this focus group?

Group	Theme	Number of comments	Comments/Examples
<b>Adults</b>	<b>Organization</b>	3	"Introduce the mentors." "More time for intermittent reflection." "I like the idea of having an agenda." "IA detailed agenda seemed helpful."
	<b>More time/more meetings</b>	1	"Some sort of follow-up."
	<b>General comments</b>	2	"It was very interesting! I thought it went really well." "Not sure...it is interesting to try and plan a web site in this way (group setting) so I think it would be difficult to improve. I felt there was good flexibility and information shared."
<b>Youth</b>	<b>Organization</b>	13	Balancing/mixing groups. More organization, more direction on what to do. "Need to be all together when we are doing things". "More hands on activities, not so much brainstorming." "Maybe an agenda or just more focused topic plan." "Maybe 1 extra break." "Perhaps with a bit more focus, with a bit more respect to people's time."
	<b>More time/more meetings</b>	5	"Wish we could have had a bit more time!" "More meeting together in the future."
	<b>General comments</b>	4	"It was very good overall." "I have enjoyed it the way it is now." "Get more people involved!" "Pacing was better this time around." "Finding/explaining purpose of the discussion we had at the very start."

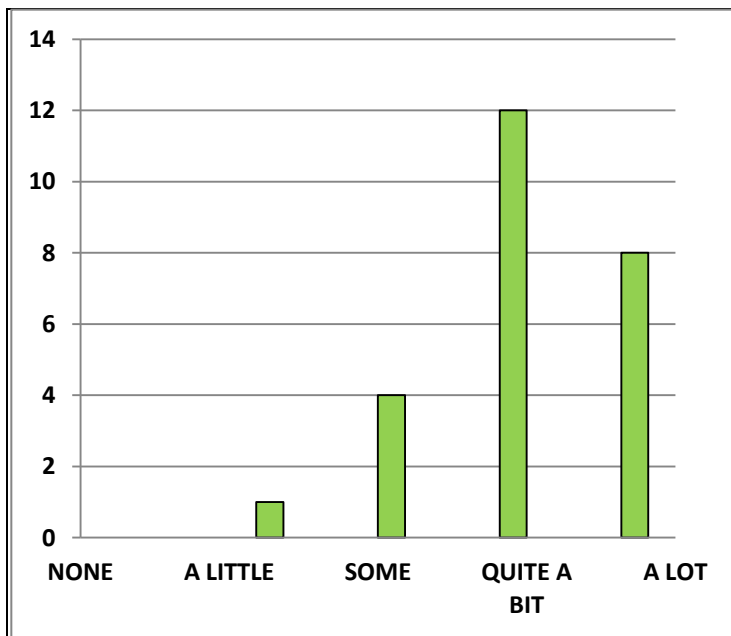
## Connecting Generations: Building the Bridge

Perceived benefit of the events

### ADULTS



### YOUTH





# PROJECT REPORTS



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## Connecting Generations: Building the Bridge

### Project Coordinator's Report

Sarah Hook-Nilsson

Based on feedback from adults and youth who attended the focus group sessions and accomplishments to date, the Connecting Generations: Building the Bridge project has been a successful initiative:

- Local youth and adults have collaborated on a discussion of 21<sup>st</sup> century employment skills, in particular those required for self employment.
- A web site has been created with an outline of available services offered by the Connecting Generations program.

In addition,

- A brochure has been designed
- Market research has started for a service that could offer private coaching to adults seeking assistance with social media and computer skills.

Feedback from the questionnaires completed by adults and youth as well as the video records of one of the sessions and of interviews of youth conducted by a local reporter, suggest that those who attended the focus group sessions found the collaborative process interesting, informative and fun. Although it may take more time to produce results, both youth and adults found the intergenerational collaboration to be a rewarding experience and a useful way to share technical knowledge:

- The process became a conscious “cognitive apprenticeship” for both the youth web and brochure designers and for the other youth who attended the group sessions.
- Focusing on the tasks while simultaneously reflecting on the process assisted youth in building on the critical thinking skills they were acquiring.
- Adults whose work in this field often excludes social contact with peers found the opportunity to connect with each other valuable.
- A core group of loyal youth and adults have taken ownership for the Connecting Generations web site.

