2020 began with a wave of excitement at North Cascades Institute. We were celebrating 30 years of Mountain School, our iconic residential environmental education program for thousands of 5th graders in our region. At the Mt. Baker Ski Area, we were engaging middle school students to learn about snow science, watersheds and climate change. We hosted wilderness medicine training at the Environmental Learning Center, planned backcountry Youth Leadership Adventures trips and created a robust slate of classes and excursions for adults and families. We were staffed up and ready to act on our belief that shared experiences in nature strengthen our communities.

When the coronavirus pandemic hit, making gathering in person and proceeding with our normal programs impossible, we were stopped in our tracks. The Learning Center and Sedro-Woolley office were shut down and staff abruptly sent home to work. Like all of you, we were shocked, dismayed and scared. But resiliency and creativity are in our DNA, so we adapted to face these new challenges head-on.

How could we work toward our mission of inspiring environmental stewardship through transformative learning experiences in nature in this new world? How could we support our communities with schools closed and people stuck at home? How could we help families connect with nature in their yards and neighborhood parks? How could we keep our staff employed and engaged?

We rolled up our sleeves and got to work ▶

PARTNERING

in the Whatcom Coalition for Environmental Education to provide in-person academic support and outdoor learning for local students



ENGAGING

thousands of park visitors at outdoor pop-up shops and improving our online store (whose sales help fund our school and youth programs)



OFFERING

a hybrid model of Youth Leadership Adventures for local teens and creating a podcast about student perspectives on climate change



DEVELOPING

new educational video series that will educate people worldwide for years to come about the North Cascades ecosystem and human presence



FACILITATING

online learning opportunities on topics such as birds, volcanoes and fire ecology, and other virtual ways for people to engage with nature wherever they live

2020 PROGRAM IMPACTS

What we were able to accomplish in 2020—in unpredictable and ever-changing circumstances—embodies the entrepreneurial energy that created North Cascades Institute in 1986. We didn't surrender to the fear of the pandemic. Instead, we focused on our mission and values. We listened to our communities' needs and adapted our programs to meet new challenges. We took risks and learned from our failures and our successes. And we found the courage to move forward thanks to resiliency and creativity from our staff, our board's leadership and our generous donors and funders. Here are a few highlights from a challenging year:

Mountain School

Mountain School is our 30-year-old residential education program in the heart of North Cascades National Park. Only 13% of area 5th graders came to the Environmental Learning Center before the pandemic struck and schools closed. Our instructors turned to several different initiatives, including new "Mountain School at Home" content, and further work on the Curriculum Redesign.



The new curriculum is more student-centered and focuses on Next Generation Science Standards, climate literacy and indigenous presence in this place. Through this redesign, we intend to increase the relevancy of the content by centering identity-affirming, social-emotional learning, ushering in a new era of teaching for social justice.

Our instructors created more than 20 new educational activities and videos and shared them online with teachers, parents and students, including topics like Owl Adaptations, Watersheds, Glaciers, Nature Art and "Walking with Wonder."





290

STUDENTS SERVED IN PERSON 16
AT-HOME ACTIVITIES
CREATED

EDUCATIONAL VIDEOS CREATED



Instructors celebrate the first day of our 30th year of Mountain School.

Mountain School at Home is just plain AWESOME!
Thank you so much to all of your staff for making
this great resource for us and our kids!



32 STUDENTS IN

4 SESSIONS

256

LEARNER DAYS 35%

ALUMNI OF OTHER
INSTITUTE PROGRAMS

Youth Leadership Adventures

▶ Youth Leadership Adventures inspires a lifelong conservation ethic in the next generation of leaders. In 2020, Institute staff came up with a modified version of YLA, recruiting small cohorts of local students and providing them with a combination of self-guided, at-home activities, social media prompts and a culminating in-person adventure day of sea kayaking. They also created a podcast that gave student participants an opportunity to reflect on their feelings surrounding climate change, a challenge that in many ways defines this generation of youth.

If you hope for a better future, you have to imagine it, then start taking steps to do it."

