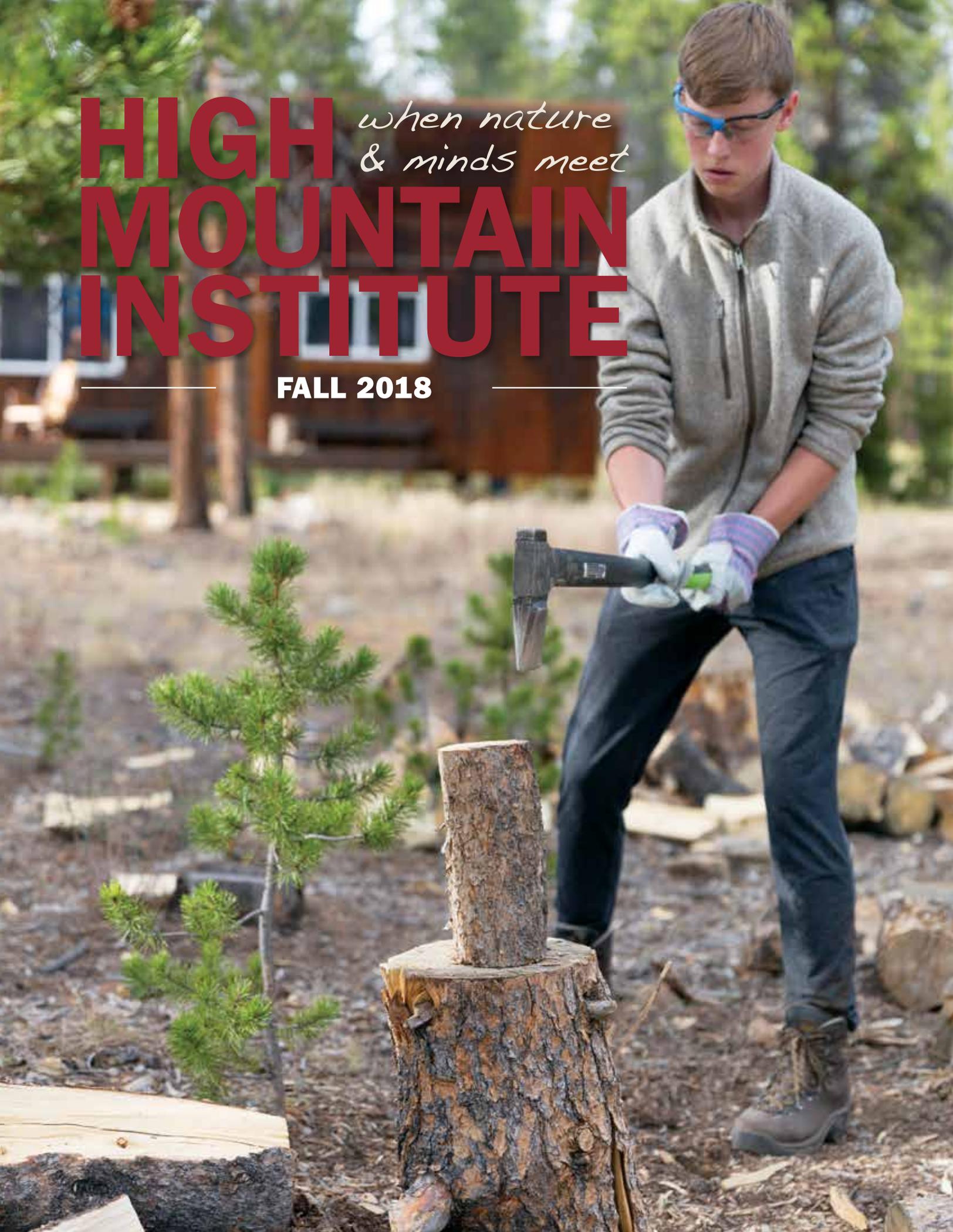
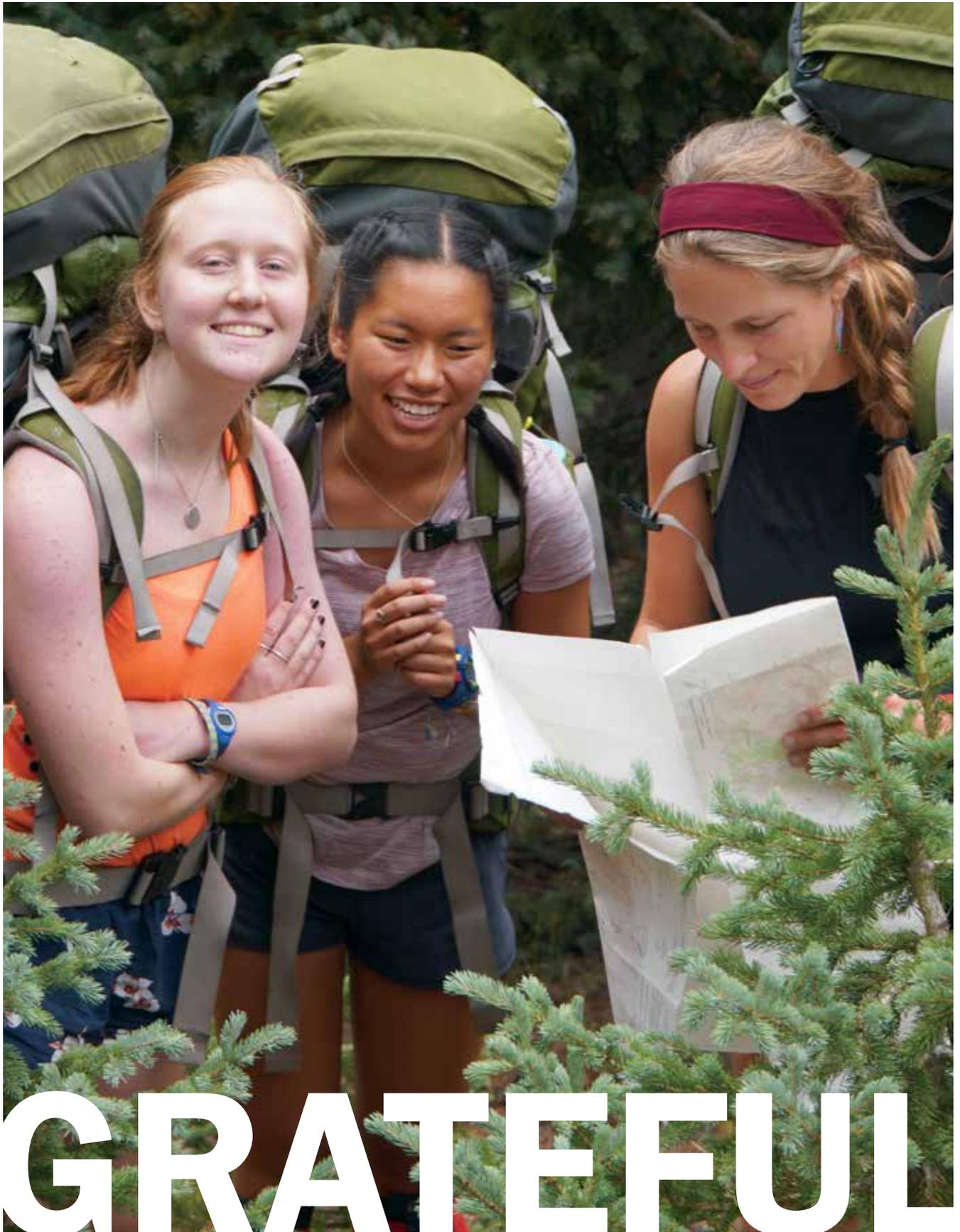


