



2024-2025 ANNUAL REPORT

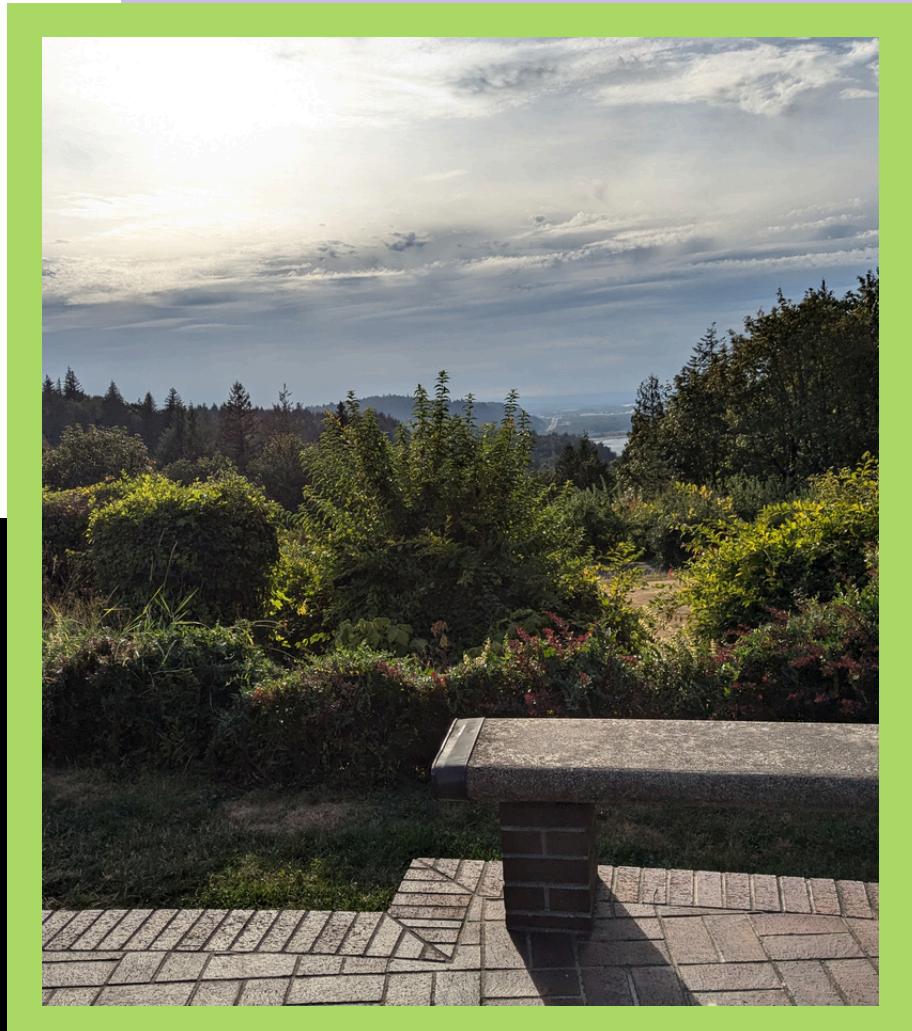
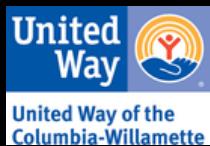
DISASTER LEARNING **RESILIENCE** NETWORK

CULTURALLY GROUNDED HEALING & LEARNING SPACES
BY LEADERS OF COLOR FOR LEADERS OF COLOR

"These funds are amazing and unique for a small organization. It has felt unrestrictive just because of the flexibility. That's what we need. The work is going to continue. We were able to do more because of that." - Raíces de Bienestar

PREPARED BY
Christy da Rosa, PhD,
LICSW

Editor: Jessica Hua
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Annual **2024-2025** **Summary** →

Introduction

The massive wildfires that hit Oregon in September 2020 had a tremendous impact on the health and well-being of communities of color across the state. In the immediate aftermath of this disaster, community-based organizations serving communities of color identified profound gaps in communications, evacuation, shelter, and other systems intended to alert and protect the state's residents from disasters. The Disaster Resilience Learning Network (DRLN) was created in 2021 to bring together culturally grounded and/or people of color serving community-based organizations (CBOs) and leaders who serve communities of color disproportionately impacted by disasters.

Leadership & Growth

In 2024 and 2025, the DRLN focused on reimagining the leadership and decision-making process of the Network and in-person gatherings. These efforts resulted in the Advisory Lead Council, consisting of six DRLN members, and regional leads for CBO members located in Portland Metro, Central Oregon, and Southern Oregon. United Way of Columbia-Willamette also continued the DRLN Resiliency Grant which support local and regional disaster resilience efforts. Seven CBOs received funding through this grant.

untitled, March 2025

The seed is buried deep within the dark of the earth.

Its roots coaxed from the nucleus to join forces with the living world.

She builds her confidence in darkness and practice patience in stillness.

This that once was, is now breath.

- Jamila Wilson (UWCW)

Photo provided by Nanda Ramos





The Disaster Resilience Learning Network

Creating culturally-grounded healing spaces by and for leaders of color in disaster resilience work

Membership

Our members consist of CBOs that primarily work with communities of color in disaster work here in Oregon, OHA's Environmental Public Health team, United Way of Columbia-Willamette, and Trauma Informed Oregon

 **29**
Participating Orgs

 **44**
Active representatives

2025 Membership Directory

AfroVillage
Beyond Toxics
Bridging Cultures (Puentes Entre Culturas)
Centro de Servicios Para Campesinos
Coalición Fortaleza
Confederate Tribes of Grand Ronde
Equitable Giving Circle
Familias en Acción
Friends of Tryon Creek
Living Islands
Micronesian Islander Community
Native American Rehabilitation Association NW, Inc. (NARA)
Nurturely
The Next Door, Inc.
Oregon Health Authority
Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility
Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste
Raices de Bienestar
Radical Rest
Respond to Racism (in Lake Oswego)
Rogue Climate
Rogue Foods Unite
Oregon League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)
The Stronghold: A Culturally Responsive Peer Support Program
Trauma Informed Oregon
UNETE, Center for Farm Worker Advocacy
Unite Oregon
United Way of Columbia-Willamette
Voz Workers' Rights Education Project

OUR MISSION

The DRLN is committed to advancing equitable disaster resilience, for people of color, through healing-centered, culturally grounded collaborations and sustainable practices.

