



# INTERNATIONAL STORYTELLING CENTER

*Connecting the World through the Power of Storytelling*

## **Niswonger Foundation Grant Close-Out Report: 2020**

The challenges of a Pandemic this year forced the International Storytelling Center, along with many other non-profits, to alter its system for delivering programs. We were successfully able to move from live, in-person programming to a digital format, and appreciate the grant assistance from the Niswonger Foundation that supported these changes.

We are grateful to the Foundation for allowing revisions to our original proposal. As a result, the grant provided support for these virtual offerings:

- Presenting the first ever, all virtual National Storytelling Festival
- Outreach to area teachers via a free workshop with storyteller and educator, Lyn Ford
- The creation and distribution of ISC's digital story guides
- A complimentary or greatly reduced admission to a virtual children's concert for elementary classrooms and at-risk children's service organizations
- A complimentary, virtual storytelling concert offered to area senior centers

### **Description of Activities**

#### All Virtual National Storytelling Festival

ISC was able to successfully hold the National Storytelling Festival, September 29<sup>th</sup> through October 3<sup>rd</sup>. This event contained over forty-two hours of programming, employed forty professional artists, and had nearly 10,000 attendees. Of these attendees, a total of 18% had never attended the Festival in person. The first ever, virtual National Storytelling Festival provided multiple streams of instruction including footage from our archives, discussion panels, curated programming, story-based workshops, and interactive engagement for our attendees. Friday's program included a track specifically geared toward children and families.

Feedback was solicited from artists, teachers, and participants, with positive comments on all. A few of the reviews are provided below.

*In association with the Smithsonian Institution*

“Hello! The virtual festival this year is so good! Thank you so much for all of the hard work that you all are doing to put this together for us! It is absolutely wonderful to get to relish the performances from afar! It is evident the work that you all have been employing to produce high quality virtual performances! I’m a teacher with too much time spent on Zoom and Google Meets. What you are giving us is a beautiful respite. Thank you again. :)”

“Miracles. The Festival is FABULOUS!!! So clean, warm, easy to navigate, full of heart and truth and courage. Everyone is texting how wonderful it is!! Hold your head high. It’s beautiful. Thank you.”

“I want to express how nourished, moved and inspired I feel. I’m “churching” this morning with David and Josh. Just ... Sigh. My heart is so full and fed. And lonely too. Missing the tents and hugs, and the quiet breathing of an audience entrained. Thank you for doing the festival this year so the line could be unbroken.”

#### Outreach to Area Teachers: Virtual Workshop

During the digital 2020 National Storytelling Festival, ISC hosted a live workshop for teachers led by Storyteller Lyn Ford; the session was also recorded. Lyn led the workshop in a way that would also be appropriate for teachers to view at a later date. The workshop, *Focused on Feelings: Storytelling to Support Emotional Intelligence in Children*, is geared toward second and third graders and emphasizes ways to support children's social and emotional development. We have granted two hundred and seventy-seven regional teachers access to this recording for the first two weeks of December 2020. This offer was also extended to NPAC's teachers via Vicky Hudson.

#### Digital Story Guides

ISC’s story guides are designed to support teachers and parents adapting to new ways of teaching. These guides are created using the recordings of live footage filmed at previous National Storytelling Festivals, and are geared towards grades 3-8. In 2020, ISC created 22 story guides featuring 14 tellers. Access to these were recently offered to the aforementioned teachers via an online toolkit.

ISC’s Learning Library, is fast becoming a multi-useable resource for connecting individuals to storytelling. Funding through the Niswonger Foundation is helping us to build on this platform so that our website can become more interactive as well as highlight all our work with youth and outreach learning. Our plan is to do this work locally when possible, and to make it replicable to teacher and education practitioners online through toolkits, interactive webinars, and ultimately, a more comprehensive live, teacher-training program.

*In association with the Smithsonian Institution*

### Children's Storytelling Concert

On November 21<sup>st</sup>, ISC presented a virtual children's concert. This subsidized event had an admission price of only \$5/household. It included folktales from children's author Carmen Deedy, along with tales from professional storytellers Adam Booth, Simon Brooks, Ed Stivender, and Clare Murphy. Complimentary admission was also offered to regional organizations that serve at-risk and underserved populations, including Coalition for Kids, Boys/Girls Club, Girl's Inc., and the Niswonger Children's Hospital. The subsidized concert had a total attendance of 770.

In addition, the concert was made available complimentary to regional classrooms. A total of 450 regional children were able to watch the concert for free.

