

Annual Report 2014

SACRED
ROCK

“While I was standing alone and enjoying the view of nature, the waterfall, and the rainbow, I began to look to my left and look to my right and notice no one was by my side. At that point I began to realize its all on me to make the best of what I have, where I am, and where I’m going in life.”

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EDUCATION NATURE'S WAY.



Board of Directors:

Ron Kauk *Executive Director*
Nancy Goodban *Board Chair*
Kenji Hakuta *Secretary/Treasurer*
Brian Cooley
Lamar Henderson
Steve Shackelton
Lucy Snyder

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EDUCATION NATURES WAY.

PO Box 148
Yosemite, CA 95389
www.SacredRok.org
www.facebook.com/SacredRok
SacredRok@SacredRok.org

photography: RonKauk ©2014

Letter from the Board

Sacred Rok turned five this July. We are delighted to share our Fiscal Year 2014 Annual Report, highlighting our accomplishments July 2013- June 2014, and reflecting our plans for the future.

It started with a simple act, when Ron, Nancy and Kenji took a walk up Inspiration Point. We started thinking about sharing all that we value in education and nature with the young people of Merced and beyond. Our motto is "Education Nature's Way," and we created the simple message that our mission is help youth to learn to respect nature and through that, to respect themselves. Our approach is to slow down and focus on the basics – water, air, breathing, learning to walk again, learning to be human.

We accomplish our mission through day trips and camping trips with young people, as well as telling our story through books and videos, photographs, educational presentations, and online through our newsletter, website and Facebook page.

Our main accomplishments this year have been to expand our storytelling through presentations, and to strengthen our collaboration with Merced County Probation and Merced County Boys & Girls Club through day trips, camping trips, and visits to the juvenile facility in Merced.

These projects are supported by Cliff Bar Family Foundation, North Face, Patagonia, and Merced County United Way. In addition, with the support of

the National Parks Foundation, we have begun a significant new initiative in partnership with Yosemite National Park and the Associated Tribes of Yosemite to help the park reach out to native youth to be in touch with their cultural historical connection to Yosemite.

During the coming year we expect to see the final cut of the documentary *A Search for Freedom* that features Ron and the young people of Sacred Rok. We are also planning a book that reflects the voices of incarcerated Probation youth and a video with Native American youth.

The lessons we have learned in bringing young people into nature over the past five years are profound. We are grateful for the opportunity to share these lessons with the young people we serve as well as with the larger community. We are especially grateful to our many supporters and donors, without whom this work would not be possible.

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The Year in Review

It has been five years since we started Sacred Rok. We are continuing to build relationships through the art of communication, appreciation and respect.

Simply being and being in the moment—these experiences show the way back to the basics.

When we say “relationships” at Sacred Rok we mean with all life – air, water, and land. This is the Law for the Real World. When we say “communion with our senses” we mean tuning in and remembering how to feel as well as think. Our experiences continue to help us better understand the word “education” and commit to the reality of Education Nature’s Way. We tell our story and share what we have learned.

With the support of our donors, Ron has led twenty-two day trips and five camping trips this fiscal year with American Indian youth, Merced County Probation, Boys & Girls Clubs of Merced, EMQ FamiliesFirst, Greenacre Homes Inc, and Symple Equazion. These outings provide the opportunity to build relationships and to help these young people experience and appreciate Yosemite’s ceremony of nature.

Ron has also made presentations to Patagonia outlets in the Bay Area as well as other educational presentations, including showing his movie *Return to Balance: A Climber’s Journey* at the Yosemite Visitor Center on weekend nights during the spring and summer.

We are grateful to our supporters. All of our trips are at no cost to the participants. We are 100% funded by donations (monetary and in-kind), grants, and contracts. We are especially pleased to have established a collaboration with the National Park Service, which demonstrates our ability to work together with institutions.

This past spring, Yosemite National Park asked us to apply for a grant with them to help bring Native American young people to Yosemite and get back in closer touch with their culture. We are honored to be able to partner with Yosemite National Park through a grant from the National Parks Foundation as part of its America’s Best Ideas program.



