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Overview of Sacred Rok

G.Z.¹ said, "The Day I went hiking was Heaven to me. I loved it. It made me think about life. Being out there, in the mountains, climbing high in the rocks, getting a beautiful view of everything..."

Neuroscience research increasingly shows the positive impact on the brain and behavior from being in the outdoors – even walking in the park among greenery. We all know the healing power of nature, and the difference it makes for a troubled young person to learn to sit on a rock or by the river, listening to the rushing water, bearing witness to the granite cliffs, and building a relationship of trust and mutual respect with a caring adult.

The power of the approach we have taken through Sacred Rok comes from nurturing a sense of awe in our young people through observation of landscapes and reflecting on natural beauty. The experiences that we provide them through trips to Yosemite and Pinnacles National Parks help to create a connection to the earth. Simply walking, communing, and communicating in such environments can be life-changing.

In Yosemite, the granite cliffs and crashing waterfalls remind us of the sacred presence of the natural world. The profound beauty of Yosemite has a way of opening our senses to receive the medicine and healing, evoking the spirit into a relationship of communing, communication, and connection.

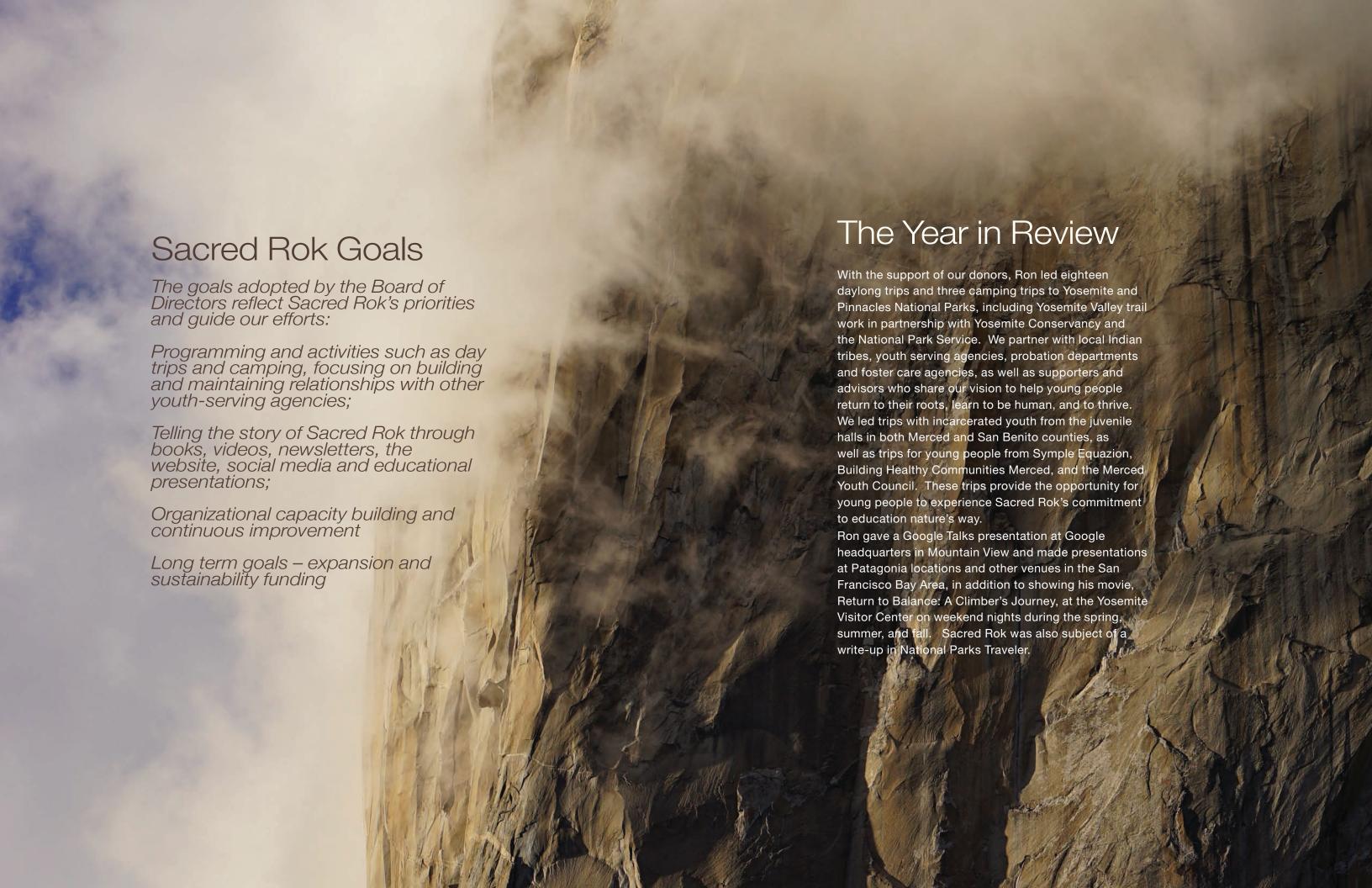
In Pinnacles, the ancient story of the 23-million-year old rocks leads to a profound consideration of time – the value of time and the preciousness of life itself. The landscape has a calming effect, and if we are lucky we might catch a condor soaring above effortlessly to spark our imagination to the beauty of our existence.

