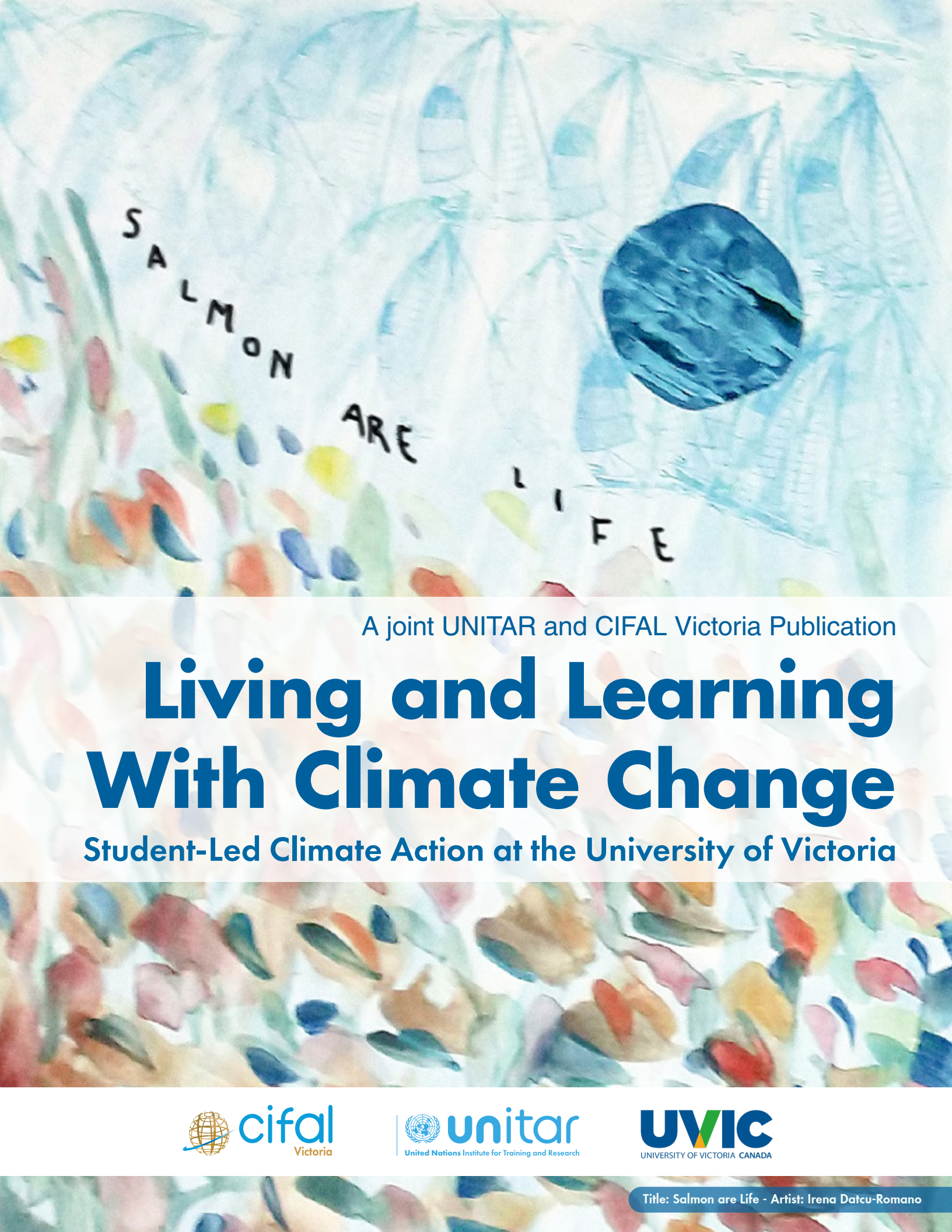




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A joint UNITAR and CIFAL Victoria Publication

Living and Learning With Climate Change

Student-Led Climate Action at the University of Victoria



Title: Salmon are Life - Artist: Irena Datcu-Romano



Acknowledgements

Undergraduate student leaders

Alice Eckert

Jenna Inch

Tiegan Suddaby

Alex Steinitz

Annika Vaughan

Organization of events

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Michael Lines, McPherson Library/Mearns Centre for Learning (Humanities and Social Sciences Librarian)

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Crystal Tremblay, CIFAL Victoria (Director), Map Shop (Co-Chair), Department of Geography (Assistant Professor)

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Students, Community Mapping Geography (Spring 2024 course)

University of Victoria Sustainability Project

Resilient Urban Systems & Habitat Initiative

Engage with Nature-Based Solutions artists, including *Rande Cook*, *Colton Hash*, *Emrys Miller*, *Erin Robinsong*, and *Merlin Sheldrake*

We acknowledge and respect the lək'wəŋən peoples on whose traditional territory the LLWCC learning series took place, and the Songhees, Esquimalt and W̱SÁNEĆ peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day. In order to move forward in a world with climate change, we must see the land as indigenous peoples always have, with respect and harmony.

Table of Contents

0

Acknowledgements

Undergraduate student leaders

Organization of events

Editors

Copy Editor

Other contributors

1

Foreword

2

Welcome

3

Introduction

4

Project Description

Addressing Climate Anxiety
Through Climate Action

Academic Libraries as Hubs
for Climate Learning and
Community Engagement

5

Student Leaders

6

Roundtable/
Community Café

7

Student Youth
Impressions

8

Exhibition of
Arts-Based Responses

Transformation: Rebuilding
Relationships, Creating
Resilient, Watery Communities

Engage with Nature-Based
Solutions

Students' Artworks

Photos of works by Engage
with Nature-Based Solutions
artists

9

Field Trip

Dreaming of Zero Impact: Can
We Really Live Sustainably?

10

About

About UNITAR
University of Victoria
CIFAL Victoria
Further Information

11

References

1. Foreword

UNITAR is committed to engaging young people and integrating their views, insights and ideas into its work. As the training arm of the United Nations, UNITAR designs and delivers capacity-building programmes, research and learning solutions that equip individuals, institutions and organizations with the skills and knowledge needed to advance sustainable development.

Youth are key agents of change, contributing to the advancement of inclusive and sustainable development. UNITAR is pleased to support initiatives with and for young people to address emerging challenges and gaps, such as *“Living and Learning with Climate Change”*, a joint effort of UNITAR, the University of Victoria (UVic), and the International Training Centre for Authorities and Leaders (CIFAL) Victoria, supported by a driven student body dedicated to raising awareness and promoting understanding of climate change.

This initiative was developed in response to the need to provide students and community members with opportunities to engage with one another and to collectively explore pathways forward in a climate-changed world. Global and national surveys indicate that climate change is an increasing source of anxiety, particularly among young people. Through this approach, UNITAR seeks to listen to youth perspectives on the emotional dimensions of this global challenge, while encouraging informed engagement and action on climate change.

This report offers a snapshot of the activities carried out under this initiative, including student-created art and the dialogues that brought together faculty, staff, students, as well as First Nations and community members.



Michelle Gyles-McDonnough

United Nations Assistant Secretary-General

Executive Director, United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR)

Living and Learning with Climate Change presents a practical example of how action-oriented pedagogy can enable young people to develop solutions to sustainability challenges. It is my hope that this approach will provide useful insights for educators seeking to design innovative learning practices that empower youth to contribute to a more sustainable future.

2. Welcome

Post-Secondary institutions are places where students, academics and the wider community come together to engage and discuss the greatest opportunities and challenges of our time, no matter how difficult. The University of Victoria endeavours to take this a step further by providing an experiential and reflective learning environment, that nurtures collaboration, and most importantly action.

Part of the educational goals of any university should be to ready our population for flexibility and to learn and adapt when a situation changes or new dilemmas arise. It's our duty to train and inspire the next generation of thought leaders to help tackle the world's biggest challenges like creating an equitable planet or mitigating climate change.

With growing frequency our communities are being inundated with troubling news about our global climate or world affairs. We need new ways to both learn about these situations, create a diversity of approaches in how to discuss them, and devise new strategies to face them. And then there must be timely innovative initiatives to follow.

I am so pleased with the Living and Learning with Climate Change events that have contributed to the goal of making the university a champion for sustainability education, and for focusing on engagement through education.



Kevin Hall

President and Vice-Chancellor, University of Victoria

Chair, International Training Centre for Authorities and Leaders (CIFAL) Victoria

Thanks to CIFAL, the UVic scholarly community is better poised to be at the forefront of learning, leading, and acting on climate change. We are well-positioned to continue fighting for a better future, and your contributions are making that future a reality.

Thank you.

3. Introduction



Crystal Tremblay

Director, International Training Centre for Authorities and Leaders (CIFAL) Victoria

Associate Professor, Department of Geography, University of Victoria

As Director of CIFAL Victoria, I'm pleased to introduce this latest contribution to our ongoing series on student-led engagement with climate change. UNESCO's recent report "Reimagining our futures together" calls for a fundamental shift in how we think about education in our complex and uncertain world. At the heart of this shift is a recognition that the next generation isn't just preparing to lead the future - they're leading right now.

