

Education natures way.

Annual Report 2020

A Year in Review

Thank you for being part of the Sacred Rok community. With the support of our donors we finished our eleventh year of working with underserved youth from the Central Valley and Northern California. What started as a camping trip with a small group of foster youth from Merced has evolved into a community of like-minded collaborators who understand the value and power of education nature's way.

Sacred Rok operated in accordance with restrictions from Covid-19. Throughout the year, in spite of challenges and in line with the safest practices for gathering, Sacred Rok held fourteen trips to Yosemite and Pinnacles National Parks, and Bishop, Ca from July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020.

We led trips with incarcerated youth from the juvenile halls in both Merced and San Benito counties, Native youth from the Big Pine and Bishop, Ca, area Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) youth, and the Merced Youth Council. These trips continue to strengthen our ongoing relationships with our youth and our connection to the natural world.

Our Executive Director, Ron, in addition to showing his movie, *Return to Balance:* A Climber's Journey, at the Yosemite Visitor Center, also gave a series of presentations at various clubs, and events. We also continued a mentoring internship with a young woman our COO, Katie Lambert, hosted in our previous fiscal year.

We are grateful for the support of the Clif Bar Family Foundation, The North Face, Patagonia, the United Way of Merced County, the Gummerlock Foundation, The Moffat Foundation, as well as many individual donors.

We appreciate our friends and supporters who share our values and commitment to our youth and their future.

SACRED ROK

BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

Ron Kauk - Executive Director

Steve Shackelton - Board Chair

Brandi Lennertz - Secretary, Treasurer

Lamar Henderson

Lam Kindavong

Brian Cooley – Honorary Board Member







SUMMIT OF ULI BIAHO, 20,043'

Karakoram, Pakistan John Roskelly Image, 1979

A Letter from our Executive Director

RON KAUK

In 1979, at the age of 21, I went to Pakistan into the Karakorum Range of the Himalayan mountains. After a seven day trek our team of 29 porters and four climbers arrived at base camp, 14,000 feet off the Baltoro Glacier. For me, I felt at home amongst these granite walls. This valley was similar to Yosemite, where I had learned all the disciplines of climbing from boulders to big walls, even ice climbing. Our first ascent of Uli Biaho required 100% commitment from us all as a team. Tied together with ropes, but also trust that would allow us to face the biggest, overall climbing challenge of my lifetime.

Our climb took ten days. The four of us took on responsibilities - two climbers would do the leading and the other two hauled the gear, set up camp and melted snow on ledges for water. Over the course of the ten days we alternated these responsibilities. Our team had to understand what it meant to commune with this extreme environment and communicate to each other at all times. This was an ultimate experience of accomplishment for a safe passage making it to the summit.

After our short time on the summit, the reality of getting down to the ground was rappelling 3,000 feet. This took two days. All the lessons learned on this climb seemed to represent a school for life which promoted a profound feeling of connection with all the elements.

Preparing for this journey through years of climbing in Yosemite was based on a common sense approach to the art of protecting yourself in extreme environments; Being honest with yourself about your abilities and the ability to work together with a team on a shared goal of making it safely through many incredibly challenging situations.

For me, Sacred Rok represents a lifetime of experiences that have been put together with a team of people that I feel have the same commitment of reaching a shared goal. We are committed to helping our youth build a foundation for their lives; to think clearly for themselves through the development of the senses, and for them to live their dreams and discover their authentic self. This can bring us to the realization that all life is connected.

We all have a shared responsibility to take care of our world. I thank the youth for helping us understand that.

With respect to Education Nature's Way,

Ron Kauk

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Overview of Sacred Rok

THE SACRED ROK MISSION is to help youth learn to respect nature and through that, to respect themselves. Our approach is to slow down and focus on the basics by bringing awareness and education to the rhythms of nature, through the air we breathe, the rivers that flow, and the profound reality that we are nature. We are remembering what it means to be human. This is why we say, "Education Nature's Way."

Since 2009 we have led day trips and camping trips with approximately 600 youth who are primarily incarcerated, in foster care, or come from low-income, and underserved communities. For eleven years we have continued to work with organizations like San Benito County Probation, Merced County Probation, Merced County Human Services, local Indigenous groups, and various other youth serving organizations in the Central Valley and Northern California.

