



DESERT YOUTH HERITAGE PROJECT PROGRAM REPORT - FALL 2021

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Desert Youth Heritage Project (DYHP) is a youth internship program financially supported by the Juan Bautista de Anza NHT and in partnership with the Santa Cruz River Valley National Heritage Area. The program goal is to foster stewardship of the Santa Cruz River Valley by engaging youth and the public in a shared understanding of the region's cultural and natural heritage from the perspective of youth living in the Sonoran Desert.

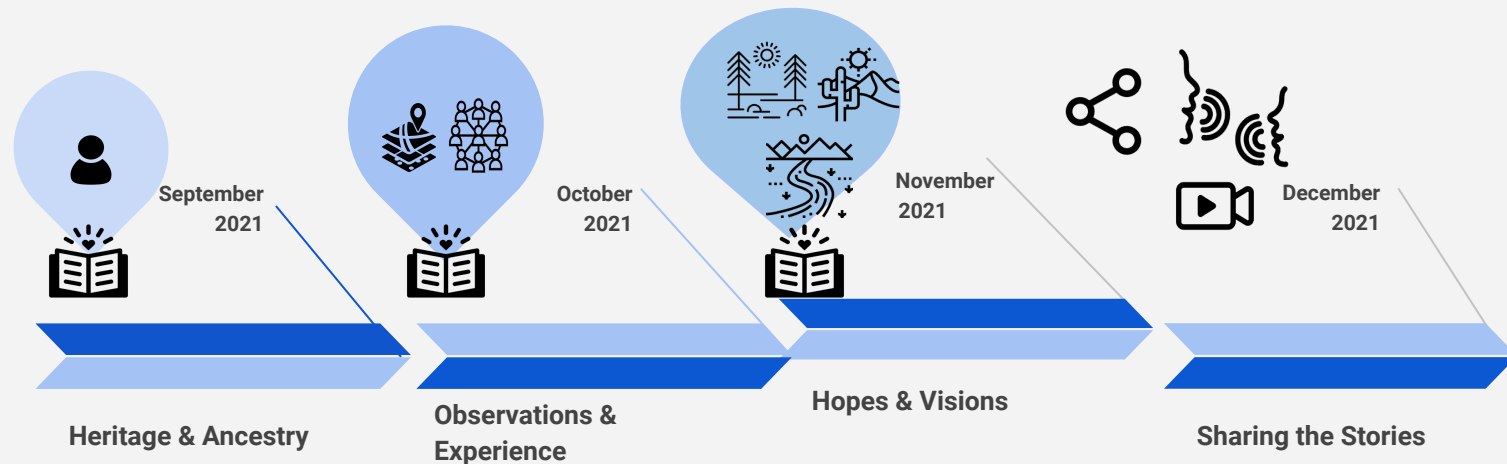
In the fall of 2021, seven high school DYHP interns utilized ITE interpretive storytelling methodology by exploring their community, interviewing family, researching information, and then sharing their connection to the cultural natural environment as residents within the Santa Cruz River Valley. Youth interns employed multiple storytelling mediums to depict their intersection of environment, ancestry, community, and culture. On December 18, 2021 the interns presented their experiences to the public.