#### Suggestions for next steps include:

Implementation of the web site and completion of the brochure for Connecting Generations.

- An additional ‘photo shoot to be held in February in order to obtain more high quality pictures of youth and adults in conversation.
- Promotion of the web site using the brochure in local businesses
- Outreach to youth no longer in school to advise them of the opportunity to promote services that can grow into viable businesses

#### Conclusion

Coordinating Building the Bridge has been an exciting and rewarding experience, not least because we are all as much learners as teachers as the process unfolds.

### Project Facilitator's Report

Ahava Shira

As one of the program facilitators for Building the Bridge, I led six focus groups for youth and adults in the community to learn more about business development and practice the skills of 21<sup>st</sup> century entrepreneurship. During Small Business Week, I delivered two introductory workshops for youth and adults to identify their unique skills and explore how they intersected with specific needs in the community.

I facilitated four more workshops specifically designed to help local youth and adults develop a working website and brochure for Connecting Generations. My task as the facilitator was to create a space in which the adults and youth felt comfortable sharing their respective skills and experience while remaining open to new learning. In order to support this collaborative process, the participants were encouraged to engage in personal storytelling, creative brainstorming, works-in-progress presentations and reflective conversations.

The aim of the website and brochure became clear as the youth and adults grappled with what was most important to promote. The youth learned that they needed to tailor their creations by considering who would be reading/viewing them. They also needed to consider how they wanted those readers/viewers to respond to what was there. They had the opportunity to engage in their craft side-by-side with professionals, practicing their new skills while receiving feedback and support for further learning.

Through their exposure to the experience of a number of local experts, the youth deepened their awareness of key employment skills including: identifying appropriate communication strategies, employing effective written and visual language and understanding social media and other tools for marketing and promotion.

As small business owners, the adults had the opportunity to connect with their peers and learn from others involved in similar businesses, while sharing their expertise in website development, graphic design and photography with the youth.

At times I felt challenged to keep the groups focused, as there were so many details to consider, and so many opinions to hear. Because of this, I might recommend that some aspects of the process be decided “behind the scenes,” rather than being open to input from so many participants.

However, there was value in allowing the youth to participate in the decision-making process, as it is a vital aspect of critical thinking, another key skill in 21<sup>st</sup> century learning.