Young people have lost touch with nature, and yet they will be the earth's stewards in coming generations. There are several barriers which prevent youth from having time in nature. Electronics are incredibly attractive to youth, but can result in a disconnect and lack of interest in the outside world. Additionally, many youth don't have the opportunity to experience nature during their everyday lives either from a lack

of knowledge that these spaces exist or from a lack of access to parks and greenspaces. This is especially true in the underserved, ethnic and minority communities.

Studies show that 90% of justice-involved youth have experienced serious trauma in their lifetime.

We seek to break those barriers. Merced is called "The Gateway to Yosemite" but many of the youth from this community have never been there. Growing up in neighborhoods with guns, drugs and gangs, they risk getting into trouble and getting locked up. Merced is the 5th highest out of 58 California counties for youth fatalities by guns – the majority a result of gang violence. Teens in the Central Valley are more likely "disconnected" – not in school and not working. Juvenile felony arrest rate 8.4 per 1,000 in Merced, 7.1 in San Joaquin, and 6.4 in Tulare vs 5.3 per 1,000 statewide.



According to www.prisonpolicy.org, nation-wide nearly 50,000 youth are confined today. Confinement remains a punishing and often traumatizing experience for youth who typically already have a history of trauma and victimization, signaling that reforms are badly needed in the juvenile justice system.

Studies show that 90% of justice-involved youth have experienced serious trauma in their lifetime. Healing the trauma takes time and nurturing; spending time in nature, communing with positive role models and the environment can be an incredibly healing opportunity for these youth. Exposure to nature has proven to help relationship skills, reduce stress and aggression, help the ability to focus, reduce symptoms of ADHD, and improve impulse control. Even going outside for as little as five minutes a day will provide a boost to well-being.

Sitting by a river, hiking, camping, learning to climb rocks, trail building, trash clean-up, and other service work; these experiences with nature serve as a source of energy for youth to discover their potential, to explore themselves, to develop relationships with caring adults, and to learn to mentor other youth.

Through time spent together we help them create a connection to the earth and a ground-ed-ness within themselves. In these environments, as we taste the water and enjoy human community in ways so rarely experienced by our youth, we open up our senses to this reality of seeing, hearing, touching, and above all feeling, and being able to talk about how we feel. We can practice the realization and the art of being human.

OVERVIEW OF SACRED ROK | ANNUAL REPORT 2020



The cost of doing nothing: A year in juvenile hall costs taxpayers more than \$90,000.

Simply walking, communing, and communicating in such environments can be life changing. The potential of so many young people is lost because our social institutions are not responsive to these instinctive needs.

We can help break the spell and end the cycle of violence, abuse, trauma and lifetime incarceration with these youth. And from this end, a new cycle – of love and respect for ourselves, our communities, and all life – will emerge, inspiring us to re-evaluate how we educate all our youth by extending the path of formal education to include education nature's way.

Sacred Rok's commitment to supporting our youth in nature has shown us the healing power that can help transform the trauma of violence, abuse, and neglect.

We are grateful to our supporters and donors, who share our values and commitment to our future as an inclusive society connected to nature

Sacred Rok is governed by an experienced and dedicated volunteer Board of Directors from a variety of ethnic, cultural, and professional backgrounds from educators, human services professionals, and law enforcement, to community members and leaders.

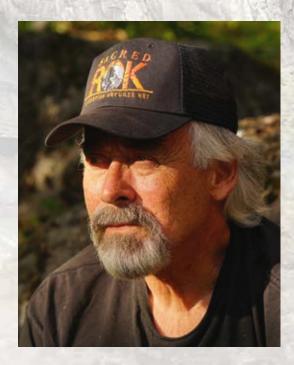
Sacred Rok Goals

The goals adopted by the Board of Directors reflect Sacred Rok's priorities and guide our efforts:

- O1 Programming and activities such as day trips and camping, focusing on maintaining relationships with our current contracts and building new relationships with other local youth-serving agencies;
- O2 Telling the story of Sacred Rok through books, videos, newsletters, the website, social media and educational presentations;
- **O3** Building staff infrastructure to manage new initiatives.
- O4 Long term goals An expansion into more long-term and sustainable funding.

