

**Youth Climate Action Training
Workshop 3:
Strategies For Hope and Storytelling in The Climate Era
Maeve Stone**

Introduction

This workshop was created for Youth Theatre Ireland's Climate Action Training Workshops series by [Maeve Stone](#), a socially engaged artist with a background in theatre and filmmaking. Maeve worked for many years in Dublin with Pan Pan Theatre Company, The Abbey Theatre and presented her own work in Dublin, Melbourne and New York. More recently she has been working in film to reach audiences with short films such as *The House Fell*, *The Last Harvest and Panganay*. Her work is focused on equity, social justice and generative action that helps to address climate challenges in an inclusive way; making work that is creative, community led, environmentally focused and invites joy.

What to Expect:

I'm focusing on the creative aspects of practice; how to ask generative questions, ways of reframing the future, important ideas around language and exclusion, how to cope with feelings of overwhelm and despair when dealing with the climate crisis, filling the well and staying connected, good resources for those just beginning.

This workshop invites participants to sit with some of the biggest emotional and creative challenges of making work in a time of climate crisis. There are feelings of overwhelm, powerlessness, and uncertainty about the future that stop us feeling creative at all. Together, we'll explore how these very challenges can become sites of imagination and action. Expect to be gently challenged: to think beyond the doom, to confront systems that feel immovable, and to notice the ways language, assumptions, and creative habits might be limiting how we imagine the future. But also expect joy, collaboration, and surprising moments of possibility. We'll use practical, creative exercises to unlock new ways of thinking, support each other in naming what feels hard, and explore tools for sustaining hope and curiosity in the face of urgent issues. This is a space for artists and facilitators who care deeply and want to find empowering, imaginative ways forward together.

The workshop is delivered in four sections across one day with a focus on increasing creative capacity and narrative strategies when addressing climate breakdown. It offers key principles to re-frame the challenge of looking at the future with hope and reconnects the participants with a sense of personal agency. It is best suited to young people over the age of 15.

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Some elements of it were delivered to two youth theatre groups in The Honey Fitz Theatre, Bruff, Co. Limerick, Ireland, in November 2025. This workshop was delivered over one full day but can be delivered over several sessions as time allows.

Duration 10:00 - 5.00pm

Age range 13-18 years old

Workshop Description

Warm Up: 15 - 20 minutes

A quick body and mind warm up that pulls us all into the room and lets us shake off whatever we've entered with.

1. Four Square or Box Breathing that incorporates physical movement: Participants begin with hands touching at their heart. Inhale for 4 counts while lifting arms overhead, hold for 4 with arms extended, exhale for 4 while lowering arms, and hold for 4 with hands by your sides. Repeat several rounds, keeping movements smooth and breath controlled to release tension and boost focus.
2. Mindfulness Moment Exercise: Look around and notice three things you can see, two things you can hear, and one thing you can feel (like your feet on the floor or air on your skin). Keep your attention on each sensation for a few seconds.
3. Offer to the group: Name the last wild animal you saw. Where was it? When was it and any observations about the animal or insect?

Exercise 1: Seven Generations 35-45 minutes

If the facilitator has access to the group in advance it can be helpful to set 'optional homework', to invite young people to speak to a parent or elder who may know more about their ancestry.

Introducing this workshop, this principle comes from indigenous wisdom - most notably the Iroquois - and traces the logic that in foraging, actions and ideas you must leave enough for

the seventh generations¹ who will follow you. I also make reference to the Aymara² people from Bolivia who see time in the opposite structure; the future is behind you and invisible, but the past is spread out in front of you like a map. We can use the past to chart our route into the future.

Intention: This is a narrative way of reframing your own position as one within a much longer cycle that includes your ancestors and those still to come. It recognises the resonance and impacts of our actions today into the future.

Detail:

1. PAST: Each participant is asked to draw seven circles. Before filling them they must consider how many generations before them they are aware of; do they know the name, date of birth / death defining characteristics or interests of their Mother, Grandfather, Great-Grandmother? Depending on how many generations they can speak about into the past they determine which is their own circle. In each circle they name the person, their date of birth and death if known, and key ideas about what that person added to the world through their work, care or interests.
2. PRESENT: The participant fills in their own circle and if they have any children or nieces or nephews who may occupy the next generation.
3. FUTURE: The participant considers the empty 'future' circles and imagines if they or a sibling were to have children, what date that person might be born, what they might care about or contribute to the world. They move to the next circle thinking about the next generation again, adding in a name, date of birth, interest and so on until all seven circles are filled.

This process will lead most people to a view of the future where their great grandchildren are born at the beginning of the next century.

The exercise invites reflection and discussion. Make time for each participant to offer a reflection on what they have found in thinking about their ancestors and future ancestors.

