Ironwood Tree Experience

Youth. Nature. Community.

INVESTMENT REPORT 2022 - 2023



OUR MISSION:

To create healthy & resilient communities, Ironwood Tree Experience makes it possible for young people to engage with the natural world and be stewards of the environment.

Students from Agua Fria High School play in a waterfall in Madera Canyon on their way to Coronado NF for an overnight trip

TO THE SUPPORTERS OF IRONWOOD TREE EXPERIENCE,

We are in a reflective state of mind. With the conclusion of the fiscal year & with our organization entering adulthood (18 years of ITE!), we find an opportunity to reflect on a "physical year" of engagement with our community. This community includes the youth who inspire us, & whom we seek to inspire; the natural world & the deeply rooted cultural connections to place; our partners, who we actively collaborate with to deliver deep, quality experiences for youth; & donors, some of whom we know only through their financial support of ITE's mission.

This year especially, we reflect upon ITE staff. Each individual is connected to our Sonoran Desert community in diverse ways. Each are top notch professionals, naturalists, & advocates for youth & their access to nature.

We are thankful to the Sonoran Desert summer that provides a space for reflection on our relationships with the people & places that have endured all these years. Thank *you*, our community members, who continue to invest in **youth, nature, & community.**



~Suzanne Dhruv & Eric Dhruv,
ITE Co-Founders & Directors

BECAUSE OF YOU...

WE ARE CONNECTED TO YOUTH

MEET MIA & DESHAWN

WHO EAGERLY EMBRACE EVERY CHANCE TO EXPLORE AND GROW



Mia enjoying the water at Sabino Canyon on an internship day focused on teen mental health

Mia Ramirez

"This program is meant for...those who need to look, wander around the forest, help their mental health... Often it heals you from civilization and all these problems that we're dealing with."

Mia's **intro** to ITE was through *Field Studies for Schools*. She returned by joining *EcoPrograms* and then the *Youth for Blue Skies* (YBS) internship in spring 2023. Mia loves to explore her **connection** to nature through art. She impressed everyone with her **artwork** on bottle caps at the year-end symposium - a piece about the **effects of pollution** and **climate change** that she sees in her own life.



Deshawn getting ready to eat while on a 3-day backpacking trip in the Catalinas

Deshawn Davis

"Nature is medicine... We can't live without it...When you're in nature with others, no matter your background...it brings people together and connects people."

Deshawn has been part of ITE *EcoPrograms*, *Wilderness Warriors*, & *EcoTruths for Indigenous Youth*. **Inspired** by these experiences, he's sought out more **opportunities** in the **environmental sector** with *Tucson Clean & Beautiful*, *Saguaro National Park*, & interpreting on *The Chuk-son Trail* with ITE. Read a **full story** about Deshawn on our website - https://ironwoodtreeexperience.org/2023/02/youth-spotlight-deshawn-davis/

710 **youth*** joined ITE **programs & events** in Fiscal Year '22.
*unique & returning

76% **of** *Field Studies for Schools* **trips** were with **public** or **tuition-free schools**

76.4% of youth surveyed reported that **spending time outside** helped them **deal with stress** caused by social distancing during the pandemic.[1]

[1]Jackson et al., 2021, *Outdoor Activity Participation Improves Adolescents' Mental Health and Well-Being during the COVID-19 Pandemic*

WE ARE CONNECTED

WE ARE CONNECTED TO
NATURE & PLACE



"I sat on a rock, and touched grass, and saw the little critters running around. I noticed the different sounds the birds made, the wind. I noticed the temperature get cold, get a little warmer. It just gives you time to ground yourself and also notice... the whole ecosystem working together."

-**Julia Ortiz-Tzul** reflecting on a "silent sit" activity. This was Julia's last program before heading off to study at Georgetown University



An Ornate Tree Lizard crawling on Santos's head in the Catalinas!

