



About ABCD

All of Belfast: Climate Dialogues project origins and overview

In 2020, the Belfast Free Library won a grant from the Institute for Museum and Library Services for the All of Belfast: Climate Dialogues, a **Community Memory project**. The Library won this grant to facilitate conversations with a broader cross-section of the Belfast community in ongoing discussions about climate change to ensure that all voices and views are heard. Using best practices from citizen science, climate change communications, and civic engagement, the project was envisioned to document, share, and archive diverse ideas, perspectives, priorities, and aspirations on climate change from Belfast area citizens.

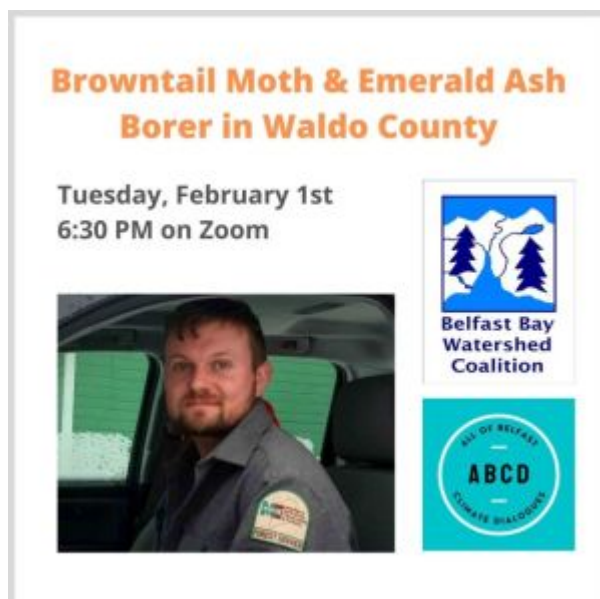
The project goals are to:

- Engage broad cross-section of Belfast in talking about climate;
- Curate high-quality education materials regarding climate change;

- Develop and support programming to normalize conversation on climate;
- Archive full range of Belfast area residents’ ideas and priorities regarding climate change.

When we applied for the IMLS Community Memory grant in November of 2019, the White House had disallowed federal employees from using the phrase “climate change.” In early 2021 when we began piloting programs with residents, the national conversation had been transformed by a new administration ready to talk about climate change. The more time that passes, the more frequently we hear “I don’t want to talk about this, I want to take action!” We’ve also come to appreciate how good action can feel in these anxious times. We continue to look for ways that the Library can support, amplify, and inspire climate ACTION.

One of the goals of the IMLS project was to increase the Belfast Free Library’s visibility as a gathering place and host conversations about the challenges facing our community. The pandemic made it clear that the Library is the place that Belfast turns to for support. When in-person events ceased in 2020, the majority of organizations who wanted to move events online approached the Library and program librarian Brenda Harrington for help in doing so.





Browntail moth presentation in collaboration with Belfast Bay Watershed Coalition.

**Deep Woods:
How Climate Change Impacts
Forests & How Forests Slow
Climate Change**



**Tuesday, March 22nd
6:30 PM on Zoom**





Presentation on climate change and Maine's forests, co-sponsored with the Belfast Garden Club.

**Celebrating Our Adventures
on Earth: Fireside Chat**



**Wednesday,
April 20th
7:00 PM at
Waterfall Arts**




Collaboration with Waterfall Arts in their "Fireside Chat" series, celebrating Earth Week 2022.

COVID pivots and project evolution

The ABCD project began in the fall of 2020, mere months into the COVID-19 pandemic. Our plans for facilitating cozy conversations among Belfast residents to help each other learn how to be comfortable sharing and listening to each others' perspectives, priorities, and observations of climate change and its impacts were no longer safe. We needed a new approach. We experimented with convening groups for paired conversations on Zoom and learned important lessons (e.g., Zoom is not an enticing venue for talking about challenging, uncomfortable topics with people one hardly knows or has never met!).

So, we shifted gears again. We launched new webpages with information [about climate change](#) and [the value of talking about climate change](#). We created an [online collection](#) space where we invite and share Belfast area residents to post writing, letters, artwork, poems, pictures - anything that captures their observations, fears, hopes, or priorities. We launched an [event series](#) and co-hosted events with Belfast organizations addressing climate change (spoiler - there are a lot of them!).

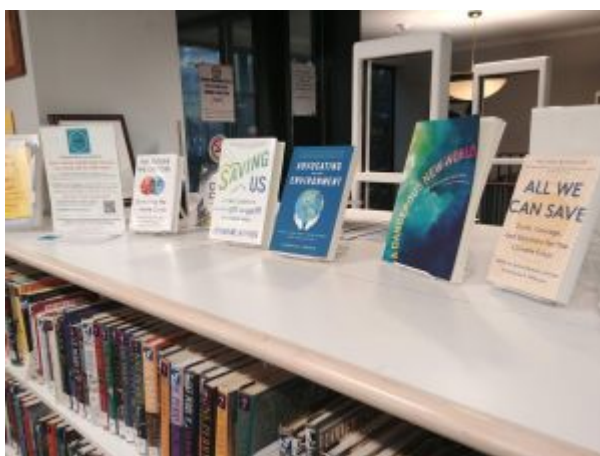
In January of 2022, we teamed up with Belfast's [Climate Crisis Committee](#) to host the Waldo County Climate Symposium. The goal of the symposium was to launch collaboration and coordination among the active parties to get more mileage from each move. Fifteen Waldo County organizations with climate change-related activities attended the symposium. Each gave a 5-minute presentation about who they are, their present activities related to climate change, and their future plans. A summary of each presentation is available in the [symposium report in the ABCD Collection](#). The symposium ended with an enthusiastic call for continued conversation.



