

2023 N2N Annual Grantee Convening Overview and Final Report

Summary and Purpose



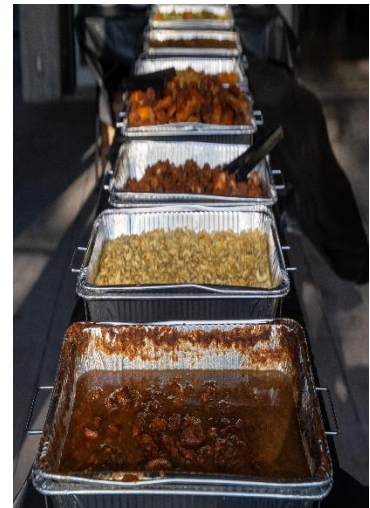
This year's N2N Grantee convening was held for the first time since 2019 (pre-COVID) on Wednesday September 13, 2023 from 5-8pm at the Bethaday Community Learning Center in White Center. In planning with the N2N Advisory Committee and the N2N Community Advocates, the theme of the event was "**Community Care, Wellness and Resilience**". Looking back at the N2N grantees over

the last few years during the pandemic, it was clear that community organizations and efforts all focused on some part to community care and supporting the health and wellness of our communities. There was an expressed need to focus on both individual healing as well as the health of our community organizations. The overall purpose of the Convening remained the same from previous years: to celebrate the success of grantees; to make connections amongst diverse communities; and to learn from one another. There was a total of 104 attendees representing 72 different grantee partners, funding partners and friends.



Approach

There was an expressed desire for many in the community to return to some “normalcy” around in person gatherings to feel the spirit of our diverse communities. Thus, the approach this year was to focus on organic connections and less structured conversations. In addition, there have been several recent youth/young adults-oriented organizations that were important to spotlight. Lastly, wellness-based community partners were featured who could offer experiences that were both indigenous/cultural and less traditional alongside those seeking to transform the clinical mental health system. As per the norm, N2N offered supervised children’s activities to welcome parents and caregivers to participate.



Agenda Review

The Convening opened with an informal welcome and dinner featuring restaurants from small businesses of color located in one of the 4 N2N target neighborhoods of South Seattle, White Center, Kent and SeaTac/Tukwila. They included: Olympic Express, Salvadorean Bakery, Nana’s Southern Kitchen, Juba Café, and Soozveen Catering.



The group was blessed with inspirational words from language warrior Sondra Segundo of [Haida Roots](#) who shared drum, song, and stories of how her organization is preserving the Haida language.

To open the evening, Alesha Washington, CEO and President of the Seattle Foundation, and Sean Goode, Chief Office of Impact and Learning of the Seattle Foundation,

offered their gratitude for community partnerships and reflected on the strength of collective movements.



The next part of the evening spotlighted 3 youth/young adult led organizations recently funded by N2N. They included: Sebastian Diaz (Executive Director) and Carl King (board member, substitute due to illness) from [Cultures United](#); Sabrionna Barquett from [Never Too Early To Create](#), and the Honorable Mohamed Abdi, a volunteer with Got Your Back Seattle and a City of Tukwila City councilmember. Facilitated by N2N Community Advocate from White Center, Henok Gebreyohannes, the panelists shared their testimony of what motivated them to be involved in their respective organizations and the hardships and struggles it took to get them to where they are. Organizations focused on their respective issues of mental health, healthy sports activities and youth entrepreneurship. Attendees shared, *“The youth speakers were the highlight of the event.”*



“The youth panel was really inspiring. I loved the way the youth shared their stories in such an authentic way, and really appreciate that N2N created that platform for that to happen!”



Aileen Balahadia shared that often adults have to “get out of the way” and let the youth lead the way as they would.

The final portion of the evening focused on 3 separate breakout options that featured community grantee partners engaged in deep, community wellness work. Participants could choose from Art Therapy with Lupita Torrez, a Latina immigrant, mother, sister, and community educator, who founded the Latina

Network for Healing Leadership and Transformation. Their mission is to nurture the resilience of women, their families, and communities by facilitating spaces of belonging and offering tools for



personal and community liberation. She led participants through Art Therapy in Community, a hands-on activity to reflect, release and celebrate their individual emotional/spiritual needs and

story. Lupita shared, *"When language and words fail you, Art Therapy and the community are there to hold you."*



Participants shared, *"Art therapy is what we use in our teen group, it was confirmation that it can work."* and *"I really enjoyed the art therapy and dedicated time to spending in wellness activities. We don't often set aside time for this, and I found it to be so nourishing!!"*

The second wellness offering was led by Join Xochitl Garcia, founder/Executive Director of [Casa Surya Healings](#) which provides holistic and ancestral practices to support the process of healing, development, and personal/collective growth of the Latino community. She led participants in a ceremonial cacao ceremony that has been used for emotional and spiritual healing for thousands of years. The word "cacao" comes from the Mayan words "Ka'kau" meaning "heart blood," and "Chokola'j" meaning "to drink together." The goal was to communally uplift mood, increase vitality, and open the heart and intuition, along with other personal spiritual intentions.