28
unique locations visited throughout Southern AZ

495
total hours spent **in the field** connecting youth to nature & community

500+
species in the Sonoran Desert are **supported** by the **Ironwood tree**, a "nurse plant" & ITE's namesake

OUR PROGRAMS...

WE ARE CONNECTED TO **COMMUNITY**



YBS interns & mentors, ITE staff, Natalie Shepp (PDEQ), & Dunbar/Spring Neighborhood Foresters admiring their work on a new basin, where they planted an Ironwood tree!

This project was designed by *Youth for Blue Skies* interns in spring 2022, who were awarded a grant from *Citizens' Climate Lobby* to carry it out with the new cohort of interns in 2023.

44
community partners & teachers that added value to our programs

116
people who attended ITE events like BEYOND on the Chuk-son Trail, the "Nurture Yourself in Nature" donor appreciation event, & the Teacher Meet n' Greet

"Being a part of the ITE community has kept me grounded in a process & environment which feels truly significant to me. It gives me purpose and place."
~Isolde Edminster-Genet, ITE alum

* FIELD STUDIES FOR SCHOOLS
FALL-SPRING

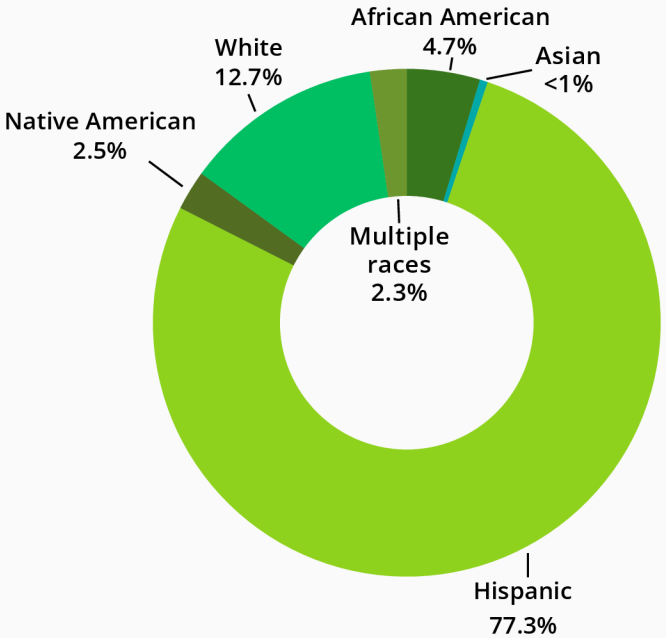
Field Studies for Schools (FSS) connects **educators** & their **students** to the Sonoran Desert through **experiential learning**. Programs span the range of 40-minute virtual experiences on **ITE *Live!*** to multi-day camping trips. With **28** program days, including **3** overnight trips, our team engaged over **375** youth outdoors while learning about **10** unique, diverse locations in Southern AZ.

School Districts (SD) **partnered with**: Sahuarita Unified SD, Sunnyside Unified SD, Tucson Unified SD, Agua Fria High SD, & Vail SD.

Funded by: National Park Service, US Forest Service, The Wilderness Society

DEMOGRAPHICS OF STUDENTS ENGAGED THROUGH FSS*

**Public schools only. Terminology and data pulled from school enrollment data from the AZ Dept of Ed - azreportcards.azed.gov*



& OUR PARTNERS

ECOPROGRAMS
FALL-SPRING

Like all our programs, **EcoPrograms** nurture youth's **sense of belonging** and **connection** to their Sonoran Desert community. EcoPrograms offer opportunities for youth to **explore** & gain new **outdoor skills**. With **10+** program days including hikes, visits to culturally significant sites, and a **3-day backpacking trip**, we engaged **51** youth, alumni, & family members.

