



# THE FOUR DIRECTIONS PROJECT

*Songs For Change: engagement, learning and healing - through the voices of youth*

DARK/SPARK

In 2014, the professional musicians who founded Darkspark delivered an arts education program to Grade 8 students at the Quinte Mohawk School in Tyendinaga, Ontario. The students were challenged to voice their perspectives on colonial history curriculum through song. The results were profound. In the end, the students challenged Darkspark to replicate their experience across the 'four directions' of Canada. And so, the **Four Directions Project** was born.

Darkspark traveled to Indigenous communities from the far North to the South, from the East to the West **harnessing pop culture to stimulate discourse**, and guiding a song-writing process to support the diverse voices and stories of Indigenous youth. Requests from Indigenous leaders, communities and educators encouraged Darkspark to expand the Four Directions Project. It now includes youth in non-Indigenous schools and communities and may be offered in any province or territory in Canada.

Darkspark invites Grade 7 and 8 students to create powerful art by assisting them in conceptualizing, **writing and recording pop songs about how colonial history affects them**, their families and communities. Its multicultural team sensitively and skillfully facilitates students creating songs for change and healing that teach, reclaim and reconcile colonial history, which is still very much a part of Canada's present. In this way, **Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth's perspectives contribute to an important cross-cultural conversation across the country**. The songs inspire both non-Indigenous and Indigenous audiences to share, listen, learn, understand, discuss and participate.

The Darkspark multicultural team is comprised of Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists, arts educators and Elders. The lead facilitators are seasoned performing musicians whose dynamism and creativity, professional expertise and cultural sensitivity mobilize student engagement. They spend 3 to 5 days in each classroom **teaching history curriculum in a manner that challenges stereotypes and prejudice**, and capturing the student's experience and perspective through songs.

Each project culminates in a **student-led community presentation**. Youth share their stories, perspectives and experiences in their own voices through the presentation of their songs and accompanying multi-media. The voices of youth on the issues are very powerful; they educate and touch audiences deeply. Finally, all songs are shared through social media and online channels, extending the impact of the project and **encouraging further cross-cultural dialogue and understanding**.

**The aim of Darkspark's Four Directions initiative is to stimulate understanding between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples. Its vision is for Canadians to hear and respect the long-ignored perspectives of Indigenous Peoples and actively invest in recovery and reconciliation.**



EMPOWERMENT  
THROUGH  
SONG

[www.darkspark.org](http://www.darkspark.org)