



# Cascadia Poetics LAB

## Annual Report 2022

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### Mission

Cascadia Poetics LAB is a vibrant community whose workshops, festivals, and opportunities for connection can open the door for transformative experiences in the 21st century. We believe that poetry is the nexus at which self knowledge, bioregionalism, and expansive creativity converge. Based in Seattle, our programs and events are held in the Pacific Northwest and the Cascadia Bioregion.

### Summary

The year 2022 featured the 4th highest revenues in the organization's 29-year history. We strive for more robust organizational development over the next three years to broaden our reach, and to build a sustainable foundation for the coming decades - after nearly three decades of existence.

### Thank you

We can do nothing without our individual donors and volunteers, and the grantors at the city, county, state and federal levels; also foundations. We extend our heartfelt gratitude for their generous support and endorsement of our mission and activities. Their invaluable contributions have played a pivotal role in fostering the growth of Cascadia Poetics LAB, invigorating our vibrant community, expanding our program offerings - all of which strengthens and broadens meaningful connections for all involved.

# 2022 Major Achievements



## Poetry Postcard Fest

Founded in 2007, The Poetry Postcard fest is the foundation for introducing people to our poetics: writing that is spontaneous, writing that takes its open form from the content rather than a set of rules, and writing grounded in a specific place on the planet - a bioregion. The event is an annual 56-day experiment in spontaneity and community -building that just completed its 16th cycle in 2022 - and tied an all-time record of 544 participants from 12 different countries, 44 U.S. states and 5 Canadian provinces. Among the inspired testimonials by 2022 participants there were:

*The Postcard Poetry Festival offers a brief foray (56 days...) all on the space of a postcard into the imagination or one's own reality. My poems are connected (or not!) to the art. The art and the word, the giving and receiving – there is a sense of magic, for me, year after year.*  
—Colette Dutton

*This will be my 11th year with the fest, and I can't imagine a year without it. August is the one month when I allow myself to prioritize poetry over other things, because somewhere out there, somebody is counting on me to write. I love, too, the fest's validation of short poems, which deserve more credit than the publishing world often gives them. We CAN say more with less!*  
—Elizabeth Maxey

The Committee of the Board that oversees the fest has an immediate goal of 1,000 participants total, and eventually 10,000 - why not? They are also discussing opening a special category to attract younger writers.



# 2022 Major Achievements

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## Cascadian Prophets Podcast

Cascadian Prophets Podcast offers interviews with diverse creatives who have pioneered or promoted through their art, and/or their writing (sometimes their activism) - Cascadian poetics; who address current (and long-time) cultural issues consistent with Cascadia Poetics LAB's mission and activities - as well as the ethos of the Cascadia Bioregion. Some are well-known; some are not. Many interview subjects have called out the thoughtful and "not-the-usual" quality of interview questions - and complimented Paul Nelson on his preparation. Podcasts continue on a monthly basis and can be found on Spotify and other services.

Our [Cascadian Prophets](#) podcasts continued in 2022 and into 2023, building on over 600 hours of audio interviews produced since 1993. This material is a gold-mine of carefully planned and skilled interviews that are offered free to the public. Among the guests this past year were:

- **Fred Wah**, former Canadian Parliamentary Poet Laureate
- **Barbara Johns** on the late Japanese-American artist Kenjiro Nomura
- **John Brehm** on *The Dharma of Poetry*
- Poet **Hoa Nguyen** on *A Thousand Times You Lose Your Treasure*
- Poet and translator **Pierre Joris** on his *Canto Diurno*
- **Patrick Mazza**, a Cascadian blogger/commentator
- former Washington State Poet Laureate **Claudia Castro Luna** on her new book *Cipota Under the Moon* about being an El Salvador civil war refugee
- **Ricardo Ruiz** (now a board member) on his book, *We Had Our Reasons*, chronicling the journeys of Mexican immigrants and undocumented persons
- film-maker **Nina Menkes** on the formula in Hollywood movies that reinforce patriarchy and misogyny
- legacy interviews with reclusive poet **Mary Norbert Körte**, the former nun and Redwood activist who died late in 2022