-2020 YLA student

Mt. Baker Snow School

Mt. Baker Snow School brings Whatcom and Skagit County middle school students to the headwaters of their home watersheds to learn how water connects us all. Our goal is to support local teachers with a relevant, placebased environmental science curriculum. In spite of snow day cancellations and ending the season early due to the pandemic, we served 416 students from 11 different schools (73% of students we anticipated for 2020), including Concrete School District students for the first time.

Snow School allows me to bring my students outside to a landscape which many of them would never experience otherwise. For some students, it is their first significant 'wild' outdoor experience. This opportunity has potential for profoundly influencing a student's education and life. It could be the key that opens their eyes to their connection with the natural world, even if only in a small way."

-Mount Baker Junior High science teacher



416
YOUTH SERVED
FROM 11 SCHOOLS

45%
LOW INCOME
STUDENTS

69%
RURAL UNDERSERVED SCHOOLS

Whatcom Coalition for Environmental Education's Connections

▶ A new in-person outdoor program, Connections gave young people furthest from opportunity in Blaine, Mount Baker, and Bellingham school districts a chance to gather with their peers and learn about the natural world from some of the region's leading environmental educators. This program was designed to augment virtual learning and provide students with enriching time outdoors. Students were selected by their teachers as those who had qualified for academic support in the previous school year, who were eligible for the federal Free or Reduced Lunch program, had limited access to the outdoors at home, or who had low attendance during remote schooling in the Spring.



172
SERVED
IN PERSON

collaborating school districts, organizations, agencies and local funders

2,151
LEARNER DAYS

Excerpt from Some kids have been learning outdoors for months in Whatcom County, NPR feature story published December 18, 2020:

"Mount Baker Superintendent Mary Sewright said teaming up with outdoor-learning nonprofits like North Cascades Institute made sense. It was a chance to work out the coronavirus safety protocols and pave the way for the district to reopen on a hybrid schedule for elementary kids last month. With that schedule, all elementary students come two mornings a week. But kids in the outdoor education program get an extra day at school.



PARKER MILES BLOHM / KNKX

'It was just a great opportunity to get our kids here in person and prove that we can do it to make people more confident about bringing kids in inperson, because we know especially with elementary kids, that's really important, and the benefits really outweigh the risks,' she said."

► Find the whole article at www.knkx. org/post/some-kids-have-beenlearning-outdoors-months-whatcomcounty-not-seattle

Way to go today! I took a poll yesterday asking my class how everyone was coping—half of the class said they'd been better. The poll's results were much more positive today and I know in part it's because they're back together again to learn (at Connections). I could see it through the camera that they looked much more engaged. Thank you for pulling this off.—6th grade teacher

REFLECTIONS FROM **CONNECTIONS STUDENTS**

My favorite part of the **Connections program was ...**

- I was able to be with friends and I made new friends
- how the instructors made it fun to learn and were able to make the most boring topic into a fun adventure
- how kind people were
- field trips and fun games
- going outside
- seeing animals

The hardest part of the pandemic for me has been ...

- the inability to socialize and learn
- my family getting coronavirus
- finding stuff to do
- not being able to see my friends
- not playing sports

My favorite thing I learned about in Connections was ...

- macroinvertebrates
- fish habitat
- symbiotic relationships
- owl pellets and dissecting them
- invasive plants
- lichen is different from moss
- clay volcanoes
- to be careful with nature

One thing that helps me learn is ...

- being able to move
- hands-on experience
- hands-on learning
- being around other people
- our listening song ("eyes watching, ears listening, *voice quiet, body calm")*

At the Environmental Learning Center

The pandemic closed the Environmental Learning Center to in-person programs two weeks into Spring Mountain School in March 2020. Thousands of hours spent planning, budgeting and training were thrown out the window, and we were forced to cancel Mountain School, Forest School, Base Camp, Family Getaways, Learning Center classes, and Conferences and Retreats through the summer—our busiest time of the year.