“We are all travelers in the wilderness of this world and the best we can find in our travels is an honest friend.”

(Reflections of a Probation youth)



2014 Goals

The four Fiscal Year 2014 goals adopted by the Board of Directors reflect Sacred Rok's priorities and guide our efforts:

1. Programming and activities such as day trips and camping.
2. Telling the story of Sacred Rok — this includes *Letters from Sacred Rok*, the newsletters, the website, the Facebook page, videos, and educational presentations.
3. Building organizational capacity including continuing to support grant writing, website maintenance, and bookkeeping.
4. Long term goals – sustainability funding and finding land to provide a place where our Sacred Rok youth can return at any time for a safe haven, a refuge for these young adults to experience the healing ceremony of nature.



Day Trips & Camping Trips

Our programmatic activities are day trips and overnight camping trips to Yosemite National Park.


Each trip is led by Sacred Rok Executive Director Ron Kauk, and camping trips are supported by Katie Lambert, our extraordinary cook and camp manager.

We limit each trip to 4-6 young people in order to be able to focus on the healing experience of the ceremony of nature, the sense of place, and the building of trust and relationships. We take the youth on multiple trips to help them become more comfortable; and to build ongoing relationships over time. Nature provides the curriculum and the structure—wind, weather, and water are our guides. A typical day trip in Yosemite Valley might include a stop at Fern Spring to fill water bottles and appreciate the ancient water flowing from the ground, a hike from Tunnel View up to Old Inspiration Point, or a walk to the base of El Capitan.

Our camping trips are typically at Tuolumne Meadows Campground. At 8,800 feet elevation, Tuolumne Meadows is only open in the summer months and is less crowded than Yosemite Valley. A camping trip might include a hike along the Tuolumne River past Pothole Dome, a walk to Parsons Lodge and Soda Springs, a dip in Tenaya Lake, or a hike up the back of Lempert Dome.



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A scenic view of a lake in Yosemite National Park. In the foreground, a hiker with a backpack is seen from behind, looking towards the lake. Another hiker is visible further down the trail. The lake is surrounded by rocky hills and a large pine tree on the left. The sky is blue with some clouds.

In Fiscal Year 2014, Ron led twenty seven trips to Yosemite National Park — twenty-two day trips and five camping trips. Here are some highlights:

Twelve day trips and a camping trip with Merced County Probation youth who are incarcerated at Iris Garrett Juvenile Justice facility.

Sacred Rok continues to partner with the Merced County Probation Department to help the young people incarcerated at the Iris Garrett Juvenile Justice Facility in Merced. Participating youth are in long term incarceration at Iris Garrett, and are selected by the Probation Department on the basis of good behavior.

Sacred Rok is grateful for the support of North Face for this project. Twice a month, the Probation van brings these young people to Yosemite for a day trip with Ron, accompanied by a Probation Officer. Once a year they go camping. And Ron goes to Iris Garrett every week for lunch, bringing organic food, which is very much appreciated. The Probation Department has built Sacred Rok into its curriculum and programming for these young people. This experience has a powerful impact on these young men. The mutual respect with Ron has been developed through shared experiences on the trips as well as in the classroom. These young people have recorded rap songs and developed a "Mission I'mpossible" website to show how the experiences in Yosemite and with Sacred Rok help them see a purpose in their lives. Truly this has provided the opportunity to change the world, one person at a time. The upcoming documentary film by Earth Network, *A Search for Freedom*, will highlight Ron's work with Probation.



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Nine day trips and one camping trip with young people from Boys & Girls Clubs of Merced

Sacred Rok has continued its partnership with the Boys & Girls Clubs of Merced County, with the support of the United Way of Merced County. The mentors at the Boys & Girls Club identify the young people and accompany them on the trips. The day trips have taken place in all seasons, giving these young people the chance to experience Yosemite throughout the year. The summer camping trip was a highlight.

