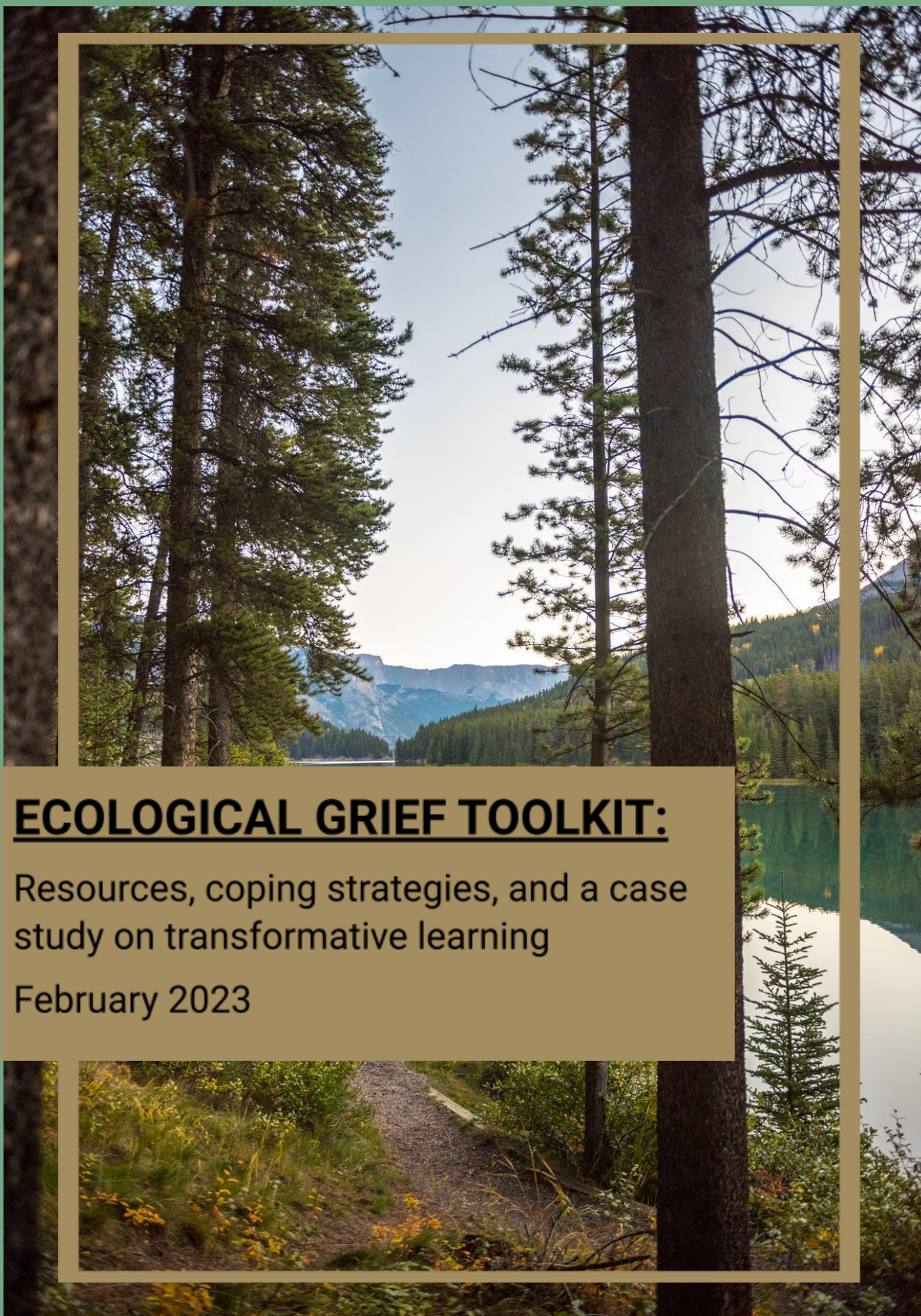




ECOLOGICAL GRIEF TOOLKIT:

Resources, coping strategies, and a case study on transformative learning

February 2023

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Caleigh Delle Palme (she/her): Caleigh was born and raised in Ottawa, Ontario, on the traditional and unceded territories of the Algonquin Anishnaabeg People. She is a member of the IMPAC5 Young Professionals Committee and works as a Marine Conservation Advisor for Parks Canada. She completed her BSc and MSc in Environmental Science and Biology at Carleton University and her interests include sustainable recreational fisheries, plastics monitoring and citizen science. Passionate about connecting to the natural world, Caleigh founded *Wild Roots Nature and Forest School*, a non-profit organization that engages and connects children to forests and rivers through play and exploration.

