

RESPECTFUL SERVICE

in a Native American Community



Respectful service is one of our values. We go in to communities by invitation only and stay invested with individuals, churches, schools, and service organizations permanently planted in these communities for the long run (for decades!). We listen to and learn from our partners in order to partner with communities successfully. We invite you into that partnership.

Please share this information with your group so that everyone starts the trip on the same page about serving respectfully.

General Respectful Service Guidelines

Be prepared with the proper registrations or release forms. YouthWorks has already reserved spaces for your volunteer shift, but sometimes you will need to complete an additional physical waiver to turn in at the service site to meet their volunteer protocols. If you are going on a Pre-Packaged Mission Trip with YouthWorks, everyone in your group needs to print and fill out the site-specific waiver packet on Go and bring it on the trip. There may be times that you need to register your specific participants online before your shift. If this is the case, you will receive instructions on Sunday when you arrive on site.

Arrive on time and remain on site for the duration of your scheduled shift. If you finish early, connect with the Service Partner to see if there are additional tasks your group can complete. If not, contact the YouthWorks staff for further instruction.

Abide by any organizational dress code requirements. Sometimes organizations have clothing-related safety policies for work in kitchens, warehouses, etc. You may be asked to wear long pants when working outside. Organizations may also ask volunteers to dress “modestly” if you will be working with a population from a certain cultural background.

Humbly complete the tasks you are assigned. Encourage your group to **stay on task** and complete the assigned work to the best of their ability. Have you thought of a more efficient way of doing a task? Great! **Ask the Service Partner first** before moving ahead with “your way” of doing it. Often Service Partners are intentional with their project instructions but welcome collaboration.

Help those in your group see the purpose of any project that may seem mundane or unglamorous. We trust our partners to know what tasks and types of work are needed and helpful for their community.

Continue reading for specific tips for serving in the type of community you'll be visiting.

Respectful Service in a Native American Community

Every community has a distinctive story, including both strengths and struggles. Our hope is that through your experience in a Native American community you will...

- increase your awareness of life in a Native American community
- reflect on the impact you can have in your own community
- deepen the way you think about God, your neighbors and yourself
- feel connected to the people and places you serve, dispelling any stereotypes or fears
- listen and learn from community members about their culture and history

Life in Native American communities may feel slower, but to simply say it's slow misses the bigger picture. Native American communities are filled with community members who work tirelessly for their community. These community members are also humans with families and other life circumstances that might mean partners show up late or your group's orientation takes a while to get started. Please be flexible and understanding.

Prioritize relationships. Mainstream American culture is very task-oriented. This, however, is not the case in most Native American communities. Spending time with people is valued more than being on time. As a result, things may not always run on schedule. Community members may not be present at your service opportunity, but if they are, spend time getting to know people before you try to get things done – think about “visiting” more than “meeting.”

When you can, take the opportunity to meet community members and learn from them what they love and value about where they live. You'll likely find that the stereotypes you've held about certain kinds of people may not hold true. We invite you to join us as we continue to let go of preconceptions and interact with people as they are and not as we expect them to be.

As you meet new friends, know that some Native American cultures don't value eye contact. Handshakes may also feel different, as some cultures don't value a firm handshake. Come with a soft grip, then simply match the type of handshake you are given.

Native American communities tend to be quiet places. You might find that conversations feel slow-paced and possibly awkward. This may be because listening is highly valued in Native American culture. Don't be afraid of silent times in a conversation. Sit in the silence, enjoy the beauty around you, and wait for someone else to speak. Please be mindful that your group may bring a lot of energy and noise to a quiet place. When in the community, be mindful of your energy and volume.

Always ask permission before taking a picture. Some people in the community may not want to be photographed, while others do not mind. Some places or events should not be photographed because they are sacred to the community.

AS YOU PREPARE, ASK YOURSELF AND YOUR GROUP THESE QUESTIONS:

- How can you prepare yourself to enter into a new Native American community?
- How do you want to approach serving humbly during your time in the community?
- What are some stereotypes you might have about the community you are visiting? How might these be misconceptions?