

## Appendix I: Interview Data

The following provides aggregate level interview data from the 18 interviews that were conducted. All responses are anonymous, removing the identity of the participants. After each question, the responses are listed from each interview. The following responses are in the words of interviewees.

### Question 1: In what Montana region do you currently reside?

- Helena
- Rocky Boy's Indian Reservation
- Western Montana
- Havre
- Missoula
- Red Lodge
- Helena
- Helena
- Broadwater County
- Missoula
- Montana City
- Helena
- Missoula
- Hungry Horse
- Libby
- Bozeman
- Southcentral Montana (Billings)
- Missoula
- Missoula

### Question 2: What types of civic engagement activities do you participate in on a yearly basis? [ask to list a few] [follow ups]

- I primarily work in capacity building with native youth by providing leadership training to students interested in designing projects to address a community need.
- I identify with following communities: Young, politically active, rural, and queer. I do voter registration drives, political campaigns, and lobby local legislators and attend community meetings on relevant policy.
- I am very civically engaged – my engagement includes voter registration, rallies, demonstrations, and working with the legislature. Most is directly if not exclusively related to my job or the other hat that I wear. I am a member of the MT Board of Regents of Higher Education. My civic engagement runs the gamut from being on the local Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, Board of Trustees for Northern MT Hospital and I am on the Board of the MT Board of Economic Development, and Board of Regents. It involves a lot of meetings, conference calls, and also advocacy work at the state level through the legislature.

- Personally, I regularly vote and I contact my congressional delegation. During the legislative session, I contact my state representatives. Professionally, I do a lot of work to get other people engaged. I have collected signatures for ballot initiatives, register people to vote, and help navigate the capitol.
- I have always tried to volunteer. When I first moved to Red Lodge, I was here initially to try to prep for Graduate School. I wanted to do something useful. I volunteered as a helpline advocate at our local domestic violence organization. I started following city council activity after some housing problems arose. Red Lodge is a tourist economy, so the summer is great, but the winters are tough. I wanted my employees at the restaurant to have a better quality of life. I am also committed to doing things that people tell me I will fail at. I just jumped in and got involved. I volunteered on Obama's campaigns and Tester's campaign. I was on the Planned Parenthood Team Council. I did what I could when I had the time. Serve on a bunch of boards, such as the Rural Fire District Board (Carbon County) and serve as a non-acting member on the school board. I am also the chair of the parks board.
- As a legislative staffer, I am a non-partisan staff, so other than voting, I really don't participate – I don't get involved in politics. Other civic things I do, I am involved in the public library foundation board. I guess another thing I do, I do try to—when school groups come to the capitol, or other groups, I give capital tours if I am available. I love to talk to groups from school kids to senior citizens and tell them about the leg. Process and how they can be involved. I also manage the session info desk where members of the public can call in and leave a message for their legislator.
- Not a lot outside of work at this point. I do a lot of speaking and I do I guess a lot of politics and political engagement. Because it is important to me to get people elected to support things that are important to me. Not only working on campaigns, by donating money.
- Through work I am involved in community development and coordinated responses for child protection and rights. I spend a lot of time meeting with governmental organizations, law enforcement, and other policy driven entities. In my personal life I support candidates running for local government by volunteering and getting involved in other ways. Also, I'm on a school board and, in the past, other local coalitions.
- Engage in my children's public education. Engage with political candidates and ballot initiatives. I vote.
- I'm a member of the rotary club, a coalition that helps design services for young children, also sit on a committee that helps allocate budget for the forest service when they have extra. I'm always open to getting involved in small things when I can.
- Voting, canvassing for candidates, holding or organizing events for partisan or non-partisan issues.
- I vote, write letters to County Commissioners and legislature during session.
- Voter Registration, citizen initiatives, Issue Education, also ran for public office.
- I vote, but don't have much time to go to neighborhood council meetings. I am involved with fundraisers for non-profits or go to academic symposiums/speakers.

- The most obvious, is that I serve in the legislature. I volunteer at an elementary school, for about five years. I spend an hour a week with a guy who's in fourth grade now. I work for a non-profit, and a lot of the work that we do is focused on community development, so my day job is civic engagement. When I am running, and being involved in government, but the most direct way that I participate is campaigning, knocking on doors, asking people about policy issues and talking about their concerns. I ref high school basketball.
- I participate in Chamber of Commerce events, business grand openings, etc. I will be working with communities to educate on the Census 2020 and redistricting. I work for a senator; I attend in participate in ceremonies of different types – remembrance or honorary ceremonies. I engage with civic groups to educate on Congressional activities or provide legislative updates.
- My profession in general is about civic engagement, but outside that I go to various events like turkey trot or run Missoula. Often go to social events.
- I work for an org that does mostly civic engagement work. Voter registration, education and turning people out to vote. We do work to encourage people's access to the ballot box. We engage in the census every ten years

