



FIELD NOTES

March 2022

A Note from Carolyn



2021 was a good year.

It was a year of uncertainty, but also a year with many successes. And it was you, our supporters, that helped make it a good year. You attended our events, helped teach students,

led community workshops, stuffed endless envelopes, donated, pulled weeds, and just plain put your heart and soul into the mission of connecting people, communities and the natural world. Attendance rates SOARED this fall to above pre-COVID levels. Thousands of students throughout North Central Washington were introduced to the wonder of nature, either at their school or on the WRI campus. Adults wove baskets, harvested mushrooms, canned tomatoes, learned to keep bees, and carved block prints. And, thanks to many generous supporters, our endowment fund now stands at \$1.28 million!

Yes – it was a year of uncertainty, and yet, it was also a year of great joy.

2022 looks even brighter – thanks to you.

Carolyn Griffin-Bugert
Executive Director

Snowshoe Adventures

"It was so fun to snowshoe for the first time and learn about all the plants and animals that help the land thrive!"

Samuel, a participant from GA

In January and February, WRI offered Snowshoe Strolls on our campus and at the Leavenworth National Fish Hatchery. Almost 300 people of all ages and experience levels joined us to learn about native wildlife, plants, and the cultural & natural history of Leavenworth.

There were many sightings of wildlife and their tracks, too. Laura, a participant said,

"The bald eagle sighting was by far my favorite part of the day with the hot cocoa coming in a close second!"



People joined us from Australia, GA, AL, TX, NY, OH, CO, MT, HI, CA, OR, and all over WA!

WRI could not have led 32 Snowshoe Strolls without the dedicated volunteers who worked alongside WRI staff. Thank you!

Your Support Pushed Us Over the Finish Line!

In 2020, the WRI Board of Directors and the Icicle Fund put together a plan to build a \$1.25 million endowment. This fund would help sustain this place and this work, forever. The goal was to raise \$250,000 to be matched four-fold by the Icicle Fund. In 2021, our goal was shared with you, our supporters. And guess what?

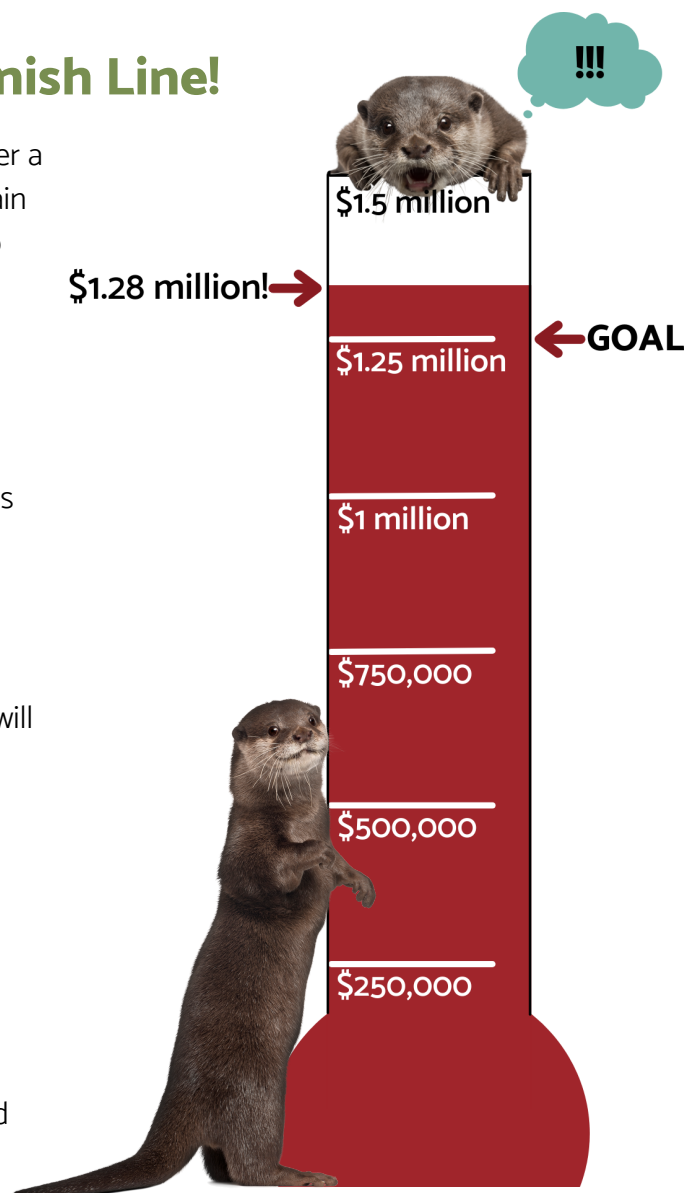
Our endowment now stands at \$1.28 million!

It was your commitment to our youth, our community, and our organization that helped us reach this goal. Your support inspires us to work even harder!

What exactly does a \$1.28 million endowment do? These funds are permanently invested with the Community Foundation of North Central Washington. Every year, the earnings from this investment will support ALL the programs at WRI. By 2023, this could be adding as much as \$64,000 to our annual budget. Think of all the ways our youth and community programs will grow!

While our current goal has been met, we are not done. With your help, we will continue to grow our endowment fund forever. The larger the fund, the bigger we can dream!

Your contribution and support is beyond appreciated. You have and will continue to make a difference!



A Story of Connection

"It was special to bring people from different backgrounds together to experience something that has been a tradition for thousands of years by people who are from this place."

