

COMMUNITY CONNECTEDNESS AND CULTURAL PRACTICE FOR COLLECTIVE POWER, SAFETY, AND HEALING

SHINE invests in *belonging and healing* as foundations for collective action

SHINE (Safety and Healing in Networks of Equity) California

is a collective of leaders and organizations, stewarded by Prevention Institute, working together across local and state levels to build community power, amplify community narratives, and improve systems toward intersectional racial, gender, economic, and immigrant justice. We envision systems of care and repair that generate shared resources, prevent harm, and foster collective healing, safety, and wellbeing.

- Locally, SHINE supports collaborative action rooted in culture and place.
- Trans-locally, SHINE facilitates learning and solidarity across communities.
- At the state level, SHINE advances policy, systems, and narrative change.



Community connectedness

“Many Latina immigrant women don’t have support from family here, so having community support and being in interdependence with each other is key. Pláticas are a sacred space for sharing and healing, where women can share resources and organize to build power.” - Deiglis, Mujeres Poderosas Amoras

An evaluation of the first seven years (2019–2025) revealed that SHINE’s intentional cultivation of safety, connection, and belonging directly facilitated the emergence of community leadership and advocacy, grounded in lived experiences.

Cultural practice

“Our community is medicine, and our cultures are healing. Youth come to the Hub to bond in a safe space. Adults with trauma from war come to our center and play cultural games. In our Buraanbur workshops, we teach traditional Somali dance, poetry, and drumming. It’s beautiful to see how our communities come together.” - Fatima, United Women of East Africa

Another key SHINE strength is integrating cultural practices as a foundational strategy for healing, which enables leadership development, organizing, and broader change work. Ancestral and cultural practices supported personal, relational, and generational healing, helped communities process violence and trauma, and built shared confidence that change is possible when the community works together.

SHINE in Practice

The Center at McKinleyville (Humboldt County)

demonstrates the power of community connectedness through relationships of care rooted in shared values. Guided by a Community Advisory Group, The Center functions as a one-stop location for rural and Tribal communities where people feel safe and welcomed. A 2024 evaluation confirmed strong alignment among partner organizations and found that community members experience The Center as a nurturing place where services are easy to access. Building outward, The Center’s block party program hosts gatherings where residents sign on to the Safety Policy,

SHINE in Practice, continued

a shared commitment to modeling healthy relationships, strengthening neighborhood connections, and shaping norms for safety and interdependence. The Center also partners with Indigenous communities to support the revitalization of Indigenous languages, traditions, and ceremonies, including culturally grounded workshops and camps for Native youth.

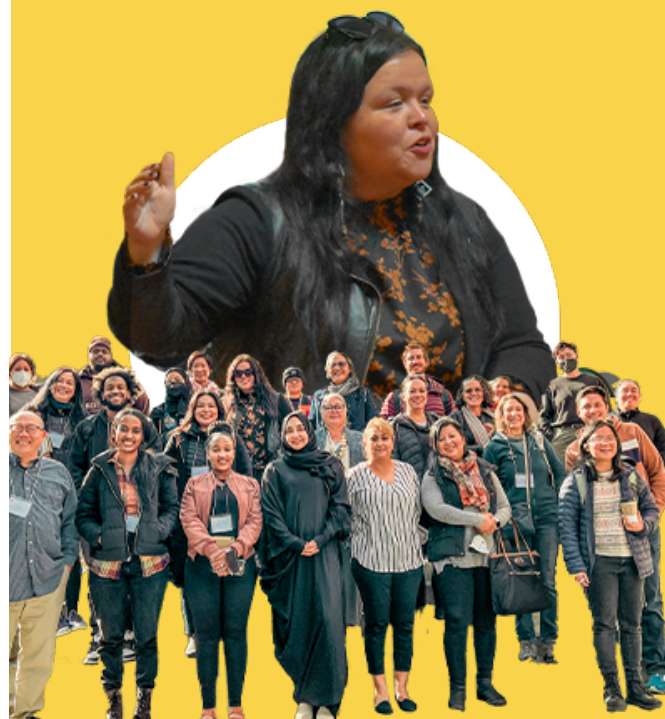
United Women of East Africa (San Diego) demonstrates community connectedness by creating trusted spaces of care shaped by cultural understanding. Serving East African immigrant and refugee communities, UWEAST has built a center to feel like home, where young people and adults gather, learn, and grow. The center offers spaces to explore identity, mental health, and healthy relationships across individuals, families, and communities. Trust is built through cultural representation among mentors, therapists, and staff. Cultural practice includes language, food, clothing, faith, and engagement of elders and faith leaders. Through healing circles and intergenerational dialogue, young people and adults are anchored in belonging and shared hope.

Prevention Institute's trust-based approach, flexible funding, learning orientation, and in-person convenings supported these community-led efforts. During one convening, participants learned about the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Peoples' crisis, Indigenous feminisms, and cultural revitalization from [Dr. Cutcha Risling Baldy](#). Reflecting on the harms of colonization, community partners grappled with solidarity with Indigenous communities, reflected on their own cultures' ancestral healing practices, and bolstered creativity and ceremony in their efforts to support generational healing, safety, and wellbeing.

Community Connections and Culture Matter Now

"My daughter's coming of age community ceremony was more healing than any therapy that I've ever done." - Aristeia, McKinleyville Family Resource Center

Amid growing structural stressors, including the dismantling of safety nets, rising attacks on targeted communities, and ecological degradation, communities face converging crises that generate fear and isolation, while deepening health inequities. Community connectedness counters fragmentation and rebuilds trust. Cultural practice, including traditions, storytelling, and art, anchors people in identity, history, and place, strengthening shared values and the resolve to act collectively toward more just and equitable futures.



Dr. Cutcha Risling Baldy speaking about Indigenous cultural practice to SHINE convening participants. Photo credit Marlene' Dusek

What's Next for SHINE

SHINE is advancing a new phase of investment in community connectedness and cultural practice as crucial foundations for leadership, organizing, and systems change. Local organizations will recruit and mentor new members across communities. Prevention Institute will provide flexible funding and facilitate capacity building and cross-community learning through practice labs and a learning community.

Building on our accomplishments and expanding the collective, SHINE will cultivate belonging and healing as essential conditions for collective power, safety, and wellbeing.

To learn more and explore partnership and investment opportunities, please visit www.preventioninstitute.org/shine and contact shine@preventioninstitute.org.



SHINE was seeded by Blue Shield of California Foundation and is blossoming through broader engagement.