

# Mountaineer

E X P L O R E • L E A R N • C O N S E R V E



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**The Glacier Gals**

**How Kool-Aid Lake Got Its Name**

**The North Cascade Glacier Climate Project**

## Volume 120 | Number 2

The Mountaineers enriches the community by helping people explore, conserve, learn about, and enjoy the lands and waters of the Pacific Northwest and beyond.



On the cover: Rose Freeman (piano) and Anastasia Allison (violin), The Musical Mountaineers, performing on the summit of Vesper Peak. Photo by Aaron Allison.

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Mountaineer uses:



**ADVENTURE  
WITH  
PURPOSE™**  
Since 1906



Photo by Rick Meade.

For the last decade, I've had the honor of serving our Mountaineers community and helping advance our mission. At the heart of what inspires me about The Mountaineers is our vision to Adventure with Purpose. Every day, we give people of all ages and walks of life the opportunity to have transformative outdoor experiences.

Adventure is what usually comes to mind when people think of The Mountaineers. As outdoor educators, we share our knowledge on how to be safe, responsible outdoor

recreationists, and empower others to be advocates for the natural world. But it's the Purpose side of our mission that inspires me daily.

When people find out I work for The Mountaineers, they often assume I'm out climbing, hiking, and skiing with people all the time. While much of my free time *is* spent outdoors with friends and family, and as a Mountaineers volunteer, most of my day job is spent indoors handling administrative priorities - and it's these priorities that make me feel like we're making a meaningful difference for our community.

One example of a Purpose-driven, critically important administrative component of my role is serving on our Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault Prevention (SHSAP) Committee. Chartered by the Board about two years ago, the SHSAP Committee fosters an organizational culture that prioritizes keeping people both physically *and* emotionally safe. This work is the bedrock of establishing an inclusive and welcoming environment, and an essential component of ensuring The Mountaineers delivers strong learning outcomes and outdoor experiences where all participants feel belonging.

The SHSAP Committee meets monthly and has been making steady progress in important areas, such as leader support and development and org-wide policy improvements. After months of work to improve our key behavior policies - making them more comprehensive and setting clearer expectations for members and leaders alike - the SHSAP Committee presented an updated, Board-approved Mountaineers Code of Ethics and Behavior Standards Policy earlier this year. On the training front, two new bystander courses were added to our Leadership Development Series: Bystander Intervention Tools for Outdoor Trips and Activities, and Preventing Harassment and Abuse in Outdoor Communities. These milestones in leader training and organizational safety are what make the Adventure part of our vision possible.

Providing courses and robust policies that improve equity and belonging are tangible ways The Mountaineers is investing in the emotional safety of our community and advancing our vision to Adventure with Purpose. Ongoing updates about the SHSAP Committee, leadership development for our volunteers, and helpful leader tools can be found on the Leader Resources page on our website. As we head into spring and summer, I hope you'll seek out opportunities to learn more about this work and how you can incorporate these resources into your Mountaineers programs.

Warm regards,

Tom Vogl, CEO



The Mountaineers is a nonprofit organization, founded in 1906 and dedicated to the responsible enjoyment and protection of natural areas.

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Basic Alpine Climbing friends at camp on Mt. Baker. Photo by Kate Goldenring.



Skye Michel  
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Photo by Karen Grubb.

I owe some of my closest friendships to glaciers. The first time a glacier brought me toward a friend, I wasn't even near a glacier but listening to one sound from speakers in a basement. An elevator acquaintance and I were attending a performance by a musician whose glacial symphonies hoped to inspire deeper connection to our landscapes. Hearing ice and meltwater trickle from the room's corners, I felt I was in the alpine (before I even knew what that word meant)

beside someone who would eventually become a lifelong friend.

Since then, I've been lucky enough to crunch my way across a few chunks of ice in the Pacific Northwest - most memorably during outings with my Basic Alpine Climbing course classmates last year. We traded good-luck crystals on Eldorado, shared dehydrated desserts below Neve, puzzled through riddles up Easton, and experienced every weather condition imaginable beneath Cowlitz. I take time to open up to new groups, but turtling up steep walls of ice while slouched beneath what felt like twice my weight made it hard to be anyone but my authentic self. In these pockets of exhaustion,

when the silliness slipped out between panted breaths, I felt connected to the people around me. The terrain required us to show up honestly and look after one another, and, in doing so, we grew closer.

If you're looking for community and a good ice breaker, consider a glacier. The hours of smiling through the slog and sore legs have a unique way of turning strangers into dear friends. This edition's stories explore how glaciers - and our landscapes more broadly - connect and move us. As the backdrop to many of our Pacific Northwest adventures, glaciers fuel our community-forming experiences, challenge our recreation skills, and test our trust in ourselves and each other. As the source of life-sustaining resources, they nourish the landscapes where we gather and play. And as companions on our trips, they request we look after them as well, inspiring creative responses to the urgent need for practices and policies that better support their persistence.

Like my basement experience reveals, you don't have to toil your way up a glacier for it to leave its mark. Whether recreating on, learning from, or admiring from afar, glaciers cultivate cherished relationships between people and places - ones that stick with us before we ever enter and long after we leave the alpine.

# TOP TRIP REPORT PHOTOS



Backcountry ski/snowboard, Artist Point, Juliane Gust.



Winter scramble, Mineral Butte, Susan Shih.



Rock climbing, Vantage, Matt Davey.



Glacier climb, Mount Hood, Martin Fisher.



Sea kayak, Hammersley Inlet, Will Greenough.



Cross-country ski, Amabilis Mountain, Barbara Mottler.



Stewardship, Shadow Lake Nature Preserve, Courtenay Schurman.



Basic snowshoe, Paradise Area, Lisa Elliott.



Cross-country ski, Lost Lake, Mike Forsyth.



Basic snowshoe, Obstruction Point Road, Colin Chapman.



Day hike, Poo Poo Point, Barbara Folmer.



Winter scramble, Humpback Mountain, Matt Surprenant.



**Name** Parshwa Shah

**Hometown** Mumbai, India

**Member Since** October 2024

**Occupation** Software

**Favorite Activities** Climbing, hiking, snowboarding, and photography

Parshwa atop South Early Winter Spire, a Washington classic. Photo by Sarah Magnuson.

### What first brought you to The Mountaineers?

I've been an avid hiker ever since I moved to Seattle in 2020. I attempted my first volcano (Mt. Baker) in 2023 with guides and after that trip, I knew I wanted to gain the technical skills to explore mountains like that safely and independently. I discovered The Mountaineers Basic Climbing course and decided to apply.

My experience in Basic was wonderful. I was so impressed by the depth of knowledge from all the instructors and volunteers, and fortunate to participate in many incredible climbs exploring the Cascades. We are so lucky to live in the Puget Sound, and The Mountaineers provides an amazing platform to connect with new friends, find climbing partners, and explore our unique geography. I hope to give back in the coming years as a volunteer and help empower more people to experience the beauty of our state.

### Why do you like getting outside with us?

For me, it's the unique blend of genuine community and continuous learning. I feel completely at home with The Mountaineers; everyone is so welcoming and warm. I've been on several climbing trips this year, and I have genuinely learned something new from the climb leaders on every trip. Beyond the technical skills, it's always refreshing to connect with people and hear their stories while we're enjoying the beautiful outdoors. That creates a powerful sense of community and belonging, which in turn makes the entire learning experience richer.

### What's your favorite Mountaineers memory?

Singing "Hot To Go!" by Chappell Roan at the summit of Ruth Mountain in June 2025. Everyone knew the lyrics to the song.

### Who/What inspires you?

My biggest inspiration comes from the people within the

local PNW climbing community, particularly the long-time volunteers at The Mountaineers. I am constantly blown away when I meet individuals who have been dedicated members for over a decade, some of whom have been climbing since the 90s. Their sustained fitness, deep wealth of skills, and commitment to the community are incredibly motivating.

### What does adventure mean to you?

To me, adventure is defined by the moment of new learning or the act of pushing beyond my known comfort zone. True adventure involves that internal dialogue when you're in the thick of it cautiously asking, "Why am I doing this again?" But the magic happens immediately afterward when the doubt is instantly replaced by, "Let's do this again!" The sense of accomplishment leaves me with a lasting smile.

I believe you can find adventure in any aspect of life. It's anything new you choose to learn or experience: exploring a new area at work, trying an unfamiliar cuisine, or, in the mountains, tackling a new range, trying a different sport, or acquiring the skills to safely navigate hazards. Pursuing these new adventures is deeply fulfilling. ▲▲

## Lightning round

**Sunrise or sunset?** Sunset

**Smile or game face?** Smile

**What's your 11th essential?** My camera

**What's your happy place?** My happy place is definitely a high-altitude, high-sugar reward: eating sugary treats atop any Cascadian summit on a clear day.

**Post-adventure meal of choice?** Pizza

# CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR VOLUNTEER AWARD RECIPIENTS

Volunteers are the heart of Mountaineers operations, and last fiscal year, more than 3,000 volunteers near and far generously gave their time to keep our programs running. Each year, we recognize a select group of volunteers who went above and beyond to support our programs. Congratulations to our 2025 award recipients!



# A Carbon Footprint Reduction Milestone Funding Secured for Seattle Program Center Heat Pump Project

By Conor Marshall, Advocacy & Engagement Manager



Solar panels on the Seattle Program Center (SPC) roof. Transitioning to energy-efficient heat pumps represents a major step toward achieving net zero carbon emissions for the SPC. All photos courtesy of the Carbon Footprint Reduction Committee.

**T**he Mountaineers staff at the Seattle Program Center (SPC) have a tradition of ringing a large bell whenever we receive a sizable gift of financial support. On a dreary morning in mid-January, I heard that bell chime. While I figured we were in for some uplifting news, I had no idea how incredible it would be. After years of working to fully fund the transition from gas-powered heating to renewable energy at the SPC, The Mountaineers had been awarded a \$324,000 decarbonization grant from Puget Sound Energy (PSE).

In addition to a \$150,000 grant secured from the City of Seattle’s Office of Sustainability & Environment in 2024, the PSE grant award gives us the funding needed to convert the building’s heat source away from fossil fuels and achieve one of the largest steps toward our goal of making the SPC a net zero carbon emissions facility. Switching to energy-efficient heat pumps will not only further decarbonize the building and reduce our organizational carbon footprint, it will provide air conditioning in popular programming spaces.

## The volunteers behind the project

Funding the installation of heat pumps and securing a key achievement for The Mountaineers carbon footprint reduction efforts wouldn’t have been possible without the vision, expertise, inspiring philanthropy, and fundraising support from members of the Carbon Footprint Reduction Committee (CFRC).

Longtime Committee chair Geoff Lawrence and founding members Jim Burke and Charlie Michel have been discussing the SPC’s transition to heat pumps since 2020. Over the last four years, I’ve had the opportunity to support the work of the CFRC’s dedicated volunteers and have seen firsthand how passionate they are about fighting the climate crisis, one energy reduction project at a time. These committee members are true visionaries. They not only powered the incremental work of discussing new projects, unearthing funding opportunities, and communicating the importance of sustainability and individual carbon footprint reduction to our community, but also encouraged our staff to learn, dream big, and take significant strides to reduce our organizational carbon footprint.

The CFRC was instrumental in achieving net zero status for our Tacoma Program Center (TPC) in 2024, positioning the building as a beacon of sustainability and community resilience, and has already done important work toward our net zero vision in Seattle. In 2019, we added an array of solar panels to the SPC and completed smaller upgrades, including converting to an electric fireplace (thanks in part to philanthropic support from Charlie Michel and other committee members).

The strong community partnerships and deep impact of project success at the TPC inspired the CFRC to bring the same level of sustainability to our Seattle home at Magnuson



Heat pumps at the Tacoma Program Center.

Park. Following a similar blueprint used to fund and install heat pumps and reach net zero in Tacoma, the CFRC homed in on their next milestone in Seattle by soliciting a building energy audit for the SPC, working with contractors to prepare project plans, and relentlessly seeking grant funding to make this fully funded project a reality.

Our successful application to Puget Sound Energy garnered high marks from reviewers and yielded strong support from Seattle Parks and Recreation and the City of Seattle Office of Sustainability and Environment. "I think what really put us over the top and led to our success on the PSE grant was our extensive study and design work," says CFRC member Charlie Michel.

"Once again, The Mountaineers is a model for an organization with outstanding leadership, committed staff, and dedicated volunteers," says CFRC member Jim Burke. "We're setting an example for the nonprofit community by leading the way on carbon footprint reduction. I'm encouraged by our prospects for funding the remaining pieces of the Seattle project."

### Striving for net zero carbon emissions in Seattle

As a community that cares deeply about a healthy future for our lands, waters, and communities, The Mountaineers recognizes the need to respond to the climate crisis by aggressively reducing our impact on the environment.

Our commitment to sustainability is embodied in our organizational vision to achieve net zero carbon emissions from our facilities and operations.

Reaching net zero for the SPC will save an estimated 7,260 therms of natural gas and 85,000 pounds of CO<sub>2</sub> from being emitted into the atmosphere a year. This carbon savings is equivalent to taking eight gas-powered cars off the road each year.

"The Mountaineers is grateful for the investment in and support of this project by Puget Sound Energy and the City of Seattle," says CFRC Chair Geoff Lawrence. "Their partnership is a critical piece to decarbonizing and achieving net zero carbon emissions at the Seattle Program Center."

Installation of the heat pumps is anticipated to commence this spring, with a target completion date of late summer. We look forward to keeping our community updated as the project progresses. ▲▲

## HELP US REACH OUR GOAL

Our progress to reduce the carbon footprint of Mountaineers facilities and operations wouldn't be possible without the support of our community. Thanks to the work of the CFRC and support from members like you, it's just a matter of time before our net zero vision becomes a reality.

As the implementation phase of the heat pumps project commences, the CFRC will be seeking additional grant funding for outstanding projects to get the SPC building electrification project across the net zero finish line. These sub-projects include:

- Adding solar capacity to the existing solar array and installing a battery backup system. During sunny months, our enhanced solar panel system is expected to generate more electricity than it consumes.
- Installing restroom occupancy sensors, reducing energy use by allowing the fans to turn off when spaces are unoccupied.
- Replacing the electric resistance water heater with a more energy-efficient heat pump water heater.

Although smaller in scale, these upgrades will help power the building during an outage and transform the SPC into a community resilience center. Consider a gift to The Mountaineers Net Zero Fund today in support of this important work: [mountaineers.org/donate/other-giving-options/netzero](https://mountaineers.org/donate/other-giving-options/netzero).

