



SITKA CENTER FOR  
ART AND ECOLOGY

# IMPACT REPORT



2023-2025



*Botanical Ink Workshop with Guest Artist Iris Sullivan Daire*

*"Many of my students face poverty. Sitka's art literacy program gives them an opportunity to express themselves and their lives that they do not receive in the main classroom. I have seen some of my most at-risk students thrive when art takes place."*

**Misty Wharton, Superintendent  
Nestucca Valley School District**

# Table of Contents



01.

Program Overview

02.

Impact

03.

Meeting the Need

04.

How It Works

05.

Strategy

*"In art literacy class I feel safe, supported and allowed to be more creative than usual. Art literacy gives me something to look forward to in my day."*

*Alana, middle school student*

# K-8 Create Overview

## Need

**Most public schools in Sitka’s rural Oregon coast communities serve economically disadvantaged families and do not have the resources to offer art programs as part of the curriculum. On the coast, 95% of students are low income, qualifying for free or reduced meals through their schools based on federal income guidelines.**

Sitka has long desired to offer free art and ecology youth programming on par with the quality of our workshops for adult learners as a way to give back and make a local difference. Sitka’s campus, however, was not designed to safely host kids and is located in a serene and protected coastal forest neighborhood that school buses may not safely access.

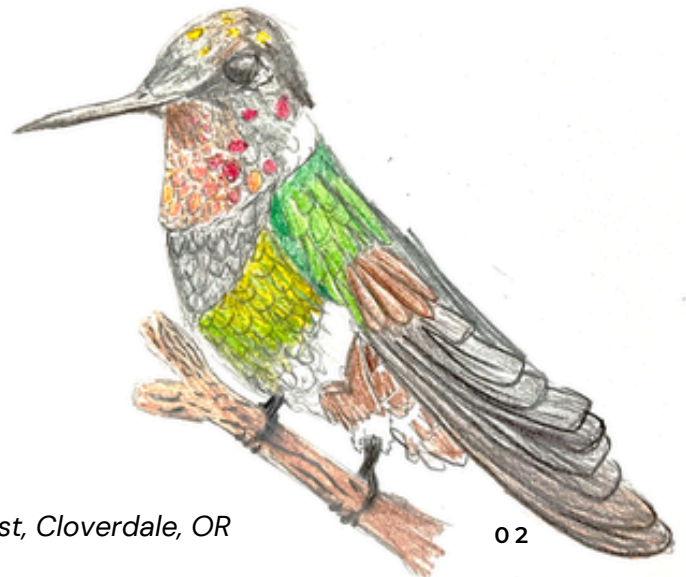
## Solution

In 2019, Sitka joined forces with Community Arts Project (CAP), a 30-year-old nonprofit that provided monthly art literacy and art-making lessons through two local elementary schools. Due to staffing and pandemic challenges, CAP was struggling. Rather than start a new program that would

compete with CAP for resources, Sitka reached out to CAP’s board and offered the solution of Sitka taking on stewardship of CAP’s programs, and using Sitka’s greater administrative capacity to fund and grow the program to serve more kids and schools. A transfer of assets was completed in 2020 and the program was saved.

## Impact

**Sitka has since grown the program – now K-8 Create – by 900%, from serving 500 students in two schools in 2020 to reaching over 5,000 PreK-8th grade students across three coastal counties and nine public school districts in 2024-2025 with free monthly art and STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art and math) education and supplies.**



*Rufus Hummingbird illustration by Bella, 6th grade artist, Cloverdale, OR*

# 2023–2025 Impact

# 130%

Annual audience growth, from 2,000 youth in 2023 to over 5,000 in fall 2024

## 1

### Expand into new schools in Clatsop and Lincoln counties

K-8 Create's expansion in fall 2024 responds directly to community demand. Following overwhelmingly positive feedback from Tillamook administrators, teachers and students involved in the 2020–2023 pilot programs, schools in all five Clatsop County districts and four new Lincoln County schools will participate in 2024–2025, marking a 130% increase in reach compared to the previous school year and 900% growth since program launch.

## 2

### Engage guest artists

A key strength of K-8 Create is our ability to showcase professional artists who come to Sitka in our Youth Program curriculum. Recent and upcoming featured artists include Betty LaDuke, Ashland-based visual artist; KC Hall, Canadian Indigenous graffiti artist; Maja Sereda, Polish multidisciplinary artist; Francisca Brunet, Chilean mixed media artist; Maddi Bacon, American artist and nature conservationist; and Thomas Meinzen, Eugene-based composer, writer and conservation ecologist.

## 3

### Hire community-based art instructors

To support K-8 Create's tri-county expansion, Sitka hired five new community-based Youth Art Instructors this year to deliver the program in Clatsop and Lincoln county schools. By employing local artists, we're fostering close, culturally sensitive connections with participating schools and their communities, while also creating paid arts jobs in rural areas.

