

STORYBRANCH

Core Values & Guiding Principles

Why this document exists

Every organization is shaped by beliefs that influence how it thinks, behaves and makes decisions.

Some beliefs describe what matters most. Others describe how those beliefs should become visible through everyday actions.

At Storybranch, we distinguish between **values** and **guiding principles**.

Values express the qualities and ideals that we seek to cultivate and protect. They answer the question:

What matters most to us?

Guiding principles translate those values into practical commitments. They help us make decisions when circumstances are uncertain, complex or changing. They answer the question:

How do we act consistently with what we value?

Storybranch's projects, technologies, collaborations and areas of work will continue to evolve. These values provide continuity through that growth.

They also connect Storybranch's founding focus on childhood with its wider intergenerational and systemic work. They guide how we create experiences for children, collaborate with educators and families, support professionals and organizations and consider the environments in which sustainable futures grow.

Like the roots of a tree, they may not always be the most visible part of the organization, but they sustain every branch, project and relationship.

1. Scientific Integrity

Value

We value truth, evidence and intellectual honesty.

Author: B. Ivón Hassel, year 2026

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Scientific integrity is the foundation of Storybranch. Every experience we create, story we tell, solution we propose and partnership we develop begins with a commitment to verified knowledge and responsible communication.

Science is not simply a collection of established facts. It is a continuing process of observation, questioning, testing, interpretation and refinement.

For this reason, Storybranch combines confidence with humility: confidence when communicating well-supported evidence, and humility when knowledge is incomplete, uncertain or evolving.

We use storytelling, creativity, design and technology to make scientific knowledge engaging and accessible. These methods must strengthen understanding rather than distort, oversimplify or replace scientific accuracy.

Storybranch distinguishes clearly between scientific research, professional practice, lived experience and Indigenous or traditional ecological knowledge. We respect the origin and context of each form of knowledge and avoid presenting them as interchangeable.

Trust is earned through integrity.

Integrity begins with evidence.

Guiding Principle

We communicate science responsibly, acknowledge uncertainty honestly and allow evidence, not assumptions, to guide our work and decisions.

2. Meaningful Connection

Value

We value meaningful connection because relationships influence how people learn, care, collaborate and act.

Scientific understanding is essential, but information alone does not always create lasting engagement or change. People are more likely to care for the natural world when they experience it as something to which they belong rather than something separate from their lives.

Storybranch therefore creates experiences that connect knowledge with curiosity, emotion, place, participation and personal meaning.

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Connection also shapes how we work with colleagues, collaborators, communities and partners. Healthy relationships create stronger learning environments, more respectful collaborations and more resilient organizations.

Meaningful connection is especially important during childhood, when relationships with nature, place and responsibility are developing. Storybranch seeks to create experiences in which children can understand that they belong to the living world and can explore that relationship together with families, educators and communities.

Connection can also support intergenerational learning. Children's questions, observations and discoveries can encourage adults to reflect, learn and reconsider their own relationship with the environment.

We recognize that relationships with the living world are shaped by place, culture, history and lived experience. When appropriate, Storybranch seeks respectful collaboration with Indigenous and local communities and recognizes the importance of knowledge developed through long relationships with particular landscapes and ecosystems.

Meaningful connection transforms information into purpose.

Guiding Principle

We cultivate relationships that strengthen understanding, belonging, collaboration and care for the living world.

3. Curiosity

Value

We value curiosity because every meaningful discovery begins with a question.

Before knowledge becomes established, it begins with observation, uncertainty, exploration and a willingness to look more closely.

Curiosity encourages us to remain open to new evidence, different disciplines, unfamiliar perspectives and continuous learning. It reminds us that understanding is not a destination but an evolving process.

At Storybranch, curiosity extends beyond scientific inquiry. It shapes how we approach people, cultures, technologies, ecosystems and collaboration.

We respect knowledge that emerges through scientific research, professional practice, local experience and cultural or traditional understanding. We remain clear about the

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origin, methods and limitations of different forms of knowledge while exploring what they may contribute when brought into thoughtful dialogue.