# Guardians of Life

By Kiliii Yüyan, Mountaineers Books author



**T**he first epiphany of that summer morning was simple: killer whales sure can be lazy.

From my kayak, I watched the bright sea sparkle as waves rose and fell around what appeared to be motionless black fins in the distance. Were the orcas sleeping? It had never occurred to me then, in my twenties, that marine creatures might sleep, especially killer whales as I had imagined them.

I had brought two friends out on the water to see these celebrities of Washington's Salish Sea. Michael and Erin were paddling the traditional skin-on-wooden-frame kayaks that I helped them build. It had been Erin's lifelong dream to see orcas in the wild, and she hummed with barely-contained excitement at the black silhouettes, still more than a football field away.

But the orcas, perhaps a dozen of them, loitered in the waves, barely moving. Our excitement slowly tempered to patience, then cooled into boredom.

Unable to restrain herself, Erin turned to me with a sudden burst of enthusiasm and said, "Let's sing to them!" Before I could respond, Michael and Erin leaned out of their kayaks, chorusing Bob Dylan across the water.

I hesitated. Their enthusiasm was kinetic but not enough to overcome my inertia. My engineer father's rational worldview tugged at me. I was a believer in science, not superstition.

Those subconscious restraints held my voice inside. Singing to whales felt foolish.

But my resistance didn't last long. When my friends started to sing the opening lines of "Hey Jude," I was overcome. My love for the Beatles was too big. I joined in. My booming voice reverberated down my body, into my legs, and through the kayak's flexible skin into the sea.

Almost instantly, those black fins in the distance stirred. The whales turned, their shapes sharpening as they glided toward us. It couldn't be – were they lured by our siren songs?

I realized I was living inside one of my grandmother's stories. I could almost hear her explaining to me in Mandarin that if I wanted to bring whales close, I should sing to them. *You will remind them of our ancient relationship, back in the time when the animals were people, and we could speak to each other.*

My grandmother was Nanai/Hezhe, one of the Indigenous people originally from the region of what is now northeast China. Her family traded between China and Russia across the Amur River, the border between those countries. She raised me, living first in Asia and then in the United States.

As an adult I came to understand that the folktales she told me were more than stories. They were a conduit to her Indigenous culture, much like the traditional kayaks I now build. Looking back, I understand her stories differently – not as entertainment, but as volumes in a library of ecological



Photographer and traditional kayak-builder Kiliii Yüyan, paddling Kyuquot Sound, the beautiful home waters of the Ka:'yu:'k't'h' First Nation. Photo by Ryan Howard Sigesmund.

wisdom, knowledge distilled over millennia of living in intimate relationship with land and water.

That knowledge echoed back to me the day the orcas drew near. Suddenly, they weren't distant shadows but powerful presences. Behind me, Erin shrieked – with fear or maybe delight – as a playful calf surfaced, nudging the stern of her kayak with a mischievous push. A heartbeat later, I felt it slip beneath my own boat, the pressure wave rippling through the skin of the kayak and rising into my legs.

We had sung to the whales, and they had remembered. ▲▲

*Excerpted and adapted from Guardians of Life: Indigenous Knowledge, Indigenous Science, and Restoring the Planet (2026). Published by Braided River, an imprint of Mountaineers Books. Reprinted with permission. Guardians of Life is available for purchase at our Seattle Program Center Bookstore, online*



*at mountaineersbooks.org, and everywhere books are sold. Join Kiliii for a talk at Town Hall Seattle on April 1, the Seattle Program Center on June 23, or one of his other area events. Learn more at [www.mountaineers.org/authorevents](http://www.mountaineers.org/authorevents).*

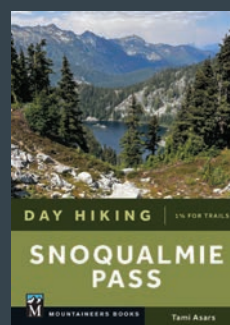


## The Bird with Flaming Red Feet

By Maria Mudd Ruth

Bridging the gap between field guide and memoir, *The Bird with Flaming Red Feet* invites you to slow down, look closely, and reconnect with the wild places and creatures just outside your door.

Drawing from over a decade of beachside study, author and longtime volunteer surveyor Maria Mudd Ruth weaves together science, field observation, and community storytelling to paint a vivid portrait of the charismatic Pigeon Guillemot. In a joyful call to observation and stewardship, Ruth dives deep into the guillemot's behaviors, quirky traits, and ecological relationships, and shares the stories of the passionate citizen scientists who have built a unique community around caring for and studying this vibrant bird.



## Day Hiking: Snoqualmie Pass

By Tami Asars

With sparkling alpine lakes, towering forests, and rugged peaks, the Snoqualmie Pass region of the Cascades has long been a favorite destination for day hiking. Experienced hiker and guidebook author Tami Asars shares her expertise to help you find the perfect hike for every occasion with 126 handpicked trail recommendations spanning Issaquah to Ellensburg. Handy features include trail quality and difficulty ratings, an at-a-glance chart to help compare and select outings, quick-reference icons for observing flora and fauna, suitability for kids and/or dogs, and more.



## Seattle Field Guide

By Kathryn True and Maria Dolan

Explore Seattle through new eyes with *Seattle Field Guide*. With 38 nature-based outings throughout the city, this guide will enhance familiar sights with wild facts and introduce you to inspiring places you've never heard of. From peregrine falcons atop skyscrapers to bedrock breaking through the earth at low tide, seasonal suggestions, public transportation tips, and thoroughly researched facts will show you Seattle's natural world like you've never seen before.

# A Canine Rescue

## Kitsap Scramblers Practice Creative Risk Management

By Meryl Lassen, Kitsap Branch Key Leader and Super Volunteer



A view of Buckhorn Mountain on November 8. Photo by Meryl Lassen.

November 8 was an ordinary day. I was leading a scramble at Buckhorn Mountain with Nathan Starr (my climbing and life partner) and Ron Jones (Olympia Scramble Chair). Our trip included three experienced participants: Ann Dannhauer (Everett), Tanna Knouse (Olympia), and Janette Powell (Kitsap). We knew this early winter scramble would be challenging with uncertain conditions, but we were well prepared.

Our plan was to start at 7:30am in the light of the sun, eat lunch at the summit, and be back down no later than 4:45pm. Equipped with safety gear, headlamps, micro spikes, poles, warm clothes, and back-up plans, we set out on our scramble. After a lovely and uneventful winter ascent, we were on track to return before sunset.

At 3pm, on the snowy switchbacks below Marmot Pass, Tanna encountered a man with two 80lb poodles. One could not walk; its back legs quickly folded when it tried to stand. There were still 5.2 miles and 3,200 feet of descent ahead.

### A different kind of trail angel

I'm part of a small group of Kitsap scramblers that has earned a reputation for being in the right place at the right time. So far, our third-party rescues include: skiers with broken legs, glissaders with torn ACLs and dislocated shoulders, a climber with Altered Mental Status (AMS), and more. We joke about the existence of a "Trail Magic Mafia" that calls us in for favors when the safety of fellow recreationists is at stake.

With daylight quickly waning, we realized we were this party's best chance of getting off the mountain safely. It seemed the "Trail Magic Mafia" was calling in another favor...



Our original four-person carry system. Photo by Tanna Knouse.

We assessed the pup's docile demeanor and pooled our gear. A down blanket, four trekking poles, athletic tape, carabiners, and a dog leash were all we had. Another solo hiker, the last off the mountain that day, joined our effort, adding muscle and a few more straps.

For our first attempt at a system, we used our blanket as a hammock, supported by four trekking poles taped together, looped through knots at the front and back of the blanket, and carried by four people, two abreast. We carried the dog like this for short shifts, but the narrow trail and fatigue soon forced a redesign. We then switched to a two-person, single-file carry system using our backpacks as anchor points to distribute the load between the front and back haulers. The hammock was attached to the trekking poles, which were looped through our packs at hip length (via the ice axe loops) and secured with straps and carabiners.



Top: Our two-person carry system. Photo by Janette Powell. Bottom: Hauling the injured pup in the dark. Photo by Ron Jones.

Everyone rotated carrying the pup for quarter- or half-mile stretches. It soon became dark, and as we took turns leading, the front hiker called out trail obstacles. Our trip leaders with glacier climbing experience quickly taught the scramblers how to maintain pace, communicate, and give clear directives in low-light conditions. Participants who had never been on a rope before were calling out terms like “slack” and “tension,” maintaining our team pace like pros. Meanwhile, Ann (a doctor) and Janette (a physical therapist) monitored the haulers for fatigue and ensured our crew of 51- to 62-year-olds stayed safe and functional.

At long last, around 9pm, the gleam of our headlamps caught trailhead signs and cars. We arrived over four hours later than planned, but the effort was worth it, considering the dire straits the man and his two pups would have been in had we not chosen to help a hiker in need.

## THE 10 CANINE ESSENTIALS

**Obedience training.** Before you set foot on a trail, make sure your dog is trained and trusted to behave when faced with other hikers, dogs, wildlife, and an assortment of strange scents and sights in the backcountry.

**Doggy backpack.** Let the dog carry their own gear.

**Basic first-aid kit.** Suggested items include canine eyewash, tweezers, and any prescription medication your dog requires.

**Emergency dog sling.** Test your sling before heading to the backcountry to ensure you can carry your dog out if needed.

**Dog food and trail treats.** Pack more food than your dog normally consumes, as they will burn more calories than usual.

**Water and water bowl.** Don't count on there being water along the trail for your dog.

**Leash and collar or harness.** Sometimes leashes are required by law or encouraged for common courtesy, so you should always have one handy.

**ID tags and picture identification.** Your dog should always wear ID tags, especially in the backcountry.

**Dog booties.** These help protect your dog's feet from rough ground or harsh vegetation. They also keep bandages secure if the dog damages its pads.

**Compact roll of plastic bags and trowel.** Practice good Leave No Trace principles by cleaning up after your dog.

## Our takeaways

By the end of the scramble-turned-rescue, we were hungry and righteously beat, but otherwise in good shape. At the trailhead, the hiker who joined the rescue told us he was inspired to join The Mountaineers. The dog's owner turned out to be a new student in The Mountaineers 2026 Basic Alpine Climbing course and told us that his faith in humanity was restored thanks to our help.

The next day, the dog's owner let us know the pup was on the mend after receiving emergency vet care. If our team hadn't been prepared with extra essentials and gear, the dogs and their owner may have needed a more technical rescue and more extensive care. What could've ended as a tragic disaster turned into a near miss, thanks to our group's kindness, leadership, and ingenuity.

During challenging times, a small act of kindness can be a light in the dark. Not only did the four-legged patient survive, but the experience reinforced our fellow recreationists' excitement to learn from The Mountaineers - a win-win! ▲▲

*Before hitting the trail with your dog or allowing dogs on the trips you lead, visit our website for helpful resources on hiking with dogs: [www.mountaineers.org/hiking-with-dogs](http://www.mountaineers.org/hiking-with-dogs).*



# HOW KOOL-AID LAKE GOT ITS NAME

By Anastasia Allison, Leadership Development Series speaker and founder of Kula Cloth

Anastasia at Cache Col on Day 1 of the Ptarmigan Traverse. Photo by Brenda Gordon.

Standing at the edge of Cascade Pass, I crane my neck upward toward our first objective, a tiny pass called Cache Col. My friend Brenda and I are hiking the fabled Ptarmigan Traverse, a remote, 40+ mile alpine route through some of the most breathtaking and isolated terrain in the North Cascades. The traverse is a commitment. Once you start, there are no easy exits (either retreat or keep moving forward) and the trail's steep traverses are cut by numerous no-fall zones.

As we strap on our heavy packs and set off, I feel a mix of anticipation and low-grade dread rumble in my stomach. We pick our way slowly up the snowfield toward the col and cross over a narrow gap in the ridge. Then, as we begin descending more steep snow, I peer into the basin below in anticipation of what I've been dreaming of seeing for so long...

## An unsolved mystery

Many years ago, I came across a photograph of a lake that made me gasp. Although a tiny body of water, it appeared to spill like an infinity pool into the endless depths of the North Cascades. The photo caption read simply: Kool-Aid Lake, North Cascades. A novice backpacker at the time, I promised myself that one day I'd gain the skills to be able to visit Kool-Aid Lake. I didn't know why the lake mattered so much to me. I only knew that it did.

And here I finally am, gazing at Kool-Aid Lake nestled in the basin below. Except I can't see it. The lake is still buried under snow.

After years of dreaming about Kool-Aid Lake and gaining the skills to finally reach it, I feel discouraged as we continue along the traverse. The days that follow test every ounce of our endurance and resilience. A near miss with rock-fall shakes our confidence. A misstep on a slope nearly sends me sliding before I catch myself with my axe. We get soaked in at Yang-Yang Lakes, our progress slowed by fog and outdated GPS gear. We struggle up glaciers and navigate with what feels, at times, like a tiny bit of luck. But we keep moving, inch by inch, step by step, until we round the last bend in the trail.

I had hoped that seeing Kool-Aid Lake would offer clues to the origin of its name. Does it look like a Kool-Aid pitcher? Does alpenglow give it a fruit-punch hue? Resembling more of a snowy thumbprint on the landscape, the lake - and its answers - remain a mystery.

## A chance encounter

It's been fourteen years since that trip, and the call of Kool-Aid Lake lingers. "One of these days," I often joke, "I'm actually going to see Kool-Aid Lake."



Clockwise from top left: Anastasia resting on a rock near the Dana Glacier. Photo by Brenda Gordon. Anastasia and Jack at the retirement center. Photo courtesy of Anastasia Allison. Gunsight Peak and Dome Peak from White Rock Lakes on the Ptarmigan Traverse. Photo by Anastasia Allison.

And then, I begin feeling another call: to serve my community by volunteering to play violin at a local retirement center. On my first visit to a local facility, my husband Aaron and I bring our instruments, as well as a few videos of me and my friend Rose playing in our duo, The Musical Mountaineers. (For the past eight years, Rose and I have performed unannounced serenades for nobody at over 40 different locations in the Cascade Range).

After our first performance, a gentleman named Jack Hansen approaches me. "Have you ever been to Cascade Pass?" he asks. "Or Cache Col?"

I blink. Those are not the kinds of questions I expect to get in a retirement home.

"Yes," I say, one eyebrow raised at this curiously knowledgeable man, "I've done the Ptarmigan Traverse."