**a. What prompted you to get involved?**

- Young People Fellow for the People for the American Way Foundation and through this fellowship I gained skills in social justice organizing and created a blueprint for community change.
- Safety for me and my communities, especially the rural queer communities.
- There is a line of demarcation – some of them are associated with my professional life as it works to my work with [development corporation] for 19 years. Much of the work is done on behalf of the organization. In terms of the sorry behind it, is healthcare. I was asked to serve on the board – it is important for a rural area to have healthcare. Being a part of providing that to the people is important. We also want a vibrant and healthy business sector in the community in which I reside. At the higher education level, I was asked by the Governor to consider an appointment and I believe strongly that higher education is important for society, individuals and communities.
- I want to make a positive difference in the lives of others. One person can make a difference, leadership matters. We have to use the skills that we have to move the needle in terms of making Montana a better place to live and work.
- Personally, my parents were public school teachers in Ronan. The nature of their work required them to be engaged in political life – from the ways they were allowed to teach to their compensation. It was modeled in my household growing up. Professionally, I did two years of AmeriCorps after college and studied political science. Not because I wanted to go into politics, it was just interesting. After that, I decided that I didn't want to work in the school system anymore, I then became engaged in an organization that worked on creating systemic change through community organizing. That is

how I learned about the whole smattering of organizations that do organizing for system change.

- The affordable housing piece of it was the big catalyst. People don't know much about city government. City government councils are between 3 and 12 people and they make huge decisions that impact people's lives. I also wanted to bridge the gap for people who were not interested in politics. I am not the typical city council person. If people saw someone that they understood better on the council, they would be more involved.
- Co-worker approached me about serving on the library board, and I saw it as a good way to get involved in the community. I was appointed after I had been here a few years. And voting—my parents voted all the time and it is just something I have always done.
- I've always seen the link about what I care about and how things are funded, nationally, state, and local
- I felt a sense of responsibility to the community, especially regarding child safety and protection.
- Being a part of the community and making the state and nation a better place to live for the good of everyone.
- Work mostly, this community that is attempting to rebrand and rebuild. The EPA has left the area and the school system is a visible part of the area – we are trying to be a positive light in the community. I feel a sense of responsibility and because of my position I get asked to get involved in a lot of things.
- It has been a part of my family, was important for them to be civically engaged. They wanted to make sure they were a part of the community.
- Previous experience in local government. I understand that decision makers won't know unless people tell them.
- From a young age different issues that affected the community were important to me. School funding levels.
- I vote because I believe there is a civic duty and it is my responsibility. I also believe that I should be supporting activities that support my community.
- I guess example of other people in my life who I admire who do similar things. I got into the child mentorship thing because I had a family friend that spent a lot of time doing that. And also, when I was in high school, we had elective programs where we did mentorship and I got a lot of value out of those. One of the kids I worked with in high-school, I am still involved in his life, so it was rewarding in that respect. With politics, we had some family friends that I met who I really admired who served in the legislature, so that kind of planted the seed in my brain in that way, so they encouraged me to run and I said sure. I had really good government teachers, all the way through middle and high school. I've learned that as I represent a University district, that I have perhaps a warped sense of people's lack of civics education. My parents definitely set an example—they owned businesses growing up and were always going out of their way to support non-profits and schools and were involved in local government issues. My dad was a

picture framer and they gave away a lot of money in services to schools and charities and non-profits—that was his way to give back. And before that, they were both teachers.

- An internship in Washington, D.C. during college prompted me to get involved.
- I have enjoyed the social aspect of any of these activities, anything that is geared for certain issues and meeting new people.
- I think that people's ability to participate in our democracy is crucially important and one reason we've been able to sustain the democracy. I also think that voting is a place where it is really easy for people to do really insidious things. It is a place where racism and sexism and homophobia and transphobia can show up in insidious ways. So, it is important to remove those structural barriers for people of color in access to voting and the information that they need to be informed to do so.

**b. Do you encourage others to participate? [why/why not?]**

- Yes, we oftentimes forget to ask the youth what they think needs to be done.
- I also have worked with superintendents and principals to identify young students with potential or who were more active.
- Absolutely, because I feel like a lot of the communities, I am a part of are marginalized and our voices are not included in discussions in policymaking and power. Rural and queer folk are especially underrepresented.
- I do – I think it's important that in whatever way we are comfortable to become involved. Whether it is the local, state or national level – I've oftentimes recommended individuals to others as good people to serve on boards of directors or to become civically involved.
- Yes, it feels so obvious. I think because the decisions that are made impact people's lives and wellbeing. Their family, the people they love, the ways that we interact with each other, so I think it is just part of living in a community is engaging in the civic spheres.
- I am trying to get young people involved all the time. Do not categorize young people. There are barriers to access in knowledge. Young people are working on their families every day. There is a cost to gating information and no one pays too much attention to that. I want to make things accessible on their time.
- I do encourage people to participate. When I talk to school kids especially, making sure they're registered to vote. One thing we're lucky here in Montana, our process is open and transparent. Anyone can testify at a hearing. I encourage people to get involved and meet with their legislators. Because that is how we will shape democracy and shape what we want. When talking to school kids – I always ask, how do laws affect you? Encourage them to volunteer and learn about their communities and what affects them.
- Absolutely, I was at a panel recently and it's been a tough couple years for fundraising, and one of the questions was, give two words that would change

the system. And I said Vote. I watched when Bill Clinton got elected, things changed immediately. At that time, I was involved in workforce consolidation programs, block grants, and I am not a fan of them. They are able to serve native Americans by life and limb—the bottom of the ladder—block grants run out. Bush wanted to fund workforce development with block grants.