# HIGH MOUNTAIN INSTITUTE

*when nature  
& minds meet*

FALL 2018





# GRATEFUL

Summer at HMI began with an inspiring celebration: 350 alumni and friends returned to Leadville to honor the twentieth anniversary of the school's founding. Those who returned to campus connected over common experiences, shared memories, and hopes for HMI's future. They told stories about their time in the mountains and reflected on how this special place so positively impacted their lives. The weekend reminded us of why HMI is important—and how it will continue to be important well into the future.

We look forward to offering the promise of HMI—something that shone so brightly during the Reunion—to the next generation of students. We could not do this alone, however, and remain grateful for everyone who has supported us the last twenty years. To our entire community: thank you for making HMI possible, yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

## THROUGH OUR LENS THIS SUMMER & FALL:



TO FOLLOW MORE OF HMI'S ADVENTURES, FIND US ON SOCIAL MEDIA

# BEING PART OF SOMETHING SPECIAL

## HMI'S 20-YEAR REUNION

By Danny O'Brien, Head of School

One of my favorite highlights of HMI's Reunion this past June happened around mile three of our Saturday morning Fun Run. I was taking turns running among a group of alumni helping me push my daughter, Vivie, in her jogging stroller.

One of the alums works for SpaceX, Elon Musk's company. Another recently graduated from Purdue with a degree in engineering. Chris mentioned that SpaceX was looking for engineers, and Graham replied that he was looking for a job. A connection was made!





