

The image features a collage of decorative elements on the right side. At the top right is a green nautilus shell. Below it are several green fern fronds of different sizes. Interspersed among the ferns are four gears: a large red one, a medium blue one, a small yellow one, and a small green one. The word "Spr" is in blue, the green gear replaces the "o", and "ckets" is in blue.

Sprockets

**Learning Cohort
2024-2025**

Sprockets improves the quality, availability, equity and effectiveness of out-of-school time learning for all youth in Saint Paul through the committed, collaborative and innovative efforts of community organizations, government, schools and other partners.





The **Sprockets Learning Cohort (SLC)**, a special project funded by the McNeely Foundation, was designed to support the professional development of youth workers through a collaborative learning environment. The eighteen month cohort focused on the intersections of identity, systemic oppression, trauma, mental wellness, and restorative practices. Cohort members learned together, built a bonded network, and each ventured into an action project to apply their cohort learning in their organizations.

SLC, was conceptualized on the belief that supporting the growth of youth workers supports the growth of youth and our communities. In her work on organizing strategies, adrienne maree brown suggests that embracing the design of **fractals** allows us to understand that “what we practice at a small scale can reverberate to the largest scale.” SLC was built as a fractal model.

The following pages feature cohort members reflections on the cohort experience (p. 5) and their action projects (p. 6-21). Throughout, you will see recurring images of **ferns** – a fractal that grows readily throughout Minnesota.

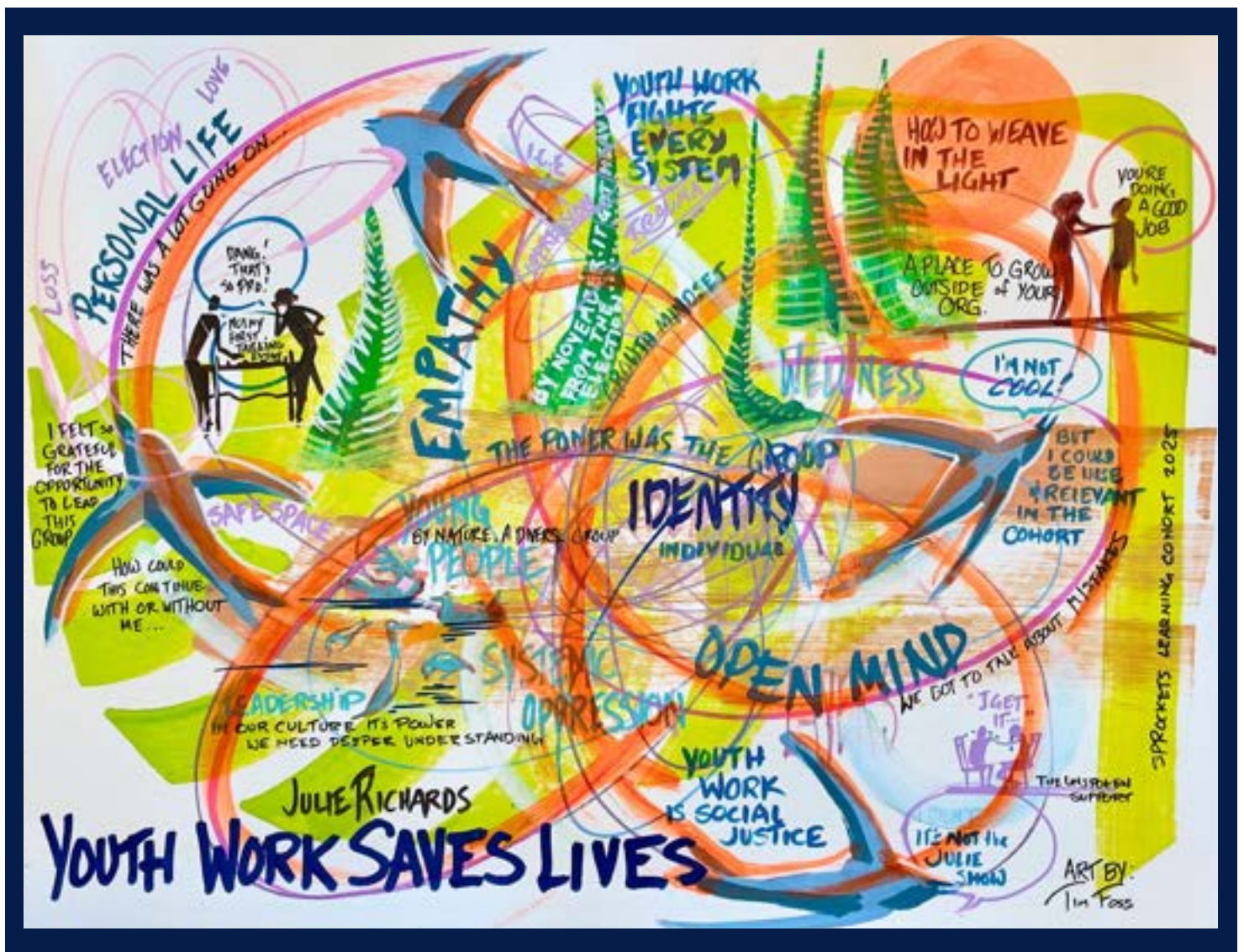
Reflection from **Erik Skold, Director of Sprockets**

Sprockets is honored to have been able to facilitate and support this cohort. Youth work is difficult and important. Seeing these youth workers come together to wrestle with important topics, build relationships and support each other, and improve their youth work practices is exactly what we hoped for when we started this project. Sprockets thanks Julie Richards for her leadership and all of the participants for their hard work, contributions to the field, and most of all their support and dedication to young people.

Reflection from **Shaun Kelley Walsh, SLC Action Project Coach**

Working with each of the youth workers to support imagining, building, and implementing their action projects was a true gift. I got to encourage them to go slow or big or small or backwards or upside down. I asked questions, sent resources, built supports, and helped make connections. Ultimately, though, my role was to reflect their own brilliance back to them. I have no doubt that the connections built in SLC will continue to have impact for youth and youth workers far into the future.