Jack's face lights up. "Back in the 40s... I can't remember exactly when, but I think it was 1949... we climbed Magic Mountain, near Cache Col," he says. "We walked down the other side and there was this little lake there – this unnamed, nothing of a lake. We sat at the lake that day and drank Kool-Aid for lunch, and then I took a piece of paper, attached it to a small stick, and wrote 'Kool Aid Lake.' I put the stick in the ground like a sign... and wouldn't you know, the name stuck."

My heart starts to pound. "You named Kool-Aid Lake?" I whisper.

Jack smiles. "I don't think anyone else knows. It wasn't a big deal at the time. We were just having lunch."

I can hardly breathe. The staff at the assisted living center look curiously at me, not quite understanding my excitement. After years of wondering, I've solved the mystery of Kool-Aid Lake, in the most unexpected place I could have imagined, without even trying.

### The legacies we leave

I continue to visit the retirement center each month to play music and swap mountaineering stories with Jack. Every time Jack describes an adventure, his eyes glint with the eternal youthfulness of a summit climb.

One day in September of 2025, while Aaron and I are performing for a large group at the retirement center, I decide to regale the audience with a story about how we filmed a summit serenade atop Mt. Pugh. As I excitedly describe the difficulty of hauling a violin and piano over 5,000 vertical feet, I'm met with kind but blank eyes. The story falls flat. The one person who would understand the accomplishment of such a feat isn't in the crowd.



Above: The campsite at Yang-Yang Lakes, Ptarmigan Traverse. Photo by Anastasia Allison. Left: Anastasia (left) and climbing partner Brenda (right) ready to leave the Cascade Pass Trailhead with their heavy packs. Photo by Dave Gordon.



We play for nearly an hour. In between songs, an employee somberly approaches me to say that Jack isn't doing well. "Maybe you can bring your violin up to his room to play a few songs when you're done here?" they suggest. I nod eagerly.

When our set is done, we ascend a single story to Jack's apartment. He is laying in his bed, shirtless and frail, with a huge smile on his face. "Well, what a surprise!" he exclaims loudly, his eyes beaming.

I begin playing for him. Tears stream down my face as I perform "The Ashokan Farewell" - a song that somehow always feels like both a hello and a goodbye. When I'm done, I look at him with a sly grin and say, "Do you know why I had to come up here? I just told the entire group downstairs about climbing Mt. Pugh with a violin and piano, and nobody cared. I thought to myself, *Jack will care!*"

He gives a hard, booming laugh that defies the fragile state of his physical body. "Your story is getting published in *Mountaineer* magazine," I tell him proudly. "Everybody is going to know you were the one who named Kool-Aid Lake."

His eyes glisten as he looks up at me. "You know what?" he says. "I've remembered something else about that day, too... It happened on a trip with the Everett Mountaineers."



Descending to snow-covered Kool-Aid Lake. Photo by Brenda Gordon.

I smile at the coincidence. A nurse pops in to check on Jack, and I take it as our cue to let him rest. Before I leave, Jack and I share one last look at each other - the kind people share when they know they won't ever see each other again in this lifetime. I lean over and hug him hard.

The next morning at sunrise, I carry my violin to the top of a hill near my house and record a song for Jack. I email him the recording and receive a blank email response a few hours later, but when I check the video link, it shows one view.

A few days later, Jack passes away.

### Living the questions now

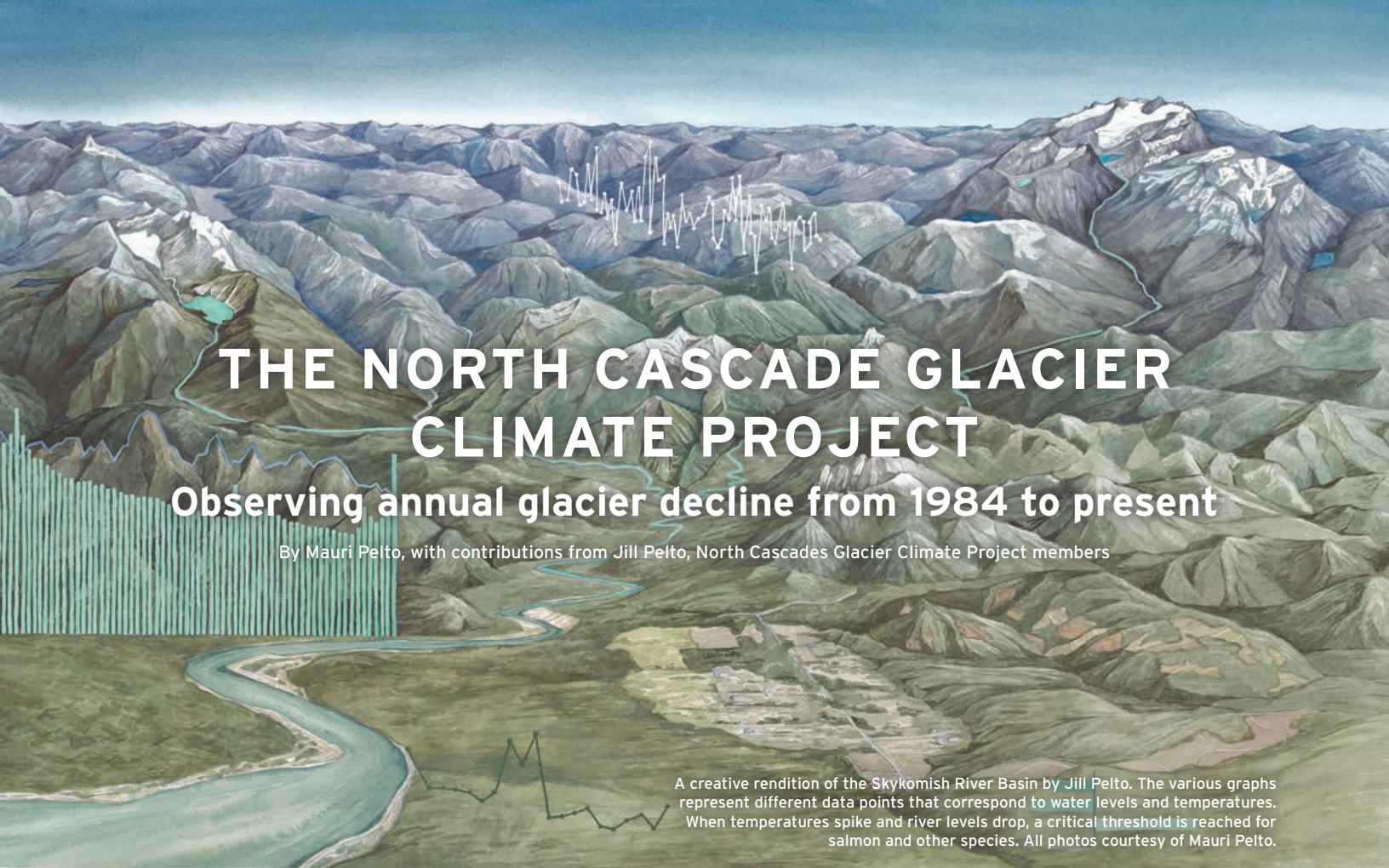
Thinking of my connection to Kool-Aid Lake and my path to Jack, I can't help but be reminded of the Rainer Maria Rilke quote: "Be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart and try to love the questions themselves, like locked rooms and like books that are now written in a very foreign tongue. Do not now seek the answers, which cannot be given you because you would not be able to live them. And the point is, to live everything. Live the questions now. Perhaps you will then gradually, without noticing it, live along some distant day into the answer."

I've still never seen Kool-Aid Lake in person. Many years ago,

I thought I was supposed to return and see the lake unfrozen, but now I understand that was never the point. The whisper of Kool-Aid Lake wasn't calling me back to the trail, it was asking me to listen... and to tell the story - Jack's story - to anybody else who has the same glimmer in their eyes when they talk about their time in the mountains.

Now, when others arrive at that small, snowmelt basin on their first night of the Ptarmigan Traverse, they might also wonder at the history of the lake and discover that its name holds the memory of a kind man who once sat there with his friends and drank Kool-Aid for lunch. Maybe knowing that story will make them feel a little less alone, and a little more connected to the mysterious ways our landscapes bring us together.

*Author note: While writing this story, I became curious about the first time "Kool-Aid Lake" was mentioned on a topographic map. Initially, the lake's name was probably passed down from climber to climber, until it just became what people called the lake long after the name's origin had been lost. The USGS online historical database shows that the lake was either not visible and/or not named on maps prior to 1963. From my research, the USGS Topo Map of the area printed in 1963 is the first time "Kool-Aid Lake" is mentioned. ▲▲*



# THE NORTH CASCADE GLACIER CLIMATE PROJECT

## Observing annual glacier decline from 1984 to present

By Mauri Peltó, with contributions from Jill Peltó, North Cascades Glacier Climate Project members

A creative rendition of the Skykomish River Basin by Jill Peltó. The various graphs represent different data points that correspond to water levels and temperatures. When temperatures spike and river levels drop, a critical threshold is reached for salmon and other species. All photos courtesy of Mauri Peltó.

**G**laciers are an integral component of our landscapes. They regulate the climate; provide freshwater that sustains ecosystems, aquatic, and human life; and shape the pristine terrain that inspires our outdoor adventures.

The Mountaineers has long been interested in our region's glaciers. Since 1916, various editions of *The Mountaineer Annuals* include field studies that discuss members' detailed observations of Pacific Northwest glaciers and note changes in size and behavior. Since the organization's founding, glaciers have been central to our recreational ethos, and they are shrinking at an unsustainable pace.

### Researching glacier loss

To better understand the rate of glacier loss and its impact on our region's watersheds, I founded the North Cascade Glacier Climate Project (NCGCP) and led our first field season in 1984. The project's goal was ambitious: to document the response of glaciers to climate change across the North Cascade Range for 50 years.

When deciding what glaciers to monitor, I reached out to Mountaineers members for insight and landed on 12 glaciers: Columbia, Daniels, Easton, Foss, Ice Worm, Lewis, Lower Curtis, Lynch, Rainbow, Sholes, Spider, and Yawning. (While the NCGCP focuses on yearly detailed observations of 12 glaciers, we periodically observe an additional 35 glaciers, and occasionally observe more than 100 others). Of those glaciers, 11 are in Wilderness Areas. Hence, in true Mountaineers fashion, the project's research was designed

around backpacking accessibility and non-mechanized equipment. All the glaciers we monitor are reached by foot, and all equipment is hauled by pack.

More than two decades into the project, it became clear that our findings could not be communicated by data alone. With the help of my son and daughter who joined the project in 2005 and 2009, we evolved into a glacier science and art expedition team. Over the years, we've worked with a variety of artists and journalists to communicate our research, including painters, fiber artists, illustrators, writers, printmakers, photographers, and even a cake artist. The synergy of our art and science enables us to reach broader audiences and inspires the community to connect both intellectually and emotionally to glacier change.

In 2026, we completed our 42nd year of observation. As last year was the United Nations International Year of Glaciers' Preservation, I felt it an important time to update *The Mountaineers* on what the NCGCP has observed.

### Trends in glacial response to climate change

To monitor glacial change, we focus primarily on observing changes in mass balance. Mass balance is the difference between "accumulation" (the amount of snow and ice added to the glacier each year) and "ablation" (the amount of snow and ice lost on the glacier each year). When ablation consistently exceeds accumulation, the glacier shrinks.

Through our research, we discovered that glaciers respond to climate at different speeds depending on the turnover rate of



their mass balance (or, how quickly the glaciers accumulate and ablate ice). This explains why, during a given time range, some glaciers might grow while others shrink or remain consistent in size.

For example, North Cascade glaciers (like Coleman Glacier on Mt. Baker) with a high mass balance turnover rate - which are the quickest to respond to climate change - retreated steadily since 1890, then started advancing during the cool, wet period between the 1950s-1970s, and continued to retreat steadily since 1976. Glaciers with a low mass balance turnover rate (like Colonial Glacier on Colonial Peak) - which are the slowest to respond to climate change - have been experiencing continuous retreat since 1890. Thus, the difference in glacier behavior during the 1950s-1970s was due to high mass turnover glaciers responding quickly to the period of cool, wet weather, whereas low mass turnover glaciers did not respond fast enough before the climate warmed again.

Our observations revealed that every glacier observed between 1984 and 2005 had experienced cumulative mass balance loss, with the impact being most pronounced on small and thin glaciers that had a low mass balance turnover rate. By 2005, several glaciers the NCGCP had been monitoring - such as the Lewis, Lyall, Milk Lake, and Spider Glaciers - were extinct.

In our research, we also observe the impact of glacial loss on the local watershed. Glaciers play an important role for rivers by buffering low flow periods and regulating stream

temperatures during late summer. Without glaciers, the late-summer water supply diminishes and stream temperatures rise, which can reduce water quality and create unsuitable habitat for aquatic life.

Here are a few NCGCP case studies of glacial loss and subsequent watershed impacts observed in the North Cascades.

### Skykomish Valley

Between 1984 and 1986, the NCGCP identified nine glaciers in the Skykomish River basin that had active crevassing (which is an indication of thick and healthy ice accumulation) and sufficient area to be classified as a glacier. But between 2005 to 2023, six of these glaciers disappeared.

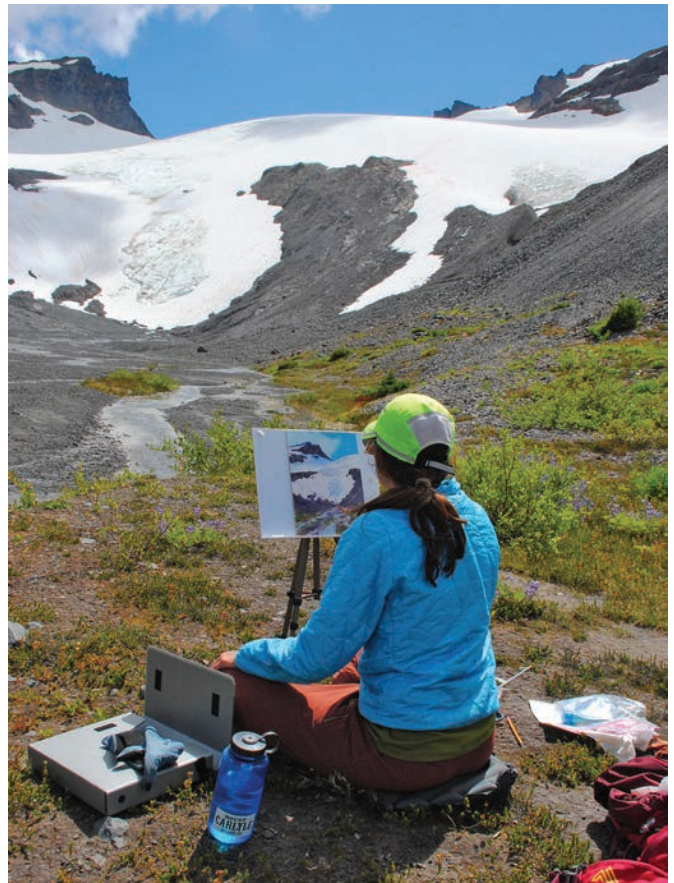
Two of the three glaciers that remain - the Lynch and Columbia Glaciers - now comprise 88% of the basin's glaciated area. From 1984 to 2013, the mean annual mass balance on the Lynch and Columbia Glaciers was -0.38 meters per year (meaning, on average, they lost 0.38 meters per year). From 2014 to 2025, the mean annual mass balance decreased to -1.55 meters per year. The basin's third glacier, Foss Glacier, has lost 85% of its area since 1958 and has almost disappeared.