One day trip with Symple Equazion youth

Sacred Rok has continued its partnership with Symple Equazion, a Merced-based nonprofit that works with young women and men who are attending the alternative high school after having difficulties in the regular public high schools, including those on probation. We took one day trip with them this year, giving these young people the chance to experience for themselves the healing ceremony of nature.

One camping trip with young people from Mariposa Middle School

Sacred Rok has been on day trips and camping trips with the students at Mariposa Middle School, and this year the camping trip in Tuolumne Meadows offered the chance to renew the relationship, experience the open skies and meadows, hike, and sleep in a tent.

One camping trip with young people from Greenacre Homes Inc

These teenagers were in foster care and/or on probation in Sonoma County. Driven to Tuolumne Meadows by their counselor, they had the opportunity to spend four nights under the stars, hiking and swimming during the day and listening to the Ranger talks around the campfire at night.

One camping trip with young people from EMQ FamiliesFirst.

EMQ FamiliesFirst brought young women from its foster care program in Santa Clara County to go camping at Tuolumne Meadows. It was a life-changing experience. One of the girls' foster parents said after the trip that she had never seen her so at peace. She was calmer, less anxious, and better behaved. As their counselor commented, these girls often don't have the chance to interact with adults besides their social worker, attorney, and the judge. The opportunity to be treated like a regular person, do crafts, take walks, and especially to be treated as an equal by their social workers on the trails, was a powerful time for healing. Sacred Rok will continue to collaborate with EMQ FamiliesFirst. Ron will also come to the Bay Area to lead day trips there.

Activities with American Indian Youth

Through Yosemite National Park, Sacred Rok received a grant from the National Parks Foundation to partner with American Indian tribes to bring youth to Yosemite. American Indian elder Bill Tucker has previously partnered with Sacred Rok on camping trips, and this grant provides the opportunity to strengthen the relationship for the youth and to tell the story through a video project.

Bill Tucker provides the cultural and traditional touchstone for the youth in this collaborative partnership. Activities included the annual Spiritual Camp in June as well as activities planned for summer and fall 2014. Yosemite has a powerful resonance to the American Indian community. This project provides the opportunity to help reconnect young people to their rich cultural heritage and their roots in the park.

The Miwok, Paiute, Mono, and Chukchansi tribes have lived in the Sierras for centuries. The Miwok People were evicted from their homes in Yosemite Valley as late as the 1960s, when the last homes were burned, and many young people in these tribes no longer have the connection to their history and culture in the park, nor the opportunity to connect with its granite rocks, rushing waters, and healing power.

Sacred Rok is honored and inspired to have this opportunity to work together to promote the wisdom of the indigenous connection.



A Note from The Camp Kitchen

Katie Lambert, our extraordinary cook and camp manager who is currently studying for a Masters Degree in Nutrition, has shared the following insights:

Part of my job at Sacred Rok is to provide everyone with the best food I can conjure. This not only means good taste, it also means good for you. A lot of thought and time go into thinking of recipes, adapting recipes to fit with our mission of better health through nutrition, and what ingredients will be the most beneficial. As a child in Louisiana, I remember that my great grandfather grew a garden that supplied food for the table and the many months ahead. Things that didn't get eaten immediately were jarred, canned and frozen. Jams, salsas, stews and pickled items lined the shelves of the pantries of every member of our family. I remember the crisp cucumbers sprawled across the ground, the prickly merlitons and their weird smell, the stakes of snap peas, the canopy of grape leaves draped across the pecan trees in the back corner, and the hot house with it's tomatoes and box of potatoes. The tomatoes were the best with their deep red flesh and the sweet water of the earth. I ate them like apples on occasion or my great grandmother would very gingerly peel and chop them and season with salt, pepper and vinegar. These became one of my favorite things to eat. My great grandfather took pride in his plants and he kept a journal of his garden – what he planted, when he planted, what pests came, what nutrients were needed, when was the

frost, when was the drought, home remedies and theories. As I grew up I started to garden myself and I called him or wrote to him often asking advice on what I had growing. My gardens prospered and my tomatoes and peppers were almost as sweet as his. Small scale, organic farming produces fruits and vegetables and meats so rich and full of life - this is the food that I love and this is the food that Sacred Rok supports. We want the youth and adults we work with to understand this difference and to be nurtured by this food. This is why we largely support local, organic farming practices and try to buy most, if not all of our food from these types of people and places.