She now lives, plays and works in Mi'kma'ki, Halifax Nova Scotia, where she enjoys coastal living and views of the Atlantic Ocean.



Carter McNelly (he/him) is based in St. John's, Newfoundland where is an ocean sciences student at Memorial University. He is a Junior Analyst in Marine Conservation with Parks Canada, mainly working on the ocean literacy file with Noémie. He is also an executive and board member with the Canadian Network for Ocean Education (CaNOE), a national nonprofit with the goal to strengthen, amplify, and share ocean education from coast-to-coast-to-coast. In the summer you can find him hiking or camping in one of the many parks that Newfoundland is home to and in the winter you might catch him snowshoeing.



Don Carruthers Den Hoed (he/him) is a Research Associate with the University of British Columbia and Transformative Learning Coordinator for the Canadian Parks, Protected, and Conserved Areas Leadership Collective (CPPCL). As an academic practitioner, he combines three decades of experience in parks education and land management with scholarly work in inclusion and equity, sustainable leadership, and knowledge mobilization.

Don lives on Nexwlélexwm/Bowen Island in the traditional territory of the Coast Salish peoples, including the Skwxwú7mesh and Tsleil-Waututh Nations. He is a proud father and partner and loves to explore nature, kayak, and raise chickens.



Élizabeth Melis (she/her/elle): Élizabeth is a research assistant for the Group for Research and Education on Marine Mammals (GREMM), where she works on beluga conservation within the Saint-Lawrence. She is particularly interested in whale conservation, MPA potential, and more recently, eco-grief. She graduated from l'Université de Montréal with a bachelor's in biological sciences in April 2022.

Élizabeth lives in Totouskak also known as Tadoussac, Québec, on the ancestral and unceded territory of the Nitassinan people.



Emily Wells (she/they) is a biologist-turned-social scientist who is pursuing her Master of Environmental Studies in the School of Resource and Environmental Studies (SRES) at Dalhousie University. Emily's research background spans 10 years and multiple fields: beginning in genetics, she later worked in behavioral ecology and biogeography laboratories before settling into interdisciplinary marine studies. Parallel to research, Emily is passionate about participatory learning: she has worked in education for eight years, engaging youth in environmental stewardship and leading English-as-Second Language (ESL) workshops.

Emily is a settler of German, English, and Irish ancestry who feels most connected to the lands and waters that are the ancestral homelands of the Beothuk (Conception Bay, Newfoundland) and is currently a grateful visitor in Mi'kma'ki.



Hali Moreland (she/her): Hali is a marine conservation analyst for Parks Canada Agency, where she focuses on coastal community well-being and its role in creating successful National Marine Conservation Areas.

Hali lives in the beautiful town of Revelstoke, British Columbia, on the ancestral and unceded territory of the Sylix, Sinixt, Secwepemc, and Ktunaxa peoples.