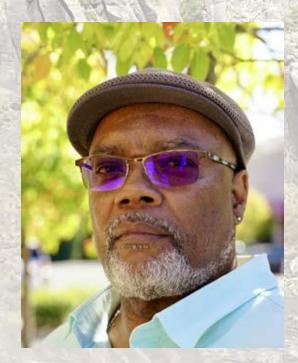


Letters from the Board



STEVE SHACKELTON
Board Chair

Yosemite is the adventure-stoked universe of my childhood and educational well of my adult career. Sacred Rok offers an incomparable opportunity to invest a lifetime of inspiration drawn from Yosemite into a channel that operates to assist young people along the path of learning. In this case, learning about confidence, character and respect through physical, arduous time spent together in the wild, natural, rugged worlds preserved for them by parks. It also means seeing with profound appreciation, the resilient power of community - through the care and generosity of the larger Sacred Rok family of friends. This spirit has gotten us unflaggingly through a year of fires and pandemic: a trial that has made us stronger and more committed to the work of education nature's way.



LAMAR HENDERSON
Board of Directors

Sacred Rok offers an opportunity to show gratitude for what nature and being in nature has done for me. As a 12 year old I had the opportunity to spend 2 weeks in the Sequoia National Forest as a participant/camper. We spent 4 nights and 5 days hiking, seeing, smelling and experiencing the majesty that is big trees, rushing rivers and wild life.

This experience created a shift in the way I saw the world and the way I saw myself in it.

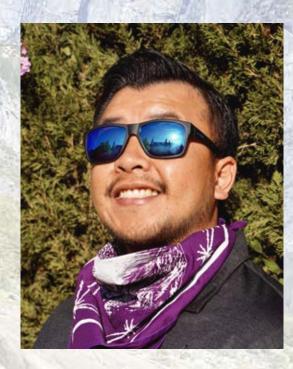
After my experience as a camper I was invited back to experience a more advance camping experience then later an employee. All my adult life I wanted to share that experience with other youth...Sacred Rok provides that opportunity. In what feels like an ailing world for so many... Sacred Rok provides the medicine!



BRANDI LENNERTZ
Secretary, Board of Directors

I am grateful to be a part of Sacred Rok, because I get the opportunity to support a diverse group of kids experiencing the wonders of Yosemite in a safe and supportive environment. It gives me joy to see kids gaining confidence in their physical ability to navigate a trail, or climb a boulder, or experience the mist from the power of a waterfall. On a recent trip with Sacred Rok we took a group of foster youth into El Capitan Meadow and after lunch they climbed a Ponderosa Pine that stands in the meadow. After, one of the boys said to me "I feel like a kid again". That simple statement enforced the importance of our mission which is to support the education and emotional well-being of youth through their relationship with the natural world.

"Education nature's way."



LAM KINDAVONG
Board of Directors

As we press forward and move into a new year with lifestyle adjustments, one thing we can all rely on is the consistency nature has to offer. This everlasting footprint remains a precious memory that youth can always hold onto. These opportunities that Sacred Rok provides continue to become sacred moments that youth can always reflect on.

