

Bridging National Borders

The Bi-National Arts Institute is a non-profit dedicated to celebrating and strengthening the border community through arts, education, and performance. The 2022-2023 Chorus America funding allowed them to provide singing classes at two schools, Greenway Elementary School in Bisbee and Naco Elementary/Middle School, as well as support two concerts, one of which was the 2022 *Concert Without Borders* which took place at the border wall between Naco, Sonora and Naco, Arizona.

Students at each school received group singing classes and learned some bilingual and multi-lingual pieces that they could all sing together at the concerts. The *Concert Without Borders* included a variety of artists including students from Naco Sonora who sang from the other side of the border wall. Chorus America funding was instrumental in helping the Bi-National Arts Institute get into the schools and provide consistent lessons to the students, many of whom cross the border every day to attend school. Lori Keyne, Executive Director and Co-Founder of the institute expressed how important it is to celebrate transnational culture and said “to be able to lift up any kind of a Spanish song as part of the repertoire, other than *La Bamba* or *Feliz Navidad*, is really wonderful to see how it affects not only the kids, but the families. Because I think kids that cross whose English is not that good can be marginalized.”

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—Lori Keyne, Executive Director and Co-Founder, Bi-National Arts Institute



Students from Naco Sonora at the Concert Without Borders

Lori Keyne said that she felt that one of the biggest successes of this program was the collaboration between the Naco and Bisbee school districts as well as Naco, Sonora. School administration and teachers have expressed to the Bi-National Arts Institute that these music lessons are extremely beneficial to the students, not just for the musical benefits which are tremendous, but also for how learning this music has helped students with their memorization and language acquisition skills. They also expressed hope that the program will continue in the future.



Greenway Elementary School