

## ***Journal #4867      from sdc      2.3.20***

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From the Office of the Chairman  
Shoshone-Paiute Tribes of the Duck Valley Reservation



February 1, 2017

Message from the Chairman – The Trump Presidency and Tribes

Tribal Members,

I have attended meetings in Washington DC recently with tribal leaders and have studied the situation as keenly as I could. It is my duty I feel that I write this message to inform you of my take on what is happening. I know that some tribal members support Donald Trump and my apologies to you if I offend you. This letter is it to share what I have learned and recommend. Some issues to think over at least:

Electoral College vote winner Republican Donald Trump has become President by law. He did not win the majority in the total citizen vote - none-the-less he is President. He is in charge of the Executive Branch of the US Government and the governmental agencies such as the Department of Interior. He is now Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces of the United States. He holds an office with enormous and far reaching power.

Our federal programs funding presently operate under a "Continuing Resolution" (CR) until April 28, 2017. Congress will decide beyond that date. We will hopefully finish out the Fiscal Year 2017 (ending October 31, 2017) with no drastic funding impacts. Any far reaching impacts of a Trump Presidency and Republican Congress will likely occur later in the year and proposed budgets after that. Our current IHS/OCHF Annual Funding Agreement is for a 5 year period (signed last year) – which hopefully will endure. Our BIA Annual funding Agreement is signed each year. DVHA has housing funding in reserve development accounts – which hopefully will endure.

The main advice given by many is: "Hope for the best – but prepare for the worse.

An editorial in the *Atlantic* by Eliot Cohen (Former Republican President Bush Aide):  
Included: *"We are denouncing not his policies but his temperament, not his programs but his character. Precisely because the problem is one of temperament and character, it will not get better – it will get worse. He will do much more damage before he departs."*

## **Minn. man on a mission to keep Native burial customs alive**

By Chris Serres Star Tribune

January 30, 2021 — 5:36pm

Long Hollow, S.D. – Braving bitter cold and gusting winds, nearly a dozen people said prayers in their native Dakota language as they watched a bonfire blaze through a deceased man's clothing, sending a thin trail of smoke drifting over the snow-covered hills on the Lake Traverse Indian Reservation in South Dakota.

The traditional burning of garments represented a final rite of passage for the spirit of Francis Jay Country Jr., a 66-year-old tribal elder and musician whose life was cut short this month by the coronavirus. The bonfire also culminated two days of elaborate ceremonies in which a tribal chief, dressed in an eagle feather headdress, led family members in songs, drumming and prayers facing the four directions.

For Mary White-Country, now a widow, the rituals brought much-needed comfort that her husband's spirit was no longer suffering and had begun its journey. "Today, I have cried all my tears," she said after the ceremony. "There is closure because my husband was sent off in a respectful manner, in a way that honored his traditions."

But the burial customs and ceremonies that many Indigenous communities have cherished for generations are under pressure from an unforeseen enemy — COVID-19.

The coronavirus is killing American Indians at staggeringly high rates, inflicting incalculable trauma and exposing historic gaps in the predominantly white-owned funeral services industry. Only a handful of morticians in the region have specialized training in the diverse Indigenous customs that follow a tribal member's death and know how to navigate the complex process for arranging burials on reservations. Overwhelmed by an upsurge of bodies, these funeral directors are being forced to turn away many Native families, depriving them of a traditional ceremony and emotional closure.

Nationwide, American Indians are perishing from COVID-19 at nearly twice the rate of white people, but the disparities are even greater across the Upper Midwest. Over 10 months of the pandemic, Native Americans in Minnesota have died at four times the rate of white Minnesotans, and they are being hospitalized at nearly 3.5 times the rate of whites after adjusting for age, according to state Department of Health data.

Few have borne closer witness to this deadly toll in Indian Country than Robert Gill of Buffalo, Minn., a citizen of the Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate tribe and among the only Native American morticians in the country.

A gentle hero to many tribal members, Gill has made it his life's mission to restore Native burial customs and to "decolonize," as he calls it, the process of honoring and burying those who die on Indian reservations. Since the arrival of the coronavirus, death has become an all-encompassing specter of Gill's daily life, consuming his days and even his nights. He travels hundreds of miles each week to remote tribal communities as far west as the Crow Indian Reservation in Montana and as far north as the Turtle Mountain Indian Reservation near the Canadian border.