The basin is on a trajectory to lose all its remaining glaciers in the next two to three decades.

In the Skykomish River, ongoing glacier loss has resulted in lower late-summer streamflow and warmer stream temperatures. Since 1986, there have been 15 separate years



Above: Fiber artists Emma Mary Murray (left) and Katie Hovind (right) creatively documenting glacial recession on the lower Curtis Glacier. Right: Margaret Kingston painting the state of Sholes Glacier on Mount Baker.



when streamflow in the Skykomish River was significantly low (below 14 cubic meters per second) for 10 consecutive days, and since 2008, the river has repeatedly exceeded its maximum temperature threshold of 16°C (meaning that, under the Clean Water Act, the river violated water quality standards and was deemed “impaired”).

The Skykomish River is a tributary of the Snohomish River, where efforts are being made by the Stillaguamish Tribe to improve conditions for salmon. These important efforts may be significantly offset by continued glacier loss.

## Mount Baker

The NCGCP annually measures three glaciers on Mount Baker (Easton, Rainbow, and Sholes), and periodically measures five others (Deming, Boulder, Coleman, Mazama, and Squak). In 1984, several of these glaciers were advancing, but by 1990, all had begun to retreat. By 2025, the average retreat of the eight glaciers was 710 meters. Evidence of glacier thinning can be observed from the terminus of these glaciers to their upper reaches.

From 1984 to 2025, the area of Mount Baker glaciers declined by 20-25% and experienced 24-27 meters of glacier thinning. In turn, glacier velocity (or, the rate at which these glaciers move, indicating the decline in mass balance) has declined, as has crevassing. These changes impact climbing routes as they expose poor rock and talus where the route was once snow and ice. While fewer crevasses allow for a shorter climbing route, the crevasses open earlier in most summers. In addition, some icefall areas are becoming increasingly unstable, leading to more serac fall.

In 2025, several new bedrock areas emerged beneath Baker’s Deming and Easton Glaciers from 8,500 to 9,000 feet. Two new bedrock areas also emerged in the main Easton Glacier icefall from 6,800 to 7,200 feet.

For a decade, we’ve worked in partnership with the Nooksack Tribe to monitor the impact of glacial recession on Mt. Baker’s

Nooksack River Basin. Where glaciers remain in the North Fork of the basin, streamflow rises during heat waves and stream temperatures remain below 12°C. However, in the unglaciated South Fork, streamflow significantly declines during heat waves and stream temperatures rise to above 18°C.

## Yakima Basin

In 1984, the NCGCP began observing the Yakima Basin’s three largest glaciers: Chimney Rock, Daniels, and Ice Worm Glaciers. We continued annual observations of Ice Worm Glacier until its extinction in 2024. Since 1984, Daniels Glacier has lost 70% of its area and is no longer retaining significant snowpack at the end of each summer. For the past five years, Daniels Glacier has lost 5% of its area each year.

This rapidly dwindling group of glaciers in the Yakima Basin melt into the Cle Elum River, which feeds the Cle Elum Reservoir. The reservoir is the largest in the Yakima River Basin, providing irrigation to 180,000 hectares of agricultural land. Glacier loss has markedly reduced runoff and increased water temperatures in the Cle Elum Reservoir in the late summers. By late August 2025, the Cle Elum Reservoir had dropped to 7% full, which curtailed water allocation to the downstream Yakima Basin agriculture (which includes 75% of the nation’s hop production).

## Methow Valley

In 1971, The USGS North Cascade Glacier Inventory identified 15 perennial snow or glacier areas in the Methow Valley. In 2005, the NCGCP identified only nine.

When we began periodic field monitoring of Methow Valley



glaciers in 1984, we observed that Silver Star Mountain had three glaciers. By 2013, the western Silver Star glacier still showed signs of active crevassing and retained snow cover through the summer; however, what remained of the middle Silver Star glacier was fragmented stagnant ice, indicating it might no longer have been a glacier. By 2025, the western Silver Star glacier had retreated 80 more meters. The crevassing had noticeably reduced, and the top of the glacier showed several thin areas that would eventually detach. The glacier still had crevassed areas suggesting ice that was at least 30 meters thick, indicating it may survive another decade.

During late summer periods, we've witnessed a sharp reduction in streamflow in the Methow Valley over the years. Between 1990-2004 and 2015-2025, water flow dropped significantly during late summer, and since 2015, the amount of water that glaciers introduce to the watershed during late summer has fallen by roughly 40%. (Reintroducing beavers can buffer late summer streamflow to an extent, something The Methow Beaver Project currently supports.)

## How you can help

Across the North Cascade Range, we've witnessed a 35-50% loss of ice in the past decade, translating to a rate of 1.5 meters of ice thickness lost per year. For many of the relatively small alpine glaciers in the North Cascades, this rate of loss has resulted in extinction.

In addition to environmental consequences, glacier loss significantly impacts our recreational experiences by altering climbing routes, increasing rockfall risk in newly deglaciated areas, and creating unstable ice caves. No longer can you



Left: Observing annual snowpack thickness on Rainbow Glacier in August 2024 via color variation in crevasse layers. The whiter layer is from the 2024 winter, and the browner layer beneath was deposited during the 2023 winter. Above: Jill, Mauri, and Ben Pelto on the Rainbow-Mazama Glacier Saddle using a snow probe to safely measure snow depth. Collectively, the family has spent 75 field seasons observing North Cascade glaciers.

stand atop a Cascade peak in late summer and look over a range of glacier-clad summits.

At the current rate of loss, it's uncertain whether 50 years from now any glaciers will remain. The possibility depends on the choices we make and the evolution of our energy production and consumption.

You can help protect our glaciers by:

**Reducing energy consumption.** This means adjustments in direct and indirect energy usage. Invest in energy-efficient appliances and opt for low-carbon transportation methods. Additionally, consider buying products that require less energy to produce. For example, you can adopt a low-footprint diet that minimizes meats and highly processed foods, and utilize more reusable products. For more information on how to reduce your carbon footprint, visit [www.mountaineers.org/CFRC](http://www.mountaineers.org/CFRC).

**Contributing to the research.** Share your observations with the North Cascade Glacier Climate Project by emailing [mspelto@nichols.edu](mailto:mspelto@nichols.edu) or tagging us on Instagram (@mspelto and @jillpelto).

**Participating in local climate advocacy.** Work proactively with organizations that amplify your voice in asking lawmakers to support policies that protect our cherished landscapes, and educate your community about the impact of sustainable lifestyle choices on our glaciers. ▲▲

*The Mountaineers is committed to doing our part to respond to the climate crisis by advocating for public lands protections and investments in climate action, reducing our organizational carbon footprint, and educating the outdoor community by publishing books and other content that promote climate solutions, sustainability, and stewardship. For more information, visit: [www.mountaineers.org/conservation](http://www.mountaineers.org/conservation).*

# The Glacier Gals

Building Community One Unserious Summit at a Time

By Tatiana Van Campenhout, 4-year member and climbing instructor



The Glacier Gals at the summit of Glacier Peak, July 2024. From left to right: Tatiana Van Campenhout, Rose Gear, Laura Murahashi, Renee Stern, and Kate Goldenring. All photos by Tatiana Van Campenhout.



Snow camping at Artist Point to celebrate New Year's Eve, December 2025.



Above right: Above the clouds on the summit of Mt. Olympus, July 2024.

**A**round 3am on the Emmons Glacier, the hour when a headlamp turns the world into a tunnel, my brain shrank to a single job: one foot in front of the other. We were traversing firm snow above a no-fall zone when the rope lead's voice came through the radio, calm and clear.

"Tats," Kate said, "I know you're uncomfortable with exposure. How does this exposure feel? Do you want us to place protection?"

We had discussed exposure the previous night in our pre-climb briefing – what it feels like for each of us and what support might look like if one of us started to feel unsafe. Still, hearing Kate name my fear in real time made me feel seen in a way I didn't expect.

"I'm okay," I said into the radio. And I was. But the check-in mattered more than the answer because it displayed a kind of care that makes a hard place feel safer.

## Finding my Mountaineers family on Mt. Olympus

The women I climbed Rainier with all joined The Mountaineers at different times and in different ways. Gradually, we found our way to each other through shared connections. The first time our group really snapped into place was when one Mountaineers member, Renee, pitched the idea of a women's climb of Mt. Olympus in 2024.

Olympus is one of those big objectives that lives on your list for a long time – long, remote, not something you do casually. It's the kind of climb you only do with a team you trust.

Six women said yes, and we instantly bonded over our shared goals: a solid plan, plenty of snacks, and zero unnecessary chaos.

In the months leading up to Olympus, I got sick and wasn't bouncing back the way I had hoped. My training took a hit. I did the math: *five days... big mileage... high elevation... heavy pack...* I worried I'd be the weak link and was fearful I'd get out there only to realize I didn't belong.

The night before our first push, I barely slept. My brain spiraled over the impact of antibiotics on my performance, the consequences of my undertraining, and the quiet fear that I'd be the slowest of the group. Eventually, I gave up on forcing rest and put on a guided meditation. The mantra was simple: you are capable.

The next morning, I told the group how I felt – tired, nervous, unconfident in my fitness – but instead of brushing me off, they met me exactly where I was. "You are capable," they said, like it was a fact, not a pep talk.

And then Olympus gave me a moment to test that fact. Near the summit there is a rock climb. I'm not a rock climber, and my confidence wobbled as we approached. I stood at the rock base trying to focus when one teammate, Klare, asked, "Are you ready?"

I answered honestly. "No."

Without flinching, she asked, "What are you?" and before I even had a chance to think, I said it: "Capable."

That phrase – you are capable – started as something I needed to hear. But on Olympus, it turned into something we







gave each other. Not as pressure. Not as a performance. As a reminder: you're allowed to be scared and still do the thing. You're allowed to be tired and still belong. You don't have to be the strongest person in the group to be a meaningful part of it.

### Climbing volcanos, bit by bit

A few weeks later, the same group planned another summit: Glacier Peak. This time, I felt more at ease – not because the mountain was easier, but because I trusted the people I was with. I was starting to understand that confidence doesn't always come from feeling stronger; sometimes it comes from knowing your team has your back.

Before the climb, we met to talk through a go/no-go framework and to align on pacing, plan for hourly self-care breaks, and set expectations for camp timing. We made it a point to discuss risk tolerance *before* the trip to avoid having those conversations in the worst possible places when we're already cold, tired, and committed.

Quickly, our group planning evolved from simple logistics to a place where concerns could be voiced early, and support showed up fast. We swapped articles about nutrition, recovery, and the parts of the outdoor experience that can feel invisible in male-dominated spaces. Often, there's an unspoken pressure to keep up or look as steady and unbothered as the strongest climber in the group. This can inevitably lead to downplaying



Clockwise from top left: A belated Halloween hike at Snow Lake, November 2024. Ascending the Suiattle Glacier on Glacier Peak, July 2024. Our campsite at White Pass, Glacier Peak, July 2024.

personal needs like skipping the break, hiding the fear, ignoring the cold, or pushing through being under-fueled. Instead, we built opposite habits: speak up early, say what you need, normalize it, make it safe. This kind of group dynamic created a sense of safety that wasn't just emotional – it was practical.

People climb Glacier in a day. In two days. In three. We looked at the options and collectively chose the most unserious approach possible: four days. Not because we couldn't go faster, but because we didn't want to turn the mountain into a sufferfest for no reason. We wanted time to move well, recover, and actually enjoy where we were – time to sit in wildflower meadows and eat snacks like it was our job.

Somewhere between camp chores and snack breaks, we developed an internal organizational structure – very official, very serious, and completely necessary for the success of the expedition. We assigned ourselves job titles based on our strengths, our personalities, and our willingness to commit to a bit.

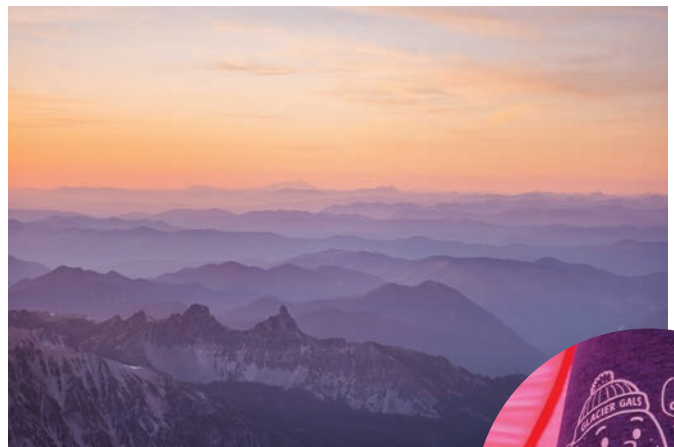
As the photographer, I became the Director of Expedition Management & Social Media Manager. Kate took on the Head of Glacier Safety Operations & Navigation. Laura was promoted to Senior Director of Emotional Safety & Hydration Manager. Renee served as Director of Medical Operations & Comic Relief. And Rose stepped in as Executive Director of Rope Management & Trail Stability Inspector. These roles were self-appointed, non-negotiable, and came with zero pay and unlimited responsibility.

After a successful summit of Glacier Peak, The Glacier Gals were born.