Talking with Belfast Farmers' Market about the ABCD project



Unveiling of Belfast's new tide gauges and high water mark signs, 2021



Selections from the ABCD book collection at the Belfast Free Library

Insights to action

Over the months of this project, we have had several “ah-ha!” moments that have changed our thinking, approach, and planning. Here are some of the observations we have had that continue to shape the ABCD program, and our own actions.

#1: Even our project team struggles to find hope in the crisis of climate change. We have been buoyed by authors and leaders like Dr. Katharine Hayhoe who focus on amplifying the progress that is being made. We have noticed that our energy and enthusiasm rises when we discover promising actions in our state or connect with other organizations committed to advocacy and action. **Working together is the best antidote we’ve found to feeling overwhelmed.** We are working on ideas to engage people in our community around the climate wins there are, rather than just bringing attention to the existential crisis we face. We are hopeful that the more optimistic approach that has raised our spirits will raise participation in ABCD events and in our online ABCD collection.

#2: A community’s resilience -- its ability to flex with and recover from challenge -- is only as strong as the web of connections that hold it together. Sure, we need a robust power grid and strong critical infrastructure like sewage treatment plants supported by backup systems - things that the government needs to address. But when challenge arrives - a downed tree, a flooded basement, temporary or permanent loss of income - **what is essential for human wellbeing is strong ties to people ready to give and receive, to offer support, cook a meal, and lend a hand or an ear.** We heard this from the farmers on our January 20, 2022 [Growing Resilience: Local Farmers Respond to Climate Change](#) panel who appreciated their network of peers and elders in the farming community. We heard this in the founding story of Waldo County Bounty shared in the [Waldo County Climate Change Symposium](#). And we witnessed it in the aftermath of the fire at the Penobscot McCrum potato processing facility in early 2022.

#3: We are inspired by the Climate to Thrive organization on nearby Mount Desert Island. After more than a year of work instigating conversation that we hope leads to action, **we recognize the need for dedicated and paid leadership to driving and guiding effective change.** We will be exploring how to launch such an effort and at what scale (Belfast? Waldo County? Coastal Communities of Penobscot Bay?). If you are interested in this idea, please contact us at abcd@belfastlibrary.org.

Project team

The Belfast Free Library is dedicated to helping individuals of all ages pursue independent learning by providing access to timely and useful information in all formats. The library was established in 1887 with funds from two Belfast residents with a vision of public learning. Read more about the [library's history](#).

Brenda Harrington is an outdoor enthusiast who loves to hike, ski and ride her bike. She enjoys family outings with her two grown children. Brenda moved to Waldo County in the late 1980's and has been the Belfast Free Library's Adult Programming Librarian since 2003.

Sarah Kirn first came to Maine as a teenage student on a Hurricane Island Outward Bound School sailing course. She stays, at least in part, for the light - in particular, that golden light that sometimes breaks through, or under, a dark grey storm cloud and makes the coastal evergreens glow - and for her network of friends and colleagues around the state. She also loves the seasons - the snap of a winter morning, the miracle of spring, the ease of summer warmth, and the bug-free days of fall.

Misty Mallar grew up in Maine and has lived in Belfast since 2011. She enjoys her job hosting at Nautilus Seafood & Grill restaurant, with its unique oceanfront beauty in all seasons. And, she loves the community connections and friendships she has formed there with co-workers and locals. With her husband, she owns Seaberry Hill Farm, a small home-based plant nursery.

All of Belfast: Climate Dialogues (ABCD) is a project of the [Belfast Free Library](#). This project was made possible by a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services. IMLS grant number: APP-246100-OLS-20. [Read the proposal](#) on the IMLS website (scroll down to find Belfast Free Library).

All of Belfast: Climate Dialogues (ABCD) is a member of [Maine Contemporary Archives](#). Supported with Maine State Library's Cares Act-LSTA funds received from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS).



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[Share Your Story](#)

[Belfast Is Responding to Climate Change](#)

Climate Change 101

[Dialogue and Climate Change](#)

[Surveys](#)

[ABCD Newsletter](#)

Contact us: abcd@belfastlibrary.org



Library Hours

Monday 9:30 am - 8:00 pm

Tuesday 9:30 am - 6:00 pm

Wednesday Noon - 8:00 pm

Thursday 9:30 am - 6:00 pm

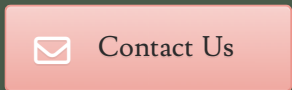
Friday 9:30 am - 6:00 pm

Saturday 10:00 am- 2:00 pm

Sunday CLOSED

Belfast Free Library
106 High Street, Belfast, Maine 04915

Telephone: (207) 338-3884



Make a donation to the library



Waldo County Vital Records

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