Before the pandemic, Gill was being asked to arrange three to four burial ceremonies a month for Native families. Now the 50-year-old mortician is receiving that many funeral requests every week.

Even with a punishing work schedule, he sometimes struggles with guilt over his inability to meet the surging demand for traditional burial services. He knows that many tribal families are being left with no choice but to turn to white-owned funeral homes with morticians who do not understand their language and customs. Without ceremonies rooted in their culture, Gill argues, tribal members are disconnected from their history and unable to mourn properly.

"Where is our humanity?" Gill asked, as he prepared to load a casket into his waiting hearse.

"An expression of a life that was lived brings closure for a family. And if they can't have that, then it's not dignified."

### **A dark legacy**

The dearth of funeral options, some tribal leaders argue, is a legacy of America's dark history of racial subjugation of American Indians and their religious practices. Until 1978, when Congress passed the American Indian Religious Freedom Act, spiritual ceremonies like the sweat lodge and drum dances were still technically illegal. The prohibitions enabled Christian churches to establish deep footholds on reservations and further restrict Indigenous customs — including their ceremonies for honoring the deceased.

"As a kid, they called us 'devil worshipers,' and we were taught to be ashamed of our own culture and traditions," said Chief Arvol Looking Horse, a keeper of the Sacred White Buffalo Calf Pipe and elder of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe. "Even our funeral ceremonies were outlawed."

For Gill, the doors to becoming a professional seemed all but sealed as a child growing up along the wooded shores of Buffalo Lake on the Lake Traverse reservation. Gill suspects that, were it not for his unrelenting mother, he never would have graduated from the reservation's public high school in Sisseton, S.D., which still calls its sports teams "the Redmen."

When he was in second grade, Gill's mother became alarmed when her son kept coming home from school with headaches. Gill, then just 9, told her that white teachers were beating him with rulers and regularly pulling on his ears and hair. His mother, Patricia Gill-Eagle, then learned of another boy who was beaten so badly with a broomstick that welts formed on his back. Fed up, Gill's mother and 10 other parents removed their children from the local elementary school in Sisseton and opened their own tribal school.

"The public school made my son feel little, like he couldn't make it in the world," said Gill-Eagle, a retired nurse who is still active in the tribal school system. "He didn't learn to be a proud Native until we pulled him out."

After attending a nursing program, Gill spent nine years working as an ambulance driver and emergency medical technician (EMT) on the Standing Rock and Cheyenne River reservations in the Dakotas, where he says the poor treatment of deceased Natives became impossible to ignore. It sometimes took hours for a mortician to arrive and remove a body after someone died; and the bodies could be decomposed beyond recognition, he said. The non-Native morticians who arrived at the death scenes would sometimes talk or joke about a recently deceased person as if grieving relatives were "invisible or not in the room," Gill recalled.

"I witnessed a deep lack of respect," Gill said. "It opened my eyes and made me realize that we have customs and traditions that allow us to care for the deceased, but we weren't being allowed to practice them."

Determined to bring more dignity to the burial process, he enrolled in the Worsham College of Mortuary Science in Chicago, where he graduated in 2012. He is believed to be the only licensed mortician of Dakota heritage in the country.  
Long-distance house calls

Today Gill is virtually alone in the funeral business for his willingness to make long-distance house visits — sometimes driving entire days, through sleet and snow, to meet with tribal families in their homes. Each visit carries the risk that he will contract the virus still raging through Indian Country. Gill is the only one of five morticians who work at Chilson Funeral Chapel in central Minnesota who has not been sickened by COVID-19.

"You've got to have nerves of steel to do this work in a pandemic," Gill said.

Beyond the ceremonies, he spends long hours in the embalming room preparing bodies for public viewing. Too often, Gill said, he heard tribal members complain of how their loved ones "looked like clowns" after non-Native morticians failed to recognize their darker skin hues and used bright-colored makeup (purples and reds) meant for white skin, he said. Gill carries a cosmetics kit on the road and often touches up a body before a ceremony.

"Sometimes I ask myself, 'Why do my people not have their own funeral homes?' he said. "We buried our own for hundreds of years."