Some prompt questions may help deepen any conversation:

- What actions taken now could still be having a harmful impact for the seventh generation?

¹ Seventh Generation Principle <https://www.ictinc.ca/blog/seventh-generation-principle#:~:text=The%20Seventh%20Generation%20Principle%20is,seven%20generations%20into%20the%20future>

² Bolivia: Guardians of the Andes | Aymara Resilience & Climate Change <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jfkrb3oSWzY>

- What could you do now that would still be adding value for the seventh generation?
- How would your great-grandparents have responded to one of the challenges you see in society today?

Exercise 2: Biomimicry

Nature Knows Everything

60 minutes

Begin by asking participants to contribute an example of where nature is a master designer. This opens up the conversation. Then introduce the concept of biomimicry and its function within design principles.

Intention: To think about the vast wisdom of nature and use the design principles of biomimicry³ to develop a hopeful view of the future. Creating narratives using local newspapers and finding solutions using the six core principles as a guide.

Detail:

Using recent local newspapers, the participants work in groups of 4-6 to identify a key challenge facing their community. They define it: What is the challenge or conflict? How does it affect people and nature? What forces keep the problem in place?

Each group presents their challenge identifying the ideas they are most interested in exploring. This takes between 20 to 30 minutes. The groups then use these six tenets of biomimicry to imagine how this conflict or challenge could evolve.

- Evolve to survive – What needs to change to protect it into the future.
- Use resources well – Nature doesn't create any waste, only humans do that.
- Adapt to changing conditions – stay flexible and resilient.
- Know when to stop growing - what size allows it to thrive.
- Respond to the local context – use local conditions, knowledge and materials.
- Support nature's needs – avoid toxic substances and damaging practices.

Choosing one or more of these principles, participants are invited to draw a map or image of what could change in the conflict or challenge if each of these principles were applied. The maps can be literal or imaginative - whatever the group wants it to be. The facilitator guides the participants around the space to see one another's maps and discuss the outcomes.

³ What is biomimicry <https://www.learnbiomimicry.com/blog/biomimicry-lifes-principles?srsId=AfmBOoq2LimuuBIZmbQsUd9BmHKScvFh7sWxz6nGl-2e-ueEKy5JySio>

Exercise 3:
Playing With Perspective 75 minutes

This exercise changes the frame. Working in groups of 4-6, participants choose a fairytale they are familiar with and reimagine it from a more-than-human perspective.

Intention: To bring the ideas of the rights of nature to life in a fun and theatrical way.

To Begin:

Groups start by discussing the fairytale they are interested in exploring and map out the key plot points. (The facilitator can bring a summary of 6 or 7 if memories are struggling) They decide as a group on three key moments from the story they would like to explore more. It should feel like a beginning, a middle and an end / set up, conflict and resolution. Encourage the groups to consider clear physical expression, levels/power dynamics, tension, emotion.

Each group presents their fairytale, and the other participants guess which story it is - feeding back on what they can see. This takes 30 minutes.

From here we begin to adapt it for nature. Each group thinks about their fairytale and how the story might change if it was told from the perspective of a plant, insect, animal or even a landscape, like a lake or a mountain. The group re-works their three scenes to reflect this new frame and perspective. The leader encourages the groups to consider clear physical expression, levels/power dynamics, tension, emotion.

The groups share their 3 scenes again. This takes roughly 30 minutes depending on group size.

The exercise closes with a reflection on the ideas and approaches that thinking about nature in a different way has generated. This takes 15 minutes.

Exercise 4: Future Scene 60 minutes

This exercise allows the young people to identify themes and ideas that are of interest and importance to them and then translate those into a future setting, adding in elements that may offer a positive or cautionary view of the future.

The group is divided into pairs and given 10 minutes to discuss a significant moment of change in their lives using the prompt: "Tell me about a moment when everything changed". Each participant presents their partner's story, and the facilitator draws a mind map of the ideas that emerge. Noting the settings, themes and characters that are repeating, the facilitator can then form the structure of the 'Future Scene'.

Working in groups of 5-8, the facilitator gives the following prompts:

- You are working on a two-minute scene that should have a beginning, a middle and an end.
- You are working with the theme 'Friendship' (for example) and taking into consideration some of the ideas that came up in the brainstorm session, you are looking for a moment of conflict.
- There should be a character who has power, and a character who has none.
- Think about what might have changed in that context by the year 2050. This places the participants in a mind frame where the next generation / their own children may be facing these same challenges but in a changed world.
- The groups are given 30 minutes to work on and then stage their future scenes with the group.

In a review, the entire group is invited to reflect on what was surprising or what was repeating in the ideas that emerged. This takes roughly 15 minutes.

Feel free to contact me for further information and resources via www.maevestone.com