Feeling confident in our group dynamics, we decided to test our talents on Rainier. In preparation for the climb, and as an ode to our Olympus mantra, I tried to use AI to generate a logo that said, "You are capable." AI produced dozens of versions,



Clockwise from top left: Ascending the Emmons Glacier on Rainier, July 2025. The Glacier Gals at the summit of Rainier, (from left to right: Chelsea Danielle, Klare Frank, Tatiana Van Campenhout, Jess Umayam, Rose Gear, and Kate Goldenring). Sunset from Camp Sherman on Rainier. Our mascot, the Capapable Potato.



none of which spelled capable correctly. Instead, we got: “You are capabable,” “You are capaaapable,” “You are capapable,” and a few versions that looked like they’d been typed by someone wearing mittens.

Just like that, our mantra was upgraded: You are capable. We made sun hoodies with our slogan, accompanied by our new mascot, the Capapable Potato. (A potato, because Jess is famous for bringing boiled potatoes on climbs – one of the most chaotic and effective carb strategies I’ve ever witnessed.)

The details of our mascot were absurd, which was exactly the point. Under all the systems and seriousness, the Glacier Gals are built on a simple Mountaineers ethic: we work hard, we take safety seriously, and we don’t take ourselves too seriously.

We did, in fact, summit Rainier – and we did it the Glacier Gals way: slow, steady, intentional, with everyone showing up for the team. Back at basecamp, we sealed our successful summit with a mandatory, deeply unserious photo shoot.

### Support that follows you home

Almost without noticing, our group expanded beyond the mountains. Last September, I got injured and had to take a break from outdoor activities. Suddenly my weekends were wide open, and instead of feeling rested, I felt lost. When I decided to invite the Glacier Gals over for dinner, I realized they weren’t just the kind of community I adventure with, but the kind that holds me even when I can’t show up as my most adventurous self.

It would be easy to look at the Glacier Gals now and assume this kind of community just happened, but it doesn’t. We built this community the same way you build anything solid

in the mountains: slowly, intentionally, and with repetition. We showed up for the unglamorous parts. We learned each other’s pacing and strengths. We practiced speaking up early. We made decisions that prioritized the team over the summit.

And over time, things shifted. Strangers in Mountaineers courses became partners. Partners became friends. Friends became the kind of people you can count on – on a rope team at 3am, and at a dinner table when life feels messy and you don’t know what to do with your suddenly empty weekends.

The mountains are what brought us together, but the reason we stayed together was never just about climbing. We stayed because we built a space where ambition and safety could coexist, where competence didn’t require bravado, and where asking for what you need didn’t make you difficult, it made you trustworthy.

If there’s one thing I’ve learned from The Mountaineers, it’s that you can build your own community, but you have to be willing to do it on purpose – to invite, to include, to communicate, and most importantly, to keep showing up. Because the best part of finding your community isn’t the summit photo... it’s the voice on the radio in the dark reminding you that you’re not alone, and that *you are capable*. ▲▲

# THE ISOLATION TRAVERSE

## Leaning Into the Lessons of the Alpine

By Jackson Laing



**E**quipped with 60 pounds of gear and food, my friend Jonathan and I are skinning toward the Tepeh Towers Col when I hear a *whumpf* beneath my skis. The sound indicates the collapse of weak snow layers buried within the snowpack. We're traveling under the northeast slope of Eldorado Peak which, at roughly 40 degrees, makes for a classic ski line. It also makes for a deadly avalanche. I hold my breath and wait, but nothing slides.

Relieved of imminent avalanche threat, we continue on and set up camp at the col (one of the more epic camp spots I've had the privilege of sleeping at). Perched above the McAllister Glacier, we scope our line for the next day. The weather forecast predicts mixed rain and snow, sustained 20-miles-per-hour winds, and low visibility for the next two and a half days. In our tent, I watch the neon ember sunset cool to a deep ocean blue as stars begin to twinkle above the granite spires. I can't help but wonder who the grand show is all for. My chest hums with a mix of fear and excitement for what's to come.

Jonathan and I are attempting a multi-day ski tour of the Isolation Traverse in the North Cascades. Roughly 28 miles long with 14,000 feet of gain through remote terrain, the Isolation Traverse is, as the name implies, quite isolated. While the two of us are proficient outdoor recreationists, we've never done a multi-day ski trip and feel this journey will be a good test of our skills.

### The way of water and ice

We awake the next morning to freezing temperatures and clear skies. The weather forecast is still grim, but we try our luck and begin picking our way across the southwest portion of the McAllister Glacier.

I always feel inspired being at the top of a glacier, the origin point of water. My skis rest on snow that will eventually melt into McAllister Creek and flow into the human-made Diablo Lake, which generates electricity for Seattle. Below the dam, the waters of Diablo Lake feed the Skagit River, home to five different species of salmon who make their way downstream to sustain life throughout the Pacific Northwest. From alpine to sea, these waters are the arteries of the landscape. They replenish the streams that feed ocean life. They power my home and my computer on which I write my alpine memories. These glaciers are life-giving, and they deserve our respect and care.

This year was a particularly poor snow year in Washington. Less snowfall means less glacial regeneration, less snowmelt, less hydroelectric power, and less drinking water, among myriad other impacts such as extended wildfire season. If more people could feel what it's like to stand beside the gentle power of a glacier, perhaps they would lend an empathetic ear to the voices asking us to consider the consequences of our actions on our cherished wild places.



Taking in the Tepeh Towers. Our campsite at the col is the low spot left of the towers. All photos by Jackson Laing unless otherwise noted.



Traversing under Backbone Ridge from the rappel notch. Photo by Jonathan Blanchard.

We continue traversing northwest, under the ridge line, and pass between waves of snow-blanketed crevasses. Cornices the size of city buses and small houses loom above like buzzards in the desert, an overhead hazard we were not expecting on a spring traverse.

At 10:30am, we reach the base of a notch in the ridge line. With skis now strapped to our packs, we climb up the 60-degree slope. The snow has softened under the morning sun and collapses with every step. Following Jonathan's lead, we traverse in Z shapes (similar to kick turns up a slope) to get up to the notch.

As we ascend, we hit shade where the snow is still hard and thin. Using a mix of dry tooling and ice climbing techniques, we hook our axes on exposed rock and pick into ice while delicately placing the toes of our ski boots on the five millimeters of thin snow covering the rock for purchase. After an hour and a half, we arrive at the top of the notch and set up our rappel down the other side. Thirteen meters later, we're on the west side of the ridge. There's no going back now, no matter the weather.

Jonathan begins leading us under the west side of Backbone Ridge when he hears a snow layer collapse under his feet. Almost immediately, a D1.5 wet slab avalanche falls above. The slide breaks between rocks and is luckily too small and slow moving to cause any harm. As we ascend, Jonathan

continues hearing distinct layers collapse. He describes the noise, only heard by the person breaking trail, as a hollow gunshot. Spooked, we stick to treed terrain when possible and ascend quickly. Fear tempts me to freeze up, but I trust Jonathan's judgment and follow him as we make it off the slope.

We transition and descend a 1,600-foot, north-facing chute, then begin a steep 1,000-foot climb out of the drainage basin and eventually reach a crest overlooking Wilcox Lakes. It's 8pm, and our intended camp lies behind another mountain. We resolve to camp instead at a flat east of the lake.

### Applied mindfulness

The following morning, wolverine tracks mark the snow outside our tent toward McAllister Creek. I am eager to get the mountain before us, behind us... but the tracks remind me that what I consider my place of play is the wolverine's home. The wolverine lives this traverse day in and day out, knowing intimately every mountain and every creek, traveling between them seemingly without fuss. As a local mountain guide, I look to the wolverine as an example of what it means to be in this environment, to travel with strength, grace, and resilience.

In an ascending traverse, we make our way up the next mountain. Windswept slopes require ski crampons where easterly winds blast, threatening to knock us over. A fall would



Whether contemplating our next move or the intricacies of life, there was always ample room to think.

be tough to arrest on this steep and icy, rock-littered snow slope. I attempt to replace my fear with mindfulness. While day-to-day mindfulness can be a way to gain inner peace and happiness, mindfulness can take on the feeling of survival when nearing physical and mental limits in the mountains: I am mindful because I have to be. I am mindful because that is what is demanded of me. I am mindful because I owe it to my friends and family to make it back home safe.

Mindfully, we continue north toward Snowfield Peak, and skin against the barrage of easterly winds. The clouds rest thousands of feet high, providing great visibility of the massive avalanche runout zone we're traversing (1,000 feet of runout above and below). To be at the mercy of the mountains is a relationship of trust and understanding: trusting that my partner and I have assessed the situation properly and understanding that based on our objective observations, the mountains are granting us passage. While the slopes remain calm, we gratefully travel under their watchful eye.

Soon, the clouds begin knocking on our door with light snow. We reach the Neve Glacier, where the clouds have now dropped in around us. With obscured visibility, we pick our way down the Neve Glacier. Crevasses flank us on either side, and the low slope of the glacier makes the downhill skiing slow moving and confusing. With full whiteout conditions, it's impossible to discern whether we're moving or standing still. Many times, I don't realize I'm stalled, and fall over.

As we continue, the visibility improves. We are tired and

apprehensive about an impending storm, but after a brief mountain-mindfulness-psych-improvement break, we are ready to tackle the next climb. After all, we've put ourselves in this situation - we don't get to be upset about it.

We make quick work of the climb and ski down the slopes east of Paul Bunyan's Stump, then traverse north under the eastern flank of Pinnacle Peak toward Pyramid Peak. I foolishly lower my guard, thinking the hardest part is behind us. However, the terrain ahead requires crossing through a 60-foot-wide avalanche debris path and then up and over another ridge.

Awkwardly, we skin through snow chunks (some of which are six feet tall) lining the debris path that rests below a 1,000-foot-long bowl. The only complement to our thoughts is the echo of snow blocks still shifting above. We advance north toward what seems to be the most direct route. Snow slides beneath our feet as we struggle to stay upright. The morning's snow had fallen as rain at this lower elevation, making the conditions wet and loose and impairing the adhesion of our skins. Every other step sets off a small, wet loose slide, continuously sweeping us off our feet. Our planned route takes us high above a cliff face, and the conditions make us anxious about the possibility of getting swept over and down the cliff. We backtrack a few hundred feet and opt for a different route, then skin northeast under the cliff face and across the slope toward a north leading gully, our last hope for an exit up and out of this basin. The going is slow.



Rocky terrain forced us to carry our skis while subject to high winds.



Sixty pounds of gear and food is the cost of doing business.

Every few steps, our skins slide off our skis. Doubt, anxiety, and dread begin to creep in.

### What we bring home with us

Struggling to get out of the final basin, Jonathan and I are suddenly allured by the sight of Highway 20 far below. There's a certain undeniable feeling when you're in the alpine and catch sight of civilization lazily lingering below. Some days your ego sings, "I'm up here while everyone else wouldn't dare," while other days it wallows, "What have I gotten myself into this time?" I find the happy place to be somewhere in the middle.

As we pause to weigh our options, six birds land on a nearby rock outcrop. I feel an unexpected wave of calm and confidence wash over me. Seeing other life forms exist in this harsh environment tells me that we, too, can exist here, and get out of here.

Empowered by a renewed sense of positivity, we strap the skins to our skis with Voile straps - an absolute game changer - and make tight kick turns up the chute. Eventually kick turns become impractical on the steepening slope, but - thanks to the delay caused by our earlier faffing - the waning daylight is firming up the snow. The changing conditions allow us to take off our skis, strap them to our packs, and boot our way up the remainder of the chute. The universe is looking after us. We are exactly where we need to be, when we need to be.

The traverse exit proceeds to be a seemingly endless

onslaught of steep, tight trees we walk, and flat areas we skin. The snow gradually diminishes enough that walking becomes more of a controlled fall through the melting snow. I begin to question whether there was ever a trail in the first place when Jonathan exclaims, "It's the trail!" We descend over tree roots and rocks, ever vigilant with the veggie belay. When the time comes to switch to trail runners, I can hardly remember what it feels like to wear anything but ski boots, or to have full mobility of my ankles. We descend for a couple more hours, then pop out of the woods and onto Highway 20.

Jonathan and I agree this traverse was the hardest mountain adventure we've ever experienced. But like most hard things, it taught me a lot. Amid instances of objective danger, I learned what it's like to feel out of control, then turn to the mountains and my skills for reassurance.

Returning home, I find it difficult to settle back into my everyday comforts. Everything feels more simple here; my perceived problems more irrelevant. Maybe the reason it's difficult to return is because a piece of me is still in the alpine, navigating its hazards and gazing at its grandeur. Miles away from those glaciers and streams, I can still hear their gentle voices: a constant reminder of their power, and our responsibility to protect them. ▲▲

*The Mountaineers encourages everyone who recreates in or near avalanche terrain to take an avalanche safety course. Learn more at [www.mountaineers.org/courses/avalanchesafety](http://www.mountaineers.org/courses/avalanchesafety).*

# Living a Life of Adventure With Purpose

## A Q&A With Erik Weihenmayer

By Rose Steller Burke, Associate Director of Events & Partnerships



Erik at the summit of Mt. Cook, New Zealand. Photo by Eric Alexander.

In 2001, Erik Weihenmayer stood on the summit of Mount Everest and became the first blind person to reach the top of the world. Since then, he has adventured around the globe completing the Seven Summits, kayaking the Grand Canyon, and taking on astonishing challenges that rival blind or sighted adventurers in ice climbing, rock climbing, backcountry skiing, and more.

At our annual Gala on April 25, The Mountaineers will honor Erik with the *2026 Adventure with Purpose Award*, our organization's highest honor. We're delighted to celebrate Erik's exceptional outdoor leadership and his work inspiring people from all walks of life to get outside and live without barriers. In anticipation of the event, we asked Erik a few questions about his experiences living a life of Adventure with Purpose outdoors.

### **Is there a particular outdoor landscape or place that you most enjoy?**

My new favorite place is the Cochamó Valley in northern Patagonia. As a blind person that can't take in the beauty of this place with my eyes, I have to experience its beauty through sound. I really love this particular spot when you hike above the treeline into these boulder fields surrounded by high granite amphitheaters - in this spot, I can hear the expanse of sound. Sound has a texture and I listen to the sound vibrations move out through space and bounce off objects and come back to me. That is how I experience the beauty of this amazing place.

### **You often speak about trust and interdependence. How has relying on others shaped the way you lead, and how do you think that mindset can strengthen outdoor communities more broadly?**

Well, climbing is one of those beautiful sports where you have

to instantly connect with people because you're putting your life in each other's hands. And that's a rare thing to come across in a relationship or in sports - the immediate sense of interconnectedness - and I love that.

Going blind, I feared I'd have to rely on people and be dependent - on the sidelines just waiting for scraps of attention. I hated that idea. Then I found climbing, which is all about trust - trust in yourself and trust in each other. It really empowered me to think about my role.

