

A photograph of a swampy forest, likely a cypress swamp, with tall, thin trees and their reflections in the water. The text is overlaid on the image.

# Where the Trees Stand in the Water

*EDEN Engagement: Toronto  
Seed City Curriculum  
Natalie Fasheh*

**APRIL 2022**



## ABOUT

Three-time Grammy Award winning opera superstar Joyce DiDonato has created the global tour of EDEN, her major concert hall performance about environmentalism. Her personal commitment and partnership with ITAC has launched a re-imagining of the impact of a concert experience through teaching artist-led workshops in every city. The International Teaching Artists Collaborative (ITAC) is the world-wide network of artists who work in community and educational settings, who have the skills to bring change to communities. Together ITAC and EDEN Engagement will pilot a new approach to prove that touring can be a legitimate and powerful tool for change in communities.

Cities on the tour are designated either "Root Cities" or "Seed Cities". Seed Cities are a 1-4 day(s) event that engages the youth with one of three specific environmental issues; Urban Gardens, Urban Trees, Food Choices:

- Urban Gardens: They are youth-friendly. Among many social benefits, they bring these environmental benefits: reduce carbon use (reduced food transport); reduce water runoff; help pollinators; plants absorb CO<sub>2</sub> and pollutants and produce oxygen; health benefits in the food and the community building (reduced stress and blood pressure).
- Urban Trees: Trees are omnipresent and overlooked in cities—kid friendly. They can plant them, and the EDEN performance encourages that. Trees are powerful answers to heat mitigation (reduce temperatures by 8 to 10 degrees and need for air conditioning), carbon and pollution sequestration and oxygen production, water flow pollution reduction, biodiversity, and food insecurity. Health benefits include healthier air, psychological benefits, lowering blood pressure and stress.
- Food Choices: Scientists have proven that small choices make a big difference. Because many foods with a high health burden, including processed meats or red meats, also have high environmental costs, switching out 10 percent of a person's daily caloric intake can cut a person's food-based environmental footprint by over 30 percent. Between growing it, packaging it, moving it around, cooking it, and often wasting it, food production makes up about one-fifth to one-third of all annual greenhouse gas emissions globally. Eat less red and processed meats, eat more veggies and fruits, reduce food waste, and if you have a way...compost.

