

Funds Distribution Report

Recipient Organization:
Pongo Poetry Project

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<https://pongopoetryproject.org>

Organization's General Goals:

Pongo Poetry Project is a Seattle-based nonprofit that uses personal poetry to facilitate healing among youth coping with devastating traumas, such as abuse, neglect, racism and exposure to violence. Pongo has mentored poetry with over 6,500 individuals. Research and evaluation demonstrate the significant therapeutic benefits of our programming and high levels of satisfaction among the youth we serve.

| | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| Date of Award: | Level: |
| 2021 Q2 | \$2,501 to \$5,000 |

For more information, please read the attached report from Pongo Poetry Project.

8802 27th Ave NE
Tulalip, WA 98271
TulalipCares.org

Disclaimer: This report may be a summary of content provided by the recipient, not always complete quoted material.

Introduction

Pongo Poetry Project is deeply grateful for the generous support of the Tulalip Tribes Charitable Fund. Your investment allowed Pongo to achieve a remarkable level of impact over the course of the 2021-2022 program year. The following report outlines Pongo's progress across the key strategic priorities for which we sought funding: 1) our poetry mentorship programming, 2) our local and national training initiative, and 3) our youth poetry publishing program. We expanded our direct service efforts to reach additional local youth and continued to share our unique programmatic methodology both locally and nationally. Additionally, we published *The Story of My Heart*, our 16th anthology of youth poetry. And your support allowed us to meet the significant need for our services brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Childhood trauma is pervasive in the U.S., and is associated with higher rates of depression, alcohol dependency, and suicide. The pandemic has exacerbated such trauma among youth of color and those in poverty, damaging their mental and emotional well-being. So much so that, pediatric health experts in the U.S. recently declared a state of emergency in youth mental health. Funding from the Tulalip Tribes Charitable Fund allowed Pongo to support youth as they navigated the emotional turmoil of the last two years of this public health emergency. We are incredibly thankful for your partnership in our shared effort to support those dealing with the most devastating of traumas.

Pongo's Direct Service

Pongo continued offering our poetry mentorship programming at our two flagship sites, the Child Study and Treatment Center (CSTC) and King County Juvenile Detention. Pongo defines a "writing session" as each time a youth participant writes one-on-one with a mentor. During the 2021-2022 program year, Pongo facilitated **74 sessions** and produced **152 poems**



at our CSTC site. During the same period, Pongo facilitated **96 sessions** and produced **163 poems** at King County Juvenile Detention. In addition, Pongo facilitated poetry with youth at You Grow Girl!, a Seattle non-profit focused on empowering girls of color to become leaders through the development of life skills, advocacy, and self-respect. Pongo offered **38 sessions** and produced **102 poems** during our 21-22 program year. Our writing mentors helped youth write poetry about their difficult personal experiences,

engaging them in a healing process to release their internalized feelings of shame and personal defectiveness. Participating youth wrote about many painful subjects including domestic violence, murder, addiction, gang violence, and exploitation. Despite the distressing nature of these episodes, our authors experienced relief, joy, and dignity through the act of self-expression and being "heard." The youth we served developed pride from their authorship, as they received printed copies of their poems and shared their work with caring mentors and peers. Ultimately, Pongo offered a safe space for our authors to unburden themselves, and articulate the full extent of their suffering in response to their traumatic experiences.

Pongo's Training & Outreach

Pongo conducts presentations and trainings on the Pongo Method to propagate our uniquely effective model in communities locally and around the country. Recognizing that

anyone who suffers from trauma can benefit from a Pongo opportunity, we work with counselors, teachers, artists, university students, and volunteers to help them start their own trauma-informed writing projects based on our model.

