

Giinawiind Giginitaawigi'gomin

"Together We Grow" Youth Program



AICHO
American Indian Community
Housing Organization

Giinawiind Giginitaawigi'gomin

"Together We Grow" Youth Program

A program through the American Indian Community Housing Organization (AICHO), Giinawiind Giginitaawigi'gomin allows middle school and high school-aged youth to participate in skill-building activities that expose them to Indigenous cultural food practices, gardening, farming, entrepreneurial skills and communication skills with the opportunity to earn money.



Giinawiind Giginitaawigi'gomin

"Together We Grow" Youth Program

Throughout the Giinawiind program, youth tend to urban garden plots, create value-added products with what they grow and harvest, sell their goods at farmer's markets, and practice photography and video skills to document their experiences in the program. Additionally, weekly fieldtrips in collaboration with local Indigenous farmers and cultural knowledge holders immerse youth in Anishinaabe traditions.



Blessing of the Garden

Hope Flanagan, Community Outreach and Cultural Teacher at Dream of Wild Health, conducted a Blessing of the Garden ceremony alongside Dream of Wild Health Garden Warriors Felicia and Alyssa.

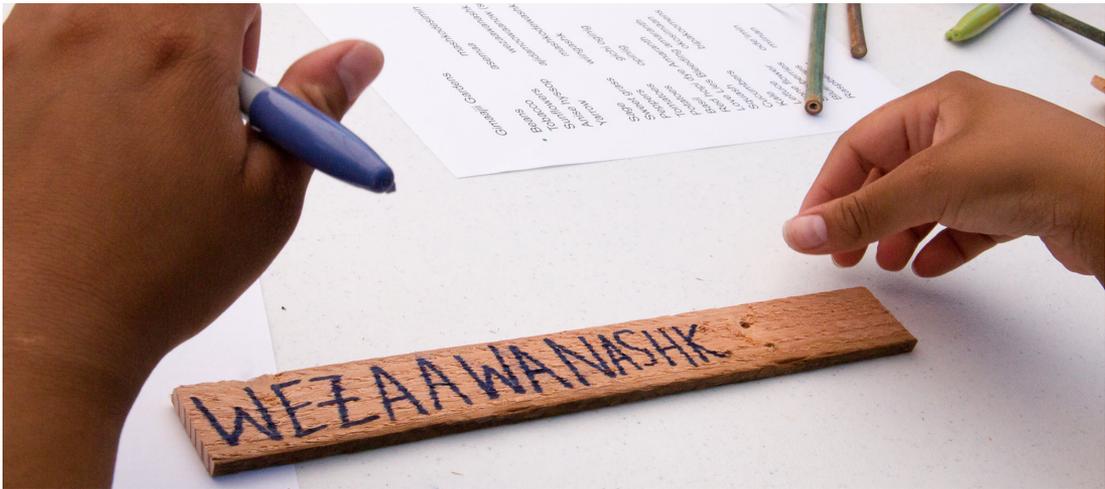


At this beautiful ceremony, Hope, Felicia, and Alyssa did cultural activities with the youth as a beginning to the Giinawiind Giginitaawigi'gomin youth program.

Following this ceremony, a Giinawiind youth's grandparent mentioned that his grandson had been very moved and, for the first time, felt a deep spiritual connection with his culture. He felt like a "weight had been lifted" and a "sense of healing."

Blessing of the Garden

This ceremony set the tone for the program, focusing on having the youth connect with Anishinaabe culture (including music, language, etc), build community, and express themselves. The youth wrote signs for AICHO's gardens in both English and Ojibwe, emphasizing the importance of reconnection with the traditional Ojibwe language. Additionally, the youth had the opportunity to introduce themselves to the crowd, beginning a program theme of the Giinawiind youth expressing themselves and using their own voices.



Wild Food Harvesting



Led by wild foods harvester Tashia Hart, Red Lake Nation tribal member, Giinawiind youth learned about traditional, medicinal, and cultural properties of the plants and berries that they can find all around them in Northern Minnesota.



Wild Food Harvesting

The youth learned about the importance of getting to know plant relatives, respecting them, thanking them, and looking to them for healing. After their plant walk and harvesting experience, the Giinawiind Giginitaawigi'gomin: Together We Grow program students took some time to sit and reflect in their program journals with written word or artwork about their connection with plants.