OUR VALUES

The DRLN is committed to fostering space for culturally grounded people and to equity at the heart of our health, our work, and our resilience.

OUR PHILOSOPHY

The DRLN was created within the theoretical guidelines of the social resilience framework, healing-centered, trauma-informed, and culturally grounded approaches.

GOALS



Wellbeing

The DRLN will improve and support the health and wellness of BIPOC leaders working in climate and disaster resilience.



Relationship

The DRLN will build relationships for leaders of color working in climate and disaster resilience.



Culture

The DRLN will center and bridge the importance of cultural grounded knowledge into climate and disaster resilience.

NETWORK GROWTH

In 2024, the Disaster Resilience Learning Network (DRLN) advanced its commitment to equitable disaster resilience for people of color and by people of color, centering the lived experience and leadership of its members through a year of connection, learning, and growth. The Network hosted its first in-person retreat at the Menucha Retreat and Conference Center, supported by Meyer Memorial Trust, delivered a Prepare to Prosper Webinar and sponsored five members to complete The Hearth's Storytelling Certificate Program, attended multiple conferences, and held regional gatherings. The Network also advanced its fiscal sovereignty and leadership efforts through piloting a new leadership model.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Trauma Informed Care & Disaster Work: All staff of Network organizations and friends of the Network were invited to a trauma informed care and disaster resilience training four part series led by: Christy da Rosa, LCSW and Steffannie Roache, LMHC

Like previous trainings, the overall goals of these educational series was to 1) increase awareness of how trauma impacts CBO work and community, 2) offer language and framework around resilience and community healing approaches, and 3) offer practicable resilience and community healing skills CBO leaders can use within their communities. 15-29 people attended each session.

The Hearth's Certificate in Community Storytelling: Oral traditions belong to all cultures and civilizations. It is the universal way information gets passed down for generations. It is through these stories we are reminded of our similarities and reveal the core of our soul. Storytelling is our greatest tool of resilience. It is a bridge connecting us to one another and interweaving cultures. Stories help us find our intersecting points and strengthen the sustainability of the beloved community.

In 2024, the Network funded five DRLN members to attend The Hearth's Certificate in Community Storytelling. In 2025, the Network funded an additional member to attend this program.

NETWORK LEADERSHIP & CONNECTION

This Network is committed to practicing shared leadership models. From the inception, Oregon Health Authority (OHA), Trauma Informed Oregon (TIO), and United Way of the Columbia Willamette (UWCW) served as leads stewarding the Network. The DRLN's Advisory Lead Circle (ALC) emerged from a shared vision for greater fiscal sovereignty and leadership from within CBO Network members.

From Fall 2024 to Fall 2025, the Network piloted two new approaches to leadership and community. These included the emergence of the **Advisory Lead Council (ALC) and Regional Leads** for Portland Metro area, Central Oregon, and Southern Oregon CBOs. With this pilot, the Network seeks to transition to a horizontal leadership structure with equitable decision-making for its members along with greater fiscal sovereignty. This transition also seeks to encourage local Network gatherings to build relationship between members.

UWCW staff invited the Regional Leads to serve on the ALC to develop membership and infrastructure and pilot this new form of governance. Additional network members were also invited to join the ALC throughout the pilot. Currently, the ALC and Regional Leads consist of:

- Aisha Edwards (Radical Rest) for the Portland Metro region.
- Debbie Cabrales (PCUN) for the Central Oregon region.
- Cecilia Giron (LULAC) for the Southern Oregon region.
- Jamila Wilson (UWCW) representing a funder perspective.
- Christy da Rosa (TIO) representing an academic and trauma informed care model perspective.
- Jessica Hua (OHA) representing a public health perspective.

Based on the assessment of these pilots, it is recommended that regional gatherings explore uplifting existing Network organizational work (i.e., DRLN covers attendance costs for members to attend local CBO activity.) or invest further into statewide gatherings. The ALC is also recommended to pilot a third party facilitator capable of managing schedules and developing products based on ALC feedback to relieve members of procedural tasks.

REGIONAL LEAD PILOT ASSESSMENT

The 2023 workgroups developed the desire for regional gatherings, with the goal of deepening relationships and fostering connection across different regions. The success of these gatherings varied by location. The Portland Metro region met four times and offered a diverse range of activities, including a nature walk, a member dinner featuring Indigenous self-care kits, a visit to an Indigenous farm, and a wellness-focused hot soak. In Southern Oregon, members met twice, once for pottery-making and once at a community event hosted by a member organization, which included dancing, food, and relationship-building. In contrast, the Central Oregon region struggled to convene due to geographic distance between members, which made scheduling and meeting logistics especially difficult.

One regional lead observed a disconnect between the network's stated values of connection and the level of participation in regional activities. Two regional leads noted that while many members expressed a strong desire for in-person relationship-building, few were able to attend when opportunities arose. Challenges such as limited responses to scheduling outreach and low RSVP engagement raised questions about the network's current level of connectedness and capacity for sustained and independent participation.

Regional leads also reflected on the broader context affecting engagement. Emerging political crises and community stressors made it difficult for members to prioritize gatherings, particularly those framed around self-care. Some expressed discomfort organizing restorative activities while their communities faced hardship. However, one lead observed that the in-person retreat held in Fall 2024 successfully fostered connection, rest, and belonging. Based on this feedback, it is recommended that the Network invest in an annual or biannual statewide retreat that centers wellness, community care, and relationship-building rather than multiple smaller regional meetups. This approach could help consolidate resources, increase attendance, and strengthen the sense of collective care across regions. Alternatively, regional gatherings could also explore uplifting existing Network organizational work (i.e., DRLN covers attendance costs for members to attend local CBO activity.).

ADVISORY LEAD CIRCLE PILOT ASSESSMENT

The DRLN's Advisory Lead Council (ALC) was intended to serve as a horizontal leadership body, piloted with three Regional Leads, Debbie Cabrales (Centros), Cecilia Giron (LULAC), and Aisha Edwards (Radical Rest), two additional Network members, and consulting from Oregon Health Authority and Trauma Informed Oregon.

Members described the pilot experience as both rewarding and challenging. Many joined the ALC out of commitment to the DRLN's relationship-centered mission and a desire to help shape the Network's future. However, competing professional and community obligations made participation difficult. All members hold significant leadership roles within their respective organizations, and balancing ALC responsibilities with ongoing community crises often led to limited availability and inconsistent meeting attendance. Scheduling over Zoom proved particularly difficult, and meetings rarely started with the full group.