DYHP PLACE-BASED ANTHOLOGY

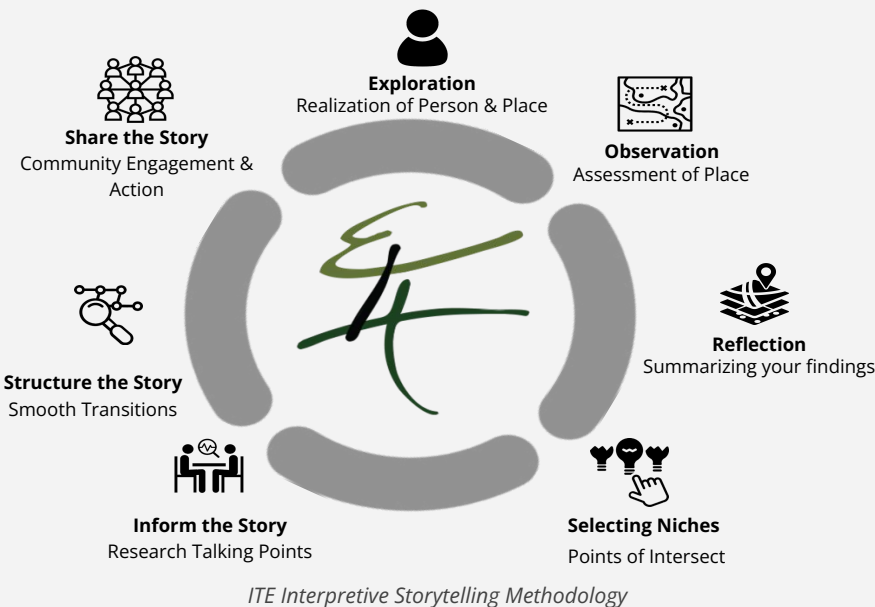
The Desert Youth Heritage Project is a place-based anthology that shares the stories of young people's ancestry, experiences, and hopes for the places they call home. These youth stories form a tapestry of shared perspectives and hopes for the Sonoran Desert, Santa Cruz River Valley, and the Santa Cruz River. All stories were guided by key themes from the Juan Bautista de Anza NHT, such as movement, community, and diversity.

These stories are comprised of the students':

- personal connections to heritage, ancestry, and the Santa Cruz River.
- observations and experiences as residents of the Santa Cruz River Valley.
- hopes and visions for the Santa Cruz River, the Valley, and the Sonoran Desert.



METHODOLOGY & OBJECTIVES



The DYHP internship utilizes a methodology that guides young people through experiences in their community while gathering stories about their connection to heritage, place, and the natural world. These experiences help youth understand their "niche" - that ecological term meaning a unique environmental role a species plays in the community.

Through exploration, storytelling, and collaboration with a diversity of experts, youth discuss and identify how the unique environmental and social issues impact their desert home and their role in the overall story.

The DYHP objectives are to:

- rediscover personal heritage and shared history along the Santa Cruz River
- advocate for environmental justice
- specialize in social and environmental issues affecting the place you call home
- explore unique wildland and urban ecosystems from the sky islands to the barrios
- develop interpretive stories and resources related to environmental realities affecting youth and community
- apply knowledge and experiences gained in past ITE internships
- educate community members on the unique heritage of the Santa Cruz River Valley
- apply knowledge and experience by mentoring new youth environmental stewards

DYHP INTERNSHIP

Duration: 3 months

September 18th, 2021 - December 18th, 2021
(See Appendix 1)

Total In-Person Field Experiences: 9

(Saturdays, 4 in the Urban Ecosystem, 5 on Public Lands and Wilderness, 6-8 hours for each experience)

Total Youth Engagement hours: 86

Intern Benefits: \$200 stipend, certificate of completion, and personalized portfolio of skills

Project Specialists:

Audrey Belows, 18 Catalina Foothills HS
Simona Breault-Evans, 16 Tucson HS
Bianca Carranza, 16, Rincon HS
Juan Manuel Fierros, 18, Pueblo HS
Blake James, 16, City HS
Julia Ortiz, 16, City HS
Destiny Soshiduran, 16, Primavera HS

**Internship Requirements & Responsibilities:**

- Must have participated in prior ITE programs and be between the ages of 16 and 20
- Identify professional interests, passions, and careers within the world of intersectional environmentalism
- Discuss concepts such as justice, equity, race, access, and beyond as they pertain to the environment and environmental issues
- Coordinate transportation with ITE staff, family, and fellow interns.
- Collaborate with adults and youth within a professional context
- Group work both virtually and in-person settings (within Covid-19 social distancing guidelines)
- Commit ~60 hours from September-December
- Communicate via ITE mediums (email, Zoom, Trello, text)

Get to know the Project Specialists and explore the Desert Youth Heritage Project Story Map [here](#) or by visiting ironwoodtreeexperience.org.



