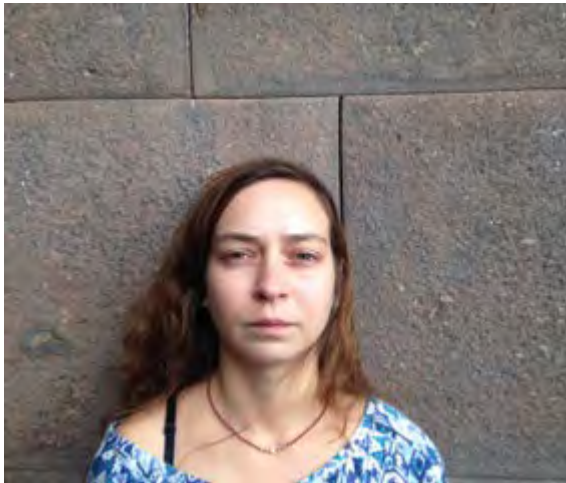


**FUTURES/forward** Mentee: **Lara Aysal**, May to September 2020, mentored by [David Diamond](#)



**LARA AYSAL** is a climate justice and human rights activist, performance artist, facilitator of community-oriented projects. She has collaborated with a variety of communities in South Africa, South America, Turkey, Italy, Germany, and Canada. Her work mainly focuses on child sexual abuse, youth in detention centres, migration, ethnic minority conflict and climate crisis. She is one of the co-founders of AA+A Contemporary Performance Research Project and Ray Performance Collective. Before starting her Ph.D. in Canada, she taught first and second year acting classes at Beykent University and published individual and collaborative ideas on Conference of the Parties (COP20), civil disobedience, theatre in conflict

zones and poems on possibilities of hope. She is interested in the role of theatre to address, organize, and take action within climate justice context through decolonizing methodologies. She finds joy in experimenting with tools of theatre to disturb everyday life. Lara received her BA (Honours) from Bilkent University Acting Department and her MA in Advanced Acting from Bahcesehir University. She is currently a Ph.D. student at University of Victoria Department of Theatre. <https://laraaysal.com>

**Lara's mentorship included being placed as Artist-in-Residence with Greenpeace Canada where she created, facilitated, and piloted a community-based participatory arts project: "Theatrical Adaptations: Co-creation of Knowledge on Climate Change through Storytelling".**

**Inspiration for the project:**

[Mi'kmaw Elder Albert Marshall](#) "brought forward *Etuaptmumk*/Two-Eyed Seeing as a Guiding Principle for Integrative Science and encourages its awareness across Canada and beyond... "Two-Eyed Seeing is the gift of multiple perspectives treasured by many aboriginal peoples and it refers to learning to see from one eye with the strengths of Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing, and from the other eye with the strengths of Western knowledges and ways of knowing, and to using both these eyes together, for the benefit of all". Check out <http://www.integrativescience.ca>.

Our workshop series was centred around bringing different knowledge systems together through

storytelling, with the guiding principles of Etuaptmumk/Two-Eyed Seeing (Bartlett & Marshall, 2018) approach, as a form of community-based participatory art. Our knowledge holders Audrey Siegl and Sarah Rosengard guided and inspired us to develop our stories.

Climate scientists and many activists, like Greta Thunberg, highlight the necessity to unite behind science while we move forward. However, Western knowledge is not the only knowledge system that can help us adapt to climate change. Indigenous knowledge is rooted in observations accumulated over generations of detailed observation and interactions with local ecosystems. Opening a pathway for a meaningful exchange of information between different knowledge systems could enable communities to reflect, not only on what actions must be taken, but also how actions should be taken in these challenging times. During the project, an intergenerational team of participants, who are interested in storytelling and are struggling with issues around climate change, have been invited to participate in a series of workshops. We invited Western and Indigenous knowledge holders to guide a series of workshops where participants had a chance to engage with and reflect on what they learned from knowledge holders through storytelling.