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Day Trips & Camping Trips

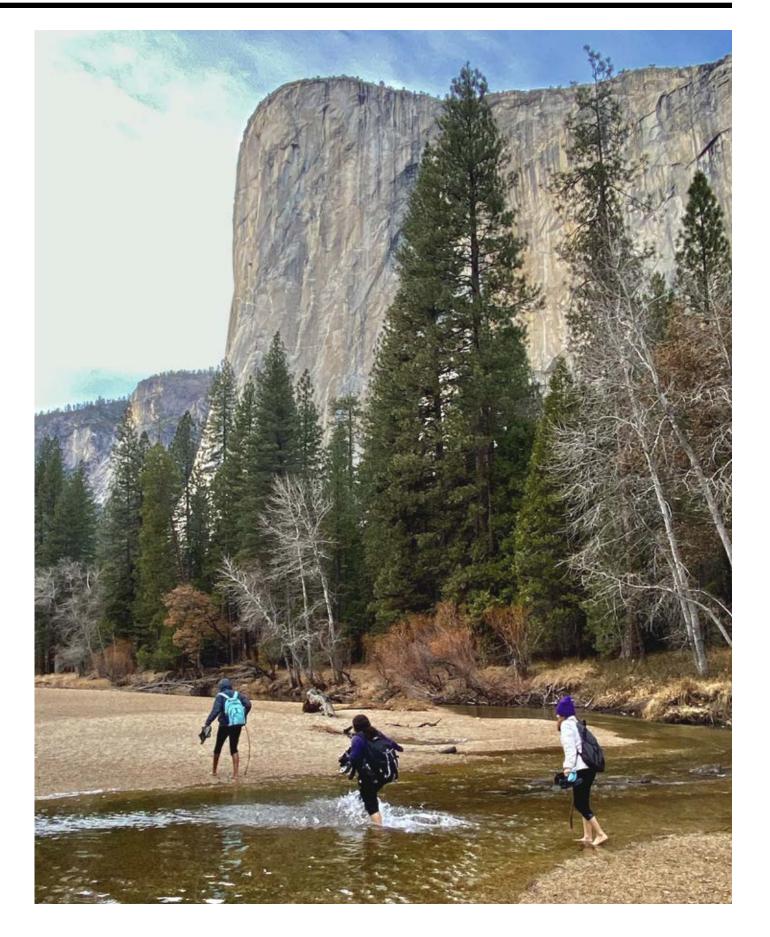


OUR ACTIVITIES ARE DAY TRIPS and camping trips to Yosemite National Park, Pinnacles National Park and Bishop, CA. Each trip is led by Sacred Rok Executive Director Ron Kauk and Katie Lambert, our extraordinary cook and Chief Operating Officer. We limit each trip to 4-6 youth in order to be able to focus on the healing experience of the ceremony of nature, the setting, and the building of trust and relationships. We take the youth on repeat trips to help them become more comfortable and to build ongoing relationships over time.

Nature provides the curriculum and the structure – wind, weather, and water are our guides. A typical day trip in Yosemite Valley might include a stop at Fern

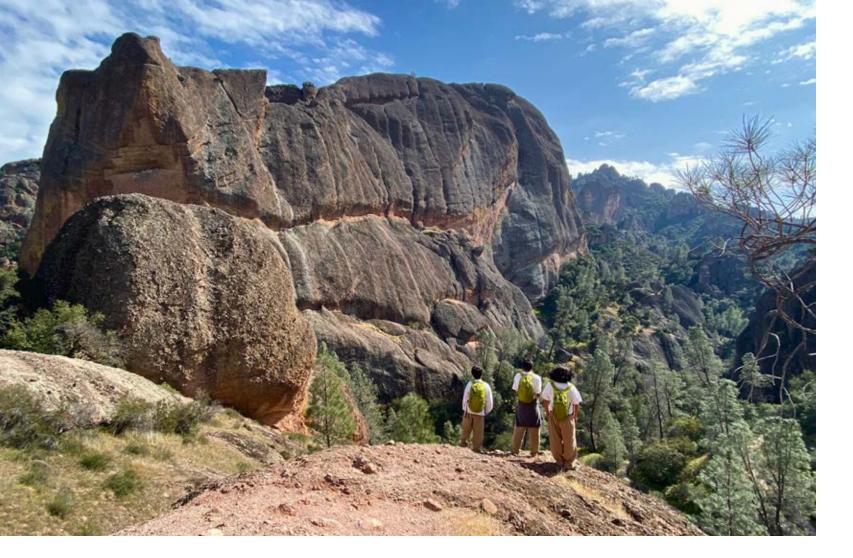
Spring to fill water bottles and appreciate the ancient water flowing from the ground, a hike from Tunnel View up to Old Inspiration Point, service work or a cultural lesson at the Wahhoga Native Village, lunch, a rock climbing session in Camp 4, or a walk to the base of El Capitan. Our camping trips are typically at Tuolumne Meadows Campground.

At 8,800 feet elevation, Tuolumne Meadows is only open in the summer months and is less crowded than Yosemite Valley. A camping trip might include a hike along the Tuolumne River past Pothole Dome, a walk to Parsons Lodge and Soda Springs, a dip in Tenaya Lake, rock climbing or a hike up the back of Lembert Dome.



SACRED ROCK | EDUCATION NATURE'S WAY





Merced County Juvenile Hall

Sacred Rok led three day trips with Merced County Probation youth who are incarcerated in Iris Garrett Juvenile Justice facility.