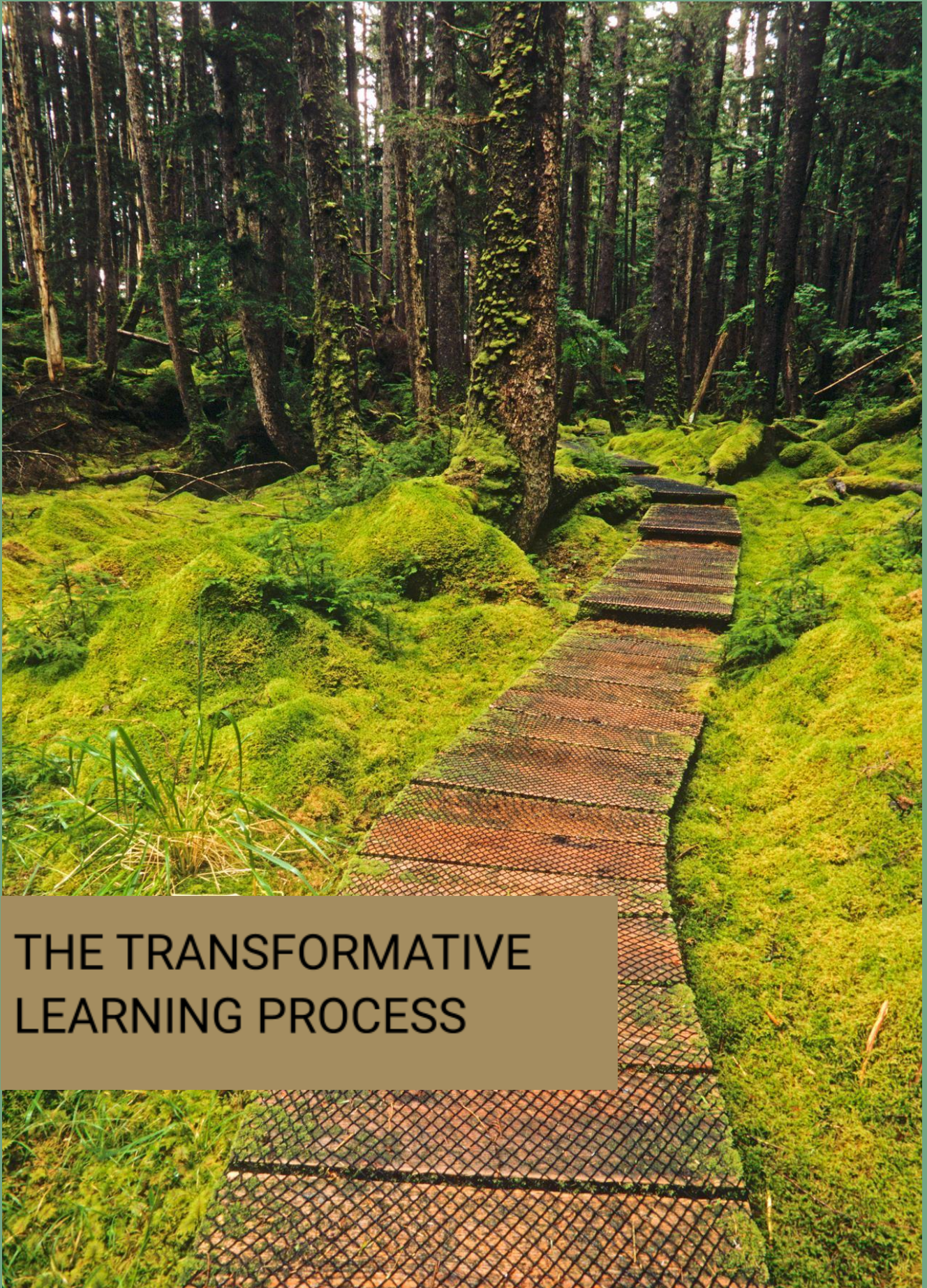
Nadia Dalili (she/her): Nadia is a marine resource management technician for Parks Canada, where she works on monitoring and conserving the marine ecosystem of the Saguenay–St. Lawrence Marine Park. Her role is varied from collecting data on marine mammals and vessel interactions, data validation and analysis, to educating visitors and boaters on the regulations present in the marine park. Nadia also enjoys youth engagement and outreach, and has ten years of experience working in different roles as an environmental educator.

Nadia is originally from Tiohtià:ke/Montreal, Québec and now lives in Les Bergeronnes, Québec and works in Totoussak/Tadoussac, Québec, on the ancestral and unceded territory of the Nitassinan people.



Noémie Roy (she/her/elle): Noémie is a youth engagement officer with the IMPAC5 Secretariat and a junior analyst in marine conservation with Parks Canada. She specializes in ocean literacy, or how to strengthen equitable, sustainable and healthy relationships between people and the ocean.

Noémie lives in Lévis, QC, along the majestic Washipekuk (colonially known as the St. Lawrence River). She is grateful to live, learn and play on the ancestral and unceded territories of the Huron-Wendat, Wolastokiyik and Abenaki.



THE TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING PROCESS

The impetus for the creation of this group was IMPAC5. Several group members were encouraged to submit a proposal for the conference and after reaching out to various friends and colleagues, it was clear that ecological grief was the subject we wanted to focus on.



Within this context, **ecological grief** refers to the feelings (sorrow, anguish, rage, shame, etc.) associated with climate change and biodiversity loss.

Over multiple brainstorming sessions, we solidified what the process would look like and committed to the following course of action:

1. An **outward applied learning journey** to develop ways to cope with ecological grief and turn it to action (e.g. testing out ecological grief coping strategies).

Journey 1 Steps:

1. Form the group
2. Create a shared understanding of eco-grief
3. a. Review best practices in coping with eco-grief
b. Review ways to turn eco-grief into action
4. Pick the coping strategies for group members to try
5. Try them
6. Have milestones to track how well it's going
7. Seek resources/experts/information as needed.