Another memorable moment for me began as a sad occasion. Over the weekend we dedicated an on-campus memorial to Jack Fields, a Semester 17 alumnus and Semester 30 apprentice, who died in a skiing accident in 2017. Jack's family, including his brothers Sam and Charlie (both HMI alumni), came to Leadville to help dedicate a beautiful rock cairn. We asked those who knew the Fields family to get together for a simple ceremony. I expected maybe a dozen alumni to join us for the occasion. Instead I watched, moved and stunned, as scores of alumni, many of whom were only moved by Jack's spirit, joined us on the mile loop trail. The HMI community, beginning with our first faculty and extending to our youngest alumni, is a cohesive one. The group that was present for Jack's memorial dedication showed me this once again.

I also remember thinking I could hear a pin drop, even given the crowd of 350 people, as Eli Robinson, Semester 1 alumna, spoke about HMI's powerful impact on our students and the world writ large. The same crowd moments earlier had offered Molly Barnes, HMI's co-founder and someone new to many recent alumni in the audience, a lasting standing ovation. We were now united again, this time deep in thought about the evolution of HMI and the role it continues to play in our lives. The conclusion of Eli's speech brought the audience to its feet once more—both to congratulate Eli on her contribution to our evening together and to lift collectively our school into its third decade.

Being part of our 20th Reunion was being part of something special. We were united in gratitude and love for a place that has offered so much to so many. It mattered little over the Reunion whether you were at HMI when a swinging piece of plywood substituted for a front door or when we flipped the switch on the solar panels that now provide for 100% of our energy. All weekend strangers danced, networked, talked, reflected, and laughed. People who had met only moments before were suddenly fast friends.

I believe that HMI is an important place. I think we are teaching students essential skills—how to collaborate, communicate, and to find the best in yourself and others—that are too often missing in today's world. These are worthy and serious outcomes, and I am proud of them. But, over the course of this one weekend, I also remember that HMI teaches us other skills—to laugh, to be thankful, and to appreciate the beauty of the places around you.

HMI's Reunion left me happy and fulfilled. I know that 350 alumni and friends left happy and fulfilled too, thanks to our shared experience with this school. I cannot wait to welcome this group back, along with many who could not make it to Leadville this time around, for our 25th Reunion. Save the date for June, 2023! ■



**A**nyone who has spent time at HMI has a story to tell—a story about how they got here, how they became who they are here, and how they continue to embody the spirit of this place. It is these stories that have carried HMI for the last two decades, keeping our community connected to our mission and to each other.



During dinner on Saturday night of the 20-Year Reunion, several alumni told their favorite HMI stories. They spoke of pranks, wilderness expedition triumphs, moments of profound growth, and a deep connection to this place.

During his story, Ray McGaughey (Semester 15 and HMI Director of Admissions) said: “Year after year, HMI accomplishes this great metamorphosis. Students arrive as strangers and leave as best friends. They arrive unsure of themselves and leave more self-confident and self-aware. They arrive as adolescents and leave as young adults. I experienced this transformation personally as a student in 2005. Two years later I watched HMI impact my younger brother just as powerfully. And now, as an HMI staff member, I am so proud of the work we continue to do. The magic is still alive and as strong as ever.”

After detailing a prank gone hilariously awry in her math class, Alex Tomb (Semester 35) said: “This [the prank] I

think perfectly encapsulates the spirit of HMI; I was the happiest I’ve ever been during my four months here.”

Aidan Denahy (Semester 36) spoke about a tough expedition, during which he realized his immense gratitude for the people around him, even those he did not originally connect to: “That’s what I realized HMI is about...It’s about the community that doesn’t build perfect people, but allows imperfect people to grow up around each other. I think we all have shortcomings and low moments and the only way to get up from those, especially in the wilderness, is by trusting one another and covering each other’s backs. Even when it’s not the easiest thing to do.”

These stories, along with the hundreds of others that were shared throughout the weekend, helped make the Reunion weekend a rocking success. The spirit of HMI is alive and well, and we can’t wait to celebrate with you again in 2023! ■

# ON GENDER & LEADERSHIP

by Coco Loehr, Science Faculty  
& Timbah Bell, Dean of the Apprentice Program



## HOW DOES GENDER IMPACT OUR STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES AS LEADERS? WHAT TOOLS DO THEY NEED TO GROW INTO THE MOST EFFECTIVE, AUTHENTIC LEADERS POSSIBLE?

**T**o explore some elements of these complex questions, we have introduced a Gender & Leadership class to our wilderness curriculum.