When asked what his favorite part of the Giinawiind program was, one youth said “the plant walk with Tashia. My future job is to make medicine... [and] to identify medicinal plants.” He wants to one day create a bio-indigenous medicine center.



Asemaa Pouch Making



The Giinawiind Giginataawig'gomin: Together We Grow program youth learned about one of the Anishinaabeg sacred medicines -- asemaa (tobacco), how to make it out of red willow, and how to make a traditional asemaa pouch from Fond du Lac Ojibwe tribal member Herb Fineday, Jr. Herb shared about Anishinaabe cultural values of respect and humility.



Asemaa Pouch Making



**"Connecting back to my culture through indigenous activities has been very important to me."
- Giinawiind youth**

Additionally, Herb spoke about the traditional practice of offering asemaa to human or non-human relatives when they share their gifts. It was a very grounding experience and the youth loved learning these important cultural teachings.



Indigenous Cooking Class

The Giinawiind youth had Delilah and Alyza Savage, Fond du Lac Band of Ojibwe youth entrepreneurs and cousins, as cooking instructors. Before cooking, the cousins shared about their journey to becoming Indigenous food producers, gardeners, harvesters, bakers and business owners. The youth learned about connecting with Indigenous culture through the making of traditional foods.



Indigenous Cooking Class

With help from Delilah and Alyza Savage, the Giinawiind youth made a delicious batch of all organic, creamy manoomin (wild rice) vegetable soup.



Mural Painting

Artists and muralists Moira Villiard (Fond du Lac Ojibwe Direct Descendant) and Michelle Defoe (Red Cliff Band tribal member) spent the day with AICHO's Giinawiind Giginitaawig'gomin: Together We Grow youth participants. They both shared about Indigenous ways of creating art using things found in the natural world and provided the youth with guidance on creating the 3 Sisters Mural. This mural is inspired by the traditional three-sisters planting method, in which miskodiisiminag (beans), agosimaan (squash), and mandaamin (corn) are grown together, replenishing nutrients that are removed back to the soil.



Mural Painting

For this mural, the community came together -- AICHO partnered with Family Freedom Center, a local Duluth organization that works to empower, support, and celebrate Black community members. AICHO and Family Freedom Center elders and youth ate lunch and painted together.



This beautiful mural is displayed in Family Freedom Center's Freedom Farm garden.

Traditional Namegos Smoking Fieldtrip

David and Patra Wise hosted the Giinawiind youth at their homestead. They shared the Indigenous process of making smoked namegos (lake trout) with the youth, took them on a nature walk, and harvested wiigwaas (birch) and wiigob (basswood) for Indigenous tea. After this, they brought the youth out to their farm where they have plans to raise bison to regenerate soil and maintain a balanced ecosystem.



Traditional Namegos Smoking Fieldtrip



At the end of the field trip, the lake trout and Indigenous tea were finished and the youth were able to enjoy these tasty cultural foods.



Youth-Led Class & Tour

In partnership with the Duluth Community Garden Program, Giinawiind youth gave a guided informational tour of AICHO's Gimaajii Mino Bimaadizimin Gardens. Additionally, students shared about the benefits of incorporating native plants into landscape and gardens, as well as how native plants can be used for food and medicine. The youth taught a class on traditional Indigenous activities including making sun teas from a variety of native plants as well as a healing salve. Seven community members benefited greatly from this youth-led class, and the youth felt empowered to teach others about the knowledge they had gained throughout the program so far.



Giinawiind youth, Elijah, giving a guided informational tour to visitors.

Power Camp

Youth participated in Power Camp, a 2-day workshop put on by partner organization Outside the Box focused on youth power and activism around themes of environmental justice. Youth worked with Analyah Schlaeger dos Santos, Youth Environmental Justice Coordinator with Minnesota Interfaith Power and Light, to discuss and share stories about power dynamics and how youth can share their voices to influence change.