As universities, we must create transformative learning spaces that embrace the sustainable development competencies our students need - systems thinking, collaborative problem-solving, and the ability to navigate complexity with critical awareness, empathy and hope. Through our partnership with UNITAR and the CIFAL Global Network, we are proud to amplify our students' voices and connect their local efforts to vital global conversations.

The students in our "*Living and Learning with Climate Change*" initiative understand that addressing climate change isn't just about technical solutions - it's about restoring relationships with the natural world, with each other, and with future generations. As one student observed, "emotions come from real places," recognizing how global issues shape our personal experiences. Another noted that "anxiety brings agency" - when we face the emotional weight of climate challenges, it becomes a powerful driver for change.

These young leaders demonstrate that transformation happens when we honor the whole person. As they discovered through these engagements, “the body knows how to transform better than the brain,” showing how creative, embodied approaches can drive climate action more effectively than purely analytical ones. They’re creating spaces where “resting creates the space to deal with climate change,” understanding that resilience requires both action and restoration.

Their approach is grounded in care, respect, reciprocity, and gratitude. Transforming climate anxiety into action, they’re creating new ways to learn together and showing us education centered on reciprocity rather than extraction, on collective care rather than individual achievement.

“Through CIFAL Victoria’s partnership with UNITAR, we see students reshaping education to nurture the relationships and competencies that will sustain us all.”

4. Project Description

Addressing climate anxiety through climate action

Climate change increasingly is becoming an anxiety-provoking issue, especially for young people. Informally, it is what many university lecturers report from their students, and has repeatedly been confirmed in both global and national surveys.¹ The Fall 2022 **Living with Climate Change** learning series addressed this with an innovative approach by facilitating a series of student-led events (see the CIFAL-UNITAR publication *Youth Championing the SDGs*).² **Living with Climate Change** offered students and community members opportunities to engage with others who have similar worries and to discover ways forward in a climate-changed world.³

Based on its success, the faculty and staff who had initiated and guided the 2022 event series undertook to create a follow-up in the academic year 2023-2024. Even more clearly than in the 2022 event series, this time around the focus was on facilitating climate action in response to climate anxiety. The emphasis, furthermore, was on the idea that to live with a rapidly changing climate requires readiness to learn and adapt. This is reflected in the name that we gave the new series, **Living and Learning with Climate Change**.

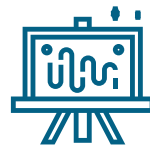
As in the first series, the programme of events included a great diversity of approaches, intended to open the discussion:



1. A student engagement conversation with Dr. Jonathan Foley, Executive Director of Project Drawdown, at the Mearns Learning Centre – McPherson Library, after Dr. Foley’s on-campus presentation for the Pacific Institute of Climate Solutions, PICS (6 November 2023).



2. An arts-based climate action workshop, organised in conjunction with the student-run University of Victoria Sustainability Project (6 February 2024).



3. An art exhibition at the Main Hall of the Mearns Learning Centre – McPherson Library. It featured pieces created at the earlier arts-based, climate action workshop, curated by students and library staff, as well as works by professional artists from the Engage with Nature-based Solutions (ENBS) initiative, curated by Maleea Acker (19 February – 10 March 2024).



4. An exhibition of maps, in collaboration with the Community Mapping Geography course, at the Mearns Learning Centre – McPherson Library, held in conjunction with the Resilient Urban Systems & Habitat Initiative (6 February 2024).

¹ See, e.g., Hickman et al. (2021), Lull et al. (2021), Poortinga et al. (2023).

² See *Living with Climate Change* (2023) *Youth Championing the SDGs*. <https://www.unitar.org/about/news-stories/news/youth-championing-sdgs-living-climate-change-cifal-victoria>. Also see Heyd and Tremblay (in press).

³ At the University of Victoria there are a variety of initiatives aimed at addressing climate anxiety. The School of Environmental Studies, for example, offers a certificate on Transformative Climate Action, which deals with this problem, among other things.



5. A field trip to O.U.R. Ecovillage, Shawnigan Lake, to experience a community-based sustainability

demonstration site, and to learn about their climate-friendly construction techniques, their permaculture research, their interactions with local and distant governments and bureaucracies, their internal governance structures, and their relationships to local First Nations (2 March 2024).



6. A community café/roundtable on how to live and learn with climate change, with invited knowledge keepers and community members, at the

Mearns Learning Centre – McPherson Library (9 March 2024). This was the central event of the series. Further description of it can be found below.



7. A closing reflection meeting for student leaders, faculty, and staff involved, at the Centre for Global Studies (20 March 2024).

The event series once again attracted a great number of students and community members.⁴ It is expected that they will have found new ways to engage in constructive climate action strategies that have a multiplier effect in their respective communities. In this way, the **Living and Learning with Climate Change** events contributed to the goal of making the university more effective with regard to sustainability education,⁵ and to embody an “action-oriented-pedagogy”.⁶



Thomas Heyd

Centre for Global Studies (Associate Fellow),
Department of Philosophy and Environmental
Studies (Adjunct Professor), University of Victoria

4 Between 20 and 30 people engaged with these events repeatedly, and 600 or more engaged at least once.

5 On this matter, also see the points raised by Hong et al. (2023), Pálsdóttir and Jóhannsdóttir (2021), and Stein (2023).

6 See Leimbach and Milstein (2022).

Academic Libraries as Hubs for Climate Learning and Community Engagement

The University of Victoria Libraries played a pivotal role in developing the **Living and Learning with Climate Change** events series. Academic libraries, including the Mearns Centre for Learning – McPherson Library, are increasingly moving beyond traditional roles of collecting and managing published information to the role of actively enabling access to the expanding body of knowledge in all media, including community knowledge. This evolution aligns with contemporary understandings of 21st-century library missions (ACRL 2024, Beasley 2024, Mumenthaler 2023, Ruttenberg et al. 2022), and the UNESCO Open Science recommendation (2022).

A key goal for university libraries is fostering connections with local and virtual communities. Initiatives like the **Living and Learning with Climate Change** series bring these nascent connections to the forefront. Strengthening university-community ties is vital for a robust civil society and underscores a core commitment of libraries to citizenship and democracy.

Our experience with the **Living and Learning with Climate Change** events demonstrates how academic libraries can become central players in community-engaged programming, particularly on critical issues such as climate change. Moving beyond traditional support for faculty and administration and working in partnership with CIFAL Victoria, the Centre for Global Studies, and the Office of Community-Engaged Learning, the libraries demonstrated

capacity to actively cultivate dialogue, knowledge sharing, and connections among diverse groups. Notably, the libraries provided crucial input in the formation, funding, planning, communications, and execution of the learning series. A strong sense of student and researcher ownership of the library, coupled with a general perception of libraries as trustworthy and inclusive spaces for serious inquiry, was key to success.

Through our engagement with **Living and Learning with Climate Change** the University of Victoria Libraries demonstrated our commitment to interdisciplinary approaches and the power of creative expression in addressing complex challenges like climate change.

Michael Lines

McPherson Library (Humanities and Social Sciences Librarian), University of Victoria



5. Student Leaders

*“Through our engagement with **Living and Learning with Climate Change** the University of Victoria Libraries demonstrated our commitment to interdisciplinary approaches and the power of creative expression in addressing complex challenges like climate change.”*

Five undergraduate student leaders, Alice Eckert, Jenna Inch, Tiegán Suddaby, Alex Steinitz and Annika Vaughan engaged in the two-semester long **Living and Learning with Climate Change** series of events. They were provided with opportunities and resources to experience leadership roles in organizing meaningful events, designed to address climate anxiety and critically engage with the governance of our collective future on a local scale. The planning and realisation of events was furthermore substantially supported by M.Sc. graduate student Marcela Faralhi Daolio and Ph.D. student Meghan Richey.

6. Roundtable/Community Café

This event was the central element of the learning series, intended to create a space for discussion for students and community members on how to live with climate change. It was designed to be a half-day long structured conversation focussed on ways to address eco-anxiety and develop climate resilience through four discussion tables. Each table was guided by one of four student leaders who had prepared key questions related to their focal theme. Knowledge keepers of the four chosen areas were invited to participate. (Mearns Centre for Learning – McPherson Library, 9 March).

