

NORTH CASCADES INSTITUTE

810 State Route 20, Sedro-Woolley, WA 98284
360-854-2599 www.ncascades.org



April 2017

Dear Friend,

In March I attended final capstone presentations and graduation of our 15th cohort of graduate students. After a week of listening, learning and late night conversations, I felt inspired and invigorated by these amazing students. Their commitment to each other, to their own students, and to the planet makes me proud. They step into the world ready to make a difference—with their Master of Education degree from Western Washington University in one hand and a shared mission for social justice firmly grasped in the other.

Emma Ewert's capstone, *Holding the Center: Story and Community*, wove together her family's history with her own search for self, and shared how stories—whether spoken, written, acted or sung—are what make us human. She traced her own story arc from Lopez Island to the summits of the North Cascades.

Emma was introduced to North Cascades Institute 17 years ago when she attended Mountain School as a fifth-grader with her father, a teacher at Lopez Elementary School. Those were the days when Mountain School took place in "Big Green," the Army tent that served as a kitchen and rainy day classroom at the Newhalem campground. Emma remembers the rain, learning the names of Cascadia's native trees, and how enthusiastic the instructors were.



"But mostly, **I remember my feeling of being deeply connected with nature and how inspired I was,**" says Emma. "Those formative experiences influenced my decision to pursue environmental education as a career and to attend North Cascades Institute's graduate program."

"**Kids have to learn where they come from,**" she told me. "If we understand what we have *here*, in this place, we know that we have to take care of it. Making decisions about environmental sustainability makes sense once you've *fallen in love with the place.*"

Emma's story reminds me that now—more than ever—we need to help young people fall in love with their public lands and their local ecosystems, so that they will care for and protect these special places we call home. Your gift on or before May 10 makes this possible. Thank you for making a generous contribution.

Emma's story arc, like many other participants, includes Institute programs such as:

"I was drawn to the Institute's **M.Ed. graduate program** because it's all about experiential, hands-on learning. You're immediately *doing* something with what you're learning. Being outdoors, moving, experiencing new places and new ideas, being part of a strong community ... North Cascades Institute fosters this vibrant and continual learning environment, which keeps teaching fresh and exciting."

"I was nervous when I started teaching **Mountain School**, but I remembered the feelings and connection to nature that it fostered in me, which eased my fears. I wanted



to help kids walk away jazzed, and feel so good about this place that they want to return. If I'm doing my job, the right things just happen."



"In working with **Youth Leadership Adventures** over the summer, I got to mentor three apprentices and watch these young women of color grow as educators. And I witnessed the power of students sharing their stories and being vulnerable. The appreciation and support they showed one another, despite coming from different backgrounds was powerful. The greatest gift we can give someone is to really hear their story."

Thank you for making a gift to educate 3,400 young people this year. Together, we will:

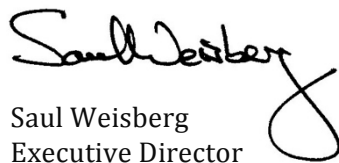
- ✓ Bring fifth graders to *Mountain School* so they will expand their senses and skills on a silent forest walk, learn about their local ecosystem and their role in it, and experience an outdoor classroom like no other.
- ✓ Instill confidence in high school students in *Youth Leadership Adventures* when they reach the summit of Desolation Peak or paddle into camp after a long day on Ross Lake.
- ✓ Equip local middle school students with snowshoes to explore their backyard volcano in winter to learn how climate affects the snowpack and watershed at *Mt. Baker SnowSchool*.
- ✓ Create shared experiences for parents and children in *Base Camp, Family Getaways* and *Skagit Tours* through learning and playing together in North Cascades National Park.

With your help, North Cascades Institute provides the place and the experience; the opportunity for transformation; and the skilled and passionate educators to foster curiosity and learning. Like Emma said to me, "Magical moments happen all the time. We just have to get out of the way."

Emma father passed away in August 2012. Remembering time spent outdoors with her dad, Emma said, "I realized that it was in these moments—backpacking, camping, falling in love with the outdoors and sharing it with others—that I am the happiest. So why not make this a job? Plus, doing this work keeps me connected to my father. Getting to pass forward a love for the outdoors to other kids continues his legacy."

You and I can create this kind of legacy. **Now more than ever, it is vital to inspire and empower the next generation, and all the generations to come.** Together we must introduce young people to their public lands NOW, so they will care for them forever. Thank you for making a generous donation today.

Sincerely,


Saul Weisberg
Executive Director



P.S. You are helping young people create their own story—one that includes nature and their connection to it. Please make a gift using the enclosed envelope, online at ncascades.org/give, or join us for GiveBIG on May 10 to stretch your gift with our \$33,000 challenge match. Thank you!