Places such as Pinnacles and Yosemite are the greatest classrooms on earth, where basic human senses are evoked and a macramé of feelings and understandings come together. In such environments, as we taste the water and enjoy human community in ways so rarely experienced by our youth, we can practice the realization and the art of being human. 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. As one of the youth commented about his experience, "Me personally, I didn't want to stop! I wanted to keep going and going... How much I love being out there!"

Ron Kauk, Executive Director

^{1.} We are using his initials to protect his privacy because he is an incarcerated minor.











Day Trips & Camping Trips

Our programmatic activities are day trips and overnight camping trips, primarily to Yosemite National Park and also to Pinnacles National Park. Ron Kauk leads the trips, and camping trips are supported by Katie Lambert, our extraordinary cook and camp manager, who has a Masters degree in Nutrition and is responsible for procuring and preparing healthy, local, organic food for the trips.

Our model is to work with small groups of young people with their adult staff and mentors, and to lead multiple trips over the months and seasons, building trusting and respectful relationships over time. We limit each trip to 4-6 young people 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.

D.C. said, "Everything has a story, water, rocks, animals and humans... we all learn from one another."

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, or a walk to the base of El Capitan. Day trips in Pinnacles National Park include hikes on the many trails in one of our nation's most recent national parks. Our camping trips are typically at Yosemite's Tuolumne Meadows Campground. At 8,600 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, or a hike up the back of Lembert Dome. Longer hikes include Cathedral Lakes, Elizabeth Lake, and Gaylor Lake.



Merced County Juvenile Hall

Sacred Rok led seven day trips (including trail crew work days) and one camping trip with Merced County Probation youth who are incarcerated in Iris Garrett Juvenile Justice facility.

For the ninth year, Sacred Rok continues 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. The youth have created BCA Mission I'mpossible to share their stories about their experiences in Yosemite with Sacred Rok. Their mission: "Mission I'mpossible'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 acompanied by a Probation officer. Participating youth are selected by the Probation Department on the basis of good behavior. The day trips often include trail repair. Under the auspices of the National Park Service and funded by the Yosemite Conservancy, Sacred Rok and the Bear Creek Academy youth are helping to remove old decaying asphalt on the Yosemite Valley trails near Camp 4.

Ron also goes to juvenile hall every other week for lunch. He brings healthy organic food and they share lunch and talk about their experiences in Yosemite. The juvenile hall has built Sacred Rok into its curriculum and programming for these young people.

San Benito County Juvenile Hall

Sacred Rok led six day trips to Pinnacles National Park for San Benito County Probation Department youth from juvenile hall.

San Benito County Juvenile Hall is a short drive from Pinnacles National Park, which was established in 2013 as one of the nation's newest national parks. Ron Kauk and Sacred Rok Board member Steve Shackelton, former superintendent at Pinnacles and former Chief Ranger at Yosemite National Park, lead the trips to Pinnacles.

