

Catalyst Initiative at The Minneapolis Foundation

2019 YOUTH CULTURAL HEALING SUMMIT

Thursday, October 17, 2019 | 9:30 a.m. – 4 p.m.

*Facilitated by Marnita's Table, hosted by
Westminster Presbyterian Church*

Overview

On Thursday, Oct. 17, 2019, the Catalyst Initiative at the Minneapolis Foundation and Marnita's Table brought together over 300 community members from across the state and nation for the Youth Cultural Healing Summit to lift up youth leadership, cultural healing and intergenerational wellness. Hosted at Westminster Presbyterian Church in Minneapolis, the event centered around a delicious all-day feast featuring an abundant spread provided by Fabulous Catering. Design support for the summit was provided by youth and youth workers who attended a planning event in the spring.

During the event, participants enjoyed interactive dramatic performances showcasing multigenerational casts by the Ikidowin Youth Theater Ensemble of the Indigenous Peoples Task Force and the Irreducible Grace Foundation. These centerpiece performances drew on personal and collective experiences with historic, primary and secondary traumas and engaged participants in learning and practicing methods for restoring breath, a sense of physiological safety, and wellbeing through cultural and holistic practices. Guests were also invited to engage in interactive spaces and activities such as the Resource Wall, Let It Go! and crafting stations, as well as an in-room supervised youth play area. Over the lunch plenary, guests were invited to participate in small-group guided discussions during a Mini-Mindstorm session.



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Check out the video of this event
on Catalyst's YouTube channel.



Guests were invited to engage in breakout sessions and meet someone new.



Holding Space for Healing

Guests also had access to a Quiet Room, a calming, private space with massage therapy available. This room featured our Let It Go! station, where participants had the opportunity to choose from a selection of beautiful papers and writing materials to record what they hoped to let go of for their personal wellbeing and continued resilience. After recording the personal “let it go” items, participants symbolically released them by dropping the papers into a basket. Special thanks to those who held space in the Quiet Room:

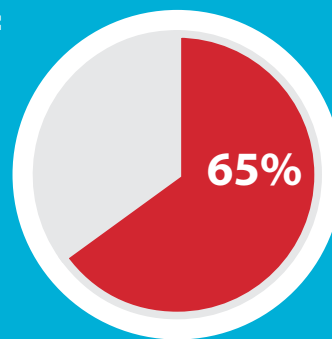
- Ihotu Jennifer Ali – *reproductive health bodyworker, hormonal health coach and performing artist*
- Daniela Montoya-Barthelemy – *public health consultant, full spectrum doula, sex educator, yoga instructor and founder of La Loba Health & Empowerment*
- Donna LaChapelle – *mind-body-medicine healer*
- Becca Seliskar – *transformation coach, mind-body-medicine healer*

Additional thanks goes to the youth artists and organizers who prepared the crafting activity for the day and held space for diverse voices, joy and vocal expressions of belonging and wellbeing: Michelle Abdon, Carmel San Juan and Symone Wilson. We would also like to thank our “pop-up” speakers, who shared personal stories of the importance of cultural healing for them: Abbie Shain, Yolanda Martinez-Pineda and Vangxor Xiong.





Participants
of color:



Total Participants 300

Cultural & Integrative Healing Practices: The Breakout Sessions

The afternoon featured four breakout sessions, providing participants with the opportunity to learn about healing practices from youth leaders and those who work with and support them, while exploring cross-generational individual and collective resilience. Sessions selected for the summit focused largely on restorative and reparative practices for resilience and healing from trauma, particularly those that help support youth, educators, organizers, practitioners and community members of all ages.

Sisters in Strength: Zine-making as a Form of Radical Self-care and Healing Justice

with Sisters in Strength/Girls for Gender Equity, New York City

Sisters in Strength (SIS) is a survivor circle housed at Girls for Gender Equity in New York City for youth survivors of childhood sexual abuse and their allies. During this session, members of Sisters in Strength walked through “Where the Garden Blooms: A Zine” by survivors and their allies and shared best practices for zine-making as a form of radical self-care and healing justice.

Resilient Connections: Developing Community Leadership and Improving Psycho-social Wellbeing within the African Immigrant and Refugee Communities *with Dr. Tolulope Ola*

This was a hands-on, in-depth and practice-based workshop on community organizing, which focused on healing circles. Healing circles allow essential connections in mind, body and spirit to explore, understand and act appropriately and responsively as leaders to help our communities thrive. The session inspired, equipped and connected attendees to see with their hearts by being culturally sensitive and acknowledging how cultural differences impact diverse communities.

Youth Empowerment & Cultural Healing *with the American Indian Community Housing Organization (AICHO) in Duluth*

AICHO presented their youth empowerment work spanning various themes of culturally based healing, including a) Nurturing Native plants and gardens for healthy food choices, b) Exploring how art therapy and artistic expression and storytelling is a healing practice, and c) Demonstrating the use of Native languages as empowerment.