Participants participated in the blessing, preparing, and drinking of a cacao ceremony. It was a beautiful evening to be outdoors in the adjacent Lakewood Park.

Attendees shared comments such as *"I had a really calming, loving, learning experience in cacao circle."* and *"it was very interesting, and I loved it. I have a plan to go to their place."*



The last wellness offering was to join Makinie Fortino, LMFT and CEO of [DMHS: Deconstructing the Mental Health System Inc.](#) an organization whose mission is to achieve an equitable, anti-racist Mental Health System, through acknowledging how intersectionality and racism impacts any system affiliated with the system. She was joined by Erika Cherry, a community therapist and wellness champion for a conversation about community care and healing, while working in nonprofit settings. There was an opportunity to connect with other wonderful organizations,



explore and exchange ideas about prioritizing innovation and wellness to help our communities and nonprofits thrive. Small circles and partner work allowed participants to share their struggles with balancing all aspects of mental and community health. One participant shared, *"This wasn't my first choice, but it was definitely where I was guided to be from a higher power. When I shared how Brown and Black women need to support each other with self-care and healing it really resonated with*

others. My new mantra is "I love u," but we need rest and heal. Your health is more important than this event/situation."

As attendees left the convening, they were each gifted parting gifts curated from the aforementioned organizations: organic soap and healing/mediation oils.

Graphic Recording

The Convening featured real-time recording of the thoughts, ideas, and notes from the evening. This approach allowed people to synthesize and understand the content of the evening, no matter what learning style or language used. Claudia Rodriguez used a holistic approach to capture and highlight the "spirit" of each event by using all the



Post Event Survey

In a post event survey, we heard from a small sample of attendees.

- 94% reported that this Convening was of highest value to them, their organization and their community work.
- 94% reported that they mad new connections they'd like to maintain beyond this event
- 100% reported that they learned something new from the event, either from other attendees or from featured speakers or presenters

Some suggestions for the future included:

- Opportunity / activity at tables so folks could introduce themselves.
- Please continue to provide space for wellness activities. *"That was so valuable."*
- More cultural presentations and sharing.
- Next location use a community owned space or larger community center with more parking and accessibility

Sample topics were proposed for a 2024 event. The ones that garnered the most interest included:

- youth leadership and voice, multiracial organizing and advocacy for policy/systems change
- Pro-Black solidarity and movements
- Immigrant/refugee justice and reform.



Participating grantees, partners and friends:

A la Garifuna Women, ADEFUA Cultural Education Workshop, Africans on The Eastside, Amigos de Seattle, Association of Zambians in Seattle Washington (AZISWA), Braided Seeds, Hip Hop is Green, Casa Surya Healings, Centro Comunitario de Autoayuda, Choose 180, Cierra Sisters, City of Kent, City of SeaTac, City of Tukwila, Communities



Rise,
Cultures
United,

Deconstructing the Mental Health System, Duwamish River Community Coalition, Equitable Recovery & Reconciliation Alliance (ERRA), Fanikia Foundation, Global Wisdom Collective , Gowns for Grads, Haida Roots, Helping Link, Immigrant Seniors and Youth United, Iraqi Community Center of Washington, It's Never Too Early To

Create, Khmer Community of Seattle King County, Latina Network for Healing, Leadership and Transformation, Magic Cabinet, Medina Foundation, MLK Day Organizing Coalition , Mother Africa, Movimiento AfroLatino Seattle, Nehemiah Initiative Seattle, New Connections of Seattle King County, Open Doors for Multicultural Families, Pacific Islander Community Association, Philanthropy NW, Praxis Institute for Early Childhood Education,



Public Health of Seattle King County, Puget Sound Clean Air Agency, Renton School District, Salsa de la Vida, Seattle Foundation, Serve Ethiopians Washington, Somali Family Safety Task Force, Strippers are Workers, Supportive Partnerships in Education and Beyond, The Seattle Griot Project, The Service Board, United Way of King County, WA State Coalition of African Community Leaders, West Hill Community Association , White Center Community Development Association, Whitewater Aquatics Management, Women United, Wonder of

Women International, Your Money Matters Mentoring

Acknowledgements: Thank you to the Seattle Foundation, N2N Advisory Committee and to our community partners for making this night happen. Special thanks to Riham Hashi N2N Community Advocate for event planning, Rusol Abullah for supervised children's activities and Aileen Balahadia N2N Program Consultant for her leadership. All photos credited to [Mel Ponder Photography](#). Final report written by Aileen Balahadia, October 2023.