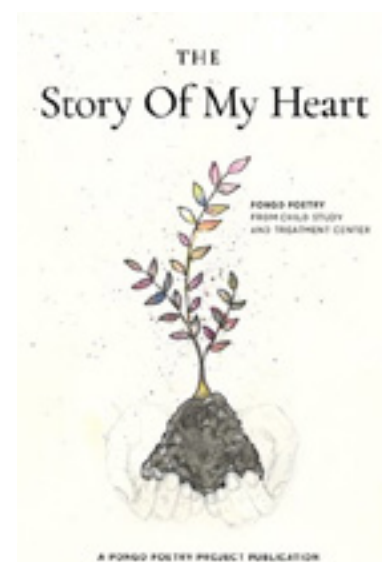
In the last 5 years, Pongo has conducted 85 trainings on the Pongo Method, including sessions at the Expressive Therapies Summit, the National Association for Poetry Therapy, the National Alliance on Mental Illness, the Council of Juvenile Justice Administrators, the Michigan Juvenile Detention Association, and the UC San Diego School of Medicine. In the past year alone, Pongo trained over 140 professionals over the course of 8 local and national trainings. Mental health professionals, arts therapists, emerging community leaders, and educators across Washington, Oregon, California, New York, and beyond were equipped with the knowledge and skills to incorporate our uniquely effective trauma-informed methodology into their existing work. We have supplemented our outreach efforts by offering free teaching resources on Pongo's web site and by publishing a book on our methodology, entitled *Writing with At-Risk Youth: The Pongo Teen Writing Method*.

As a result of these efforts, 96 Pongo-inspired projects have sprung up locally, nationally, and internationally. Many of these new sites consult with Pongo for further training and use the tools on our website to enhance their program offerings. Therapeutic poetry programs based on our model, serving thousands of individuals coping with trauma, have been successfully established in multiple locations, including: (1) locally at Friends of the Children and New Horizon Ministries, (2) nationally in cities including Los Angeles, Minneapolis, San Diego, Colorado Springs, Ann Arbor, and New Orleans, and (3) internationally in the Netherlands, South Africa, Jamaica, and El Salvador, among others.

The Story of My Heart

In addition, last year Pongo published *The Story of My Heart*, our 16th anthology of youth poetry, featuring pieces collected in weekly writing workshops at CSTC between 2010 and 2020. Since 2000, Pongo has facilitated poetry writing workshops for children and teens at CSTC, the only state-run psychiatric hospital for youth in Washington State. The youth in residence range in age from 6-17 and have been diagnosed with a variety of conditions including traumatic stress, developmental and learning disabilities, and autism. Though roughly 40% of the youth arrive at CSTC due to a court order, by the end of their stay, nearly all youth are voluntary residents.

The collection is a testament to healing and growth that youth at CSTC have experienced through Pongo poetry writing over the last decade. Pongo distributed over 450 copies of the volume to youth, youth-serving program providers, and members of the wider community. By engaging with the book, readers have had the opportunity to bear witness to the pain, resilience, and creative capacity of youth whose voices and perspectives are too often relegated to the periphery.



Our Results

Our evaluation efforts to date have produced ample evidence of the effectiveness of our model. Pongo has collected data and supported pilot studies of its outcomes by psychiatrists and psychologists from the University of Washington School of Medicine. These studies demonstrate that Pongo's intervention increases resilient attitudes, self-esteem, and emotional intelligence among our writers. Furthermore, studies show decreases in anger, depression, and cravings for alcohol among substance abusers after participating in Pongo poetry writing.

Since 2005 Pongo has collected over 1,580 surveys from the authors in our programs, producing remarkable results that demonstrate the efficacy of, and need for our program:

- 99% of Pongo authors enjoyed their writing workshop,
- 98% of Pongo authors were proud of the writing they produced,
- 74% of Pongo authors wrote on issues they do not ordinarily discuss,
- 81% of Pongo authors felt better after writing,
- 39% of Pongo authors said they had written sparingly or not at all prior to our program but,
- 93% of Pongo authors said they expect to write more in the future.

Through our website, we have collected an additional 26,000 surveys from individuals across the country who have written poetry on our website, showing similarly impressive results.

The effectiveness of our training program is demonstrated by the feedback received from attendees. In 2021, 97% of participants rated their experience as excellent, 97% rated Pongo facilitators as experts, and 94% reported that our training offered experience relevant and applicable to their professional work.

Gratitude

In the last year, support from the Tulalip Tribes Charitable Fund has made it possible for Pongo to benefit hundreds of youth locally and thousands of youth nationally and internationally. However, data about our reach and the news of our expansion efforts only tell a fraction of the story.

