



# NORTH CASCADES INSTITUTE FOREST SCHOOL

# 2018|19

PROGRAM REPORT

**Forest School** was designed in 2018 with Bellingham Public Schools to renew the 50-year legacy of environmental educational programming at the **Gordon Carter Conservation Site**. Around age 8, young people undergo a spurt in language and social development and often struggle staying focused. For this reason, it is a particularly crucial time to take learning outdoors. Forest School taps into young people’s natural inclination toward curiosity and play. During the field trip, 3rd graders pretend to be a jeweled beetle, a pileated woodpecker, or a flying squirrel and learn about their species’ interdependence on other plants and animals within the larger habitat.

## Program Outcomes

Foster **CURIOSITY & INQUIRY** skills through exploration



Nurture a **SENSE OF PLACE** within a greater network of all living things



**SUPPORT TEACHERS'** integration of Next Generation Science Standards



Increase **CULTURAL RELEVANCY** of science education



Encourage **EMPATHY** development via perspective-taking



Spark **CONNECTIONS** to prior and future learning



## Pilot Year Takeaways

**Feedback from teachers** we served in the Fall of 2018 encouraged us to pursue solutions that would promote smaller trail group sizes and better integration into teachers’ year-long curriculum. For the Spring 2019 season, we hired a cohort of 9 Forest School instructors, ensuring a 1:9 instructor-to-student ratio. We also partnered with Dr. Debi Hanuscin from WWU, whose pre-service teachers developed pre- and post-trip lessons to be taught within a longer, classroom unit of study. For 2020, we are working with Bellingham Public Schools to develop the infrastructure and facilities on the Gordon Carter site that would increase accessibility for students with exceptionalities.

“ I love Forest School.  
I want to go back.  
Thank you for teaching me all about jeweled beetles. I wonder how long until the babies grow up? I learned that jeweled beetles are colorful.”

— 3rd Grade Student



## Program By the Numbers

Philanthropic support enabled the Institute to subsidize fees for Forest School by **\$90/student!**

**804** **THIRD GRADERS**  
served from  
15 schools

**202** **TEACHER & CHAPERONE**  
participants

**250** **imaginary HABITATS**  
built for mascot  
animals

**38%** **LOW-INCOME**  
students

**50+** **HOURS of CAMOUFLAGE**  
played

**90** **UNIQUE SKITS**  
performed

## Evaluating Outcomes

**62%** of teachers reported students showed an **increased desire to spend time outdoors**

**46%** of teachers reported their students demonstrated an **increased inquiry about local habitats**

**94%** of teachers reported Forest School was “highly valuable” to **increasing environmental learning**

## Partners & Supporters

► Forest School is made possible with the generous support from individuals and organizations, including:



*Darby Foundation*

*Hugh and Jane Ferguson Foundation*

*Samson Rope*

*Jane Talbot*

► And to all of the individuals and families who made generous contributions, thank you!



“ Some students go into the forest or other natural areas on a regular basis with their families, but many do not. My students made connections to other types of habitats they investigated in science, to the resources that the Coast Salish People used and still use today in social studies, and to the plants and animals they saw (signs of) in our local park. Thank you!

—Kate Larocque, 3rd Grade Sunnyland teacher