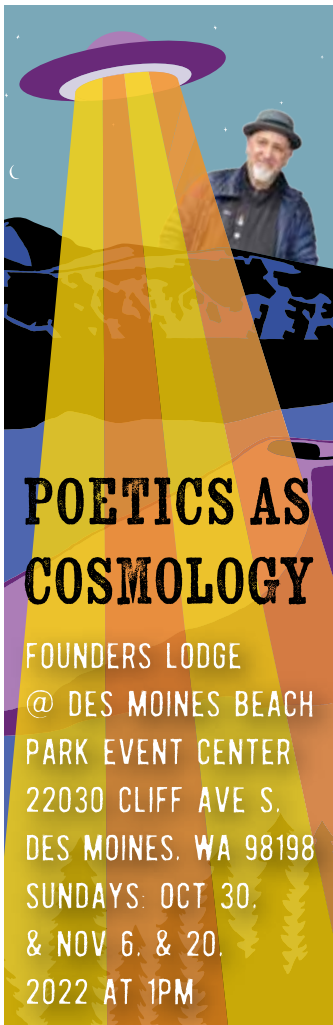
## Online Workshops and Readings

Cascadia Poetics LAB hosts poetry readings online and in various locations available to the general community – often in Seattle and the Puget Sound area - always featuring local poets as guests, and almost offering a modest honorarium. We also staged the wrap-up of our initial Founders Circle membership campaign, a zoom reading featuring Fred Wah, Robert Lashley and Theresa Whitehill.

# 2022 Major Achievements



On-line workshops are offered with rich and provocative cross-genre prompts and exercises to help people explore and expand their writing techniques and topics. Started during the pandemic, the workshops conducted via Zoom and facilitated by Founding Director Paul E Nelson, continued under the names: *Life as Rehearsal for the Poem* and *Poetics as Cosmology*. Wanda Coleman's *American Sonnets* were one of the texts studied in depth in Fall 2022 and the workshops generated approximately 23% of organizational revenues. Testimonials included:



*I really appreciate how you encouraged us to experiment and incorporate more spontaneity into our writing and made the class a safe place to share the results. I loved your urging us to be weird! And to make the deepest gesture possible. If I had to choose one word to characterize the class's impact on me. I'd say liberating. (And that's a great thing to receive from a 5-week class.)*

—Nancy Hausauer, Tacoma, WA, Nov 23, 2022

*I think you can take a lot of credit for the fact that people were inspired to do great work in the class. There is something about the model that really works. You give people inspiring prompts and fire them up. But the group is not a "class" really. And that is good. In a class people are children. And that is sort of paralyzing. It is more of an organic community — of equals — so people are constantly getting inspired by each other. It is supportive, not competitive, and non-hierarchical. And you have an amazing capacity to listen to each person. I enjoy the workshops and the "family" but — most important — I keep coming back because the classes — and the rich poetry community you have created — keep me writing.*

—Ann Graham Walker, Nanoose Bay, BC, Nov 1, 2023

*You did it again! Such erudition and systematic knowledge of your field. You opened my eyes on Charles Olson's "open field of energy" and miraculously related it to the philosophical work of Alfred North Whitehead. Such knowledge is not easy to come by. You also did a fabulous exercise on the generation of poems that knocks out the ever-babbling conscious mind. Poetry comes from a deeper place. Thanks, Paul, for making our day brighter at the Alaska House and the gift of poetry! Can't wait until the next session!*

—Koon Woon, Seattle, WA, Oct 7, 2022



# Looking Forward

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## Watershed Press

One huge decision made in 2022 was to publish our long-awaited *Cascadian Zen* anthology, and to do so via our own imprint which we named Watershed Press. The press currently operates as a committee of the Cascadia Poetics LAB and spent hundreds of hours soliciting and reviewing submissions and designing the structure of the book. One of our goals with this anthology was to create a collection worthy of use as a text in a university classroom.

The Committee is also exploring establishing itself as an independent entity - and already has a list of worthy authors they want to publish. Publishing takes money, of course, so the Committee is figuring out how to become solvent in a notoriously difficult field - and developing an appeal for investors, since it currently depends on Cascadia Poetics LAB for funds.