On a frigid day in mid-January, Gill traveled 200 miles through an unforgiving blizzard to a hamlet on the far reaches of the Lake Traverse Reservation to meet with relatives of Ronald Allen Goodsell, a 69-year-old former construction worker who died just days earlier from COVID-19. The evening light was still pouring through the windows of the family's kitchen when Gill and his broad, 6-foot-3-inch frame appeared in the doorway with a suitcase full of documents.

He was greeted by three generations of Goodsell family members — including siblings, cousins and grandchildren — who came and went through the crowded kitchen as Gill talked them through the traditional burial process. The family had decided to give Goodsell an Indian name, "Tatanka Ob Mani" (Walks with Buffalo), which involved a separate naming ceremony. Then came a long discussion over the limited choice of caskets. Goodsell's widow wanted a coffin decorated in the Native colors of the four directions (black, red, yellow and white). But such a casket, the family learned, simply did not exist.

The family would have to settle on a generic brown coffin that lacked any exterior symbols of the deceased's Dakota heritage.

"It's unfortunate, but there are no Native funeral casket-making companies anywhere in this country," Gill calmly explained to the Goodsells.

"We're always having to deal with these 'wasichu' (whites) for everything and they just don't understand us," responded Nola Ragan, the widow's sister.

Before departing, the family handed Gill a small collection of Goodsell's clothes — including a traditional, white-ribbon shirt made by the deceased's grandson — to dress his body when he returned to Minnesota.

Gill politely thanked the family and stepped out into the clear, star-filled night on the reservation.

On the long return trip to Minnesota, he could smell the faint scent of the man's clothes next to him on the passenger seat, and he rehearsed what he would say at his ceremony. Finally arriving home past 10 p.m., Gill had a late supper with his wife, Bonita, and then laid out a suit for the next day's journey back to the reservation.

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## **An Insurrection and a Breaking Point for a Better Future – A Reflection from NAP's Executive Director**

Dear NAP Friends and Relatives,

Like you, I have trouble putting to words how I feel about yesterday's events at the U.S. Capitol, only a 15-minute walk from where I live. Deep sadness is the closest I get. There are so many reasons that the insurrection at the Capitol yesterday feels like the breaking point of our collective heavy heart in this country. As individuals, we have suffered tremendous personal losses, anxiety and pain. As communities, we have lost language, stories, and knowledge, along with our family and community members. As a nation, we have felt hopeless about how we move forward, and for too many of us, simply unsafe.



(L to R) Erik Stegman, Sen.

Daniel Akaka, and Wendy Helgemo

One of the most personal moments for me yesterday was having to watch these rioters breaking into the Senate gallery, rifling through desks, and making a mockery of an important and sacred institution. While this colonial government was forced upon our people, the Senate is one of the several institutions where our tribal leaders have continued the fight of our ancestors to respect our treaty rights and advocate in good faith for our peoples' future. The sickening display on the Senate floor is personal because it reminded me of my days as staffer for the Senate Indian Affairs Committee. Some of the proudest days of my life took place on that floor when I was working with my colleague Wendy Helgemo in the final days before the Senate passed the current reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act. It was there that these senators debated whether to add much-needed protections for Native women on our lands, particularly the restoration of our tribal court authority over some domestic violence crimes by non-Native perpetrators. Though only my chairman, the late Sen. Daniel Akaka of Hawaii, was Native, the



other non-Native Senators debated and passed these crucial laws because our people have tirelessly advocated in those hallways. They have done so many times, over many important issues, over generations.

To me, the Senate floor is a sacred space, even for us as Native people. I say this to honor our people who have served there, and to those who have shared their stories to advocate there—all to benefit our people and honor our ancestors.

This is what those rioters defiled in front of all of us.

While I now oscillate between sadness and anger, as I'm sure many of you do, I'm finding more strength than ever in our work together. As we've seen before in this country, the breaking points often lead to sun on the horizon. The work of NAP to drive bold and meaningful investment in Native people is one of the best medicines we can offer at this moment. Shortly before the insurrection, we saw the once un-thinkable happen in Georgia because of the hard and sustained work of the Black community. As Native people, we have experienced similar power-building, now over several election cycles in many key races. We have also advanced our own people to the highest levels of government.