The ALC pilot also began amid significant external stressors including the aftermath of the 2024 Presidential election, statewide budget cuts, and escalating threats to the communities represented by Council members. These factors, combined with burnout and emotional fatigue, shifted meeting focus toward mutual support and solidarity rather than formal governance. The Council was also formed quickly due to staff turnover, without clear structure, defined roles, or agreed-upon objectives. While the intent was to develop this infrastructure collaboratively, the lack of clarity sometimes left members unsure of their purpose or next steps. As one participant summarized, "It felt like building the plane while flying."

To strengthen future iterations, ALC pilot members recommended establishing clear meeting structures and expectations from the outset. This includes setting a consistent meeting time (potentially evenings or weekends to accommodate schedules), beginning each session with a recap and updates on action items, and dedicating portions of meetings to specific aspects of infrastructure development. Providing clarity on decision-making processes, timelines, and deliverables could help align member contributions and reinforce the ALC's role in shaping the Network's long-term governance. A third party facilitator has the potential to provide this structure.

DRLN'S FIRST STATEWIDE RETREAT

From September 9–11, 2024, the Disaster Resilience Learning Network (DRLN) held its first in-person retreat at the Menucha Retreat and Conference Center. Supported by funding from Meyer Memorial Trust, the retreat was designed to foster connection, healing, and restoration among Network members after several years of virtual collaboration. The Network covered all lodging, meals, activities, and transportation to ensure accessibility for all participants. Members were also invited to bring young children if they could not find childcare. Two members brought their infants to the retreat. **38 DRLN members attended the retreat, representing 21 organizations.**

The goal of the retreat was to center restoration. Over the course of three days, members had the option to engage in a variety of wellness and reflective activities that embodied the Network's values of relationship-centered and trauma informed care. All programming was optional, meaning members could opt to take a nap, go on a nature walk, or other wellbeing activities instead of the planned program. Programming options included Andean Sounds meditation, yoga sessions, a garden creation workshop, watercolor gratitude mandalas, forest bathing, a water ceremony, tarot readings, and acupuncture sessions.

By centering rest, creativity, and cultural wellness practices, the retreat provided an opportunity for members to reconnect with themselves, each other, and the land. Many expressed that this time together deepened trust, and strengthened relationships across regions.



Very nourishing time, I've never been to an actual retreat when working for a nonprofit. Thank you for the opportunity. I tried many new things that I wouldn't usually have access to.

- DRLN Member (From Feedback Survey)

PARTNERS IN RESEARCH

Many DRLN members supported Christy da Rosa, who at the time was a Ph.D. student candidate through Portland State University with her dissertation through advertisement, participation, and consultation. This research would not have been possible without their incredible support and the collaboration of numerous DRLN individuals and organizations who generously contributed their time, expertise, and resources. Please go to [PDXScholar](#) to view this study.

Beyond Translating Cultures: Organizational Cultural Brokering and Latin@/e/x Community Resilience after the "Mobile Home Parks" Fire

As wildfires increase in frequency and severity in rural communities, disaster management agencies are seeking to collaborate with community-based organizations (CBOs) working with rural, low-income Latin@/e/x communities to build wildfire resilience. This qualitative case study examines the critical role of CBOs rooted in their local, predominately low-income Latin@/e/x communities as cultural brokers in supporting Latin@/e/x wildfire survivors following the 2020 "Mobile Home Parks" Fire in a rural county in Oregon. Drawing from 23 semi-structured interviews, three focus groups, a review of relevant documents, and participant observations, the research investigates how Latin@/e/x CBOs navigated the complex cultural landscape between wildfire survivors and traditional disaster recovery frameworks.

This case study examines how institutionalized disaster recovery systems, designed for administrative efficiency, often overlook the cultural realities of Latin@/e/x wildfire survivors. The research reveals significant challenges in wildfire recovery for Latin@/e/x communities, including linguistic barriers, resource scarcity, systemic trauma, and cultural disconnection. When disaster recovery frameworks clash with local culture, those with the least institutional power bear the greatest risk. The findings reveal how standardized approaches can unintentionally reproduce systemic vulnerabilities rather than support transformational, culturally rooted resilience. Effective cultural brokering between conventional disaster management agencies and Latin@/e/x wildfire-impacted communities requires institutional commitment to long-term leadership development, the cultivation of institutional humility, sustained relationship-building before and after disasters, meaningful policy reforms, and robust accountability mechanisms.

This study proposes an expanded conceptualization of cultural brokering at an organizational level for understanding how cultural brokering can operate as a multidirectional process with transformative potential. It differentiates between two distinct approaches: one-way and multi-way cultural brokering. One-way cultural brokering refers to cultural translation in one direction, aiming to focus on improving access to existing conventional disaster recovery systems and helping Latin@/e/x wildfire survivors navigate institutional processes through linguistic interventions, case management, and culturally rooted outreach strategies. Multi-way cultural brokering refers to a circular cultural translation direction where communities are able to create new disaster recovery paths rooted in local wildfire survivor culture in partnership with conventional disaster recovery allies. This approach improves safety and roots in core community challenges to recovery.

By positioning local cultural knowledge as essential rather than supplemental to conventional approaches to wildfire recovery programming, these organizations have developed innovative pathways for grief, healing, and transformational resilience for their wildfire survivor service recipients. This approach reimagines disaster recovery and resilience programming by recognizing community members as the most crucial recovery resource, establishing culturally rooted and trauma informed healing processes, and developing leadership and political engagement among survivors.





NETWORK SIGHTINGS

The DRLN continues to center the importance of amplifying CBO perspectives in the field of disaster resilience. Our Network funded members to attend and present at key conferences and events in Oregon and one an international conference in Colorado. By directly supporting their advocacy efforts, we emphasize the need for our members to share their insights, experiences, and advocacy for equitable disaster preparedness, response, and recovery strategies tailored to the needs of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities. Through these speaking engagements, our members offer invaluable culturally-rooted knowledge in their lived experiences, question existing narratives and oppressive practices, and advocate for cultural well-being and safety in disaster resilience efforts.

NATURAL HAZARDS CENTER WORKSHOP 2024



Abstract: The Disaster Resilience Learning Network uses a transformative approach to support leaders of color in building community resilience. Historical trauma and structural oppression have systematically excluded community leaders of color in disaster resilience planning. By creating a fundamentally new system—one that integrates a social resilience framework, healing-centered practices, and culturally grounded, trauma-informed approaches—the Disaster Resilience Learning Network is a space that fosters connections and develops effective disaster response strategies.