### Youth Web Site Designer's Report

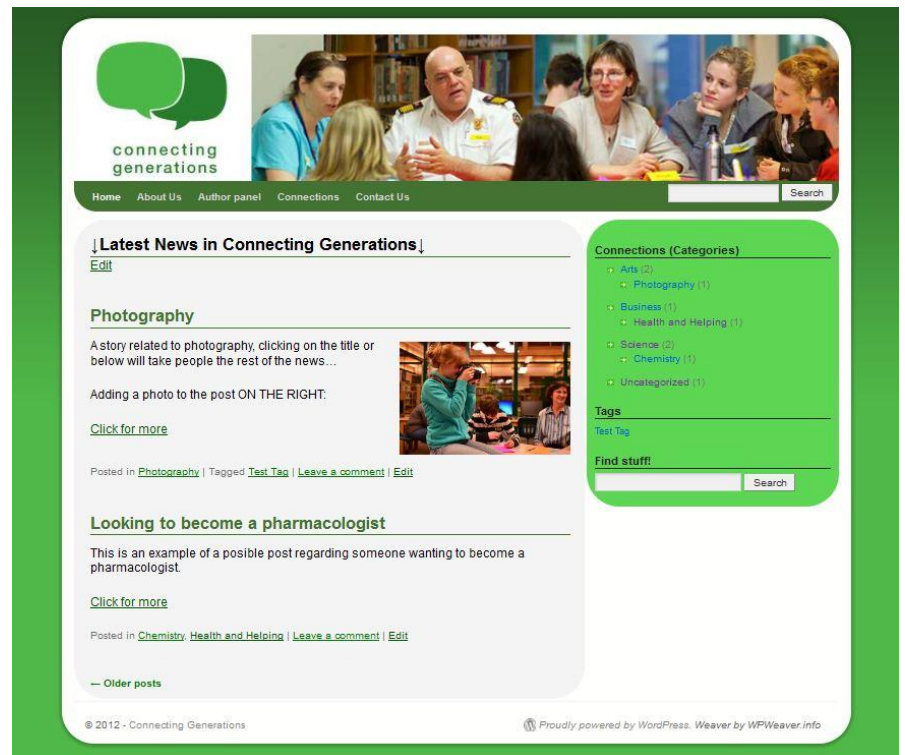
Scott Chamney

#### Connecting Generations Website Project

Progress to date

The Connecting Generations website is a collaborative project intended to connect youth with the greater community. A number of focus groups with adults and youth including students have been held where brainstorming for the site has taken place. Also smaller student working groups have discussed specific elements.

It was decided that the website would be created using Word Press as it is open source software, which means that once the site is up and running any number of people may be appointed as administrators or editors. A Word Press theme was chosen that allowed for customization. The green speech bubbles logo that was designed by Josephine was used as a starting point to create the look and feel of the website.



The website will act as a community directory of requests for and possible connections with youth and adults who have skills to offer and/or requests to fill. As Word Press is an open source software there are literally thousands of Plug-ins that can be put to use on our site. At this point we only have a few running, but we will be exploring more with which to showcase this directory.

This project has been a particularly important learning opportunity for me as I had no prior knowledge of Word Press. I have explored its offerings and experimented with its features, sometimes going down dead ends. I very much enjoyed being mentored by members of the Salt Spring Island community who have considerable expertise in Word Press and generously shared their knowledge and suggestions. I also benefited greatly

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from a full day Word Press conference that I attended at the University of Victoria where I learned many things and had the opportunity to ask questions and discuss possibilities with others who had a variety of skill sets with Word Press. Many of the proficiencies I acquired have been implemented on the website. I now feel that I have an expertise that I can use in future website contracts.

Apart from learning technical skills, I have taken on a leadership role in the hosting of the focus groups and students meetings: introducing the website, explaining the direction it is going in, cultivating other people's ideas and incorporating them into the project. I now look forward to getting the website up and running and mentoring our student/youth focus group members on how to use and edit websites. Working with the students has been rewarding as they have many insights to share and great enthusiasm for the project. This project has been a wonderful learning experience overall.

**Contact Us**

This is where our contact info will be... *and maybe a google map too*

I set this page to the "sitemap template" so that a sitemap will appear below.

**Pages**

- [About Us](#)
- [Author panel](#)
- [Connections](#)
  - [Connections Available](#)
  - [Connections Requested](#)
- [Contact Us](#)
- [|Latest News in Connecting Generations|](#)

**Posts**

- [January 2012 \(5\)](#)

**Categories**

- [Arts \(2\)](#)
- [Photography \(1\)](#)
- [Business \(1\)](#)
- [Health and Helping \(1\)](#)
- [Science \(2\)](#)
- [Chemistry \(1\)](#)
- [Uncategorized \(1\)](#)

**Tag Cloud**

Test Tag

**Connections (Categories)**

- [Arts \(2\)](#)
- [Photography \(1\)](#)
- [Business \(1\)](#)
- [Health and Helping \(1\)](#)
- [Science \(2\)](#)
- [Chemistry \(1\)](#)
- [Uncategorized \(1\)](#)

