

November 20, 2015

Dear Friend of the Institute,

Lately, I've been thinking a lot about the word **resiliency**.

In ecology, resiliency signifies nature's capacity for adaptation and change; a place's ability to renew and rejuvenate. In human terms, resiliency represents our capacity to recover quickly from difficulties.

The Institute's resiliency was severely tested this August when a wildfire began from lightning strikes near Newhalem on Highway 20. After smoldering for days, the Goodell Fire grew from a few hundred acres to more than 3,000 acres in just a few hours. My heart pounded as the fire raced up the Newhalem Gorge toward the North Cascades Environmental Learning Center.

Our staff and students evacuated and we had to cancel many programs at the peak of our summer season, including Skagit Tours, Base Camp and the highly anticipated Anniversary Picnic to celebrate 25 years of Mountain School and 10 years of the Learning Center. We didn't know if or when we'd be able to continue operations in the fall.

But what I saw in the face of this turmoil was amazing!

Our phones rang and emails buzzed with an outpouring of support. People like you offered to house displaced staff, sent encouragement, volunteered to help, forgave us for last minute program cancellations, and made donations to help cover losses.

Resiliency.

We immediately began making contingency plans to host Fall Mountain School at a new location. Graduate students relocated to Marblemount and continued their studies while camping, cooking and living together in close quarters. Staff worked late nights to respond to and communicate the ever-changing realities on the ground.

Resiliency.

Then, in the last days of August, the drama ended as suddenly as it had begun when a weekend of torrential rain stopped the wildfire's spread – only 24 hours before it was estimated to reach the Learning Center!

Resiliency . . . and gratitude.

I was grateful to get back to the Learning Center and the wildlands surrounding it. But this harrowing experience reminded me that the Institute is more than beautiful buildings and stuff, more than ancient cedars and a glacier-fed lake.

North Cascades Institute is people and place; it's community. It is you. It is me.



North Cascades Institute is the high school girl who learns to lead a group of her peers in the backcountry. It is the family who canoes on Ross Lake to observe the forces of geologic time. It is the young boy who visits his national park for the first time. It is the graduate students who share their passion for curiosity, inquiry and nature with others.



And it is 5th grader Jesse Gaona who graced the cover of *The Seattle Times Pacific Northwest* magazine this summer holding his Mountain School journal.

The headline of this in-depth story about Mountain School read “North Cascades Institute’s goal is simple: Save the world.” It’s a rather cheeky sentiment, but I’ve been saying it with some seriousness since 1986.

YOU play an essential role in “saving the world.” One way you do this is by making North Cascades Institute resilient, strong and effective.

Thank you for making a generous year-end gift to bring experiential education to people of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities in the North Cascades.

Just a few examples of what you and I do to build resiliency into the future:

- **TEACH** thousands of 5th graders about their local ecosystem and their role in it at Mountain School each year, jumpstarting a life-long interest in nature and caring for this special place.
- **TRANSFORM** underserved high school students through backpacking and canoeing, service projects, field science and public speaking. Youth Leadership Adventures prepares the next generation to steward the North Cascades, solve pressing environmental problems and adapt to climate change.
- **PROMOTE** diversity in incoming Graduate M.Ed. students through scholarships, helping our teachers better represent the diverse population we serve. You are training the conservation, education and nonprofit leaders of tomorrow, sending them out in to the world like seeds on the wind.

We have adapted. We have recovered. We are stronger than ever. You can ensure that we continue to be strong by giving today, so that next spring the laughter of Mountain School kids and new wildflowers will color the patchwork of burned forests and add to the fabric of resiliency.



Thank you so much for your support,

Saul Weisberg, Executive Director

P.S. After this summer’s wildfire experience, I appreciate you and the larger North Cascades Institute community – the artist, naturalist, explorer, donor and student – even more. **You are building resiliency into the future by creating the conservation leaders of tomorrow.** Thank you for making a gift today using the enclosed envelope or online at www.ncascades.org/give.