Presented by: Carina Guzman (Oregon Health Authority), Erica Ledesma (Coalición Fortaleza), Jamila Wilson (UWCW), and Christy da Rosa (TIO) with Erica Cuesta (Familias en Acción) and Kianna Judo Angelo (Living Islands) in attendance



OREGON RESILIENCE SUMMIT 2024

Abstract: "The topic of this roundtable will be CBO Capacity and Sustainability and how affinity spaces, this network, and our organizations address burnout, historical trauma, and professional development of BIPOC leaders. Participants are invited to share their own insights on how their approach workforce wellbeing."

Takeaway:

We hope that attendees will be able to expand their understanding of staff wellness within the context of historical and cultural contexts. By doing so, we offer multiple pathways to addressing burnout in our network's affinity space.

Question Prompts:

What is my relationship to wellness? How does my organization define wellness? How does my organization and social network cultivate a culture of wellness that centers the lived experience of its staff and community?

Presented by: Jamila Wilson (UWCW), Blanca Gutierrez (Rogue Climate), Christy da Rosa (TIO), Michele Pinkham (NARA NW), Nanda Ramos (Tryon Creek) with Laura Millette (LULAC), Cecilia Giron (LULAC), Miguel Cholula (Bridging Cultures), and Debbie Cabrales (Centro)

OREGON PREPARED 2025



The DRLN had representation from two member organizations, Stronghold in Klamath County and Living Islands in Portland, at the Oregon Emergency Management (OEM) "Oregon Prepared" conference in April. DRLN representatives networked with state emergency management officials, shared what their local communities are doing, and provided resources available from across the state to support their communities. They attend workshops ranging from communications before, during and after an emergency to inclusive evacuations and multi-agency coordination strategies and learned about successful efforts profiled in several case studies.

A MESSAGE TO CBO PARTNERS

The legacies of historical trauma continue to shape the ways our communities of color navigate resource access, cultural identity, and representation in leadership spaces. These inequities persist across generations and are compounded by climate disruptions, political instability, and economic pressures that disproportionately impact the communities our CBOs serve. Yet traditional funding models are structured to mold communities to predetermined scopes, timelines, and deliverables, rather than allowing CBOs to evolve in alignment with lived realities.

TRUST-BASED FUNDING PROCESSES

CBO grantees consistently emphasize that trust-based, adaptive funding enables more meaningful and responsive work. As one partner shared, "Communicating with each other is important, but DRLN understands the relationship and collaboration. The trust is important." Another noted, "There were so many moments when we were just surviving and putting out fires... but I knew the DRLN was flexible, which allowed us to pivot where we needed. If it had been another funder, would they have been so flexible?" Among the Network's grantees, two reported offering community gatherings that would not otherwise have been funded, demonstrating that relationships, not novelty from a funder's perspective, is often what communities need most.

Relational accountability also strengthens impact more effectively than bureaucratic reporting. Smaller CBOs, especially those without dedicated grant staff, struggle to manage multiple grants that require frequent reports and extensive documentation. These administrative burdens compete directly with time spent supporting community members. Funders whose trust is reflected in their funding processes make it possible for organizations to stay focused on community care, connection, and responsiveness.

Across all grantees, the message is clear: communities are dynamic, and funding models must reflect that reality. Trust, flexibility, and relationship-centered support allow CBOs to meet emerging needs with cultural strength and creativity.



REPORT OUT OF 2024-2025 DRLC UWCW GRANTS

Community-based organizations participating in the Disaster Resilience Learning Network (DRLN) were eligible for these funds, which were used in support of their community and/or staff. The DRLN program itself is led by and for people of color. These funds are intended to support community-based organizations and must be used to build resilience and social connectedness for communities of color affected by climate-related disasters (i.e., wildfires, floods, heat waves). All funding requests had to support one or more of the DRLN pathways for increasing resilience to disasters:

- culturally grounded, healing-centered community engagement
- mental and emotional community health and wellness
- restoration of identity and relationship with self and community

UWCW awarded a total of \$122,500 funds for disaster resilience building effective August 2024 to September 2025.

This funding process continues to hold the following components to decrease procedural vulnerability culturally specific, grassroots organizations commonly experience:

- **Flexibility:** UWCW accepts multiple applications methods (e.g., video, paper, online application). The funding process is also open to grant projects evolving to better meet community needs and CBO capacity as the projects progress.
- **Pluralism:** The DRLN recognizes that there are multiple ways in which disaster resilience is understood and built. This funding process is open to diverse disaster resilience building approaches outside mainstream emergency management narratives.
- **Feedback:** The DRLN actively gathers feedback in an ongoing commitment to decrease accessibility barriers to funding. DRLN volunteers also participate in the grant application review process, excluding their own.



RAÍCES DE BIENESTAR

OVERVIEW

DRLN Representative: Jocelin Garcia

Other Organizational Staff on Project: Esmeralda Zapata, Dr. Ruth Zúñiga, Bianey Jimenez, Fabiola Arreola

Community Served (Including identities, income, etc.): Latine community

Estimated # of People Impacted: 500-600

County/Region Served: Statewide with emphasis on Southern Oregon region

ORGANIZATION

Raíces de Bienestar is a 501(c)3 non-profit launched in 2021. Their founders and directors have more than 20 years of combined experience working with the Latinx community, traditional health workers, and behavioral, mental, and public health. Their vision is for healthy, thriving, connected Latine communities, and their mission is to promote and strengthen Latine mental health, emotional wellbeing, and resilience through culturally grounded, evidence-based practices and initiatives. Key values of the organization include community, trust, cultural wellbeing, cultural diversity, and sustainable change. Raíces de Bienestar operates a bilingual, bicultural mental health clinic serving uninsured and underinsured Latine families, provides training for traditional health workers and graduate clinicians, and engages in community outreach and education that reaches thousands each year.

