

# FIELD NOTES

## September 2021

### A Note from Carolyn



Sometimes a small comment, an interaction, or an experience can have a profound impact. Such was the case for me.

I was ten years old on a school field trip to a local forest. Along the trail, our guide was eager to show us how a fallen tree was now serving as a “nursery tree” to seedlings; the decomposing tree was feeding the next generation of trees. To my ten-year-old mind, this was an exciting and unique idea – nature taking care of nature. My love of nature began at that moment.

At the Wenatchee River Institute (WRI), we know that every personal interaction can have a profound impact. How we value people through the words we use, how we open their eyes to the natural world, or how we create a sense of community are all important. It is sometimes the smallest interaction, the gentlest connections, that can have the greatest impact.

Your support is helping to create and nurture the people who will care for this earth – and each other. Thank you. We couldn't do it without you.

Carolyn Griffin-Bugert  
Executive Director

### A Story of Connection

Language is a connection to culture, whether that is one's own culture or another. Learning to say “hello” in another language can be a simple way to connect.

ṭíł ǰǰšt / hello

This fall, WRI will offer the third series of classes to learn the Indigenous language, nxaʔamxčín, spoken by the Chelan, Entiat, Moses-Columbia, and Wenatchi people. Few fluent speakers remain, and WRI wants to be a part of the strategy to keep the language alive.

In our prior classes, there were a mix of Indigenous participants, learning their own language, and non-Indigenous participants, striving to learn and connect.

This created a unique opportunity for deeper understanding through personal stories. Classes helped build respect and an eagerness to learn more about the land's original stewards.

lámlamt / thank you

WRI is dedicated to giving voice to Indigenous people and helping communities connect.



Annette Timentwa, Language Curriculum Coordinator for the Colville Tribes (left) and Pauline Stensgar, the last fluent-speaking elder (right).



# A Tale of Firsts



María playing in the river with the biggest grin!

Imagine leaving your home to travel to a new place for seasonal work with no friends or familiarity. Imagine moving to a place where the language you hear is not your first language. This is a reality for many people in this valley. Let's step into the shoes of a girl who lives this reality.

María is a 12-year-old girl from Northern California. Her family moved to Monitor for seasonal farm work and to live in the migrant labor camp. María's parents depend on this work

for their living. They move from place to place, working outside in all conditions – rain, shine, smoke, heat. María's family work on the land that many recreate on. They often don't recreate on the land, as their days are filled with working the land.

This summer, WRI brought nature-based activities for children and families to the migrant labor camp. María was shy and timid, but participated and learned what nature could offer her. María's parents were strong advocates for their daughter, wanting her to get the best experiences in life and for her to feel okay about being in their new temporary home. Encouraged by her parents, María leapt at the opportunity to come to WRI for our summer camp program and experience summer camp for the first time.



María is a quick learner. Here she is tubing for the first time with a new friend!



María learning to paddle board on the river!

In her first week of camp, María had a hard time connecting with other students and was nervous about the activities ahead. She had never been swimming before. With encouragement and support, María transformed from being scared to go into the water to not wanting to leave the water! María had never fished before, but caught two fish (the camp record!). She even picked up the fish and threw it back into the water. She was willing to try anything, and once she did, she dug right into it. María returned to camp the following week and learned how to paddle board. Trailing behind at first, by the end of the week, she gained confidence in her new-found skill and led the pack!

María had so many firsts in her two weeks of summer camp – firsts that many of us deem basic. She blossomed and came out of her shell. She inspired the WRI staff as we watched her grow and learn. WRI is fortunate that local donors and grants made it possible to invite children like María to participate in our programs at no cost. The simple act of offering an opportunity allows students like María to flourish. Thank you for supporting these programs!



María learning to fish. She caught two fish!



# Introducing... Nature!

Wildlife. Plants. Mountains. Rivers. Leavenworth is a place with so many ways to connect with nature. This summer, WRI started Guided Nature Walks to highlight these ways to connect. Ella, a WRI educator, created and led these walks.

One visitor from Egypt came on a walk to get an introduction to the Pacific Northwest. She left having learned about a new animal: salmon. She was amazed to learn that they could survive in both fresh and salt water! Another family who recently moved from Mexico used the walk to learn some new English words and orient themselves to the area, "it was one of the best experiences!".

During the walk, participants learned about native plants and their traditional uses. According to one local resident,

*"I had no idea this plant could be useful, and it's been growing in my yard all this time".*

Ella noted that there's a lot of hesitation to try edible plants.

*"People don't realize you can find food in another place besides the grocery store".*

WRI plans to continue Guided Nature Walks this fall. These walks allow local residents and visitors to learn about the community, plants, animals, and cultural history in the best setting possible: nature.



Ella showing visitors native plant species in Waterfront Park.



Visitors using binoculars to view some native birds of the Wenatchee Valley.

## Making a Difference, No Matter How Small

Thanks to the support of donors and grants, WRI implemented a Pay What You Can structure in Fall 2020. Our intent was to serve more low income and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) families. By reducing financial barriers, we hoped to increase accessibility to programs. It worked.

Your generosity helped to make WRI programs more accessible for families. It made it possible for children to attend summer camps, no matter their family's economic standing. Thank you for supporting this program!

This summer, a survey was given to families of camp participants to assess the impact of the Pay What You Can structure. Of the 50 responses received,

**28%** said that Pay What You Can made it either possible or easier to attend camp.

According to data collected from camp registrations,

**58%** of the camp spots paid less than the value of summer camp.

# Thank you for a great summer! We appreciate your continued support of the Wenatchee River Institute.

## STAFF (left to right):

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