This is a breaking point, but only because Native people are working with other people of color and marginalized communities to truly shift power and systems in this country after generations of trauma. I write to express my gratitude to all of you for your support of our work and our communities. While we still have a tough road ahead of us, I know that we walk in the steps of our ancestors and have the strength to build a much brighter future together.

In Solidarity, Erik Stegman, Executive Director, Native Americans in Philanthropy  
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[nrdc.org](http://nrdc.org)

[At Last, Justice at the National Bison Range](#)

[The Natural Resources Defense Council works to safeguard the earth - its people, its plants and animals, and the natural systems on which all life depends.](#)



### **Gary Coffrin**

**CROW DANCERS of Eastern Montana, 1894-95. Note some big grins, the jester's horn headdress. PC users, please click image to better see details. Grant Bulltail advised: "White paint or clay signifies they get their energy from the buffalo, who paw the ground in wallows and cover themselves in white sand or powdered dirt. The man with half his face painted white shows that he has been in a fight, has courage, and is willing to meet death. The man wearing a necklace made of large circles or rings (from horse harnesses) symbolizes a good life and have**

UPDATE: I found the same capture on an O.S. Goff mount. That makes the Montana Historical Society's attribution to Goff and the 1894-95 date appear accurate. My earlier analysis suspecting a later date was wrong.

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### **Fur Trade in Minnesota Shaped the Region for Two Centuries**

<https://www.minnpost.com/mnopedia/2021/02/the-fur-trade-in-minnesota-shaped-the-region-for-two-centuries/>

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### **Climate Power for All?**

[https://www.ecoshock.org/2021/01/climate-power-for-all.html?](https://www.ecoshock.org/2021/01/climate-power-for-all.html?fbclid=IwAR3TxTIJIT5ASP9ypqDH8bgc6pXdPIoCAEXrc8zleqFhOVXfMIJi8Ui2cmo)

[fbclid=IwAR3TxTIJIT5ASP9ypqDH8bgc6pXdPIoCAEXrc8zleqFhOVXfMIJi8Ui2cmo](https://www.ecoshock.org/2021/01/climate-power-for-all.html?fbclid=IwAR3TxTIJIT5ASP9ypqDH8bgc6pXdPIoCAEXrc8zleqFhOVXfMIJi8Ui2cmo)





[indiancountrytoday.com](http://indiancountrytoday.com)

[Candidate says rethink Seattle. Indigenously.](#)

[Colleen Echohawk, affordable housing and nonprofit leader, announces candidacy for mayor of Seattle](#)



[Tero Wrpt ·](#)

Nevada Copper (NCI) plans to participate in the Western Nevada College (WNC) Applied Industrial Technology (AIT) training.