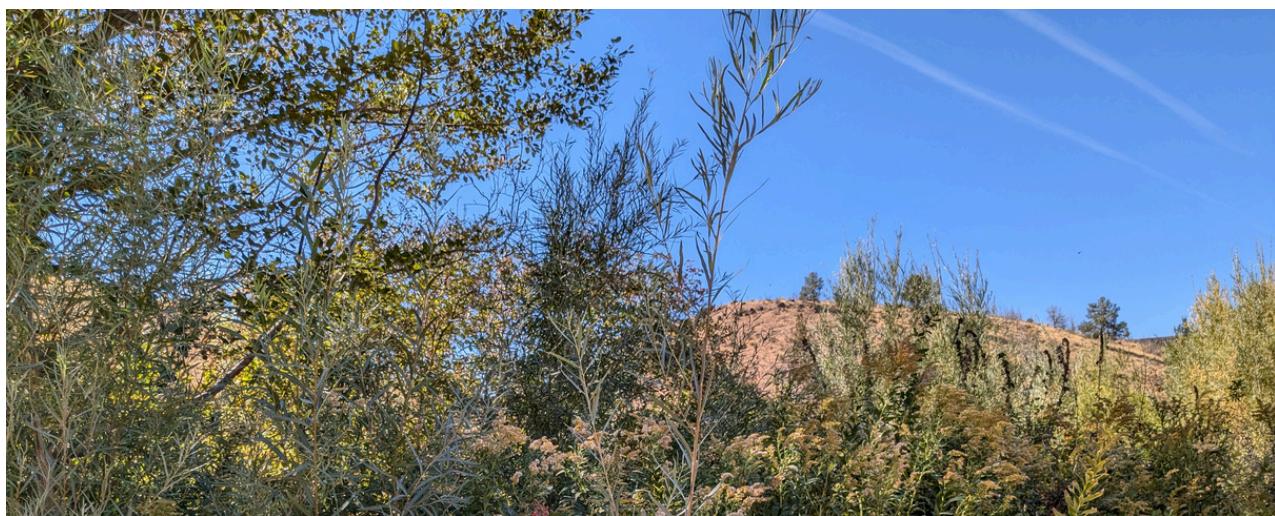
PROJECT & IMPACT

Raíces de Bienestar's Medford Community Health Worker (CHW) Wildfire Resilience Project was designed to strengthen post-disaster recovery and mental health access for Latine families in Southern Oregon impacted by the 2020 Labor Day wildfires. The project supported the work of a bilingual, bicultural CHW who served as a bridge between public health systems and wildfire recovery resources for pineros and campesinos. This role was divided into two interconnected areas: community liberation and education, and one-on-one patient navigation. Through these functions, the CHW led community engagement activities such as tabling events, Pláticas (community conversations), and Charlas (educational talks) that addressed emotional wellbeing, emotional safety, and the current sociopolitical climate. In addition, she supported individuals with resource navigation, documentation assistance, and mental health screenings. While this work primarily took place in Southern Oregon, Pláticas expanded to greater Oregon to accommodate the larger community's needs. The CHW also provided phone screenings for the organization.

The project's impact was deeply rooted in the trusted community relationships that the CHW built through safe and culturally grounded entry points for families navigating trauma, loss, and systemic barriers. Pláticas was initially offered in-person in Southern Oregon upon the request from the community. However, community engagement struggled after November 2024 in response to political shifts. After multiple outreach attempts for in-person activities, Pláticas shifted to a virtual setting to support the Latine community statewide. This shift supported safer participation about the sociopolitical climate. The program's adaptability ensured that engagement continued even when participation waned or external challenges arose. The CHW supported hundreds of individuals directly through navigation and support services, while connecting with many more through group activities, Charlas, and outreach events that promoted healing, reflection, and community connection. Dra. Zúñiga observed, "Her love for the community is just amazing. People know her as someone they trust and part of the community."

RECOMMENDATIONS

For other organizations seeking to foster resilience and recovery after disasters, Raíces de Bienestar's experience highlights several key lessons. Flexibility funding based in trust of the grantee is essential. Programs must be able to evolve with community needs rather than adhere rigidly to pre-set structures. Funders who encourage adaptive implementation make it possible for organizations to remain responsive and effective in times of rapid change. Hiring and supporting community members from within the affected communities offers resource access steeped in trust and culturally rooted engagement. Maintaining intentional communication and collaboration among partners and funders can help sustain connection and shared purpose even as organizations grow or shift focus. In challenging times, centering that relationships are at the heart of resilience work can help organizations survive while staying true to their mission.



Information provided by Dra. Ruth Zuniga.

BEYOND TOXICS



OVERVIEW

DRLN Representative: Eric Richardson

Other Organizational Staff on Project: Krystal Abrams

Community Served: Communities overburdened by pollution, low-income, BIPOC, families

Estimated # of People Impacted: 100 people engaged

County/Region Served: Central Oregon

ORGANIZATION

Beyond Toxics is a statewide nonprofit organization based in Eugene, Oregon, founded in 2001. The organization's mission is to provide leadership in building a community driven environmental justice movement for a thriving and just Oregon. Beyond Toxics uplifts voices from communities disproportionately impacted by pollution and climate change and works through grassroots organizing, policy advocacy, education, and coalition building to ensure everyone has access to clean air, water, and safe environments.

GRANT PROJECT & IMPACT

Through the initiative Healing Climate Trauma through Cultural, Spiritual, and Ecological Connections, Beyond Toxics brought together partners, families, and community members to nurture resilience and healing through connection with the land. Working alongside the Eugene Springfield NAACP, Plaza de Nuestra Comunidad, and Nurturely, the team created culturally grounded and trauma informed spaces that centered joy, nature, and spiritual well being. Over the past year, the project blossomed across two main garden sites, the Plaza Garden and the Amicus Memorial Garden in North Eugene. These gardens became places of gathering and growth, where people of color and bilingual families could reconnect with nature, food traditions, and one another.

Families and youth participated in activities that combined learning, creativity, and care. Participants gardened, made natural self care and cleaning products, shared recipes, and celebrated cultural foods. Regular Wednesday gatherings became a rhythm of community life, where parents and children worked side by side, learning from the earth and from one another. Out of these spaces, new opportunities began to grow. A cooperative housing developer, inspired by the vision of community resilience, committed to transforming the North Eugene garden site into a resilience hub that will serve as a lasting anchor for collaboration and cultural exchange.



The project strengthened both community resilience and cultural connection. Families and youth learned about pollinators, Oregon native plants, and traditional foodways, deepening their connection to the land and to cultural heritage. Participants described these moments as healing and grounding, an antidote to isolation and stress. The gardens also became places of meaningful exchange between Black and Brown communities, fostering solidarity and shared learning across cultures. The success of these gatherings sparked new partnerships, including conversations with the local watershed and the Black Cultural Initiative, to expand garden spaces and deepen collaborative impact.