Rachel, Community Programs Manager

Winter is a time for storytelling and sharing. Creating space and time to foster connections with others is important for building a strong community and relationship with the land.

Colville Confederated Tribal member, Dan Nanamkin-k'oup? lus enim kl'a (Thunder and Lightning), has committed his life to just that. Dan is a storyteller, Indigenous cultural educator, and

musician. He travels the nation fighting for Indigenous rights and advocating for environmental and social justice. He and his ancestors believe our connections to each other, and all life, are essential. The stories, songs, and dances that he shares create a sense of kinship.

WRI had the honor of hosting Dan for a Red Barn Event. He arrived in colorful and elaborate regalia. His table was lined with stuffed animals of all kinds, burning sage, storybooks, and his drum. Stuffed animals played the roles in his stories, allowing listeners to engage visually. The evening ended with Dan playing his flute and singing. Goose bumps rose on the arms of the audience as Dan played Silent Night and the audience hummed along. It was a special evening of stories, culture, and community.

WRI continues to seek ways to inspire connection with nature to a wider, broader, and diverse audience.



What does it mean to be a naturalist?

On the road, giving lessons, having fun, and traveling with a purpose! That is the essence of WRI's Traveling Naturalist Program.



Every month, the Traveling Naturalist Program visits schools in Chelan, Manson, Brewster, Orondo, and Rock Island. That's 450 students getting monthly lessons!

Not all students and schools have the resources to visit the WRI campus to walk our trails, watch birds, explore the river, and get up close and personal with nature. The Traveling Naturalist Program was created to help WRI reach more students and increase how many students in North Central Washington have access to environmental education programs. This program has a special focus on schools that serve low-income populations and large numbers of students of color.

"Yes! We get to do science today!"

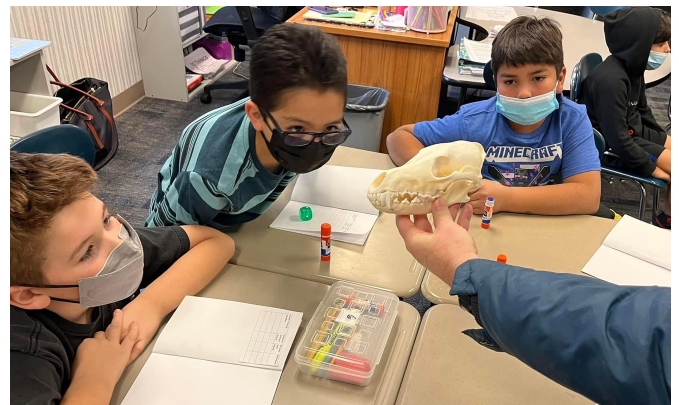
That's the first comment WRI Field Educator, Tucker, heard when students at Morgen Owings Elementary saw WRI education staff arrive at their school. Students were instantly excited for the next part of their day. They knew they'd be learning something new and that it would be FUN!

In the first Traveling Naturalist lesson, students learned what a naturalist is and how anyone can be one. Each student received their own nature journal to document their observations with drawings and words as they explored the natural world on their school grounds.

Not even halfway through the lesson, Mauricio asked if he could take his journal home to work on and show his family. Eager to nurture that excitement, Tucker sent Mauricio home with an extra journal. Mauricio not only was excited to learn, but brought that enthusiasm home to his family, too. As Tucker explained,

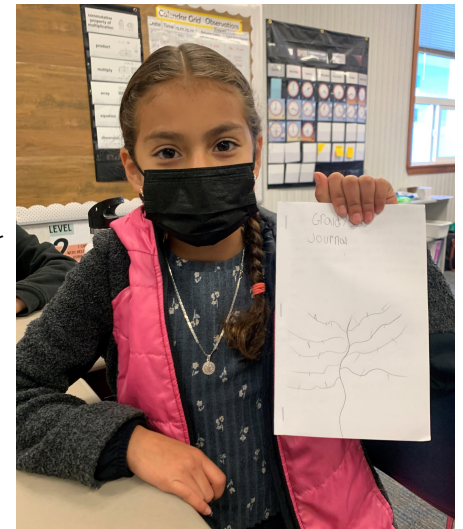
"Maybe he was already into nature, or maybe this lesson is what sparked it."

How do you spark curiosity and excitement in students? You pass around a box of interesting items from nature – lichen, pinecones, leaves, shells, sand dollars, rocks, and a wasp nest. As Tucker explains, "You don't have to know what it is to observe and learn from it." Some students may have never visited the ocean before and now they are observing seashells for the first time. One student exclaimed, "I can hear the ocean!"



Each 4th & 5th grade class are visited about 7 times throughout the school year. That's 24 classrooms!

This program would not be possible without support from the Williams International Fund, Fordham Street Foundation, Washington State Recreation & Conservation Office, and YOU, our donors! Thank you for helping make an impact on students throughout NCW.



Student excitement was infectious and more students wanted to bring their journals home!

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The Wenatchee River Institute connects
people, communities and the natural world...
In 2021, we did just that!

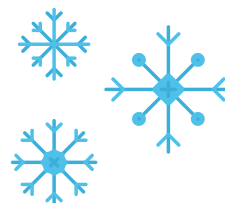
Community member contacts: **1,994**

Student contacts: **4,070**

17 schools in **8** school districts
plus homeschool students!



Connecting
People,
Communities
and the
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- Adventures
- WRI's Endowment for
The Future
- A Story of
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- Donor Recognition
- Traveling Naturalist
Program Stories

Thank you for making
2021 a great year!

What's inside?

FIELD NOTES
March 2022

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We couldn't do it without you.

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