Arts Connection, the Arts Council of San Bernardino County
San Bernardino, CA

Grant request: $20,000
Book selection: An American Sunrise

Project information:
Proposed programming start date: 09-28-2021
Proposed programming end date: 10-28-2021
Number of partner organizations: 23
Number of book discussions: 6
Total number of events: 16
Anticipated total participants: 2,500

Panelist notes:
Organization description narrative (one page)

- Briefly describe your organization's mission, history, and achievements.

Arts Connection (AC)- the Arts Council of San Bernardino County - is the central resource and organizer for arts and culture professionals in San Bernardino County. AC was launched in 2013 as a result of a two-year planning process with over 70 arts professionals and leaders in the field with the purpose of sharing resources and supporting initiatives that encourage community building through the arts. Arts Connection’s mission is to elevate arts and culture in San Bernardino County, building and weaving our growing network of artists, organizations and business partners throughout the county. AC is deeply committed to extending its core work into the county to partner with and provide examples for other cities and communities of how to integrate arts and cultural activities into the fabric of their planning and organizing.

Working as a state and local partner with the California Arts Council, AC offers teaching artist trainings, EDI, grant writing, cultural planning, and marketing workshops as well as individual assistance for artists and organizations who intend to submit California Arts Council grant applications. As a result, AC has seen greater involvement and funding resources sent to the area.

Recent outreach projects in the Morongo Basin include facilitating arts-driven community engagement work in support of the 2020 Census. In addition, Arts Connection is piloting new models for a just, inclusive economy in the City of San Bernardino through a multi-year collaborative grant supported by the James Irvine Foundation. At the county level, AC is working with the Board of Supervisors to establish a new Public Art Policy Committee.

- Describe the impact of your organization's experience with presenting community-wide programming that demonstrates an ability to conduct a successful NEA Big Read.

Arts Connection was honored to have received NEA Big Read grants in 2019 and 2020. To date, the NEA Big Read Morongo Basin has brought together over 50 community partners including local non-profits serving seniors, economically at-risk communities, military families and veterans, arts and environmental organizations, local businesses, county and school libraries, educational institutions serving K-6, high school and college students. Over 4,000 students and community members have participated in Big Read events held throughout the Morongo Basin including in the most geographically isolated areas.

Arts Connection’s experience with presenting community-wide programming includes establishing the Breeze Way Art Walk in partnership with San Bernardino Generation Now, co-creating community orchards as participatory event spaces throughout the county with Fallen Fruit, and hosting California’s Poetry Out Loud program and competition for the last four-years.

AC’s annual conference which brings together artists, cultural producers, and business, community and civic leaders, aims to drive creative problem-solving strategies on such local issues as: accessibility of health and human services, including education, literacy, nutrition, transportation, and economic development.
Project description narrative (no more than three pages)

- Provide a rationale for your chosen NEA Big Read book.

The Serrano, Cahuilla, and Chemehuevi people are the original stewards of the land in and around the Morongo Basin commonly known as the greater Joshua Tree area. *An American Sunrise* by United States Poet Laureate Joy Harjo, will allow Arts Connection to bridge connections between Native and non-Native community members and organizations in and around the Morongo Basin. By creating programs in collaboration with Native artists, Tribal Councils and organizations, AC and its partners hope to inspire conversation and learning around tribal identity, culture, language preservation and the disconnection from and continued exploitation of Native American land. Today, less than 1% of the Morongo Basin population is Native American, as the Serrano, Cahuilla and Chemehuevi people moved to find work, and live on reservations in the nearby Coachella Valley (low desert) throughout the 20th century. Harjo’s poetry will guide us towards an embodied understanding of what it means to occupy and benefit from stolen land, confront our history and find ways to heal our relationship to this land and all of its people.

- Describe the community you plan to reach with NEA Big Read programming.

The Morongo Basin, traditional land and unceded territory of the Serrano, Chemehuevi and Cahuilla people, is located in the high desert of San Bernardino County in Southern California and is bordered by Joshua Tree National Park. The Basin is home to two incorporated cities, Yucca Valley and Twentynine Palms, and to the unincorporated communities of Joshua Tree, Landers, Morongo Valley, Pioneertown, and Wonder Valley. The total estimated population for the area, according to the American Community Survey, is 70,075 persons. The Morongo Basin is home to a community of business owners, ranchers, environmentalists, climbers, marines, veterans, retirees, families and artists. 13% of the population is over 65, and 23% is under the age of 18. The median household income is $38,630, compared to $63,857 across the rest of San Bernardino County and $68,400 nationally.