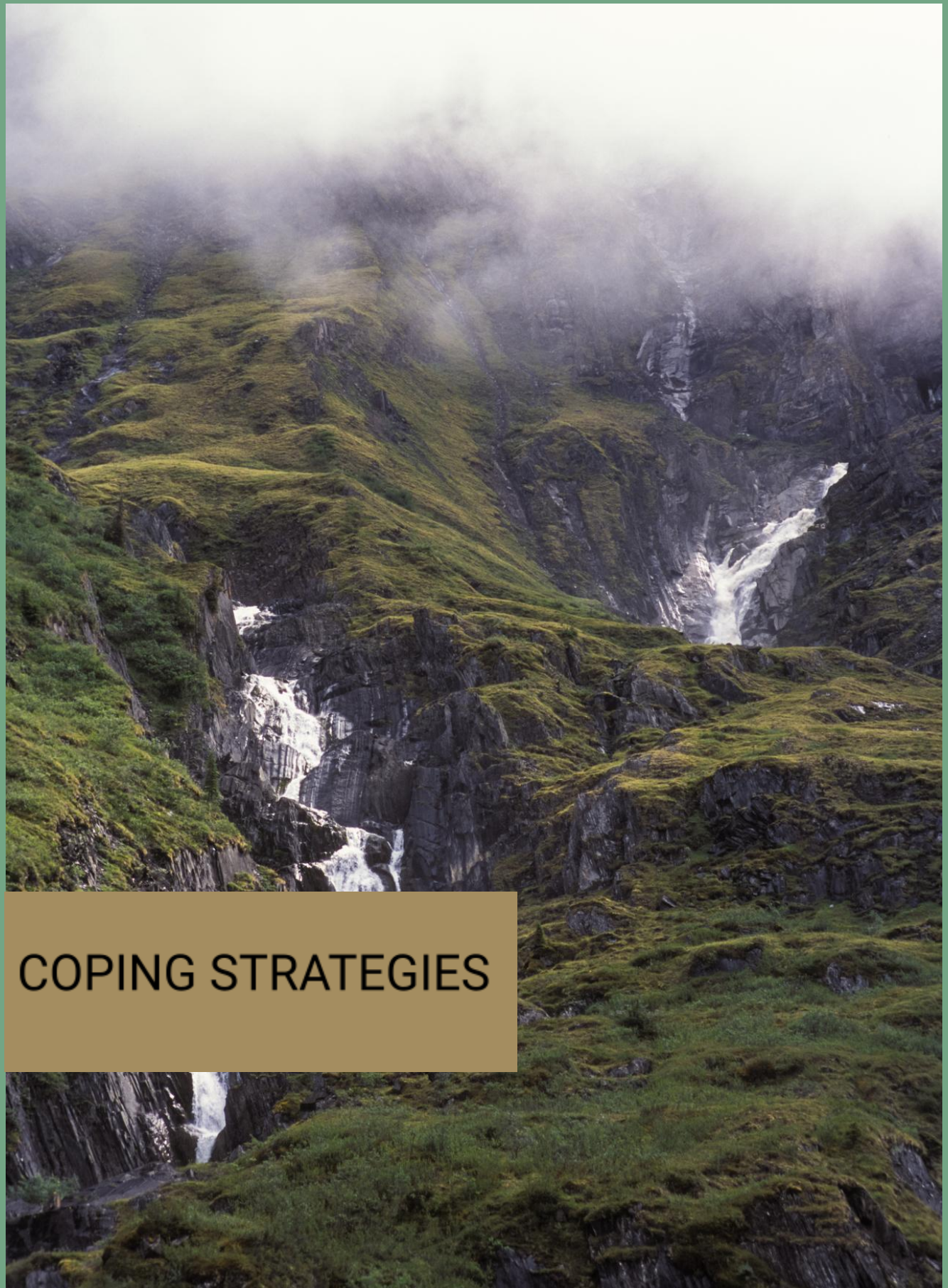
2. An **inward transformative learning journey** to reflect on how the process—or climate change itself—may impact the group members.

Journey 2 Steps:

- 1. Allow the process to unfold and learn about ecological grief
- 2. Create and commit to a regular process for checking in and sharing your experience
- 3. Establish a regular individual reflective process (e.g. sit in nature for 15 minutes each week)
- 4. Establish a shared reflection process (e.g. peer-to-peer calls)

While IMPAC5 presents a great opportunity to share what we've learned so far, we don't believe the transformative learning ends there. We see IMPAC5 as the beginning of a larger journey that continues to build dialogue and understanding around ecological grief and provides people with the diverse tools needed to stay resilient in the face of our current climate crisis.





