

HARDWARE STORE HERALD

Volume 23

News from the Wrangell Mountains Center

Winter 2022/23

Connecting people with wildlands through art, science, and education in Alaska



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▲ Full moon rising over the Wrangell Mountains (Photo by Jon Erdman)

Rebuilding & Restarting: Reflections on Past and Future

by Jon Erdman, Executive Director

In the ghost town days, McCarthy community life was often dominated by intense feuds and conflicts. It got so bad between two neighbors living in McCarthy that if one neighbor let their guard down the other might seize on the opportunity, dash over to their enemy's garden, and begin ripping vegetables out of the ground.

These and other stories are chronicled by Tom Kizzia in his celebrated and acclaimed new book, *Cold Mountain Path: The Ghost Town Decades of McCarthy-Kennecott, Alaska* (Porphyry Press). One of the highlights of this summer was to host one of the Porphyry Press in-person book launch events for Tom, a reading at the Old Hardware Store.

When the WMC was in its infancy, in the 1970s and 80s, there were intense debates about whether the beauty and integrity of this place could be preserved while still supporting a small human community. The early WMC visionaries sought to find a new path between strict environmental preservation and those who advocated for unrestricted development.

Tom also writes about this ideological struggle and the WMC impact on the community. In my interview with him for Season 2 of our End of the Road podcast, I asked Tom for his

Rebuilding & Restarting: Reflections on past and future

(continued from Page 1)

take on the WMC role in the evolution of the community. Reading *Cold Mountain Path* has made me keen to track our past trajectory as we embark on a process of rebuilding and restarting.

We held Tom's reading, this summer, in the Great Room of the Old Hardware Store, and it was a special time. The Hardware Store itself feels like living history, and the place has a distinct personality that is especially conducive to meaningful talks, presentations, and discussions.

This summer's Great Room greatness also included Artist in Residence presentations, Word Jams (open mics), a Fourth of July "Interdependence Day" celebration, an art gallery with artist Luke McKinney – and more. As staff, we were eager to open the Great Room up again for more community events, on the heels of the pandemic. Our energetic summer crew brought new energy, eager to cultivate community and immerse themselves in this place.

We experienced bumps in the road and growing pains, but the new faces and the successes of this past summer are energizing to me. Even our challenges become opportunities. As in the past, those who find their way to the WMC have an earnestness about being here and an eagerness to make the most of their time.

We seek to build a strong future, with community as our foundation, supported by a strong structure of fiscal sustainability, and guided by a plan and vision that is true to our roots while being responsive to the challenges of the present and future. The founders' foresight still resonates.

That brings me back to the question I posed to Tom Kizzia, about the vision of the founders and early supporters for a healthy human community within the broader context of national park conservation. Tom spoke highly of the WMC's early involvement in these issues, citing "an intellectual rigor" associated with the first field studies students in the early '70s. The Wrangell Mountains Center embodied a path of cooperation, and Tom's take is that this "had a big part in keeping the divisions down and keeping a much more positive attitude."

This same spirit of cooperation and collaboration still guides us. The community has evolved and changed, of course, but our commitment is still to this place, both the wild world and the human community, as we share this extraordinary place and explore how these connections can transform us and our world. ↻

Faces of the WMC – 2022

by Katina Leier

Dave Sarbell returned in 2022 as our facilities rockstar – and boy were we happy to have him back! He planned and began a project to collect rainwater for use in the gardens – a huge water and time-saver! He spearheaded the new garden bed in the Hardware Store front yard, and supported upgrade of the new solar power system. When not fixing and beautifying our facilities he was hand rolling sushi or taking awesome video footage for WMC media. He will return in 2023 as a media artist.

Varia Garon joined us as a facilities intern for her first year in the Wrangells, and quickly became a key player on our core team. She hopped right on construction projects like the solar power shed, and also wowed us with her amazing culinary skills. Without a kitchen manager she really stepped up helping with inventory, and creating amazing gourmet meals including muhammara and her famous Daal! Over this winter, Varia is assisting the WMC Facilities committee in planning future campus upgrades. Varia will return in 2023 to manage facilities.



▲ *Dave Sarbell (Photo by WMC Staff)*



▲ Katina Leier, Varia Garon, Joey Boots-Ebenfield
(Photo by Jon Erdman)



▲ Caroline Diamond (Photo by Dave Sarbell)



▲ Brooke Harrington (Photo by WMC Staff)



▲ Tamara Egans Harper (above) ▶ Jon Erdman / Michelle McAfee (right) (Photos by WMC Staff)

Katina Leier originally hails from Connecticut, and was very excited about her first time in Alaska. She started as a food and fork intern and has a background in farming and food justice. She quickly became involved in programming and facilities, and has since joined WMC staff. She will be returning this summer.