For the 11th year, Sacred Rok continued to work closely with the Merced County Probation Department's juvenile hall and its Bear Creek Academy (BCA), a short-term program for incarcerated youth who have been committed by the Juvenile Court and are incarcerated for at least a year at the Iris Garrett Juvenile Justice Correctional Complex in Merced. In 2015 the youth created BCA Mission I'm possible to share their stories about their experiences in Yosemite with Sacred Rok.

Their mission:

"Mission I'm possible's members seek wisdom by learning from nature and life's experiences to find purpose in life, be more responsible, and respectful while being human beings."

The Probation van brings BCA youth to Yosemite for a day trip to Yosemite with Ron and our COO, Katie Lambert. They are always accompanied by Probation officers. Participating youth are selected by the Probation Department on the basis of good behavior. The trips often include trail repair or work around the Wahhoga Native Village.

Ron has also gone to juvenile hall several times a month for lunch. He brings healthy organic food, they share lunch and talk about their experiences in Yosemite. The juvenile hall continues to build Sacred Rok into its curriculum and programming for these young people.

TRIP HIGHLIGHTS:





San Benito County Juvenile Hall

Sacred Rok held one overnight trip to Yosemite and one day trip to Pinnacles with youth from San Benito County juvenile hall

San Benito County Juvenile Hall is a short drive from Pinnacles National Park. Ron Kauk and Sacred Rok Board Chair, Steve Shackelton, have led many trips with youth from the Juvenile Hall to Pinnacles National Park.

Juvenile Hall Superintendent Joe Frontella says,

"Sacred Rok brings such therapeutic value to the youth we work with in the San Benito County Juvenile Hall. I am confident that the community as a whole will eventually be a better place because of the work that Sacred Rok is doing today."

Merced Youth Council

Sacred Rok led two overnight trips with young people from the Merced Youth Council

This was our fourth year working with the Merced Youth Council. For us at Sacred Rok it is always a great experience to have the Merced Youth Council come up as we join together for our walks and talks within Yosemite. It is an opportunity to work together in bridging these two environments of Merced and Yosemite, the urban with the natural. The Merced Youth Council is getting involved in social issues that promote the health and wellness of their community. We are honored to continue this relationship and look forward to expanding these stories into their community, which will help the vision for the future of these young people to be the leaders that they already are becoming.

DAY TRIPS & CAMPING TRIPS | ANNUAL REPORT 2020



"Thank you for helping me and making me laugh."

- SR YOUTH

Big Pine 6Th Grade Class

Sacred Rok led 2 day trips within the Bishop, Ca. area and 2 overnight trips to Yosemite with the 6th grade class at the Big Pine school.

The Big Pine school is an "Expeditionary Learning School", which brings new learning opportunities to small classes of local, mostly Indigenous youth. As of the 2020 school year the Big Pine school was 75% Native American, coming primarily from the Big Pine Band of Owens Valley Paiute Shoshone.

Expeditionary Learning schools focus on project-based learning where the youth attain a deeper understanding and knowledge through active exploration of the outside world around them. In conjunction with their educational philosophy and our mission we held two weekend trips in Yosemite National Park and two days of rock climbing in Bishop, Ca.

CASA – Merced County

We held one weekend trip with a foster home from CASA of Merced.

The goal of CASA is to protect and insure each foster child's right to a safe, permanent home. These children have come into the Juvenile Dependency Court system as the victims of abuse, neglect and/or abandonment. CASA of Merced County has sought to work and collaborate with all of the appropriate agencies serving abused and neglected children.

Sacred Rok facilitates the ceremony of nature by providing our youth the opportunity to walk on the trails, swim in the lakes and rivers, and enjoy the sunrises and sunsets. Through day and overnight trips to Yosemite National Park we develop our senses and promote calmness and a connection to the harmony that exists in nature. This is a sacred space for youth to start to feel comfortable and confident within themselves.

Other Trips

We held a handful of other day and camping trips to Tuolumne Meadows and Bishop with small groups of local Native youth, and mentoring trips with small groups of youth and advisors.



