



Storybranch Philosophy

A Philosophy for Understanding, Connecting with and Caring for the Living World

Version 1.0 (Draft)

We are not separate from the living world. We belong to it, and our future grows with its future. We are all connected.

Introduction

Storybranch was founded from a simple tension: scientific knowledge about the living world has expanded rapidly, yet knowledge alone has not always produced wiser collective decisions. Environmental challenges require not only information, but also the ability to recognize relationships, evaluate evidence, understand uncertainty and act within the ecological and social systems that sustain life (UNESCO, 2020).

Storybranch exists to connect scientific understanding with human experience. Science helps us investigate how the living world functions. Meaningful experiences help knowledge become relevant, memorable and connected to responsibility. Together, they can cultivate the curiosity, competence and stewardship needed to contribute to sustainable futures.

This purpose begins early. Storybranch was founded on the belief that children who grow up connected to nature and aware that they belong within the living world can carry that understanding into future choices, professions and communities. Because children grow within families, schools and wider institutions, our philosophy also extends to the adults and organizations that shape the conditions in which learning and action become possible (Ardoin & Bowers, 2020; Chawla, 1998).

This document expresses the worldview that guides Storybranch. It does not prescribe one educational method or one form of work. It provides a coherent foundation for books, programs, research, technology, professional learning, community projects and collaborations.

Author: B. Ivón Hassel. Year, 2026.

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1. We belong to the living world

Human wellbeing depends on ecological processes that provide air, water, food, materials, climate regulation and countless other conditions for life. Recognizing this dependence is not a metaphor; it is a biological and systems reality.

Storybranch therefore understands people as participants within living systems, not observers standing outside them. Nature is not only a resource, a destination or an object of study. It is the wider community of life within which human societies exist.

Belonging does not mean idealizing nature or denying conflict, risk and change. It means recognizing interdependence and accepting that human decisions have consequences across ecological and social systems. A stronger sense of connection with nature has been associated with environmental concern and pro-environmental orientations, although relationships vary across individuals and contexts (Mayer & Frantz, 2004; Tam, 2013).

2. Sustainable futures begin early

Childhood is a formative period in which relationships with nature, knowledge, responsibility and possibility begin to develop. Research in early-childhood environmental education indicates that nature-rich, participatory experiences can support cognitive, affective and social-emotional development, while significant-life-experience research identifies childhood contact with nature and supportive adults among recurring influences reported by environmentally engaged adults (Ardoin & Bowers, 2020; Chawla, 1998).

Storybranch does not assume that a single book, lesson or outdoor experience will determine later behavior. Development is shaped by repeated experiences, culture, family, education, opportunity and wider social conditions. Our role is to help establish foundations that can be strengthened throughout life.

This foundation matters regardless of the careers children later choose. Environmental understanding and systems awareness are relevant to engineers, educators, lawyers, designers, policymakers, entrepreneurs, scientists, artists and organizational leaders because decisions in every field affect resources, communities and living systems.

Children may also contribute to learning within their families by introducing questions, observations and new knowledge. This intergenerational influence is possible but context-dependent; it does not transfer responsibility for structural environmental change from adults and institutions to children (Duvall & Zint, 2007; Istead & Shapiro, 2014).

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3. Understanding creates the conditions for stewardship

Storybranch does not treat stewardship as a rule to be imposed or a guaranteed outcome of education. Knowledge alone does not automatically produce action, and emotional connection alone does not guarantee responsible behavior. Meaningful engagement emerges through interactions among understanding, experience, reflection, social context, competence and realistic opportunities to participate (UNESCO, 2020).

We therefore begin with understanding. Scientific knowledge helps people recognize patterns and consequences. Experience can make those ideas personally relevant. Reflection helps learners consider meaning and responsibility. Together, these elements create conditions in which stewardship may develop.

Our central principle expresses this relationship:

Knowledge helps us understand the living world. Meaningful experiences help us feel that we belong within it. Together, they cultivate the stewardship, competence and leadership needed to create sustainable futures.

This is not a claim that learning follows one universal pathway. It is a design commitment: Storybranch will combine scientific integrity with experiences that invite curiosity, connection, reflection and informed action.

4. Strong roots allow responsible growth

Visible outcomes—books, workshops, technologies, partnerships and research—are not the beginning of Storybranch. They grow from deeper roots: scientific integrity, curiosity, meaningful connection, purposeful creativity, stewardship, hope through action and a commitment to continuous learning.

These foundations allow the organization to evolve without losing coherence. Growth is not measured only by the number of projects created, but by whether each project remains connected to Storybranch's purpose, values and responsibilities.

The tree is therefore more than a visual identity. It is a systems metaphor. Roots represent foundations; the trunk connects knowledge and method; branches express different areas of contribution; leaves are the experiences through which people encounter the work; and the forest represents the wider ecosystem of relationships in which impact becomes possible.