THE FOUR TOPIC AREAS WERE:

1. Emotional climate anxiety and resilience

KNOWLEDGE KEEPER MEGHAN RICHEY

STUDENT LEADER ALICE ECKERT

2. Arts-based transformation

KNOWLEDGE KEEPER DAVID GIFFORD

STUDENT LEADER MARCELA FARALHI DAOLIO

3. Community resilience and action

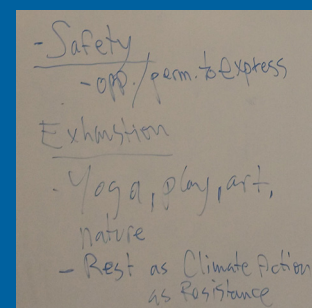
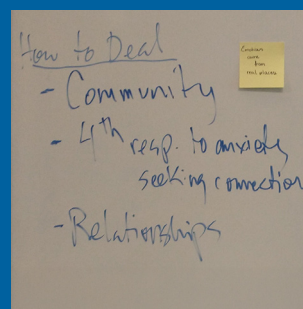
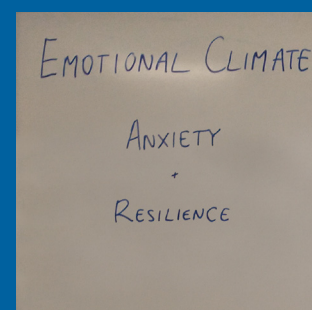
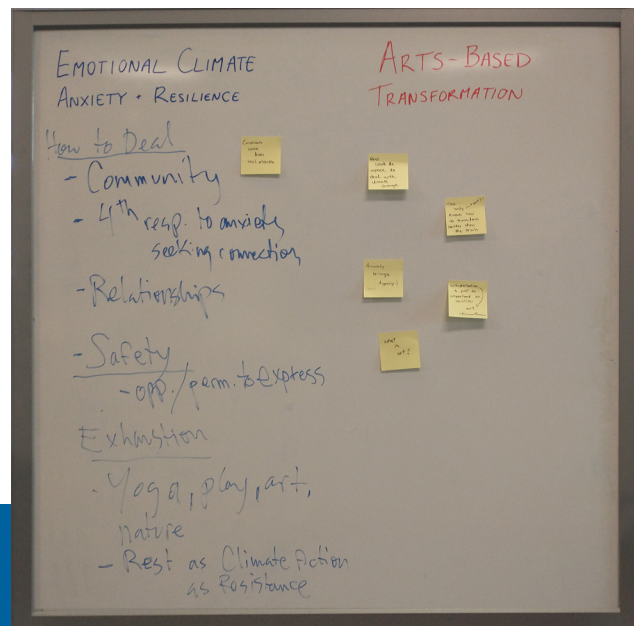
KNOWLEDGE KEEPER PATRICIA LANE

STUDENT LEADER ALEX STEINITZ

4. Rebuilding relationships

KNOWLEDGE KEEPER RICHARD PICKARD

STUDENT LEADER ANNIKA VAUGHAN



Living & Learning with Climate Change

a student-led, UVic supported, climate action series
#LWCCUVIC

Emotional well-being, Arts-based transformation,
Community Resilience and Action, Rebuilding relationships

Roundtable Café

An afternoon of activities for students and community members on how to live with climate change. We will discuss how to address eco-anxiety and develop climate resilience by engaging with community and environment.

Join us at our tables focusing on

- Emotional well-being,
- Arts-based transformation,
- Community Resilience and Action, and
- Rebuilding relationships

A knowledge keeper and a student will lead each table of participants through a round-robin conversation on each topic.

This event is for us all and to find a way forward!

Details

- WHERE:
UVic Mearns Centre for Learning/
McPherson Library - Room A308
Digital Scholarship Commons (DSC)
- WHEN:
Saturday 9th of March
1:00PM to 3:00PM
- WHO:
Open to all UVic students, staff,
and community
- REFRESHMENTS:
Forest tea, coffee and some snacks
will be provided!

Register Here:



ARTS-BASED
TRANSFORMATION

Anxiety
brings
Agency!

Interpretation
is just an
important
creative
art

what
is
art?

Best
create the
space to
deal with
climate
change

The
body
knows
how
to transform
better than
the brain

7. Student Youth Impressions

Facilitating the Arts-Based Transformation table, alongside with the knowledge keeper David Gifford and the Living and Learning with Climate Change team, was a powerful and inspiring experience. Our discussion focused on how artistic expression can help people navigate the emotional aspects of climate change — especially feelings of anxiety, exhaustion, and uncertainty. Through an open-minded conversation, it became clear that one meaningful path forward is through art and its ability to transform emotion into expression, and expression into action.

Participants shared diverse perspectives, ranging from those of artists to those simply using creativity in their everyday lives, highlighting how art can shift the way we understand and respond to environmental changes. We explored how art supports individual healing while also strengthening collective resilience — connecting also with other roundtable themes like community-driven solutions. The insights that emerged affirmed the important role of creativity, mindfulness, and storytelling in building not just awareness, but also hopeful and real responses to climate change.

The conversation touched on a variety of themes including:

- “Emotions come from real places” – Illuminating how global issues shape our personal, emotional experiences.
- “Resting creates the space to deal with climate change” – Translating how youth often see art as a refuge – a way to step back from overwhelming global issues, find calm, and build the inner resilience needed to engage with climate challenges.
- “The body knows how to transform better than the brain” – Indicating how art—through the body – can sometimes drive local climate adaptation and action more effectively than anxiety or overly systematized approaches to the climate crisis.
- “Anxiety brings Agency” – When people are encouraged to face the emotional weight of the climate crisis, it can become a powerful driver for engagement and change.
- “Interpretation is just as important as creation” -Here, the act of engaging with art-through interpretation and reflection-is equally as valuable as creating it, making space for inclusivity and emotional transformation, even for those who don’t identify as artists.

Marcela Faralhi Daolio
M.Sc. student
Environmental Studies

I was drawn to the **Living and Learning with Climate Change** initiative because of its integrated, holistic, and experiential approach to addressing the climate crisis by making the connection between human mental health and planetary health. **Living and Learning with Climate Change** was an opportunity to find creative pathways for addressing climate change. The roundtable was an exciting coming-together of students, staff, and community knowledge keepers. The table at which I participated as a knowledge keeper highlighted the psychological impacts of climate change, with a focus on resilience building, student-led support, and finding ways forward that engage the whole self. I loved the multiple perspectives that contributed to rich conversations, and I left the event feeling inspired and equipped with new ideas and approaches.

Meghan Richey
Registered Clinical Counsellor, Ph.D.
candidate (Interdisciplinary Studies)

I had the honour of having my paintings included in the 2023 and 2024 **Living and Learning with Climate Change** Exhibits. It was moving and informative to see all the artwork on display and notice how students, faculty and staff alike were interacting with and responding to the Exhibit. My own piece was a deeply personal reflection on my own climate anxiety, and sharing it opened up vulnerable and generative conversations with friends and strangers alike. The arts are uniquely powerful in this way, elucidating the real lived experiences behind the statistics and headlines we often see in media that can make climate change feel abstract and faraway. It also helps people, who may not realize they experience climate anxiety or are otherwise impacted by the climate crisis, to start to see the connections in their own lives. This entire experience further reinforced for me the transformative power of art for emotional processing, community engagement and knowledge mobilization about the various impacts of climate change.

Sabrina Guzman Skotnitsky
M.A. (Environmental Studies)

8. Exhibition of Arts-Based Responses

An exhibition of student art, addressing climate change anxiety, curated by student leaders, in tandem with an exhibit of professional art commissioned by Engage with Nature-based Solutions, curated by Maleea Acker.

(Mearns Centre for Learning – McPherson Library, 26 February to 17 March 2024.)

Transformation: Rebuilding Relationships, Creating Resilient, Watery Communities

The **Living and Learning with Climate Change** team organised an exhibition of student work in the main concourse of the library. The exhibition theme was centred around the conception of our interconnectedness to natural and human systems through the metaphor of Bowker Creek, a Creek that connects the University of Victoria to the Pacific Ocean. It addresses the impacts of climate change on fresh and saltwater ecosystems, and how climate change impacts students in their personal and private lives. The works in the exhibition deal with both climate anxiety and hope, as well as questions of connections and disconnect, including how we connect to the natural world, and issues pertaining to climate change and its impacts on our oceans.