Mindfulness as a Path to Resilience *with Drake Powe*

This session explored the potential for mindfulness and meditation practice to help stabilize us in difficult times. It helped participants uncover a process that teaches us about ourselves as we discover our strengths and explore a new approach that motivates, not from fear, but from real confidence.



The event centered around a delicious all-day feast, featuring an abundant spread for all dietary needs, from vegan to carnivore, prepared by Fabulous Catering.



Mindstorm Small Group Discussions

Over lunch, participants were invited to engage in table conversations around a set of questions. Below are examples of the questions and responses we received:

We asked: What are the practices that help move intergenerational healing? Is there anything we could do individually and/or as a community to begin to address trauma across generations (both historic and present-day) and its effects on our neighbors and ourselves?

- Eating together
- Storytelling – sharing stories
- Knowing where we come from and respecting that
- Spaces like these...telling stories, talking with people from different generations within your own family and outside
- Ask for help
- Talk about the trauma so you/we can begin to help
- Take a step back, try to see things holistically
- Keep boundaries
- Take into account different interests, cultures, beliefs and practices

We asked: Are there methods of health and healing, outside of the conventional Western medical systems, that you use in your own life, family, community or culture?

- Honoring other customs and beliefs in therapy
- Healing is holistic and there isn't just one answer
- Prayer/spirituality
- Making your bed...feeling in control or mindful in your life
- Changing your self-talk
- Work-life balance is good, but being comfortable in being emotional at work is great too
- Qigong and yoga
- Meditation and mindfulness
- Acupuncture
- Gratitude
- Weaving, dancing, singing, the arts
- Journaling
- Breath work
- Going into nature
- The unproductive time
- Be there to support the youth and bring sense of inclusion and communities





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Mindstorm Small Group Discussions

We asked: What would it look like to be a community that focused on healing and wellness rather than sickness and disease, to build wellness- and healing-informed spaces as an alternative to trauma-informed ones?

- Strengths-based
- Reacting to behaviors, multiple ways of being
- Not being defined by trauma
- More attention of skill-building for wellness
- Maintaining wellness versus getting through day-to-day
- It is possible because it would remove the taboo connected with mental health
- It would be almost like a perfect world
- Less of a hierarchy (e.g. victim, caregiver)
- Changes emphasis from what's wrong with someone to what's right with them
- Being proactive rather than reactive
- Having mental health be as normalized as physical health
- Have a culture where people take ownership of their health AND ensure everyone has access to quality care
- Resilience
- Growth versus deficiency mindset

We asked: What are some specific ideas/recommendations on how health and education systems, social services and other community organizations can become catalyzed to become partners, promoters, practitioners and supporters of youth-driven and youth-led healing and wellness?

- People who have experienced the trauma need to be invited to the table
- A person must understand their past to help heal or understand their future
- More youth councils and advisory boards, youth voice/involvement
- Adults to have attitude of “How can we serve you?”
- Ask question, “How will this decision impact youth?”
- Ethical storytelling and decolonizing [of] imposed narratives
- By more forums/summits and opportunity to connect
- Collaborate
- Educate



Guests were invited to engage in interactive spaces and activities such as the Resource Wall, Let It Go! station and in-room supervised youth play area.



Circle Share-in

In closing, we asked participants to say to their neighbor in the circle one positive thing participants have always wanted to hear about their own characters. Here is a sample of what was heard:

- See me as:**
- belonging*
 - a changemaker*
 - loving*
 - kind*
 - full of life*
 - good enough*
 - funny*
 - strong and passionate*
 - trustworthy*
 - brave*
 - a bold person*
 - capable*
 - determined*
 - impactful*
 - joyful*
 - loyal*
 - persevering*
 - an individual*
 - grieving*
 - my lived experiences*
 - spiritual and courageous*



Here's what participants had to say about their experience:



100%

Would attend the Youth Cultural Healing Summit again



100%

Would invite someone next time



Participant Responses

“I really enjoyed meeting new people while feeling welcomed.”

“I was very surprised with the way the conference was run. It was engaging and interactive. Very good learning and developing knowledge on working with youth.”

“The program today and facilitation was excellent.”

“I love bringing together food and meaningful, humane interaction.”

“I really appreciate and value the safe space for people to connect and enjoy each other and learn. Thank you for having me.”

“It was refreshing to be in a space with so many beautiful minds, beautiful people. This definitely needs to happen every year.”

“I was very nervous about coming today because I was afraid of not belonging and feeling like an outsider. I really appreciated how welcoming this event was and how diverse. This will be my first step in engaging and getting uncomfortable in order to grow. Thank you!”

Personal Impact

An attendee of the Youth Cultural Healing Summit had just moved to the Twin Cities with her family unexpectedly this fall and didn't know anyone in the area. After attending the Youth Cultural Healing Summit, she told a staff member that the event made such an impact on her and her children that she wants to volunteer and do anything she can to show her appreciation. She is currently in school learning about holistic health and is looking forward to reconnecting with those she met at the event. She was also very moved when she saw the story on “CBS This Morning.”



Watch the “CBS This Morning” feature on the summit.

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