September 17, 2025

Migration to the United States is one of the most challenging experiences in one's lifetime.

Many immigrants start over, even if they had successful careers back home. Economic pressure, discrimination, and cultural adjustment are only a few of the hurdles. Often the only source of comfort and stability can be found in uniting family members and in forming cultural cohorts among extended family and friends. And among the findings of our Tenderloin survey of 1,108 immigrants was that sharing a meal with either friends or family is essential for uniting.

However, the issue of food insecurity is disrupting this bonding among generations. Tariffs are increasing the cost of food, which has significantly increased in San Francisco compared with the cost of food at the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Food stamps are being severely reduced. These situations impact the ability of residents to gather in familiar cultural and traditional settings around food.

As described in our previous newsletters, the Flow Funding Circle of eleven elders (Radiant Lights of the Setting Sun) proposes the following three projects to address food insufficiency:

Farm to Kitchen Table

To reduce the cost of food for local residents, products from organic farmers and fishermen will be available to Tenderloin residents at wholesale cost on a weekly basis. We are identifying farmers and resource people to join us in this endeavor. And we are building a group of volunteers to support this work.

Family Nights Together

On the first Friday of the month, residents, loved ones, and companions will be invited to a community supper where they will explore solutions to the challenges they are facing. After supper, guests will prioritize problems and discuss practical measures and humanistic solutions —the things that are not quantifiable but sustain relationships and make life worth living.

From My Heart Cooking Club

A regional cooking club will bring together the Asian population in the neighborhood. As noted in an earlier newsletter, grandmothers are compiling recipes and stories to be passed down to the next generation. The collection of recipes will be published in their native language and in English. The coming together around recipes offers yet another way for residents to fortify existing ties and form new friendships that enhance and widen their support system.

A Force for Good Exists: It's Time to Build

Eighty-seven percent of the Tenderloin residents feel their neighbors protect and safeguard one another. More than 900 respondents indicated their willingness to help us identify how food factors in culturally, and we are learning more about what makes their life more meaningful and productive. And at community focus group meetings, the overwhelming majority of the

participants indicated their willingness to volunteer and help us realize proposed solutions to food

See the photo below of community elders sharing the cultural meaning of the food dishes they prepared.



What we highlighted above is Wildflowers Institute's initial strategy to addressing food insecurity in the Tenderloin.First, we must build on the momentum to help while healing and strengthening ties in the community**.** Through these food-based initiatives, we encourage the extended family to draw from its personal history and cultural tradition while adapting to new resources, conditions, and situations in America. We will shine a light on positive and productive energy that brings family and friends—the "super" clan—together around the kitchen table.

Wildflowers Institute's focus is to sustain change in the Tenderloin's immigrant community. By partnering with local residents and aligning small grants to support projects, such as those mentioned above, we're reinforcing purpose and shared meaning in life that drive the innate energy therein. This approach to more targeted funding at the grassroots level is known as "Flow Funding."

Thirty-three years ago, the Flow Fund pioneered direct giving in concert with how local change making happens. The Fund identifies trusted individuals who have come to know their true purpose in service to others. They work and learn together in a circle and on the ground in a

community and are the emissaries of philanthropic endeavors. Jessika Greendeer, a Ho-Chunk Nation tribal member from Baraboo, Wisconsin, and a member of the Deer Clan, was a member of a Flow Funding circle. As a seed keeper and farm manager, Jessika identified a couple growing and preparing indigenous foods for their community on the Oneida Reservation in Wisconsin and for other Native communities.

As Jessika noted in her report: "I was completely blown away by how this couple used past funds to complete their commercial kitchen, and they are working on a drive-thru market which will sell products from their farm and the gardens/farms of Native producers in the area. . . . The work they do is a labor of love to bring back our foods and get seeds back into the hands of community members. The humility of this family continues to amaze me, and I am grateful to know there are people like them who live like our ancestors, welcoming people to their home to learn to grow, make ancestral tools, prepare ancestral foods, rebuild at indigenous ecosystem, and feed the people again."