Julie Richards

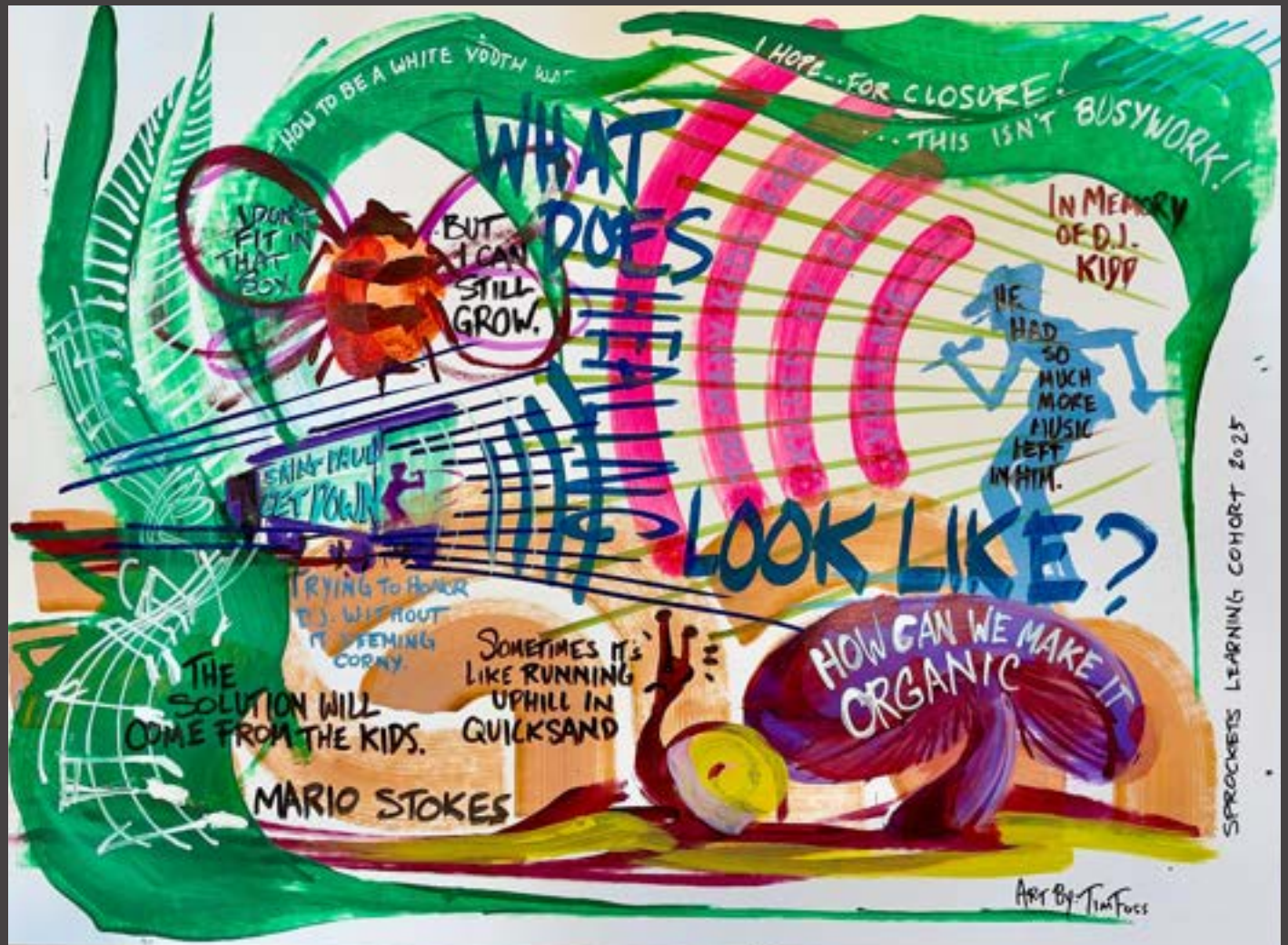
Sprockets Learning Cohort Designer & Facilitator
Inquire, Decipher, Progress Consultancy

This cohort has been a beautiful example of how ecosystems rooted in curiosity, empathy, and authenticity create ripples of resilience, connectedness, and love in all directions. It has been a privilege to help shape this learning environment that pushed us to deeper reflection, dissection, and reconstruction.





This image is a visual recording of the Sprockets Learning Cohort members' reflection session on their experience in the cohort conducted May 16th, 2025.



Mario Stokes

St. Paul Parks and Recreation

This year, Mario and the team at the GetDown lost a member of their community to gun violence. Inspired by the cohort learning on identity, power and trauma, Mario decided that his project would attempt to honor a life lost and support community healing. Mario is working with youth to create a community concert that will be held this summer.





Jocelyn Wiedow

Sprockets

Jocelyn wants to deepen youth workers' understanding of the histories of the neighborhoods they serve and build informed youth work practices that value lived experiences and community assets. Jocelyn worked with partners to host a guided walking tour along Payne Avenue on St. Paul's East Side. In the future, she plans to develop opportunities that engage youth workers across other St. Paul neighborhoods.





Paloma Cardoza

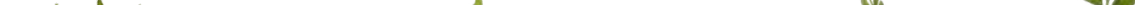
Urban Roots

The previous summer, team members had developed a curriculum to intentionally include youth reflection on their identities. The identity work in the cohort inspired Paloma to expand and deepen this curriculum to explore identity as a source of pride and strength. For her action project, Paloma built out this curriculum and it will be implemented this summer.