Pongo provides the youth we serve a creative outlet for expressing previously repressed grief, facilitating healing and igniting a passion for writing that endures long after their participation in our program. The following feedback, received from a Pongo youth author, best captures the transformative nature of our work:

I felt relieved about talking about things through writing that I didn't usually talk about. Being in such a horrible place and then having all these joyful people come in to help us, it was kind of like an ambulance coming to a car wreck.

Support from Tulalip Tribes Charitable Fund made this impact possible. For a closer look into the impact of your support, we encourage you to review the attachments to this report. We have included testimonials from Pongo youth, community leaders, and artists, which speak to our efficacy. Furthermore, we have included samples of Pongo youth poetry from the 2021-2022 program year. These poems represent the self-discovery, healing, and growth that Pongo programming inspires, and that your generous support made possible.

As we embark on our next phase of growth, and look to deepen our impact, we proceed with an immense appreciation for your investment in our work. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at by phone at 206-816-0414 or by email at developmentmanager@pongopoetryproject.org.

With Gratitude,



Nebeu Shimeles
Development Manager

Attachments:

2021 Budget Comparison: Planned vs. Actual

Pongo Poetry Project Testimonials

Pongo Youth Poetry Samples from 2021-2022 Program Year

2021 Revenue: Planned vs. Actuals

| | 2021 Planned | 2021 Actuals |
|---|----------------------|----------------------|
| Revenue | | |
| 4010 Individual Contributions | 58,250.00 | 86,915.00 |
| 4020 Corporate Contributions | 5,000.00 | 4,329.00 |
| 4030 Foundation Contributions | 75,000.00 | 46,900.00 |
| 4040 Government Grants | 8,500.00 | 6,000.00 |
| Total 4000 Contributions | \$ 146,750.00 | \$ 144,144.00 |
| 4300 Revenue for Programs | | |
| 4320 Book Sales | 1,200.00 | 4,439.00 |
| 4330 Training | 2,000.00 | 4,711.00 |
| 4350 Royalties | 25.00 | 0.00 |
| 4360 Service Fees | 32,200.00 | 33,952.00 |
| Total 4300 Revenue for Programs | \$ 35,425.00 | \$ 43,102.00 |
| Total 5000 Special Event Revenue | 35,000.00 | 19,385.00 |
| Total 6800 Revenue from Investments | 500.00 | 500.00 |
| Total Revenue | \$ 217,675.00 | \$ 207,131.00 |
| | | |
| Expenditures | | |
| Total 7000 Contract Labor | 2,500.00 | 811.00 |
| 7210 Salaries | 203,664.00 | 211,150.00 |
| 7250 Payroll Taxes, Withholding, Fees & Benefits | 21,000.00 | 20,407.00 |
| Professional Development | 0.00 | |
| Total 7200 Payroll Expenditures | \$ 224,664.00 | \$ 231,557.00 |
| 7510 Fundraising Expenses | 10,500.00 | 6,804.00 |
| 7520 Bookkeeping Fees | 3,600.00 | 4,167.00 |
| 7525 Tax Preparation Fee | 675.00 | 0.00 |
| Total 7500 Legal & Professional Services | \$ 14,775.00 | \$ 10,971.00 |
| 8110 Office Supplies & Software | 3,000.00 | 4,838.00 |
| 8115 Office Supplies | 750.00 | 1,500.00 |
| 8120 Bank Charges & Fees | 1,000.00 | 1,154.00 |
| 8130 Business Taxes & License fees | 300.00 | 250.00 |
| 8140 Entertainment | 250.00 | 100.00 |
| 8150 Insurance | 10,000.00 | 3,442.00 |
| 8160 Other Office Expenses & Equipment | 175.00 | 23.00 |
| 8170 Rent & Utilities | 7,186.00 | 1,547.00 |
| 8180 Repairs & Maintenance | 100.00 | 0.00 |
| 8185 Website and Social Media Expenses | 3,500.00 | 3,289.00 |
| Total 8100 Non - Personnel Expenses | \$ 26,261.00 | \$ 16,143.00 |
| 8400 Program Expenses | 0 | |
| 8420 Program Supplies | 1,700.00 | 360.00 |
| 8430 Printing and Book costs | 4,000.00 | 3,289.00 |
| 8440 Travel | 250.00 | 373.00 |
| 8460 Workshop/Training Expenses | 1,500.00 | 798.00 |
| Total 8400 Program Expenses | \$ 7,450.00 | \$ 4,820.00 |
| Total Expenditures | \$ 275,650.00 | \$ 264,302.00 |
| Net Operating Revenue | -\$ 57,975.00 | -\$ 57,171.00 |
| Net Revenue | -\$ 57,975.00 | -\$ 57,171.00 |