Outreach and Education

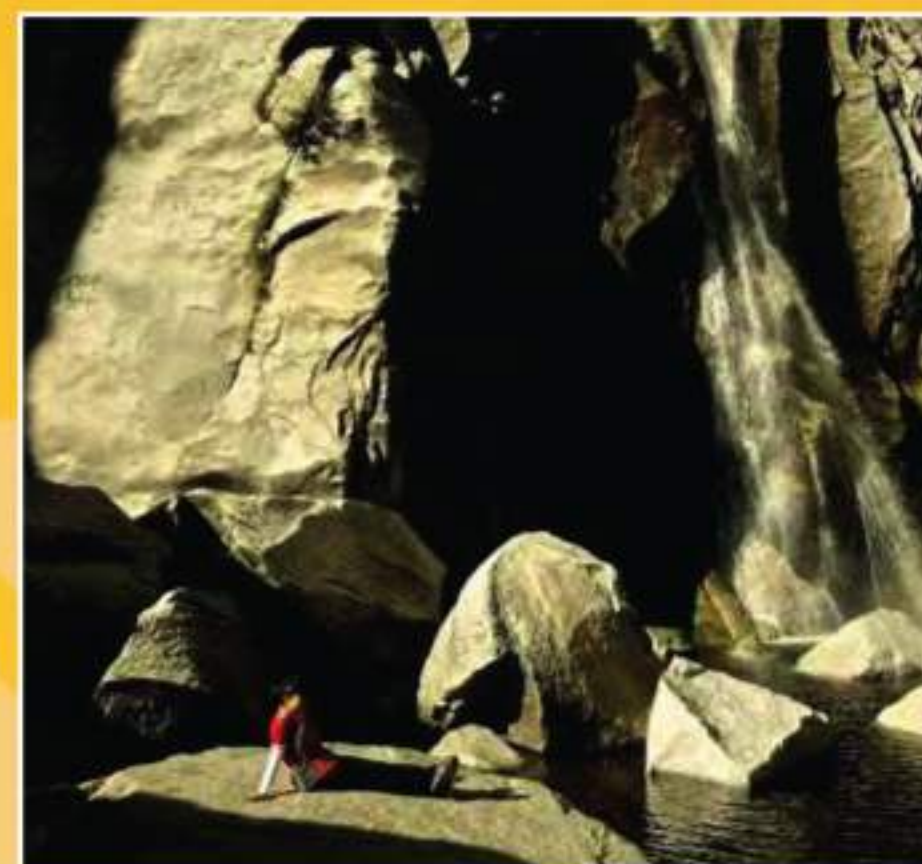
One of Sacred Rok's goals is to tell the story to help people understand the importance of nature, to share how we can learn to get back to the basics of being human, talking, walking, and breathing.

Our 2013 book, *Letters from Sacred Rok*, has been very well received. We are currently working with the Merced County Probation Department on a book sharing the voices of the young people who are incarcerated. Their story will also be shared in the *A Search for Freedom* documentary. We are also planning a video with the American Indian youth allowing them to share their experiences and feelings with their own culture and how it plays out in Yosemite.

Ron made a series of presentations at Patagonia locations in the San Francisco Bay Area, as well as to foster parents and foster youth at EMQ FamiliesFirst for Foster Parent Appreciation Day, in addition to showing his movie, *Return to Balance: A Climber's Journey*, at the Yosemite Visitor Center on weekends in the summer.



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Outcomes

We seek positive outcomes - defined as changes in knowledge, attitude, or behavior — for youth participants. Here are some of our findings.

