

Creating Climate Resilience: Processing Climate Emotions through Artmaking and Dialogue

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As inheritors of the climate crisis, young people in particular are struggling with disproportionately high rates of climate anxiety and related forms of eco-distress triggered by current and anticipated climate impacts. As an artist, youth, and member of the climate justice movement, Sabrina knows from lived experience how these emotions can lead to immobilization, depression, and burnout. This has inspired her to pursue the following research questions through her MA thesis: can, and if so how, does visual artmaking and dialoguing help young people cope with climate anxiety and related eco-emotions? Furthermore, in what ways can these arts-based approaches help youth generate active hope? Employing methods from Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) and arts-based research (ABR) her project engaged youth ages 17 - 21 in so-called Victoria in a series of artmaking sessions from November to December 2023. Participants were provided the space and materials to discuss and create artworks about climate emotions, particularly climate anxiety and their visions for what a climate resilient and socially just future could look like. Her findings support existing evidence from psychology, social work, art therapy and related fields of the power of arts-based approaches for healing, resilience-building and fostering community among people who share similar mental health challenges. This conference session will include a short presentation on Sabrina's findings but will primarily centre around an artmaking activity she facilitated with her study participants. Her hope is that attendees take away 1) a greater appreciation for the unique challenges but also the strengths of youth living through the climate crisis, 2) ideas of how to integrate arts-based approaches in research and/or practice and 3) practical resources on climate change and mental health.