### Storytelling Online Concert

Following the 2020 National Storytelling Festival, we began a series called "Storytelling Online" which features eight weeks of storytelling events. On December 10, the series will showcase nationally known storyteller and Jonesborough resident, Barbara McBride-Smith, in a concert of family stories. We have offered complimentary access to Barbara's concert to twenty-three senior/assisted living centers in the area; it will be available for viewing over a week-long period.

### **Success/Challenge of Grant and Lessons learned**

We are gratified by the support and many compliments we have received for the youth programming we have offered virtually.

When the Pandemic struck in the spring, we were unsure what direction to take with our programming, particularly given the uncertain nature of the virus. Four months before the National Storytelling Festival, we decided to present all of our programming virtually. With such a short time period, we worked hard to execute our plans right up until the time of the event, and there were things we did not do because we ran out of time. This rushed timetable also affected what we have offered post-festival. For the sake of our audience, artists and staff, we should have declared our intentions sooner. We have learned that new programming takes longer than one expects, a problem that becomes magnified when trying to learn something new.

### **Budget and expenditure report – see attached**

*In association with the Smithsonian Institution*

## **Summary**

Given the unexpected challenges ISC faced in 2020, we feel our youth programming was met with great success. We have continued to reach elementary, middle, high school and college students, and to welcome feedback from our diverse educational audiences, including new formats to use, and the type of content that educators need to support their students' learning. ISC has also continued to consult with educational specialists as well as with other educational partners, individuals and advisors.

We are sincerely grateful to the Niswonger Foundation for believing in this critically important work, for being one of ISC's most valuable educational partners, and for working with us to enrich the lives of young people through storytelling.

*In association with the Smithsonian Institution*

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**Niswonger Foundation Grant  
Budget and Expenditure Report  
2020**

**Budget**

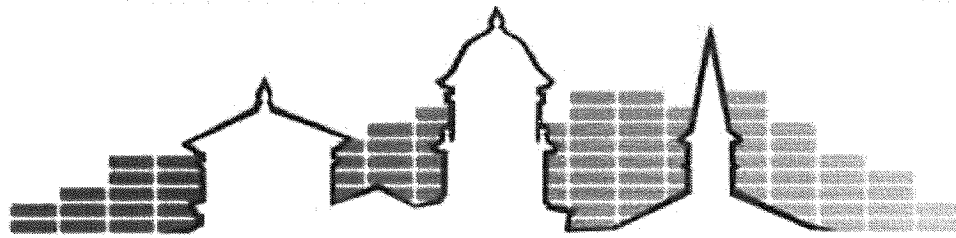
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Live Streaming the National Storytelling Festival	\$	4,500.00
Underwriting Support for ISC's Children's Programming	\$	2,000.00
Elementary School Teacher Workshop	\$	500.00
Curate Educational Video Content - 22 Story Guides	\$	1,000.00
<b>Total Budget</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>8,000.00</b>

**Allocated Expenditures**

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Live Streaming the National Storytelling Festival		
Whetsell Media - Videography/Editing/Production	\$	1,500.00
Artists Fees	\$	3,000.00
Underwriting Support for ISC's Children's Programming		
Artists Fees	\$	1,000.00
Children's Ticket Subsidy	\$	1,000.00
Elementary School Teacher Workshop		
Teacher Workshop Subsidy	\$	500.00
Creation of Story Guides - 22 Story Guides	\$	1,000.00
<b>Total Allocated Expenditures</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>8,000.00</b>



NATIONAL STORYTELLING  
**FESTIVAL**

THE 2020 FESTIVAL BY THE NUMBERS

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**9,373**

**Festival Attendees**

Estimating 2.5 attendees per 3,749 Festival registrations.

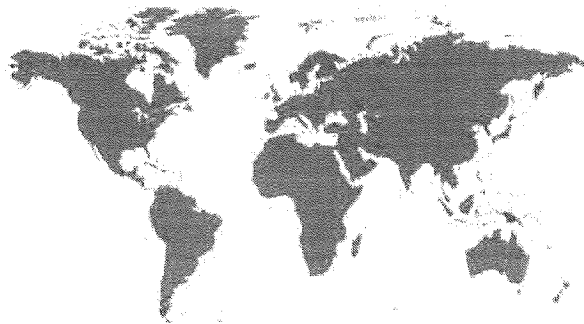
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Attendees represented

**49 states**

and the District of Columbia  
(Only South Dakota lacked  
representation.)



Attendees represented

**12 countries**

including Australia, Canada,  
Great Britain, Hungary, India,  
Israel, Mexico, New Zealand,