- Describe your programming plans in detail.

The NEA Big Read will kick-off with a keynote presentation by Joy Harjo at the Joshua Tree Retreat Center on September 28th, 2021 (outdoors in-person or via livestream). AC has confirmed the author’s availability and interest in visiting our rural desert community should we receive an NEA grant and should it be safe to travel and gather outdoors. The event will be an opportunity for community members to pick-up free copies of the book and learn about the variety of programming from our partner organizations. Arts Connection plans to formally invite Twentynine Palms Tribal Chairman Darrell Mike to welcome Joy Harjo and determine the event protocols, if our grant is confirmed.

6 book discussions will be held throughout the Morongo Basin, as well as online via zoom, in order to reach the greatest number of community members in geographically dispersed areas. Locations will include the libraries of Yucca Valley, Joshua Tree and Twentynine Palms, Space Cowboy Bookstore, Copper Mountain College, and Calvin’s Book Club.
As part of the NEA Big Read, Arts Connection will engage six local Cahuilla, Chemehuevi and Serrano artists to participate in a **public art land acknowledgment signage project**. Gerald Clarke, the highly respected Cahuilla artist, cattle rancher, educator and tribal council member, has agreed to serve as an advisor to the program. The series of signs, containing artwork that reflects indigenous artists’ interpretations of the acknowledgment of land will be placed at prominent locations throughout the Morongo Basin and be unveiled in a public ceremony (date tbd). Local tribes invited to shape the project and host unveilings include the Twentynine Palms Band of Mission Indians (Chemehuevi), the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians (Serrano) and the Agua Caliente Band of Mission Indians (Cahuilla).

Copper Mountain College will host a **drive-in screening series of contemporary Native cinema** featuring 3 evenings of feature-length and short films from October 1st through the 3rd, 2021. AC has invited the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians, producers of the annual Native FilmFest in the low desert, to curate and co-present the series. Films under consideration include: *End of the Line: The Women of Standing Rock* prefaced by a reading of Harjo’s poem “For Those Who Would Govern” and *We Are Birds* which addresses the role song and stories play in the preservation of culture through the history of Head Bird Singers.

The Native American Land Conservancy (NALC) and the Mojave Desert Land Trust will host a **panel discussion on the protection, acquisition and restoration of sacred sites**. The panel will discuss the process which led to the most recent land conveyance of Coyote Hole from the county to the NALC. (Date tbc)

Cholla Needles Arts & Literary Library will dedicate the **October issue of its monthly poetry magazine to local Native voices** in honor of the NEA Big Read and has invited Emily Clarke, Cahuilla Native American writer to guest edit the issue. Cholla Needles will also invite readers of all ages to read their original poetry or poems from *An American Sunrise* as part of a community poetry-reading pop-up event on October 24th and to submit video-logs of their readings on the Cholla Needles oral history community web page.

Throughout the month, our education and literacy partner Spark Growth and homeschool partner the Institute of Inquiry, will use the companion **Little Read** book *At the Mountain’s Base* by Cherokee author Tracy Sorrell, which pays homage to the history of women Native American service members, to engage K-6 Morongo Basin elementary students. Spark Growth will use **lesson plans created by Illuminative in partnership with the National Indian Education Association**, featuring contemporary Native changemakers fighting against invisibility and their many important contributions to this country.

- Explain how your activities will be inclusive and engage diverse audiences.

Arts Connection and its partners have committed to prioritizing increased equitable access and engagement for the 2021 NEA Big Read by 1) making books and events entirely free to the community and available in the most geographically isolated areas of the Morongo Basin; 2) welcoming audiences of all abilities by offering accessibility accommodations including ASL interpretation, audio description and captioning; 3) engaging audiences of diverse ethnicities by creating bilingual promotional materials, reaching out to culturally specific media outlets and hosting pop-up tables at partner-recommended community locations; 4) pursuing an equity-driven
curatorial model of distributive leadership, divesting power to nurture authenticity and cultivate long-lasting relationships with diverse community members and stakeholders; 5) creating multigenerational programs to engage audiences of all ages.

- Describe how you will promote your programming to a wide range of audiences.