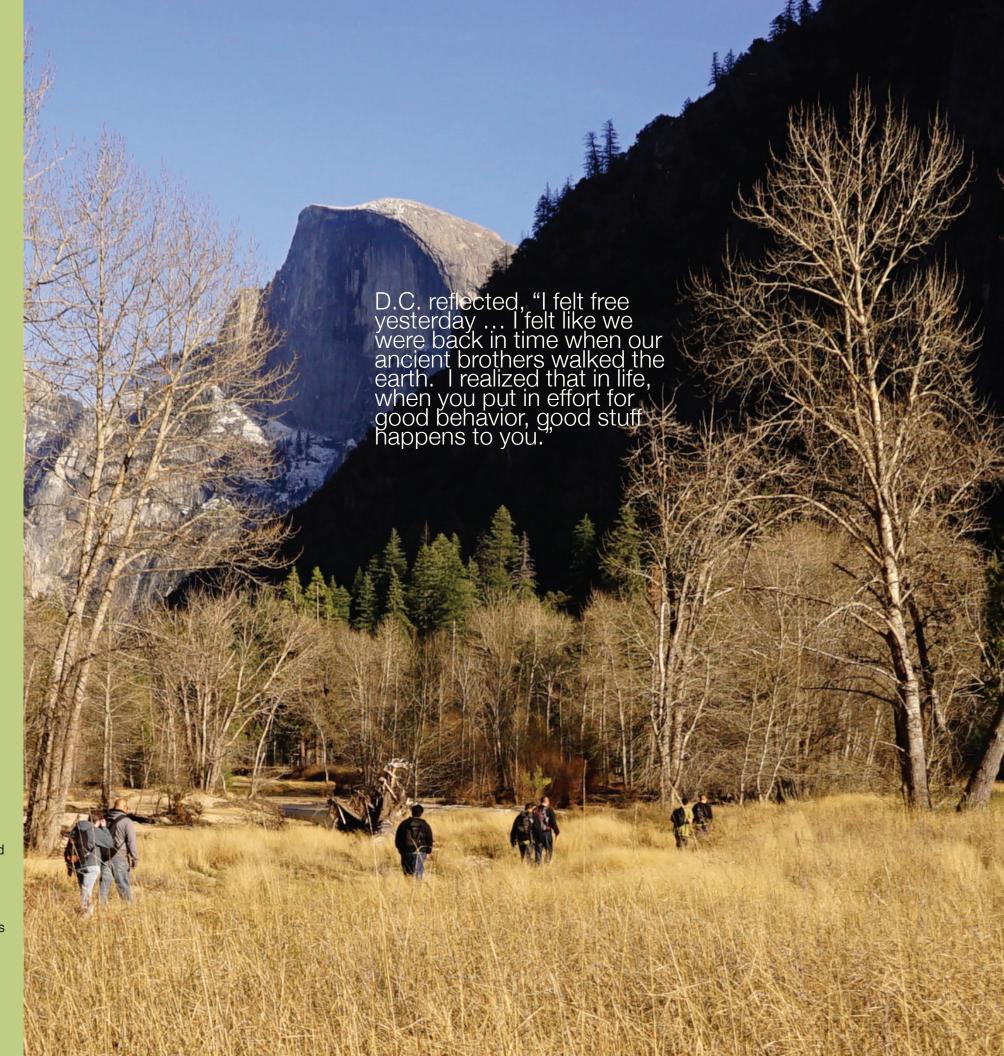
One of the youth commented about his experience, "When I first went I was afraid. I thought differently about life when I was at Pinnacles. I felt like I was escaping from my problems and it felt good to get a little bit of freedom. Nature is so beautiful, Pinnacles is such a peaceful place to be at & let go of problems. It cleared my mind. My favorite part was that I actually made it, without giving up! At first I wanted to... But I put my mind to it and did it...... So now I know if I put my mind to something...... I can make it in Life!"

Juvenile Hall Superintendent Joe Frontella says, "Ron, Steve, and Sacred Rok bring 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 day trips with young people from 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.







Chief Operating Officer Katie Lambert, our cook and camp manager, reflects on the importance of nutrition and how it has affected her own personal journey:

Food is one of life's greatest pleasures and there is much to be said for sharing in the process of cooking with others as well as sitting down with loved ones and sharing a meal. It is over the sharing of food that we not only nurture ourselves but also relationships and Sacred Rok is all about the nurturing of the self and our relationship to people and place. Our camp kitchen continues to evolve in its mission to promote food as medicine. I've come to have a deeper understanding of the power food has to promote better health, provide energy, offer protection against a host of chronic diseases, and slow down the rate of aging. Food is so much more than just calories.