Alex Steinitz
Student leader

Engage with Nature-Based Solutions

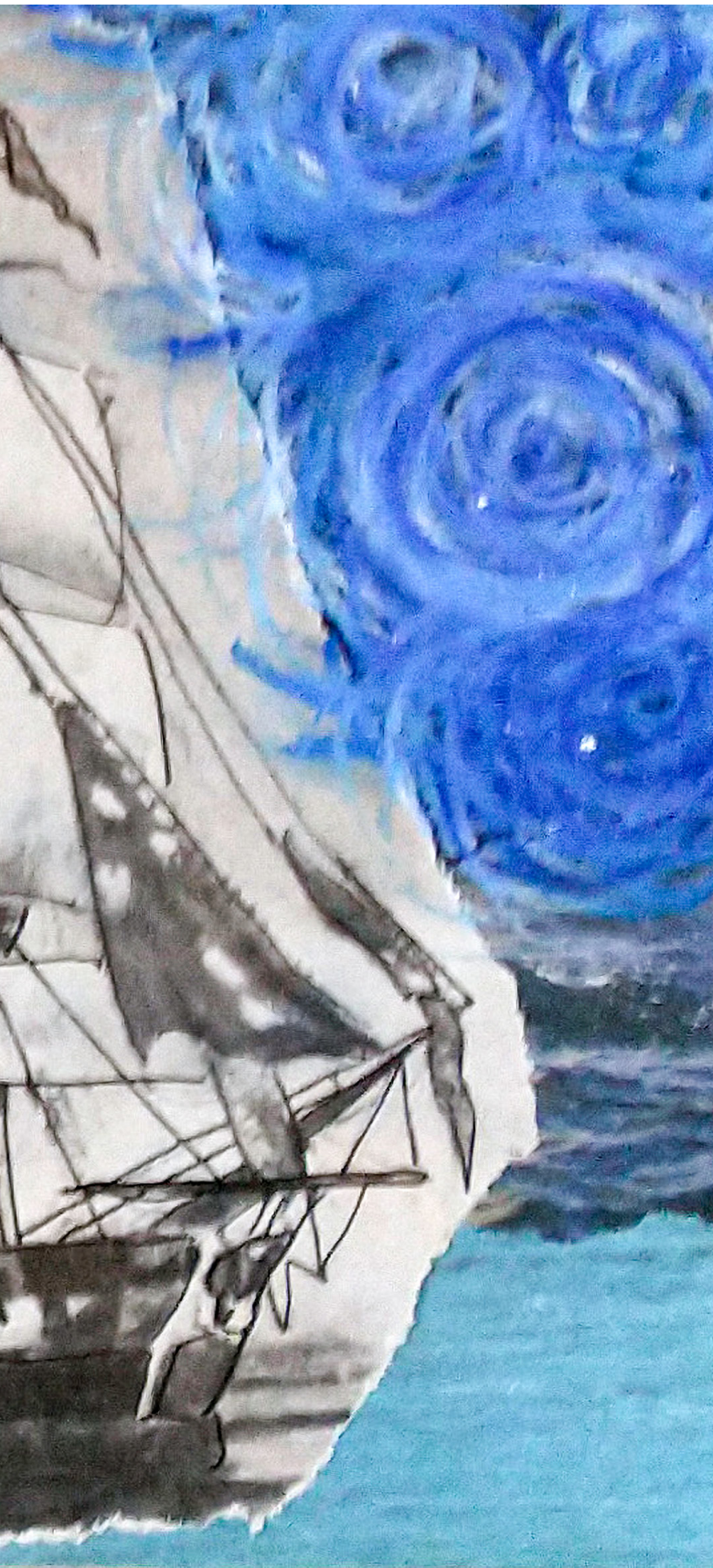
Engage with Nature-Based Solutions (ENBS) is the post-doctoral work of writer and geographer Dr. Maleea Acker. Funded by Environment and Climate Change Canada, ENBS is a new initiative to support communities who apply nature-based solutions to their local lands and waters. We collaborate with communities, collect and curate resources, produce education modules, support artists across the country to create climate-centred work through commissions, facilitate storytelling, and provide technical equipment (for monitoring and testing in the field). All of our work supports access, engagement, and education, and illustrates the impact and benefits of nature-based solutions.

Maleea Acker
Department of Geography
Post-Doctoral Researcher



Students' Artworks





Title: Sailing Through Time

Artist: Abbey Heard

Media: Mixed media on paper

Artist's Statement: When making this mixed-media piece I was thinking about our oceans and the way we interact with them. Throughout history, our relationships to aquatic ecosystems have become increasingly extractive, and I am hoping this will evolve to become more reciprocal.

Title: Sandcastle

Artist: Alex Steinitz

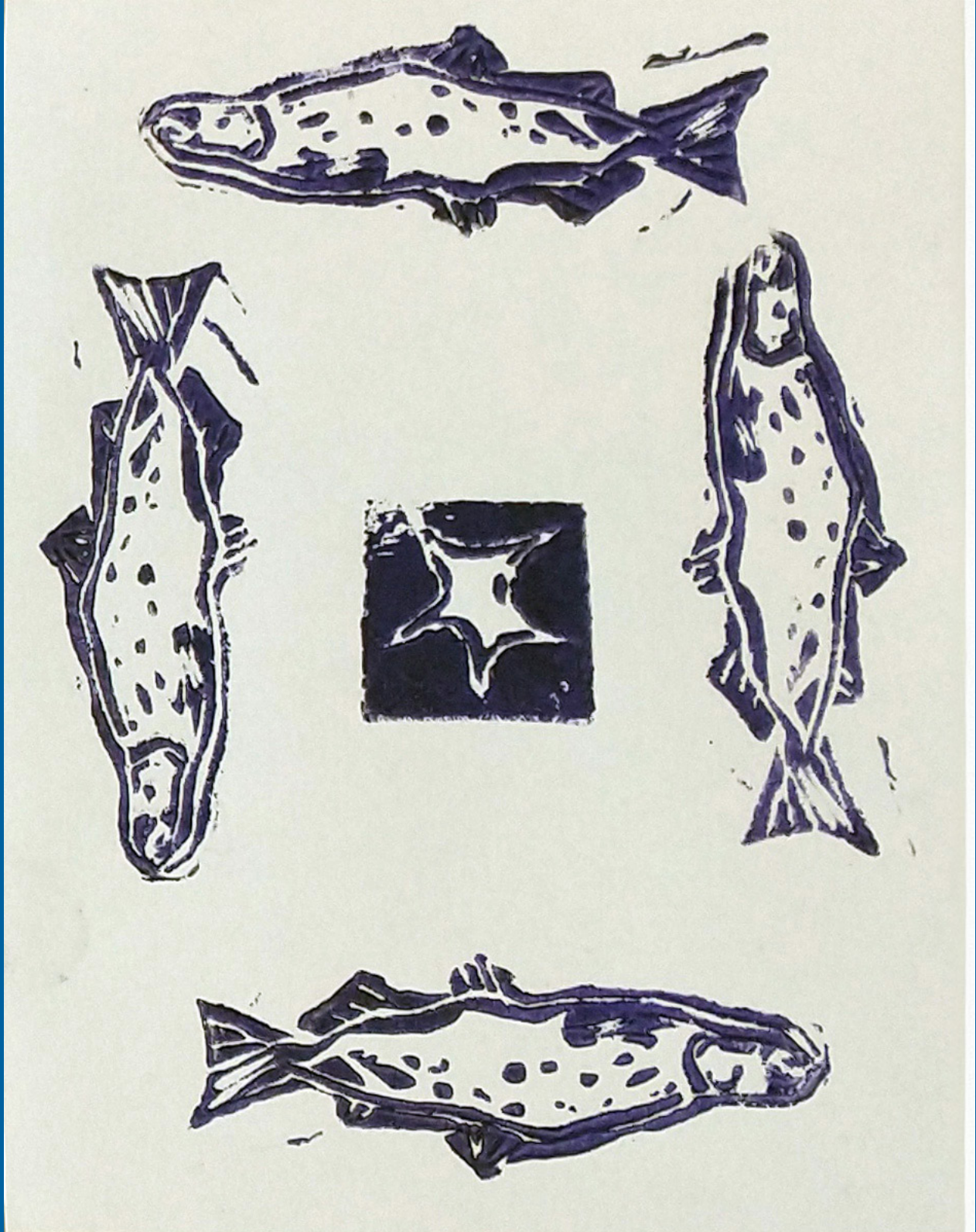
Media: Photograph

Artist's Statement: A child's sandcastle on the beach is a statement of both permanence and impermanence, and a clarion call for the transformations of the way we speak about, and to, the ocean.