Testimonials from Pongo Youth, Community Leaders, & Artists

"In Creative Justice, we see the way art not only can feed our souls and nourish our spirits. It connects us to each other and ourselves, building community in such a way that even those who have experienced great difficulty can be centered and supported. We welcome more opportunities to change the way our institutions work, and to use the power of creativity to care for each other. Pongo is among the best at this. We wholeheartedly support their work."

People confined to institutions are among the most marginalized and vulnerable in our communities. The racial disproportionality at each stage of the justice system is staggering - from initial police contact through arrest, prosecution, and sentencing. Building greater opportunities to share their stories is essential to our communal well-being; to remember the struggles we need to face together and the dreams we have yet to achieve. Pongo trains their staff and volunteers in ways to properly steward the trauma of their poet-participants, uplifting their voices, their creativity, and their potential. In doing so, they are working towards a more equitable and just region."

- *Aaron Counts, founder of Creative Justice, an arts-based alternative to incarceration for young people in King County, describing Pongo's impact on vulnerable youth and marginalized communities in the Pacific Northwest*

"At a tough point in my life - when I felt voiceless - Pongo came along like a touch of reassurance. It gave me a place to start over; a megaphone to shout through. It's helped me build my identity up from the ground and now my voice now feels heard and valued."

- *Kusumita, a Pongo youth author, describing her Pongo poetry writing experience*

"To be completely honest, I didn't think anyone would ever see or read it, which is why I think I put so many inner thoughts into it. I just put it down because I needed a way to get some emotions out. But I am truly touched that someone took time out of their day to read and appreciate it, for all the inner demons I spilled into it. I'm very fond of writing, stories, and art, and I want to grow up to involve myself in a profession that involves all three.

I don't really share my writings that much due to anxiety, and I was relieved to see that someone appreciated it. It may be more relatable than I think."

- *Gray Ryan, Pongo youth author, describing the experience of having their poetry published by Pongo*

"I believe in everything Pongo does. The happy contagion which springs from telling one's own true story, writing one's own thoughts, and following the trail of imagination, continues to pass from person to person as a healing gift. Listen to these brave, beautiful voices and feel fortified on your own trail."

- *Naomi Shihab Nye, Award-winning poet, novelist and songwriter, describing Pongo's published anthologies of youth poetry*

Youth Poetry Samples from Pongo's 2021-2022 Program Year

Youth Poetry from King County Juvenile Detention

I WISH I KNEW

by a young person, age 17

I wish I knew my biological dad
I wish I knew my dad's side of the family
I wish my path was easier
I wish I knew how to get through life
I wish life was easier
I wish I could remember the talks
my auntie gave me
I wish lessons were easier to learn
I wish I knew how to make good, positive money
I wish living life wasn't so hard
I wish I knew more about my education
I wish I knew ways to be better
than what I've become

TRIFE

By a young person, age 15

Mentally and physically, it feels
like everybody's trying to lock me up
Put me in the position where I'm feeling stuck
and down on my last string of luck

Feels so long since I felt love
My heart feels like it's going to rust
So many things I want to do
Felt like I was in a rush

If someone was to tell me
I would be in the position I was in right now
I would tell them they were out of their mind
never realizing all that can change when given time

Situations
Relationships
Appearances
Wealth
And state of mind

It took me a while to realize
that the path I was going on
was digging me in a hole
Deeper and deeper
until the dirt surrounded me

Until I became blind

Forced to commit crime after crime
just as a means to survive
That's just how it's always been
Because for me,
life hasn't always been so kind

FEELING LOST

By a young person, age 17

The first step can be the longest
when you want to go back in time
for a change
Like making amends

