



Children's Forest

THRESHOLD TO ADULTHOOD QUEST

Report

SEPT 11-16 2023

Hackhurst Farm, East Sussex

Facilitated by Heidi Rose & Sam Kouzarides

Children's Forest team:

Nicky Aisher, Jo Braham & Jen Beaufoy





YOUNG PEOPLE QUESTING:

x9 aged 17-19yrs

PARENTS:

x2 parents questing

x10 parents came to tend the fire and plant trees. Others sent well wishes.

QUEST FACILITATORS

Heidi Rose & Sam Kouzarides

CHILDREN'S FOREST TEAM

Nicky Aisher, Jo Braham & Jen Beaufoy

QUEST INTENTION

The intention for this threshold to adulthood Quest for young people and parents was to honour this important transition, giving young people an opportunity to reflect on their childhood and their intentions for their ongoing journey into adulthood. Many of the young people present were leaving home in the following weeks to start University. Parents were also given this opportunity to reflect on this significant transition. This form of Fire Quest comes from the Odawa lineage of the Peacemaker. Parents and young people came together to plant their intentions the trees in the Children's Forest.



THE STORY

We gathered together on a sunny September day and walked to the camp in the forest to set up tents and light the fire together. We had a welcome circle and walked the land together to orientate to the site, spending some time to visit the Mother Beech tree and sit quietly in the woods.

In the evening we gathered around the fire and shared our intentions for the coming quest. After a good meal, the last we would have until the completion of the Fire Quest, Sam shared teachings about the wheel of the year and of human life, bringing context to the rites of passage and the quest we were embarking on together.

FIRE QUEST

Arising before sunrise the following morning, we gathered and walked together to the Children's Forest in the misty dawn light. Here we spent some time in silence, feeling into the day and listening to the land. Sharing gratitude in circle, we brought our hearts and minds together for the coming day when we would fast and prepare our individual sites for our Fire Quest through the coming night.



INDIVIDUAL QUESTS

Over the coming day everyone found their quest sites and began to gather and prepare the wood needed for the night. It would be a 12 hour night because we were approaching the Autumn Equinox. As the day passed, Heidi and Sam spent time with each quester individually, helping them to find clarity of their intentions for the quest and people gathered together for a sharing circle in the afternoon.

As the sun began to set in the west, Sam lit the central fire with the bowdrill and we each took a coal carefully placed on pieces of bark and made our ways one by one to light our individual fires. There was a strong feeling and focus at this time, a concentrated attention was needed to carry the precious coal to our sites and light the sacred fires we would tend through the night.

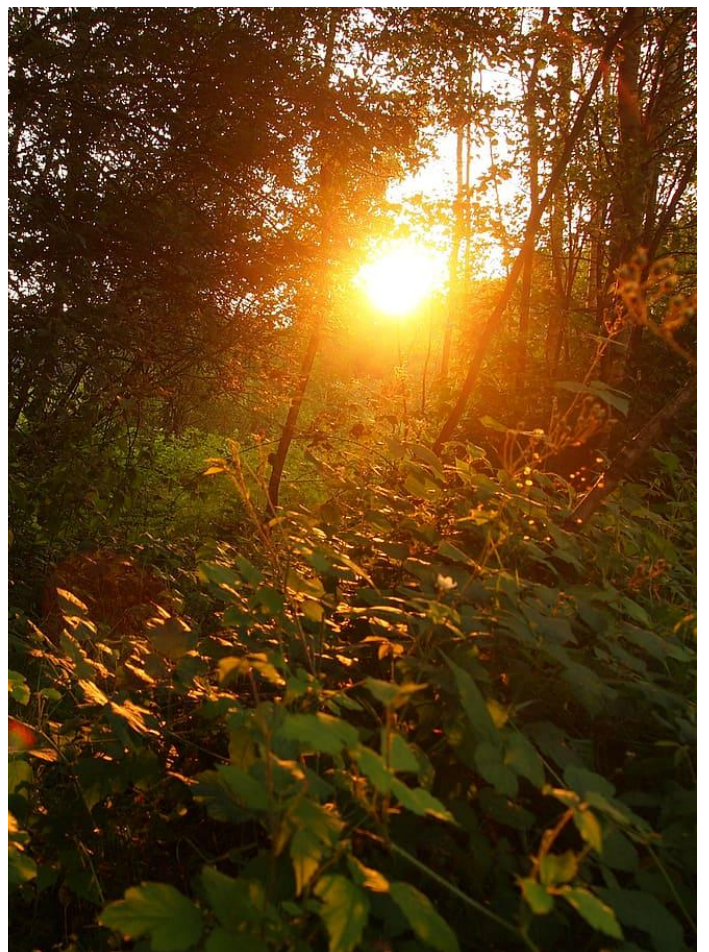


TENDING THE FIRE THROUGHOUT THE NIGHT

After all the questers had gone, parents arrived to spend time together at the central fire, sharing reflections and gratitude for their children and sending blessings for their quests.

