

CALL FOR PRESENTERS

Climate Conversations: Local Experts Imagine a Climate-Changed Future

A community-facing research forum at UBC Botanical Garden



Date: May 22, 2025

Time: 8:45 am-4:45 pm

Location: UBC Botanical Garden Reception Centre

What we are Looking for:

Researchers with climate research or expertise willing to serve as panelists discussing the concrete and/or local details of a climate-changed future. Suggested areas of research include (but should not be limited to): potential impacts of climate change on local ecosystems, plant or animal populations, infrastructure, economies or communities, and/or specific potential responses to climate change in a local context.

Expectations:

Panelists will present very briefly (5 min) on their research, and then participate in a more wide-ranging panel discussion with 2-3 other panelists about how research can help us imagine what a climate-changed future might concretely look and feel like, and what kinds of action could prepare us for it. It is hoped that panelists will also attend the full day's events, contributing to a rich dialogue between researchers and members of the audience.

Interested researchers should submit a short bio and 100-300 word description of their research and/or climate expertise to erin.despard@ubc.ca by April 5, 2025.

Background and Rationale

Even though the urgency and scale of the climate crisis is currently accelerating in a dramatic way, it remains a topic that is difficult for many people to discuss or think clearly about. It also tends to be inadequately addressed by news media, and is frequently absent from popular culture. In this context, it is no surprise that large-scale, quantitative research—which generates clear, persuasive messaging—has often been privileged over the nuance, context and political inclusion that flows from qualitative methods, indigenous knowledge and community-based research. Consequently, for many people, climate change remains a monolithic problem beyond their capacity to respond to in a meaningful way.

That said, most researchers understand that climate change is a complex entanglement of multiple kinds of problems—many of which are or will soon be observable in local settings. What kind of difference might it make if we could find ways of bringing aspects of this concrete complexity into the public realm? Might questions about the health or adaptability of local plant and animal populations, or the relative vulnerability of marginalized groups and individuals, help to engage a wider audience in imagining the impacts of climate change? If people can envision more of those impacts in concrete terms, it may become less intimidating for them to think and speak about, in connection with their own lives and experiences.

The premise of this mixed-audience, knowledge sharing event, is that considering climate change from multiple perspectives and through the lens of locally-based research projects can help researchers and non-expert audience members alike engage with the concrete but dynamic nature of the problem. In the process, we hope to expand how people imagine both the impacts of climate change, and potential responses to it.

Other Event Details

This one-day forum will include a catered lunch, guided tour of UBC Botanical Garden and a collaborative, action-focused session to close the event. A keynote presentation will be provided by Lisa Brideau, climate fiction author (*Adrift*, winner of the 2024 Evergreen Award) and senior sustainability specialist with the City of Vancouver. The organizers hope to assemble a diverse audience of participants, and invite panelists and audience members alike to communicate any accessibility needs prior to the event. The proceedings will be documented by a graphic artist and made available in the form of a zine following the event.