

Elyse Pomeranz

www.thetreeconversations.com

My name is Elyse Pomeranz. I am a tenant at 59 Arnold Crescent. I have lived there since September 2014.

I am 55 years old. I am a mother and grandmother. I work as a mentor and trainer of teachers in the independent international Waldorf education movement. I am also a craftswoman, artist, photographer and writer.

I am standing here and speaking what I know to be true so that I can face my children, my grandchildren, my students and the trees and say in good faith that I spoke openly and without fear about what I have experienced and what I hope can become possible in the future.

It is clear to me that trees are sentient; and that we can, and some day will, seek their inspiration and guidance as to how to collaborate with them.

I am here as a spokesperson on behalf of these conscious living beings, specifically four Norway Spruce trees on 60 Arnold Crescent designated with the numbers (from the arborist's report) of #0209, #0215, #0217, #0128.

What will be lost if the trees on this property are cut down will be a loss for hundreds if not thousands of people, animals and other trees and will be a loss that cannot be reversed for 100 years if at all.

These four trees growing on the property of 60 Arnold Crescent asked if I would be willing to communicate to you their point of view pertaining to their imminent removal.

Yes, the trees conveyed to me a wish to be included in this decision making process.

If you are rolling your eyes having already decided to dismiss this presentation, I am sorry. If you are ready to keep your mind and heart open to allow in something that may not fit your current view of the world I am grateful and hope you will leave today with new interest, thoughts and questions.

Because it is likely this has never before occurred at an OMB hearing I have created a brief introduction to describe the process I have developed over the last 5 years which supports communication between myself and the trees.

As a teacher, I know that listening with the intent to understand, truly open in my mind and heart is what allows a new idea, a new thought or something unfamiliar to enter. Trust and a sense of a security are essential. This is the foundation for teaching and learning. Over the last 30 years I realized that this type of listening was taking place in

the region of my heart. And what I was “hearing” was not audible or visible but rather “a feeling” or an “inner sensing”. With decades of practice I’ve come to trust this ability to perceive and from this perception decide how to act or speak in accord with what I will call “heart knowing”.

After many meaningful encounters with trees I decided that I needed to have some kind of visible record of the exchange. I developed a way of drawing using ink pencils and water brushes to create the image. Over the last 5 years I have done this 400 times with trees in 10 countries globally. I work with trees that are anywhere from 80 to 5000 years old. I know that I am just scratching the surface with this work thus far.

The trees firmly insisted that I was going to have to put my own views aside and most importantly my personal wish to “win”. In other words to have this situation turn out the way I, Elyse, wanted it to turn out. More than anything the trees were asking to have a chance to be part of the process; for their experience and point of view to be recognized; for the reality of their consciousness and awareness to be accepted.

#0217 (See image below which shows the “face” or the “personality” of this tree)



This tree (#0217) was standing as spoketree for the group, and his primary wish is to continue to grow in order to be able to offer his gifts to the human beings and animals who come and go around them. The tree also expressed a deep respect and admiration for the ability that human beings have to build. “You don’t understand what it means to have hands.”

The trees are not standing in judgment of me, the town, the residents, the developers or the OMB. They give of their life freely.

The trees are offering to contribute inspiration for how we might build so that the new structures are beautiful, healthy, strong and support emotional, psychological and physical well being as well as support the development of human community life.

Tree # 0218



This tree stands at the border of the property and also is close to the sidewalk and street. You can see that on one side (the side facing the current house) the drawing shows simply tree branches . On the side where people walk and drive by in a continuous flow the

drawing of the tree is enhanced by something lively and colourful. This tree showed me that it is constantly bestowing a gentle and warm encouragement to passersby. A sense of well-being and joy is what this tree offers to everyone. Most likely people don't associate a sudden sense of energy renewal or happiness to anything in particular. And in many cases people may not even notice anything at all. But for some reason people choose to walk this route and not along another street.

A note from me: Trees often are showering us with gifts and we might find ourselves suddenly with a solution to a longstanding problem, or just feeling more positive about our day. Perhaps you can imagine what kind of a difference this makes in a neighborhood. It is also a form of protection in that the kind of negative thoughts and feelings that underlay criminal behavior can be altered or there might be a hesitation that is created by the unexpected feeling of well being that this tree offers unconditionally to everyone in proximity.

Tree #0209



This next tree was less direct in its communication. After some months I noticed that this image is effectively an enlargement of the area in the first image given as the face of the tree # 0217. It is as if we had zoomed in towards the “nose” area of the portrait. This tree

#0209 is set back from the street and towards the eastern border of the property of 60 Arnold Crescent. It has been protected from the passing traffic and also is away from the entrance to the house or the backyard. The aspects of the image including the jewel/crystal, the bird and the flowing downwards of the rainbow colours are noteworthy. Where the tree at the front of the house #0218 is giving something to the passersby this tree is giving something into the soil, the earth below. This gift is also directed towards the birds.