A Note from The Camp Kitchen

KATIE LAMBERT

Childhood obesity and Type II Diabetes are a crisis on our youth. According to the CDC, obesity affected approximately 13.7 million youth. In California, 17% of youth ages 10-17 have obesity, ranking California the 15th highest in the nation. And it almost goes without saying that there is a disproportionate impact on youth of ethnic and racial minorities and from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Studies show that childhood obesity is a result of many factors including living in a food insecure household with limited access to healthy foods, with often regular exposure to calorie-dense, low-cost, processed foods. The reality is that a child can look overweight but still be hungry and nutrient deficient as a result of eating too many poor quality, high calorie foods. This is known as the "hunger-obesity paradox."

Positive health behaviors can and should be integrated during childhood; with mitigating and preventing adolescent obesity and Type II Diabetes at the forefront of Sacred Rok's approach to nutrition the Camp Kitchen works diligently to procure as much local, seasonal, and wild food as possible. As Sacred Rok's Nutritionist, I've built our trip menus around affordable, nutrient dense, and real food.

The fast foods, processed foods, and commodity foods have taken the place of real and whole foods due to perceived convenience and affordability. For many people healthy eating is synonymous with being expensive. But by focusing on "Traditional Foods," which are the

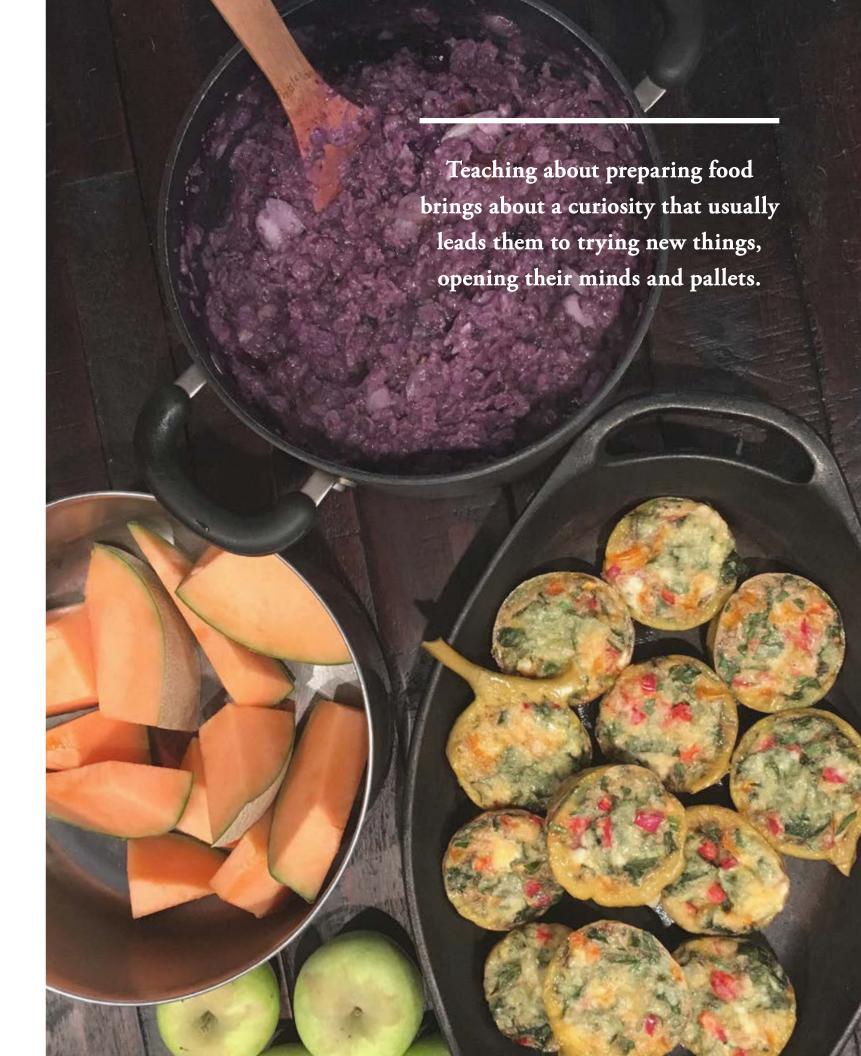
foods that nourished our ancestors throughout history and prehistory prior to the advent of the industrialization of food, I believe it allows us the gift of nourishment and can be done in a very affordable way.