With campus closed and the help of a PPP loan, our kitchen and facility staff dove into maintenance work, including deep cleaning in buildings, interior and exterior painting of the Dining Hall, staining of big beams and the Lily Shelter, Maple House and Library exterior painting, and other backlogged maintenance projects. Other staff worked on foodshed and garden activities, creating Mountain School at Home lessons, more work on the Mountain School curriculum update, Spanish translations of educational materials, Learning Center accessibility projects and more!



The kitchen staff preserved foods that would otherwise perish when the Learning Center closed



Interior and exterior spaces around campus received fresh coats of paint



Food services were adapted to safely provide take-out meals to campus visitors



The closure was an opportune

refinishing the dining hall floors

time for big projects like



Eventually, we were able to adapt Learning Center safety protocols, (such as changing our buffet and Dining Hall set up to take-out meals) so we could re-open on a limited basis to house Seattle City Light researchers, host wilderness medical trainings and offer small-group Base Camp Learning & Lodging in the fall.

Diobsud Conservation Easement

North Cascades Institute placed a portion of our 9-acre property near Marblemountthe ecologically-rich riparian zone where Diobsud Creek meets the Skagit River-into a conservation easement held by the Skagit Land Trust. We purchased the property in 2014 to provide housing for staff. The Diobsud Creek watershed is important for wildlife including salmon, wintering bald eagles and the return of wolves to Western Washington. The land along the creek and river shoreline will remain undeveloped forever.



1150 FEET OF CREEK AND RIVER SHORELINE PROTECTED FOREVER

DEC 2020

When the Skagit Land Trust does a conservation easement such as the one at the Confluence property, that partnership is forever. North Cascades Institute really got how this is a commitment now and for generations to come. So much so the Institute created a \$25,000 fund to support future stewardship work on this easement. We are so lucky here in Skagit County to have partners such as North Cascades Institute that have a far-reaching vision for caring for these lands. — Michael Kirshenbaum, Skagit Land Trust Conservation Director

Coronavirus Pandemic Impacts



▶ Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we cancelled most in-person programs at the North Cascades Environmental Learning Center in order to protect the health and safety of our staff and participants. This resulted in loss of anticipated revenue and the need for extensive staff furloughs and reductions in hours. While the pandemic had a dramatic impact on our budget, we ended the year much stronger than we initially expected due to careful management of our expenses, receiving a grant from the Small Business Administration forgiving part of the Institute's Payroll Protection Program loan, and the incredible generosity of our individual and foundation donors.

AT A GLANCE

- In 2020, the Institute earned \$1.2
 million less in tuition and contracts than
 budgeted, although much of that loss
 was offset by the reduction in expenses,
 including staffing.
- All staff experienced furloughs and/or reduced hours for a significant portion of the year.
- The Institute was also able to recoup some losses through a \$326,000 Small Business Administration grant that forgave part of NCI's Payroll Protection Program loan.
- We are particularly grateful that many foundations changed "program" grants into "general operating" grants so we had maximum flexibility to respond to the pandemic. Many of our individual donors gave above and beyond to help us as well.

Online Learning

▶ With in-person programs cancelled, we quickly learned new technology in order to host eight virtual educational programs, including The People of the Sacred River, Watercolor Mountains in Monochrome, Living with Volcanoes and The Ethical Photographer. We also partnered with Village Books for online author readings.



We also created 30 new videos to facilitate remote learning, reaching thousands of people from around the country with presentations on phenology, cooking classes, poetry readings, the Upper Skagit Hydropower Project and local cultural history. Watch at YouTube.com/ncascades.



Mountain School at Home videos



Poetry in the Rain series



Mystery Skulls with Alexa series



Phenology with Zoe series



Foodshed Explorations with Chef Justin



A Cultural History of the Upper Skagit

The North Cascade Institute online programs have really been a wonderful way for us to stay connected and get some outdoor inspiration!—Seattle family

Strategic Plan

Our Board of Directors approved a new Strategic Plan at the end of 2019. While COVID-19 impacted the way we conduct our programs, we still worked toward these broad goals:

LIFE-LONG LEARNING

- Facilitate ongoing environmental stewardship through effective, high-quality, place-based programs and digital outreach.

KINSHIP

 Cultivate an Institute community of belonging that is welcoming and accessible to ensure the Institute is relevant in a changing world.