I will interject for a moment from my human point of view. I have a bird feeder at the rear of the house at 59 Arnold Crescent. There is a remarkable assortment of birds eating at my feeder; juncos, red-breasted nuthatches, white breasted nuthatches, chickadees, sparrows, finches, cardinals, blue jays, crows and blackbirds. Also those who like to clean up the dropped seeds; red squirrels, chipmunks and rabbits. The joy they bring into my life is immeasurable. I am mentioning this because I was in Thunder Bay in September 2016 in a White Pine conservancy 3 hours out of the city. As I sat with those 400 year old White Pines I was approached by the exact same assortment of birds and squirrels as those who visit me daily on my back porch. That is remarkable to be in the city of Richmond Hill and to enjoy wildlife comparable to a Nature Conservancy north of Lake Superior!

These Norway Spruce are very very important to the birds. So this tree #0217 was showing how, through the birds, it is pouring life and vitality back into the earth.

This image depicts a specific role or work that this particular tree is undertaking on behalf of the whole neighbourhood, similarly in a human community or family each member performs different jobs or tasks, in a stand of trees the mature trees take on certain specific individual functions.

This has been shown to be true by scientific research into forestry and you can investigate this yourself if you wish by either watching the Ted talk by Suzanne Simard or reading this paper:

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- **Inter-plant communication through mycorrhizal networks mediates complex adaptive behaviour in plant communities**

[Monika A. Gorzelak](#) [Amanda K. Asay](#) [Brian J. Pickles](#) [Suzanne W. Simard](#)

Abstract

Adaptive behaviour of plants, including rapid changes in physiology, gene regulation and defence response, can be altered when linked to neighbouring plants by a mycorrhizal network (MN). Mechanisms underlying the behavioural changes include mycorrhizal fungal colonization by the MN or interplant communication via transfer of nutrients, defence signals or allelochemicals. We focus this review on our new findings in ectomycorrhizal ecosystems, and also review recent advances in arbuscular mycorrhizal systems. We have found that the behavioural changes in ectomycorrhizal plants depend on environmental cues, the identity of the plant neighbour and the characteristics of the MN. The hierarchical integration of this phenomenon with other biological networks at broader scales in forest ecosystems, and the consequences we have observed when it is

interrupted, indicate that underground 'tree talk' is a foundational process in the complex adaptive nature of forest ecosystems.

Or by reading the international bestselling book "The Hidden Life of Trees" by German forester Peter Wohlleben.

Now for the fourth tree. # 0215



Ultimately the drawings contain within them so much more than I am yet able to decipher. My descriptions accompanying the first three drawings come as a result of listening and drawing for over five years and I have had almost a year to look at these

particular drawings keeping an open mind and trying to “understand” what they are communicating. When I am making the drawings they do not arrive complete but rather I “listen” to the tree and will draw something, wet the paper, listen again, draw again, wet it again and in this way I allow something to emerge. I am as astonished by the results as anyone else.

In certain cases it has taken me many visits over several years to understand what a tree is conveying. Having a new thought is not so easy.

This drawing is from tree #0215 is, frankly, a mystery. It seems as if there are very different principles coming together harmoniously. There is a lot of movement and yet balance. I am reminded of the pine cones the tree produces and how the squirrels rely on them for food in the fall and winter. Perhaps you will have an insight into the meaning of this drawing!

My neighbors at 63 Arnold Crescent very kindly allowed me to sit with their Norway Spruce. I made three drawings with it. I have the impression that this tree is like the patriarch/matriarch of the Norway Spruce “family”. Of all the trees I sat with it seemed the most disturbed by the possibility of the cutting down of #0209, #0215, #0217, and #0218 as well as all the other trees slated to be cut.

The first drawing is an expression of this tree’s particular experience of place and surroundings.



At the time I was sitting with this tree the fires of Fort McMurray were raging. The second drawing is commenting on that event.



The third drawing was a response to my question of what is coming our way in this neighborhood and how can we meet it and respond constructively.



There is a study published in Nature: Scientific Reports from July 2015 showing that trees in a neighborhood promote health in astonishing ways. Here is the abstract from that paper.

Neighborhood greenspace and health in a large urban center

• [Omid Kardan](#), [Peter Gozdyra](#), [Bratislav Misic](#), [Faisal Moola](#), [Lyle J. Palmer](#), [Tomáš Paus](#) & [Marc G. Berman](#)

Studies have shown that natural environments can enhance health and here we build upon that work by examining the associations between comprehensive greenspace metrics and health. We focused on a large urban population center (Toronto, Canada) and related the two domains by combining high-resolution satellite imagery and individual tree data from Toronto with questionnaire-based self-reports of general health perception, cardio-metabolic conditions and mental illnesses from the Ontario Health Study. Results from multiple regressions and multivariate canonical correlation analyses suggest that people who live in neighborhoods with a higher density of trees on their streets report significantly higher health perception and significantly less cardio-metabolic conditions (controlling for socio-economic and demographic factors). We find that having 10 more trees in a city block, on average, improves health perception in ways comparable to an increase in annual personal income of \$10,000 and moving to a neighborhood with \$10,000 higher median income or being 7 years younger. We also find that having 11 more trees in a city block, on average, decreases cardio-metabolic conditions in ways comparable to an increase in annual personal income of \$20,000 and moving to a neighborhood with \$20,000 higher median income or being 1.4 years younger.

Thank you for including me in this hearing. While we are not currently considering the point of view of the trees in our care I trust that in time it will be possible. We are faced with a myriad of problems including depression, anxiety, violence and other disturbances. Will we build for beauty and health? I believe we will. And the trees will support us, as they always have.