Plenary Presentation
Storying Regenerative Futures

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Throughout human existence storytelling has shaped societies. Creating and communicating the language of stories empower people to engage in greater empathy, compassion, and hope. It's not a far stretch to suggest that storytelling has a powerful sway in addressing the complexity of climate change. This plenary talk explores the climate emergency and the roles personal and social stories play in this process, particularly as an antidote to eco-paralysis. Youth climate activists have called explicitly for systems change to address the climate crisis. With such an urgent socio-ecological imperative, how can we create systems change with current and future generations? Complexity theory uncovers ever-changing interconnected elements through what is called systems. Stories, as systems themselves, contain interconnected parts, create meaning, and provide relatable trajectories into the future. If shifting systems involves narratives, then systemic stories can help people comprehend complex issues and make generative decisions and act.

Derek Gladwin (Associate Professor, Language & Literacy Education, UBC Vancouver) and Naoko Ellis (Full Professor, Chemical & Biological Engineering, UBC Vancouver) are a collaborative team and co-founding members of the Systems Beings Lab and the Collaborative PhD Cohort on Climate Action at the University of British Columbia. They complement their diverse disciplinary backgrounds within the nexus of climate and sustainability education, blending the socio-cultural with STEM and technical approaches, to provide holistic and transdisciplinary perspectives. They have published articles and books on topics such as energy transition, transdisciplinary education, carbon capture and conversion technology, and complexity and storytelling. They also give talks and workshops and consult with global partners on educational design.