The foods we include in our diet play a critical role in controlling inflammation levels, balancing blood sugar, regulating cardiovascular health, and helping the digestive system to process and eliminate waste. Additionally, food also plays a huge role in our mood and behavior.

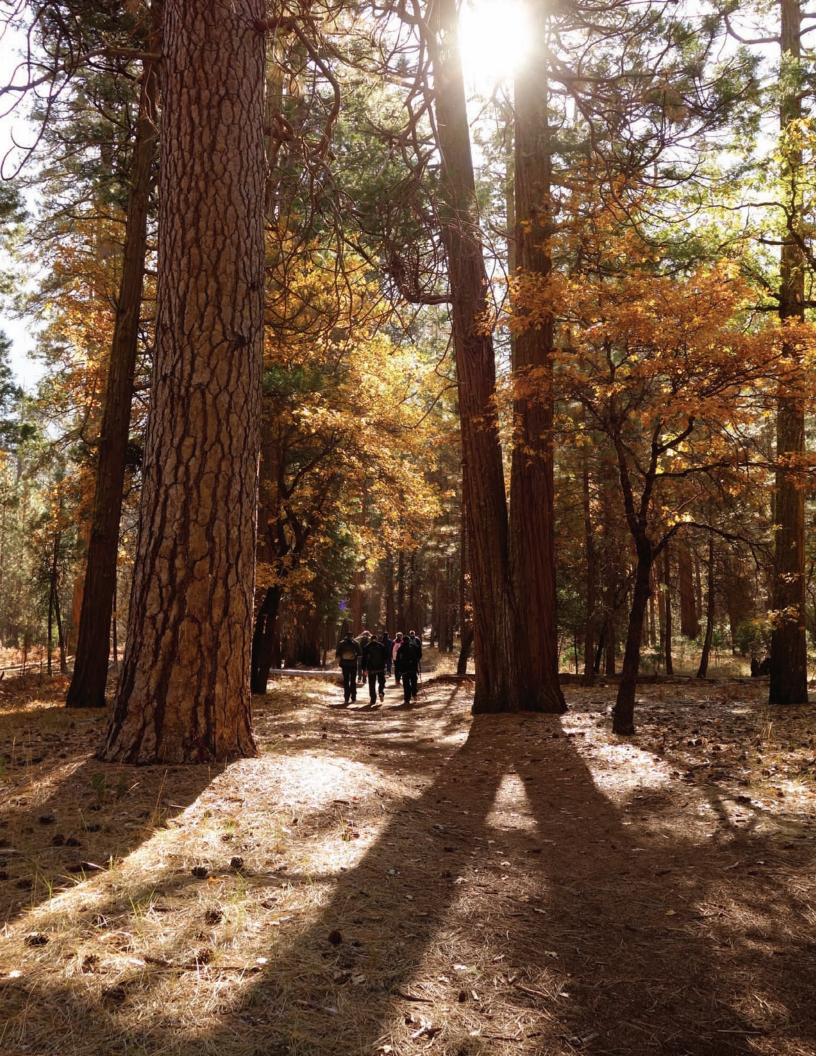
The processed, low-variety foods many of us consume regularly may be convenient and tasty, but they can compromise our health with their denatured ingredients; contributing to cellular disruption, chronic inflammation, digestive distress, hyperactivity, depression, diabetes, heart disease, cancer and autoimmune disorders. Everything we put in us has an impact and it is for this reason alone that we emphasize the importance of clean, whole, traditional and real foods.

Each year we strive to bring the groups we work with the best food we can obtain and prepare. Our menus consist of organic and seasonal foods from grains, free-range and local meats and eggs, organic and locally procured fruits and vegetables, raw and local dairy as well as items picked wild in the Sierra.

Part of our job in the kitchen is to not only provide and prepare this food but it is also to share an understanding about nutrition and what it is we are getting from the things we eat. As a nutritionist and camp cook I am honored to say that Food is one of our main pillars at Sacred Rok. A mindful approach to what we eat is what we teach.

