

# 2021/22

## Annual Report



May your heart light your path / Let your curiosity be your guide

May your wonder be your map / Let the ocean pick you up



Let the sea set you down / Let the eagle soar you high

May you be your own light

Let the stars guide you home

May You Let

BY LILAH BEANE

4<sup>th</sup> Grade / Dearborn Park  
International Elementary School



**“It always comes back to joy... and that the hard things have to be acknowledged as well in order for joy to flourish.”**

—BRIAN DANG, WITS WRITER-IN-RESIDENCE

## **Seattle Arts & Lectures’ 2021/22 fiscal year was a year of both change and challenge, joy and giddy firsts.**

**It was a year of joy.** We returned to shared experiences—in event halls, online, in schools, and in the office. We witnessed WITS Writers-in-Residence meeting students in person for the first time, after a year of online learning. We saw our favorite authors (Anthony Doerr, Kaveh Akbar, Sonya Renee Taylor & so many more) in their embodied forms, and we got to be embodied with them! And we continued to welcome our online community, and worked to make sure that they also felt a sense of belonging. We got to laugh, to cry, to see old friends, to make new friends, and to learn together.

**It was a year of transformation.** We said goodbye to staff and we welcomed new colleagues. Some stepped into new roles, including long-time SAL staffer Rebecca Hoogs as Executive Director. Hybrid working allowed us to connect in person and retain the benefits of working from home. We used our collectively written values to guide our decisions, to mindfully build our organizational culture, and to live into our ongoing work to become an anti-racist organization. New initiatives took off—such as our pilot partnerships to give away online tickets through rural libraries, our community-curated series with Ijeoma Oluo at Langston, or our Indigenous Land-Based Pedagogy trainings for teachers, led by Laura Da’ (Eastern Shawnee).

**It was a year of challenge.** The collective and individual grief and tragedy of the pandemic, and current socio-political climate rippled throughout our days. Our schools were drained (are drained), and many students experienced significant trauma; our WITS Writers-in-Residence held space for healing, care, and culture-building through creative writing. At the same time, those WITS writers and SAL staff were and are feeling the financial pinch of inflation and lack of affordable housing in Seattle. We began the year facing financial uncertainty with higher program expenses than ever (due to producing events both in-person and online)—yet our ticket income was one-third of what it was pre-pandemic. That said, thanks to COVID relief funding, a major grant from the Marguerite Casey Foundation, and generous support from donors like you, we ended the year in the black.

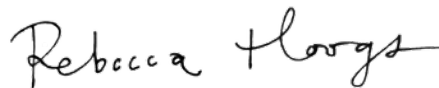
**It was a year of firsts.** After Zinnia Hansen, last year’s Seattle Youth Poet Laureate, finished reading from her just-published book of poems, *Spikenard*, an audience member approached her for an autograph. Zinnia replied, “I don’t know how to do this—this is the first time that I’ve ever been asked to sign a book.” And then—giddily, proudly—she signed her first book for the first time.

None of us knew how to do this—how to engage anew with a new world—and, yet, we did it, together. We will go on doing this—learning, inventing, creating; using story, curiosity, and vulnerability as our tools for making meaning and connecting, whatever firsts the world offers us.

**Thank you for being a core part of the SAL story this past year. We truly could not have done this work without you.**



Lauri Conner  
BOARD PRESIDENT, 2021/22



Rebecca Hoogs  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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**SAL's public programs present the most talented and thought-provoking writers and thinkers of our time to connect, challenge, and inspire our audiences.**

2021/22 programs included the **Literary Arts Series, Journalism Series, Poetry Series, Women You Need to Know (WYNK), Summer Book Bingo, SAL Presents**, and a new community-curated series in partnership with writer and activist **Ijeoma Oluo** which was co-presented by **Langston**. We launched a new partnership with the **Marguerite Casey Foundation**, presenting three free online lectures and conversations centering racial equity.