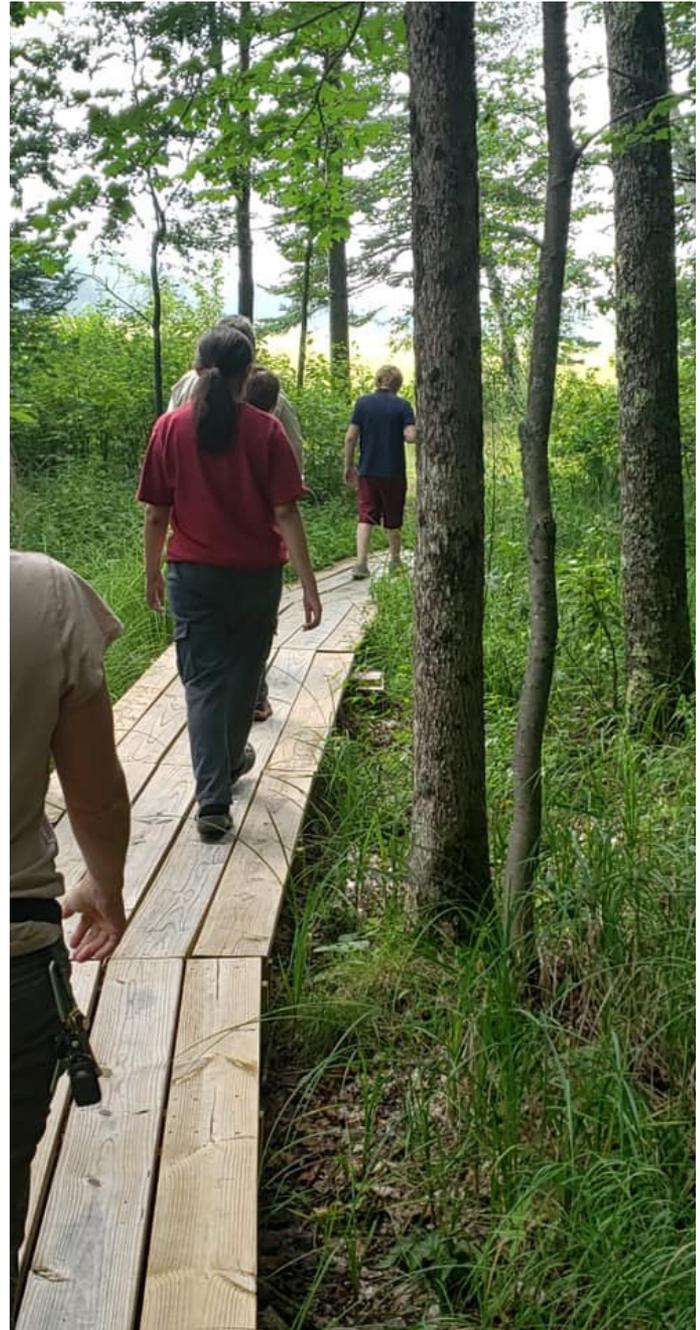
Power Camp

Artists Moira Villiard and Carla Hamilton worked with youth to use mural making as a way to express their thoughts around themes of environmental justice.



Anishinaabe Cultural Fieldtrip

The Giinawiind Giginitaawigi'gomin youth went on a field trip to the Fond du Lac Ojibwe Reservation to learn about the natural landscape and resources, manoomin (wild rice), nibi (water), and cultural/tribal life ways of the Anishinaabe by Fond du Lac tribal member Vern Northrup! Vern brought the youth and staff out to Perch Lake and Dead Fish Lake.



Vern told the Giinawiind youth about the ancient Anishinaabe prophecy about migrating to where the "food grows on water" -- manoomin.

Anishinaabe Cultural Fieldtrip

Vern shared about the history of white people attempting to separate Anishinaabe people from manoomin, as a source of food and cultural staple, using ditchbank drainage systems. Additionally, he spoke about how these systems were used to devalue the land in efforts to get Anishinaabe people to leave.

Finally, Vern spoke about the abundance of food and medicine available in the wild, and about how every plant and animal has a purpose. The youth and staff learned so much and really enjoyed their time with him.



Indigenous Agriculture Fieldtrip

At Native Wise LLC, youth learned from owners David and Patra Wise about the traditional three-sisters planting method, in which miskodiisiminag (beans), agosimaan (squash), and mandaamin (corn) are grown together. Additionally, the youth learned about high tunnels and field planting, got to learn about raising baaka'aakwenhag (chickens), and got to try honeycomb from the farm's beehive!