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5. Knowledge is plural, situated and ethically held

Scientific knowledge is the evidentiary foundation of Storybranch's public claims. At the same time, human understanding of environments also includes professional practice, lived experience and Indigenous and local knowledge systems developed through long relationships with particular places.

These knowledge systems should not be collapsed into one another or treated as interchangeable. Each has its own methods, contexts, authorities and limitations. Responsible collaboration seeks complementarity while maintaining clarity about where knowledge comes from and how it has been validated (UNESCO, n.d.-a).

Storybranch intends to collaborate respectfully with Indigenous Peoples and local communities where projects make such engagement relevant. This requires more than citing "ancestral knowledge." It requires community leadership, transparent dialogue, proper attribution, protection of sensitive knowledge and free, prior, sustained and informed consent. Communities and knowledge holders must retain a meaningful role in deciding how their knowledge is represented, shared and used (UNESCO, 2015, n.d.-b).

Storybranch will therefore avoid extracting knowledge from communities or using cultural identity as decoration. Collaboration should create reciprocal value, respect rights and governance, and acknowledge that some knowledge is not intended for public dissemination.

6. Seeds of possibility

Education is not the act of filling empty minds. It is the creation of conditions in which curiosity, understanding and competence can grow.

A question may begin a lifelong interest. A story may open a path into science. An experience in nature may alter how someone notices the world. A conversation may become the beginning of collaboration. These effects are not always immediate or measurable at the end of a program.

Storybranch therefore values both observable outcomes and longer processes of development. We seek to create experiences that are accurate, memorable and capable of supporting further inquiry, while remaining careful not to claim impacts that have not been evaluated.

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7. Many branches, one purpose

Storybranch's work may take many forms: books, scientific communication, educational programs, illustration, theatre, digital experiences, augmented reality, research, professional learning, citizen science and community collaboration.

These are not separate purposes. They are different expressions of the same commitment to translate verified knowledge into meaningful experiences and practical forms of participation.

Different branches may serve different ages, sectors and contexts. Coherence does not require uniformity. It requires every initiative to remain connected to the same roots and to contribute honestly to the wider mission.

8. A forest, not a single tree

No organization creates sustainable futures alone. Environmental challenges cross disciplines, generations, cultures and sectors. Meaningful responses depend on collaboration among educators, scientists, artists, engineers, schools, universities, museums, businesses, public institutions, Indigenous Peoples, local communities, families and learners.

Storybranch therefore aspires to participate in a wider ecosystem rather than become a solitary authority. Collaboration should be reciprocal, transparent and grounded in respect for different responsibilities and forms of expertise.

Success is reflected not only in what Storybranch produces, but also in the relationships it strengthens, the knowledge it helps make accessible, the competencies it supports and the initiatives that continue growing beyond its direct involvement. The goal is not to become the largest tree. It is to contribute to a healthier forest.

Closing reflection

Storybranch is rooted in science, guided by values, nourished by curiosity, strengthened through collaboration and growing through creativity.

We seek to help people understand that they belong to the living world, to cultivate that understanding early and to support the adults, communities and organizations that shape sustainable futures.

Like every living system, Storybranch will continue learning and adapting. What should remain constant is the integrity of its foundations and its commitment to helping knowledge become connection, competence and meaningful action.

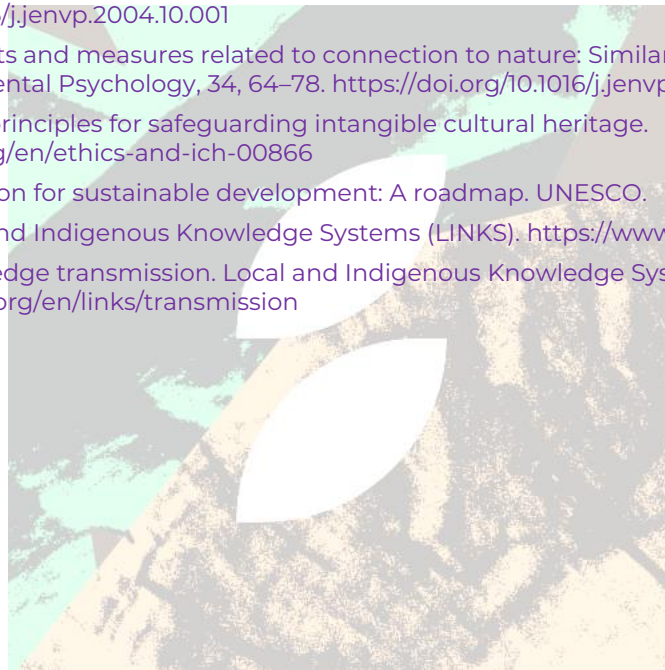
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