Teaching Artist: Natalie Fasheh

Duration: 2.5 hours

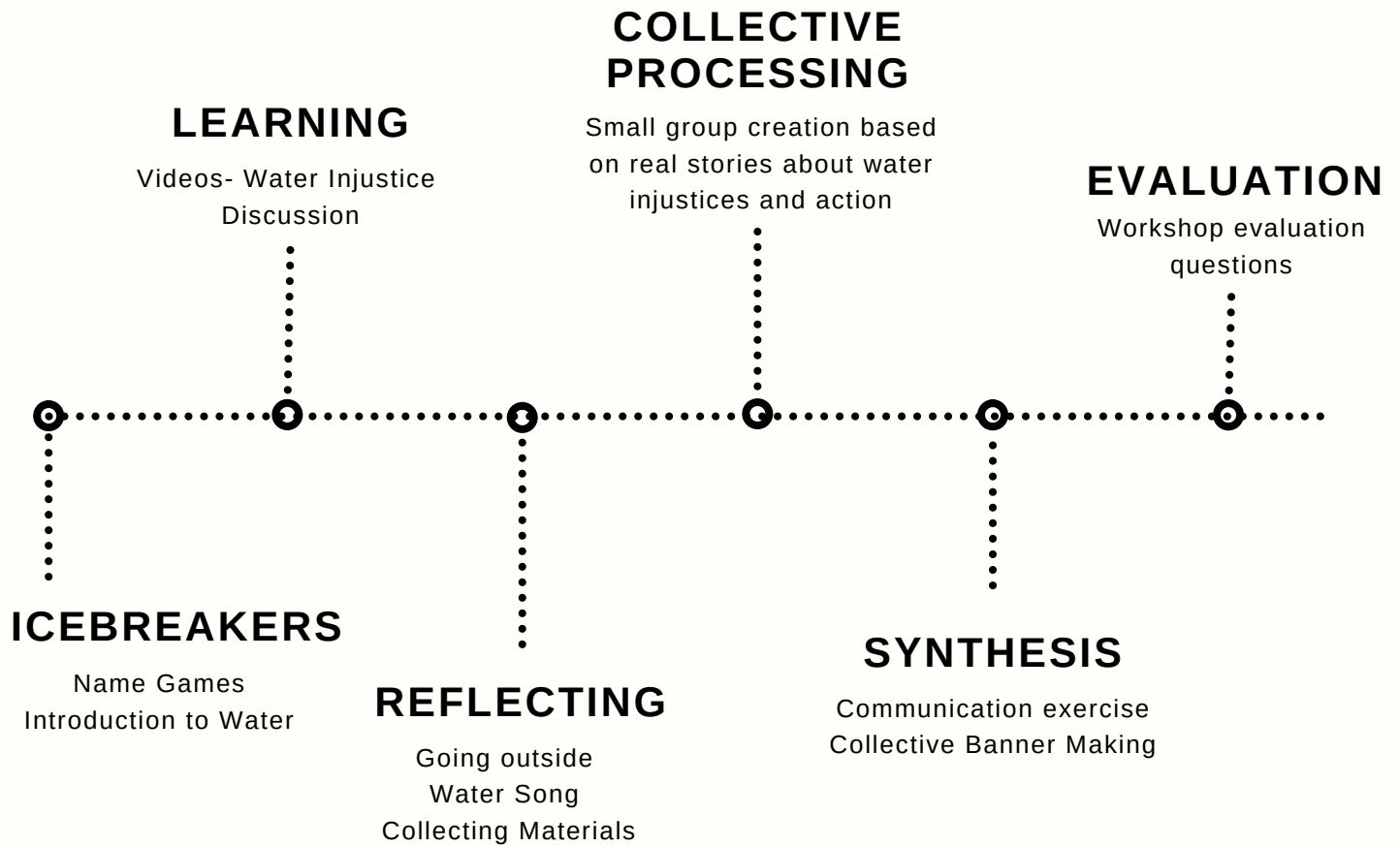
Where: Toronto, Canada

Goals:

- To educate participants about climate change in relation to water disparities and indigenous rights, and empower them to find their voices in speaking about and acting for water protection.



# Curriculum Timeline



## WORKSHOP: *WHERE THE TREES STAND IN THE WATER*

### Icebreakers, Setting the Tone:

- Opening Hellos (10 minutes)
  - Names, pronouns, art forms
- Water Benders Activity (5 minutes)
  - Stand in A circle. Pretend like you can move and shape water any which way you want to! Move and make sound that conjures the energy of the water as you 'bend' it. Everyone else imitates your movement, once you are done you pass it to someone. They then move, and so on.

### Learning: Autumn Peltier (Watch Video & Discussion—20 minutes)

- Autumn Peltier is an Anishinaabe water protector and leader. She is 16 years old, and currently the Water Commissioner of Annishinaabek Nation. From a very young age, she has been speaking up and advocating for water protection and clean water for indigenous communities.
- About Autumn Peltier : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A33XRMLBbOc>
- Autumn singing the song Nibi at a speech <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wEDqbzLFOlc>

### Discussion on the topic:

- What did you feel watching the videos?
- What did you learn?
- Is there anything else you know about water disparities in Canada?
- How did you feel listening to the song?
- What do you think of Boil Water Advisories?
- How can we protect and care for water and bring justice?

### Nibi Song (10 minutes)

- Original song Nibi: [http://www.motherearthwaterwalk.com/?attachment\\_id=2244](http://www.motherearthwaterwalk.com/?attachment_id=2244)
- Learning the song (call and response, without drums)

Ne-be Gee Zah- gay- e- goo  
Gee Me-gwetch -wayn ne- me - goo  
Gee Zah Wayn ne- me- goo

Water, we love you.  
We thank you.  
We respect you.

Reflection: Outdoor Exploration (10-15 minutes)

- Going outside, spreading out in a natural area (amidst trees, near water, by a wild field, etc.).
- Gather one natural item from your surroundings
- \*Optional, create a tree or water stream sculpture on the ground with these surroundings
- OR continue to carry your item:
- Close your eyes: Think of water, what it gives you, what you love about it, what you appreciate, it's beauty, it's power. It's importance.
- Singing Nibi song as a smooth transition from the reflection without cueing.

Going inside again, putting natural items that everyone got together where the paint and art supplies are.



### Collective Processing: Water Stories Activity (20 minutes)

- Stories of indigenous communities living in water injustices, and also coming together for water justice (pain/hope)
- Pre-Workshop Preparation: The Teaching Artist writes a one-page paper of a real story of water injustice and climate action for water protection. In the paper would be a 2-3 sentence summary of the history and current situation, and then a direct quote from the story that evokes imagination.

