

2022 Impact Report



THE TRAVELING
SCHOOL

Dear Traveling School Community,

This year's impact report is a testament to the *magic* of a Traveling School semester, regardless of its destination. But this sort of magic isn't accomplished by waving a wand. It requires elbow-grease: it's a complex recipe filled with measured amounts of engaging curricula, opportunities to bear witness, focus on community-building, inspired educators, dedicated partners, and motivated students. We built this magic from the ground up over the last three semesters in the western United States.

The magic is also, most certainly YOU—our Traveling School community. Your support made it possible for The Traveling School to grow and thrive over the past three semesters. You've sustained us as we reworked our international programming to focus right here—at home.

According to Drew, the Lead Teacher from our first western U.S. semester, the magic looks like this lesson:

"Everything offers us something," a professor told me in March 2020 when my graduate school shifted online and my hopes of teaching

for The Traveling School in southern Africa were squashed. In that moment, it was hard to see the 'something'—only the absence of what could have been. Yet sixteen months later, I was teaching in the Rocky Mountains and red-stained canyons of the Colorado Plateau. What the pandemic offered The Traveling School was this beautiful, distinctive semester. While it started first as an alternative to international travel, it quickly became an incomparable adventure, unique and somehow still undeniably a Traveling School experience.

Our western U.S. semester offered us the question: Why not start here, in our country of origin, where most of our students were born and raised? In doing so, we witnessed the power of unveiling the truths and myths of one's homeland. We simultaneously saw how the magic of The Traveling School resides not within a single place or country, but within our students, teachers, and innovative ways of educating.

As with Drew's story, the programmatic shift that resulted from the pandemic was actually a pivot into new possibilities.

If you believe in magic, keep reading, you'll see what we mean.

With love and light,



Jennifer Royall
Executive Director



Drew Higgins
Assistant Academic Dean



The Traveling School's Western U.S. Semester

Our fall western U.S. semester meanders from Montana through Wyoming, Utah, and Arizona, sometimes dipping into Colorado and New Mexico, and terminates near the southern border with Mexico. Our spring itinerary reverses this same path. Home is two vans: one brimming with students; the other exploding with backpacks, hiking boots, tents, food bins, camp stoves, dish tubs, textbooks, and a mobile library.

4: Countries represented by students
(U.S., Israel, Uganda, Canada)

22: Guest speakers
sharing expertise
each semester

248: Essays written with
pen and paper

315: Days operating in the Western U.S.
across 3 semesters (fall 2021, spring
2022, fall 2022)

393: River miles
paddled

15,000: Approximate miles driven
across the U.S. west

22,848: Pages of
novels read



Adventures With Big Agnes

by *Ellie Lardner, Fall 2021 Student*

"When I took this teaching job, I wasn't expecting to have to babysit seventeen-year-olds," Drew let out a dramatic sigh, then laughed, "Fine. One bedtime story."



On the banks of the San Juan River, our camp was abuzz with activity. Flashlights shone at the edge of my vision, and Clean Crew grumbled over the splash of water as they scrubbed the dishes from dinner. Calls of "Goodnight" and joking warnings of "Don't get eaten by the mountain lions" echoed from tents.

Drew read us *Corduroy*, a story about a stuffed-bear in a department store. No one will buy Corduroy the bear because he has a loose button and broken strap on his overalls, until a girl

who loves him despite these flaws, takes him home and repairs him. As Drew read, I half-listened, half-reflected, thinking about how far we had traveled already.

While most of our group would sleep nestled inside tents, several of us had braved the cold for the night, placing our sleeping bags next to each other and trusting that they would keep us warm. Like Corduroy, they were a little tattered and could probably use some patches, but we loved them anyways—they had been our homes for the last three months.

My parents bought me my sleeping bag when I announced my acceptance to The Traveling School. Pristine and a garish shade of teal, the sleeping bag even came with a name, "Big Agnes," or so the tag said, and my entire family referred to it as such.

As Drew read to us, I thought of how far Big Agnes and I had come. We'd learned to cook multi-course meals (some more successful than others) on camping stoves. We'd set up camp—building tents, assembling the outdoor kitchen, and unloading our backpacks from the van—in ten minutes flat with our fingers numb from the frost on the tent poles.

With Big Agnes, I journaled every night. With Big Agnes, I wrote poems about the history of the national parks, where I came from, and who I was. With her, I dreamed of decolonizing indigenous lands, fixing the drought in the West, and opening the borders between the U.S. and Mexico. I dreamed of hope in a country I had thought was broken beyond repair. I learned the importance of knowing my own country before trying to understand the rest of the world.

Later, I would shove Big Agnes into my suitcase next to my clothes as I prepared to spend my senior year as an exchange student in Amman, Jordan. Later, I would reflect on how TTS led me to seek new opportunities and taught me to approach life with openness and compassion.

