



## Every picture tells a story....the Connecting Generations logo

Our project report to cluster group 1 centred around an artifact, the logo that we have chosen to represent Connecting Generations and our journey of discovery as we have identified some of the themes which it reflects.

### The story

We wanted a symbol that would represent the program and could be easily recognized in order to promote the program both in school and in the community

- A local youth who had recently graduated from VIU in graphic design volunteered to take on the project. **Connecting Generations exists because of the skills and experience offered by interested youth and adult volunteers and the enthusiasm of those who are looking to learn without expectation of reward or credit.**
- The speech bubble logo was chosen because it so clearly represents a conversation, in particular a face-to face conversation. N.B. the “comment” speech bubble talks to itself and on Face Book the bubbles are super-imposed in opposite directions, as if speaking without listening, without connecting... **Connecting Generations is designed to bring generations together for face-to-face conversations about shared interests, skills and life experiences.**
- Green was chosen for many reasons including its association with life, well-being, balance, learning and harmony. We chose a fresh green and a darker green, rejecting one of the roughs which had grey as the background bubble. We thought that some of our grey-haired participants might take objection! But it wasn't until after the logo was created that we realized its greater significance: that the 2 greens represent the old growth and the new growth of the forest. Both are necessary and important to the life of the eco-system and support one another, just as **we need our youth and our elders and everyone in between in order to be a healthy community.**
- **Discovery and learning are hallmarks of Connecting Generations, for those guiding it as much as for those who participate.** We don't see everything at first - or even second glance. We continue to discover new meaning and gain a greater understanding as the project unfolds.
  1. Our logo continued to serve us well for the first year of Connecting Generations. The only slightly negative comment was from an adult who questioned why the youthful green came in front of the darker green, partly obscuring it. **This polarizing interpretation –youth, adults; teachers, students; us, them, did not lead us forward in our journey of discovery.** Nor was the solution to reverse the apparent focus on youth to a focus on adults-alternating “either or” between the 2 greens.

2. **We realized the 3<sup>rd</sup> dimension of our logo over time and through reflection:**

*Bridging the Gap 2010 -2011 :*

- forums designed for youth and adults to have conversations about career paths in different fields-Hospitality and Tourism, the Arts and Entrepreneurship, Health and the Helping professions, Business and Finance. We learned from this project the extent to which **conversations between unrelated youth and adults, whose paths may not otherwise cross, are opportunities for deep learning.**

*Building the Bridge 2011-2012:*

- focus groups for youth and local website designers, graphic artists and photographers to create a website and brochure for Connecting Generations, while reflecting on 21<sup>st</sup> century employment skills. We observed how **adults and youth can be inspired through intergenerational collaboration.**

*Growing Innovation* has allowed us the opportunity for reflection in greater depth.

The result of these opportunities for reflection has been a new realization about our logo:

Partially hidden behind the fresh green bubble of the foreground and the deeper green of the one behind is a 3<sup>rd</sup> space. Our logo has grown from “flat” to 3 dimensional.

- We can't see behind and between the first and second speech bubbles, so our description of what happens in this 3<sup>rd</sup> space comes through the comments made and the experience reported.

**“Conversation is not just what is said; it is also what happens between people”**(Community Conversations Paul Born). At best, the assessment and measurement of the learning, can only be the reflection of what actually takes place. From these comments, we have begun to see the picture of conversations and to recognize some of the characteristics of the 3<sup>rd</sup> space:

1. Enthusiasm, fun, learning driven by curiosity:

- Joyce (a senior): *“I am interested in getting to know young people. I find young people's energy inspiring. I would like to talk, get to know young people, hear how they are thinking, what young people do...”* (Connecting Generations-In School -History 12 students)
- *“Loved the questions from the youth and their openness and interaction”.* (Bridging the Gap forum)
- *“I think that no matter what you want to do, it is great to come to these forums because you can learn from everyone and they are very interesting.”*(Bridging the Gap forum)
- *“After this group work I think I will look differently at working with adults because it was a lot of fun”* (Grade 10 student).(Building the Bridge focus group)
- *“I am learning so much from the youth and other employers, adults and that is such a gift.”*(Bridging the Gap forum)

## 2. Empathy, understanding, respect:

In response to the question “What impressed you most?”

- *“Youth have some of the same concerns I do.”*
- *“I came away with a lot more empathy for the employers out there”.*
- *“I certainly appreciate those who work in health more than I did before”.*
- *“I really like listening to the adults - I found it was very constructive and nice to know that they went through the same things”.*
- *“Youths are not the only ones who question where we want to go.”*
- *“It was reassuring to see that many people had the same concerns as I.”*
- *“Similarities between youth and adults in challenges of self care”.*
- *“The fact that some people actually care about the wellbeing of the young people”.*  
(Bridging the Gap forums)
- *“The respectful and comfortable relationships that formed between the youth and adults”.*(Bridging the Gap workshops)

From these comments, we have come to understand that when we hear ourselves speak, and hear others speak, it is the space between, inside the conversation, where the learning happens.

We have reached a point where our view of generational and other differences has changed from being a gap to bridge, or a bridge to cross. **We are building the bridge as a 3<sup>rd</sup> space where conversation can happen in a new place**, where collaboration, engagement, creativity, openness are natural products of shared interests and passions.

### The Challenges

- The space between the bubbles is hidden from view. **Security and the screening** of participants have been issues raised by the project’s advisory committee and potential funders. The local RCMP sergeant who was on the original steering committee commented that in the case of conversations between youth and seniors, who might find it awkward to complete Criminal Record checks, he thought that we should be more vigilant about the strong, minor-aged youth who could present far more of a threat to an elderly person than the other way around... We have encountered potential funders who insist that we use Criminal Record checks. Since all conversations take place in school or in a public place and all adults and youth are interviewed before participating in the program, we no longer use Criminal Record checks.
- This story of our logo represents the balance we need to make between reflection and action. While we reflect on what is happening, there are so many more connections to be made. While we spend time on the **technical issues** of embedding a database into a website, of chasing adequate **funding** to continue and expand, there are more conversations waiting to happen...