CONSERVATION IN PRACTICE

Achieve Institute
 climate neutrality by
 2030 and use the journey
 as an opportunity to
 inspire action in
 ourselves and others.

EXEMPLARYWORKFORCE

 Establish best practices for sustainability of Institute staffing and operations to ensure our ability to respond to opportunities and challenges.

FISCAL Sustainability

 Maintain long-term financial sustainability to support the Institute's mission and strategic goals.

2020 PARTNERS AND SUPPORTERS

Our sincere thanks to over 800 individuals, families, and organizations whose contributions helped make North Cascades Institute programs possible. You energized and inspired us to remain nimble, creative and resilient! Your gifts and grants created virtual educational opportunities, expanded our work in local schools and communities, and facilitated robust programs for all ages in the North Cascades. Because of you, we had the flexibility to respond to the changing needs of our community. Thank you!

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Gordon Shriver Alan Shurman and Amy Mower Lynn Sibley and Tom Brudenell The Sibyl Sanford Action Fund of the Whatcom Community Foundation Lawrence Sides Jennifer and Richard Siegel Katey Simetra Utkarsh Simha Joan and Charles Simmerman Richard and Irene Simpson Skagit Audubon Society **Skagit Community Foundation** Skagit Environmental Endowment Commission

Skagit Valley Food Co-op Beth Skoczen and CJ Powell Julie Skylstad SmartWool, LLC Luke Smiraldo and Claudette Evans



Mike and Wendy Schramm Peter and Leslie Schutt Randy Self Rita Selin **Bobbie Seril** James Seymour Haley Shapley The Sharing Foundation **Beverly Shaw** David Sheldon and Patricia Gomez Benjamin Shepherd Deejah and Ron Sherman-Peterson Richard Shilling and Barbara Henon Hye-In Shim

Mary and John Schramm

JB and Beth Smith Jim and Judy Smith Craig and Kathy Smith Mindy Smith Patrick Sokolski Mukul Soman Sheila Sondik and Paul Sarvasy Erin Soper Space Between Sue and Larry Spadoni Michael Srebnicki Rob and Liz St Andre Benjamin St. Germain Jan Stack-Leuze and Jeffrey Leuze Jack and Sandie Starr



Avril Steele Margaret Steketee Kenneth Stevens Amanda Stewart **Brandi Stewart** Craig and Val Stewart Stillaguamish Tribe of Indians Susan Stillman Barbara Stolzenburg Jeffrey and Daphne Stone Fransisca Strampher Leslie Strickland Janice and Walter Strigen Hsung-Zin, Fen Fang Sung and Hseuh-Fang Cheng James Sung and Nicole Lam Johanna Surla and Liliana Arnold Abby Sussman and August Allen David and Barbara Sussman Sarah Sutherland and Josh Torregrossa Shara Svendsen **Swantz Family Foundation** Gordie and Peg Swartzman Erika Sweger Swinomish Indian Tribal Community Peter and Marie Szydlowski Christopher Szynal

T

Jane Talbot and Kevin Williamson
Stowe and Nina Talbot
Linda Talley and Ron Norris
Margaret Tally
Debra Tan and Peter Duniho
Anne Tarver and Catherine Carine
Esther and Mark Teodoro
Karen, Steven, Dustin and Rita Thomas

Susan Thompson
Kevin Tighe and Rebecca Fletcher
Marla Timm
Garth Tissol
Julie and Bill Toomey
David Tran
Cecilia Nguyen and Man Tran
Julie Trout and Harvey Arnone
Mark Tschurr
Dr. Trileigh Tucker and Rob Duisberg
Brad and Jenny Tuininga
Stephanie and David Twigg

U-V>

Julie and Tony Urban **US Foods** Angela Vandenhaak and Brian Heinrich Jon Vanderheyden and Kathleen Kilcovne Leanne and Reinder Vanderschoot Karla VanderZanden Rachel Vasak Sarah and Paul Vautaux Linda Versage and Walter Brodie Lydia and Jose Vila Deven Vilar Kelly Vilar and Chris Sonnabend **Aaron Viles** Barbara Vogel and John Dickinson Joan and Howard Voorheis Cynthia and Vivian Voth