One of the people who first taught me how to climb in New Hampshire, Marc Chauvin, gave me great advice. He said, "Erik, I really appreciate that you trust me so much, because you're not checking my knots, and just blindly trusting that I'm doing everything right. But if you want to become a real climber and partner to someone, you have to watch out for them, too. You have to feel their knots. You have to make sure they're being safe. Climbing is not one-sided, it's an exchange. It's a relationship of trust."

So that's what I strive for (and not just in climbing): finding ways that my team can support me, and for me to bring my unique ways to support them. As a blind person climbing, I don't want to be like a football that my team drags up the mountain and spikes on top. I want to be part of the team - someone the team can put their trust in. I can't do everything, but I can set up tents, carry a little weight from my teammates' packs, support teammates if they're sick, or cheer them up by playing guitar.

### **The Mountaineers doesn't specialize in adaptive programming, but we strive to be a place where everyone feels welcome. From your perspective, what practices make the biggest difference in creating that sense of welcome?**

It's great that there are so many adaptive sports communities



Clockwise from top left: Erik at the summit of Everest. Photo by Luis Benitez. Erik leading Red Tower, Wyoming. Photo by Heinz Zak. Erik kayaking Westwater Canyon, Utah. Photo by Kelly Johnson.

and organizations out there. It's nothing but positive for everyone. When I started climbing, there weren't any adaptive programs. I just showed up and people said, "cool man, let's figure this out together." For organizations like The Mountaineers that don't specialize in adaptive programming, I think it's okay not to be adaptive sports experts but rather take the approach of seeing who shows up, welcoming them, and adapting together. Find ways to build trust and interconnectedness with everyone who shows up.

**How do you differentiate between productive fear that sharpens focus and unproductive fear that narrows options?**

Fear is a double-edged sword, right? Fear can keep you alive by quickly reminding you you're not ready for something. But fear can also be paralyzing and stop you from taking on something you can do. My solution to overcoming fear is preparation. For example, I wanted to kayak, and I wanted to kayak the Grand Canyon, which really scared me. Every time I'd get on the water, my whole being would turn into survival mode and traumatize me a little bit. My solution was to train for six years before attempting the Grand Canyon. Each time I got on the water, I'd push the envelope a little more by telling myself that kayaking was possible. Over time, I started to notice I wasn't panicking. I was breathing, I was calm, and I was in the moment feeling it. Finally, I could say I was doing

it. I was part of the experience and not separate from it. And then kayaking became this beautiful activity where I could get "in the zone." But to overcome that paralyzing fear takes time, preparation, trust among your team, and building systems and strategies and tools around yourself.

I look at fear as energy. You can't eliminate it, but you can replace it with a different energy. One tool I use is imagining that my fear lives in a box in my psyche. I try to find other boxes of energy to fill my brain with such as gratitude, awareness, observation, and then that fear box gets pushed out to the periphery and isn't the main focus.

**As our 2026 Adventure with Purpose Award honoree, what does the idea of adventuring with purpose mean to you?**

For me, Adventuring with Purpose is continuously lifting each other up so that anyone and everyone can adventure. I've been fortunate to have had lots of great adventures and am grateful that so many people took me under their wing and taught me and were excited and thrilled by the challenge of partnering with me - a blind guy - to do big challenges. Now that I have all these experiences, I'm interested in how we can bring new and unlikely kinds of people to contribute to beautiful sports like climbing or mountaineering. That is why I started No Barriers, to give people who have never stepped off the pavement a chance to get outside and experience the mountains. ▲▲

# The First Direct Ascent of the Wickersham Wall

By John Graham, 40-year member



Standing at the summit of Denali. All photos courtesy of John Graham.

*In the summer of 1963, seven members of the Harvard Mountaineering Club, myself included, made the first direct ascent of Denali's north face, the Wickersham Wall. Deemed "one of the greatest precipices known to man" by famed cartographer Bradford Washburn, the face is a fearsome, two-mile high feature taller, top to bottom, than anything on Everest. Experienced alpinists cautioned that the constant barrage of avalanches made any attempt at the Wall "suicidal."*

*The team consisted of Hank Abrons, Rick Millikan, Dave Roberts, Chris Goetze, Pete Carman, Don Jensen, and myself. We made much of our gear, including tents, snowshoes, and pickets (and bought the rest from hardware stores). The climb took 36 days.*

*Sixty-three years later, the "Harvard Route" has never been repeated. At least one person has died trying. What follows are excerpts from my climber's diary.*

## **June 18, Pack-in**

Our first view of Denali was a tremendous experience. "That's it! That's it!" we all shouted. I don't believe it. Can anything be that big?

## **June 19**

We are at the river at 1:20am. We begin fording.

8:30am – we hoist up our 75-pound packs and set out. Dave felt lonesome for classical music so Hank and Rick attempted some Mozart on their harmonicas.

## **June 20**

We get onto the Peters [Glacier] and pitch our tents on a snow patch. So far, our plastic rain flies are keeping the pelting rain out.

## **June 21, Base Camp**

Got to the site for our Base Camp at 5pm and set the tents solidly. We are right under the Wall now and can do a lot of visual route-finding.

## **June 22**

Avalanches heard steadily all through the night and day. The shock waves from some of them shook the tent. We will be damn lucky to make this climb in one piece. The Wall is shedding almost continually. It takes 45 seconds for an avalanche, breaking off ice cliffs at 14,000', to fall nearly two vertical miles.

## **June 23**

We get several hours of good observation of our route. Our buttress is the only part of the Wall not continually swept by the big avalanches. But we find to our concern that the buttress ends 1,500' above the Peters Glacier. Our first option is go up an easily climbable but exposed icefall that rises 1,200' from the glacier. On top of it is a bowl which catches the big avalanches. We must cross this bowl, then climb a steep rock rib to its left to reach the beginning of our route up the buttress. It will take perhaps 20 minutes a trip to cross the bowl and if any poor SOB is hit then with an avalanche, ain't heaven or hell can save him.



Above: Celebrating at Camp 4. We think we got it made! Right: John Graham at 7,500 feet assessing the two vertical miles of climbing ahead.

All through dinner we hear the roar of avalanches. They never stop.

#### **June 24**

At 10pm all hell comes down the face and into the bowl above the icefall and over the lip. The cloud sweeps to the bottom of the icefall and three minutes later the shock wave shakes our tents.

#### **June 25, Into the Cannon's Mouth**

Hank and Dave snowshoed to the top of the icefall, to the avalanche bowl which we have christened the Cannon's Mouth.

We hear the familiar roar of an avalanche and look up. Way above, at 14,000', just to the left of our route, a big avalanche is building speed. The avalanche cloud rises, expands, and blots out the sun. We are a half-mile away but the cloud is upon us in seconds. Three minutes later the cloud has passed and we are covered with snow and cursing.

#### **June 26**

At 10:30pm we get up and start buckling on our gear. No talk. Tonight we will go into the Cannon's Mouth.

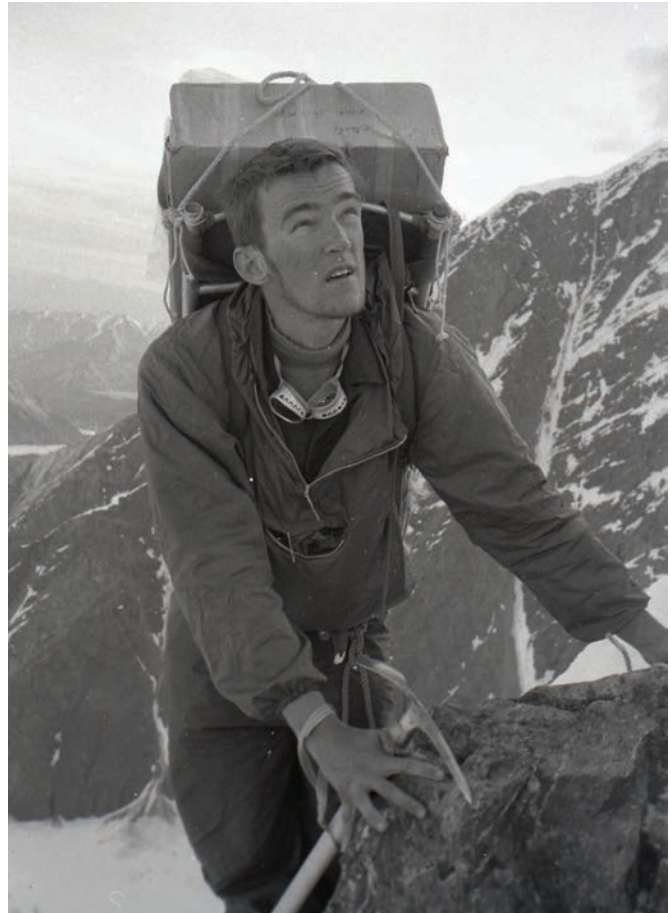
Hank and Don will keep going and try to establish a route up a rock rib that rises to the left of the Cannon's Mouth to a rock shelf at 7,100'. The rest of us will take food up and establish a cache at the left edge of the Cannon's Mouth hopefully out of avalanche danger (6,650').

We climb the icefall by the snowshoe route, wading our path. We cross lots of crevasses. I fall in one up to my neck but catch myself by jamming with arms and pack. We reach the Cannon's Mouth, cross it as fast as we can and pick our way across some snow bridges to the bottom of the rock rib and make our cache (which becomes Camp 1). Then we return to Base Camp.

#### **June 27, Camp 1**

Hank and Don return after having put the route in over the lower 1/4 of the way up the rock rib that goes 450' up from the cache at Camp 1 to the rock shelf.

A snowstorm starts at daybreak and continues for over 24



hours. Tonight Rick and Dave go to put the route up the rest of the way to the rock shelf (7,100'). The rest of us pack loads up through the Cannon's Mouth to Camp 1.

#### **June 28**

There is perhaps only 1 1/2 hours when the sun does not hit the hanging glaciers high on the north face. Only then can we be fairly sure that a super-avalanche will not get us. We figure that the hours for maximum safety in the Cannon's Mouth are about 1-3am.

One avalanche does hit the back of the bowl as I am leading across it. For perhaps fifteen minutes we are thumbing our noses at the Almighty. Not much could save us if He let a Big One go at the wrong time. Crossing the Cannon's Mouth is one of the biggest thrills I have known.

We are all getting pretty blasé about the avalanches now and do not even bother to look up anymore unless we hear them start up high.

The terrain here is out of this world. The huge wall confronting us, the avalanche bowls, the Eiger Face to our left, the Cannon's Mouth to our right, the sunrises and sunsets – and our route, which is the one wrinkle in the massive Wickersham Wall...

#### **June 29**

We sleep during the day. At 10[pm], Rick, Don, and Dave pack a load up to Camp 1. At 10:30 Hank and I leave with all our personal gear, tent, stove, and food.

#### **June 30**

Chris and Don climb to a rock ledge. This will be Camp 2. They



Navigating the ice cliffs on the way to Camp 6.

rig a pulley system from a point 100' below the ledge vertically directly above Camp 1.

Hank, Pete, and I strike Base Camp and come up the icefall. The Cannon is constantly letting go with small avalanches at its rear end and we literally run across the Mouth – for the last time, thank God. We arrive just in time to help with the pulley system. We work all night until only the personal stuff of us five and two tents are left. In this manner we raised 800 pounds of gear in six hours.

### **July 1**

Thoroughly exhausted, we pitch a second tent and camp at the cache (Camp 1). Chris and Don pad at Camp 2 on the rock shelf. We have some sweat about rockfall. There are a few near misses and two holes made in the tents. Several rock and snow avalanches just miss us during the day as we sleep. One huge one buries the bottom of our pulley system. And by a miracle I escape unharmed as a heavy rockfall lands all around me as I stand with no place to run.

We rise at 6:30pm and get dinner. With everything hauled, we strike Camp 1 and climb the route to Camp 2 on the rock shelf. What a view! Meanwhile Don and Chris are hard at work toward Camp 3 which will be placed at the top of the steep rib of rock of which the shelf is a part.

### **July 2, Camp 2**

At 11:30[pm] the snow is hard enough for us to move and we all head up the route kicked out by Chris and Don. The route from Camp 2 goes up a very steep snow and rock rib with

part of what we call "The Eiger Face" on one side and another precipice on the other.

### **July 3**

Hank and Pete take personal packs up to Camp 3 on a little shelf at 7,900' and go on from there to push the route past the First Fluting. The rest of us spend the entire night moving all the expedition gear to Camp 3 and then return to Camp 2 on the rock shelf. Our first trip up comes just as the sun is rising. It is great climbing!

### **July 4, Camp 3 & 4**

We take our personal gear to Camp 3, then up to Camp 4 which has been put up just below the Second Fluting at 8,500'.

Camp 4 is the scene of a July 4 snowball fight. I break out my cigars. We're going great. Nothing will stop us now.

We are now above all the rockfall danger and 90% of the avalanche danger.

Chris and Dave are the route-finders tonight. They will put fixed ropes into the part of the route that Rick and I led last night. The rest of us head down towards Camp 3. Spirits are soaring!

### **July 5, Camp 4 & 5**

A thin traverse we call Shady Lane is really treacherous now and Hank and I both fall on the fixed rope. I am leading on down below when a cornice I am tiptoeing on gives way under my right foot. I jam my ice ax in quick and hang over a thousand foot drop for a few scary seconds until I can haul myself back up.



Above: Millikan atop "The Icebox." Right, top to bottom: Roberts, Jensen, and Carman on top of the world. The group discussing how to navigate the approaching walls of ice.

We retreat to wait for the snow to harden up. Dan, Rick, and Pete eventually go down for two loads and bring some stuff, personal gear and a tent from Camp 4 to Camp 5. Camp 5 is at about 9,300', about halfway up the route that Rick and I did and about 200' above the vertical ice pitch where we left the knotted ropes.

For Hank and me, the night continues to be a memorable one. We haul two loads from Camp 4 to Camp 5. Then, at about 6:30am, we unwisely elect to go all the way down to Camp 3. We (mostly I) curse and swear and sweat and tug. Finally, we inch past Shady Lane and up the final slope to Camp 4 where we fall like dead men, completely exhausted.

We rest and eat and drink for an hour. We arrive at Camp 5 at 3:30pm, set up the tent, eat breakfast, and collapse.