Arts Connection will promote NEA Big Read programs to a wide range of audiences by complementing our traditional communications campaign with continued grassroots outreach efforts. The traditional marketing and communications campaign will launch in July of 2021, allowing 3+ months for our marketing rollout to include print, online, radio and outdoor advertising. Our 2020 surveys revealed that a large number of first-time attendees learned about the NEA Big Read from our promotional highway banners. We therefore plan to add a 3rd banner at the eastern edge of the Morongo Basin along highway 62, the main traffic artery. Radio z107.7, the most significant media outlet in the region will return as a media sponsor and provide advertising airtime ahead of and throughout the NEA Big Read month. Arts Connection also plans to promote programs on First Nations Experience TV, the first and only national broadcast television network in the U.S. exclusively devoted to Native American and World Indigenous content, headquartered in the city of San Bernardino (70 miles from the Morongo Basin). AC will also work to once again secure a press feature in the local Hi-Desert Star newspaper.

Bilingual promotional postcards and posters will be distributed to local businesses, coffee shops and community hangouts. Our online presence will include a dedicated website and social media campaign on our Instagram and Facebook channels. NEA Big Read programs will also be submitted to online community calendars, including the High Desert Weekender and Joshua Tree Community Connection. Our grassroots engagement efforts, which are part of a larger ongoing effort to foster trusting relationships with community leaders, has and will continue to include consultations with tribal elders, and non-affiliated Latinx community members.

- Explain how your program will distribute copies of your chosen NEA Big Read book.

The community-wide book distribution will begin 3-weeks before the official NEA Big Read kick-off event. Free copies of *An American Sunrise* will be available at all NEA Big Read in-person programs until stock is depleted, at local libraries in Yucca Valley, Joshua Tree and Twentynine Palms, as well as at pop-up locations which attract our more diverse and geographically isolated readers. These locations will include the Copper Mountain Mesa Community Center breakfast in North Joshua Tree, the Twentynine Palms weekend market, the Palms in Wonder Valley, the swap meet in Yucca Valley, and at Morongo Basin little free libraries, located on dirt road only-accessible areas. Copies of the Little Read book *At the Mountain’s Base* will be distributed in Morongo Basin unified schools by our literacy partner Spark Growth and to homeschool students by the Institute of Inquiry. In the event in-person programs (aside from the Covid-compliant drive-in) are solely online due to State health orders, pop-up distribution efforts will be doubled at essential locations such as the weekend market as was done in 2020.
Project partnerships description narrative (no more than two pages)

- Describe your partnerships with libraries (as applicable) and community organizations.
- Explain the role each partner will play in your program.
- Explain how your partnerships will allow you to reach your intended audience(s) and engage individuals of diverse backgrounds and ability levels.

In light of the uncertainty around Covid and what the state public health orders will be in October 2021, Arts Connection and its partners have developed a series of programs which can take place in socially-distanced outdoor settings and which are also transferable to an online format. In order to be inclusive of community members for whom transportation or mobility is an issue, programs will also be available for viewing on Arts Connection’s YouTube channel and/or via zoom in certain cases.

The San Bernardino County Libraries of Joshua Tree, Yucca Valley and Twentynine Palms and the Greenleaf Library at Copper Mountain Community College have been NEA Big Read Morongo Basin partners for the past 2-years, and will once again host book discussions and act as points of distribution and information for our month of programming. In 2021, libraries will also carry audiobook copies of *An American Sunrise* to engage community members of differing abilities. (Confirmed)

The Twentynine Palms Band of Mission Indians, San Manuel Band of Mission Indians, and Agua Caliente Band of Mission Indians tribal councils, headquartered in the low desert but whom are the original stewards of the lands in and surrounding the Morongo Basin, will determine the process and narrative for the land acknowledgment signage project (under Tribal Council review). Cahuilla artist Gerald Clarke will act as an advisor to the project. (Confirmed)

The Joshua Tree Retreat Center (JTRC) will host the keynote presentation with author Joy Harjo at its outdoor amphitheater and contribute operations, marketing, staff and volunteer support for the program, as well as highway marquee advertising space for the NEA Big Read. JTRC will also provide accommodations to Joy Harjo for 2-nights. (Confirmed)

Copper Mountain College (CMC) will host the drive-in film screening series and provide operations and marketing staff support, as well as promote NEA Big Read activities to the college community. The Copper Mountain College Foundation will provide cash and in-kind funding support and public relations assistance for the programs. (Confirmed)

The Native American Land Conservancy and Mojave Desert Land Trust will host a panel discussion on the protection, acquisition and restoration of sacred sites and will conduct outreach to both Native youth and minority women in STEM fields. (Date to be confirmed)
Cholla Needles Arts & Literary Library, host of monthly poetry pop-ups and publisher of a local poetry magazine, will dedicate its October issue to the NEA Big Read featuring the writing of local Native poets. Cholla Needles will also host a pop-up poetry reading event and create an NEA Big Read video-log community page on its website. Cholla Needles continues to be instrumental in helping us connect with underserved and geographically isolated residents as well as our active community of local writers. (Confirmed)

