

Project Overview and Update from the Coordinator (6/27/22)

The *Connection Project* is fundamentally a structure to organize our community for climate action. Unlike other such structures which emphasize areas of interest or affinity (e.g., Energy, Transportation, Political Action, Justice, etc.), this project divides the community into different groups or sectors on the basis of identity. For example, there is an Educators Group with which teachers, librarians and others involved in increasing climate awareness would self-identify. All this is comprehensively explained in later sections of the website description of the project.

When I first circulated this idea to several CAN Counselors and associates, the most frequent feedback was that it was “overly ambitious;” simplify it and scale it back. At the time of the launch of this project there was a lull in the succession of crises facing us and I had assumed it may ‘fly’ if properly promoted. The kick-off started with a joint presentation involving Rob Shetterly and the Brooklin Library. Unfortunately, technical difficulties (it was a hybrid event) eliminated the project’s promotion. So, how did it (or how is it) turning out?

Several groups have met so far: Food Producers (twice), Spiritual/Faith (twice), Youth (twice), and Educators (once). The Educators Group has spawned a valuable panel discussion with the focus on Climate Education, “*What Should the Young be Taught about Climate?*” CAN’s Climate Education initiative is developing further under the direction of Justine Appeal, a Brooksville Elementary School Teacher. In a similar manner, the Connection Project has spawned the Blue Hill Chapter of the Citizens Climate Lobby under the direction of David Dietrich which had its third meeting of recent. With the exception of the CCL group, none of these groups are currently meeting on an ongoing basis, but networks have been established which can be reactivated when and if something in the climate landscape can help to jump-start the groups. So has the Connection Project been a success or failure?

It has done some good in bringing together folks and promoting CAN as a community climate organization. It has not reached its second level of operation, that of bringing together the different groups to explore what can be done to increase our community’s resiliency. (However, Dennis Kiley who was slated to facilitate the integration of the groups, did a masterful job at orchestrating the panel discussion.)

Much has changed since the Connection Project's inception. The immediacy of our current political, social and economic turmoil can minimize the threat of a greater, but slower threat. The result is that the community is unable to focus on the climate issue. Also, other organizations have begun to fill the gap that the project was to address. The *Blue Hill and Island Heritage Trusts*, the *Good Life Center*, *Shaw and Island Institutes*, *Maine Center for Coastal Fisheries*, and the various town libraries have become very active in raising climate awareness. Also, towns are establishing committees to explore sustainability concerns and uniting in *Peninsula Tomorrow* under the leadership of Allen Kratz.

It is possible that the Connection Project is less needed now than at the time of its inception. It is also possible that if individuals would step up to leadership positions of the groups which do not duplicate offerings of those noted above (e.g., Elders/Third Act Group), the Project would produce significant resiliency gains for our community.