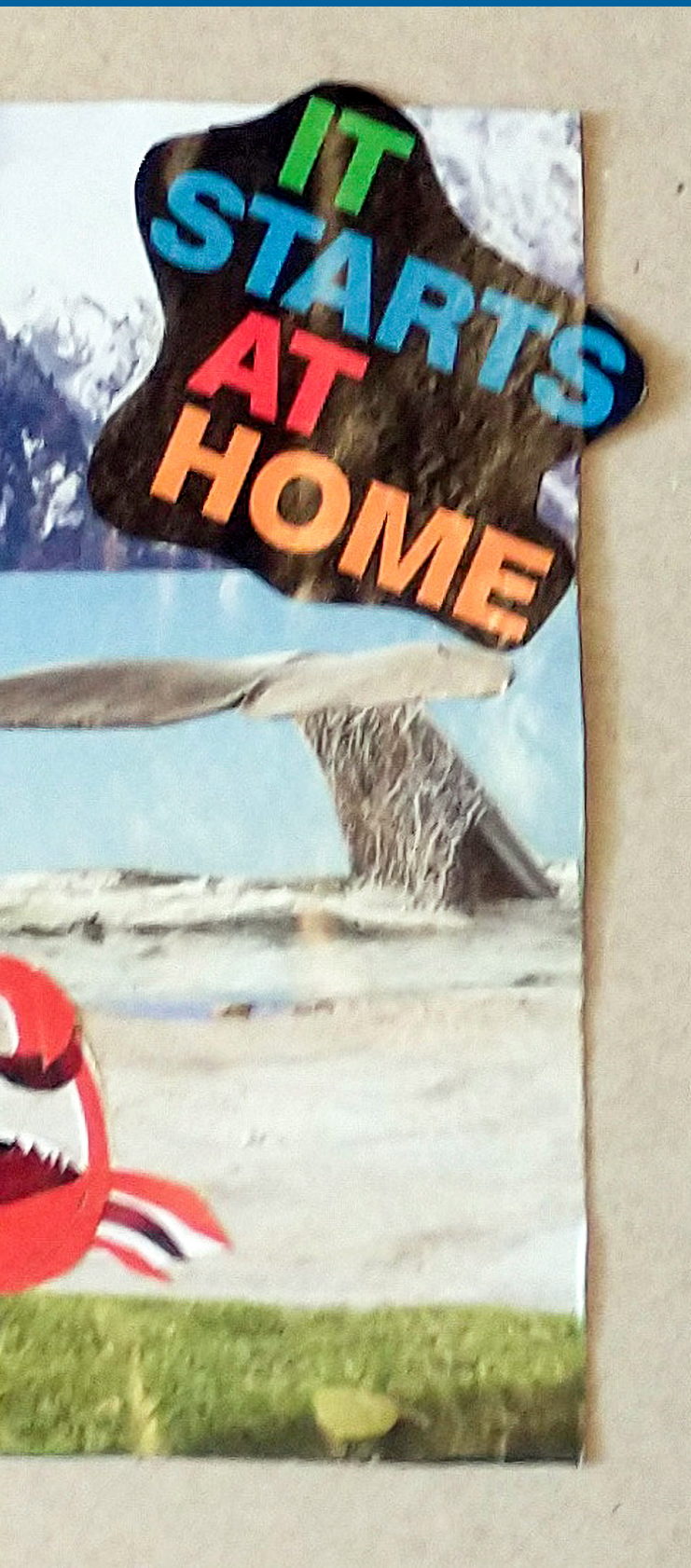


Title: Untitled

Artist: Anya Lowan

Media: Ink on paper



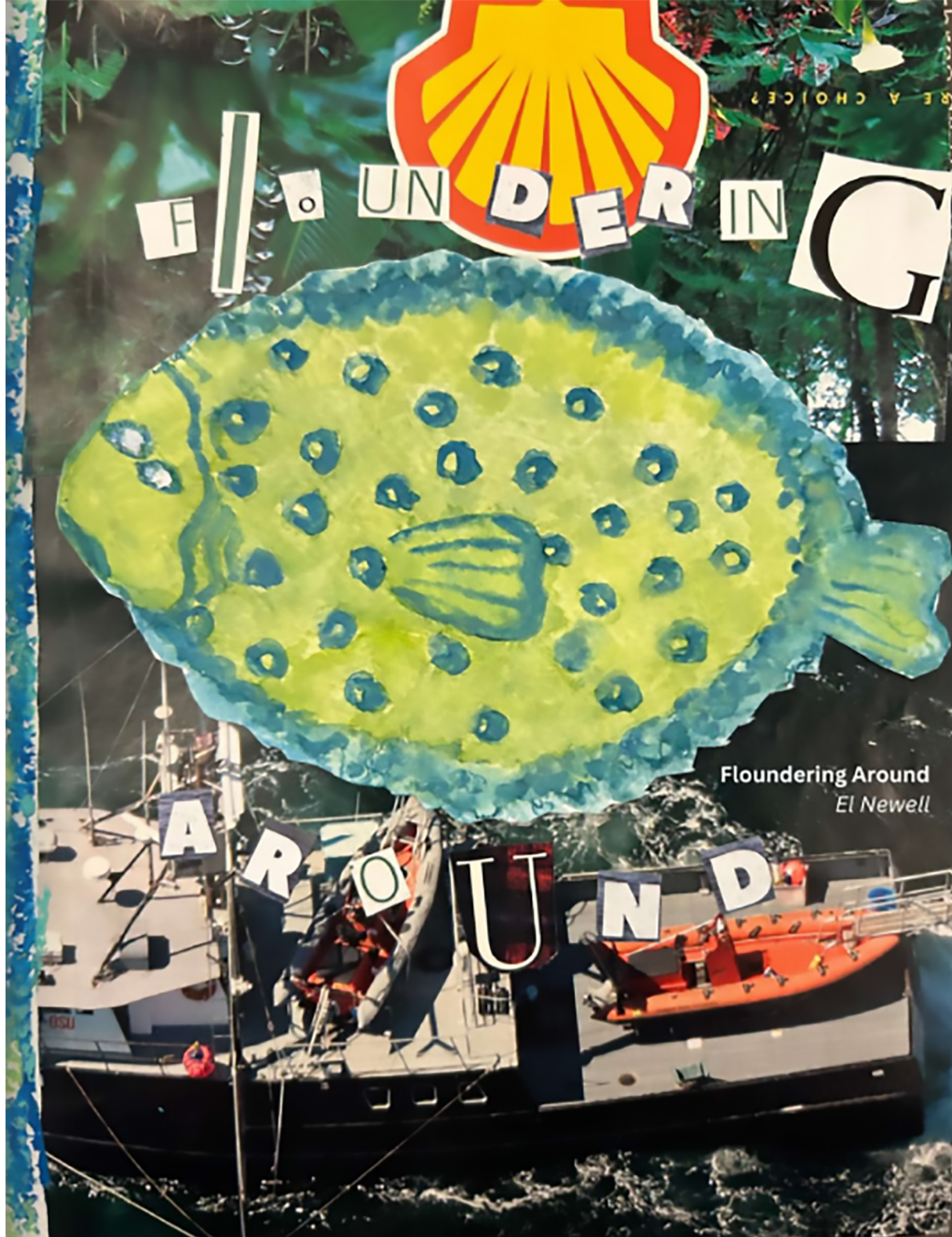


Title: It Starts at Home

Artist: Chloe MacGregor

Media: Mixed media on paper

Artist's Statement: The ocean is the earth's lungs, keeping it clean starts with what we put in it.



Title: Floundering Around

Artist: Eli Newell

Media: Photograph

Artist's Statement: Floundering Around is a comedic statement about the impact of overfishing and fossil fuels on fish populations.

Image courtesy of Ripples Youth Art Zine 2024, a project of the University of Victoria Sustainability Project



Title: Untitled

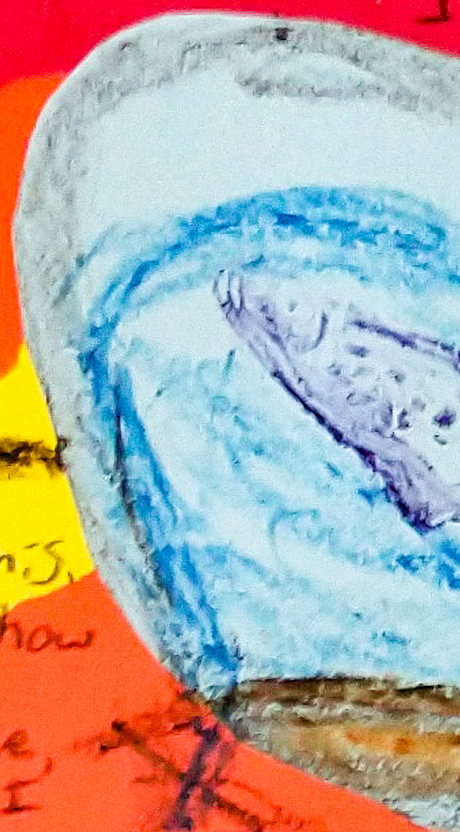
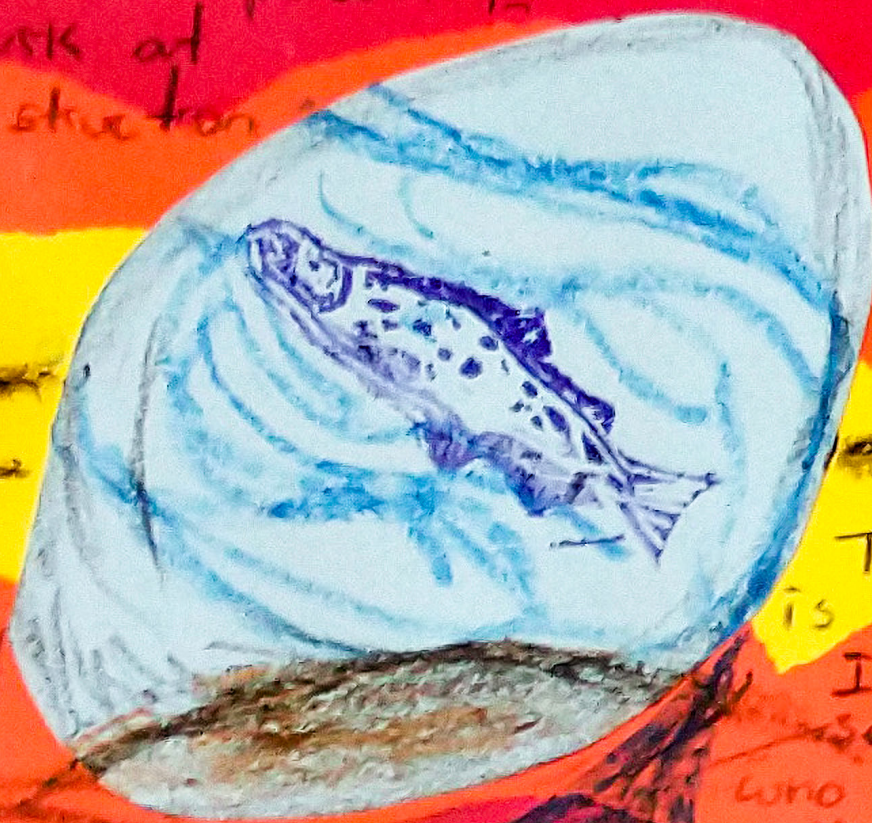
Artist: Elise Saatchi