Funded by: National Park Service, US Forest Service, The Wilderness Society

ECOTRUTHS FOR INDIGENOUS YOUTH
FALL, WINTER, SPRING

ITE supports our partners, *Indigenous Strategies,* through this internship, created specifically for Indigenous youth. Youth foster relationships with **jewed ka:cim**, Mother Earth, to identify their *EcoTruths* to inform pathways into **Eco-Leadership** and defense through policy creation and development. **Seven** program days throughout the year engaged **30** Indigenous youth.

Funded by: US Forest Service, The Wilderness Society

"ITE is a great program to be in and has impacted my life in a very positive way. It helps us get into nature, which really helps with stress that I get from school."
~Jesus Mendoza



Jesus has been very involved with ITE and was a mentor for *Youth for Blue Skies* in spring 2023.



Student feeling the cold water at Sabino Canyon during an FSS trip - Dec. 2022

YOUTH FOR BLUE SKIES
SPRING

This was ITE's second year running **Youth for Blue Skies** (YBS). **Nine** interns & **6** mentors spent **85** hours developing a sense of place, implementing **community action projects**, & learning from both adults & peers about the effects of climate change in their own lives. At the end of the internship, **youth shared stories** about what they learned & their **hopes** for the future.

Funded by: Pima County Deptartment of Environmental Quality

NATURE & CULTURE BEYOND BORDERS
SUMMER

This year saw a return of an ITE summer program, **Nature & Culture Beyond Borders**. **Six** experienced ITE youth took on leadership roles to **guide 7** middle schoolers through experiences in this program. Students spent **9** days learning about the **intersection** of **nature**, **culture**, & **history** in our beloved borderlands region.

Funded by: Western National Parks Association, National Park Service, Dustin & Kristen Yoder Memorial Foundation

WHAT WE ACCOMPLISHED...

STAFF

Suzanne Dhruv, Executive Director
Eric Dhruv, Program Director
Deborah Oslik, Operations Manager
Kristen Sawyer, Youth Development Manager
Rebecca Pérez, Program Coordinator
Isaac Cortés, Program Coordinator
Chrissy Maes, Engagement Manager
Olivia Ridge, Field Instructor
Paige Humphrey, Program Manager
Mike Kruse, Program Coordinator

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Axhel Muñoz, Paul Bellows, Josh Schachter, Corina Ontiveros, Chuck Hutchinson, Ajang Deng, IngriQue Salt, Danny Clifford, Jeff Hartman, Elena Preciado-Martin

ACHIEVEMENTS & AWARDS

- **Staff scholarships** from the North American Association for Environmental Education (**NAAEE**) *and* Arizona Association for Environmental Education (**AAEE**) to attend the 2022 NAAEE conference
- **Rebecca Perez**, ITE Program Coordinator, received an **AAEE award** for "Outstanding Environmental Educator in Informal or Non-formal Settings"
- **Welcoming 4 new members** to our Board of Directors, including an **ITE alum**
- **New & renewed funding awards from** the Southwestern Foundation for Education & Historical Preservation, NPS - Juan Bautista de Anza NHT, Wallace Research Foundation, The Stonewall Fund held at the Community Foundation for Southern AZ, The Wilderness Society, National Recreation Foundation, and The Dustin & Kristen Yoder Memorial Foundation
- **Sky Island Stewardship Partnership Recognition** Award from USFS - Coronado National Forest
- **NPS Certificate of Successful Collaboration & Recognition** of leadership in conservation & outdoor recreation & contributions for the **Anza Trail Cultural History Park**

RAISING OUR LEVEL OF EXCELLENCE

ITE has always been **committed to excellence** through providing **inclusive** and **meaningful** outdoor programs for youth. To stay true to our mission and aim to be a **top employer** for outdoor education in Southern Arizona, we have made a commitment to ***raise*** our level excellence to include all ITE staff members.

"There can often be this rhetoric that if you choose to work at a nonprofit, then you're making the financial sacrifice 'to do the good work'... We put so much care into how we provide our programs for young people... I see it as our duty to give the same amount of care and intention to our staff."