825 Arts

Mercedes is committed to inspiring people to use our superpowers to improve our

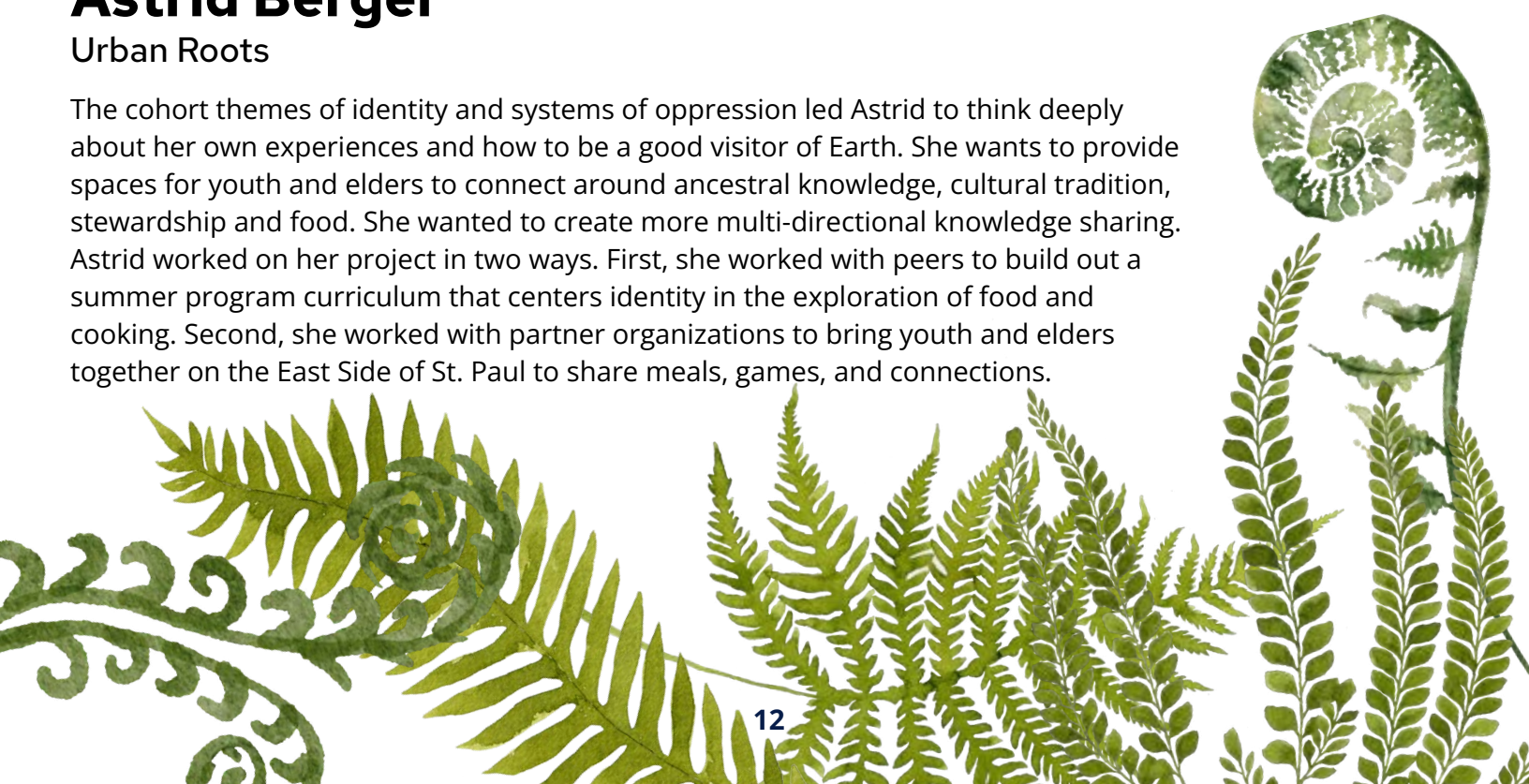




Astrid Berger

Urban Roots

The cohort themes of identity and systems of oppression led Astrid to think deeply about her own experiences and how to be a good visitor of Earth. She wants to provide spaces for youth and elders to connect around ancestral knowledge, cultural tradition, stewardship and food. She wanted to create more multi-directional knowledge sharing. Astrid worked on her project in two ways. First, she worked with peers to build out a summer program curriculum that centers identity in the exploration of food and cooking. Second, she worked with partner organizations to bring youth and elders together on the East Side of St. Paul to share meals, games, and connections.





Jess Miano

Women's Initiative for Self Empowerment (WISE)

Jess was inspired by cohort themes of identity and access. She started with an idea to create a multilingual communication structure to facilitate greater connections with families. While that goal remains important, Jess decided to focus her energy on learning American Sign Language so that she could bring WISE programming to immigrant girls who are also deaf. Jess has already begun the journey toward ASL fluency and has built an even stronger commitment to access and identity through a personal experience with the exhaustive nature of learning to communicate in a new language and in a new culture.





Leticia Ramirez, Nico Morseth & Stephany Aguirre Lopez

St. Paul Parks & Recreation

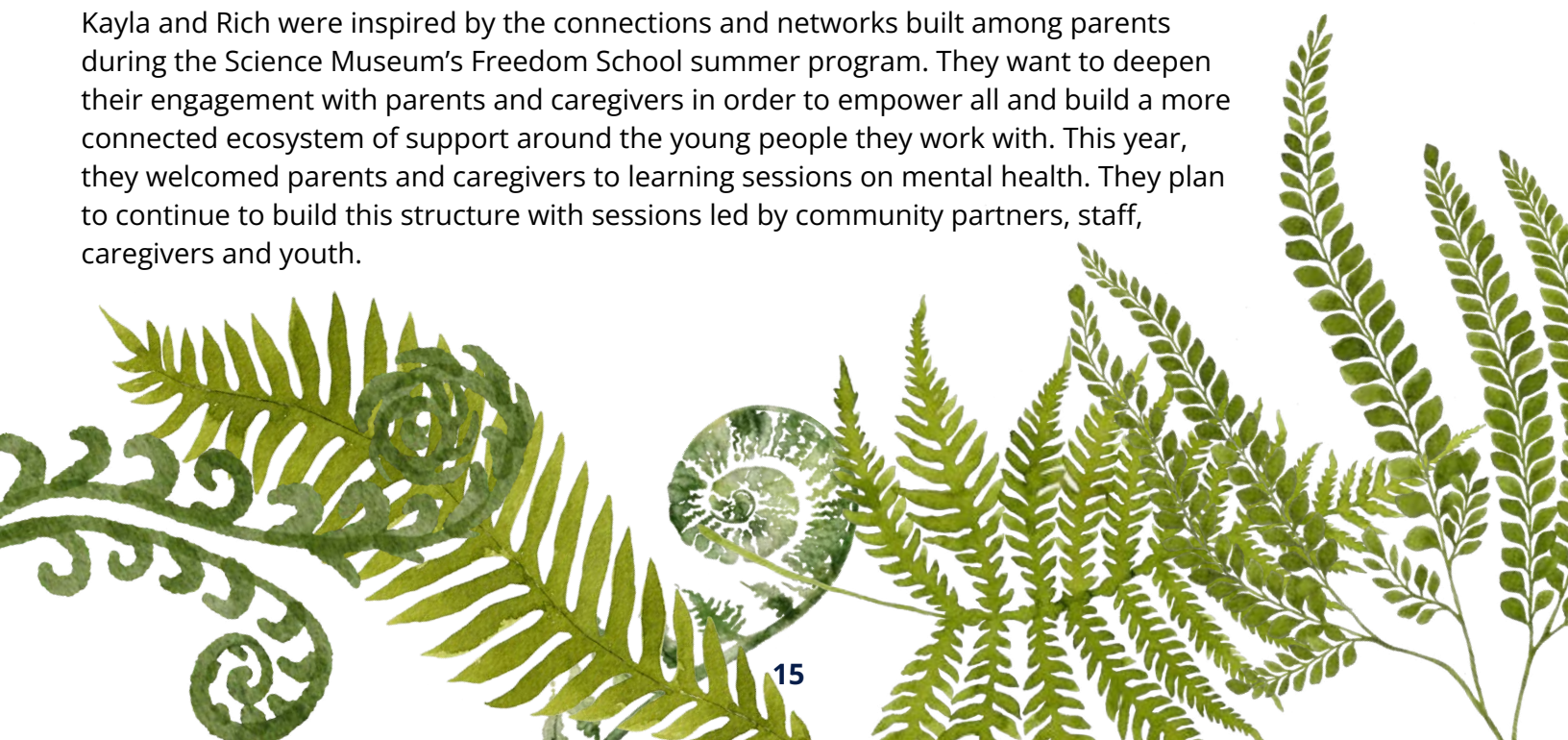
Leticia, Nico and Stephany were inspired by personal experiences, community experiences, and cohort learning to learn more about the impacts of secondary trauma on youth workers. They decided to conduct interviews with youth workers to learn more about their experiences and how organizational policies and practices exacerbate or help with secondary trauma. So far, they have learned that secondary trauma is an aspect of the job that most youth workers share, but haven't always had language for. They have also learned that organizations take very different approaches, but as leaders in youth work they have the power to change and shape practices.