**Lara's aim:**

I sincerely believe and ground my artistic practice and research on the empowerment of people through arts to initiate discussions on social change. I am interested in the potential of dramatic arts to awaken hope and, more importantly, provide an opportunity to imagine, organize and take action against unjust social, political, economic, and ecological issues. My artistic, political, and academic interests converge in my commitment to the power of praxis in moving people to take informed action. I collaborated and worked across borders with international theatre companies and facilitated research projects in development and conflict settings with refugees, prisoners, ethnic minorities, and Indigenous communities. These experiences have allowed me to associate arts-based practices with actions on social dynamics concerning climate change. I believe that artistic practices can be an effective method that enables environmental actions to take an active role in transformative change. I see this critical moment in history as an opportunity to share, practice and learn from each other about ways in which we can build alternative cultures through creativity and critical thinking.

Art plays a crucial role in understanding modes of thinking around climate change and encourages us to imagine beyond the given present. Specifically, performative inquiry accommodates possibilities of dialogue and praxis through participation-based creative methods. I believe that the instrumental principals of theatre and storytelling, such as collaboration, participation, and action through storytelling, can effectively contribute to climate change adaptation conversations and engage further with transformative social change. My goal as an artist is to build community-arts engagements that might help facilitate spaces for critical thinking, action, and social transformation. I am specifically interested in how performative inquiry, as a medium for dialogue, could stem collaboration between various knowledge systems, environmental organizations, and institutions for co-creating collective strategies on climate change. I believe that art has the potential to open a pathway for a meaningful exchange of information between different knowledge systems and this could enable communities to reflect, not only on what actions could be taken but also how actions must be taken in these challenging times. I am especially interested, in relation to what we value, how are we adapting to climate change? And how storytelling can become a tool to facilitate these spaces for adaptation? Within this context, and because we cannot currently meet in large groups, in collaboration with Greenpeace Canada, I organized online storytelling workshops with nine participants.

### **Project Goals**

What we set out to do, using some keywords:

**Building** a collaboration, dialogue between us about climate change

**Exploring** storytelling for climate change adaptation strategies from a multi-dimensional perspective

**Inviting** Indigenous and Western knowledge holders to share their thoughts and perspective on climate change to learn more.

**Bringing** Indigenous and Western knowledge together to co-create stories/performances on climate change.

### **Some Collective Guiding Questions:**

- What does climate change mean in our daily lives and realities and how can we share these meanings in creative ways?
- How can we bring together Indigenous and Western ways of knowing through storytelling?
- What skills can guide us to adapt and respond to climate change?
- How can we generate more questions for climate change adaptation and our future?

- What kind of a world do we want? What kind of a world do we actually need? How do we imagine the difference?

### Some Collective Guiding thoughts

- Art: communicate about climate crisis
- Intimate relationship, engagement, outreach through storytelling
- Language of the heart. It's not static connecting people with their path
- Collaboration lights a brighter fire
- Crisis, **care**, and **action**
- Participatory narrative, reach to variety of communities, new ways to guide energy
- Art can inspire, empower reflect in a more transformative way
- Inclusiveness
- Break apart from English one language
- Universal language
- Response to COVID as crisis, why don't we act similar for climate crisis?
- Communicate with people with different opinions. Asking questions.
- Asking questions, that we don't have answers for.

### Knowledge Holders



#### Audrey Siegl

An independent activist from the unceded lands of the Musqueam, Audrey has been active in grassroots environmental and social justice-political frontline movements.

image: <https://www.vancourier.com/vancouver-votes/candidate-profiles/audrey-siegl-sytemtana-t-cope-1.1423102>

## Sarah Rosengard



Sarah is an oceanographer and a postdoctoral fellow at UBC. She graduated from the MIT-Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution Joint Program with a Ph.D. in Chemical Oceanography.

<http://oceanleaders.ubc.ca/2017/09/06/sarah-rosengard-breaking-ground-as-an-ocean-leaders-postdoc/>

## What was the workshop structure?

Dates	Description	Process
August 12 Wed. 1pm-3pm	Introductory Workshop	Introducing the project, getting to know each other, setting goals, and guiding questions.
August 14 Fri. 1pm-3pm	Zoom session with Indigenous knowledge holder Audrey Siegl (sx̣ṭeṃṭana:t, St'agid Jaad, Audrey Siegl, an independent activist from the unceded lands of the Musqueam, has been active on grassroots environmental and social justice-political frontline movements)	- Audrey will share her work and her thoughts about climate change and crisis, her thoughts about the relationship between Indigenous knowledge and Western Knowledge on issues related to climate change. - Q & A