2021/22 also marked the inaugural **James Welch Prize Reading** which celebrates emerging Indigenous poets and is co-hosted with *Poetry Northwest* and Hugo House.



**17,697**  
**tickets issued**



23 TICKETED

21/22

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**29**  
EVENTS

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SEASON

6 FREE

**“In a year of dashed hopes & uncertain travel or reunions, I got to escape. Falling into stories bigger, deeper, sillier, more romantic, or ghashtier than my every day proved life-giving.”**

—Summer Book Bingo Participant



**9 OUT OF 10**

SAL attendees said they recommend SAL to others

**13%** of all tickets issued were \$10 Reduced Price passes

**14%** of all tickets were provided for free (or for \$5 for students or those 25 and under) to provide access to those who otherwise couldn't afford to attend



**“I am a longtime Seattle native who now calls southern Chile home; my neighbors in Pucón and I were watching the event online (a truly wonderful option, please continue this!). From the cadence of the program—opening with a young person’s poem (such an inspiration to the 10 year olds in the room!) to the wide-ranging and powerful discussion, the entire event was superb. I really appreciate seeing more diversity in every form taking the stage, leading the conversations, inviting us all into new and deeper practices through words and ideas.”**

—SAL Patron



**19%** of all tickets were issued to those living outside of Washington State

## **MISSION**

SAL cultivates transformative experiences through story and language with readers and writers of all generations.



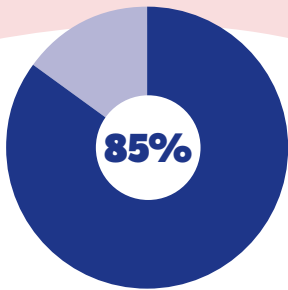
**“I loved the openness and the creativity that was channeled... and really enjoyed the safe, comfortable environment.”**

–WITS Student

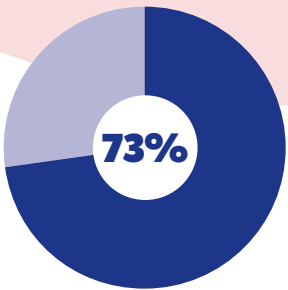
**“I really loved how we had the ability to express ourselves... it really opened our minds to a lot of new ideas and how to process them.”**

–WITS Student

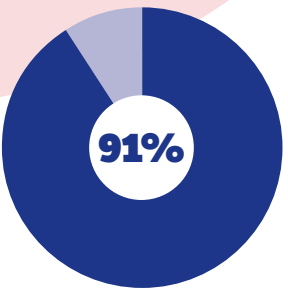
The majority of youth reported a sense of **belonging & connection** in their WITS class.



of students felt seen and accepted in their WITS class



of students felt their cultural identity was honored and reflected



of students agreed that they liked working with their WITS writer

**VISION**

SAL envisions a future in which story and language continuously and courageously revitalize equity, justice, and belonging.

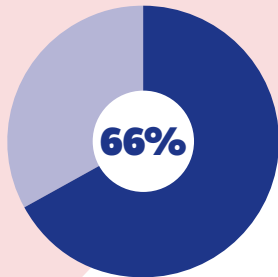
# 4,200

## K-12 students

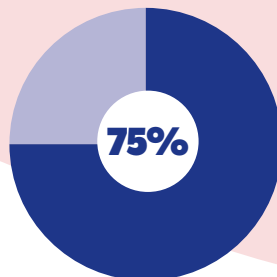
worked with **22 WITS writers** in **190 classrooms** at **25 public schools & Seattle Children's**

**“(WITS) created a space for students to explore their own identities, emotions, and the world around them.”**

—WITS Partner Teacher



of students said that they would like to participate in WITS again



of students reported that WITS made writing more fun

## VALUES

Belonging / Racial Equity / Transparency & Trust / Curiosity / Joy

**Seattle Arts & Lectures believes that literacy and a love for writing is a lifelong process that starts in our public schools and connects directly to our public stages.**

SAL's **Writers in the Schools (WITS)** matches professional creative writers with local K-12 public schools for yearlong classroom residencies. Students discover the power of their creative voices as they develop essential writing skills. The **Youth Poet Laureate Cohort (YPL)**, comprised of 13 brilliant poets, meets for monthly poetry workshops during the school year, led by professional poet mentors. YPL Cohort members perform at local reading events, connect with peer writers, and share their voices in a community that centers joy, curiosity, and self-expression.