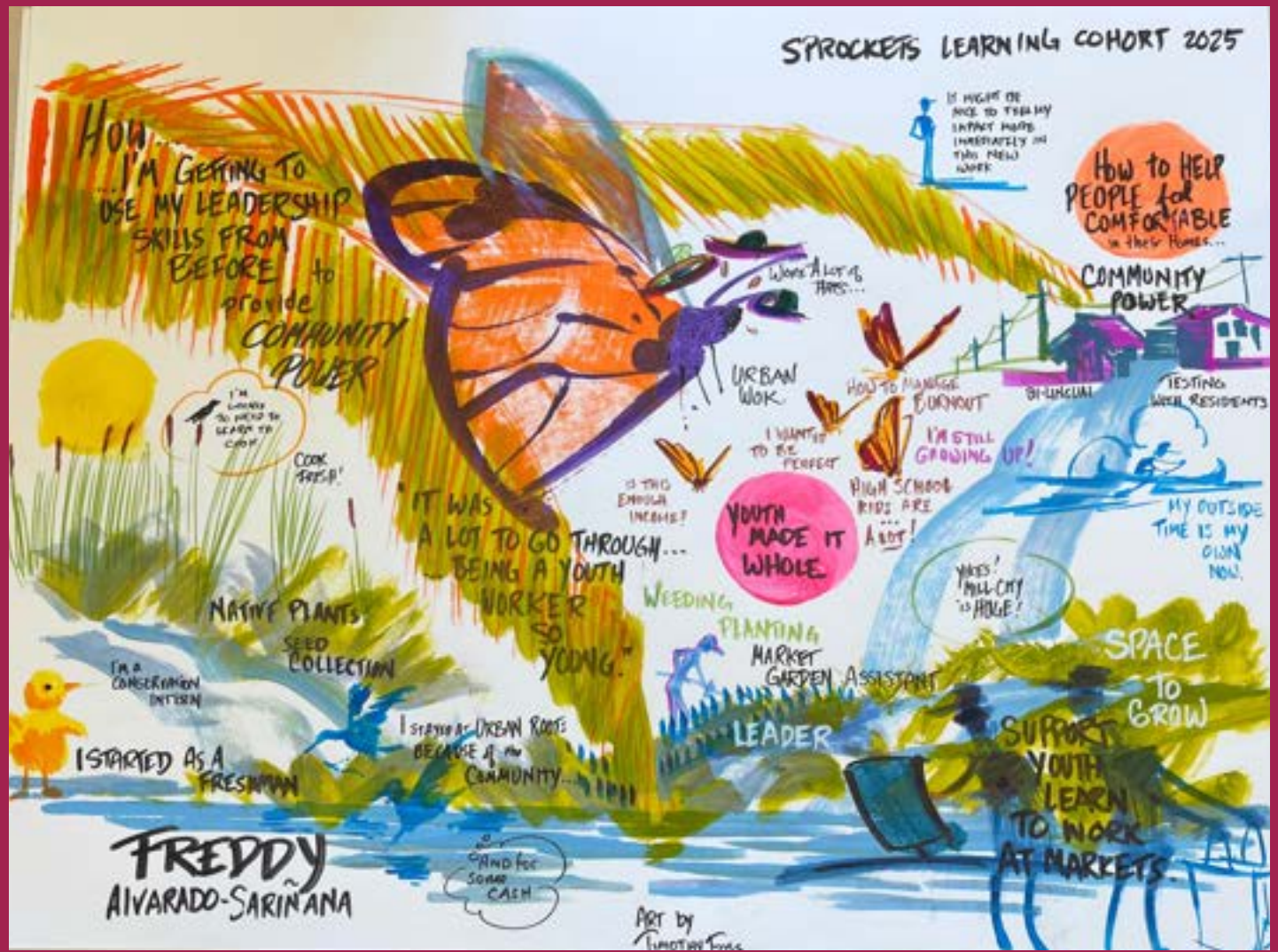


Kayla Swanson & Rich Pennington

Science Museum of Minnesota

Kayla and Rich were inspired by the connections and networks built among parents during the Science Museum's Freedom School summer program. They want to deepen their engagement with parents and caregivers in order to empower all and build a more connected ecosystem of support around the young people they work with. This year, they welcomed parents and caregivers to learning sessions on mental health. They plan to continue to build this structure with sessions led by community partners, staff, caregivers and youth.

