

## Storytelling and Art as a Catalyst for Climate Discussion

**Stephanie Ashenfelder**

University of Rochester, USA

### **Abstract:**

The Adirondack (ADK) Climate Project aims to explore the interconnection between human communities and the Adirondack Park through education, research, and engagement using storytelling and art. Advocating for a stronger focus on arts and culture in studying climate impacts, University of Rochester professors Stephanie Ashenfelder and Rose Pasquarello Beauchamp employ an arts-centered framework for engaging the public around climate change. Research indicates that art has the potential to shape individuals' attitudes and perceptions, challenging preconceived notions, fostering empathy, and promoting critical thinking. Our initiative, the ADK Climate Project, seeks to establish a personal connection between individuals and climate change by facilitating a genuine and embodied experience of their relationship with their environment.

Developed in collaboration with multiple community partners in the Adirondack Park, the project consists of four distinct components: story collection, creative responses, a digital archive, and community participation. The significance and uniqueness of this project are rooted in both the methodology employed for story collection and the artistic interpretation of these narratives as qualitative data. Both the stories and art are disseminated within the Adirondack community through gallery exhibitions and the digital archive, thereby facilitating broad access and engagement with the project.

The objectives of ADK Climate Project are to:

- Utilize storytelling and embodiment to deepen an understanding of the direct link between participants and their environment.
- Engage in discussions and activities with community members to raise awareness, foster hope, and inspire action regarding climate change.
- Reflect the relationship between Adirondack communities and climate change through engagement using narrative and art.

The outcomes of the ADK Climate Project include:

- An archive of the collected stories, mapped to the location where they are collected.
- An artist retreat hosted in the Adirondack Park, where artists listen to the stories and respond with a piece of art.
- A digital archive of the art created in response to the stories.
- A public exhibition of the art created in the park.