Crafting Manoomin Knockers

Marne Kaeske from 1854 Treaty Authority taught our Giinawiind Giginitaawigi'gomin Youth how to make their own manoomin knockers, the tool used by Anishinaabe peoples to collect manoomin by "knocking" the rice into their canoes as they pass by.



Crafting Manoomin Knockers

With her guidance, the youth split giizhikisag (cedar wood) segments into smaller pieces, then used planers and drawknives to carve down the block of wood, and finished the knockers with sandpaper. Over the course of the activity, the youth successfully transformed giizhikisag segments into polished smooth manoomin knockers, and were very excited about their ability to engage in this culturally important activity.



Manoomin Fieldtrip

David Wise of Native Wise LLC brought our Giinawiind Giginitaagi'gomin: Together We Grow Youth Program out to a manoomin harvesting camp near McGregor on the last day of the summer program. Our youth learned about poling and knocking techniques, and about protecting manoomin and nibi (water). Some of our youth got to try going out in a canoe and harvesting manoomin from the lake. Others stayed at camp, working on finishing their knockers while learning about the traditional rice parching process.



Manoomin Fieldtrip



These youth were brave, respectful, and curious. This field trip was a powerful time for them to connect with the sacred Anishinaabe food staple, manoomin.

Miigwech to David, Liz, and Lorna for the teachings and cultural experience.



Gardening

Giinawiind Giginitaawigi'gomin is Ojibwe for *Together We Grow*, and this program was started with the intention to reconnect indigenous youth to ancestral farming and gardening knowledge, promote food sovereignty in Duluth's urban indigenous communities, and fight food injustice.



Gardening



The Giinawiind youth worked to plant, maintain, and harvest two gardens at AICHO's Gimaaji Mino Bimaadizimin building in downtown Duluth, as well as an additional set of beds at partner organizations Duluth Public Library and Family Freedom Center's Freedom Farms. The youth predominantly grew traditional Anishinaabe foods and medicines, including miskodiisiminag (beans), agosimaan (squash), mandaamin (corn), ode' imin (strawberries), wezaawanashk (sage), wiingashk (sweetgrass), asemaa (tobacco), and other medicinal native plants. For some of the participants, it was their first time tending to a garden, and they learned about how to care for different plant relatives, as well as the Ojibwe names of many common foods.

Creating & Learning

The Giinawiind Giginitaawigi'gomin program allowed participating youths to engage in creative, culturally relevant activities, learn useful skills, and create homemade products for sale. The youth created the products from the plants and medicines they grew in the gardens and harvested in the woods.



Creating & Learning

Products sold by the youth included granola bars, lip balms, medicinal salves, beverages, baashkiminasigan (jam), green juice, aniibiishan (dried teas), salsa, pickles, worm juice fertilizer from AICHO's worm composting system, and fresh produce and herbs they harvested from AICHO's urban gardens.



Giinawiind Booth at AICHO's Indigenous Food & Arts Market

The Giinawiind youth had a booth at all 6 of AICHO's Indigenous Food and Art Markets over the summer, providing opportunities for them to develop entrepreneurial skills like marketing, product development, sales, and bookkeeping. The program was designed to empower students and allow them to earn the profits from the products they made and sold based on their participation.

**"I think of the quality of usefulness when other people purchase these market items. It just helps me feel motivated to... have perseverance in other objectives and goals."
- Giinawiind youth participant**



Primary Products Sold

Total Gross Program Income: \$2,722

Total Program Profits: \$2,051.35

Total income per item:

Jam/Jelly: \$236
 Salsa: \$338
 Worm juice: \$196
 Lip balm: \$156
 Salve: \$372
 Granola bars: \$570
 Beverages*: \$292