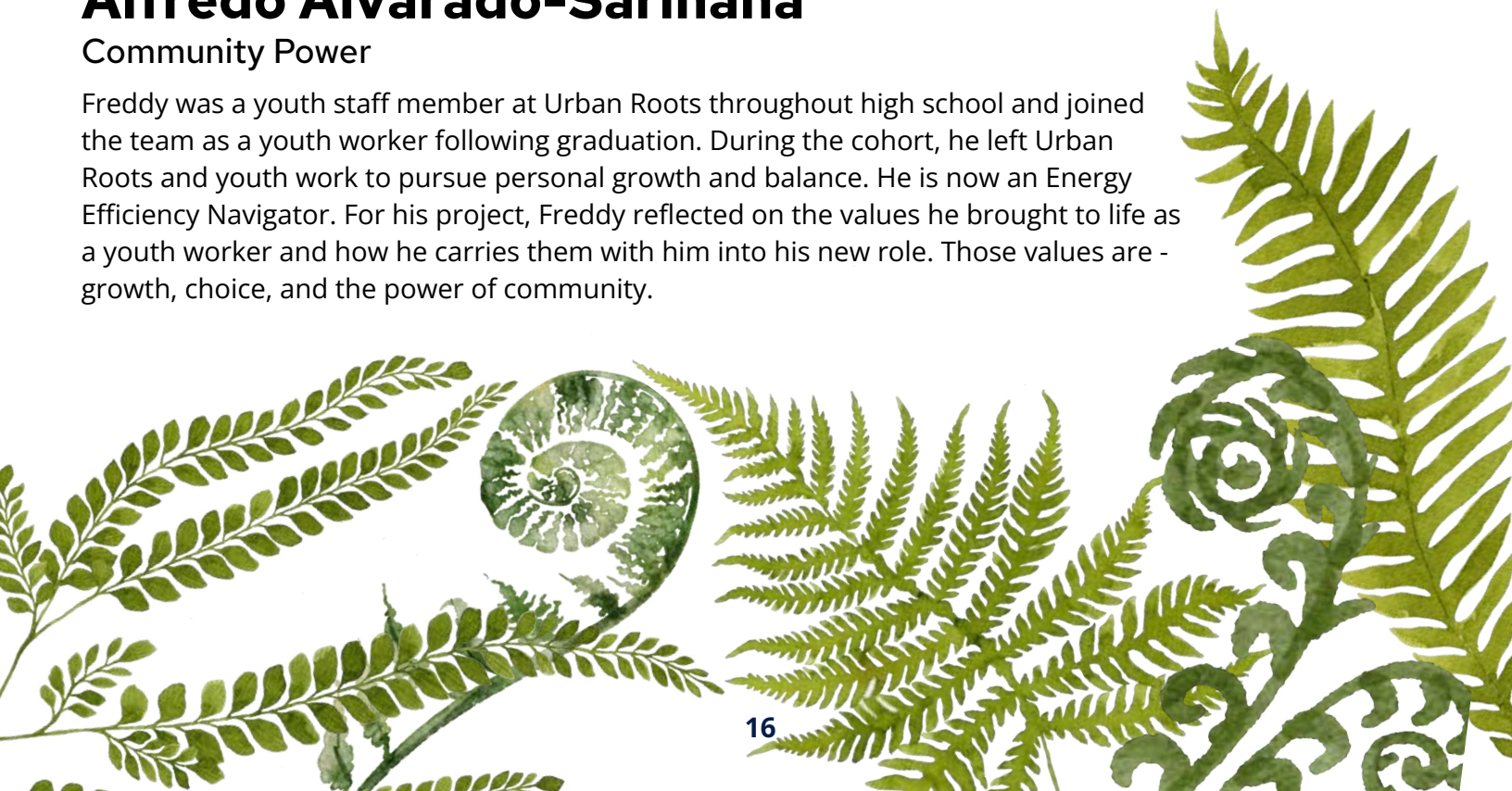


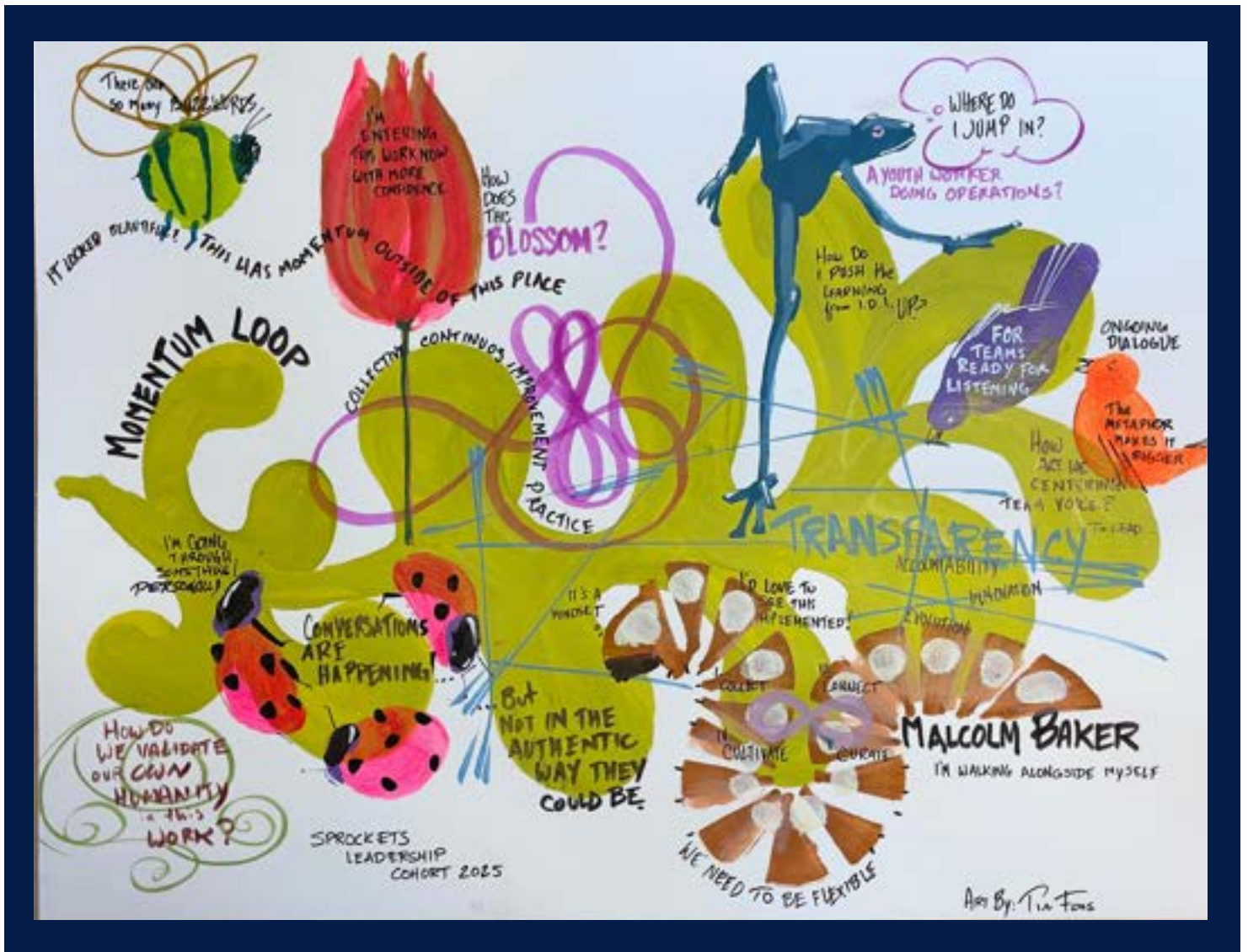


Alfredo Alvarado-Sariñana

Community Power

Freddy was a youth staff member at Urban Roots throughout high school and joined the team as a youth worker following graduation. During the cohort, he left Urban Roots and youth work to pursue personal growth and balance. He is now an Energy Efficiency Navigator. For his project, Freddy reflected on the values he brought to life as a youth worker and how he carries them with him into his new role. Those values are - growth, choice, and the power of community.