Spark Growth, which provides literacy and language enrichment programs for young children and their families in the Morongo Basin, worked with Arts Connection to select the companion Little Read children’s book *At the Mountain’s Base* by Tracy Sorell (winner of the 2020 American Indian Youth Literature Award) which honors Native women’s military service. Spark Growth will use lesson plans created by Illuminative in partnership with the National Indian Education Association, as part of its engagement activities. (Confirmed)

The Institute of Inquiry will incorporate the NEA Big Read and Little Read titles in their classroom curriculum and will help Arts Connection further reach homeschool students and their families. Homeschool students in the region represent 19% of school age students, or 5 times the national average. (Confirmed)

Additional book discussion partners, Space Cowboy bookstore and Calvin’s Book Club, will distribute copies of the book, host book discussions, help us connect with adults and seniors and promote the NEA Big Read. (Confirmed)

Radio Z107.7, the most significant media outlet in the region, will be the main media sponsor and will provide advertising air time and editorial support for the NEA Big Read on their website. (Confirmed)

First Nations Experience (FNX) is the first and only national broadcast television network in the U.S. exclusively devoted to Native American and World Indigenous content and is headquartered in San Bernardino County. Arts Connection plans to purchase ad time as well as pitch a story to FNX and hopes to secure an interview regarding the NEA Big Read with participating artists from the land acknowledgment signage project. (To be confirmed)

The California Welcome Center – Yucca Valley will provide highway banner advertising space for the NEA Big Read, strategically located on highway 62 at the entrance to the town of Yucca Valley. (Confirmed)

Pop-up book distribution partners will include the Palms in Wonder Valley, Rainbow Stew, Soul Connection, the Joshua Tree community center, and the 29 Palms Farmers Market. The market successfully helped us reach more ethnically diverse and multigenerational audiences in 2020 and will host additional book distribution pop-ups in 2021. (Confirmed)

The 29 Palms Rotary Club will support the purchase of copies of Little Read books and MilTree Veterans Project will help with outreach to our active military and veteran community members. (Confirmed)
**Project personnel description (one page)**

**Marie Bobin**, Arts Connection’s Program Director for the Morongo Basin will be responsible for a 3rd year for the implementation of the NEA Big Read programs. She is a 2021 Healing Communities Through Racial Justice fellow with Reach Out’s Center for Civic Policy & Leadership. Bobin will work with both returning and new partners with a focus in 2021 on empowering Indigenous artists and organizations to guide the content and process of the programs, and be responsible for community outreach, securing additional funding and ensuring accessibility accommodations are part of all program planning.

**Gerald Clarke**, member of the Cahuilla Band of Mission Indians is an installation artist, cattle rancher, professor of ethnic studies at UC Riverside, and tribal leader. Clarke will serve as an advisor on the land acknowledgment signage project, and will help engage Cahuilla, Serrano and Chemehuevi collaborating artists.

**Bernard Leibov**, Director of BOXOprojects, an artist residency and research outpost for the investigation of ideas related to place, community and the environment, will be the project manager for the signage project and liaison with the Twentynine Palms Band of Mission Indians, Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians and San Manuel Band of Mission Indians Tribal Councils.

**Columba Quintero** Executive Director of the Native American Land Conservancy and **Michael Mora** Director of Outreach for the Mojave Desert Land Trust will manage the panel discussion on the protection, acquisition and restoration of sacred sites, and invite Native youth and minority women in STEM, participating in their cultural heritage and education programs to participate in the program and in other NEA Big Read events.

**Rich Soos**, Founder/Editor of the poetry magazine Cholla Needles, will be responsible for producing the NEA Big Read issue of Cholla Needles featuring and edited by local Native poets, and for creating the NEA Big Read community video-log web page.

**Melanie Stine-Shannon**, is the Director for Spark Growth, a language enrichment program helping to address the deficit in supplemental literacy programs in the region. Stine-Shannon will coordinate the Little Read and use lesson plans developed by Illuminative and the National Indian Education Association to engage K-6 elementary students. Spark Growth educators create inclusive learning environments by building positive and constructive environments for self-learning and self-reflection for learners with diverse needs and preferences.

**Liz Smith**, Programs Lead for San Bernardino County Libraries, will oversee library programs and make audiobooks available this year, providing greater access to individuals of all abilities.

**Martín Mancha** will oversee the marketing and communications including the design and translation of marketing materials in English and Spanish, and accessibility requests.