Deeply nourishing, traditional foods as our ancestors knew them were unprocessed, naturally raised, largely raw and unrefined. Eating in this way helps us to develop a positive relationship with our food, and teaches us to purchase, prepare, and enjoy our food with intention.

The Sacred Rok approach is leading by example and teaching through interaction. For many of these young people this is the first time they are experiencing certain foods or methods of preparation, such as soaking and fermenting. Teaching about traditional ways of preparing food brings about a curiosity in the youth that usually leads them to trying new and unfamiliar things, opening their minds and pallets.

By creating healthy and approachable meals and snacks that the youth enjoy it opens up an extended world of flavors, aromas and a connection to the senses. With their senses awakened their minds are expanded. My aim is to make such an impression that when given the opportunity on their own they will opt for the real food option as opposed to the processed boxes.

Kati Lamlit



Out of 57 participants surveyed after their trips:

Outcomes

WE SEEK POSITIVE OUTCOMES - defined as changes in knowledge, attitude or behavior - for youth participants. Some outcomes are apparent immediately. These short-term outcomes include an increased self-confidence in nature and caring for the environment. Young people learn to sit at peace under a tree or by a river without needing an electronic tether to communication and social media. They are calmer and better able to manage anger, and more able to control their impulses. One way we measure these outcomes is through participant surveys.

Longer term, outcomes include respect for nature and themselves, the feeling of being respected and valued by adults, more positive peer and adult relationships, and goals for the future that lead to more engagement in school, work or personal projects and aspirations.

After each trip surveys are sent to the youth through their chaperones or group leaders.

said they had a better understanding of nature

said they felt less stressed

said they felt inspired

Our Supporters

WE OWE SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR SUPPORTERS,

without whom our efforts would not be possible. We are so grateful for the many donations that we receive from people who are inspired by our story, who read our newsletter, attend our events or meet Ron when he shows his movies at the Yosemite Visitor Center.

TOP OF THE ROCK: \$15,000 AND ABOVE

Clif Bar Family Foundation
Gumerlock Family Foundation
William H Moffat, Jr. Foundation

SPONSORS: \$5,000 - \$15,000

Chouinard Family Charitable
Patagonia
Paul Gyugi
The North Face

PARTNERS: \$500-\$5,000

A.C. Israel Foundation
Barbara Erny
Dan Gieber
Jan Zwiertstra
John D Hull
Lisa Mckethan and Brian McInerny

Mary Newman
Michael Danek
Milbrey McLaughlin
Nancy Goodban & Kenji Hakuta
United Way of Merced County

SUPPORTERS: \$100-\$500

Angie Chagaris	Holly Kenyon	Margaret Van Horn
Ann Anderson	J. Osborne	Maria Cranor
Arnold Rampersad	James Zatolokin	Mike Donahue
Brian Cooley	James Endo	Onyinyechukwu J Monu
Bruce Hodge	Jonathan Blees	Patrick Donaldson
Cathy Tseng	John Fisk	Patricia Payne-Zajac
Craig Reynolds	John Hopkins	Sean Collier
David Ciaffardini	Joyce Hulbert	Stephanie Antonioli
Dennis Yonemura	Karen & George Kalvass	Stephanie Cruz
Florence & Paul Eckstein	Laurel & Eric Gunderson	Steven Weiss
Heather Kirkpatrick	Linda Lansdowne	Uchechukuka D Monu
Hehewutei Amakali	Lucy Snyder	

FRIENDS: UP TO \$100

Angela DeWree	Janet Goodban	Nicholas Colgin
Austin Reed	Jeanine Gendar	Ronna Buccelli
Becky Gibson	Jennifer Murdock	Sara Carles
Beth Pratt	Lamar Henderson	Scott Isgitt
Beverly Hoshi	Laurel Anderson	Scott Williams
Darren Ellis	Lisa Sheridan	Shelly Blaisdell
David & Mila Cochran	Maria Magnani	Sonya Sukalski
Donna Piedrafita	Michael Maher	Steve Fette
Elaine Hausman	Michele Beal	Steve Matous
Frank Forencich	Nadine Goodban	Sue Beatty
J.Raine	Nancy Ogilvie	Todd Myers

Financials

In the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2020, Sacred Rok received \$108,706.91 in revenue and had \$108,992.79 in expenses, for net operating income of -\$283.88. The balance sheet showed \$214,310.01 in assets.