During this class we sometimes use stories to help communicate different concepts. As an example, let us introduce you to Sam and Kelsey—two characters born from our repeated personal experiences and observations. By discussing how these “individuals” show up in a leadership role we hope to illuminate—and spark a discussion about—the importance of considering how gender can and should factor into the way we think about leadership.

Imagine Sam as a deep-voiced young man whom society has given inordinate responsibility from a young age because of assumptions that people like him are competent. He has shouldered his responsibility and enjoyed the commensurate power and freedom as he has developed as a leader. Now, put yourself in the shoes of Kelsey. She has grown up in a society with few women in positions of power and is used to people assuming that she does not have leadership potential. She snaps out of her daydreams of leadership, admonishing herself, “This is not possible in the society I live in.”

Now imagine Sam and Kelsey on a backpacking trip. Their competence is perfectly matched. But, this is not apparent as each of them manage their cook group's kitchen. Sam is comfortable delegating responsibility and feels he is still head chef when one of his fellow group members takes over the sautéing of the onions and peppers. Kelsey's kitchen looks quite different. She is in control and decides not to delegate because she does not want her competence to be questioned. When peers ask if they can help, she quickly denies the offer, and makes sure they know that she can handle it all on her own. In short, Sam is perceived as being comfortable relinquishing power while Kelsey is seen as guarding her power.

We do not claim that this dynamic is omnipresent, but rather that historic power imbalances between genders can exert influence frequently in subtle and distinctive ways. HMI has the opportunity to bring attention to dynamics like these and provide students with the language they need to engage meaningfully with these concepts. By building this awareness early on, we set the stage for future conversations rooted in more nuanced understanding of one another—contributing to, we hope, more nuanced leadership at HMI and beyond. ■



# CULTURE: MAGICAL OR METHODOICAL?

By Carrie Mallozzi, Director of the HMI Semester

Daniel Coyle, best-selling author, contributing editor to *Outside Magazine*, consultant, and parent of an HMI alumna, came to Leadville in August to speak with faculty and staff about his latest book *Culture Code*. He explained that culture is an abstract thing oftentimes described as “the soft stuff.” We can use words to describe culture (such as trust, ethics, integrity, compassion, and goals), but Coyle argues that it is not about words but rather behaviors. Seeking to name and better understand these behaviors, he embarks on a journey to explore the environment necessary for organizations to be more than the sum of their parts. After examining top-performing groups such as Google, the Navy SEALs, and the San Antonio Spurs, Coyle discovers that good culture is the product of **building safety, sharing vulnerability, and establishing purpose.**

The week following our meeting with Coyle, we hiked up to the 10th Mountain Division Hut for an all-staff retreat. It felt symbolic to spend the day in a place named after a team that almost magically defeated the Germans by ascending Riva’s Ridge for a surprise attack in World War II. But was their victory magic? No. Methodical communication, clear tactics, and camaraderie are what led to their successes.

Just like those troops, we too are training for success in the mountains. However, there is no final defeat or finish line. On a beautiful summer day with Homestake Mountain towering above, we used Coyle’s ideas for action to discuss our culture’s strengths and areas for improvement. We must continue to curate and cultivate culture—to think about how we build safety, share vulnerability, and establish purpose—and remind ourselves that it is the most powerful and valuable thing we do at HMI. ■

---

We must continue to curate and cultivate culture—to think about how we build safety, share vulnerability, and establish purpose—and remind ourselves that it is the most powerful and valuable thing we do at HMI.



# BEYOND THE FOUR WALLS:

HMI SCIENCE CLASSES ENGAGE WITH LOCAL WATER TESTING AND REMEDIATION

By Justin Talbot,  
Director of Wilderness Programs & Risk Management

**H**istoric mining areas in our community continue to degrade water quality and impair aquatic ecosystems. More recently, however, significant remediation efforts have mitigated the harmful effects of acid mine drainage. HMI science classes have studied these efforts for a number of years; they examine macro invertebrate communities and monitor the water quality by testing for acidity, turbidity, and dissolved copper and iron. They subsequently use this data to assess downstream water quality trends and to understand the effectiveness of water treatment systems.