Stories can be based on the region and context in which the participants live, or you are welcome to explore stories below. I derived from the sources below and created a paper per story:

- Wet'suwet'en: Gathering Round the Fire.
  - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vg6aa\\_TVGXw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vg6aa_TVGXw)
- Wet'suwet'en: Leaders in Solidarity (peace and unity summit)
  - <http://www.firstnationsdrum.com/2022/01/indigenous-leaders-launch-groundbreaking-peace-and-unity-summit/>
- Lost Rivers: (Explaining the lost rivers, and then quoting from the poem)
  - [Lostrivers.ca](http://lostrivers.ca)
  - <http://www.landscapeandurbanism.com/2014/05/29/hidden-hydrology-origins-1-the-yellowwood-and-the-forgotten-creek/>
- Grassy Narrows:
  - "On December 2nd, 2002, the youth of the Grassy Narrows First Nation lay down in the path of industrial logging trucks blocking the main logging road through their territory, and sparking what is now the longest standing indigenous logging blockade in Canadian history." <https://freegrassy.net/learn-more/grassy-narrows/taking-a-stand/>
  - <https://www.aptnnews.ca/videos/grassy-narrows-first-nation-receives-69-8-million-to-address-mercury-problem/>

Activity (15 minutes): Split into groups of maximum 4 people. In your groups you will be given a slip of paper with a story. Create a response through any art mediums you like (poetry, music, theatre, dance, visual art, etc.). You may use some of the natural elements everyone gathered, and the man-made materials provided (e.g. lego, plastic bags, milk cartons, any waste).

### Share (5 minutes)

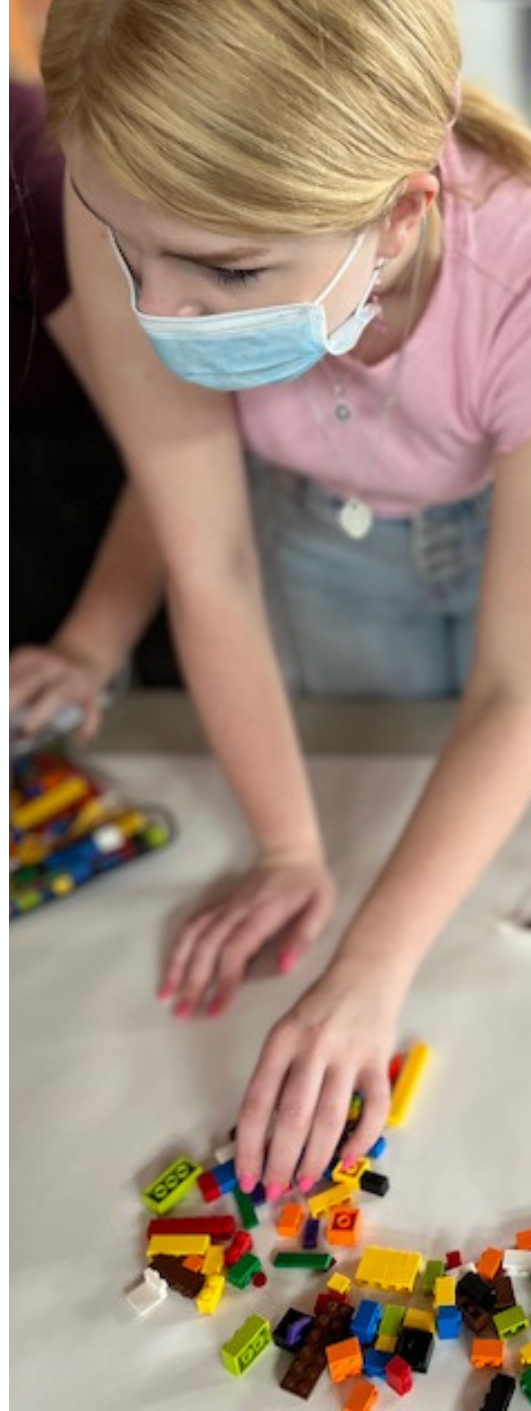
- Each group shares their interpretation

OR

Creating small still-scenes using clay and items from outside (twigs, etc.) in small groups that express something you took away from the videos, to advocate for water protection and water injustice/justice. We will go around and look at everyone's scenes after.

Watching any video(s) relating to the stories explored, that explain a bit more in depth about a water injustice, and how people are coming together to make positive change.

- Eg. Wet'suwet'en: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fp33zTg2A10> (Watched in the TO workshop)
- <https://www.yintahaccess.com/>
- <http://www.wetsuweten.com/culture/>



Break (10 minutes)

Synthesis: Reflection & Brainstorm (10 minutes)

- Let us go around in a circle and share one word or statement (in one-breath), of something you'd like to tell the world about Water and climate!
- Now speak out randomly what you can do in your own lives to protect water and care for it.
- We want to create a banner with a statement in the middle that is part of the Seeds of Hope performance or in the lobby. What will be the statement?
- What elements would you like to paint on the paper? What is important for you to paint to express all you've learned and feel about water and climate change?