Media: Paint on wood

Artist's Statement: This piece is an expression of the battling emotions I feel on a daily basis, witnessing the many signs of climate change progressing as someone who cares deeply about the environment and knows that hope, strength, and optimism are needed most at this time. Some days I read a news headline about microplastics being found in newborn babies, and I am plunged into fear, anger, and despair. The system we're in seems evil and inescapable, and my heart is heavy with the knowledge of all the suffering that has happened and will happen because of inaction and greed. I feel the weight of this even though I look around and everyone around me is calm, and there are no alarms sounding except inside my head. Like the world is ending but nobody cares. This feeling is symbolized by the red entities in the painting, echoing the local Fort McMurray, Lytton, and Kelowna fires and the colour of anxiety and destruction. Despite this, there are always little pieces of love to be found and little miracles that give me hope. When I see the joy of two people being reunited, or my roommates making art, or hear the gentle hoots of an owl in the night, I am reminded that good and kind things still exist. There is love and hope in everything, and it gives me the strength to keep going. This feeling is symbolized by the green life in the painting. Some days it wins out, some days it is overcome by the red, but it always begins to grow at the edges again, just like life itself.

I do not know if I feel greater
sadness. The water I see and love
same as ~~was~~ ^{sustains} me. There are I
flow by me.

I hate the poison in
the musk at
the construction
site.



This
is how
I
see,
who I
am,
how I
feel.

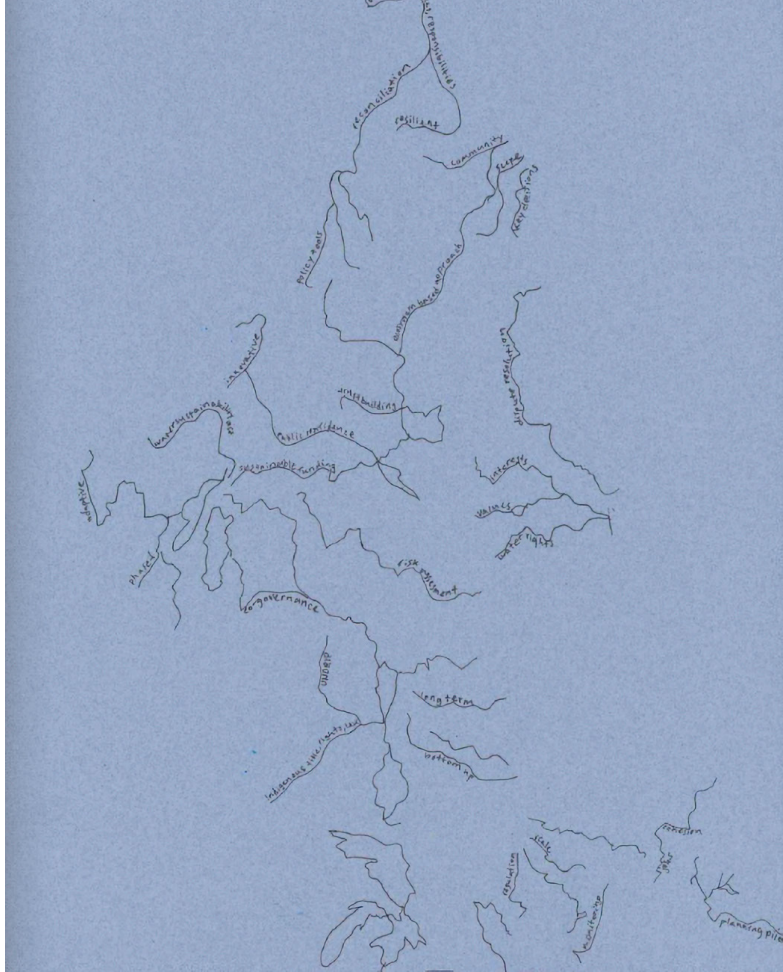


Title: I feel disconnected from the water of my life as the water I see is not what sustains me and the water that sustains me is not what I see

Artist: Finn Coleman

Media: Mixed media on paper

Artist's Statement: I feel disconnected and angry, the water I see and want to preserve is not the water I drink, and I feel confused.

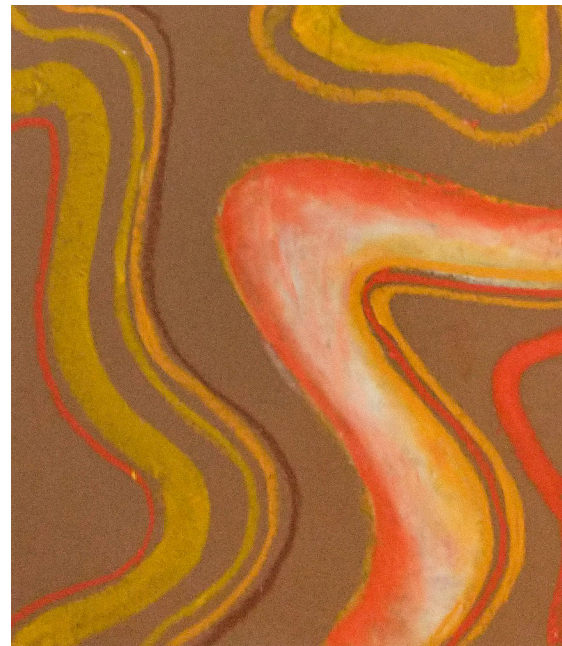
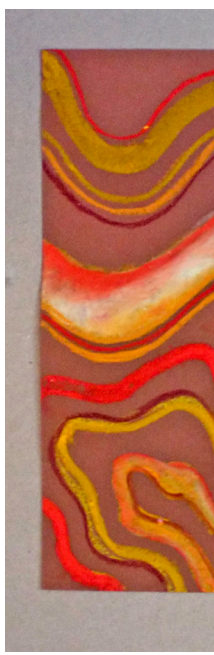


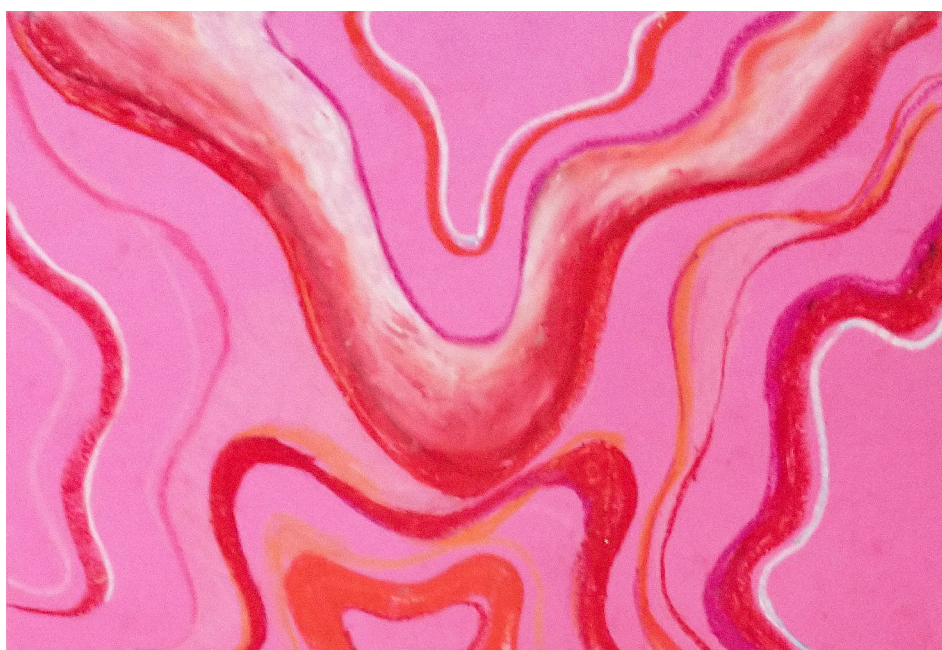
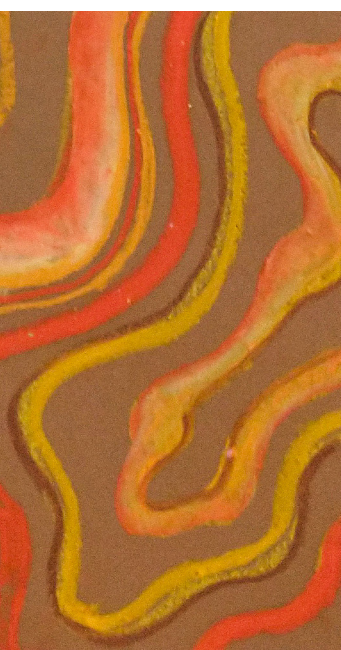
Title: For Katia