The first step can be the most challenging
when you fear death
Death is cold
like the arctic
Stepped in
Shocked

The first step can be the hardest
when you fight against faith
Like losing somebody or someone
It's confusing
You're lost for words
Abandoned

The first step is often the loneliest
when you don't know if you're going to make it
through night and day
Lost in the jungle
Trying to find your way
Survival

The first step can be an opening
where the possibilities include a change in life
Where you can see the light
It looks like the sunset
over the ocean
at Kalaloch beach

The first step can be an ending
when you think you will lose your mind
and control over self
seeing hurt

The first step can be a thrill
when you experience regaining composure of self

When that happens
I will be home with family
Connecting
Building a relationship
Laughing, joking around

The first step can be joy
when you celebrate the things that I achieved
and the goals I want in the future
That celebration is happiness
At ease
Relaxed

Youth Poetry from the WA State Psychiatric Hospital for Children's Child Study & Treatment Center

HOLE FOR A HEART
By a young person, age 12

My heart is like
an infinite hole
of darkness,
wanting to try
to have light
but consuming
the light so nobody
can have it

Dedicated to my girlfriend

THEIR LIKES, HER APPROVAL, HIS WORDS
By a young person, age 17

i am addicted. i am the girl addicted to putting a smile
on my face with every outfit.
i am addicted to being okay,
to being hyper and happy.
i am addicted.
i am addicted to being the one who always helps
others first.
the selfless girl who stands up for the underdog.
i am addicted.

but I am also addicted
to speaking words of hate.
yelling horrific words at myself every day in the mirror.
i am addicted to counting my calorie intake,
telling myself that one bite is more than enough.
i am addicted to leaving the crumbs on my plate.
the granola on my napkin.
i am addicted to the look of an untouched plate.

i'm so addicted that I do it without trying.
i am addicted.

i am addicted to only letting her rules and perceptions
of my body matter.
to letting his hands do what they want.
letting his words define my value.
i am addicted.

Dedicated to the girl who stands by my side.

THE FREEDOM OF YOUR LIFE
By a young person, age 12

If your freedom is the night
you know that the darkness will not bring you fright.
If you are out alone
but it looks like everything is unknown,
the darkness is full of surprises.
You never know just where it goes,
the moon shining up in the sky.
Where could it be up there?
If you know about the dark,
you got to know that you'll never know
the full truth of the night.
Your freedom lies in the night sky.
Just remember everyday there is a night.

If your freedom is the light,
just remember light is there too.
You can turn freedom into both.
The night and the light comes through.
You can bring the freedom everywhere you go.
To galaxy 951, or to earth where we've begun.
Apollo rings, Osiris roars, Scorpio crawls, as Medusa falls
and that's what makes your freedom
stronger than it was before.

Dedicated to my awesome teacher

Youth Poetry from You Grow Girl!

ALL THE GOOD THINGS THAT A WOMAN CAN DO
By a young person, age 13

A woman is a person who works and who takes care of her family
I experience being a woman and think that it's hard for us
and I think that I can do a whole bunch of things
like acting and dancing.
Not only is a woman amazing
—and I am amazing—

we can accomplish
many things in our life

We can be the first vice-president of the United States
That is amazing that an African-American woman
is the vice-president! We also can be scientists
who send rockets into space
and surgeons that can help people survive

We have babies and take care of them day to day
and when they are all grown up they have children
and we become grandmothers

At thirteen, I already get good grades
I try my hardest at anything I do
and if people decide they don't like me,
I just ignore them
and I know that I'm amazing
and that I'm smart
and I can do really good in life.

VULNERABILITY IS A STRENGTH

By a young person, age 14

Vulnerability is a strength, not a weakness
It is a sign of power

Vulnerability can be your anchor or your wings
You can let it take you down or use it to your advantage
You can let it take control of your emotions or you can embrace it

Feeling vulnerable is like looking at the tip of an iceberg
You don't know what is below the surface of the water
You don't know what's coming next

But do not let anyone ever tell you that being vulnerable is a sign weakness
because it is not!

It is a strength and it's your choice if you want to use it to thrive
or if you'll let it overpower you