Caroline Diamond came to us from the west coast, after doing some amazing work in international affairs at Occidental College in LA. She applied her organizational skills to program logistics. She also led MASY programs and assisted with our Youth Geology Camp.

Brooke Harrington came to us from Davis, California as a volunteer. Brooke was key to the success of our kids programming, and also graced us with storytelling and musical talents. Brooke was a finalist in our annual storytelling competition, and even ended up extending their stay to continue their awesome work for the WMC!

Joey Boots-Ebenfield joined us officially as an intern after being a star volunteer last season. He was integral in supporting our execution of the Glaciology program, and most know him as someone who always has facts on hand about the local flora and fauna. Currently he is working on a PhD at University of Maine, and we look forward to having him on staff with us next season!

Tamara Egans Harper continued her good work for the WMC in 2022 providing important administrative support, maintaining our donor database (in a way that no one else can do!), and helping us keep supporters connected to the WMC and each other.

Jon Erdman continues to be highly energized by his life and home in the Wrangells and the McCarthy community. He feels personally and professional enriched by his work at the WMC and is stoked for many more productive years.

Michelle McAfee came aboard the WMC team in 2021 to handle Social Media and Development. She loves staying connected to the Wrangell Mountains and McCarthy community through her work at WMC. ↪





Kids Programming – MASY


By Katina Leier

Engaging with youth always brings much excitement to the WMC campus, and this year was no exception. With a generous grant from the Blackburn Heritage Foundation, we were able to host a 7 day series over the course of the summer, titled Mountain Arts and Science for Youth (MASY).

You may have seen a group of wild looking kids (and adults) running around downtown McCarthy during our game of Predator vs. Prey - but we assure you it was all part of our lesson plan! The game taught youth about the food chain and life cycle of predator and prey animals integral to Alaskan Ecology. Another favorite program was Fireweed day. We foraged fireweed blooms and got in the kitchen to make some yummy, bright pink jelly!

This year we were also able to partner up with some incredible instructors. We had an awesome Fish ID

and macroinvertebrate workshop with WISE (Wrangell Institute for Science and Education), and a lesson on paper folding for an arts workshop titled *Folded Feathers*, led by our Artist in Residence, *Kassandra Mirosh*.

Another exciting youth program we had was our Youth Geology Camp. We partnered with WISE, joined by *Robin Mayo* and *Amanda Friendshuh*, and featured a natural history discussion led by WMC founder *Ben Shaine*. This 4 day backpacking program included games, journaling, trekking across the glacier and of course – lots of talk about rocks! 



▲ *Above: Making Fireweed Jelly on Fireweed Day (Photo by Dave Sarbell)* ▶ *Right/Bottom: Kids checking the fish traps with Amanda - Bureau of Land Mangament (Photo by WMC Staff)*



Storytelling Festival

By Jon Erdman

The Storytelling Festival in August felt fresh and new. Locals, seasonal workers, and visitors all delivered the kind of stories that inch a person forward in their seats. Not everyone had a seat at the Great Room for the Old Hardware Store event, which was standing room only.

And in a new twist, folks stood around the campfire, outdoors, listening to storytellers spin their yarns, because this summer we expanded our geographic reach by taking the Storytelling Festival to McCarthy's West Side. Many thanks to Glacier View Campground for hosting our first West Side event and to McCarthy River Tours & Outfitters for donating food to the Friday evening BBQ. Thanks, Nik & Gina Merlino, for the support and partnership!

◀ Left: Madz on the storytelling stage at the West Side venue ▲ Above: Bill Mann telling his winning story at the Old Hardware Store (Photos by Dave Sarbell)

In yet another new development, many stories from this summer's festival were recorded and included in Season 3 of our End of the Road podcast, which you can access at: wrangells.org/end-of-the-road.

Two nights of storytelling competition flushed out four winners (Bill Mann, Madz Volk, Brooke Harrington, and Emma Stimpson) who went on to compete for the Grand Prize of \$500 at the third and final event at the Kennecott Recreation Hall, where in yet another twist, Madz and Brooke collaborated on the fly to win the prize.