The night was so calm and gentle, stars came out and across the woods the fires glowed. The hours passed and the central fire was tended by the team and joined by Jen Beaufoy from the Children's Forest team, supporting all those tending their own fires. This was a special and magical time for all, a time for reflection and connection to self, the natural world and the mystery.

Tending the fire through the night, questers needed to stay awake to feed the fire and to feel into the time before dawn light when the fire needed to be tended down, carefully stirring the coals so that the last ember went out as the Sun came up.



RETURNING TO THE CENTRAL FIRE

Returning one by one to the central fire in the morning light, everyone was welcomed back with song and fresh fruit to break the fast quietly together. Everyone seemed to glow and there was a golden quiet all around. The meadow beyond the forest shone with dew in the dawn light. Slowly the group all gathered and shared a cooked breakfast prepared by Jo and Nicky. Breaking our 36 hour fast, it was the most delicious food and we ate in contented and grateful silence together.

The following day was spent resting and journaling, sharing stories and playing games, integrating the experiences of the night and celebrating together.



PLANTING TREES

Parents arrived on the final day and we all walked together to the Children's Forest. Oran lit the central Children's Fire with the bowdrill and we shared the intention of this forest benefiting the future generations. Jo and Nicky demonstrated how to plant the trees and there was some time for families to share their intentions for this threshold time, with which they then planted with the trees. It was a hot sunny day and thankfully Sascha, the land guardian, brought a big container of water, so that we could water the trees and ourselves well! We planted a wild Apple tree altogether, each sharing a wish for the future generations and a blessing for the forest.





CELEBRATION FEAST

We celebrated with a pot luck feast back at camp before our closing circle. We wish the young people well as they journey onwards and celebrate the parents also at this threshold time. We look forward to gathering together to share stories and tend the trees as they grow over the years to come.



35 TREES PLANTED:

- Rowan
- Wild Apple
- Oak
- Lime
- Hazel
- Blackthorn
- Hawthorn
- Wild Rose
- Sweet Chestnut

23 PEOPLE PLANTING TREES

- 9 young people
- 14 adults



QUOTES FROM PARENTS



“What a profoundly moving and beautifully vital rite of passage the quest was for our daughter, and also for us parents too. How blessed we were to be able to ground a profound moment of change this way, through finding community, family and self rooted in deep nature connection. Thank you to all who worked so passionately to make this ceremonial space for our children and hold the process, I am so grateful to you all.”

~ Alastair Leigh (parent)



“I feel so grateful for the opportunity to be able to Quest and have time to reflect in a conscious way about this important threshold with my son. It has helped me so much to spend time with myself, with my son, with the land and the fire to make this transition as clean and clear as it can be to honour my own life moving forward, while supporting my son to be fully himself in the world as an adult. Planting trees together to honour this rite of passage means so much to me and to know that this special time will support the future generations.”

~ Anonymous parent



QUOTE FROM THE YOUNG PEOPLE

“The facilitators for the quest held and tended to a space with such kindness and precision. They created a safe space for me to explore my relationships with myself and the people around me. Those relationships have changed on a deep level and my friendships will show evidence of this incredible process for years and years to come.

This has truly been an experience that is unique and off the radar for many young people but has aided a huge amount of development and room for processing that I would love to see spread and made accessible in the world, particularly amongst young adults experiencing transition periods in their lives as it creates opportunity to come to terms with our stages of life.”

~ Isla (age 18)





QUOTE FROM THE YOUNG PEOPLE

'The Quest was something that I didn't know would be right for me at the time of committing to it, but as it got closer it truly felt like the time had come to throw myself into something new and slightly daunting for me. I went into the quest with a feeling of being a little behind on things, I already knew internally that this is not how our time here on earth goes, and that everyone goes at their own pace, and that is okay. However, the immediate safety and compassion that the people who held the space created for me really quietened my mind. I opened up about things that I didn't know I needed to let out, I learned more about tending to my own fire (which was something I wasn't super comfortable with). Even the energy I felt as I walked into the woodland put me at ease. I truly feel like the quest has opened up my mind about the possibilities in life, not for the physical things I can achieve, but how to slow down my mind and sit with myself, which was something that I had needed to do for a long time. The quest felt like a work of magic, which towards the end of my time there, it felt like everyone felt the same way. It was an unforgettable experience, strengthening my relationship with the flame, myself, and my ability to naturally integrate myself into nature, and new groups of people. This can sometimes feel out of practice in a busy and sometimes 'out of touch' world. Yet this experience reminded me that life can be, and should be gentle and slow for the mind and body, but also challenging, new and surprising!"

~ Ella (aged 18)



We are so grateful for the generous welcome and practical support of the land guardians Rebecca and Sascha. To Sam and Heidi for their impeccable care and integrity in holding the quest so well. To Jo and Nicky for holding the hearth and tree planting with such love and care, and to Jen who tended the central fire all through the night.. And huge gratitude to Cibus Foundation for enabling this event to happen.

Thank you for your support



CONTACT INFO

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