## Cascadia Poetry Festival

The festival, last staged in 2019 in Anacortes will resume for the 7th time in October 2023. The event has been held in 6 different Washington locations since the first one in 2012. The Committee of the Board which began to take over organizing the festival this year is already at work on the 2023 festival, thinking about how to attract a younger demographic. The Festival also needs financial support. The festival invites readers and faculty who practice poetry consistent with Cascadia poetics, although they may not live in the bioregion.

"...Twenty-five years ago, Rick Fields, the main historian of the Dharma in North America, was dying of cancer. An interviewer asked about his illness. "I don't have a life-threatening disease," Rick said. "My life is threatening my disease. It's keeping the disease from taking over. I have a disease-threatening life." That's what this anthology is full of: disease-threatening life. Which is not a way out, but it is the way onward."

Robert Bringhurst



# Board

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## Board Development

The board staged two board retreats in 2022, one on San Juan Island at the home of patron Kim Miller and the other on the Long Beach Peninsula, where ex-board member Cate Gable set up a reading. Board members pay their own expenses for retreats. To recognize dedicated volunteers who do not want necessarily to be on the board, or who have served on the board but want off - we name Key Volunteers who attend board meetings and retreats as needed.

The quest continues to build a board suited to the cultural realities of the 21st Century creating an organization that will celebrate its 30th anniversary (Dec 2023) and continues to adapt to assure the work continues into future generations. We are led by our Founding Director, a Cuban-American, and a majority of women and people of color.

## Board Members 2022

Paul E. Nelson, B.A., M.A. Founding Director  
Matt Trease, M.A.  
Dr. Jason M. Wirth  
Diana Elser, Secretary/Interim Treasurer  
Adelia MacWilliam (Canada)  
Ricardo Ruiz

## Key Volunteers

Joe Chiveney  
Dan Clarkson  
Sally Hedges-Blauquez  
Cate Gable

Board meetings are held monthly on the second Monday in the evening, via Zoom. Usually we do not meet in July or August, sometimes both.

# Strategic Planning and Fundraising

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We are working on a strategic plan that will include a fundraising and marketing plan for the next 3-5 years - this includes fundraising and our existing activities as described here, and more! Our major high-level goals are:

**To accomplish our mission and extend and broaden its reach - especially into a younger, culturally varied demographic, as follows:**

**Continue existing activities, but increase participation:** poetry postcards, poetry festival, poetry readings, classes, podcasts.

**Publish an anthology of Cascadian art and writing via our own imprint, Watershed Press, and place it in one or more university courses as a text.**

**Assist with securing funds for and establishing Watershed Press as an independent entity** known for publishing and promoting selective authors whose work is consistent with Cascadian Poetics.

**Purchase a place on the Olympic Peninsula** where we might offer individuals a "Cascadian experience" outdoors, via residencies, retreats, courses, hikes, and nature walks. The place would be called Kagean Ni, which captures our vision to help poets live the life of a poet 24/7 in a manner that would honor the spirit, work, and life of Sam Hamill, the late Founder of Copper Canyon Press, poet, translator, and friend of the organization. It would continue — & give a physical space again to stage — the organization's commitment to a spontaneous/place-based and embodied poetics to shift the paradigm away from the abstractions and generalizations of Western culture and the disconnect from biosphere that stance enables.

**Double our budget** to increase our capacity

**To develop a succession plan for replacement of the Founding Director** (in the event of emergency and/or desire to retire)



# Operations

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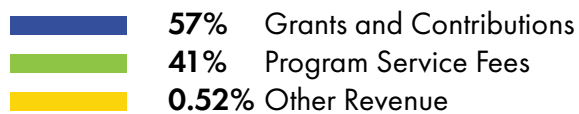
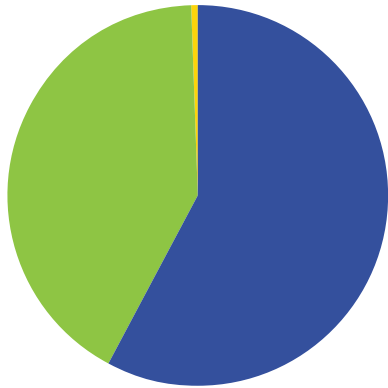
Cascadia Poetics LAB has ambitious goals that require we begin to formalize and expand our operational capacity and fund-raising capabilities. We are gold level GUIDESTAR certified. We have drafted a set of performance metrics and are now working on how to track those metrics using as much automation as we can. Other operational improvements include:

- Completing a full year being run by a salaried (dependent on availability of funds) Executive Director (titled Founding Director), complete with job description and evaluation procedures. We also added a procedure for the Governance Committee to do an annual check-in with board members to find out how the experience is working out for them, and whether there are concerns that have not been raised in board meetings.
- Creating an intern/admin assistant job (part-time, as funds allow) to help the Founding Director, and to bring a younger perspective into the organization. Veronica Martinez joined us mid-2023 and has been invaluable. One of our goals is to secure funding to make that position full-time.
- Hiring a new firm that specializes in non-profit operations to keep our financials in order and file our 990's.
- Engaging on a consulting basis an experienced grant writer to improve our ability to raise funds. We have a similar arrangement with a website specialist and artist who designed the revitalized website we launched in 2021 - which is still a work in progress, limited by how much money is available.
- Fundraising software has been upgraded to increase convenience for our donors, and to improve our ability to track more efficiently.

# Finances

## 2022 Operating Revenue:

**\$66,281.00**



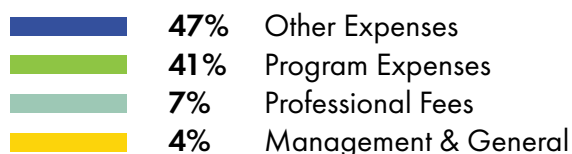
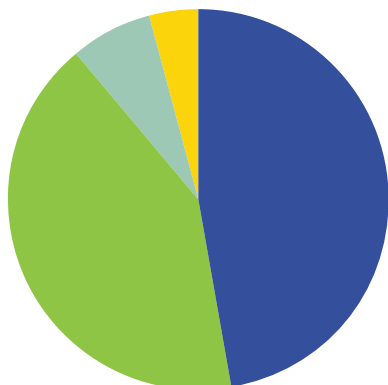
Cascadia Poetics LAB is a small organization with an annual budget of roughly \$70-75,000. We do a LOT with not much money. That size budget makes us ineligible for larger grants from foundations that often require the budget to be a minimum of \$150,000. We have one full-time employee (the Founding Director and soul of the organization). Our goal is to slightly more than double our budget in 2023-2025 and have cash reserves of **\$500,000**. *For the first time we are writing a fundraising plan* to go along with a formal strategic plan, using in-kind services offered by an experienced non-profit administrator and fundraiser.

## Financial Summary

Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$11,639.00
Other Current Assets	\$161.00
Total Net Assets	\$11,800.00

## 2022 Operating Expenses:

**\$67,961.00**



## Revenue

Contributions and Grants	\$38,430.00 [57%]
Program Service Fees	\$27,501.00 [41%]
Other Revenue	\$350.00 [0.52%]
Total Operating Revenue	\$66,281.00

## Expenses

Program Expenses	\$28,137.00 [41%]
Professional Fees	\$5085.00 [7%]
Management and General	\$2743.00 [4%]
Other Expenses	\$31997.00 [47%]
Total Operating Expenses	\$67,961.00

# Contributions

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## Thank You

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to our Sponsors, Funding Partners, and Individual as well as Business In-Kind Donors. It is through their unwavering support that Cascadia Poetics LAB has been able to thrive. Their generosity touches our hearts and makes our mission possible. We are funded primarily by public grants, by modest donations from individuals, and registration fees for our programs.

## 2022 Sponsors and Funding Partners

- National Endowment for the Arts
- Humanities Washington
- WESTAF
- 4 Culture
- Subud Greater Seattle/ Spring Street Center
- SICA-USA
- Arts WA
- White River Valley Museum and Mary Olson Farm
- Steinbrueck Native Gallery

## 2022 Business In-Kind Donors

- Colored Horse Studios
- Joe & Cathy - catering & food
- Matt Trease - technical (pod cast)
- Greg Bem - technical
- Anonymous - lodging for guest poets

# Thank You to Our Sponsors

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