



Funds Distribution Report

Recipient Organization:
Pongo Publishing

Address:
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Seattle, WA 98116

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<https://www.pongoteenwriting.org>

Organization's General Goals:

The Pongo Publishing Teen Writing Project is a volunteer, nonprofit effort with Seattle teens who are in jail, on the streets, or in other ways leading difficult lives. We help these young people express themselves through poetry and other forms of writing.

Date of Award:	Level:
2019 Q2	\$500 to \$2,500

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

8802 27th Ave NE
Tulalip, WA 98271
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PONGO POETRY PROJECT
4701 SW Admiral Way, #308
Seattle, WA 98116

Nebeu Shimeles
Development Manager

Introduction

The 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 2019-2020 program year. We expanded our direct service efforts to reach additional local youth and continued to share our unique programmatic methodology both locally and nationally. Furthermore, your support allowed us to meet the significant need for our services brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. Funding from the Tulalip Tribes Charitable Fund allowed Pongo to support youth in new, innovative ways, as they navigated the emotional turmoil related to 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



Pictured Above: Writing mentors at Pongo's Child Study and Treatment Center program site.

Pongo worked with **35 youth in 73 sessions** at the Child Study and Treatment Center (CSTC) during the 2019-2020 program year. Our writing mentors helped the youth to 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 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



Pictured Above: Pongo founder Richard Gold, leads a group of mental health caregivers in a training on the Pongo Method.

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 81 trainings on the Pongo Method, including sessions at the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, the Tulane School of Social Work, West Oakland Middle School, the Michigan Juvenile Detention Assoc., the UC San Diego School of Medicine, the National Center for Victims of Crime, and UCLA's annual "Creativity and the Arts in Healing" conference. In the past year alone, Pongo conducted 9 local and national trainings, working with mental health professionals, arts therapists and educators across Washington, Oregon and California, supplying them 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 (Rowman & Littlefield Education, 2014).

As a result of these efforts, Pongo-inspired projects have sprung up locally, nationally, and internationally. Many of these new sites send volunteers to Seattle for training, use the tools on our website to enhance their programs, and contact us for advice and support. 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 the Broadview Shelter and New Horizon Ministries, (2) nationally in cities including Modesto, San Diego, Colorado Springs, Ann Arbor, and New Orleans, and (3) internationally in Amsterdam, Cape Town, Krakow, and San Salvador, among others.

Pongo & COVID-19



Pictured Above: Pongo authors at our King County Juvenile Detention program site.

Pongo intended to pause our relationship with King County Juvenile Detention for the 2019-2020 program year. Our decision was due to major organizational shifts within the institution, including leadership transitions, demographic changes amongst detained youth, and facility relocation. However, due to the significant need precipitated by the COVID-19 pandemic, Pongo pivoted to offering services within the facility in the spring of 2020.

Between newly instituted limitations on outside visitation, the scaling back of programmatic activities, and a reduction in staff at the facility, the youth remaining in detention faced a tremendous level of isolation as a result of the pandemic. These new realities, coupled with the existing trauma of incarcerated youth prior to this emergency, made our programmatic intervention more crucial than ever. Our extensive programmatic experience has taught us how powerful poetry can be in helping people process their complicated emotions, allowing them to unburden themselves. While COVID-19 prevented the delivery of our traditional program, Pongo offered the therapeutic benefits of our program to detention youth through alternative means.

Pongo coordinated with staff at the facility to administer Pongo poetry programs for incarcerated youth. Pongo met with the mental health staff and provided a daylong training to the head of mental health and two counselors. Pongo also worked with the site's Recreation Coordinator, supplying writing activities for poetry mentorship, and providing published collections of teen poetry to be shared with detained youth. We offered further support in the form of ongoing consultation and technical guidance on program implementation. We were gratified to hear from the lead psychiatrist and lead teacher in detention that the youth inside detention missed Pongo, asked about Pongo, and, happily, continued to write poetry in anticipation of Pongo's return.

Through this modified partnership, Pongo made significant progress in using poetry to provide healing in the aftermath of personal trauma. Pongo worked with **6 youth** producing **47 poems**, during the course of our truncated three-week partnership. Trauma, by definition, is an overwhelming experience. It affects children deeply, often burdening them with confusion, a sense of personal defectiveness, and shame, rendering them unable to express themselves. When people are unable to express their emotional trauma, they may instead act out their pain through self-destructive and risky behaviors.

The power of poetry is that it is transformative, allowing youth to change the nature of their relationship to their trauma. Through the act of writing, youth discover that the terrible experiences they have endured do not make them broken people. The significance of this work is magnified by the fact that youth in Juvenile Detention and their families have borne the brunt of historical structural inequities, including racism, poverty, and mass incarceration. It is in this context that they have experienced the trauma that Pongo addresses. With

Pongo, the youth wrote about many painful subjects including domestic violence, murder, addiction, gang violence, and exploitation. Our authors experienced significant benefits from their artistic expression about these distressing experiences, including relief, joy, and creative pride.

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 pilot studies have indicated that Pongo poetry reduces distress (Dr. Ted Rynearson), that Pongo writers address their core issues in poetry (Dr. Miral Luka), that Pongo writers continue to write after Pongo (Dr. Liz Jordan), and that substance users have reduced craving for alcohol after writing with Pongo (Dr. Seema Clifasefi and Dr. Susan Collins).

Since 2005 Pongo has collected over 1,500 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,
- 93% of Pongo authors said they expect to write more in the future.

Notably, 39% of our authors said they had written only a little or not at all prior to their engagement with Pongo. Through our website, we have collected an additional 24,000 surveys from individuals across the country who have written poetry on our website, showing similarly impressive results.

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 at our King County Juvenile Detention Center program site, best captures the transformative nature of our work:

“Sharing my writing makes me feel heard and understood.”

Support from the Tulalip Tribes Charitable Fund made this impact 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@pongoteenwriting.org.

With Gratitude,



Nebeu Shimeles
Development Manager