## 4

### Offer professional development opportunities

In summer 2023, Sitka welcomed a first cohort of art and STEAM teachers from across the country, who earned professional development credits by participating in our adult summer workshop series. Additionally, in 2023–2024 we presented workshops at the Oregon Sea Grant State of the Coast Conference and at Oregon State Pre-College Program conferences, offering educators creative strategies to enhance the "art" component in STEAM education programs



# 2024-2025 Service Area

**3 Oregon Counties**  
**9 School Districts**  
**17 Schools**  
**5,076 Students**

## **Clatsop County (2,132 students)**

- Hilda Lahti Elementary School
- Warrenton Grade School
- Lewis & Clark Elementary School
- Astor Elementary School
- Pacific Ridge Elementary School
- Seaside Middle School
- Jewell School

## **Tillamook County (1,475 students)**

- Garibaldi Grade School
- Liberty Elementary School
- South Prairie Elementary School
- East Elementary School
- Nestucca K-8 School

## **Lincoln County (1,469 students)**

- Toledo Elementary School
- Crestview Heights Elementary School
- Sam Case Elementary School
- Yaquina View Elementary School
- Newport Middle School

**17** Schools  
**9** Districts  
**5,000+** PreK-8 Students





## Participant and Community Voices

*"Art is important because some kids don't know how to express themselves other ways. Through art, they can."*

Sydney, 7th grade artist  
Cloverdale, OR

*"Art helps people be more creative... some people use it as therapy almost."*

Xyla, 8th grade artist  
Cloverdale, OR



*"There is a distinct moment when the giddiness and excitement subside, and the class gets eerily quiet. It happens every time. All the learners are engaged, enthralled and listening. When they are intently working and the room is still, I can hear their tools expressing what is in their heads, getting on their canvas. It truly is when art alchemy happens."*

Kim Bush  
Sitka Youth Instructor  
Toledo, OR



*"Thanks for your excellent work and that of your team in arts education. Your work raises the quality of education and the culture of creativity in Tillamook County for both children and adults."*

Mary Faith Bell  
Tillamook County Commissioner  
Tillamook, OR

# How It Works

## Delivery

- The program takes place during the academic school year.
- Sitka art instructors deliver monthly art literacy and art making lessons to participating schools, traveling classroom to classroom.
- Each monthly lesson is tailored to the needs of each age group.
- Classroom teachers participate and help with students who need extra attention while Sitka art instructors focus on leading the art lesson.

## Planning and Evaluation

- Art supplies are organized and provided by Sitka.
- Featured artists and art movements are chosen with local demographics and culturally-relevant representation in mind.
- Students, classroom teachers and school administrators all take part in regular feedback surveys to inform future programming.

## Funding

- Participating schools contribute just \$4,000 annually for seven full months of programming, covering approximately 10% of program costs.
- The Sitka Center's team secured private foundation grants, individual donors and federal funding covered 90% of program costs in 2023.
- Securing renewed and new, sustainable funding will be essential to continue to grow the program to serve more rural kids and schools in 2024 and beyond.





# Curricular Example: Tree of Life

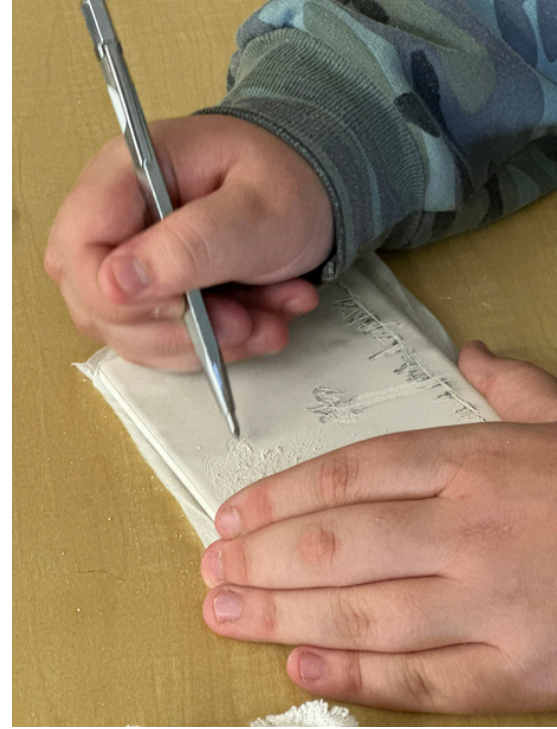
Students explored the ways in which symbols have been used throughout history as forms of nonverbal communication including Morse code, which uses a series of dots and dashes to communicate simple text, and the tree of life, which can symbolize connection, family, resilience and growth across time, challenges and generations. Students found inspiration in the work of Indigenous graffiti artist KC Hall and Ashland, Oregon-based artist Betty LaDuke, creating their own visual tree of life narratives to communicate their interests and inspirations, and the influences that root them in their communities and help them grow. Students were invited to embed secret messages in their images using Morse code.



