



NORTH CASCADES INSTITUTE YOUTH LEADERSHIP ADVENTURES

2019

PROGRAM REPORT

GOAL: TO INSPIRE A LIFELONG CONSERVATION ETHIC IN THE NEXT GENERATION OF LEADERS

Youth Leadership Adventures (YLA) offers local teens 12-day backcountry trips in the North Cascades National Park, Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest, and Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest. Through immersion in an alpine environment shaped by glaciers, these trips inspire our participants to manifest a hopeful, joyful, and sustainable future for the North Cascades ecosystem and the people who are part of it. Through support from individual donors, the National Park Service, and grants, YLA was able to offer over \$50,000 in scholarships in 2019. YLA encourages young people to be stewards of protected lands and gives them the skills and confidence to continue to recreate outdoors for years to come.

Program Outcomes

Develop a **SENSE OF PLACE & COMMUNITY** by connecting underserved teens to public lands



120+ outdoor learner hours *per student*

“ On the tenth day we walked for thick forests then, suddenly, into a huge open valley surrounded by mountains. It made me realize how small I am.

Deepen **ECOLOGICAL LITERACY** through first-hand field science learning



“ We are the future and our lives depend on the choices we make NOW.

Cultivate **LEADERSHIP & COMMUNICATION SKILLS** through identity exploration and public speaking



“ YLA built my confidence as a leader and made me push myself. It has shaped me as a person.

Empower teens through **STEWARDSHIP, CIVIC ACTION,** and **WORKFORCE OPPORTUNITIES**



“ This trip helped me to know I am able to accomplish the hard stuff in life and that I'll be ok. I have to just push forward.

Participant Snapshot

We provide scholarships, transportation, clothing, gear, meals, family orientations, culturally relevant curriculum, and gender-inclusive camp options. **97%** of participants reported that they applied for YLA because of these support systems.

50% **FIRST TIME** participating in an outdoor program

94% of participants **RECEIVED SCHOLARSHIPS**

56% identify as **PEOPLE OF COLOR**

28% YLA 8-day program **ALUMNI**

\$51k+ total dispersed **SCHOLARSHIP FUNDS**

31 average **MILES HIKED** on trip

457 **VOLUNTEER HOURS** in National Parks & Forests

50% participants **PAID ZERO DOLLARS**

56% prospective **FIRST GENERATION** college students



Ongoing Mentorship: Connecting Alumni with Next-Step Opportunities to Put Skills Into Action

Throughout the school year, **Youth Ambassadors** further develops students' leadership and outdoor skills, provides volunteer opportunities, and helps students plan for college and careers. In 2019, each participant volunteered 15.5 hours at state parks and public lands and received 18 hours of college access lessons and visits to regional colleges and universities. 2019 marked the culminating year of Youth Ambassadors. We are grateful for the successful 3 years of this program and are looking for funding for a new partnership with RE Sources to support YLA alumni throughout the school year with mentorship and curriculum in civic engagement.

Interns assist in leading summer courses while gaining work experience. Participants are inspired by interns who are of similar ages and backgrounds. Interns receive stipends, housing, meals, and Wilderness First Aid training.

Environmental Leaders Summit is an annual youth-led conference intended to connect young people with environmental professionals on topics that impact their communities. Hosted by Seattle YMCA and YMCA Earth Service Corps, the Summit welcomed over 150 youth this year. North Cascades Institute provided transportation to the Summit for YLA alumni and regional youth as well as coordinated an Opportunity Fair during the event to connect participants to jobs, internships, and civic engagement events.

“ I had the desire to try something new and to work towards making environmental education more accessible to different kinds of people. And even though I hadn't had this kind of access to the outdoors growing up, I was offered the chance to provide it to young people — many of whom don't have the privilege to recreate and learn in the outdoors. This was enough to bring me all the way from Seattle to the small town of Diablo, Washington in the foothills of the North Cascades mountains.