This year we...

1. Launched a **remote residency** with Twin Falls Middle School (in the Snoqualmie Valley).
2. Expanded an **Indigenous Land-Based Pedagogy series**, free for classroom teachers and teaching artists, with WITS writer Laura Da' (Eastern Shawnee).
3. Launched an **Apprenticeship Program** to provide paid opportunities for emerging writers in our local BIPOC community to gain experience teaching in public school settings.
4. Prioritized cultivating deeper relationships with schools who have the **highest free and reduced lunch rates** across our city.



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Seattle Arts & Lectures is deeply grateful to the following corporate, public, and foundation partners for their generous support of our work in 2021/22

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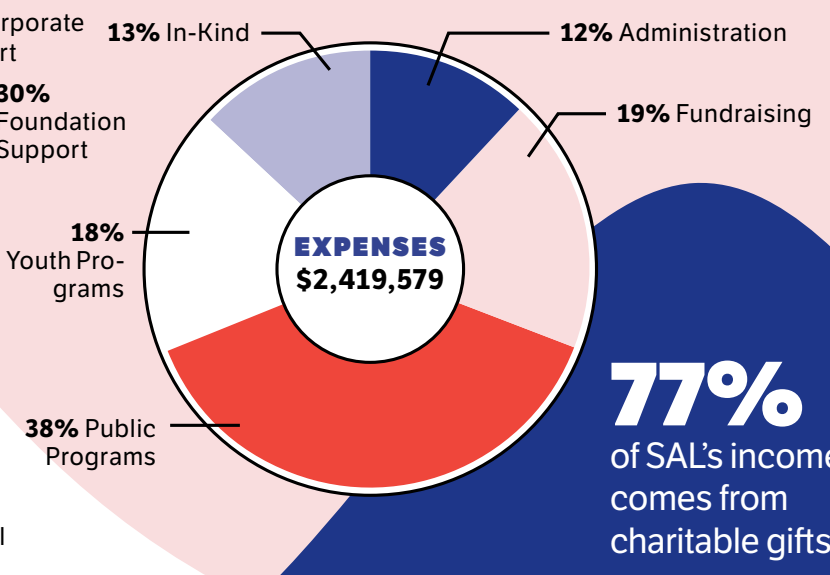
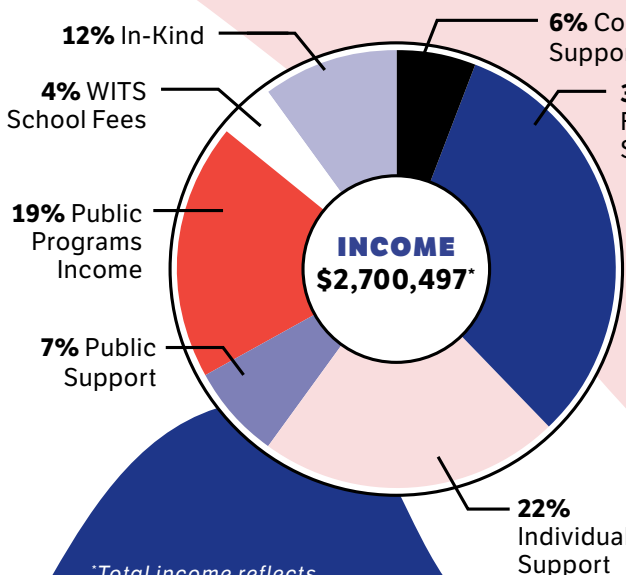
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**77%**  
 of SAL's income comes from charitable gifts

\*Total income reflects investment loss of \$17,438

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