**Tags**

Test Tag

**Find stuff!**

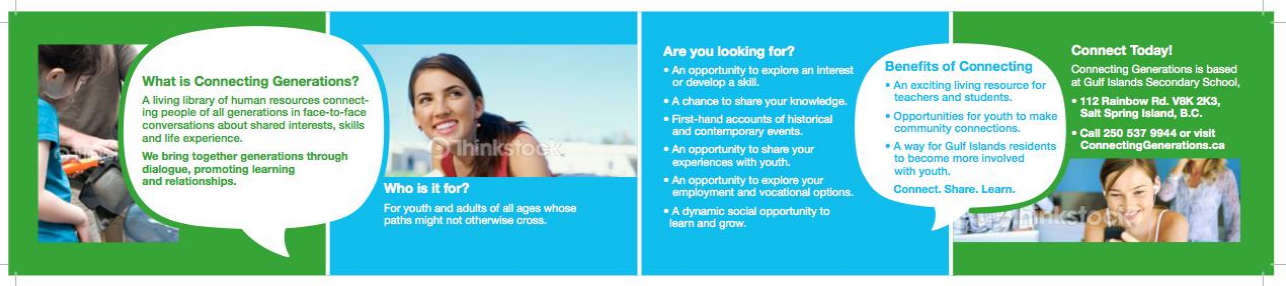
Youth Brochure Designer's Report

Josephine Duffy

It has been a delight working on the Connecting Generations brochure with Sarah Hook Nilsson and the Connecting Generation team these last few months. The focus group sessions I attended in November were unlike anything I have ever experienced before. There were so many participants and a ton of good ideas. Everyone that attended seemed very eager not only to learn about design and the design process but also to participate and make sure the brochure communicated what they most loved and appreciated about the Connecting Generations program.

Overall, the process so far has been refreshing and relatively straight forward. The Connecting Generations team and focus group participants, although there were many of them, all worked together towards the same goal: a brochure that communicates the program in a clean, professional and fun way. Sometimes I find when working with a group of people or a committee it can be frustrating to achieve a well designed, finished product that everyone is happy with. I am pleased to say that this is not the case here. I am confident that the brochure will turn out wonderfully next month when printed.

Connecting Generations brochure draft



# APPENDICES



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## Appendix A

### Focus Group Sessions

Focus group sessions were planned jointly by the program coordinator and the facilitator. Sessions were designed to be interactive, encouraging participants to have conversations with adults or youth whom they had not spoken to before. An outline was created for each group session which included a mixture of questions for discussion/ tasks to accomplish in small groups followed by sharing with the larger group. The facilitator introduced questions and assisted participants in the recognition of common themes with opportunities for reflection.

#### Small Business Week

##### Session 1: Why Not? Inspiring Business on Salt Spring Island

1. Assumption myths about Business (in general and on Salt Spring):  
*What are/what were your assumptions about being in business?*

2. Opportunities and Possibilities:  
*What opportunity is leading you/once led you to your business?*

##### Session 2: From Dream to Drawing Board: Turning Your Idea into Reality

1. Passion/Skills/Vision/Interest:  
*What are you good at? What makes you uniquely you?*

2. Community Needs:  
*How can/did what I offer/ed meet the needs of the community?*

#### November: Web site and graphic design

To open each of the sessions which focused on the website/brochure creation the program coordinator told a story:

For the November sessions, 3 stories of conversations which have taken place between adults and youth through Connecting Generations were shared with the whole group.

Questions:

- 1. What sparked you to come here today? What is your purpose or intention in joining these focus groups for Connecting Generations?*
- 2. What is the web site brochure for?*
- 3. Who do we want to reach?*
- 4. What was the value for you of working today with people older or younger than yourself?*



## Connecting Generations: Building the Bridge

### December: Critical Thinking and Communication Skills: how do we make choices and how do we tell our story?

Ahava and Sarah told the story of the spark which ignited Connecting Generations.

Less attendance at this session made it possible to explore questions in one group. Discussion centred around the details of the website with some reflection on communication skills and cross-generational understanding, in particular on how we are all challenged to connect with each other because of the assumptions we make.

*How do we make room for each other? How do we make sure that we are as equal in our exchange as possible?*

Questions were posed as participants looked at the drafts for the website:

*How are we making this inclusive?*

*How will this appeal to youth AND older people?*

*How can we be sure that visitors will be sufficiently intrigued to stay and explore?*

### January: Visual Imagery and Reflection

Sarah started with her Story of how the logo was chosen amongst others that were rejected.

Questions:

*What do you see? What do you notice?*

Reflection: *How do images speak to us?*

Website and brochure feedback and support:

*What's exciting? What's inviting? What's missing?*

Conversation\_is reflection:

*When we hear ourselves speak, and hear others speak, the space between, inside the conversation, is where learning happens.*

## Connecting Generations: Building the Bridge

### Appendix B

Link to video recording of focus group sessions November 15<sup>th</sup> 2011:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SilwmdigobA>

Interviews with 2 youth:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8BhnELQe4Wg>