**Gary Daigneault**, News Director for radio Z107.7, will oversee the radio marketing campaign for the NEA Big Read.
To the NEA Big Read Review Panel:

I am writing this letter in support of Arts Connection’s application for the NEA Big Read grant to bring the United States Poet Laureate Joy Harjo’s latest book, An American Sunrise: Poems, to the Morongo Basin of San Bernardino County in the Autumn of 2021.

The Joshua Tree Retreat Center (JTRC) is a returning partner and we are excited to co-host the keynote conversation with Joy Harjo, along with providing operations, marketing, staff and volunteer support based on our positive experience with our involvement in 2020.

We applaud Arts Connection’s continued vision to bring community-based programming of this stature to the underserved Morongo Basin. This year the choice of An American Sunrise reflects so much of what we are striving to do with our mission at JTRC. Joy Harjo’s writing, which she herself describes as being at “the intersection of poetry, spirituality and social justice” exemplifies the natural spirituality and healing that JTRC seeks to share in our unique desert setting.

I enthusiastically support Arts Connection’s application for this grant and will support the program in any way possible.

Sincerely,

Terry Taylor Castillo
Executive Director
Institute of Mentalphysics
PO Box 1000
Joshua Tree, CA 92252
Jtrcc.org
Terry.jtrc@gmail.com
To Whom It May Concern,

The San Bernardino County Library is excited to support the Morongo Basin's Big Read program in 2021. As a third year partnership, we are looking forward to expanding on the programming we did last year, and complementing the book with not only book discussion, but artist led workshops to help literacy throughout the region.

The selected book is Joy Harjo’s *An American Sunrise*, and we are excited to incorporate this book into our adult programming again this Fall. The theme of the book lends well to programming and we believe our Morongo Basin communities will be interested in participating in programs that go with the books theme.

NEA Big Read is an appreciated program in our communities. We plan to facilitate book discussions, host book related art programs, provide circulating copies of the books in various formats, and participate in the Kick-Off event for this program. We plan participate in each of our branch libraries in the Morongo Basin (Yucca Valley, Joshua Tree and Twenty-nine Palms).

The San Bernardino County Library services the Morongo communities with 3 locations, which have strong programming and established book clubs. On Behalf of the San Bernardino County Library system, I am excited to support Arts Connection’s application for this grant.

Sincerely,

Liz Smith

Library Events Coordinator
San Bernardino County Library
## NEA Big Read: proposal budget

### Personnel

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<tr>
<th>Expense</th>
<th>Detailed description</th>
<th>Source(s)</th>
<th>NEA Big Read Grant</th>
<th>Match/Cost-share</th>
<th>Match total</th>
<th>Sub total</th>
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<td>Land Acknowledgment Project Advisor &amp; Ph 125 hours @ $40/hour average</td>
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### Program expenses

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<td>Big Read Book Purchase</td>
<td>600 copies @ $17.18/copy + 30 audio books @ $15.80/copy</td>
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<td>$4,310</td>
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<td>Rotary Club / Military Spouses Ass.</td>
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<td>Keynote - speaker fee</td>
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### Promotion

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<th>Match total</th>
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<td>Print Collateral - rack cards &amp; posters</td>
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<tr>
<td>Graphic Designer fee</td>
<td>postcard, poster, highway banner, standing banner and film ppt design: 14 hours @ $50/hour</td>
<td>Grant</td>
<td>$700</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>First Nations Experience TV Network - ads</td>
<td>10 - 30-second ads</td>
<td>Grant</td>
<td>$850</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Z107.7 - radio promotion</td>
<td>radio advertising, editorial support and morning show exposure</td>
<td>In-kind: Z107.7</td>
<td>$1,000</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highway Marquees</td>
<td>advertising on JTRC and MDLT highway marques</td>
<td>In-kind: JTRC / MDLT</td>
<td>$500</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highway Banner - location rentals</td>
<td>6 weeks @ $100/week x 3 locations</td>
<td>In-kind: MDLT / Welcome Center</td>
<td>$2,400</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facebook ads</td>
<td>$10/day x 45 days</td>
<td>Grant</td>
<td>$450</td>
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</table>

### Total

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expense</th>
<th>Match/Cost-share</th>
<th>Match total</th>
<th>Sub total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>$20,000</td>
<td>$11,210</td>
<td>$16,680</td>
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If you'd like to offer further clarification on any expenses, please provide details below:

Arts Connection's Executive Director and Program Director salaries have not been included in the personnel section due to indirect state agency funding from the California Arts Council to Arts Connection.