

The Holistic Wellness Initiative
Project Year: 2025
United States – Portland, Oregon
Lewis & Clark College
Nichole Champion

Website: www.holisticwellnessinitiative.org

Instagram: [@holisticwellnessinitiative](https://www.instagram.com/holisticwellnessinitiative)

Project video: [Google Drive Link](#)

Narrative Report

Project Summary

The Holistic Wellness Initiative created a four-day youth wellness camp at Portland Community College Cascade Campus that introduced high school students to holistic health practices, nature experiences, and community-building activities. The project also participated in the fourth year of the Inquiry for Justice program, continuing to support students through holistic wellness practices in that setting. Together, these efforts addressed youth mental health challenges by offering creative, accessible opportunities for students to explore wellness through yoga, art therapy, sound healing, DIY wellness boxes, and field trips

Project Description

The issue I wanted to address was the lack of accessible, youth-centered spaces where high school students can meaningfully explore wellness, creativity, and community connection. I chose holistic wellness approaches because of my deep belief that youth are our future and that it is essential to protect, guide, and nurture them. I have seen the impact that occurs when young people are introduced to health and wellness through a holistic lens, approaches that tend to their mind, body, and spirit.

My project sites were Portland, Oregon, specifically Portland Community College's Cascade Campus and Portland State University. I selected PCC Cascade as the location for the Youth Wellness Camp because of its accessibility, affordability, and proximity to local schools and communities. Local relationships with teachers, mentors, and community partners were instrumental in spreading the word, recruiting students, and building trust with families. Portland State University, meanwhile, has long served as the home for the Inquiry for Justice Summer Program, thanks to its sustainable partnerships and the valuable resources it provides to students.

The original plan was to work with the Inquiry for Justice 10-day camp at Portland State University, serving 60 students. However, enrollment in that program was unusually low, with only 16 students. This created an opportunity, and a challenge, to pivot. I remained engaged as the Wellness Coordinator for Inquiry for Justice while also designing and launching my own independent camp. Initially, I hoped to host two youth camps, but difficulty securing affordable space limited me to one four-day camp. Despite this change, the impact was significant: 27 students applied, and 14 participated fully.

In addition to the Projects for Peace grant, the project received \$2,500 in supplemental funding from Lewis & Clark College as part of being selected as the winning recipient of the Projects for Peace grant.

Looking forward, there are strong opportunities for continuation. Students and parents have already asked whether the camp will return next summer, and I am currently building infrastructure to expand the Holistic Wellness Initiative into a sustainable nonprofit model.

Reflection

I define peace as creating spaces of belonging, healing, and empowerment where young people can connect with themselves and one another. Peace, to me, is not the absence of conflict but the presence of opportunity, especially opportunities that allow young people to thrive.

This project contributed to peace in several ways. In the short term, students gained tools for self-care, emotional regulation, and stress relief. They also had the chance to experience joy, connection, and new opportunities, such as berry picking and hiking, activities many had never done before. In the long term, students carry these practices with them into their daily lives, shaping how they respond to challenges, how they support peers, and how they envision healthy futures for themselves and their communities.

One conflict I encountered was the difficulty of securing affordable, accessible space for the camp. Many institutions required departmental sponsorship or had high rental costs, and communication delays impacted my timeline. I navigated this by persisting, problem-solving, and eventually forming a new partnership with Portland Community College. This experience taught me that logistical barriers often mirror larger structural inequities in access to resources, and that persistence, creativity, and relationship-building are key to overcoming them.

This project has changed the way I think about the world by affirming the deep need for holistic youth wellness spaces. It challenged me to see barriers as opportunities for growth and inspired me to continue building models of care that are sustainable and rooted in community.

Personal Statement

"This project reaffirmed my belief that when we invest in young people's wellness, we are cultivating peace for the future. I learned that even small spaces of healing and connection can have a transformative impact, and that the work of creating these spaces is both deeply needed and deeply rewarding."

— Nichole Champion