Even as the organization faced major leadership and staffing transitions during the year, Beyond Toxics stayed grounded in its values. Through intentional reflection and professional support, staff worked through internal challenges and nurtured morale, ensuring that the spirit of care and community remained strong. These efforts allowed the organization to carry forward its work with renewed clarity and commitment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Beyond Toxics' experience highlights the importance of accessibility, language inclusion, and cultural humility in building resilience. Creating multilingual materials, using community radio, and prioritizing translation help ensure that everyone can participate fully. Just as importantly, cultivating spaces that feel safe, welcoming, and culturally responsive invites deeper trust and long term engagement. The organization encourages others to move beyond social media outreach and build relationships through shared experiences rooted in reciprocity and care. Finally, Beyond Toxics reminds us that environmental justice and trauma healing are deeply intertwined. By grounding resilience work in culture, creativity, and ecological stewardship, communities can heal together and build lasting strength for generations to come.

Information provided by Eric Richardson and Krystal Abrams.

FRIENDS OF TRYON CREEK



OVERVIEW

DRLN Representative: Nanda Ramos

Other Organizational Staff on Project: Lena Hicks, Gabe Sheoships

Community Served: Indigenous, Black, and other communities of color; low-income families; youth and elders; and local residents across the Portland metro area.

Estimated # of People Impacted: Over 150 total engaged

County/Region Served: Multnomah & Clackamas

ORGANIZATION

Friends of Tryon Creek is a community-supported nonprofit founded in 1970 by local park neighbors dedicated to preserving Tryon Canyon, an important urban natural area in Portland. Over the past five decades, the organization has grown into a vital steward of the Tryon Creek State Natural Area, fostering environmental education, ecological restoration, and community connection. Guided by the vision of creating an inclusive community connected to this urban forest, both now and for future generations, Friends of Tryon Creek works to cultivate belonging and environmental responsibility through programs that honor both ecological and cultural relationships to the land.

GRANT PROJECT & IMPACT

With support from the DRLN Resiliency Grant, Friends of Tryon Creek completed a 240-page Climate Vulnerability Assessment (CVA) that will inform the organization's Cultural Restoration Plan. The CVA was designed to center Indigenous knowledge and perspectives, examining the impact of climate change on habitats, park infrastructure, and both local and Indigenous communities. The funding directly supported 17 Indigenous Advisors and Cultural Educators participation, who contributed their historical knowledge, plant expertise, and cultural perspectives to guide the process. One of the most impactful outcomes was the Indigenous Community Day, which created a culturally safe space for people to gather, share food, and practice traditions together. Feedback collected through surveys reflected deep emotional and cultural connections to Tryon Creek. Participants described the forest as a place for spiritual connection, intergenerational teaching, and belonging.

In total, over 150 individuals were engaged through activities, including community surveys, talking circles, and gatherings like Indigenous Community Day, which drew nearly 100 families. While the project faced challenges such as scheduling with advisors and construction delays on their new Education Pavilion, a culturally grounded space inspired by a Chinookan plankhouse, Friends of Tryon Creek adapted by conducting one-on-one interviews and rescheduling events. These adaptations ultimately strengthened relationships and produced deeper insights, advancing the organization's commitment to Indigenous-led environmental and cultural restoration.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For organizations inspired by this project, Friends of Tryon Creek emphasizes the importance of cultivating truly community-centered spaces: places that feel genuinely welcoming rather than performative. As DRLN Representative Nanda Ramos reflected, "People are more willing to engage when events are designed with their comfort and cultural context in mind - places where they can share openly, feel seen, and feel ownership of the space." Building such spaces begins with trust and authentic relationship-building. Programs must focus on rehumanizing both staff and participants, fostering mutual respect and connection instead of prioritizing deliverables or outputs. This approach strengthens engagement and fosters long-term resilience and sustainable relationships that endure beyond any single project or grant cycle.



Information & photos provided by Nanda Ramos.



VOZ WORKERS' RIGHTS EDUCATION PROJECT (VOZ)

OVERVIEW

DRLN Representative: Annica Maxfield

Other Organizational Staff on Project: Sandy Arreola, Essly Diaz

Community Served: Migrants, Latino community, Asylum seekers from Africa, Day laborers

Estimated # of People Impacted: 60 people engaged

County/Region Served: Portland, OR

ORGANIZATION

Voz Workers' Rights Education Project (Voz) is a worker-led organization that advocates with day laborers, domestic workers, and immigrants to improve their working conditions and protect their civil rights through leadership development, organizing, education, and economic opportunity. As the only organization in Oregon dedicated to supporting the day laborer community, Voz provides vital pathways for economic empowerment and collective action among individuals who often face multiple barriers to stable employment, including homelessness and immigration challenges. Guided by the belief that transformative social justice must be led by those most directly affected, Voz models worker leadership by creating a space where day laborers are not only supported in finding fair employment but are also supported to become community leaders and advocates for shaping a more equitable future for day laborers in Portland.



GRANT PROJECT & IMPACT

Voz's grant project, "Raíces de Resiliencia: Voces de la Tierra," created a nature-based gathering at Cathedral Park to honor diverse cultural practices in environmental stewardship, healing, and connection to the land. The goal was to provide day laborers and domestic workers, many of whom are migrants, with a space to connect with nature beyond the context of work, nurturing well-being and belonging through art, culture, and community. Voz intentionally chose Cathedral Park, a place where many

participants had previously worked, to help reframe their relationship to the park as one of healing and recreation rather than labor. The event, held on a beautiful summer day, brought together 30–40 members who shared music, dancing, laughter, art, and food.