Creating the Banner (20 minutes)

- As a group, students will decide what to paint on their banner that speaks to the reflection and brainstorm they just had.

OR

Another option (if kids are younger possibly): On the banner, around the empty area, let us draw and paint together. On the left, the reality of the situation and how we interpret what we just learned. The sadness, the suffering... On the right, the hopes and dreams, what water gives us, the beauty of water and how we can nourish our lives by caring for it. What is needed to protect water and bring justice?

While Painting:

- Singing Nibi song again while painting
- Seeds of Hope
- Singing the song Seeds of Hope EDEN
- What visual elements can we add to the performance?

Evaluation: (10 minutes)

- Draw or write one thing that you learned today. What did you take away?
- What is something you enjoyed today?
- What do you wish was different?
- What art form were you most drawn to?





WATCH  
THE  
VIDEO



# IMPACT & EVALUATION

The goal of this effort is to learn about the impact that the activities have on participants. We are especially curious to learn if there is any evidence that they have the impulse to take action and/or feel they can make a difference—this is the high goal of the arts-for-climate field, and we believe teaching artists have a particularly strong contribution to the field.

During the EDEN project, teaching artists were encouraged to use the Continuum of Impact Guide as a model when thinking about impact and assessment in their workshops.



"Ah it is so hard to choose one bright spot! When we went outside to sing the Nibi song, I had expected the singers to really stand and sing the song more outwardly. However, after we all closed our eyes and reflected on water, when we started singing, their singing was so delicate, reflective, and tender. I loved that moment. I felt such caring energy from them, and I felt that is when many of the participants started feeling a personal connection to the workshop. Another highlight of mine was the participants at the end before we started the banner. When I asked them all go to around and say one thing they'd like to share with the world about water, it was challenging for some of them, but then once they spoke a statement, more dialogue and back-and-forth happened, and I enjoyed seeing that transformation of getting more comfortable talking about the subject. A big highlight for me was the participants working with natural elements and legos in one of the activities, and the creativity that came out of them! I loved seeing the joy and playfulness they were going through in making their arts to share such poignant stories about water injustices and standing up for water protection."

—Natalie Fasheh

# REFLECTIONS FROM THE TEACHING ARTIST

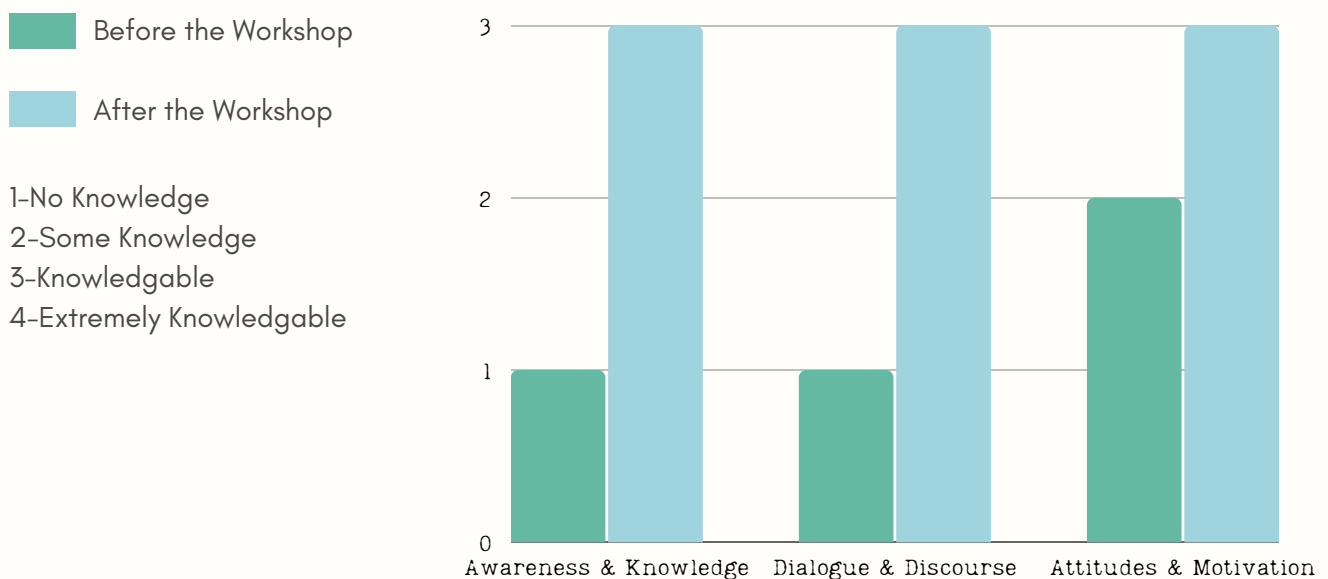
**In what ways did you observe change in your participants understanding and engagement of the environmental issue you chose?**