Artist: Hailey Chutter

Media: Ink on paper

Artist's Statement: For my art contribution I drew the water system of Canada and accompanied it with concepts for water management that highlight collaboration. I believe water governance requires respect for all relations and knowledge systems. Approaching water governance through a lens of collaboration is complex; however, it mirrors the ever-flowing, fluctuating, and intertwining water system that the land provides for us.





Title: Triptych

Artist: Honoko Narita

Media: Pastel on paper

Artist's Statement: Thank you for looking!! I hope you can enjoy watching and have a great day.



Title: Salmon are Life

Artist: Irena Datcu-Romano

Media: Watercolour on paper

Artist's Statement: I made this piece because I wanted to de-normalize decreases in salmon population and imagine a world of abundance and hope. Last year, I watched a salmon run in my hometown's Tynehead Park, and felt surprise and joy when I saw coho running down the stream. The strokes were painted fast and intuitively. The colours represent multiple facets of salmon life: red autumn backs, yellow maple leaves, slim green bodies. The text is a riff on a popular climate quote: "water is life." I use the same assertion to celebrate the salmon.



Title: Say no to Cruise ships

Artist: Olivia Dawson

Media: Mixed media on paper



Title: Climate Anxiety as Background Noise

Artist: Sabrina Guzman Skotnitsky

Media: Mixed media on canvas

Artist's Statement: This painting visualizes one of the ways in which I think about my climate anxiety. My climate anxiety (the small dark canvas) is always there, no matter if I appear happy or everything looks fine from the outside (the pink sparkly canvas). As a climate justice advocate who works to mobilize people to take action, I struggle with balancing the despair I feel about the climate crisis with wanting to present myself as hopeful. Some days my climate anxiety is so loud I can't hear anything else, but I don't want to share this for fear of discouraging others. However, when I do share how I am feeling with others, it helps lower the volume of these intense emotions.



Title: Untitled

Artist: Yazhini Venkatraman

Media: Mixed media on paper

by Erin Robinsong

ADDRESS!

Space relate us
Time find us
Earth birth us
Sky mind us

Water daughter us
Sun son us
Garden guard us
Weather pleasure us

Sunflower power us
Roses arouse us
Dandelion encourage us
Carnation, make us citizens

Moon loosen us
Stars farther us
Sea, dream us
Lake, make us

Selfheal, slough-heal, heal-all remember us
Peonies, feel us, unfurl us
Violets vivify us
Marigold marry us

Cosmos gnosis us
Florabunda dance dance
Hydrangeas hydrate us
Nasturtiums exert us
Jasmine free jazz us

Heliotrope elope us
Ranunculus ridiculous
Anemones heal any enemies
Buttercup sup us



From *Return Address* by Erin Robinsong & Merlin Sheldrake, 2024
For the full collection, scan the QR code

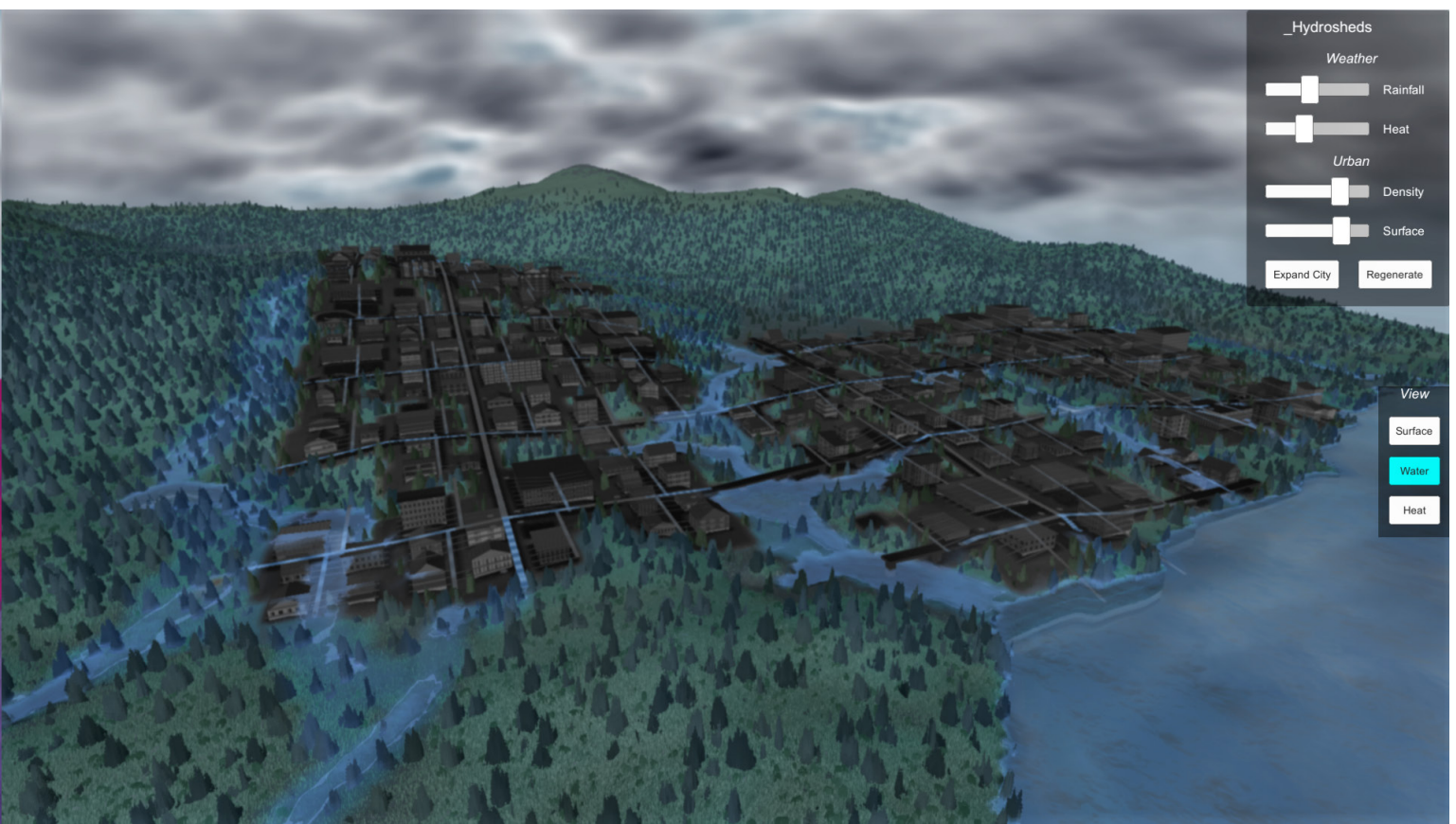
Photos of works
by Engage with
Nature-Based
Solutions artists

Title: "Address" (from chapbook *Return Address*, Skybound books, 2023)

Artist: Erin Robinsong and Merlin Sheldrake

Media: Print media

Artist's Statement: We ask what happens when we address the world directly, rather than speaking solely about the world. What channels of perception and communication open up when we speak to or with someone rather than about them? Art – as a field of experiment, play and possibility – is an ideal place to ask qualitative questions about the possibilities of inter-species communication and relation that may be difficult or taboo in the modern sciences. Qualitative (rather than quantitative) literacy is key to responding to intersecting climate and biodiversity crises: we increasingly need ways to perceive and care for others. In this project, we explore ways of developing inter-species and inter-kingdom perception, literacy, and communication skills.



Title: Hydrosheds

Artist: Colton Hash

Media: Interactive digital simulation

Artist's Statement: Hydrosheds is an interactive simulation that depicts landscape relationships between an urban community and the surrounding watershed. Within different landscapes, a city is created with a stormwater management system that conveys water away from roads and buildings. With interactive controls, viewers can alter the urban landscape and explore how changes in surface conditions can affect stormwater runoff, pollution and permeability.