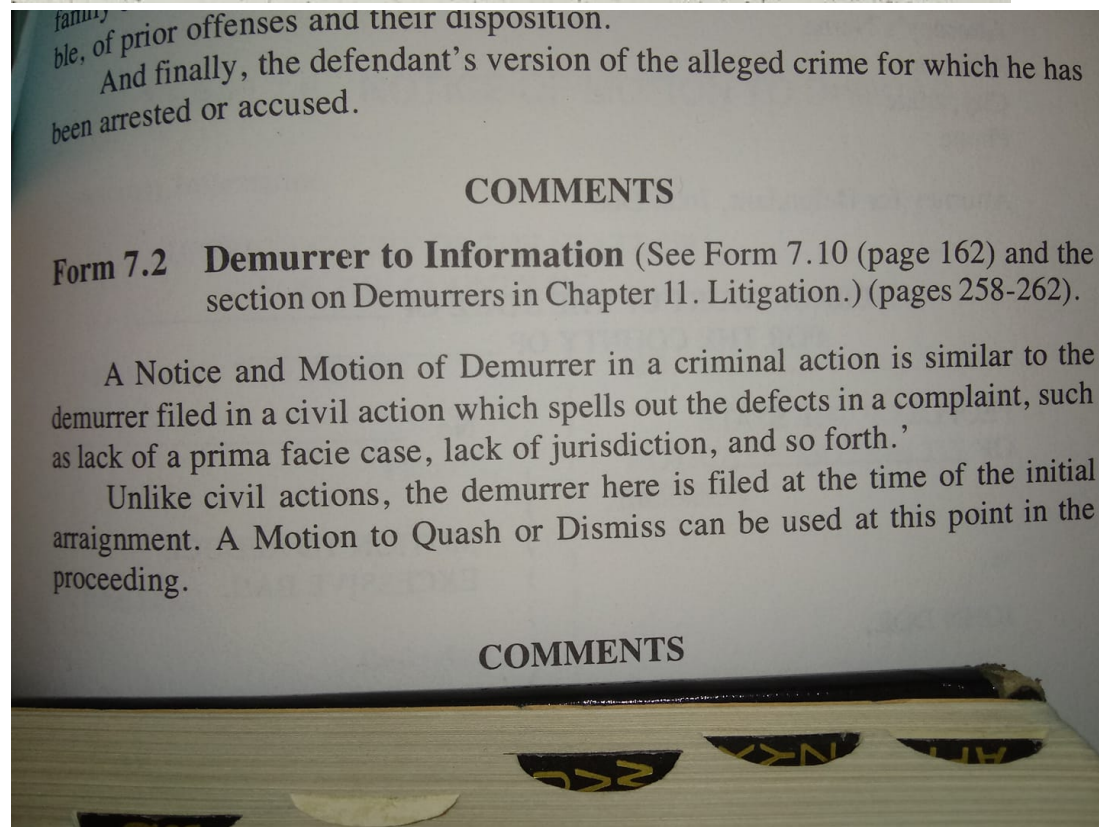
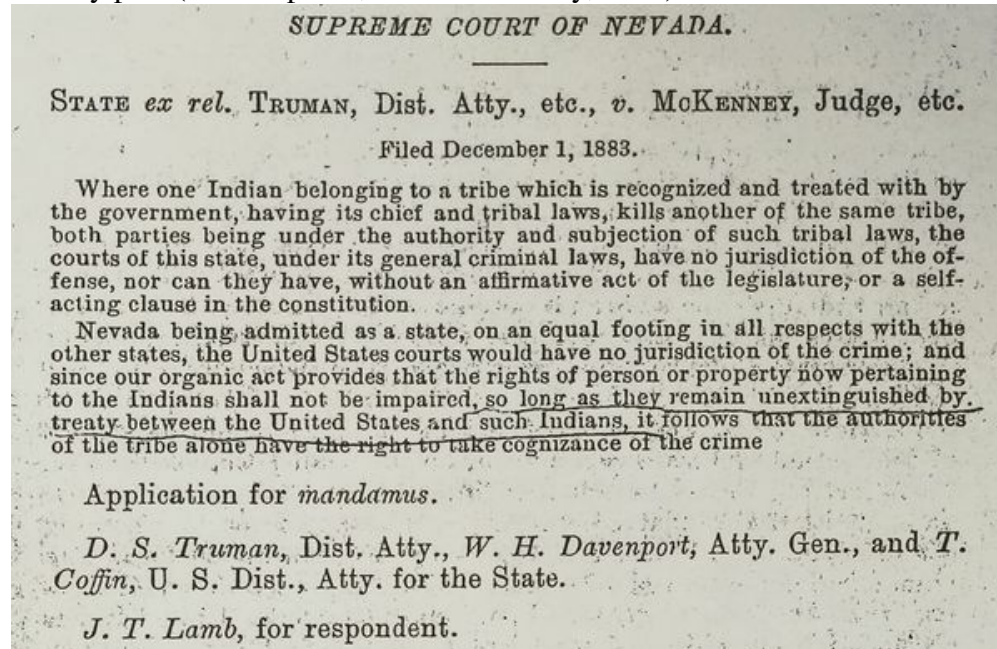
It's an accelerated course and hands on in Yerington.

Scholarship is free

Please let me know if this is something you are interested in doing or would like more information.

## Ian Zabarte

**Sovereignty is lost** when a lawyer pleads guilty or not, thereby admits the court jurisdiction. Rather, Newe write a "Notice and Motion of Demurrer" informing the court it lacks jurisdiction. See my post (Nev. Sup. Ct., State v. M'kenney, 1883).