Children's curiosity has particular value because it can make familiar systems visible again. Their questions can reveal assumptions, invite adults to explain their decisions and open conversations that might not otherwise occur.

Storybranch therefore treats children not only as recipients of knowledge, but as observers, investigators and contributors to shared learning.

Curiosity supports innovation while keeping us intellectually humble.

Guiding Principle

We choose questions before assumptions, learning before certainty and exploration before complacency.

4. Purposeful Creativity

Value

We value creativity when it serves understanding, connection and meaningful action.

Storytelling, illustration, design, technology, play and immersive experiences can make complex ideas more accessible, memorable and emotionally relevant.

At Storybranch, creativity is not decoration added after the knowledge has been developed. It is part of how people encounter, explore and make sense of that knowledge.

Every creative decision should strengthen the purpose of the work. It should help people see relationships, ask questions, remember important ideas or participate more meaningfully.

Creativity should never compromise scientific integrity.

Purpose gives creativity direction.

Science gives it substance.

Together, they create experiences that support both learning and wonder.

Guiding Principle

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We use creativity intentionally to make scientific knowledge engaging, accessible and meaningful without compromising its integrity.

5. Stewardship

Value

We value stewardship because knowledge brings responsibility.

Every decision we make has consequences that extend beyond the immediate project. Our books, programs, technologies, recommendations and partnerships can influence individuals, organizations, communities and ecosystems.

Stewardship means considering not only what we can create, but also why it should be created, who it serves and what effects it may have over time.

It asks us to think beyond short-term outputs and consider the long-term health of the systems of which we are part.

Stewardship also applies to relationships, knowledge and resources. We seek to use them respectfully, transparently and responsibly.

Stewardship also requires responsibility across generations. Children should be supported to develop knowledge, care and agency, but they should not be made responsible for solving environmental problems created by adult systems.

Adults, institutions and organizations remain responsible for creating the conditions in which children and the living world can flourish. Storybranch's work should therefore empower children while also encouraging accountability and long-term thinking among adult decision-makers.

Our work should contribute to futures in which people and nature can thrive together.

Guiding Principle

We seek to leave people, communities and the living world stronger than we found them.

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6. Hope Through Action

Value

We value hope because meaningful change becomes possible when people believe that they can contribute.

Hope is not passive optimism or the avoidance of difficult realities. It is the confidence that informed people, working together with competence, creativity and care, can make a meaningful difference.

Environmental challenges can feel overwhelming when they are presented without pathways for participation.

This is particularly important when communicating with children. Environmental realities should be presented honestly, but in ways that avoid transferring fear, guilt or an unrealistic burden of responsibility to them.

Storybranch seeks to offer children meaningful opportunities to observe, understand, participate and contribute, while making clear that adults, institutions and organizations are responsible for structural action.

Hope becomes credible when children can see both that their participation matters and that the adults around them are also taking responsibility.

Storybranch therefore seeks to cultivate hope through knowledge, connection and practical opportunity.

When people understand an issue, recognize their relationship to it and develop the competence to respond, hope becomes a force for participation, collaboration and leadership.

Hope grows when people can see that their actions matter.

Hope grows through action.

Guiding Principle

We empower people with the knowledge, confidence, competence and opportunities to contribute to sustainable futures.

Living Our Values

Author: B. Ivón Hassel, year 2026

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These values are not intended to remain words in a document.

They are living commitments that influence how Storybranch communicates, designs, collaborates, researches, teaches and grows across generations.

They should be visible in the experiences we create for children, the relationships we build with educators and families, the responsibilities we place on adults and organizations and the long-term consequences we consider.

They should be visible in:

- The accuracy of the knowledge we communicate
- The relationships we build
- The questions we ask
- The creative choices we make
- The long-term consequences we consider
- The opportunities we create for participation and action

As Storybranch develops, new projects, technologies and partnerships will emerge.

Our values provide continuity through that change.

They remind us that healthy growth depends upon strong roots.

Together, scientific integrity, meaningful connection, curiosity, purposeful creativity, stewardship and hope through action define the character of Storybranch and guide how we seek to contribute to the world.