*"I saw that many of the participants have never heard of the water injustices around them before this workshop, and this workshop allowed them more awareness about the water around them and how to care for it. I felt by the end of the session they were able to verbalize what they would like to share about water and climate change!"*

**What challenges did you face in creating and facilitating your workshop?**

*"I faced a challenge with having more time than I thought I did and feeling the pace could have been faster! There were moments when now looking back I could have been more thoughtful about going outside and having some explorations there. I felt it was challenging to not have the workshop feel monotonous for the participants, and finding a balance where they are able to listen and engage equally and through many entry points. I found it challenging to get them to chat more and discuss more- and possibly because this was all new information to them it was difficult for them."*

We tasked each teaching artist with evaluating their students based on the Continuum of Impact Guide. They rated their students on a scale from 1 (no knowledge of the subject) to 4 (extremely knowledgeable about the subject). The following graph reflects Natalie's observations of her students.

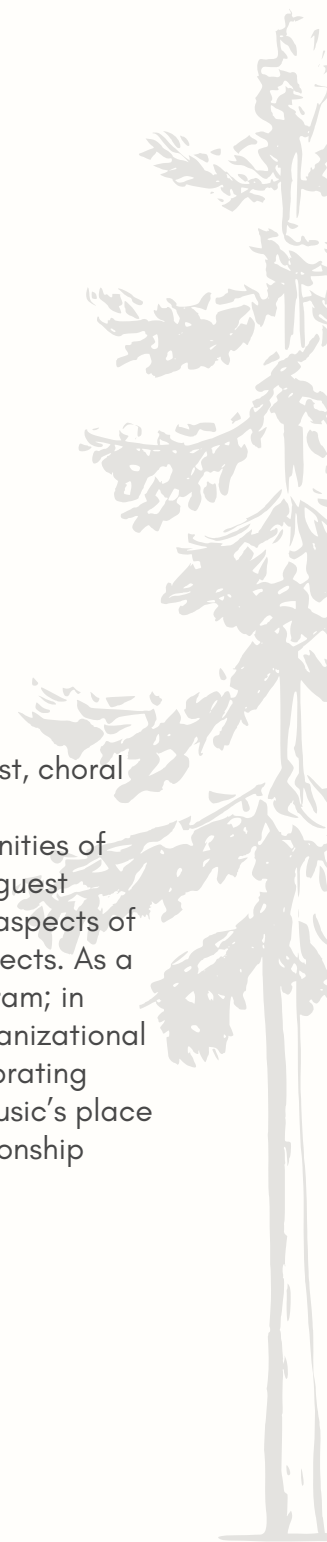


# ABOUT THE TEACHING ARTIST



## ***NATALIE FASHEH***

Natalie Fasheh is a Palestinian-Jordanian mezzo-soprano, community-engaged artist, choral conductor, composer, and poet. She leads vocal ensemble experiences rooted in empowerment, cultural awareness, and activism. Natalie works with singing communities of varying ages and lifestyles. She also has the pleasure of sharing Arabic music as a guest singer, clinician, and choral arranger. Natalie has most recently been entwining all aspects of her artistry in collaboratively designing and leading social justice-based choral projects. As a pedagogue, leader, and visionary, Natalie is part of the 2022 Global Leaders Program; in pursuit of transforming choral systems, by centering equity and justice in choral organizational structures and music practices. Natalie looks forward to continuing artistically celebrating humanity's diversity and common-threads, expanding her understanding of vocal music's place in sociocultural dialogue and bridge-building, and exploring the multifaceted relationship between community-engaged art and choral art.



# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Joyce DiDonato & Askonas Holt

EDEN Engagement  
Sophie Dand, Rachel Walters

International Teaching Artist Collaborative (ITAC)  
Madeleine McGirk, Eric Booth, Aislinn Ryan

ITAC's EDEN Engagement Project Manager & Packet Design  
Katie Rainey

Teaching Artist & Curriculum Design  
Natalie Fasheh

Choir  
Raise Her Voice Chamber Choir  
in the Oakville Choir for Children and Youth

Concert Venue  
Koerner Hall