W-Z ▶

Jennifer Waldref

Betsy Weigle

Andrew and Dee Walker
Maggie Walker
Martha Walker
Erin Wallin
Steve Wang and Kathryn HamiltonWang
John and Andrea Warner
Phoebe and Stephen Warren
Washington State Recreation and
Conservation Office
Patricia Waterston
Holli Watne
Rebecca Watson and Darwin Nordin
Dr. Reitha and Mr. Russell Weeks
Eric Wehrly

Bob Weisberg Saul and Shelley Weisberg Janet Welch Wells Fargo Bank Ms. Janet Wells Barry Wenger and Mary Humphries Laurie Werner Mona West Whatcom Community Foundation Lee Whitford Tim and Ann Whitney Darrell and Joan Whittaker Andy Wickstrand Peter and Karen Wickstrand Bill Wilcox Terry Wiley Doug Will Kirsten Willer Alma Williams Brian Williams and Mary Raines Paul and Sharon Willis Jan Wilson Bev Wiltshire Carol Winge Michael Winkelhorst Cathy Wissink Cyndi Wolfe Susan Wong Susan Wood and Jay Smith Susan Woodside Susan Woolf and Steve Price Wren Ridge Fund Robert and Barbara Wright Gail Yampol Celicia Yeoman David and Peggy Yost Kathy Young Stacy Younglove Polly Zehm Chris and Helen Zimmerman Laura Zimmerman

Maggie Weisberg

Please let us know if you see any errors or omissions in this list: give@ncascades.org.

Thank you for your support!



2020 Audited Financial Statements

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

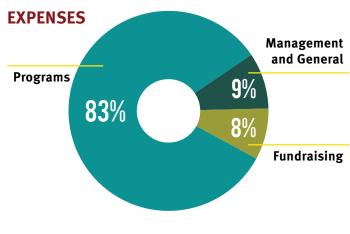
Assets	
Cash and cash equivalents	\$524,164
Short-term investments	\$247,128
Receivables, net	\$39,744
Inventory and other	\$258,220
Long-term investments	\$6,466,961
Property and equipment, net	\$850,074
	\$8,386,291
Liabilities	
Accounts payable	\$160,200
Accrued expenses	\$107,350
Deferred revenue and other	\$41,674
Line of Credit (staff housing purchase)	\$285,615
	\$594,839
Net Assets	
Operating Reserve	\$2,000,000
Unrestricted & temporarily restricted funds	\$2,401,333
Designated Funds:	
Conservation Education Fund	\$1,970,428
Nugent Family Fund	\$739,741
Youth Leadership Fund (Ginny Darvill)	\$218,600
Darby Foundation Scholarship Fund	\$97,360
N. C. Conservation Council Founders Fund	\$52,477
Andrew Goodwill Murphy Memorial Fund	\$50,404
John Miles Scholarship Fund	\$49,262
Weisberg Family Fund	\$59,462
Gary Peterson Memorial Fund	\$31,285
Jean Gorton Memorial Fund	\$24,088
Jean Gorton Memorial Fund Cook & Sullivan Fund	\$24,088 \$30,198
,	
Cook & Sullivan Fund	\$30,198

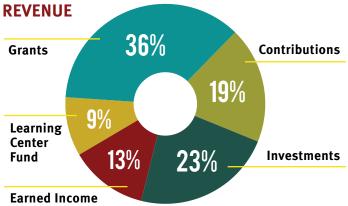
Total Liabilities and Net Assets

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

Sup	port	and	Revenues
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Programs	\$2,173,266
Expenses	
	\$3,087,497
Bookstores (retail/outreach), net	\$112,422
Rental Income	\$23,904
Foundation grants	\$412,800
Learning Center Fund - Seattle Foundation	\$295,000
In-kind contributions	\$121,082
Government grants	\$706,382
Contributions	\$460,337
Investment income	\$702,039
Contracts, tuition and fees, net	\$253,531





\$8,386,291