Immediate Outcomes

Some outcomes are apparent immediately. These short-term outcomes include an increased self-confidence in nature and caring for the environment. Young people learn to sit at peace under a tree or by a river without needing an electronic crutch to communication and social media. They are calmer and better able to manage anger, and more able to control their impulses. One way to measure these outcomes is through participant surveys.

We surveyed Boys & Girls Club participants regarding whether they thought that the trip made them less stressful or anxious; 75% responded “Yes” and 25% responded “Maybe.” Another survey question asked if the trip would help them to be more patient and to think before they act; 86% responded “Yes” and 14% responded “Maybe.”

The Boys & Girls Club shared two examples to support this outcome. Before the trip, one teen would at times speak rudely to staff. He was beginning to clash with staff to a point where they had to contact his parents. After the trip, his relationship with staff improved, based on their bonding experience in Yosemite. He has since been involved with the club participating in basketball tournaments, and just recently won the championship in his division. Another teen always wanted to be the center of attention. After the trip, she really toned herself down, becoming more helpful in the kitchen when serving snacks, calmer, and more respectful. Overall, each of the trips leaves the youth in great anticipation for the next trip.

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Long-term Outcomes

Longer term, outcomes include respect for nature and themselves, the feeling of being respected and valued by adults, more positive peer and adult relationships, and hopes and goals for the future that lead to more engagement in school or work.

Based on observations by the mentors, the participants have developed strong positive relationships with trip leader Ron Kauk as well as with the Boys & Girls Club mentors who accompany them on the trips. Their mentor states that Sacred Rok day trips with the Boys & Girls Club have had an astonishing impact on the youth:

“These trips seem to never fail to enlighten our youth and provide new experiences. For example, one teen who will be a sophomore in high school always seem to glow after each Yosemite trip, and she’s just so humble at the club.”

Youth who are given a chance to know more about their peers outside the club are more interactive towards staff. Their mentor says:

“The younger participants enjoy their close relationship with the staff mentor who went on the trips. They seek him out for enjoyment and entertainment, and enjoy sing-alongs during the bus rides. The youth are really responsive to him at the club also. All the older youth participants have also become closer to staff and mentors. They are more open when speaking to them, and less likely to get into trouble.”

We surveyed Boys & Girls Club participants to see if they thought that trips like this and being in nature would help them in home and in school, and 85% said yes.

100% said the trip gave them a better understanding of nature and the natural world. 86% said the trip made them more confident about being in nature, and 14% said maybe. The mentor reported that:

“It’s always beneficial when club members get a chance to visit this beautiful place and to return with a positive outlook. Participants have been outstanding at the club and one also received recognition as “youth of the month.” As a result of the trips, these youth demonstrate a more positive attitude, being very respectful and responsible, and earn great grades. One teen had been struggling with her science class, to a point where she was failing. The trips served as an outlet, where she could de-stress herself, be sincere, feel harmonious, and to be self-reflective. Since she started the trips, she began improving, increasing her grade by two letters. She cherishes these trips up to Yosemite, and always looks forward to them.”



Future Plans

We want to continue telling the story of Sacred Rok, the story of how to learn to be human, how to respect nature and learn to respect ourselves. We will continue to lead trips for youth from Merced and the rest of California. In addition, we will continue to share our story through books, videos, newsletter, social media, and presentations. We will convene like minded adults who share our philosophy, including those in the education field who recognize the need to incorporate the value of nature and the true value of being human into the classroom. Thank you for your support and friendship!



Supporters

We owe special thanks to this year's supporters, without whom our efforts would not be possible. We are so grateful for the many donations that we receive from people who are touched by our story, who read our newsletter, attend our events, or meet Ron when he shows his movies at the Yosemite Visitor Center.