Our primary funding in FY 2019 was foundation funding (\$65,250.00 - 61% of our revenue), followed by individual donations (\$24,197.00 - 22% of our revenue), followed by Corporate contributions (\$10,000.00 - 9% of our revenue) and government contracts (\$8,224.49, 8% of our revenue).

Our primary expense was camping and day trips, which accounted for \$93,332.00 or 95% of our expenses. Outreach and education made up \$1,405.20 or 1% of our expenses. Organizational expenses made up the remaining \$11,855.05 or 10% of our expenses. Our largest organizational expenses are insurance, administrative support, staffing for grant writing and upkeep of the web site and newsletter, telecommunications, and postage.

The pie charts on the right shows our revenue sources and our costs. The Profit and Loss Statement and Balance Sheet are shown on the next two pages.

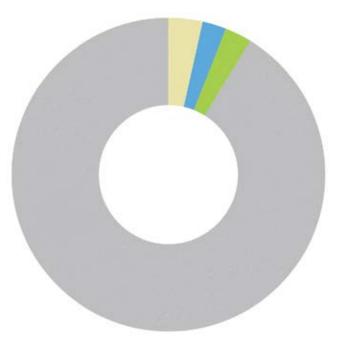


Fundraising 3%

Total Contract Services 1%

Total Outreach, Education 1%

Total Program 95%



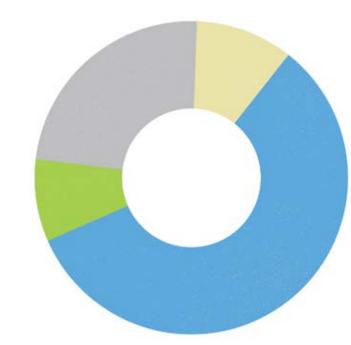
Fiscal Year 2019-2020 Revenue

Corporate Contributions 9%

Foundation Grants 61%

Government Grants & Contracts 8%

Individual Contributions 22%



SACRED ROCK ANNUAL REPORT

SACRED ROK PROFIT AND LOSS JULY 2019 - JUNE 2020

00.00 50.00 24.49 97.05 36.37 1.00 08.91 00.00
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24.49 97.05 36.37 1.00 08.91 08.91 00.00
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SACRED ROK BALANCE SHEET AS OF JUNE 2020

Assets Current Assets	
Bank Accounts	
Charles Schwab	0.00 540.80
PayPal Bank TriCounties Bank	180,572.10
WePay	0.00
TOTAL BANK ACCOUNTS	\$181,112.90
Other Current Assets	
Supplies Inventory Undeposited Funds	1,926.58 0.00
TOTAL OTHER CURRENT ASSETS	\$1,926.58
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	
	\$183,039.48
Fixed Assets Camper	43,310.00
Accum Depr - Vehicles	-14,951.00
TOTAL CAMPER	28,359.00
Furniture and Equipment	4,936.53
Accum Depr - Furn and Equip	-2,025.00
TOTAL FURNITURE AND EQUIPMENT	2,911.53
TOTAL FIXED ASSETS	\$31,270.53
TOTAL ASSETS	\$214,310.01
Liabilities and Equity	
Liabilities	
Current Liabilities Other Current Liabilities	
Payroll Tax Payable	1,265.32
TOTAL OTHER CURRENT LIABILITES	\$1,265.32
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES	\$1,265.32
TOTAL LIABILITIES	\$1,265.32
Equity	
Opening Balance Equity Retained Earnings	732.75 212,595.82
Net Income	-283.88
TOTAL EQUITY	\$213,044.69
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	\$214,310.0°

SACRED ROCK | EDUCATION NATURE'S WAY FINANCIALS | ANNUAL REPORT 2020

"I am so grateful that you provided the opportunity for my students to be outside and connect with nature. They talk about you frequently and the moments we shared in Yosemite.

Looking forward to deepening our connection to rock climbing. It's amazing how pushing them out of their comfort zones has really extended beyond just their physical bodies – they're more willing to take risks academically and socially, too."

ALI AMBERG,
 BIG PINE 6TH GRADE TEACHER



