

Ecological Fiction Inspires Action!

by **MARY WOODBURY** /// EAC Volunteer

Fiction exploring humanity's impacts on nature is becoming more popular. It has the distinct ability to creatively engage and appeal to readers' emotions. In fact, it can stir environmental action. A survey I took last year showed that 88% of its participants were inspired to act after reading ecological fiction.

Principled by real science and exalting our planet's beauty, these stories are works of art. They live within classic modes of fiction exploring the human condition, but also integrate the wild. They can be referred to as "rewilded stories." The following Canadian titles are some of my favourites in this genre.

Christiane Vadnais' *Fauna* is a collection of connected noir stories from a weird climate-changed world, partly inspired by southern Québec's dark forests. *A Diary in the Age of Water*, by Nina Munteanu, is set in a near-future Toronto, in which climate and ecological destruction brings forth a world where water is scarce. In Claudia Casper's *The Mercy Journals*, set mostly in British Columbia, we are motivated by the main character's journey from apathy to redemption in an ecologically destroyed world. These stories are rife with descriptions of the natural world held in a delicate balance.

Cherie Dimaline's *The Marrow Thieves* also visits a future world devastated by climate disruption with macabre unorthodox outcomes. It features Indigenous young adults providing inspiration as they fight for the lives of their people. Nalo Hopkinson's *Brown Girl in the Ring* is set in post-apocalyptic Toronto. Mysterious and mystical, it also tackles themes of racism and the rise of hope and empowerment by women of colour. In Algonquin Anishinaabe Karen McBrider's *Crow Winter*, a woman and a demigod crow try to save their sacred land. Waubgeshig Rice's *Moon of the Crusted Snow* shows strength on a Northern Ontario First Nations reserve as an ominous event turns the village dark. In these stories, BIPOC authors combine the cultural with the ecological, often serving as cautionary tales and showcasing the intersectionality of societal issues.



In Michael Nicoll Yahgulanaas' *Carpe Fin*, which fuses manga with Haida storytelling, a community in a northern temperate rainforest near the ocean deals with a fuel spill wreaking havoc on food supplies. *Twenty-Six*, by Leo McKay Jr., is a fictionalized and emotional account of a real mining disaster in Nova Scotia. Thomas King's *The Back of the Turtle* is an iconic novel about a First Nations scientist's guilt after he develops a defoliant chemical destroying a community's environment. Jennifer Dance has written stories such as *Hawk*, which addresses racism while focusing on topics such as Canada's oil sands and the safety of animals. Catherine Bush's *Blaze Island* uses Shakespeare's *The Tempest* as an allegory for climate change and is inspired by storms on Fogo Island. In these stories, human impacts on natural systems necessitate our species' resilience.

This sampling of stories is only that – a sample. I urge readers to dive into reading rewilded work to aid in finding our best ways forward in reality.

Mary Woodbury lives in Nova Scotia and runs dragonfly.eco, a site exploring ecofiction around the world. She has guest-authored at Stormbird Press, ClimateCultures.net, [Chicago Review of Books](http://ChicagoReviewofBooks), SFFWorld.com, and [Fjord's Review](http://Fjord'sReview), and is part of the core team of writers at Artists & Climate Change; she also has published two books (pen name Clara Hume) exploring climate change: *Back to the Garden* and *Bird Song: A Novella*.

The Head, Hands and Heart of Sustainability

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION IN THE CLIMATE CRISIS

by **ASHLEY BOONE** /// EAC Volunteer

Climate change is currently the most important issue we face globally - even amidst a global pandemic. It affects every living being as we so delicately rely on the climate to survive. Although the effects of climate change may feel far from our daily realities, effective discussions and actions must take place for sustainable solutions.

How do we begin? It seems that climate change presents itself as too large, too complex a problem to tackle alone or as a community, an organization, or a government. Yet, because we are a species who thinks, feels, and acts, it's possible through self-reflection, community involvement, and relationship building to start having effective conversations about climate change.

The Head:

Admittedly, thinking got us here in the first place. Our minds shape our reality. Having effective conversations which lead to sustainable actions requires us first to be clear and knowledgeable. In a world of sensationalized fake news, frustrating climate deniers, confounded scholarly arguments, and mass amounts of information to sift through, it's no wonder the mind grows weary! Training our attention through mindfulness practices can be a first step towards discernment and perseverance in the pursuit of sustainable goals. Mindfulness offers a time to pause, include reality as it is, and shift our behaviours into alignment with our personal ethos. If climate change is something we wish to tackle together, it must begin with our individual beliefs and behaviours.

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PHOTO: Simon Ryder-Burbidge

The Hands:

When sound evidence presents a sustainable path forward, logically, we should try to follow it. More often than not, the difficulty lies in initiating action. There are many avenues of action such as volunteering, lobbying, protesting, educating, and dedicating our careers to the climate crisis. Our human desires to act upon our values and beliefs can be the most inspiring and productive ways to have effective conversations thereby effectively move forward together. Through community involvement, the actions speak for themselves; by producing measurable change, there is more grist for the sustainable mill.

The Heart:

The strongest driver of change comes from the heart. No matter how much or how little we are affected by climate change, acknowledging our collective stories of suffering and joy can catapult us into action for those less fortunate than ourselves. Empathetic listening is one technique to build relationships with those in our community who may be left out of important conversations. Listening skillfully with compassion also supports in respectfully debating those with differing opinions or misleading data. Communicating critical information can be overwhelming for some, so while one can still convey the facts, show the proof, and debate until global temperatures rise, creating an emotional connection through the art of friendship and storytelling may be the most successful communication strategy of all.

Linking the head, the hands, and the heart together is crucial when working with the climate crisis and sustainable solutions; it is personal ethics, logical reasoning, and heartfelt relationships that will provide a solid foundation for effective conversations, and worthwhile actions.