Later, I would learn to navigate a new culture, language, and life. On the other side of the world, when I saw Big Agnes on my bed, with rips and a slightly broken zipper, I would smile like she was an old friend I hadn't seen in a long time. She would remind me of the dreams I had cherished, tucked between two other sleeping bags, smiling in the frigid October air.



Eleanor Lardner, right, in Grand Teton National Park

The Magic of Teachable Moments

by Meredith Nass, Spring 2022 Faculty

What's magical about teaching at The Traveling School? It's the days when lessons come from all directions and what could have been only a theory in a textbook jumps to life for students. Last spring, this was one of those days:

Meredith Nass



Looking out at the red-rock vistas of Bears Ears National Monument, you wouldn't know that just twenty minutes north, on the edge of Navajo and Ute-Mountain-Ute tribal lands, is the White Mesa Uranium Mill.

We had been studying Environmental Justice, a social movement that addresses the unequal exposure of marginalized communities to health hazards such as toxic waste from extractive industries. One morning, our class discussed an article about two Japanese activists who were resisting the export of Japanese uranium waste to the White Mesa mill.

Later that day we met the article's author, journalist Zak Podmore, and the two Japanese activists, Tomoyo and Hajime. Tomoyo and Hajime talked with us about uranium as an energy form, the impacts of uranium mining on the land and people, the lasting devastation of Fukushima nuclear disaster on the Japanese people, and about



2022 Spring semester students with journalist Zak Podmore and activists Tomoyo and Hajime in Bluff, Utah

their lives and personal stake in anti-nuclear activism. The students made origami paper cranes as they listened, rapt.

That evening, we made Navajo Tacos with two Diné women who also shared their connection to White Mesa—many of their relatives had worked at the Mill. One had lost her father from cancer due to exposure to nuclear waste there. She said this was common amongst the Mill workers, the vast majority of whom were Indigenous peoples.

This is what it means to engage in place-based, experiential learning. These sobering yet powerful stories underlined the importance of Environmental Justice in a way no classroom lecture ever could. Our students carried this day with them for the rest of the semester, and I hope like me, continue to think of the voices of the local people who are impacted by global problems we too often learn about only in the abstract.

Traveling through Stolen Lands

There is no part of our western U.S. semester that is not on native land. From Siksikaitsitapi (Blackfeet) to Northern Arapaho, Diné (Navajo) to Hopi, Wipuhk'a'bah (Yavapai) to Tohono O'odham, the list continues; and only listing names disregards the diverse, individual stories of Indigenous peoples.

In history class, students write land acknowledgments for their home communities and Traveling School course areas as a way of honoring the original and ongoing stewards of these lands. They learn that effective acknowledgments are specific and well-researched, reflect thoroughly on the land's history, describe Indigenous peoples' stories in all tenses (present and future—not only past), honestly name harms such as genocide, and delineate personal action steps to empower Indigenous groups.



Excerpts from Fall 2022 student land acknowledgments:

I would like to acknowledge that I live, work, play, learn, and go to school on; benefit from and use the traditional unceded territories of...

...From time immemorial, Indigenous peoples in these tribes have lived in what is now called...

...my ancestors took this land, of which Tribal Nations had connected and grown with, and land-grabbed unjustly and nonconsensually through new diseases, broken treaties, wars, and government-forced displacement...

...I will work to support Native businesses and encourage friends and family to do the same...

...I will continue to learn by reading books, listening to podcasts, exploring tribal websites and talking directly to Indigenous people wherever I travel...

...a land acknowledgment does not make up for the attempted genocide of the past...

... this, among other land acknowledgments, is one tiny step in the marathon of reconciliation.

International Student Highlight



Even as the ragged Rocky Mountains or cacti-filled campsites of the West felt like foreign landscapes, for most Traveling School students, the United States is home. Yet for these venturesome students, the western U.S. semester was a study abroad experience.

"As an international student, living in and learning about the U.S. was a transformational experience. I learned about a different narrative of American history and debunked myths about historical events such as the first Thanksgiving. I was also doing physical activities like rock climbing on Corndog wall and canoeing on the Missouri River, which taught me to be open about trying new things, push myself to work harder and trust my group members to support me."

Patricia Ninsiima
(Kampala, Uganda),
Fall 2022



"There was no decision of what to wear in the morning, no useless clutter lying around, no running around searching the house for a missing item, because there was only really one place to search! Every single thing I had on the semester was there intentionally, and I think that was my favourite part about it."

Stella Schwartz
(Whistler, B.C., Canada),
Fall 2022



"Studying with peers from a different country made me realize how much I want to learn! It taught me that learning can take place anywhere, especially outside of the classroom. During my time with The Traveling School, I realized that experiential learning was so much more enjoyable and impactful, so I decided to apply to study at a United World College (UWC) and got in! I am now doing 11th grade in Bosnia."