“If done slowly, the act of photography can help the photographer to witness more detail. As we compose a photograph in a forest, we may notice tiny plants along a stream, the texture of bark, different colours of lichen, how the sunlight breaks through openings in the tree cover. Slow photography can focus our attention on the details of the space we’re in. After we’ve been taking photos for several minutes, we become more present, and everything else fades away.”

In 2023, Emrys Damon Miller explored and photographed Bowker Creek, from its origins on the grounds of the University of Victoria, through various neighbourhoods in Saanich and Oak Bay, and as it enters the ocean. One hundred of his best photographs were gifted to the public domain, so that the Friends of Bowker Creek, Peninsula Streams Society, local school teachers, local government, and others can use the images. Supported by Engage with Nature-Based Solutions. www.engagewithnbs.ca

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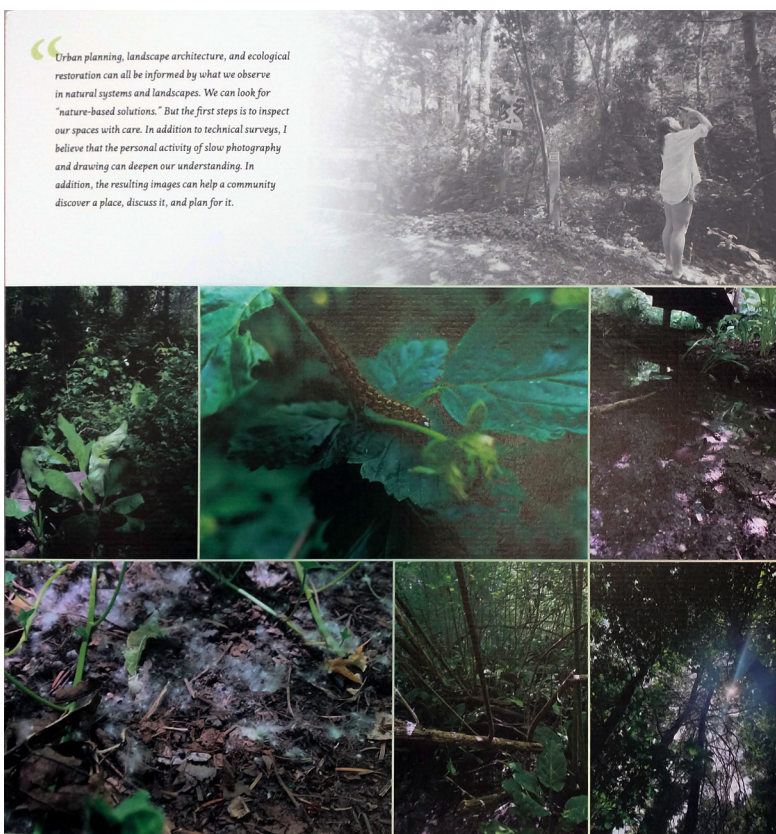


“The activity of drawing can help us observe more slowly and deeply. When drawing, you often notice things you don’t otherwise see.”

Drawing landscape can be a kind of meditative process. Drawing requires just enough attention that it can focus you, and quiet your thoughts. You become calmer, more present, focused on a slow process of observation and making marks on paper. It’s an activity that’s still and gentle, building a relationship between yourself and the space you’re within.

In 2023, Emrys Damon Miller explored and drew several locations at Bowker Creek, sometimes solo, and other times with other artists. TOP RIGHT & MIDDLE LEFT Drawings by Emrys. BOTTOM LEFT: Photo of Kevin Price drawing. BOTTOM RIGHT: Drawing by Astrid Neilson-Miller. Supported by Engage with Nature-Based Solutions. www.engagewithnbs.ca

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“Urban planning, landscape architecture, and ecological restoration can all be informed by what we observe in natural systems and landscapes. We can look for “nature-based solutions.” But the first steps is to inspect our spaces with care. In addition to technical surveys, I believe that the personal activity of slow photography and drawing can deepen our understanding. In addition, the resulting images can help a community discover a place, discuss it, and plan for it.”

In 2023, Emrys Damon Miller led a “photo walk” with a UVic Geography class. Students participated in an afternoon of learning about Bowker Creek, photography, and placevoice — and then explored Bowker Creek with their own cameras. CLOUTIER PHOTO TOP LEFT: Workshop samples from students Deanna, Greg, Sonia, Savannah, Marissa, Matt. Supported by Engage with Nature-Based Solutions. www.engagewithnbs.ca

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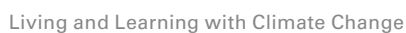
Title: Bowker Creek Sketch

Artist: Emrys Miller

Media: Graphite and paper

Artist’s Statement: Emrys’ images show the intricacies of life along the length of Bowker Creek, including the flora and fauna of the area, areas where the creek has been culverted and urbanized, and ecologically intact areas where biodiversity and native species are present, as the creek wanders through neighbourhoods in urban Victoria and Oak Bay.

Along the banks of the Winter River, trees are laid flat where hurricane Patsy snapped their spines in 2002. A chainsaw grumbles to life. Piles of downed wood dot the open hillside, pushed together by bulldozers, ready to burn. Luminous rain clouds gather, preparing to fling their heavy burdens into the twist of water that wanders through broken forest. At the water's edge, dead yucca pines pool around the hollows, wedging their beaks under the bark looking for insects to eat. Beetles chase trails into the cambium. Slow, cold-blooded snout turtles lounge, impassively, in pools of deepening shadow. In my apartment, I reach out my hand to turn the tap and feel a jolt of pressure. I fill my glass and wait for my thirst to be relieved.



9. Field Trip

This field trip to O.U.R. Ecovillage at Shawnigan Lake was undertaken to learn about an innovative, ecologically appropriate, way of living. Participants learnt about climate friendly construction techniques, research done by residents, their interactions with local and distant governments and bureaucracies, and the ecovillage's governance structures, which included respectful conversations with First Nations. (2 March 2024)

Dreaming of Zero Impact: Can We Really Live Sustainably?

Reflections by a field trip participant

I joined the day trip to O.U.R. Eco-Village in the company of about 15 UVic students and faculty. We spent the first half of the outing attending a presentation about the goals, governance, and history of the ecovillage. After lunch, we took a tour around the property. The students mainly participated to learn about permaculture and left excited about the opportunity for local, meaningful climate action.

Silas



Entry to O.U.R. Ecovillage, photo courtesy of O.U.R. Ecovillage (18 April 2025)



Photo of closing reflection meeting, Centre for Global Studies, University of Victoria

10. About

About UNITAR

Established in 1965, the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) is the dedicated training arm of the United Nations, with the mission to bridge gaps in knowledge and skills through impactful training, research and innovative learning solutions. UNITAR empowers individual learners, builds capacities of institutions and organizations, especially in vulnerable contexts, to translate knowledge into action and accelerate progress toward the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development.

University of Victoria

The University of Victoria (UVic) was established in 1963 and is one of the oldest universities in British Columbia. UVic has earned recognition for its research output and teaching quality along with a vibrant academic community aiming to foster sustainability and social justice through diverse perspectives, including those from Indigenous and international communities. As a research-intensive institution, UVic is actively engaged in various research initiatives addressing global challenges. It hosts several renowned research centres and institutes, contributing significantly to advancements in technology, environmental sustainability, and social sciences¹. The University of Victoria Libraries recently established the world's first institute of advanced studies based in an academic library KULA: Library Futures Academy.²

CIFAL Victoria

Established in 2021, the International Training Centre for Authorities and Leaders in Victoria (CIFAL Victoria), delivers training activities and research that build on UVic's commitments to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). It connects the region with the global community and supports international knowledge-sharing and partnerships, with a focus on four key themes.³

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- 1 About the university (n.d.). University of Victoria.
<https://www.uvic.ca/about-uvic/about-the-university>
 - 2 Kula: Library Futures Academy – Libraries. 2025. University of Victoria:
<https://www.uvic.ca/library/about-us/kula-academy>
 - 3 CIFAL Victoria. (n.d.). UNITAR.
<https://unitar.org/about/offices-training-centres-around-world/cifal-victoria>

CIFAL Victoria has a strategic focus on four key themes:

1. Oceans, climate and sustainability
2. Innovation and entrepreneurship
3. Decolonization and Indigenous knowledge
4. Global health and well-being

Further Information

Regarding the 2023-2024 Living and Learning with Climate Change events, see here:

<https://onlineacademiccommunity.uvic.ca/lwcc/2024/02/>.

For the full report of the 2022 Living with Climate Change learning series, see Living with Climate Change (2023). For further insight on the significance of the Living with Climate Change initiative, see Heyd, T. & Tremblay, C. (in press). Savannah Barratt, Jade Chicorelli, Jaden Jeske, and Pearce Jones. (2023) "Youth Championing the SDGs - Living with Climate Change." Edited by Crystal Tremblay with contributions by Thomas Heyd, Ken Josephson, Michael Lines, Vanessa Lueck, and Rhianna Nagel. UNITAR/CIFAL Victoria.

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