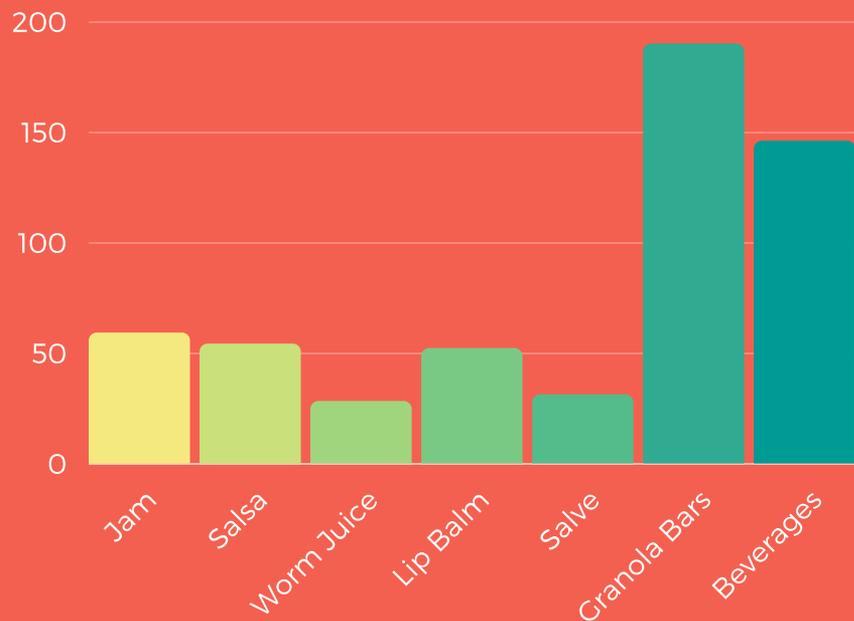
Total profit per item:

Jam/Jelly: \$164.61
 Salsa***: \$176
 Worm juice: \$170.8
 Lip balm: \$124.8
 Salve: \$319.3
 Granola bars: \$380
 Beverages*: \$219

Profit margin per item, not including labor costs:

Jam/Jelly: 69%
 Salsa: 52%
 Worm juice: 87%
 Lip balm: 80%
 Salve: 86%
 Granola bars: 67%
 Beverages: 75%

Total Number Sold of Each Product



Giinawiind Youth Participants

15 Youth Participants**

Total Profits* not including labor costs: \$2,051.35

Average Profit per Participant*: \$170.95

Total Program Hours: 156

Average Hours per Participant: 81.25**



**The Giinawiind program "really woke [me up] and showed me I had a part to play and a job to do... you guys were my safe place. Thank you all so much."
- Giinawiind Youth Participant**

* Profits made from selling products at AICHO's Indigenous Food and Arts Markets.

** Including YES Duluth participants

Youth Employment Services (YES) Duluth Participants

DWD's Youth Employment Services (YES) Duluth program provides employment and education support to eligible youth and young adults that reside in Duluth and are ages 16 to 24 at time of enrollment. The Giinawiind Giginitaawigi'gomin Program was able to sponsor YES Duluth Participants and benefitted from these participants' leadership.