While Hank and I were having our exhausting night, Chris and Dave were putting more fixed ropes in the upper part of the route Rick and I had blazed above Camp 5 and then they continued up. They encounter a huge ice cliff at about 10,300' but find a relatively easy way up it by climbing through a vertical cleft or chimney we call "The Icebox." They establish a cache and a tentative site for Camp 6 just above that ice cliff at about 10,400'. They return to Camp 5.

#### July 6, Camp 5 & tentative 6

We begin at 3am, shuttling loads from Camp 4 to Camp 5 and then to the cache at tentative Camp 6. The stretch up from

Camp 5 is fantastic ice scenery: huge ice cliffs, jumbled seracs the size of hotels and fields of broken ice blocks.

The evening of July 6 is the start of a memorable marathon. We eat at 8pm and then strike Camp 5 and move to tentative Camp 6 and set up the tents. Everything is now at tentative Camp 6. The view from here is tremendous, especially sunrises and sunsets which are practically impossible to tell apart up here.

We all rope up and head up together. Our plan is to go until we just can't go no further. We've all got summit fever now.

#### July 7, new Camp 6

We climb steadily. At 6am, pushing hard, we establish a new cache at about 12,600', which becomes the new Camp 6.

Good news. The lead team reports that the top of the Wall is almost in sight.

We return to our tents at tentative Camp 6. On one glissade I miss a snow bridge and catapult myself headfirst 30' down into a crevasse (which I climb out of unhurt).

We have a huge meal at tentative Camp 6 and at 11:30am start the haul to the new Camp 6 at 12,600'. We make it by 5pm, so tired we can hardly stand.

#### July 8

At this altitude I find I must make an extra effort breathing and end up panting a few times.

We've been pushing ourselves like madmen since we left Base Camp and have made incredibly rapid progress. What's left will call not so much for technical skill but sheer endurance.





Gaunt, tired, and happy having successfully completed the first direct ascent of the Wickersham Wall.



Dave Roberts, Rick Millikan, John Graham, and Pete Carman celebrating 50 years since the climb.

The weather clears momentarily giving us a tremendous view. We are camped among huge seracs at the edge of a great ice cliff.

#### July 9, Camp 7

Today is a real work day. We each carry two loads up to a new camp site at about 14,500', virtually at the top of the Wall. The weather is getting fiercer with the height. Steady wind. Temperatures around 15 to 20°. A snowstorm has come up. Down in the valleys, thunderheads are forming.

#### July 10, Camp 8

More double-packing. Weather perfect. All that's left now is the long slog. We can see the North Summit above us. Altitude and deep powder slow us down. We pitch Camp 8 at about 16,100', directly below the North Summit. Packing at this altitude is an awful masochistic business: kick steps, pant, kick steps, pant... Nobody expected us to be this high this soon (least of all ourselves).

#### July 11, Camp 9

We spend the whole day packing from Camp 8 at 16,100' to Camp 9 at 17,400'. The going was awful. Up a 40° slope of powder overlying ice.

#### July 12

Temperatures near zero with gusty winds. By afternoon this improves a bit and all but Hank and I take light loads up to a cache at 19,100 feet.

#### July 13

The storm worsens. We all stay in our tents at Camp 9. Even relieving oneself means risking a serious chance of frost bite. *[I remember the fun we had composing letters we might have to send to next of kin in event of an accident: "Dear Mr. and Mrs. Roberts, your son David crapped out at 19,000 feet."]*

#### July 14

It is sheer hell being penned in our tents only less than 2000' from our goal. The temperatures are still near zero with winds as high as 50mph. Outside, without protection, we would be dead in minutes.

#### July 15

Storm continues. We are still all in pretty good spirits but there is a noticeable mental as well as physical strain to our precarious position. We are right smack in the middle of the north face, albeit above the special dangers of the Wall but absolutely at the mercy of the weather. *[We had no idea that for these five days at Camp 9 we were a global news item. We had climbed ahead of "schedule" and search planes, seeing our lower route buried in avalanche debris, assumed we were dead.]*

#### July 16, Camp 10 & summit

It dawns bright, almost clear and windless. We all feel that this is the day. We rise at 4:30am, eat a great pork chop and scrambled eggs breakfast and strike camp at 7.

We go up a 40° snow and ice slope. We finally reached the cache at about 1pm. We make the North Summit at about 3:30pm, July 16 – 26 tough, exciting days since Base Camp.

Temperature is -5° and wind velocity at 55mph. We manage a few pictures. I fail to light a victory cigar on the summit. Sob.

We have climbed an arrow-straight route up the center of the North Wall. We have done what everybody said would never be done. Boy do we feel good.

Coming up that last hundred yards to the North Summit was perhaps the hardest going of the trip. It was almost complete white-out and high winds. We had to climb with packs up a knife edge ridge and I swear I was forced to do some of it on my hands and knees, jamming in my ax and pulling myself up.

This has been one of the most satisfying days in my life. The victory dinner pot overturned and partially ruined the meal but Don's victory liqueur saved the occasion.

*Over the next seven days, we would reach the South Summit (the highest point on Denali) and descend via the more popular route, the West Buttress, feasting on cache goodies abandoned by other expeditions. The last close call of the expedition came on the pack-out, when Hank and I almost drowned in the McKinley River. To read a full account of this expedition, visit: [www.johngraham.org/denali-diary](http://www.johngraham.org/denali-diary). ▲▲*

# Improving Trail Experiences With SERIES

By C.W. Schurman, MS, CSCS, NBC-HWC, PN2

Descending Mt. Ruth. Photo by Skye Michel.

**H**ikers often concentrate on distance, travel time, pack weight, and elevation gain to improve their trail experiences. But in 35 years of hiking, I've learned other ways to enhance trips. Varying the day's intention is one.

To help vary your intentions and improve your hiking experiences, I've developed the acronym SERIES (speed, endurance, recovery, intervals, enjoyment, and strength), a training tool to keep in mind as you choose your next outing.

## **Speed: Hikes that focus on turnover and efficiency**

Speed hikes involve walking faster than usual and increasing your breathing rate. They help condition your anaerobic system without overwhelming your legs or joints. To do a speed-focused hike, select medium-length trails with moderate grades and reduce the weight of your pack.

When choosing your hike, take your current conditioning and skill levels into consideration. (What might be considered easy for one hiker could be challenging for another.)

## **Endurance: Hikes that provide time on your feet and steady effort**

Endurance hikes focus on duration and consistency over intensity. Longer trails with gentler grades help build stamina and mental resilience, as well as teach you how to fuel, hydrate, and pace yourself for hours and even days.

## **Recovery: Hikes that allow restorative movement**

Recovery hikes are lighter, easier outings designed to refresh rather than push. These hikes help prevent burnout and keep training sustainable, while providing opportunities to connect with nature. Birdwatching trips are a great example as they give the body a chance to move more slowly while experiencing birdsong and bird behaviors in a beautiful setting.

Forest bathing, nature journaling, packrafting, and horseback riding are other examples of outings that might provide connection to nature while allowing your body to recover. The intention is to stay at a conversational pace (keeping your heart rate below 70% of your max, or solidly in Zone 2).

## **Intervals: Hikes that involve short anaerobic workouts**

Interval hikes are hard, short, and quickly elevate your heart rate. For interval training, find a steep trail (or nearby set of stairs) and ascend as fast as you can, then repeat for a few cycles. Try to keep the same pace as you repeat the uphill section. If you're lacking in speed on your hikes, including uphill intervals is one of the best ways to see improvement. Be aware, however, that stair climbing heavily taxes the calves so increase gradually (not more than 10% over a week).

## **Enjoyment: Hikes that are pure fun for the mind and body**

Rather than focusing on "exercise," enjoyment hikes should be well within your capability and simply *fun*. They may be easier outings that include tasty treats or trail games - whatever sparks joy. You may choose to go on such a hike to meet new people, explore a new place, or just relax.

## **Strength: Hikes that build uphill power on steeper trails**

Strength hikes significantly impact your hiking experience, especially if you plan to carry heavy weight (like technical or overnight gear). They allow you to use additional pack weight to challenge your muscles on short, steep terrain and are a functional way to supplement leg training at the gym. The focus is on the quality of effort instead of the mileage.

## **What do you need today?**

Every hike can be more than just a set of numbers on a training tracker. As you plan your next outing, take a moment to ask: *What do I need today?* By rotating through these six types of hikes and setting intentions based on your needs, you can train smarter, show up stronger, and keep your love of the trail alive all season long.

*Learn more about the SERIES training approach on April 22 at the Seattle Program Center. Register at: [www.mountaineers.org/SERIES-2026](http://www.mountaineers.org/SERIES-2026).*

*Courtenay Schurman is an NSCA-CSCS certified personal trainer, Precision Nutrition Level 2 Certified Nutrition Supercoach, board-certified health and wellness coach, and co-owner of Body Results and Thrive Clues. Visit her websites at [bodyresults.com](http://bodyresults.com) and [thriveclues.com](http://thriveclues.com), or send a question to [court@bodyresults.com](mailto:court@bodyresults.com).*

# The Five Ts: The Essentials Behind our Culture of Philanthropy

By Shannon Rolbiecki, Senior Director of Advancement



Climbing Glacier Peak. All photos by Andrea Turner.

**S**haded from the heat beneath two meager trees, I sweatily drop my overnight pack in relief. I'm on day one of a private, two-day climb of Glacier Peak with my climbing partner, a female force of nature I've had the privilege of training alongside through Tacoma's Basic and Intermediate Climbing programs.

Exhausted and dripping in sweat, I shovel a handful of caramel cashew trail mix into my mouth when I notice a group of 12 to 15 climbers carefully rationing their energy while passing our off-trail oasis. "I bet they're Mountaineers," I say, mouth full of caramel and chocolate. My climbing partner decides to yell to the group, "Hey! Are you from The Mountaineers!?" After registering some nods, we yell again (with perhaps a bit too much enthusiasm), "Yay! We're from the Tacoma Branch!"

Backcountry Mountaineers sightings always bring me joy. Knowing I share community and a passion for the outdoors with both familiar and unfamiliar faces on various adventures reminds me of the incredible gift this organization is to so many.

## How we give back

Throughout my career in nonprofit fundraising, I've had many conversations about a culture of philanthropy – what it is, how we build it, and how we sustain it. At its core, a culture of philanthropy is an organizational environment where everyone understands, values, and participates in fostering relationships and securing the resources needed to achieve the mission.

Organizations typically talk about ways people can give back through the three Ts: Time, Talent, and Treasure. After joining staff at The Mountaineers, I learned that we recognize two more: Ties and Testimony. Whether it's teaching a course, mentoring a new student, encouraging your trail-curious friend to join, or making a financial gift to ensure our programs continue, all of these acts strengthen our community.

As I reflect on my journey with The Mountaineers community, I realize we have a true, self-sustaining culture of philanthropy built on giving back. We may join to take a course, learn a new skill, or simply get outside and explore, but for many members, being a Mountaineer becomes so much more. We start as students and return as mentors, leaders, and committee members. We learn new skills and return to teach courses and help build new ones. We give additional gifts beyond our membership, understanding that the future of our organization depends on contributions of all Five Ts. This is The Mountaineers Way.

## What brings us together

Giving back to our community extends beyond courses and activities. The strength of our community is often found in what happens off trail: checking in on fellow Mountaineers when they're injured and can't get outside; organizing meal trains for climbers in recovery; contributing to GoFundMe campaigns for unexpected medical bills; and simply looking



Andrea (left) and Shannon (right) at the summit of Glacier Peak.

out for one another as we battle the darkness of Washington winters, together.

What I find most powerful about The Mountaineers is that our community spans generations and includes people from vastly different backgrounds and political leanings. Yet we come together to share skills, get outside, and give back to keep this community thriving – for 120 years now! Amid difficult, tumultuous, and heartbreaking times, our Mountaineers community often feels like the antithesis of our broader societal divide.

Of course, any community is not always harmonious. We may vehemently debate which friction hitch would win in a fight (Team Prusik!), or grumble whenever a group leader declares, “Be Bold! Start Cold!” Still, we consistently find common ground in the connections we share through this organization, and that common ground is worth sustaining for another 120 years.

Whether you give back by teaching, leading, joining a committee, filling your bookshelf with Mountaineers Books, giving financial resources, or continuing to renew your



Shannon on the approach to Glacier Peak.

membership long after you’ve hung up your backpack, you are helping sustain this magical community. You are ensuring that generations to come can continue to experience the healing beauty of nature, swap stories of Type 2 fun, and debate the virtues of wide-mouth versus narrow-mouth water bottles.

Thank you for sharing and sustaining this community with me. ▲▲



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# Seattle Overnight Camps Are Back and Better

By Leslie Gobel, Overnight Camps Associate Manager



Overnight camp participants starting their week at Artist Point, with a beautiful view of Mount Shuksan. All photos courtesy of The Mountaineers Overnight Camps.

In a busy world, there's nothing quite like spending time in community outdoors, especially when that time involves returning home each evening to a mountain lodge. Our Overnight Camps, held at The Mountaineers Stevens and Baker Lodges, invite campers ages 10-15 to engage deeply with the natural world while make lasting memories in some of our state's most beautiful places.

The location of our Mountaineers lodges is what makes this camp experience unique. Set against the beauty of the Pacific Northwest, our lodges provide a cozy, rustic backdrop for camp living and fun, with easy access to nearby trails, rivers, and mountaintops. The lodges also provide a chance for campers to unplug and step away from screens and other distractions while prioritizing connections with new friends and places.

No matter your camper's passions and skills, our themed weeks are sure to provide something exciting. Let's take a look at some of the awesome activities in and out of the lodge that campers can look forward to this summer.

## Water Weeks (Stevens Lodge)

Water Weeks offer campers the opportunity to cool off and enjoy time in Washington's many bodies of water. Campers hike to crystal-clear alpine lakes perfect for a quick swim, and visit Lake Wenatchee, which offers pristine paddleboarding and kayaking along the lake's shores. The highlight is a day of rafting on the Skykomish River. Known for its thrilling rapids and breathtaking scenery, the Skykomish provides an exciting chance to learn the ropes of rafting, allowing campers to practice working as a team, communicating, and respecting the power of nature.

## Rocks Weeks (Stevens Lodge)

Rocks Weeks are full of skill building around one of The Mountaineers signature activities: rock climbing! Campers visit either Leavenworth or Index to climb at classic crags and practice top rope climbing, bouldering, rappelling, belaying (age dependent), and tying knots. With the help of our accomplished instructors, both beginner and experienced campers will have a chance to test their strength and determination. Rocks Weeks also include hiking and swimming in Lake Wenatchee, as we love the opportunity to see new views and take a dip on a hot summer day.