PROGRAM SUPPORT

Angel Enriquez Breault
Ironwood Tree Experience
Program Manager

Rebecca Perez
Ironwood Tree Experience
Field Instructor

Isaiah Haley
Ironwood Tree Experience
Past DYHP Participant

Kristen Sawyer
Ironwood Tree Experience
Youth Development Manager

Imena Ezelle
Coronado National Forest
USFS Coordination

Kendall Korsen
Mission Garden
Community Outreach Coordinator

LESSONS LEARNED AND HIGHLIGHTS



Desert Youth Heritage Project Camp-Out

A primary component incorporated into DYHP was more opportunities for outdoor skills development and camping experience. DYHP interns joined ITE for an overnight camp experience on Tohono O'odham ancestral lands. While camping on Babad Do'ag, also known as Frog Mountain or the Santa Catalina Mountains, Project Specialists explored canyons, learned local ethnobotany, and shared personal stories of heritage that were gathered through their genealogy research. In addition to these skill-based successes, this campout served as an integral opportunity to build camaraderie amongst the participants.

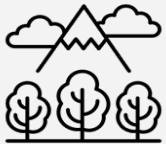


Desert Youth Heritage Project Showcase at Mission Garden

ITE partnered with Mission Garden, a living agricultural museum located adjacent to the Juan Bautista de Anza NHT, to host the DYHP showcase. Community partners, family, and the public had the chance to connect and engage with the DYHP Project Specialist interns to learn about their experiences gathering data and stories across the Santa Cruz River Valley. The showcase was structured so guests could "Meet & Learn" from the interns to hear perspectives of young emerging leaders and to learn what connects them to the place we call home. This was followed by a more formal and focused panel discussion with interns to hear their collective takeaways and insights from the program.



EVALUATION AND NEXT STEPS



Program Structure

While a 3 month program structure allowed for sufficient place-based experiences and exploration, it did not offer a sufficient amount of time for collaborative project-based learning. Interns could benefit from an extra month of structuring personal narratives and finalizing projects. 3-4 additional workshops split between the beginning and the end of the program would allow more time for revisions and peer-to-peer mentorship/evaluation.



Community Engagement Opportunities

Due to the large amount of virtual programs last year, there were plenty of community engagement opportunities available. A key component of this program was hearing the stories and diverse perspectives of place. While interns were able to connect with community and family members, there was a deficit of space for interns to connect with ITE partners about their relationship to heritage. An increase of workshop programs would increase engagement opportunities for community members to connect.



Celebrating Earth Day with KXCI - Tucson Community Radio

KXCI Director and ITE board member, Elva de la Torre, made it possible for 7 DYHP interns to be interviewed about the intersection of their community, ancestry, and environment as well as their aspirations for the future. These reflections were broadcasted and streamed by KXCI throughout Earth Day (April 23rd, 2022). We are very excited to collaborate with KXCI in the future to amplify youth voice across the Santa Cruz River Valley.

APPENDIX 1: DYHP PROGRAM ITINERARY (FALL 2021)

Date	Activity	Activity Locations	Staff and Community Support
August 1-13	Program Development	-	Angel
August 14- Sept. 10	Program Recruitment	-	Angel
Saturday 9/11/21	Applications Due	-	Angel
Saturday 9/18/21	Orientation of Self - Introduction to Place, Person, and Heritage	Mission Garden, Santa Cruz River	Angel, Rebecca, Kristen, Emily Rockey
Saturday 9/25/21	Orientation of Self - Place as Person and Heritage	Barrio Viejo, Santa Cruz River	Angel, Rebecca
Saturday 10/2/21	Urban Ecosystems Pt. I	El Centro: Dunbar Spring, Barrio Anita	Angel, Rebecca, Drew Berryhill
Friday 10/8/21 - Sunday 10/10/21	Exploring Wildlands - Camp-out	Molino Creek, Molino Basin, Gordon Hirabayashi	Angel, Rebecca, Kristen, Imena Ezelle
Saturday 10/23/21	Exploring Wildlands - Field Outing	Cienega Creek	Angel, Rebecca
Saturday 10/30/21	Exploring Wildlands - Field Outing	Montrose Pools, Catalina State Park	Angel, Rebecca
Saturday 11/13/21	Exploring Wildlands - Field Outing	Tanque Verde Falls (Sky Island Bajada)	Angel, Rebecca
Saturday 11/20/21	Structuring Stories, Moving Outward: Urban Ecosystems Pt. II	ITE UFS, Santa Cruz River Loop	Angel, Rebecca
Saturday 12/4/21	Structuring Stories	ITE UFS	Angel, Rebecca, Kristen
Saturday 12/18/21	Program Close and Wrap-up	Mission Garden	Angel, Rebecca, Kendall Korsen