~**Deborah Oslik**, Operations Manager

This process began with ensuring **higher** and **equitable compensation**, increased **paid time off**, ITE's first **parental leave policy**, and **professional development** opportunities for all staff.

We are dedicated to continuously **improving** this effort to make ITE a **secure, rewarding,** and **inspiring** place to work.

WITH THE HELP OF OUR SUPPORTERS



Olivia (staff), Kaitlin, Aurelia, Abby, and Madeleine - ITE family and supporters at the "Family Friendly Happy Hour" fundraising event at Westbound.



Axhel (board of directors) during the "Killdeer & Cold Brew" fundraising event. He's talking about Gulf Fritillary butterflies while Aurelia admires them in the background.

130 **DEDICATED DONORS** WHO GIVE YEAR AFTER YEAR

Annette & Paul Felix, LoriAnne Barnett Warren, Paul Bellows, Dean Bennett, Erica Bennett, Anaruth Bernard, Joel Biederman, Bob & Angela Rockov, Angel Breault, Judith Breault, Carrie Brennan, Sandra Brody, Julie Burguiere, Shawn Burke, Shea Burns, Cheryl Cahill, Carleen & James Denovchek, Robin Breault, Cassie Carlisle, Catlow & Lisa Shipek, Vanessa Chamberlain, Carolyn Chilcote, Monica Christensen, Matthew Clark, Danny Clifford, Gale Coleman, Jacob Cooper, Isaac Cortes, Kimberly Crooks, Kevin Dahl, David Taylor & Lana Holstein, Elva De La Torre, Helen Dearmore, Deb & Jim Hilbert, Patricia Desai, Akshay Dhruv, Rona Dhruv, Dieter & Netzin Steklis, Elaine Dillingham, Elise Dillingham, Jennifer Duberstein, Georgia Ehlers, Julie Friberg, Dinkar Gangwal, Gregg Garfin, Mary Jo Ghory, Emily Goff, James Greenberg, Christine Hannum, Daniel Hernandez, Karla Hernandez, Holly McCarter & Joseph Tabor, Diego G Huerta, Rebecca Huerta, Doug Hulmes, Jan & Chuck Hutchinson, Jane McCollum & David Buck, Judith McDaniel & Jan Schwartz, Kate & James Harrison, Kathy Ben & Scott Wilbor, Khyanna Muñoz & Lizdelia Muñoz, Kenneth Kingsley, Tiffany Kiramidjian, Michelle Kostuk, Krista & Mark Dhruv, John Lai, Laura Castro Cortes & Eduardo Cortes, Lawrence Liese, Lloyd & Bob Sharp, William Lytle, Madeleine Golde & Norman Oslik, Jeffrey Oslik, Christine Maes, Pat Maes, Manuel & Percilla Patino, Steven Marlatt, Elena Martin, Linda Martino, Maura & Steve Buckley, Jennifer Mcdonald, Shela McFarlin, Phoebe Meixner, Brad Miller, Stuart Moody, Carolyn Morton, Axhel Munoz, Lesley Newman, Trica Oshant Hawkins, Deborah Oslik, Pamela Golden & Ross Zimmerman, Vincent Pawlowski, Peg & Jeff Hartman, Rebecca Perez, Charles Picklesimer, Pierre Landau & Katya Peterson, Stacey & Joseph Plassmann, Graham Porell, Lena Porell, Marjorie Porell, Lee Porter, Amanda Rader, Subhash Raval, Anne Rempe, Tahnee Robertson, Robin Kropp & Russell Scott, Michael & Keri Russo, Christina Savel, Bennett Sawyer, Katherine Sawyer, Rupal Saxena, Janet Schachter, Joshua Schachter, Karin Schorr, Natalie Shepp, Gretta Siegel, Carianne Sienna Campbell, Scott Smith, Carol Soth, Susan Strauss, Tina & Brian Love, Cynthia Wallace, Joachim Weltzin, Amelia Whalen, Ryan Williams, Roberta Wilson, Joseph Winfield, Kristin Wisneski-Blum, Jamie Wolgast, Scott Yarnes, Gordon Yarrington