4 YES Duluth participants

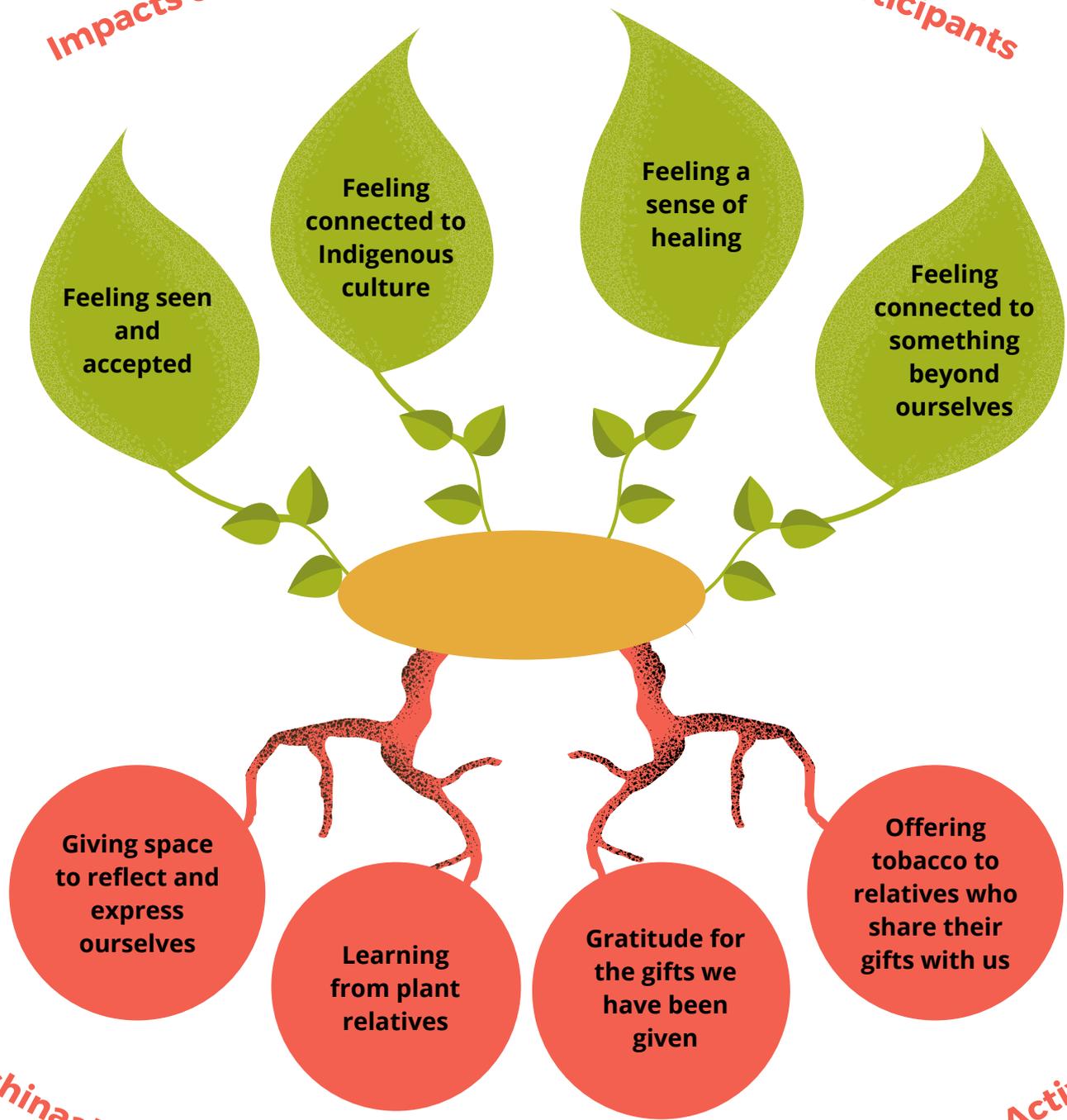
156 hours by YES Duluth participants

Total wages earned by YES Duluth participants: \$2,028



“Usually when I am given a special role, I always take it as an opportunity for it to be linked with a certain memory and time for a lesson I could possibly use in the future.” - Giinawiind Youth Participant

Impacts of Cultural Practices as Identified by Participants



Anishinaabe Cultural Practices Incorporated into Daily Program Activities

Additional Stories of Impact

From Giinawiind parents:

- “You are teaching them to be leaders!”
- “You are making them feel accepted without any shame which is different from their school experience.”
- “You are treating them with their culture.”
- “You are grounding – reclaiming their (cultural) identity of who they are.”
- A parent commented that their child has struggled with anxiety and depression over the past few years, but the program has really helped their child to turn a corner.

From Giinawiind youth:

- “This has been healing.”
- “I completely loved the program with all my heart. Every person I’ve met in that program was so inspiring.”



Giinawiind Giginitaawigi'gomin

AICHO Program Staff

Katie Schmitz, AICHO Community Outreach Coordinator

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Jeremiah Volkert

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Jordan Thompson

Alyssa Lee

Nathaniel Lee

Zachary Lee

Program Partners

Freedom Farm

Duluth Public Library

Duluth Community Garden Program

Outside the Box

1854 Treaty Authority

Hope Flannagan with Dream of Wild Health

DanSans Creative

Native Wise LLC

Tashia Hart

Vern Northrup

Herb Fineday of Round Lake Traditions

Delilah and Alyza Savage of Baby Cakes

Bakery and Savage Cousins Salads

Moira Villiard

Michelle Defoe

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Photo credit: Ivy Vainio, Cheryl Stone, Katie Schmitz, Jordan Thompson, Elijah Kot

Chi miigwech to everyone who helped make this program happen!