— Urvy Prasad, 2019 YLA Intern

36 **SUMMER COURSE** participants

2 **YLA** **INTERNS**

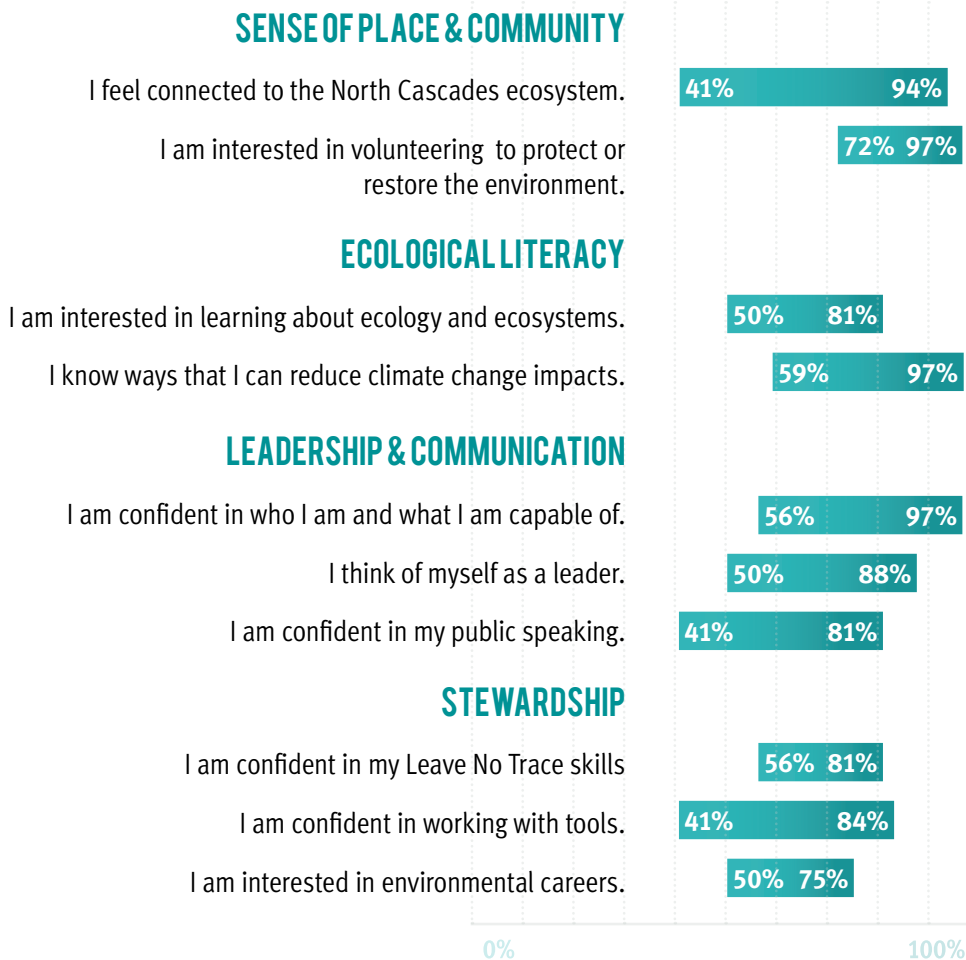
19 **YOUTH** **AMBASSADORS**

44 **VISITORS** to Visitor Days

Evaluating Program Outcomes

Pre- then post-program surveys demonstrate progress towards program outcomes and student transformations as a result of participation in YLA.

Youth Leadership Adventures Courses



DURING YLA, TEENS FORGE FACE-TO-FACE FRIENDSHIPS WITH PEERS OUTSIDE OF THEIR FRIEND GROUPS FROM SCHOOL.

58% of students' biggest fear was meeting new people



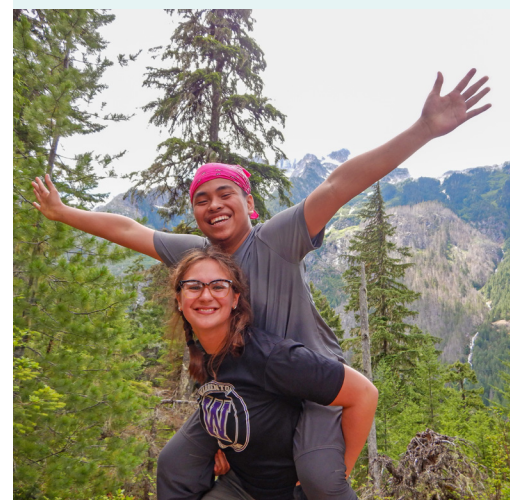
71% of students' favorite part was connection with peers

“ I loved the sense of community and love that came from being a part of this group



Visitor Days connect teens with professionals in local environmental or recreational businesses, tribal groups, and nonprofits. In culmination of the leadership curriculum, participants share stories reflecting on their challenges and growth. In turn, visitors use compassionate listening and provide a live audience for students

to practice their public speaking. Their presence and thoughtful questions deepen student learning by reflecting back to students the significance of their experience and contextualizing the value of tenacity in all areas of life. We had 44 visitors (over 200 hours volunteered during Visitor Days) in 2019.



“ It has always been a challenge for me to be truly open to people. This trip has made me put myself in my challenge zone— something that I rarely do.



Pathways for Youth: Marisol's Story

“ I am a 17 year old Latina from Mount Vernon, WA. The North Cascades Institute has been a part of my life for over two years now. I have done two trips with YLA as well as been a part of the Ambassador program. These experiences have changed me to become a better person.

Before my first trip, I had had some glamping experiences but didn't know backpacking was going to be so challenging mentally and physically. I am not in the best shape, so I was worried about the total amount of miles and about being gone completely for 12 days since it was the longest I have been away from my family.

I am proud to say after my backpacking trip, I hiked over 40 miles with a 30lb pack on

my back. There were moments where I wanted to cry and give it all up, but I knew I was not quitting! I learned that anything is possible when it comes to your mindset and staying positive, even during the times when you want to give up.

Programs like this are not only helping me in the future but giving me the chance to explore this beautiful Washington that many of us minorities don't have the time or money to get to do. I am applying to universities for next fall and hope to pursue a career in medicine and the outdoors because I think the uses for plants are super interesting. This program will always hold a special place in my heart because I have had so many great experiences and still remain in contact with all my friends I met in YLA. We truly changed each others' lives.

2019 Donors and Supporters

Youth Leadership Adventures is made possible with the generous support of hundreds of organizations and individuals. Special thanks to our:



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Henry M. Jackson Foundation
National Park Service
OneFamily Foundation
REI Co-Op
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Swinomish Indian Tribal Community
Tulalip Tribes Charitable Trust
WA Recreation & Conservation Office No Child Left Inside Grant Program

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