Thanks to our sponsors and storytellers for making the Storytelling Festival possible: McCarthy River Tours & Outfitters, Glacier View Campground, Uncle Herbs, Nate Anderson & Howard Mozen, and our summer Staff for working hard to make it happen. 🐾

The Science of Summer



▲ Participants from around the globe on the Root Glacier during our 2022 Glaciology Program (Photo by Dave Sarbell)

By Jon Erdman

When viewed through the dynamic and majestic lens of the Wrangell Mountains, study of the earth and other sciences brings the world to life, stimulating mind and body. We can stand within these geologic forces and feel our smallness in a way that brings both awe and perspective.

The WMC supports research and academic programming and brings the science of this place to our immediate community. We continue to catalyze scientists, environmentalists, historians, and local naturalists to make their expertise accessible, particularly through our Summer Arts & Lecture Series. (See page 7)

This year we kicked things off in May with Mark Vail and Mike Loso, two folks with a knack for bringing the natural world alive. Mark delighted us with another bird walk and

Mike (local NPS glaciologist and a former WMC Executive Director) gave a stimulating talk at the Rec Hall.

The WMC also hosted Eric Peterson and a crew of UAF glaciologists for ongoing research and equipment monitoring on the local glaciers. With our local WISE (Wrangell Institute for Science & Environment) partner, we hosted a geology camp for local youth. (See page 4)

On Labor Day, to close out the summer, environmental historian Bathsheba Demuth (Brown University) gave a presentation and reading from her page-turning new book, *Floating Coast: An Environmental History of the Bering Strait*. The WMC continues to make encouraging progress on establishing new partner institutions for our flagship field studies program. The WMC Board and Executive Director are working toward a resumption of the program in the

Summer Arts & Lecture Series

By Michelle McAfee

WMC's Summer Arts & Lecture Series (SALS) was in full swing beginning in June. We hosted Glacier & Geology Lectures with instructors from the Glaciology School, including McCarthy's own glaciologist Mike Loso and UAF Professor Martin Truffer.

The Old Hardware Store housed Word Jams, Artist in Residence presentations, and a lovely performance by visiting singer-songwriter Martha Scanlan, who participated in the Riversong program and taught a WMC songwriting workshop.

WMC co-sponsored a series of events with Porphyry Press, for the local launch of Tom Kizzia's acclaimed book, *Cold Mountain Path: The Ghost Town Decades of McCarthy-Kennecott, Alaska*. Authors Elishaba Doerksen (*Out of the Wilderness*), Corinna Cook (*Leavetakings*), and Mary Odden (*Mostly Water*) also shared stimulating readings and presentations.

Artist in Residence Marco Lawrence and environmental historian Bathsheba Demuth (Brown University) rounded out a full Summer Arts & Lecture Series with Labor Day presentations at Porphyry Place. Demuth read from her new book, *Floating Coast: An Environmental History of the Bering Strait*, a groundbreaking exploration of the relationship between capitalism, communism, and Arctic ecology since the dawn of the industrial age. ❧

Supporting Organizations

Alaska Community Foundation
Alaska Humanities Forum
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▲ Martin Truffer lecture at the Kennecott Recreation Hall - SALS (Photo by WMC Staff)



▲ Youth Geology Camp participants chilling out on the glacier, Page 4 (Photo by Dave Sarbell)

summer of 2024. You can visit wrangells.org to make a contribution to our scholarship fund for future students in financial need.

The WMC once again resumed hosting the International Glaciology Summer School, after pandemic postponements. UAF faculty organize this biannual program as a symposium for glaciology graduate students from across the globe. Students have 10 days to showcase their research and solicit feedback as well as establish meaningful relationships and network with other students and faculty in the field. It was a lively, energetic group that hit the ground running in early June and made the most of their time in the Wrangells – and that's what it's all about in the brief summers here in the Wrangells, under the midnight sun. ❧

The Art of Summer

By Jon Erdman

The Wrangells are a magnet for artists and creative imaginations, and this summer we sought to catalyze this creative energy in community events, from Word Jams to impromptu jam sessions with seasonal Lodge workers. The accomplished singer-songwriter, Martha Scanlan, played at the Rec Hall, in conjunction with Nancy Cook and the Riversong family.

We also restarted one of our most dearly loved programs, the Wrangell Mountains Writing Workshop. We were fortunate to have authors with deep local roots — Mary Odden (*Mostly Water*, 2020) and Corinna Cook, Ph.D (*Leavetakings*, 2020) — serve as instructors for this four day workshop.