Rimone Aram
(Tel Aviv, Israel),
Fall 2021

Traveling School Partnerships



"The most powerful thing about The Traveling School is taking a group of female-identifying teenagers out of their comfort zone for an extended period of time. The group has the opportunity to intentionally create their

community, and they have guidance and support from strong female role models. I enjoyed watching the students support each other through the challenges of backcountry living, coming off the river as more confident, competent individuals than when they first pushed off the shore."

Sarah Ebright, Montana Wilderness School Instructor,
Missouri River canoe trip

"What is powerful about The Traveling School? Everything! Experiential education. Talented instructors. Immersive programs. Incredible students. A warm and inclusive atmosphere."

Hiroko Yamamoto, University of Utah professor, Design Build Bluff volunteer work



"Working with Traveling School students is thrilling—there is something about their energy. As a woman, I feel incredibly lucky to be offering perspective on topics I've studied and sharing insight with young women. There is a level of comfort and intimacy, as well as solidarity. The girls are so smart and curious, and are also great fun."

Betsy Quammen, Author, Guest Speaker

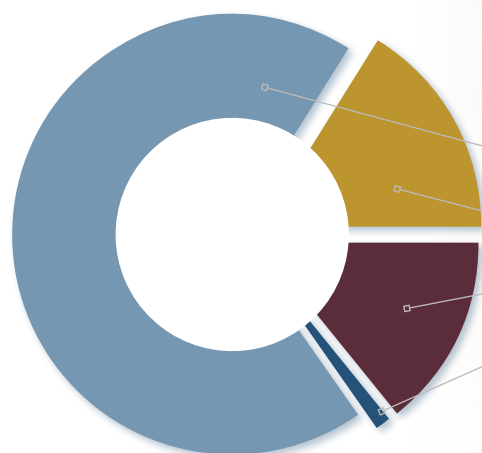


The Traveling School is Grateful for *You!*



Thank You

We truly appreciate all of those in our community who have generously donated to support The Traveling School this year! Thank you for supporting our students and our western U.S. semester.



July 1, 2021– June 30, 2022 REVENUE

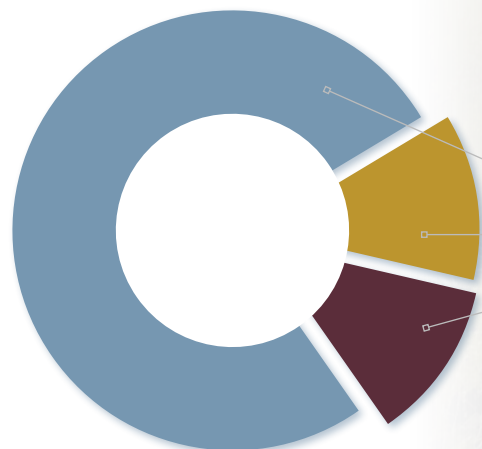
Tuition + Fees: **\$652,175**

Donations: **\$151,437**

Grants: **\$134,853**

In-Kind Donations: **\$9,812**

Total: \$948,277



July 1, 2021– June 30, 2022 EXPENSES

Program: **\$739,308**

Administration: **\$117,124**

Fundraising: **\$112,857**

Total: \$969,289

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* Completed board service in 2022.
Thank you for your dedication and
service to The Traveling School.

Faculty

Fall 2021

Drew Higgins - *Program Coordinator*
Becky Fitzpatrick - *Logistics Coordinator*
Leah Shorb
Megan Hardy

Spring 2022

Leah Shorb - *Program Coordinator*
Heather Weas - *Logistics Coordinator*
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Key Organizational Partners

Think Again Training & Consulting
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City Kids Wilderness Project
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Key Program Partners

AMB West
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Arivaca Action Center
Biosphere 2
Design Build Bluff
Verde Valley School
Borderlands Restoration Network
Prescott College

Deep Dirt Institute
Groundwork (Paonia, Colorado)
People Helping People

Key Speakers

Besty Quammen (*historian & author*)
Dr. Shane Doyle (*Apsáalooke, Montana-based scholar, teacher, and advocate*)
Laura Ziemer (*Senior Counsel & Water Policy Advisor, Trout Unlimited*)
Justina Lindeman (*RISE self protection in Jackson, WY*)
Zak Podmore (*author and journalist*)
Regina Lopez-Whiteskunk (*activist, member Ute Mountain Ute Tribe of Towaoc*)
Gwen Clark (*Diné homestead host on Navajo Nation*)
Dr. Leah Mundell (*Northern Arizona University, Anthropology professor*)
Glen "Gooch" Goodwin (*Bisbee-Patagonia, AZ naturalist and guide*)
Ed Kaboutie (*Tewa/Hopi artist, musician, storyteller of the Yoties band*)

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*The Traveling School amplifies
female voices through
transformative education to
ignite positive change.*



THE TRAVELING
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