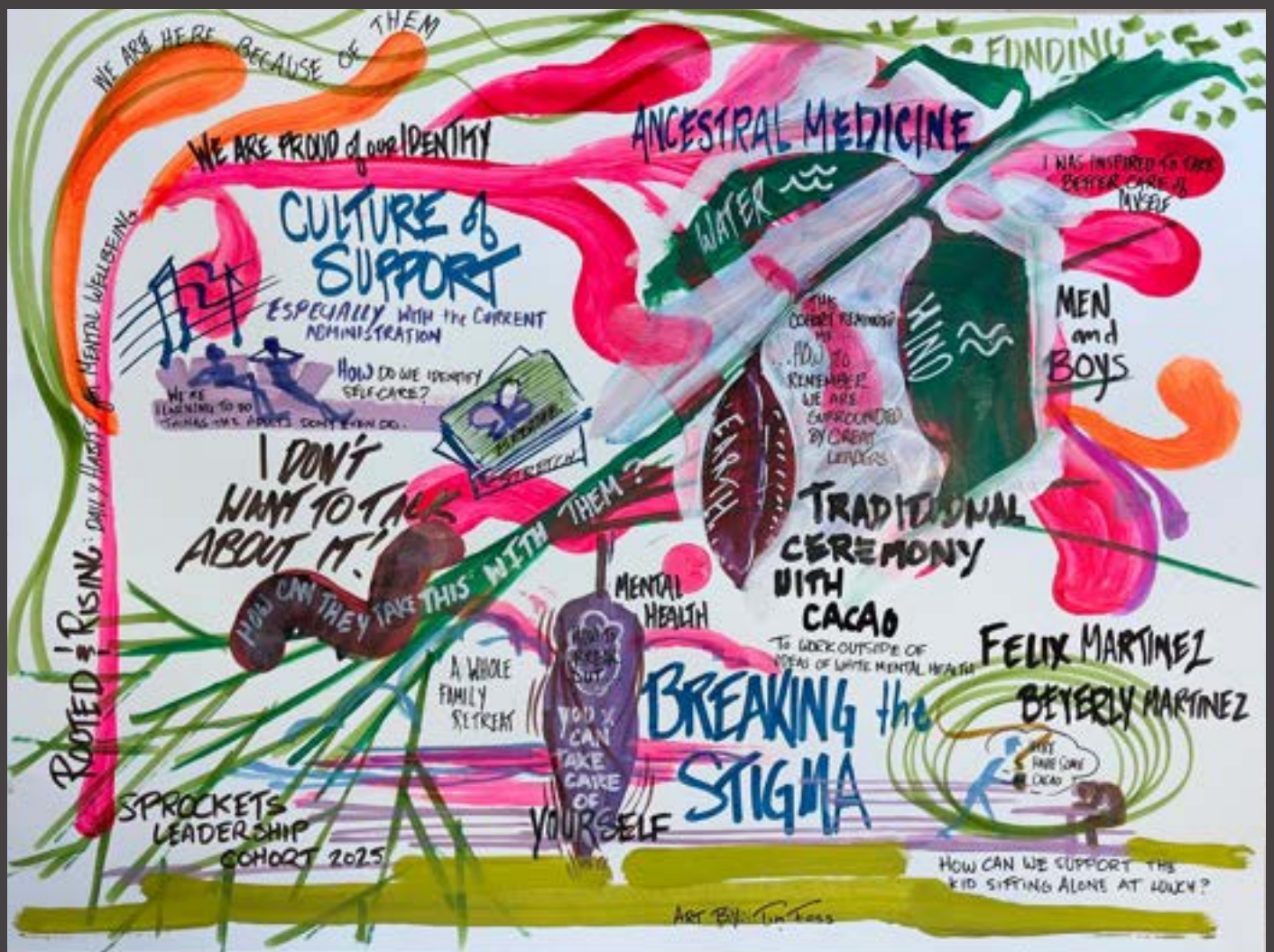


Malcolm Baker

Special Education Leader Fellowship

Malcolm strives to build collaborative structures and mindsets that support a culture of accountability and transparency, allowing people to thrive in their work. Being the person who received opportunities for improvement but feeling unable to move things forward to create change inspired him to craft a solution. For his project, Malcolm created Momentum Loop, an infrastructure for collective continuous improvement that can be implemented by an organization to prioritize team voice to guide its growth & evolution.