Katie Lambert, Nutritionist





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 selfconfidence 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. Observations from the adults bear this out:

When we arrived at the campsite and as the sleeping tent slowly began to take shape, I noticed that we were all working as a team, towards one common goal: shelter. Over the next two cold nights and mornings, our personal barriers unconsciously came down and we were at ease with each other, sharing stories and laughing together.

I observed the youth do things that we as staff try to instill in them when they come into our care. I observed respect, teamwork and traits of leadership in each of them.

The outcomes were transformative on the youth. All of the kids who went had positive attitudes the whole the feeling of being respected and trip and were eager to jump in and participate in the daily chores that come with camping. There were no complaints and tremendous amounts engagement in school or work. of gratitude for giving them the opportunity to experience nature.

Something unique happens to people when are removed from the comfort of their familiar surroundings. Also when kids realize they will have the opportunity to temporarily escape the confines of their daily existence they are more inclined to think twice before acting on negative impulses. In my best estimation it's the getting the kids to think before they act which has been so elusive in the field of rehabilitation.

I can truly say that the experiences have been profound. Watching the youth experience things that they might not have had a chance to, to see them get to act like kids and lose that hard exterior if just for that moment is so very rewarding. We are not divided into staff and youth; we come together as a group, a group that hikes, talks about nature, problems, the world, and how our footprints impact our world.

Longer term, outcomes include respect for nature and themselves, valued by adults, more positive peer and adult relationships, and goals for the future that lead to more

One of the adult staff said, "We have noticed that the youth that participate in the trips have a better attitude in general and are more receptive to staff that experienced that journey with them."

One youth, who got out of Juvenile Hall and got a job, said, "I'm glad 21 there was a program like Sacred Rok to give me another chance. Without Mr. Ron Kauk making it possible for us and our Yosemite trips I don't believe I would have come this far."



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 touched by our story, who read our newsletter, attend our events or meet Ron when he shows his movies at the Yosemite Visitor Center.

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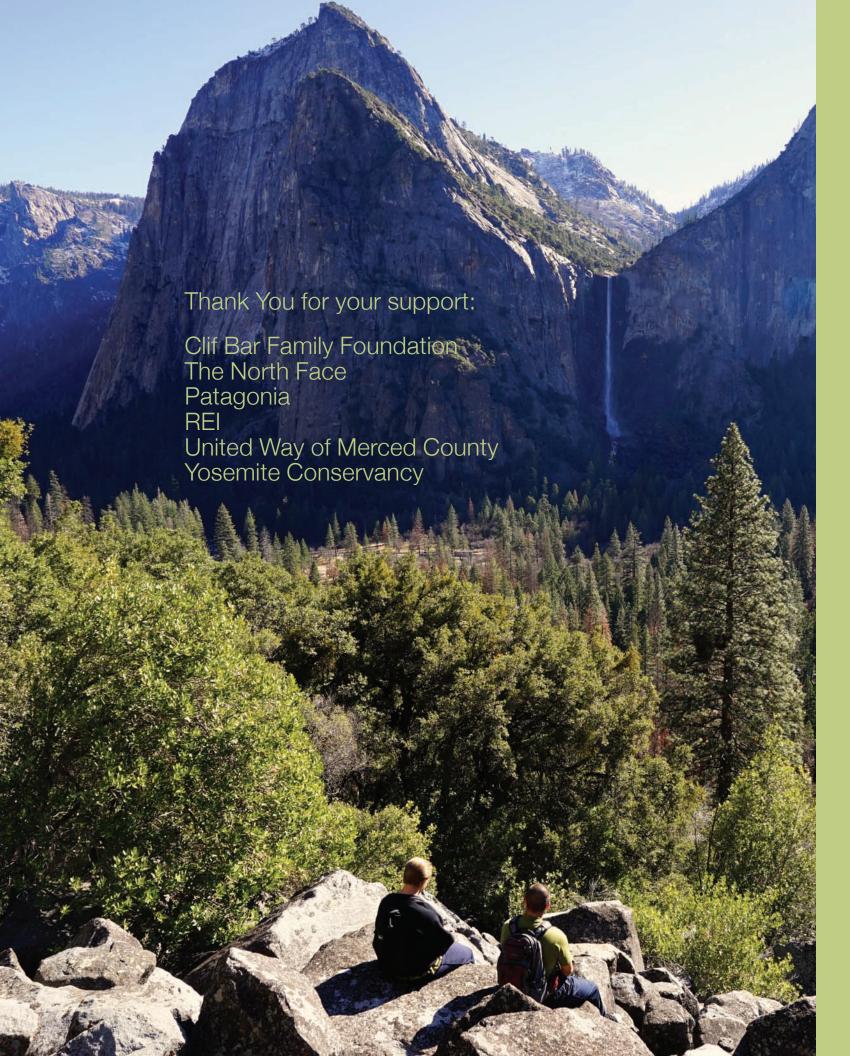
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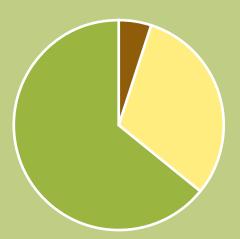
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Financials

