



Copper Beach
Painting by Anders Knutsson

TreeFriends

Using the Arts to Transform Our Relationship to the Natural World

What's it all about?

The core purpose of TreeFriends is to bring about urban behavioral change in response to multiple global crises. Using the arts—poetry, art, music, dance, theatre and deep dialogue—TreeFriends invites people to revisit our fundamental human story in order to change it radically so that it aligns with current scientific findings that confirm the interrelated and interdependent nature of all life on planet Earth.

Why TreeFriends?

Trees are one of the most powerful life forms on Earth and are revered by people the world over. Friends evoke qualities such as loyalty, trust, acceptance, reliability, respect.

What has been our fundamental human story?

For millennia most people have been behaving as though humans are separate from and superior to other life forms. In addition, the assumption has been that certain humans are superior to and more deserving than others. As this story continued to be played out over the centuries, people considered all life (including “inferior” humans) as their “resource” to be controlled, used, removed, discarded and/or eliminated. The dire consequences of this behavior are becoming increasingly obvious to more and more people. Recently creative thinkers have been **calling for humans to adopt a new story**.

We know how to change our out-moded Story!

Centuries ago humans had to alter their worldview from the widely accepted story that Earth was the centre of the universe to the one that all school children learn today. That major shift in consciousness took place slowly and painfully with strenuous resistance from the reigning power institutions.

How do we go about adopting a new story?

Much of TreeFriends' mission is aimed toward high school and college students - those who will be most affected by our changing world. Working in collaboration with resident faculty offering multi-media experiences and activities to NYC high schools and university students, TreeFriends addresses questions such as: How am I connected to the natural world? How do my actions affect others? What can I do to acknowledge the reality that all life is interconnected and interdependent? Who am I really?

How does this lead to real change?

As students become more conscious of the consequences of their actions and motivated to change their behavior, TreeFriends connects them to existing environmental and social change programs designed to improve urban conditions. This process is intended to both educate and inspire, **resulting in life-changing commitments dedicated to honoring and respecting all life.**

Now it's time to change the old story that humans are in charge of nature, which has kept us stuck in our present unsustainable patterns of behavior!

Today we face a critical urgency to change, not merely from the evidence of climate change but also the globally escalating imbalances between rich and poor, the breakdown of social systems both local and worldwide that produce widespread violence, isolation and despair. We are also witnessing the same kind of strenuous resistance from today's power structures.

From earliest times, we have expressed our most powerful experiences through music, art, poetry, theatre and dance. The arts can take us to the deepest places where our connections can be rebuilt.

TreeFriends invites you to take this journey with us.



**World's Oldest Living Tree,
Bristlecone Pine (4,763 years old)
Painting by Anders Knutsson 2008**

Praise for TreeFriends

"Congratulations on a very successful preview Tree Friends event. The dialogue process and the specific series of questions asked were very provocative and I think the combination of art, poetry and movement really primed the pump well."

— J. Chevalier, Artist

"I never realized how wasteful my personal use of water was. From now on I'm going to change my behavior."

— R. Sheley, Actor

"I want my graduate students to experience TreeFriends."

— J. Stoner, Chair Global Sustainability Dept, Fordham University Business School

Partner Network

Greenworks NYC

US Partnership Education of Sustainability

Climate Literacy Network

TreeFriends is an initiative of the Coalition for OneVoice.

For more information go to

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