## Trails Weeks (Baker Lodge)

Our Trails Weeks are being reimagined this year to focus on backpacking. Campers ages 13-15 will have the opportunity to learn and build upon their backpacking experience in the beautiful backyard of Baker Lodge. Depending on the week, campers spend either two or three nights in the backcountry hiking, swimming, and learning crucial outdoor skills such as cooking, efficient packing, setting up camp, and first aid. Trails Weeks are separated by experience level, so be sure to assess your camper's abilities and trip preferences before registering.

## What's new in summer 2026?

As a relatively new program, we're constantly improving and brainstorming ways to provide safe, enjoyable, and accessible outdoor experiences for our participants. We're excited to integrate new ideas and feedback into this summer's Overnight Camps programming.



Top: Water week campers rafting and swimming on the North Fork Skykomish River. Bottom: Campers smiling from the balconies of Stevens Lodge on the first day of a fun-filled week of camp.

Based on feedback from parents and past participants, we're excited to reimagine our Trails Weeks to incorporate more unique opportunities to build skills on the trail. While every week of overnight camp includes a hike (regardless of theme), the Trails Weeks backpacking trips take hiking to a new level by allowing students to fully immerse themselves in the outdoors. During Trails Week 1, novice campers will camp at a site for two nights, providing a safe space to grow outdoor skills in a new environment. During Trails Week 2,

more advanced backpackers will camp at two different sites, allowing participants to experience new settings and practice travelling longer distances with higher elevation gain. Whether new to backpacking or experienced, campers will make lasting memories and expand their skills in a supportive and inspiring environment.

One of our primary goals is for Overnight Camps to be an accessible option for extended camp experiences for all PNW youth. In an effort to improve accessibility, The Mountaineers will provide transportation via bus to and from the lodges this summer. All you need to do is meet us at The Mountaineers Seattle Program Center for pick up and drop off, wave goodbye and hug hello to your kids, and leave the rest to us. Parents and guardians will still get a glimpse into their camper's experience at the end of the week when we share pictures, bestow camp awards, and reflect on our favorite camp moments.

In addition, the Overnight Camps team is growing this year! Along with our year-round camp leadership, the team will now have a Program Coordinator and five Program Instructors, creating a more robust ratio of instructors to participants and thus improving risk management, activity offerings, and overall camper experience. We look forward to building another skillful team of outdoor educators who prioritize safety, community-building, education, and fun for every one of our participants.

### How to register

Don't miss out on the chance to give your child the adventure of a lifetime! Overnight Camps registration is open, and there is still room in a number of offerings. To secure a spot, visit the Seattle Summer Camps page on The Mountaineers website, navigate to Seattle Overnight Camps, review the available camp dates, and complete the online registration forms. Scholarships are available if finances are a barrier to participation.

If you have questions or need assistance, contact our camp team at [summercamp@mountaineers.org](mailto:summercamp@mountaineers.org). We look forward to seeing you this summer! ▲▲

## How a rapidly changing Seattle sparked an art movement

### Beyond Mysticism The Modern Northwest

*Beyond Mysticism: The Modern Northwest* is organized by the Seattle Art Museum.

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*The Timber Bucker* (detail), ca. 1934, Ernest Ralph Norling, American, 1892-1974, oil on canvas, 34 1/8 x 40 in. Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC. Transfer from the US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1965.18.35, photo: Courtesy Smithsonian American Art Museum.

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### Seattle Event Rentals

(206) 521-6026 | [rentals@mountaineers.org](mailto:rentals@mountaineers.org)  
[mountaineers.org/SeattleProgramCenter](http://mountaineers.org/SeattleProgramCenter)

### Tacoma Event Rentals

(253) 566-6965 | [tpc@mountaineers.org](mailto:tpc@mountaineers.org)  
[mountaineers.org/TacomaProgramCenter](http://mountaineers.org/TacomaProgramCenter)

The Mountaineers is a volunteer-led community built around sharing knowledge and skills to safely recreate outdoors. We offer courses, activities, and events every season, and members are encouraged to participate in programs offered by any branch.

## How to Sign Up for Activities & Courses

### Step 1

Visit our website [mountaineers.org](http://mountaineers.org)  
 Hover over the 'Activities & Courses' tab and choose 'Find Activities' or 'Find Courses, Clinics & More.'

### Step 2

Filter your search  
 Define your search using the filter options in the green column on the left. For activities, you can search by location by clicking 'Map.'

### Step 3

Register  
 Click the program of interest to learn more about objectives and expectations. If you like what you see, select the 'Register' button. Once you register, you will receive a confirmation email.

*Note: Most courses require you to register a few months before the course start date. You will need a current waiver on file with The Mountaineers to participate in activities and courses.*

## How to Sign Up for Events

### Step 1

Visit our website [mountaineers.org](http://mountaineers.org)  
 Click on the 'Events' tab at the top of the webpage.

### Step 2

Browse for local events  
 Use the blue bar on the left side to select the type of event you are interested in. Or, you can click 'Find Events' and filter your search by activity focus area.

### Step 3

Select an event & register  
 Many events are free but require you to RSVP. Events that require tickets will have a link for online ticket purchases.

## Volunteer With Us

Volunteers are integral to helping us accomplish our mission and Adventure with Purpose. Consider becoming a part of our volunteer community! Learn more about volunteering with The Mountaineers at [mountaineers.org/volunteerwithus](http://mountaineers.org/volunteerwithus).

### Volunteer Benefits

- **Gear discounts:** Volunteer 5+ days to unlock access to steep discounts with more than 300 brands!
- **Awards and recognition:** Volunteers who go above and beyond are recognized with branch and org-wide awards and enjoy additional benefits such as a free Northwest Forest or Discover pass, exclusive badges, and unique gear discounts.
- **Matching volunteer hours:** By volunteering, you can sustain The Mountaineers mission and multiply your impact through employer matching gifts. Employers who offer volunteer matching typically match at \$10-\$17 per volunteer hour. Learn more at [mountaineers.org/workplacegiving](http://mountaineers.org/workplacegiving).

### Grow Your Outdoor Leadership Skills

Interested in becoming a Mountaineers leader? Attend a Leadership Development event to hone your outdoor skills and connect with current and aspiring leaders. Learn more at [mountaineers.org/leadership-development](http://mountaineers.org/leadership-development).

### How to Volunteer

To learn more and start your volunteer journey at The Mountaineers, reach out to your current branch chair or email the Associate Director of Leadership, Michelle Song, at [michelles@mountaineers.org](mailto:michelles@mountaineers.org).

The Mountaineers is home to seven branches. Regardless of which branch you join, you can sign up for offerings with any branch. Learn more at [mountaineers.org/locations-lodges](http://mountaineers.org/locations-lodges).



## BELLINGHAM

**Chair:** Michael Abernathy, [michaelabernathy05@gmail.com](mailto:michaelabernathy05@gmail.com)

**Website:** [mountaineers.org/bellingham](http://mountaineers.org/bellingham); [bellinghamountaineers.com](http://bellinghamountaineers.com)

You'll find the Bellingham Branch tucked alongside the upper craggy expanse of the North Cascades. We enjoy easy access to the peaks that drain into the Nooksack and Skagit River basins. Our close-knit community offers climbing courses, hiking trips, and backcountry adventures in a diverse, inclusive, and supportive environment.

**Branch Council Meetings** are on the fourth Tuesday of each month. Visit our branch calendar for details.

## EVERETT

**Chair:** Scott Braswell, [scottpotpie@gmail.com](mailto:scottpotpie@gmail.com)

**Website:** [mountaineers.org/everett](http://mountaineers.org/everett)

Founded in 1911, the Everett Branch is situated between Seattle and Bellingham and enjoys convenient access to the North Cascades, Mountain Loop Highway, Stevens Pass, and Puget Sound. We're a smaller branch with many in-person events for our members to connect, such as Spring Happy Hour, Beer & Gear, Beta & Brews, and our Annual Awards Banquet. Our calendar features courses and

trips that bring the community together in adventure, education, and conservation. The Everett Lookout and Trail Maintenance Committee maintains the historic Mt. Pilchuck and Three Fingers Lookouts.

**Branch Council Meetings** occur every other month in hybrid or remote formats. We're always enthusiastic to welcome new volunteers and members. Contact Scott Braswell to get involved.

## KITSAP

**Chair:** Melissa White, [melissa.white@gmail.com](mailto:melissa.white@gmail.com)

**Website:** [mountaineers.org/kitsap](http://mountaineers.org/kitsap)

The Kitsap Branch draws members from throughout western Puget Sound, from Gig Harbor to the Olympic Peninsula, including Kitsap, Jefferson and Clallam counties.

We have committees for climbing, scrambling, navigation, hiking/backpacking, stewardship, first aid, and sea kayaking.

**Branch Council Meetings** are held quarterly and our annual Branch Celebration is in January. We're always looking for new folks to get involved, please join us!

## SEATTLE

**Chair:** Kelsey Hoffman, [hoffmankelsey@gmail.com](mailto:hoffmankelsey@gmail.com)

**Website:** [mountaineers.org/seattle](http://mountaineers.org/seattle)

The Seattle Branch began as the sole club location in 1906 when The Mountaineers was founded. Our branch is also home to the Seattle Program Center, which features a bookstore, indoor and outdoor climbing walls, friction slabs, event spaces, and more.

**Branch Council Meetings** are held every other month to discuss new and ongoing initiatives. We're growing rapidly and actively seeking people to support our community. Visit our branch calendar for details and reach out to the branch chair if you are interested in volunteering.

## FOOTHILLS (I-90/I-405 CORRIDORS)

**Chair:** Travis Vermeer, [travisvermeer@gmail.com](mailto:travisvermeer@gmail.com)

**Website:** [mountaineers.org/foothills](http://mountaineers.org/foothills)

The Foothills Branch is the organization's newest branch, founded in 2004 and encompassing the eastside communities along the I-90 and I-405 corridors. In addition to our educational and activity programs, we host film screenings, guest speakers, and

stewardship events with other conservation-minded partners.

Our branch is growing rapidly, and we are actively seeking people to support our community - no prior experience required. We invite you to get involved in branch leadership and committees to get our communities outside. Contact the branch chair if you might be interested.

**Branch Council Meetings** are held every other month (except summer) to discuss new and ongoing initiatives. All branch members are welcome! Visit our branch calendar for details.

## TACOMA

**Chair:** Danny Casady, [danny.casady@gmail.com](mailto:danny.casady@gmail.com)

**Website:** [mountaineers.org/tacoma](http://mountaineers.org/tacoma)

The second largest of all seven branches, the Tacoma branch maintains its own program center in the Old Town neighborhood of Tacoma, as well as the Irish Cabin property located near Mt. Rainier.

**Branch Council Meetings** are held every six weeks to discuss new and ongoing initiatives and general branch business. Visit our branch calendar for details.

## OLYMPIA

**Chair:** Katja Hurt, [kat.horwitz@gmail.com](mailto:kat.horwitz@gmail.com)

**Website:** [mountaineers.org/olympia](http://mountaineers.org/olympia)

**The Adventure Speaker Series** takes place on the first Wednesday of the month and runs November through February.

**Branch Council Meetings** are held at 6pm on the second Wednesday of the month, alternating in-person and Zoom, though Zoom is always available. Members are encouraged to attend. Contact Katja Hurt for details.

**The Olympia Library** has many interesting books, bear canisters, and maps available to borrow. For all these resources and more, visit our branch website.

## Get Involved With Your Branch

### Visit Your Branch Page

Go to [mountaineers.org](http://mountaineers.org) and click on 'More' in the top menu; then click 'Locations & Lodges' and select your branch from the dropdown options. On your branch home page, you'll find branch news, upcoming events, contact info, and more.

### Sign up for Branch News

Branch eNewsletters are a great way to stay up to date. To opt in to these emails, update your Notification Preferences in your online profile.



Check Out Our Upcoming Events

Open to Mountaineers members and the general public, our lodges provide visitors with unparalleled access to skiing, snowshoeing, hiking, and more. The Mountaineers is also home to the Kitsap Forest Theater, a historic outdoor theater showcasing two musical productions a year which are open to the public and a family favorite.

**LODGE WEBPAGES** Information about schedules, availability, meals, group rentals, and special events can all be found on the lodge webpages. You can also book your stay online. To access our lodge webpages, visit the direct links listed below or go to [mountaineers.org](http://mountaineers.org), click on 'More' in the top menu, and then click on 'Locations & Lodges' in the dropdown menu.

**VOLUNTEER** Our lodges and the Kitsap Forest Theater are run by dedicated volunteers, and they can use your help! Visit their webpages to learn how you can contribute to the teams that keep our outdoor centers running.



## Baker Lodge

[mountaineers.org/bakerlodge](http://mountaineers.org/bakerlodge)

Mt. Baker Lodge, above Picture Lake and near Artist's Point in the North Cascades, is a gorgeous place for a get-away. The lodge is located within walking distance of the Mt. Baker ski area as well as numerous hiking trails.

## Stevens Lodge

[mountaineers.org/stevenslodge](http://mountaineers.org/stevenslodge)

Tired of the hustle and bustle of the big city? Come for a relaxing getaway in a cabin in the woods. Ski, ride, and explore from our lodge, a short drive from Seattle. Nestled next to the Stevens Pass Ski Area, our ski-in/ski-out lodge is open during the Stevens Pass Ski area's official season.



## Meany Lodge

[mountaineers.org/meanylodge](http://mountaineers.org/meanylodge)

Meany Lodge is The Mountaineers oldest winter sports resort, located approximately 60 miles east from Seattle off I-90 near Stampede Pass and surrounded by the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest. Meany Lodge provides a warm family environment for all - perfect for winter and summer adventures alike. During the ski season, the lodge operates a rope-tow on our ski hill for ski lessons, cross-country skiing, and snowshoe excursions.

## Kitsap Forest Theater

[foresttheater.com](http://foresttheater.com)

We're thrilled to unveil an enchanting 2026 lineup, featuring three unforgettable shows! *Disney's Frozen* brings the beloved characters and songs of the movie to life. Step into the world of Victorian London with *Oliver!*, a masterpiece filled with unforgettable music and heart. And enjoy a fresh twist on a legendary detective tale with the murder mystery, *Miss Holmes*. Save money by purchasing our ticket packages, or consider auditioning. Volunteer to help with property upkeep, cooking, set support, costumes, and ushering/parking during shows. We offer an Adventure Camp for K-4th grade and a Theater Camp for 5th-8th grade campers.





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