Top of the Rock, \$15,000 and above

Clif Bar Family Foundation
National Parks Foundation

Sponsors, \$5,000- \$15,000

Yvon and Melinda Chouinard
Family Foundation
North Face Explore Fund
Patagonia

Partners, \$500-\$5,000

Assistance League of Los Altos
Victoria Eisenhart
Greenacre Homes Inc
Milbrey McLaughlin
and Larry Klein
Taylor Samuels, TMS
Environmental Systems
United Way of Merced County

Supporters, \$100-\$500

Jennifer and Edward Asselstine
Linda Berg
Susan Brochini
Ruth and Fred Brousseau
Sue and Dave Ellis
Nicole Gabel
Nancy Goodban and
Kenji Hakuta
Patrick Heryford
Gay and Laurance Hoagland
Hilary Hopkins

Isis Keigwin
Marjorie Long
Lisa Mckethan and
Brian McInerney
Kent Newbold

Beth Ogilvie and
Susan Straghalis
Patty Payne-Zajac
and Mark Zajac
Philip Purvis
Shari Rago
Margot Rawlins
Lucy Snyder and Chris Gallery
David Tyack
Camille Whitney
Nicole Young

Friends, up to \$100

Mary Ann and James Barbee
Michelle Bowling
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Nancy A. Calibjo
Catherine Cilfone
Richard Conness
Lori Constan
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and Brian Cooley
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Shirley Mantyla
Cami Mattson
Mark Miletich
Adam Palmer
William Plaut
Beth Pratt
Gale Rankin and
Vicente Bonnard
Mary and James Shackelton
Piyush Shah
Gary Springer
Cathy Tseng
Timothy Wilson