Activities included a live performance by a member's band, block carving to create rubber stamps, and a meal prepared by two members. The team also created and distributed 30 healing kits containing potted plants, sage, teas, cooling towels, first aid items, and other physical and cultural healing tools. In addition, Voz developed a journal featuring ten member interviews on their approaches to well-being, including personal profiles, grounding exercises, coloring pages, and reflections on what healing means to them. [**Click here to learn more about these journals.**](#)

The event fostered joy, creativity, and healing among workers who are often brought together for survival or labor rather than community care. Many participants shared how meaningful it was to connect socially and culturally in ways that celebrated their identities. One worker, whose story was featured in the journal, proudly shared his section over a video call with his family, a moment that captured the pride and visibility the project inspired. This community space represented a powerful shift away from daily hardship and chronic stress, offering a chance for restoration and connection in the face of ongoing social and political challenges. Overall, the initiative directly engaged more than 40 participants and created ripple effects across their families and broader networks, strengthening cultural connection and resilience through joy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As Voz reflects, "enjoying life is part of resistance." Resilience grows strongest when rooted in culture, creativity, and community care. For other community-based organizations seeking to foster engagement and resilience, this project demonstrates the importance of centering joy and cultural expression as acts of healing and empowerment. Even when advocacy and survival remain central to the work, intentionally creating space to celebrate one another, build relationships, and share culture reinforces collective strength. Involving community members directly in planning, such as bringing their own music, food, and art, ensures gatherings reflect shared ownership and authentic meaning making. Finally, addressing language barriers, even when fluent staff are not available, through translation and multilingual materials, is essential to building inclusive, welcoming spaces for all participants.



Information & photos provided by Annica Maxfield.



THE NEXT DOOR, INC.

OVERVIEW

DRLN Representative: Alicia Ramirez

Other Organizational Staff on Project: Alicia Swift, Anna Osborn

Community Served (Including identities, income, etc.): Latino/Spanish Speaking community members.

Estimated # of People Impacted:

12 (2, Valle Verde series); 25+ (monthly Valle Verde reunion gatherings); 220 (monthly subscribers for mental health podcast)

County/Region Served: North Oregon Columbia River Gorge

ORGANIZATION

The Next Door Inc., founded in 1971 and based in the Columbia River Gorge, is a leading social service nonprofit whose mission is, "Opening doors to new possibilities by strengthening children and families and improving communities." The Next Door, Inc. offers over 35 programs that encompass counseling, mentoring, parenting support, economic development, health and wellness education, and more. Their mental health services serve youth ages 3 to 26, employing methods like behavior skills training, play therapy, family counseling, and medication management, with a sliding-scale payment approach to ensure access. Guided by values of integrity, empathy, justice, flexibility, and empowerment, The Next Door, Inc. strives to create safe, responsive, and inclusive supports for underserved communities across Oregon and Washington.

PROJECT & IMPACT

This grant project continued to support Valle Verde, a program that offers mental health awareness and resilience within the Spanish-speaking community of the Columbia Gorge region. This 12-week series was designed to provide culturally relevant education, tools, and conversations that empower participants to better understand and manage their emotional wellbeing. Between July 2024 and June 2025, two Valle Verde cohorts were completed, graduating 12 participants. The Next Door, Inc. also expanded outreach through the Spanish-language podcast "Comparte, Aprende y Vive," which has produced over 500 episodes since its inception, offering accessible and relatable discussions on mental health topics. Since January 2025, the Valle Verde facilitators have held monthly gathering for past Valle Verde participants to reunite and continue discussing mental health topics in a supportive space.

The Valle Verde program created transformative spaces for healing, learning, and connection. Participants describe it as one of the first environments where they felt safe to openly share their personal experiences and traumas, many for the first time.



Through a mix of popular education methods, group reflection and co-learning, the program helps participants connect the relationship between mental health, the body, and lived experiences of stress and adversity, including immigration-related trauma. The monthly Valle Verde alumni gatherings have strengthened this impact by offering ongoing support and community building long after the initial 12-week series concludes. Some alumni reported becoming more active in advocacy work in their community as a result of the program. For facilitators, each series brings new insights and growth, deepening their understanding of community needs and reinforcing the co-learning model that defines this work. The program's success also gained national recognition when two CHW facilitators presented their experience at the 2025 National Latino Behavioral Health Conference in New Mexico, an affirmation of the program's innovation and authenticity in delivering Spanish-language, community-led mental health education.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For community-based organizations interested in replicating or adapting this work, the Valle Verde experience underscores the importance of trust, flexibility, and accessibility. The Next Door, Inc. noted that community members struggled to find safe, in-person places to connect due to the current sociopolitical climate. Working hours also impacted participation when agricultural sector needs were high. The Next Door, Inc. recommends meeting participants where they are, physically, emotionally, and organizationally, especially when communities face barriers related to immigration, work schedules, and systemic trauma. Facilitators rooted in their communities need organizational flexibility to meet their community's needs as they shift. Programs that are locally led by trusted CHWs are more likely to succeed because these facilitators understand the nuances of community life and can be flexibly accordingly. This organization recommends that funders and partners emphasize relational accountability over bureaucratic reporting, fostering space for authentic dialogue and shared storytelling about impact rather than rigid metrics. Simplifying funding processes and maintaining open communication ensures organizations can focus on the quality of their work rather than administrative burdens. Finally, developing facilitator guides and certification opportunities (CEUs offered through the Oregon Health Authority) can strengthen workforce capacity, availability, and ensure community sustainability.

Information & photos provided by Alicia Swift & Anna Osborn.



LIVING ISLANDS

OVERVIEW

DRLN Representative: Kianna Juda Angelo

Other Organizational Staff on Project: Ruby Nomani, Roselynna Quinit

Community Served (Including identities, income, etc.): Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, and Micronesian

Estimated # of People Impacted: 60

County/Region Served: Statewide

ORGANIZATION

Living Islands is a volunteer-driven nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting Micronesian communities through cross-cultural education and awareness since 2013. The organization acts as a cultural and educational network that celebrates and advocates for the diverse identities of Micronesian peoples, strengthening ties between local and international leaders, stakeholders, and communities. Living Islands Through traditional storytelling, cultural research, knowledge sharing, community work, and targeted educational programming, Living Islands seeks to build strong and sustainable societies by first supporting strong communities.

PROJECT & IMPACT

Living Islands launched The Women's Emergency Preparedness for Pacific Islanders (WEPPPI) workshop, a workshop created by Oregon-based Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (NHPI) women and designed for NHPI women across generations from college students to elders. The project offered culturally grounded training in emergency preparedness, with practical skills adapted to Pasifika identities, family structures, and lived realities. Foundationally inspired by Oregon's Be 2 Weeks Ready program, participants explored what preparedness truly means for Pacific Islander households in the U.S. compared to life in the Islands by sharing stories, hard conversations, and generational knowledge. The workshop addressed topics often unspoken in mixed-gender settings, such as sanitation, food security, and household safety. Participants created emergency go-bags, food kits, fire extinguishers, meeting points, and preparation strategies relevant to mothers working around children and multigenerational homes. Graduates conducted community outreach and collaborated with Living Islands and created six public service announcements (PSAs), building visibility and awareness for their community. The project emphasized creating safe and women-centered spaces where NHPI women could speak openly, embrace authority over preparedness in their households, and build a shared understanding of how to prepare their families and communities.