COPING STRATEGIES

A large component of our learning journey was trying different coping strategies for ecological grief. We've included a short overview of our experiences below.

Nature journaling: Nature journaling is a personal practice of writing or drawing in response to nature. The act of nature journaling can forge connections between you and nature, increase your awareness of the world around you, and help ease your mind and body. Our eco-grief group connected with Corina Brdar, a Parks Canada colleague and avid nature journaler, who walked us through some methods of nature journaling and shared her experiences with the activity. To learn more, check out her story and some of her work [here](#).

'Traditional' journaling: Many group members kept a journal throughout the transformative learning journey. A lot of us felt it was a great way to reconnect with ourselves, process complicated feelings, vent, and give ourselves space to critically reflect. While it was a more ad-hoc strategy than others, it was helpful and worthwhile.

Meditation: The eco-grief group approached meditation as a practice of mindfulness and paying attention to the current moment to relieve stress and connect with our mind and body. We tried out two different guided meditations: the first was a water-themed guided meditation that was produced by Parks Canada staff from Lake Superior National Marine Conservation Area (available [here](#)); the second was a guided 10-minute Vipassana meditation from Tara Brach (available [here](#)).

Caleigh crafted a morning meditation with affirmations for all of you to help with feelings related to eco-grief (found [here](#)).

Get to know your non-human neighbors: This strategy was a way to connect with nature close to home. Over a few weeks, group members took to their backyard, balcony, or neighborhood street and got acquainted with the non-humans who shared their outdoor space. We met ginkgo trees, Norway maples, lilies, blueberry bushes, rock tripe lichen, mood moss, wild columbine, pale corydalis, eastern skunk cabbage, stinkhorn mushrooms and more. Group members felt this was a really powerful way to connect with the natural world around them.

Forest Bathing or connecting with nature can be a powerful tool. Grab a set of headphones, a blanket and a thermos of tea and head outside to try a Forest Bathing invitation (available [here](#)).

Photo journaling: Photo journaling is the same as traditional journaling, but the entries are made with pictures rather than words. Over the months, one of the ways the eco-grief group started their video check-ins with each other was to share a rose (something that has brought you joy or success), a thorn (something that has challenged you), and a bud (something that brings you hope or potential). We decided to create a photo journal of our rose, bud, and thorn with 3 representative photos - one photo for each category with the overarching theme of climate change or ecological grief. The photo journals are available [here](#).

Imagining a better future: One of the first strategies the group completed was to imagine a hopeful future and create a visual of that image through an art form (e.g. drawing or painting). Often when we imagine a future world, it can be dark and hopeless - this strategy encouraged group members to flip that narrative and imagine what the world would look like if we *got things right*. Examples of these future renditions are available [here](#).

Activism: In this context, we approached activism as actions that protect or aid the environment. Many group members had been in the activism space prior to this, but we wanted to make it more specific and explicit for the purpose of this learning journey. Group members got involved in activism at the individual and community level. Examples of actions taken included voting, emailing local politicians on environmental issues, creating a dialogue with family and friends on climate change, taking environmental education courses, and delivering talks to colleagues and managers.

The group itself: One of the most profound coping strategies was unintentional - the creation and upkeep of the group itself. Some of us came into this process as strangers - we leave it as friends. Over the past year and a half, this group has been everything to us: a safe space, a welcome refuge, a sounding board, a place to be held accountable, a place to vent, a debate room, a place to feel heard and seen. We've supported each other, challenged each other, picked each other up, and listened to one another's hopes

and fears. While many coping strategies were helpful, having the group to come back to week after week was instrumental in our transformative learning journey.





RELEVANT RESOURCES



Here are a few resources that we hope will be helpful. Feel free to share resources with us if you have some too!

