

INTERNATIONAL STORYTELLING CENTER

2022 Year in Review

This was a vital and joy-filled year for the International Storytelling Center. 2022 marked our 50th annual National Storytelling Festival, a milestone that felt all the more celebratory and poignant because of the challenges we've all faced over the last few years. We've spent this year honoring our organization's past while talking about how we can continue to make it better. And we've continued to deepen our commitment to diversity, community building, and young people. Let's take a look at some of the highlights of this year.

A Happy Return to In-Person Programming

The 50th anniversary of the National Storytelling Festival was the perfect occasion to celebrate ISC's return to live programming. After two years of online-only events during the pandemic, we were so glad to be reunited with our tellers and beloved audience in Jonesborough. Spirits were high and attendance was good. Event planning has become more difficult, expensive, and uncertain in our post-lockdown landscape, but ISC's capable team has met every challenge with skill and aplomb.

ISC's other signature series, *Storytelling Live!*, also returned to a live format this year for its 19th year. Throughout the 26-week season, and for the National Storytelling Festival, we continued to film select performances for ticket holders who wanted to watch from home. For *Storytelling Live!* in particular, the state-of-the-art platform we adopted during the pandemic has expanded accessibility dramatically, making our concerts available to a worldwide audience.



Storyteller Brigid Reedy at the 50th National Storytelling Festival in Jonesborough, TN

More Community-Based Storytelling Programs

Over the course of the year, ISC continued its "I Have a Story" program, a four-part series of events sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts. (The first part occurred in 2021.) Our purpose is to work with different groups in our home base of Washington County to share and preserve their stories, culminating in a toolkit we can share with other communities that want to emulate the programs.

In March, we partnered with Carver Park Recreation Center, a historic Black community center in Johnson City, Tennessee, to produce a short documentary about the history of the facility and the elders who were there from the beginning. In May, we worked with the Warriors' Canvas & Veterans Art Center, a nonprofit that specializes in art therapy, to conduct a "Stories of Service" workshop. Finally, in November, we collaborated with East Tennessee State University to support college students on their path to academic success.

Youth and Educational Outreach

The latest project under our *Stories for Change* initiative is a three-part series funded by the East Tennessee Foundation. For the first component, we partnered with the Langston Centre, a multicultural facility, to add a storytelling component to their programming with at-risk youth. Carolina Quiroga, a local storyteller who's originally from Colombia, led a daily workshop for elementary school-age kids at Langston's Latin American-themed summer camp session.



Photo by Tyler Morning Telegraph / Sarah A. Miller

Storyteller Carolina Quiroga performed at the Langston Center in Johnson City, TN

In 2022, ISC also reactivated our *Kids Storytelling Institute*, a creative cultural experience for young people. Over the course of a week in November, we hosted more than 450 fifth graders and their teachers from across the region for an educational storytelling program about inventor Thomas Edison with Tim Lowry. Teachers also took away resources from the program to expand lessons back in their classrooms. It is designed to give kids an immersive experience in our theater in the hopes of sparking a lifelong relationship with storytelling and the arts.



Storyteller Tim Lowry during ISC's Kids Storytelling Institute in Jonesborough, TN

Creative Partnerships and Interdisciplinary Connections

Storytelling is an incredibly flexible tool that can serve people in many different contexts. ISC has always been interested in thinking outside the box when it comes to partnerships, both within the arts and humanities and in other contexts, including the worlds of humanitarianism and peacebuilding. ISC President Kiran Singh Sirah, who was named a Rotary Peace Champion in 2017, spoke at many of Rotary International's conferences and trainings across the country. He also presented at a conference for special education professionals, gave a keynote for Main Street America, and was tapped as a thinking partner and presenter for a special convening of Appalachian leaders at Great Smoky Mountains National Park organized by the iconic musician Yo-Yo Ma.



ISC President Kiran Singh Sirah with Yo-Yo Ma in the Great Smoky Mountains

In recognition of ISC's work using applied storytelling to promote dialogue, empathy, and intercultural understanding, and to expand its reach, a funding collaborative with the New Pluralists will generously back a new two-year project. "More than One Story" will officially launch in the new year with research on new ways to use storytelling to develop best practices, build community, and fuel positive change.

Thank you for being part of the ISC story.

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