<p>August 17 Mon. <b>10 am- 12 pm</b></p>	<p>Zoom session with Western knowledge holder Sarah Rosengard (oceanographer and a postdoctoral fellow at UBC).</p>	<p>Sarah will share her work and her thoughts about climate change and crisis, her thoughts about the relationship between Indigenous knowledge and Western Knowledge on issues related to climate change. - Q &amp; A</p>
<p>August 19 Wed. 1pm- 3pm</p>	<p>Storytelling workshops #1 <b>Analyzing what we learned and themes from the knowledge holders</b></p>	<p>1. In pairs share reflections on the sessions with knowledge holders. Keep in mind these questions: - what did we learn? - what concerns did they have? - what themes came up? Pick 4-5 themes <b>(knowledge holders' themes)</b></p> <p>2. What inspires you through these themes? Think about bringing images, poems, videos, songs that represent these themes for the next session.</p>
<p>August 26 Wed. 1pm- 3pm</p>	<p>Storytelling workshops #2 <b>Building themes from knowledge holders</b></p>	<p>1. Let's check out the material. What are your thoughts?</p> <p>2. Collective storytelling exercise: Divide the group into two. If we were to create a story from these materials what would this story be? Can you group this material to tell a story? Simply change/play around with the order of the material. To create a story.</p>

		<p>* Think of a story having an introduction (beginning) a conflict (middle) and then a resolution (ending).</p> <p>* Think about who is the character (s) in the story?</p> <p>3. Share the collective stories.</p> <p>4. Reflections/Questions that come up from the stories.</p> <p>5. What themes come up from these stories? (<b>reaching towards our themes</b>)</p>
<p>August 28 Fri. 1pm- 3pm</p>	<p>Storytelling workshops #3</p> <p><b>Building themes from our experiences</b></p>	<p>1. Exercise: Pushing against each other – in pairs create a debate to discuss) try to push against each other as much as you can.</p> <p>2. Exploring our themes: write a sentence that you relate to one of the themes from your life. A short story about how you relate to the theme.</p> <p>3. In pairs discuss the sentence</p> <p>4. Hot seat: Share partners’ sentences as if you were the character. Respond to questions from other participants as if you were the characters.</p> <p>5. What do you think about the process? How did you feel in character? How did you feel about your story enacted?</p> <p>6. What questions come up?</p>



<p>September 2 Wed 1pm- 3pm</p>	<p>Storytelling workshops #4 <b>Bringing together both what themes we have from the knowledge holders and our own experiences.</b></p>	<p>1. In pairs, what are our themes from knowledge holders? What stuck with you the most? Think of elements like places, characters that come up.</p> <p>2. What are our themes from our sentences?</p> <p>3. In what ways are both of these processes similar or different from each other? What questions come up about these themes?</p> <p>4. For the next session, think about writing a short story that you chose from these processes.</p>
<p>September 4 Fri. 1pm- 3pm</p>	<p>Storytelling workshops #5 <b>Bringing together both what themes we have from the knowledge holders and our own experiences.</b></p>	<p>1. Working on stories: share your short story.</p> <p>2. Going back to your reflections with knowledge holder's session: - Nature (fire, water etc.), places, situation (action) and characters that you can integrate into your story, if you already haven't.</p> <p>3. Discussion/reflection on what you picked and how you are integrating it into your story.</p>



September 9 Wed. 1pm- 3pm	Storytelling workshops #6  <b>Bringing together both what themes we have from the knowledge holders and our own experiences.</b>	1. Share stories 2. How can we present the stories? Which story starts and which stories follow? Why? 3. Reflection about the process.
September 11	Feedback and Reflection session with Audrey Siegl	Performing the stories for Audrey. Q&A after the performance.
September 14	Feedback and Reflection session with Sarah Rosengard	Performing the stories for Sarah. Q&A after the performance.
September 18	Working on comments	How did we feel? What changed about our thoughts about climate change and about our stories?
September 23	Online Performances	1. Optional performance open to public.  2. Reflecting on the project.

Go to <https://icasc.ca/futures-forward-mentorship-lara-aysal> learn more about the project artists/participants and view their stories from the project presented in various media.

**We wish to thank Greenpeace Canada for this collaboration and hosting Lara Aysal’s amazing artist-in-residency! FUTURES/*forward* gratefully acknowledges that Lara’s mentorship thrived due in part to the generous support of the McConnell Foundation, BC Arts Council, and the City of Vancouver.**