Therapy/Mental health information

North America:

Specific for Black folks + POC:

- [Healing in Colour](#) (BIPOC therapists who adhere to a predetermined statement of values)
- [Diversify Outdoors](#) (resources for diversity in outdoor recreation and conservation)

Specific for Indigenous folks:

- [Healing in Colour](#) (BIPOC therapists who adhere to a predetermined statement of values)
- [Wabano Centre](#) for Aboriginal Health
- Hope for Wellness Helpline: 1-855-242-3310

Specific for LGBTQIA2S folks:

- [Inclusive Therapists](#) (Social justice-oriented mental health providers by location - Canada and US)

General:

- IN CANADA: if you are in distress, you can text WELLNESS to 741741 at any time
- [Emotional Resilience Toolkit for Climate Work](#) (Climate Therapy Alliance)
- Call 211 or visit [211.ca](#) (211 connects people with the appropriate information and services to enhance Canada's social infrastructure and enable people to fully engage in their communities)

Some international resources:

- [Directory of International Mental Health Helplines - HelpGuide.org](#)
- [International Mental Health Crisis Support - Mental Health General](#)
- [Global Mental Health Resources – CheckPoint \(checkpointorg.com\)](#)
- [Climate Aware Practitioners \(Australia\)](#)

News Articles:

- [Defining our Eco-Emotions](#) (Beside Media)
- [Fears around climate change are causing some people to seek out support groups](#) (CBC)
- [Climate Change Despair Is Real. This Is How You Fight It](#) (KQED)
- [The miraculous hope of climate scientists](#) (Resilience.org)
- For parents: [Talking to your child about climate change](#) (UNICEF)
- For parents: [NASA Climate Kids](#) (NASA)
- [Climate-aware therapists](#) (Climate Psychology Alliance)
- [Rapidly increasing climate change poses a rising threat to mental health, says IPCC](#) (The Conversation)

- [Hope and mourning in the Anthropocene: Understanding ecological grief](#) (The Conversation)
- [Hold This Space](#) (a self-guided website which helps you reflect on your emotional response to climate change)

Climate Change/Eco-grief focused organizations:

- [COP^2 - People x Planet](#)
- [Force of Nature](#)
- [Extinction Rebellion](#)
- [Project Drawdown](#)
- [All That We Can Save project](#)
- [Climate Psychology Alliance](#)
- [EcoAnxious Stories](#)
- [Good Grief Network](#)
- [Work on Climate](#) (Slack group)
- [350.org](#)
- [Work that Reconnects](#)

Climate change/Eco-grief organizations with a focus on amplifying 2SLGBTQIA+ folks:

- [Out for Sustainability](#) (a platform for co-creating climate resilience and environmental justice by and for LGBTQIA+ communities)
- [Queers X Climate](#) (an organization dedicated to unite and support climate and LGBTQ+ activism to develop and implement solutions for our common global climate crisis)
- [Our Climate Voices](#) (an organization that works to share the stories of those impacted by the climate crisis and those working to solve it, centering queer voices at the intersection of climate and LGBTQ activism)
- [Queer Ecojustice Project](#) (aims to build a movement of queer folks impacted by the climate crisis and environmental injustice, and queer climate and environmental activists)

Research Articles:

- [Climate Change and Wellness in Canada](#) (slight focus on ecological grief in youth and Indigenous communities in Canada)
- [Climate Well-being Resource Kit](#) (University of British Columbia Climate Hub)

Quotes:

- It is no measure of health to be well adjusted to a profoundly sick society. —Jiddu Krishnamurti
- One way to open your eyes is to ask yourself, 'What if I had never seen this before? What if I knew I would never see it again?' —Rachel Carson
- When a radical change is needed, many argue that it is impossible for individual actions to incite it, so it's futile for anyone to try. This is exactly the opposite of the truth: the impotence of individual action is reason for everyone to try. —Jonathan Safran Foer, *We Are the Weather*
- Don't ask what the world needs. Ask what makes you come alive, and go do it. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive. —Howard Thurman
- Being fully present to what is happening to the world is a radical act that can transform grief into action - Joanna Macy
- It's hard to find a balance between grief and celebration. But you know, people often ask me, "What can one person do?" And I say, "Stop being one person." - Kathleen Dean Moore

Books:

- Migrations by Charlotte McConaghy
- Bewilderment by Richard Powers
- Taking a Break from Saving the World by Stephen Legault
- For parents of young children: Planet Earth needs our help
- Hope in the Dark by Rebecca Solnit
- Generation Dread by Britt Wray

Journal Prompts:

- Close your eyes. Imagine the world you would like to live in one day. What do each of your senses pick up? What does this future smell, feel, sound, look like?
- Who are the people that inspire you most in the world? Write down 3 characteristics that they embody.
- When was the last time you remember feeling light and carefree?
- Complete the following sentences:
 - "Every day, I am afraid of..."
 - "Every day, I show courage by..."