



CONNECTIONS™ Program Framework and Overview

Locally, provincially and Canada wide, our communities are becoming increasingly diverse. Diversity and inclusion education in the areas of acceptance, understanding and positive action is vital to creating a world in which we all wish to live. SEEDS Connections™ is encouraging positive change through the provision of the powerful, life-changing CONNECTIONS™ Program for Alberta high school students.

Overview of CONNECTIONS™

The objectives of the CONNECTIONS™ Program are to:

- Empower youth to utilize their personal leadership and critical thinking skills
- Create positive change in their schools and communities related to diversity, inclusion, environmental and energy issues;
- Foster cross-cultural understanding and raise awareness about diversity issues
- Gain skills and work together to combat stereotyping, ethnocentrism, prejudice, and discrimination
- Connect youth with the natural environment and cultivate environmental stewardship
- Support students to initiate and present transformative, proactive “Be the Change” projects related to human diversity and the , contributing to the overall wellness and health of their schools and communities



Through blended and experiential learning, leadership skills are developed in cross-cultural understanding, race relations, environmental stewardship, and in dealing effectively with racism, discrimination, stereotyping, and prejudice. Participating students develop a stronger sense of empowerment about how they can use their leadership styles to make powerful and positive differences within their schools and communities.

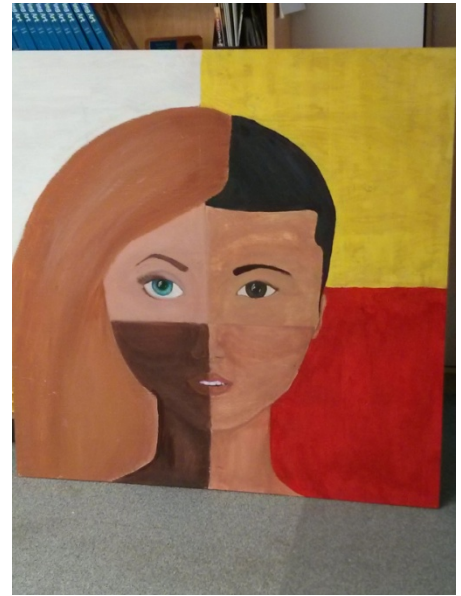
By participating and completing the CONNECTIONS Program, students may earn up to five Career and Technology Studies (CTS) high school credits which can be applied towards their Alberta high school diploma.

The entire CONNECTIONS Program is comprised of three components over a five month period of time:

- 1) Pre-Trip online learning and related activities - Starts four weeks prior to the on-site program.
- 2) Four-day on-site applied learning experience, currently held at Kamp Kiwanis, Calgary.
- 3) Post-Trip online learning and a final “Be the Change” project, presented at a school and/or in the community.

Background of the CONNECTIONS™ Program

The CONNECTIONS™ Program was developed through an innovative partnership with the Calgary Board of Education in 1987. Over the years, the program has been enhanced and improved, empowering students from across the province to utilize their personal leadership skills in affecting positive change related to diversity and environmental issues.



Painting by St. Joseph's, Brooks, Student

In 2010, the SEEDS Foundation and the Connections Education Society partnered to provide the CONNECTIONS Program to Alberta students. With support (no longer available) from Cenovus Energy from 2010 to June 2016, we were able to expand the program to new communities with the result that 1,112 student participants created “Be the Change” leadership projects, which have involved an estimated 66,000 students, teachers and community members. In 2014, the two organizations merged into a new charitable entity, SEEDS Connections, which continues to offer its leadership, diversity and environmental educational programs, meeting its mission to inspire Canadian youth to create positive change.

Through a key partnership with Alberta Distance Learning Centre (ADLC), Connections is offered as an online course for students. The collaborative relationship allows the program to be made available to students throughout the province and is integral to the success of the program.

Students and schools have fully embraced the CONNECTIONS program, such that many offer it as a semester course and other Alberta schools are requesting participation. In the 2015-16 school year, we offered five programs, (averaging 55+ students in each) to over 260 students who presented “Be the Change” leadership projects to an estimated audience of more than 15,000 students, teachers and community members. Due to current economic and funding challenges, in the 2016-17 year, we have been able to offer three programs to 191 students from 24 schools, with anticipated project audiences of over 11,000.

The objective of SEEDS Connections is to have the capacity to offer this invaluable program to all Alberta high school students in future years.