Photographers Paul Scannell and Anna Mikuskova started a new community photography working group that we plan to expand next summer. Luke McKinney was also a catalyst

for something different: the WMC hosted a three-week gallery showcasing Luke's work. Future galleries and art shows are in the works!

Kristin Link's Field Sketching and Journaling Workshop was quite the hit this summer, with a surprise write-up in the New York Times! Kristin will be offering two workshops this coming summer. You can find the link to the article and learn more about this and other 2023 arts programming at wrangells.org.

Deep gratitude to the Alaska State Council on the Arts for the funding that made it possible for the impactful summer arts programming of 2022. 🍷

▼ Tom Kizzia & Jeremy Pataky presenting a public reading of "Cold Mountain Path" (Photo by Dave Sarbell)





▲ Multimedia piece donated to the WMC by artist Cassandra Mirosh, titled "Speak your Truth" (Photo by WMC Staff)

Artist in Residence Program

By Katina Leier

We continue to deepen and expand our arts programming, and this summer we hosted four incredible artists through the Meg Hunt Artist in Residence Program (AIR). This special WMC program is conducted with assistance from Kristin Link and Maria Shell, in honor of former McCarthy local, arts supporter and dancer Meg Hunt.

First, we were joined by Anne Haven McDonnell and Daniela Molnar. Anne is a Poet and author from Santa Fe, New Mexico. Daniela is a visual artist, poet, and writer hailing from Portland, Oregon. They collaborated on an inspiring community presentation about their work and creative process, and they found time to join the WMC staff for a day in the ice caves!

Next, we welcomed Cassandra Mirosh, a long time teacher and Alaskan artist who explores the mediums of paper, collage, glass mosaic, watercolor painting and acrylic painting. She led an incredible workshop titled *Folded Feathers* for our MASY youth program, and another

workshop for the local community. She also held a very successful art show in Porphyry Place and donated a piece to the WMC honoring Meg Hunt.

Lastly, we welcomed Marco Lawrence, an illustrator and printmaker living in New York City with a highly diverse portfolio. Marco's incredible illustrations drew inspiration from all the Wrangells have to offer – including McCarthy dogs!

Special thanks to Maria Shell and Walt Tague for their generous, ongoing financial support, and warm thanks to Patt Garrett and Cindy Hendel for current year's support. We also want to recognize a very generous grant from long-time WMC friend and photographer JT Thomas to help support the long-term sustainability of the AIR Program.

The Meg Hunt Artist in Residency Program is currently accepting applicants through March 10 for the 2023 season, and we look forward to another great year meeting creatives from across the country! ✨

Thank You Donors!

The following list acknowledges donations received after last year's Herald was published (Nov 1, 2021) through the 2022 Calendar year.

\$2,500+

Alaska State Council on the Arts, Blackburn Heritage Foundation, JT Thomas, Maria Shell & Walt Tague, Mt. McKinley Moose Legion #51, Sally Gibert & Dick Mylius, Tim Bartholomaus & Sophie Gilbert

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▲ Full Moon rising behind the Old Hardware Store
(Photo by Dave Sarbell)



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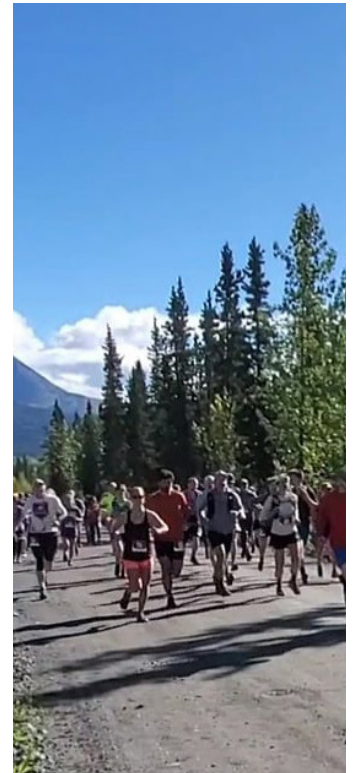
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▲ Top: Author reading with Bathsheba Demuth / Bottom: Participant in Field Sketching Workshop (Photos by Dave Sarbell)



▲ Top: Birdwalk with Mark Vail (Photo by Dave Sarbell) / Bottom: Kids making Fireweed Jelly-MASY Program (Photo by Dave Sarbell) / Right: McCarthy Marathon (Photo by WMC Staff)



The WMC is located on the traditional territories of the Indigenous Ahtna People. We acknowledge and honor the ancestral & present land stewardship and place-based knowledge of the peoples of this territory.