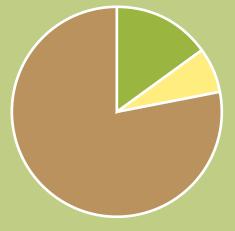


Fiscal Year 2017 Revenue

5% Governme
31% individua
64% Foundat

In the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2017, Sacred Rok received \$95,489.64 in revenue and had \$66,033.54 in expenses, for net operating income of \$29,456.10. The balance sheet showed \$85,899.73 in assets. Our primary funding in FY 2017 was foundation funding (\$61,250.00, 64% of our revenue), followed by donations (\$29,156.34, 31% of our revenue), and government contracts (\$5,046.39, 5% of our revenue).

Our primary expense was camping and day trips, which accounted for \$51,315.19 or 78% of our expenses.Outreach and education made up \$4,946.77 or 7% of our expenses. Organizational expenses



Fiscal Year 2017 Expenses

15% Organizational Expenses
7% Outreach & Education

made up the remaining \$9,771.58 or 15% 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 above show our revenue sources and our costs. The Profit and Loss Statement and Balance Sheet are shown on the next two pages.

Sacred Rok Fiscal Year-End Profit and Loss Statement June 30, 2017

ORDINARY INCOME/EXPENSE		
INCOME		
Restricted		
Government Grants and Contracts	\$5,046.39	
Foundation Grants	\$61,250.00	
Total Restricted		\$66,296.39
Unrestricted		
Individual Donations	\$27,214.41	
Corporate Donations	\$1,941.93	
Interest	\$36.91	
Total Unrestricted		\$29,193.25
TOTAL INCOME		\$95,489.64
EXPENSE		
Camping and Day Trip Costs		
Program Staff	\$42,409.37	
Travel	\$4,601.98	
Food and Camping Supplies	\$4,303.84	
Total Camping and Day Trip Costs	<u> </u>	\$51,315.19
Outreach and Education Costs		
Shipping and Printing	\$2,770.55	
Design	\$1,345.00	
Other	\$831.22	
Total Outreach and Education Costs		\$4,946.77
Organizational Costs		
Administrative Support Staff	\$2,800.00	
Postage and Mailing	\$826.26	
Telephone and Telecommunications	\$1,553.94	
Insurance	\$3,628.50	
Office supplies, misc administrative	\$447.87	
Bank and PayPal Fees	\$485.01	
Total Organizational Costs		\$9,771.58
TOTAL EXPENSE		\$66,033.54
NET ORDINARY INCOME		\$29,456.10
NET INCOME		\$29,456.10



Fiscal Year-End Balance Sheet June 30, 2017

ASSETS		
Current Assets		
Checking/Savings	\$83,377.55	
Supplies/Inventory	\$827.21	
Total Current Assets	\$84,204.76	
Fixed Assets	\$1,694.97	
TOTAL ASSETS	\$85,899.73	
LIABILITIES & EQUITY		
Equity		
Retained Earnings	55,710.87	
Opening Balance Equity	\$732.76	
Net Income	\$29,456.10	
Net Income Total Equity	\$29,456.10 \$85,899.73	



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