To expand on this curriculum, the HMI Summer Term collaborated with Colorado Mountain College's (CMC's) Natural Resource Management Field Institute to work on some ongoing abandoned mine remediation efforts. I met up with Dirk Rasmussen, Project Manager and Adjunct Faculty at CMC's Field Institute, to talk about this summer's project and possible future projects:

**Q:** WHAT WAS THE SUMMER PROJECT THAT YOU WORKED ON WITH HMI?

**A:** In 2014, CMC's Field Institute received a grant to fund remediation of abandoned mines. One of the project's goals is to reduce erosion and capture contaminated mine tailings that are being transported downstream into the Lake Fork Creek and Arkansas River. For three days CMC's Field Institute and HMI Summer Term students and staff collected boulders and logs to construct a large sediment trap. Without HMI's help, this would not have been possible and the finished product exceeded my expectations! When higher stream flows occur this sediment trap will accumulate contaminated sediment that would otherwise flow downstream and pollute cleaner waterways. Throughout this process, students learned first-hand about acid mine drainage processes and actively participated in efforts to remediate waterways in Leadville.

**Q:** WHAT WAS THE STUDENTS' FAVORITE PART?

**A:** In the beginning, I don't think students entirely understood the magnitude of what we were building. However, as the sediment trap took form, students started leading our design conversations and weighing in on implementation decisions. It was clear that they were invested and taking ownership of their work. In the end, I think students surprised themselves with their finished product. One student even said he wants to come back to Leadville just to check on the long-term effectiveness of the trap.

**Q:** I KNOW THAT YOU HAVE IDEAS FOR WORKING WITH HMI AND OTHER LOCAL SCHOOLS. WHAT COULD THE FUTURE HOLD?

**A:** As backcountry travel grows in Lake County, it's critical that people become more aware of how abandoned mines can contaminate drinking sources. The problem for many wilderness waterways is we don't have water quality data from areas we expect acid mine drainage to occur. One idea I have is for CMC to collaborate with HMI and Lake County Schools to monitor some of these remote areas. For example, as part of the HMI science curriculum, students could collect remote water samples while on their expeditions. In addition to students gaining first-hand environmental science experience, the results could be lead to more informed decisions about where we are get drinking water in the backcountry. ■

“



## HMI'S INAUGURAL ALUMNI OF COLOR RETREAT

During the Retreat this June, members of the HMI community who identify as people of color came together to celebrate diversity at HMI, create connections, and to discuss diversity initiatives at HMI. The Retreat was attended by people from 12 different Semesters and Summer Terms who had a meaningful, productive, and fun time bonding over their experiences at HMI. They also spent time generating feedback for what HMI can do to improve in supporting an increasingly diverse community. Folks who attended the Retreat said:

**Emy Takinami** | Semester 25

*“One of my favorite moments came after the Retreat was over. During a breakout session at the Reunion on diversity, equity, and inclusion at HMI, I felt particularly empowered when a few other retreat attendees and I had the chance to share our experience with allies who brought a genuine interest and care to this work. The breakout session was a prime example of the positive cross-cultural/cross-racial communication and interaction that I hope HMI will continue to foster. The Retreat provided the much-needed space to talk about the implications of our shared identities at HMI, celebrate successes, raise issues, and make plans—all of which helped us prepare for a future of meaningful interactions and collaborations with the whole HMI community.”*

**Bianca Gonzales** | Semester 39

*“One of my favorite moments was the hike we did in Buena Vista. We were able to spend a day in the beautiful outdoors yet also have meaningful conversations about diversity.”*

**Justin Amofo** | Semester 32

*“My favorite moment was sitting by the water with my fellow HMI colleagues of color and exchanging experiences and memories. During this time, I was really made aware of how deeply we all could relate to one another, regardless of which HMI program we had participated in.”*

**Brayhan Reveles** | Semester 38

*“As the water rushed by the shaded riverbank, we sat down and spoke about our experiences at HMI. We all were full of different, powerful perspectives and heartfelt memories. Everyone opened up and let themselves be vulnerable when sharing intimate memories in a Circle-style discussion about the various experiences we had as culturally diverse alumni attending HMI. It was an amazing experience and I hope there are many more to come.”*

”

**HIGH MOUNTAIN INSTITUTE**

531 County Road 5A  
Leadville, CO 80461  
TEL 719-486-8200

**ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED**



DO YOU KNOW AN EDUCATOR  
WHO HEARS ABOUT  
HMI STUDENTS AND THINKS,  
“HOW FUN WOULD THAT BE...?”

**Then consider telling them  
to join us this summer on our  
Educators Expedition!**

- Meet and backpack with HMI faculty and other educators in the Colorado mountains
- Discuss the impact of leadership and place-based education, and learn how to take it back to the classroom
- All educators welcome, regardless of position or grade level!

---

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE VISIT  
[WWW.HMINET.ORG/EDUCATORS-EXPEDITION](http://WWW.HMINET.ORG/EDUCATORS-EXPEDITION)**