*"I truly believe experiences like these enrich and deepen our students' understanding of themselves and our world. Thank you for providing such engaging and interesting lessons. Teachers who have participated in the lessons are absolutely raving about their experiences."*

Rachel Williamson, Principal  
Liberty Elementary School





## Curricular Example: Sitka Spruce Ink

As part of a nature observation series, students studied the physical elements of Sitka spruce trees. Astoria-based fabric artist and naturalist Iris Sullivan Daire demonstrated ways in which leaves, seeds, tree bark and roots can be used to make plant-based inks and dyes with a sense of place. Kids painted botanical illustrations using place-based ink distilled from Sitka spruce needles.

Later in the school year, the spruce ink was used as a wash on etched clay tiles.



# Nestucca K-8 School Summer Day Camp

In partnership with Nestucca K-8, Sitka hosts a free summer day camp for up to 100 K-8 students. Held during four weeks in July, the camp offers four days of immersive arts and nature programming each week, connecting youth with professional artists through hands-on projects and outdoor exploration.

## 2023 Camp – "Fossils of the Future"

Students explored fossils and imagined how caring for the planet today can impact future ecosystems. Highlights included mixed media relief paintings with artist Marlana Stoddard Hayes, songwriting with Sirintip Phasuk and fossil-inspired illustration with Ray Troll and Smithsonian Natural History Museum Director Kirk Johnson.

## 2024 Camp – "Nature, Innovation and Impact"

Youth engaged in bookbinding, digital photography, felting, poetry and mask making, exploring personal connections to nature. Guest artists included Qinqin Liu for nature-inspired mixed media, Arcadia Trueheart for paper mâché mask making and Jessamyn West for belly dancing, culminating in a public performance.





Mixed medium relief painting workshop  
with Oregon artist Marlana Stoddard Hayes



# 2024–2025 Strategy

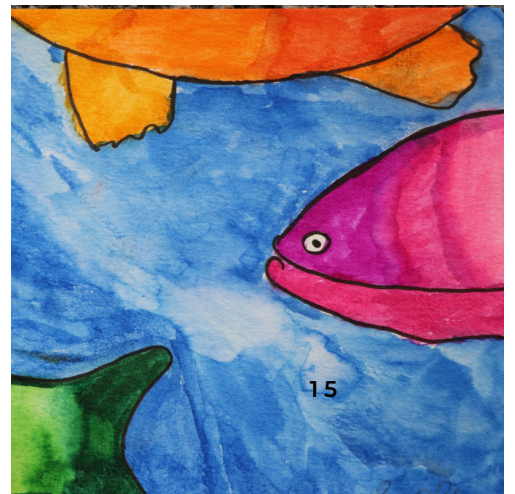
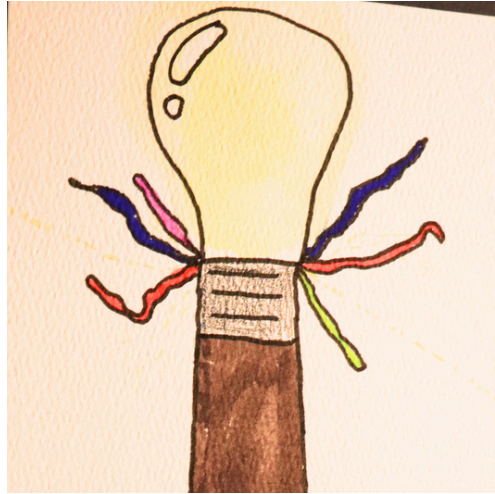
## Challenges

- **Securing superintendent-level support and advocacy** is critical to ensuring principals and teachers can prioritize monthly art education in classrooms.
- **Sustainable, multi-year funding** is essential to guarantee that students, schools and districts can rely on the continuity of this program.
- **Demand for Sitka’s program in rural communities** far exceeds what Sitka can provide with our current administrative capacity.

## Opportunities

- **Expanding partnerships with superintendents and school leadership** offers the chance to deepen arts integration in rural schools.
- **Securing multi-year funding** not only ensures program stability but also allows for investment in intentional growth and innovation.
- **Increasing administrative capacity** through strategic hiring and training will enable Sitka to meet the rising demand for arts education, further strengthening our impact across rural communities.

PROJECTS	DETAILS	OUTCOMES
Complete a 2024–2025 K–8 Create lessons-learned and future needs assessment	Learn from our 2024–2025 expansion to inform future growth into new communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key findings are identified to inform five-year planning</li> <li>• Rural school and teacher needs are heard and prioritized</li> </ul>
Expand into Lincoln and Clatsop counties with Superintendent support	Serve 11 additional schools in 2024–2025, 17 schools total	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3,000 more rural kids have art access</li> <li>• 900% audience growth since 2020</li> </ul>
Secure renewed and new multi-year funding to serve more kids and schools	Leverage our two-year \$220,000 Youth Promise grant to build new and renewed donor momentum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current funders renew and deepen their support</li> <li>• New funders are inspired to join</li> </ul>





Thank you for helping inspire  
the next generation of rural  
artists and innovators and  
fostering curiosity and  
creativity across the north-  
central Oregon coast.

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