The workshop supported approximately 15–20 attendees directly, with broader community impact through outreach conversations and the emergency preparedness PSAs. Participants reported feeling more confident using preparedness gear (i.e., fire extinguishers), understanding emergency routines they could use with their families, and talking about sensitive preparedness needs in Pacific Islander cultures. Elders and younger women exchanged stories and strategies, enriching the curriculum and highlighting generational differences in capacity, resources, and priorities. The project also reimaged the contents of go-bags to align with community realities, such as including fish jerky, portable power banks that could be used in the home, and waterproof storage. One community member who depends on a nighttime breathing machine used the power bank to ensure safety during an outage, illustrating the immediate practical value of their preparedness go-bags. Through its trust-based environment, the workshop opened space for deeper reflection, conversation, and data gathering, particularly when staff stepped back to encourage greater participation. The project strengthened confidence, leadership, and intergenerational learning, while offering NHPI women a rare setting to shape emergency preparedness from their lens.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For others invested in culturally grounded, women-centered emergency preparedness education, CBOs can build on Living Island's approach by creating spaces that reduce fear and anxiety around preparedness, encourage dialogue, and honor cultural norms while adapting them for U.S.-based emergencies. Mixing generational participants fosters mutual learning and helps tailor messages to different living situations and resource levels. Hands-on scenarios, small-group discussion circles, and pre- and post-workshop surveys can deepen engagement and capture knowledge gaps.

CBOs need secure private, safe meeting spaces and reduced barriers to county or state training opportunities. The Network can further strengthen this work by continuing to provide safe, trusting spaces; reducing reporting burdens; and supporting diverse, community-driven approaches to resilience that reflect the lived experiences of NHPI families.



Information & photos provided by Kianna Judo Angelo and Ruby Nomani.



NARA OF THE NORTHWEST, INC.

OVERVIEW

DRLN Representative: Michele Pinkham

Other Organizational Staff on Project: Heidi Nicewander, Sinan Hang, and multiple staff

Community Served (Including identities, income, etc.): Indigenous, SPMI, dual diagnosis

Estimated # of People Impacted: 400

County/Region Served: Clackamas County, Washington County, Multnomah County

ORGANIZATION

NARA NW is an Indigenous-owned and operated nonprofit based in Portland, Oregon, founded in 1970. Originally established as an outpatient substance use treatment center, the organization has since expanded its services to include a full continuum of care: behavioral health, primary medical and dental services, child and family programs, transitional housing, and wellness initiatives tailored for American Indian and Alaska Native individuals and families. At the heart of NARA NW's philosophy is the belief that "without the family circle there will be no future," a principle that guides its commitment to centering services around family, community, and cultural identity. Traditional Indigenous culture and spirituality are deeply woven into all programs, with sacred ceremony, the use of the pipe and drum, and the presence of a totem pole serving as reminders of holistic healing for emotional, physical, spiritual, and mental well-being. Each year, NARA NW serves approximately 5,000 clients representing more than 255 tribes.

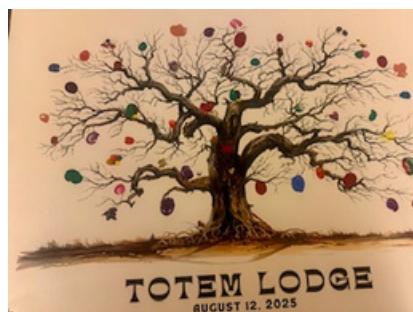
PROJECT & IMPACT

Throughout the year, NARA NW hosted a series of community healing events designed to foster resilience, food sovereignty, and cultural sustainability among clients and the wider community. These gatherings served as grounding spaces that embodied NARA's holistic approach to wellness, connecting people to the land through gardening, art, and shared ceremony. The central event, End of an Era, marked the transition from Totem Lodge to the new Bear Lodge site. Participants reflected on their time at Totem Lodge, writing down favorite memories and hopes to place in a time capsule and adding their fingerprints to a collaborative painting of a tree as a symbol of growth and continuity. Traditional Indigenous foods were shared, reinforcing a sense of belonging and cultural pride. Grant funding also supported NARA NW's annual art fair, where clients sold their artwork, and the community picnic, which celebrated sobriety and connection. In addition, the organization provided inclement weather supplies to community members experiencing homelessness, including cooling towels, sunscreen, and water bottles during summer heatwaves and sleeping bags, tarps, gloves, and rain gear during colder, rainy months.

The End of an Era event created a space for reflection, gratitude, and healing as participants celebrated the memories and relationships built at Totem Lodge. Many shared stories of providers who had made a lasting impact on their journeys, strengthening the sense of continuity and care that defines NARA NW. As Heidi Nicewander from NARA NW reflected, "The End of the Era had so many good conversations and their experiences at Totem Lodge. It was very heartwarming. Some clients have been here for a while and shared stories of providers that impacted them that aren't part of NARA anymore. That was pretty cool." The annual art fair further deepened community bonds, providing a platform for creative expression and empowerment. Sinan Hang from NARA NW also noted, "Everyone sold lots of their work. It was a really great celebration. Our clients look forward to it. It's a very therapeutic process. You can see they take pride in it." The annual picnic, a cherished celebration of sobriety and connection, continues to play a vital role in supporting mental health and community care. Together, these events demonstrated that culturally affirming spaces are essential for healing and resilience, allowing participants to reconnect with one another, their traditions, and the broader community.

RECOMMENDATIONS

NARA NW's experience underscores the importance of remaining client-centered and responsive to changing community needs. Effective community engagement evolves with circumstances, whether during times of transition, seasonal shifts, or collective challenges. Tailoring activities to current realities helps foster trust, comfort, and long-term participation. Other community-based organizations can learn from this approach by blending practical support with opportunities for creative expression, reflection, and celebration. Storytelling, shared meals, and ceremony all strengthen resilience and belonging. NARA NW also encourages funders and networks such as the Disaster Resilience Learning Network to continue uplifting community stories of healing and to recognize the value of sustaining long-standing traditions. The continuation of the annual sobriety picnic, made possible through this grant, highlights how supporting ongoing gatherings, not only new projects, can sustain community resilience and connection over time.



Information & photos provided by Heidi Nicewander and Sinan Hang.