[hcn.org](http://hcn.org)

[The fight for an equitable energy economy for the Navajo Nation](#)

[Diné activist Nicole Horseherder's long quest for equity from the rise and fall of the coal economy.](#)



The Power of Youth Challenge: Youth Leading Racial Healing is a leadership and service opportunity supporting youth-designed projects that promote racial equity and address systemic racism. The Challenge provides young people (ages 13-19) across the U.S. with the opportunity to identify a need in their communities related to racial healing and apply for a \$250 grant to support a (COVID-safe) service project. In addition to building their own leadership, service, and career skills, grant winners will have the opportunity to increase understanding, communication, caring, and respect within their communities through service projects that address racial division and injustice.

The Challenge, made possible with generous support from [The Allstate Foundation](#), launched on **Tuesday, January 19, 2021, the National Day of Racial Healing**. Funded projects may encompass a range of activities—from establishing a school anti-racism committee to bolstering the availability of books and resources by racially and ethnically diverse authors in a local library.

Together, these youth-led service projects will:

1. Reinforce and honor our common humanity, while celebrating the distinct differences that make our communities vibrant.
2. Acknowledge the deep racial divisions that exist in America and empower young people to curate experiences that help people of all ages start to heal.
3. Engage young people from all racial and ethnic groups in genuine efforts to increase understanding, communication, caring, and respect for one another.
4. Activate young people to play an important role in addressing systemic racism in their communities through service.

## **INFORMATION FOR APPLICANTS:**

Young people can begin submitting their project ideas now through April 30, 2021. Projects will be evaluated and funded on a rolling basis.

### **Projects should:**

- Respond to an identified need in their community related to promoting racial equity and/or healing
- Have tangible, concrete outcomes

### **Projects should not:**

- Be overtly political in nature and/or relate to a specific political party
- Center around boycotts and/or campaign against something

### **ELIGIBILITY**

To be eligible for the program, individuals and/or teams must meet the following criteria:

- All young people ages 13 – 19 who want to improve their communities are eligible to apply.
- Applicants must live in the U.S.
- Participants must agree to report on project progress and reflect on their project's impact.
  - Projects must follow [CDC's guidelines](#) for social distancing for both the applicants, and their project audiences' health and wellbeing.

### **APPLICATION CRITERIA:**

All applications must contain the following information.

- Full applicant name
- Location: state or territory, city town or county
- Contact information – address, email, text/social - and a preference for how you want to be contacted.
- Project Name
- Project description – short and simple.
- Why
- What & how
- When



- How could you spend \$250 to accomplish your plan?
- Racial Healing
- What does racial healing mean to you?
- How will your project address racial division and injustice?
- **Keeping the Promise** – what we ask of you: An agreement to follow-up with APA and report back on the progress of your project, which includes:
- Checking in with APA leaders as the project is ongoing (at least twice; more help is available if requested)
- Participating in technical assistance (webinars, Instagram Live, etc.)
- Promoting project on social media channels using #PowerofYouth and #HowWeHeal
- Participating in APA storytelling about your project through photos, videos, interviews, and other media that captures your initiative and outcomes.
- Speaking to media about projects (if requested). Coaching will be provided.

Thank you for your interest in the **Power of Youth Challenge: Youth Leading Racial Healing Grants** that you can lead safely from home.

America's Promise Alliance looks forward to supporting you with resources to help make your project come alive and/or to grow. We have created a short and simple application and are offering a range of support and technical assistance from other young people who have experience leading their own service projects.

**The purpose of the projects will be to:**

1. Reinforce and honor our common humanity, while celebrating the distinct differences that make our communities vibrant.
2. Acknowledge the deep racial divisions that exist in America and empower young people to curate experiences that help people of all ages heal.
3. Engage young people from all racial and ethnic groups in genuine efforts to increase understanding, communication, caring, and respect for one another.
4. Activate young people to play an important role in addressing systemic racism in their communities through service.

**This is how it works.** Complete the following application (see below). We will reach out if we need additional information. We may follow up to learn a little more about your project or to provide support in areas such as: project planning, marketing, or building a budget. A panel of youth leaders will make final determinations about the allocations of mini-grants. If selected, grant recipients sign an agreement indicating they will provide deliverables such as: project progress reports and photos or videos about the project.

We are here to help you realize your vision. And we are asking you to help make service a common experience in the lives of all young people especially during these challenging times.

**All projects must follow the [CDC's guidelines for social distancing](#) for the safety, health, and well being of all involved.**