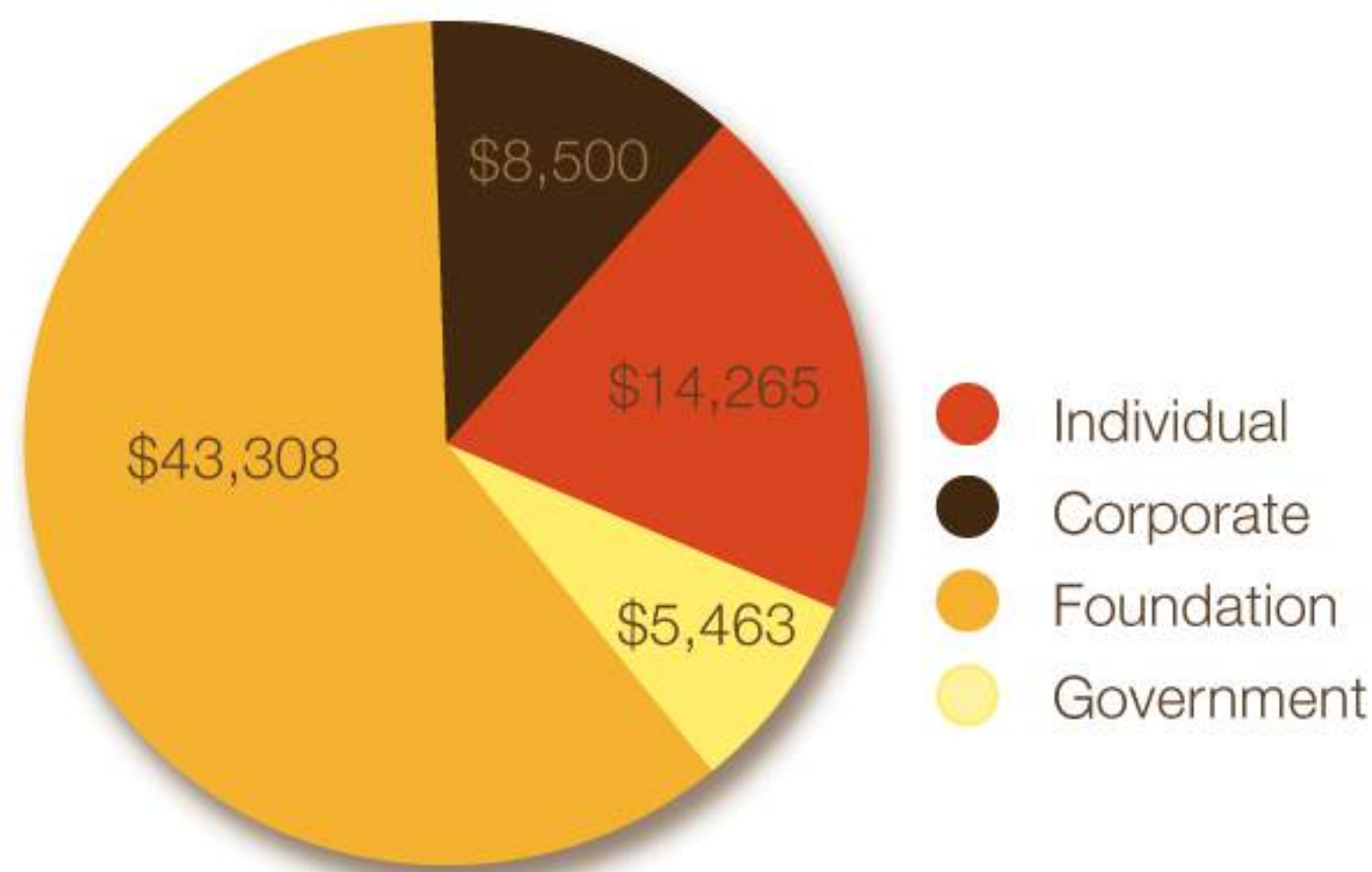
Financials

In the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2014, Sacred Rok received \$71,561.17 in revenue and had \$47,752.94 in expenses, for a net income of \$23,808.23.

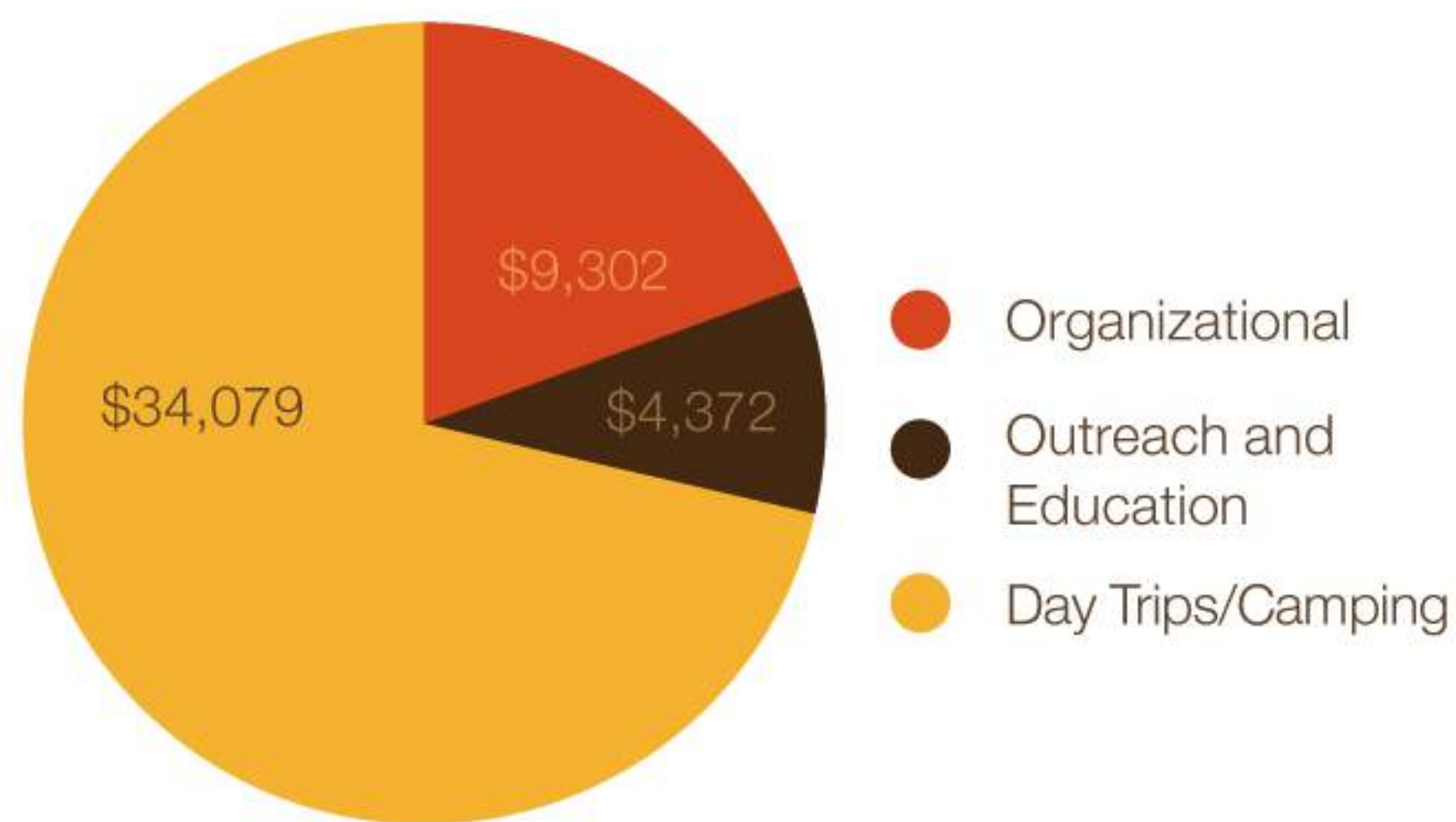
The balance sheet showed \$72,051.05 in the bank. Our primary funding in FY 2014 was foundation funding (\$43,308, 60% of our revenue), followed by individual donations (\$14,265, 20% of our revenue), corporate donations (\$8,500, 12% of our revenue), and government contracts (\$5,463, 8% of our revenue).

