

Wenatchee River INSTITUTE

FIELD NOTES

Fall 2026

A Note from Canuche



This year, construction and woodchipping sounds have mixed with children's laughter across campus. Over the past several months, WRI has finished major repairs and improvements to the Red Barn, Outdoor Classroom, and the WRI campus landscape while continuing to connect families with nature.

We recently celebrated another successful Sunset & S'mores and are carrying that energy into a fall season full of Youth Programs, a packed calendar of Red Barn Events, and other Community Programs. We're also excited to be advancing plans for an electric vehicle to support our education programs across the region and looking ahead to an important milestone: WRI's 20th anniversary and Bird Fest's 25th anniversary in 2027. We can't wait to celebrate two decades of impact with you.

Thank you for being part of the journey. Happy reading!

Canuche Terranella
Executive Director



The Red Barn Resiliency Hub

The Red Barn is now a community resiliency hub! With thanks to a generous grant, the facility features a new heat pump and a solar microgrid with battery storage. Even when the main grid power goes down, the Red Barn will stay warm, dry, and lit as a community resource.

The Community Resilience at the Red Barn Project is supported with funding from Washington State's Climate Commitment Act (CCA). The CCA supports Washington's climate action efforts by putting cap-and-invest dollars to work reducing climate pollution, creating jobs, and improving public health. Information about the CCA is available at www.climate.wa.gov.



Forty-four new solar panels and 60 kWh of battery storage now power the Red Barn! When built in 2011, the Red Barn set a high bar for cutting-edge green building. These modern upgrades ensure it stays at the forefront of sustainability.

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New Friends in New Places

What a monumental summer for Youth Programs at the Wenatchee River Institute! This year, we reached an incredible milestone by hosting our highest number of Summer Camps yet, welcoming a wave of young explorers to the outdoors. Behind this record-breaking season is a network of extraordinary community partners whose collaboration allowed us to scale our reach further than ever before. Among our proudest expansions are new camps in Cashmere in partnership with the Cashmere Museum & Pioneer Village, which successfully bridged access to hands-on environmental and cultural programming for families across both Cashmere and Wenatchee, introducing a new audience to the WRI community.

"Normally, my daughter hates going to museums, but after just one day at camp, she came home asking if we could visit every single museum possible! We are so grateful for these incredible programs."

Local Summer Camp Parent



Summer campers take turns playing teacher at the Cashmere Museum & Pioneer Village's one room school house.



Adventurous Artists get a quick break outside while the smoke AQI levels were safe – a rare occasion for this week's camp.

Of course, a summer wouldn't be complete without a test of our adaptability. When the air quality reached hazardous levels for several days in a row, two full camps moved inside the River Haus since the Red Barn's roof was being repaired. The location adjustment proved that resilience is second in nature. Thanks to our creative educators and incredible partners like the Wenatchee Valley YMCA, shifting air quality couldn't stop the summer fun. We seamlessly transitioned to indoor pool days, clay sculpting, and creative arts to ensure every kiddo had a safe and unforgettable experience.

"When we asked for their top moments of the week, one camper told us: 'All my friends back home are from school or sports, so getting to make new friends from somewhere else was the best part.'"

Emma Knott, 2026 Summer Camp Educator

2026 Summer Camps Impact

17 Camps

62 Pay What You Can Discounts Used

215 Camp Spots

146 Lottery Entries

Weathering Storms Together

When last December's storm swept through, it left our campus battered with more than 25 downed trees, debris blocking familiar paths, and major structural damage. It took months of dedicated effort, stretching through this September, to fully repair the roofs on the Red Barn and Outdoor Classroom. Throughout that long season, your patience kept us grounded, and we are thrilled to be welcoming you back to full campus programming!

Recovery was a massive community effort. Across all four post-storm work parties, more than 100 volunteers rolled up their sleeves to clear trail blockages and haul fallen timber around our campus and clear floating debris at the Blackbird Island Pond. Combined with the donors, businesses, and volunteers who contributed to these efforts, our community turned devastation into restoration.

"When people showed up on campus with saws and smiles right after the storm, it blew us away. Working alongside our community volunteers through months of repairs turned a catastrophic mess into a true testament of what community care looks like."

Canuche Terranella, Executive Director



Days after the storm, the community showed up! Despite the devastation, people came to help clear trails and pile tree debris with smiles on their faces!



The Red Barn's roof sags from the damage of a fallen tree. Several staff and volunteers help clean up and stabilize the area.



Construction crew hauling materials to repair the Red Barn's roof this August.



Construction continues on the Outdoor Classroom to repair the beam and roof this September.

A huge, special thank-you goes to Brandon Hughes, WRI's Facilities Manager. Behind the scenes, Brandon's foresight managed countless moving pieces for months. Alongside guiding volunteers, he oversaw specialized projects like coordinating a tree service to delimb snapped trees into standing wildlife habitats. He even built a brand-new accessibility path behind the River Haus with volunteer, Mike Bedard, where an uprooted tree had cleared the area. Brandon constantly anticipates what needs doing and simply makes it happen.

While storm clean-up is wrapped, our 13-acre campus always has new projects on the horizon. Thank you to anyone who has helped keep this space—and this work—resilient and sustainable for years to come. You make a difference!



Brandon digging out the new accessible path behind the River Haus. Special thank you to Mike Bedard for use of equipment and his time to make the project possible.

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WRI's Nature Journal

Entry No. 10: Short-Stemmed Brittlegill Mushroom (*Russula brevipes*)

Commonly buried in North American woodlands, this unassuming species quietly powers the forest floor. Learn more about its unusual connections below:

- The Dirt-Hatted Giant: A large, noticeable white mushroom with a short, stubby stem and straight white gills that erupts through the soil wearing a funny little dirt "hat."



- From Brittlegill to Lobster: When infected by an orange, fungus-eating mold (Hypomyces), it transforms into the delicious, seafood-flavored "Lobster mushroom." (Note: A variety with a faint blue ring at the base is exceptionally spicy and inedible!)
- Underground Partners: Forms a vital mycorrhizal network with conifer trees, linking its mycelium directly to roots to help the forest absorb soil nutrients.
- The Orchid Connection: Acts as a nutrient provider for the non-photosynthetic spotted coralroot orchid, which taps into the underground fungal network to steal sugars for survival.

Disclaimer: *Please refer to an official guide while foraging for edible materials. Eat foraged items at your own risk.*