5 **RECURRING DONORS** WHO PROVIDE SUSTAINING SUPPORT

Joan Calcagno, Lorraine Edminster, Gene & Melissa Einfrank, Michael Hilbert, Shannon & Mark Miranda

32 **FIRST-TIME DONORS** WHO JOINED THE ITE COMMUNITY

Keith Ashley, Audra Christophel, Carla Clark, Michael Clifford, Andrew Cook, Michelle Crow, Anna Delgado, Ajang Deng, Ayush Dhruv, Carin Eldridge, Jan Elster, Franklin & Anne Lane, Adam Frye, Joseph Gass, Claire Gurlitz, Daniel Gurlitz, Kimberly Gurlitz, Amanda Humphrey, Elizabeth Humphrey, Jeanette & David Wickey, Stephanie Kavanaugh, Paul Longo, Bret Muter, Kaitlin Porter, Matthew Roberts, Allison Titcomb, Marilyn Van Roekel, Erin Voss, Jeannie Yazzie, Lusine Yepremyan, Paul Young

2 **MAJOR GIFT DONORS** WHO SUPPORT ITE'S ESSENTIAL NEEDS

Wallace Research Foundation,
The Stonewall Fund held at the Community Foundation for Southern AZ

5 **BUSINESS DONORS** WHO CHOSE ITE AS THEIR CAUSE

AZ Zipline Adventures, Decibel Coffee Works, Raison Pan, Technicians For Sustainability Inc., Westbound - Tap & Bottle

FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT

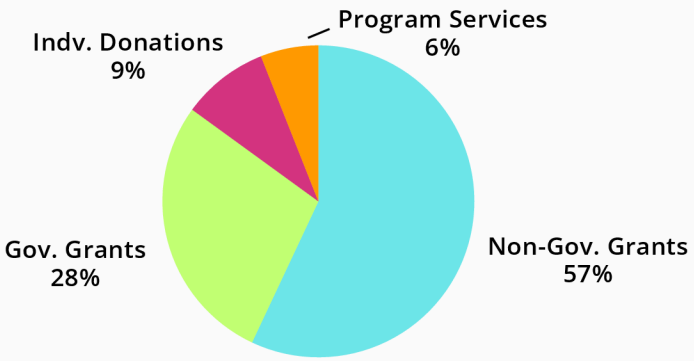
$ REVENUE

Non-Government Grants 57%

Government Grants 28%

Individual Donations 9%

Program Services 6%



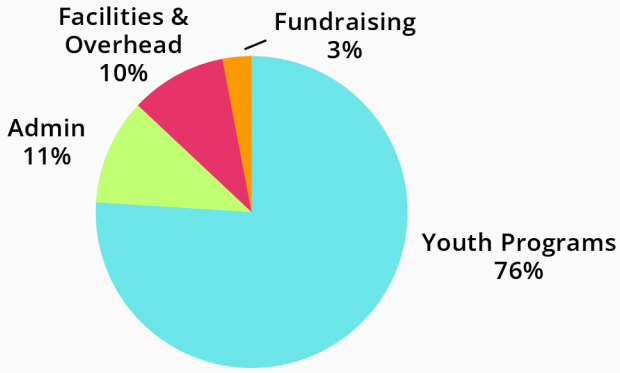
$ EXPENSES

Youth Programs 76%

Administration 11%

Facilities & Overhead 10%

Fundraising 3%



You can support our mission and programs by **donating online** at ironwoodtreeexperience.org/donate



"I really did relate to younger people telling the stories. It gives me hope for the environment. A preservation of what is important about Tucson."
~Gordon Yarrington, Parent of ITE alum & continued supporter

ITE staff and youth interpreters at El Tiradito Shrine after leading a walk on the Chuk-son Trail for the annual BEYOND event.