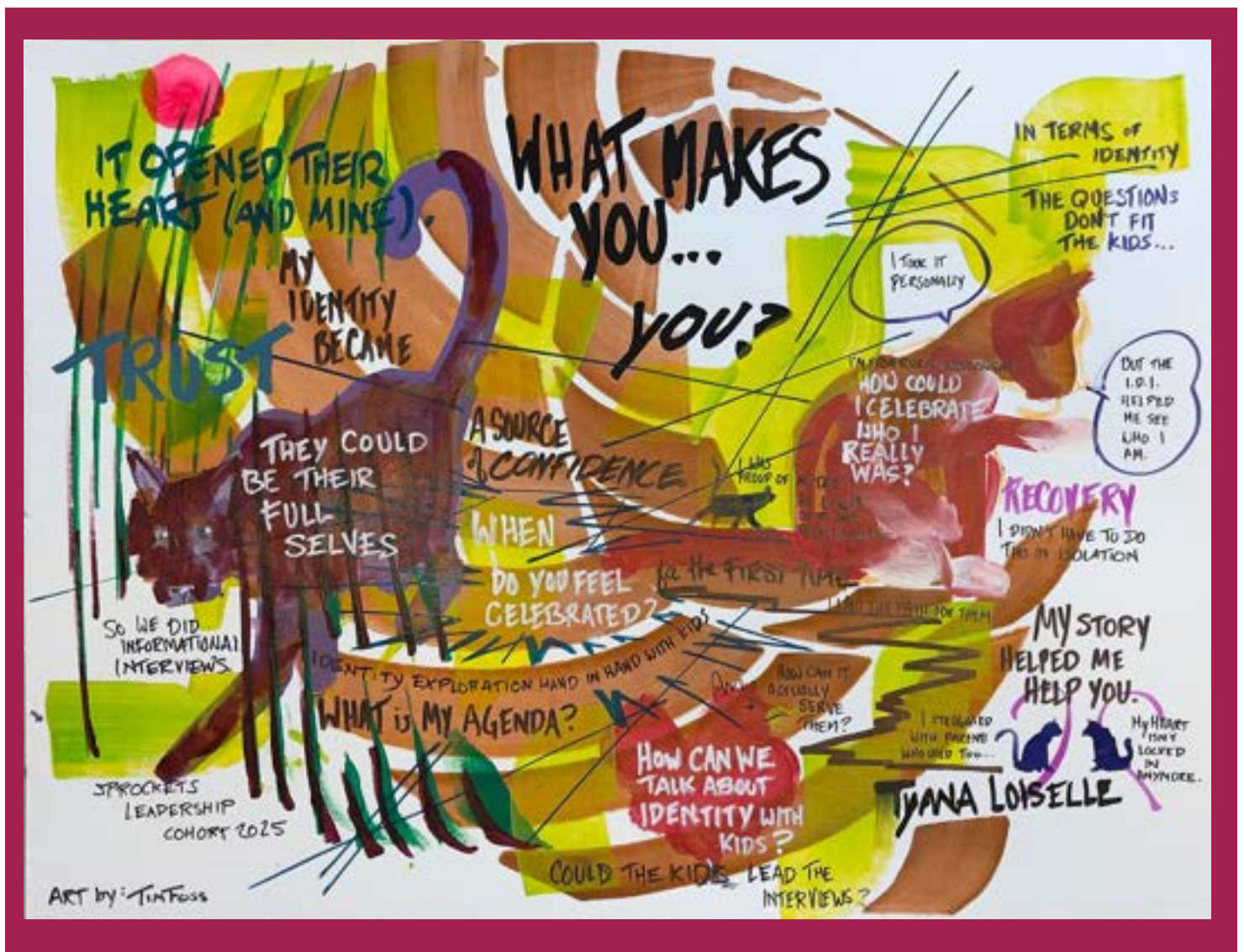




Beverly Martinez & Felix Martinez-Paz

Esperanza United

Beverly and Felix recognized a critical gap in culturally grounded mental health supports for Latine youth. In response, they partnered with Dora Palma from Corazón a Corazón Holistic Healing PLLC and Ursula Reynoso from Aquí Para Tí to co-create Rooted & Rising – Daily Habits for Mental Wellbeing, a healing retreat for Esperanza United youth leaders. Grounded in Cultura and Pertenencia (culture and belonging), the retreat blended ancestral knowledge with leadership, equipping youth to become peer mental health advocates. With continued support from MDH under the EHDI (Eliminating Health Disparities Initiative) grant, these young leaders are growing their impact and planting seeds of healing in their communities.



Tyana Loiselle

St. Paul Public Schools, Community Education Discovery Club

Inspired by her own experiences and deeper learning on identity within the cohort, Ty wanted to provide more opportunities for young people to reflect on and center their identities in Discovery Club. Ty's initial idea was to create a curriculum. After more reflection, Ty realized that her joy and strengths don't sit in curriculum design - her joy is in connecting with young people. Ty worked with the project coach to design an empathy interview process to learn more about identity and the possibilities for program improvements Discovery Club. From these interviews, Ty has already learned that how we talk about identity is too limited and that the young people express their identities in more complex and whole pictures.

