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.

**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.

**Engaging**

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

**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
4 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!”

— Harriet Rowley Elementary teacher
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.

—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, place-based 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
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.

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.

'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 person, 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.knkr.org/post/some-kids-have-been-learning-outdoors-months-whatcom-county-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

172 SERVED IN PERSON

13 COLLABORATING SCHOOL DISTRICTS, ORGANIZATIONS, AGENCIES AND LOCAL FUNDERS

2,151 LEARNER DAYS
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”)
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 NCI's Payroll Protection Program loan, and the incredible generosity of our individual and foundation donors.

Diobsud Conservation Easement

- North Cascades Institute placed a portion of our 9-acre property near Marblemount—the 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.

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

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Draw the video at
YouTube.com/ncascades

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Coronavirus Pandemic Impacts

- 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.

AT A GLANCE

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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.

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.

**EXEMPLARY WORKFORCE**
- 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.

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

Maggie Weisberg
Bob Weisberg
Saul and Shelley Weisberg
Janet Welch
Wells Fargo Bank
Ms. Janet Wells
Barry Wengler 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 Zehn
Chris and Helen Zimmerman
Laura Zimmerman

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

Thank you for your support!
### STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

#### Assets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cash and cash equivalents</td>
<td>$524,164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short-term investments</td>
<td>$247,128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receivables, net</td>
<td>$39,744</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inventory and other</td>
<td>$258,220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-term investments</td>
<td>$6,466,961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property and equipment, net</td>
<td>$850,074</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Assets</strong></td>
<td><strong>$8,386,291</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Liabilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accounts payable</td>
<td>$160,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accrued expenses</td>
<td>$107,350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deferred revenue and other</td>
<td>$41,674</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line of Credit (staff housing purchase)</td>
<td>$285,615</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Liabilities</strong></td>
<td><strong>$594,839</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Net Assets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Operating Reserve</td>
<td>$2,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrestricted &amp; temporarily restricted funds</td>
<td>$2,401,333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Designated Funds:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservation Education Fund</td>
<td>$1,970,428</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nugent Family Fund</td>
<td>$739,741</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Leadership Fund (Ginny Darvill)</td>
<td>$218,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darby Foundation Scholarship Fund</td>
<td>$97,360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N. C. Conservation Council Founders Fund</td>
<td>$52,477</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrew Goodwill Murphy Memorial Fund</td>
<td>$50,404</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Miles Scholarship Fund</td>
<td>$49,262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weisberg Family Fund</td>
<td>$59,462</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gary Peterson Memorial Fund</td>
<td>$31,285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jean Gorton Memorial Fund</td>
<td>$24,088</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cook &amp; Sullivan Fund</td>
<td>$30,198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brian Scheuch Memorial Fund</td>
<td>$29,455</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campbell-Dalton Fund</td>
<td>$37,359</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Designated Funds</strong></td>
<td><strong>$7,791,452</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Net Assets</strong></td>
<td><strong>$8,386,291</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

#### Support and Revenues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contracts, tuition and fees, net</td>
<td>$253,531</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investment income</td>
<td>$702,039</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributions</td>
<td>$460,337</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government grants</td>
<td>$706,382</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-kind contributions</td>
<td>$121,082</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Center Fund - Seattle Foundation</td>
<td>$295,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundation grants</td>
<td>$412,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rental Income</td>
<td>$23,904</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bookstores (retail/outreach), net</td>
<td>$112,422</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Support and Revenues</strong></td>
<td><strong>$3,087,497</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Expenses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Programs</td>
<td>$2,173,266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management and general</td>
<td>$239,192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundraising</td>
<td>$218,282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Expenses</strong></td>
<td><strong>$2,630,740</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Change in Net Assets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Change in Net Assets</strong></td>
<td><strong>$456,757</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### EXPENSES

- **Programs**: 83%
- **Management and General**: 9%
- **Fundraising**: 8%

### REVENUE

- **Grants**: 36%
- **Contributions**: 19%
- **Learning Center Fund**: 13%
- **Investments**: 23%
- **Earned Income**: 9%

---

North Cascades Institute has received FOUR-STAR ratings from Charity Navigator 15 YEARS IN A ROW.

Call Jodi Broughton at (360) 854-2596 or visit ncascades.org/support to learn how you can make a difference with your gift!