Our primary expense was camping and day trips, which accounted for \$34,079 or 71% of our costs. Outreach and education made up \$4,372 or 9% of our expenses. Organizational expenses made up the remaining \$9,302 or 20% of our expenses. Our largest organizational expenses are insurance, telecommunications, postage, and administrative support staffing for grant writing and upkeep of the web site and newsletter.

The pie charts opposite show our revenue sources and our costs. The Profit and Loss Statement and Balance Sheet are shown on the next two pages.



Fiscal Year 2014 Revenue



Fiscal Year 2014 Expenses

Ordinary Income/Expense

INCOME

Restricted

Government Grants and Contracts	\$5,462.84
Foundation Grants	\$43,308.00

Total Restricted

\$48,770.84

Unrestricted

Individual and Foundation Donations	\$14,265.00
Corporate Donations	\$8,500.00
Interest	\$25.33

Total Unrestricted

\$22,790.33

TOTAL INCOME

\$71,561.17

EXPENSE

Organizational Costs

Administrative Support Staff	\$1,879.90
Postage and Mailing	\$1,989.73
Telephone and Telecommunications	\$2,042.92
Insurance	\$2,700.00
Office supplies/miscellaneous admin	\$451.34
Bank/PayPal Fees	\$238.30

Total Organizational Costs

\$9,302.19

Outreach and Education Costs

Printing	\$2,118.01
Design	\$1,785.00
Other	\$468.58

Total Outreach and Education Costs

\$4,371.59

Camping and Day Trip Costs

Program Staff	\$24,596.74
Food and Camping Supplies	\$9,482.42

Total Camping and Day Trip Costs

\$34,079.16

TOTAL EXPENSE

\$47,752.94

NET ORDINARY INCOME

\$23,808.23



Sacred Rok Fiscal Year-End Balance Sheet FY 2014

ASSETS

Current Assets

Checking/Savings	\$72,051.05
Accounts Receivable	\$-399.00
Supplies/Inventory	\$827.21

Total Current Assets **\$72,479.26**

Fixed Assets **\$1,694.97**

TOTAL ASSETS **\$74,174.23**

LIABILITIES & EQUITY

Equity

Retained Earnings	\$50,366.00
Net Income	\$23,808.23

Total Equity **\$74,174.23**

TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY **\$74,174.23**



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Our mission is simple—we seek to help youth learn to respect nature and, through that, to respect themselves.

www.SacredRok.org