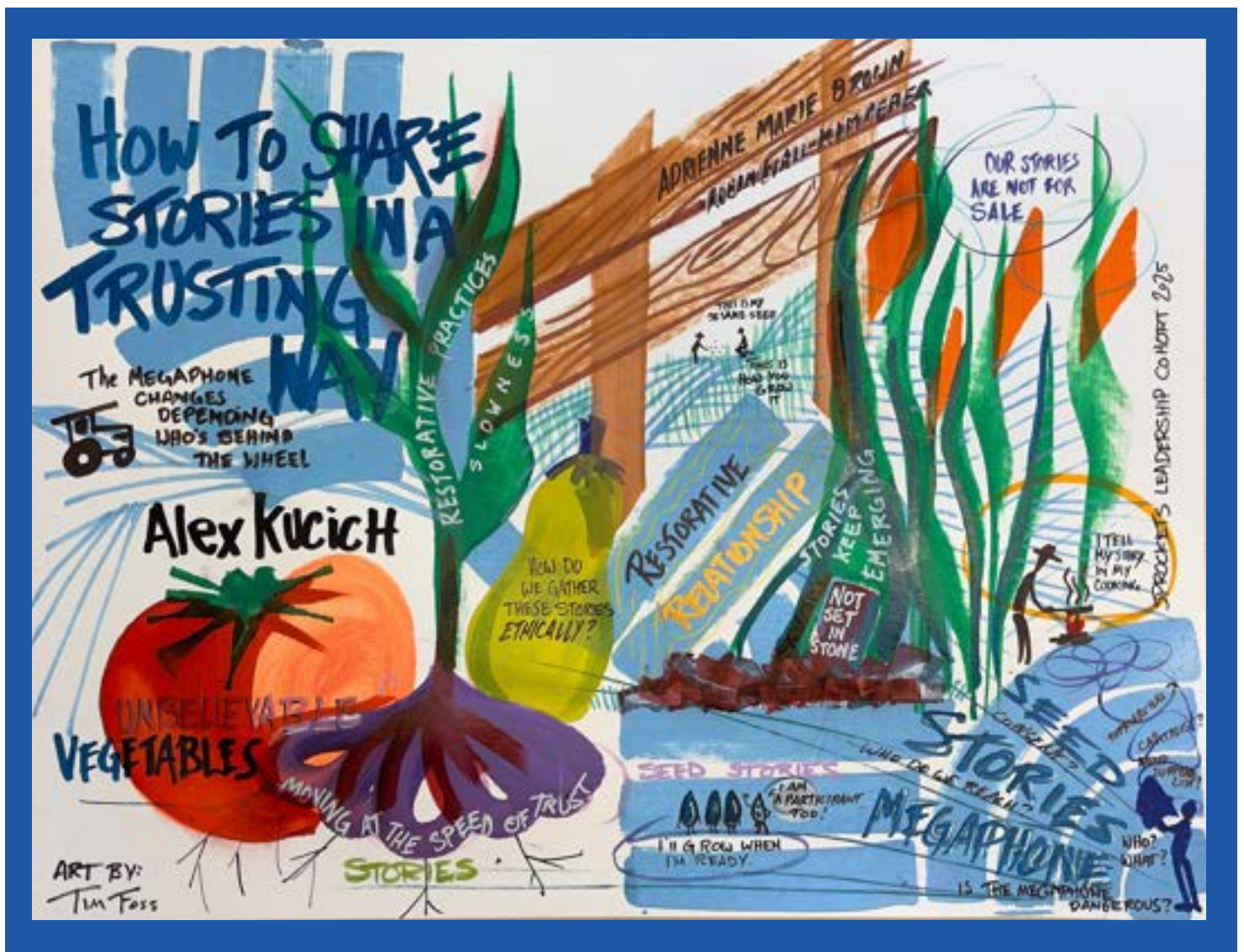


Kelsi Klaers

Conservation Corps

Throughout the cohort, Kelsi had been carrying and attempting to process a traumatic event that occurred during past programming. She was thinking about impacts on youth, peers and on herself as an organizational leader. Cohort learning on trauma and restorative practices provided new context and language, but the experience of trauma and secondary trauma remains. Kelsi will continue to work on figuring out how she wants to make her organization and team more restorative and trauma-informed.



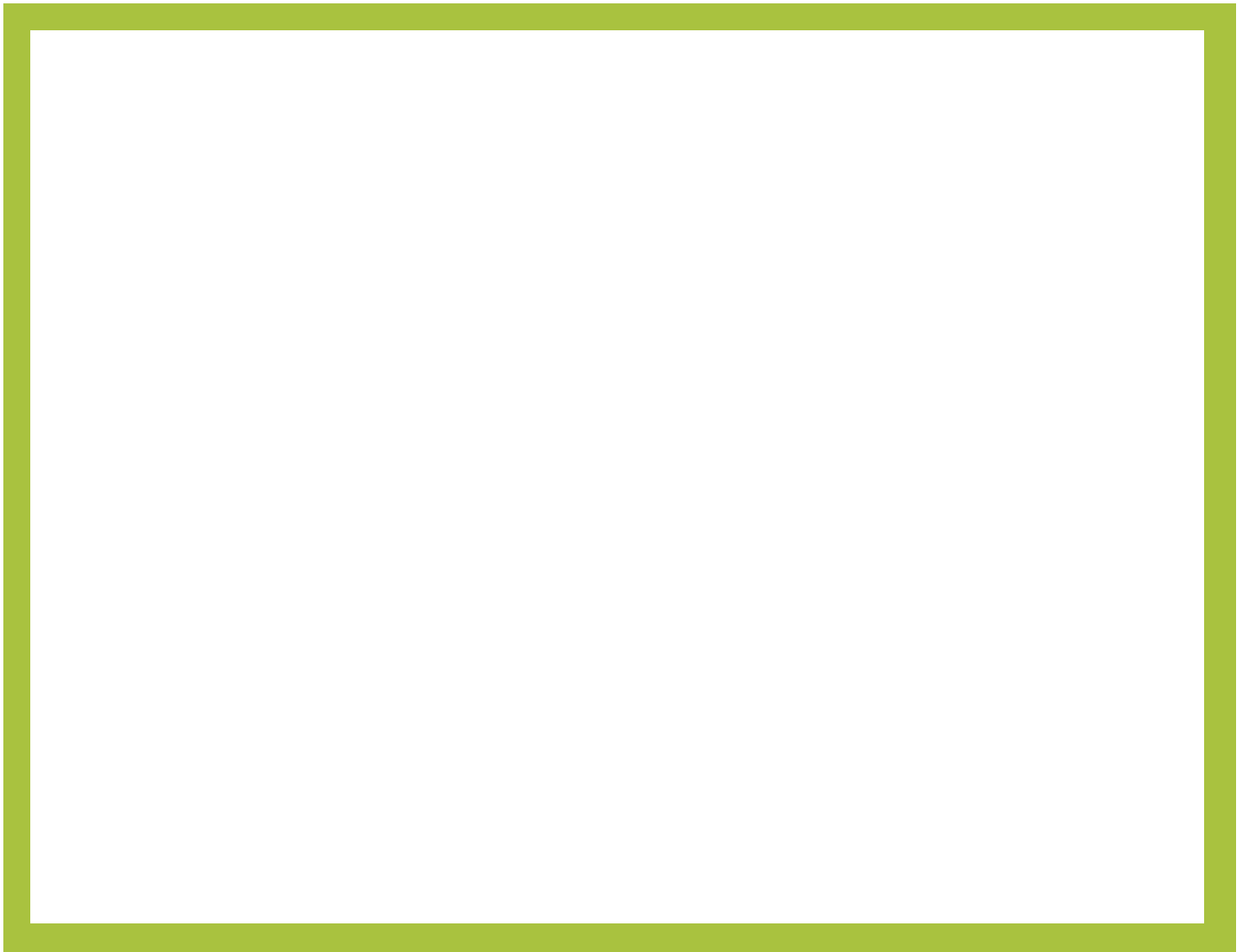


Alex Kucich

Urban Roots

When he started thinking about his project, Alex was considering where he was in his own career path and reflecting more deeply on programmatic experiences. Alex decided to focus on partnering with coworkers from Urban Roots' Seed Story project to develop a model of ethical amplification of stories and reciprocal exchange of knowledge. In their work so far, they have determined that to be ethical and reciprocal they will need to focus on building flexible processes that are unique to the people involved.





You are now part of the fractal as the impacts of the Sprockets Learning Cohort continue to expand. What will you learn? How will you connect? What actions will you take? This is your space to reflect and draw.



Thank you to the **McNeely Foundation** for your generous support which allowed the Sprockets Learning Cohort to be created.

Thank you to **Tim Foss**, from **More Belief**, for bringing your gift of visual recording to the cohort reflection process.

Thank you to each of the **Sprockets Learning Cohort members** who participated in the Sprockets Learning Cohort. You brought empathy, open-mindedness, commitment to growth, and your brilliance to the cohort experience. Together, you built a learning community committed to collective moves toward a more just community for our youth.

Thank you to the youth of St. Paul.





Transform yourself to transform the world
-Grace Lee Boggs