- Yes, regularly, I think it's important to get others involved.
- I do but try not to be a pontificator in my social circles.
- Yes - a lot of the staff that I work with. They are heavily involved in the community - from youth groups to soccer teams.
- Yes, because a part of building a community that you want is about eliciting conversation from everybody.
- Yes, mostly on social media to cast a ballot on election day. Encourage people to participate in the democratic process.
- I think participation of diverse array is important to capture the community.
- Absolutely, I do believe that is my civic responsibility. For community and society to function and be representative it needs as much input from as many people as possible. I even encourage people who I disagree with to be actively engaged.
- I just recruited my best friend to mentor the way that I do. In that respect, yes. I am always involved with candidate recruitment for local politics. I spend way too much of my time encouraging people to vote. And also, as an elected official, you spend a lot of time encouraging people to give you feedback. I mean my cellphone is public, so I get random phone calls all the time about any number of random things that you can think of.
- I encourage them to get involved with civic engagement and community activities. I do not oftentimes encourage people to get involved with politics.
- Around events, definitely. They should meet other people.
- Yes, absolutely I encourage others to inform themselves and vote. Also, to register other voters and it is important to have those one on one conversations because there is a lot to be said about those conversations and to hear it from those that you trust. I think the more we can utilize our personal relationships; the more people will trust the process and participate.

**c. Why do you think some decide to participate and others do not?**

- Most people chose not to participate because they feel hopeless and like not matter what they do it will not matter. And I feel like others chose to participate because they have an active community that encourages them to do so.
- The primary reason why people do not want to participate is the time commitment. They may not feel like they have the time necessary to do a good job. The meetings take up time.
- Oh my god, because it is so discouraging. There are power imbalances that make people feel hopeless, like they cannot affect change. On the other side, I do believe that sometimes people are so privileged by how the system

operates that they can opt out without having anything to do with it. The other side of it is there are actual barriers to engagement – whether discouraged or not – it might not have to do with that.

- As far as barriers go, I mean one explicit example is that we are about to implement the REAL ID here in Montana. It costs \$40 to get a REAL ID, without a REAL ID you can't enter a federal building – that is a legitimate, physical barrier. That is one very minor example that is very current.
- I hear this at the information desk all the time. Some choose not to because they do not think their participation will matter. Using the past presidential election – people call and say, “I voted, and my candidate won the popular and lost the election.” So why does it matter if I vote? Other people don't want to take the time to learn about the process or call their legislator. A lot of people just don't have the time or interest – jobs/kids. I had a lady call, it was her first time, and she said, “you made it so easy” and she became a frequent caller. People don't understand how easy it is to become involved. Or they just don't think that their vote matters. A vote is important, you could be that one vote that makes a difference.
- I live in the bubble. Helena is the bubble. I don't know that people understand the impact of politics. I'm not saying they're stupid, they just don't understand. I've had to give people civics lessons. People don't get it or understand who their reps are. People don't vote. I don't know if people are disenfranchised or if they are just caught up in the day to day. Voting is so important to their lives, but they don't have time to stay informed. For example, the AARP is very powerful, but they also vote. Same with the NRA.
- People that do have a belief in their own ability to affect change and are more outgoing, not afraid to speak up in groups. People that don't aren't as confident, and aren't comfortable speaking out and sharing their opinions
- There is a sense that they do not believe they can make a difference. This is because they are uninformed and see the electoral college as a barrier for their voice. Generally, there is a lot of apathy regarding local, state, national or international issues. People are already so busy with their ordinary lives (work, family, etc.) they are homed in on meeting their immediate needs.
- Some people won't get involved because they don't have the time. They get busy with their jobs and families. Many will only get involved if they are asked, because they are more of the follower type. Or some only get involved if it benefits them directly.
- Many feel discouraged because they believe their voice has no impact and feel they don't have a huge reach. People also have a number of pressing time concerns that are more immediate (illness, family, work, etc.). They have a lot going on. It is less about apathy; it is more that people are reluctant to dedicate energy to a cause where they may ultimately just feel disappointment. It hurts to fail.
- Distrust in the system, whether its election security, election administrators, or feel their vote doesn't have impact. Or they do not know how to engage, thinking its cumbersome or complicated. Those who do participate do it for

patriotic reasons, feeling they can make a difference (embrace the election process and doing something larger than themselves).

- It varies. Some people have the sense they can make an impact and shape their community. Other people feel like they have no choice, whether it is an issue that threatens the health and safety of their community or they have dependency on certain policies. It is usually out of personal self-interest of some kind.
- Time management. I currently work full time and go to school full time; it is hard to dedicate time. Also, it is the way income is stratified, lower class has less money and time to be engaged
- I think part of it is Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. If you have support and functionality in parts of your life, you can engage more deeply. If you're not stressed about paying rent, you can be more involved. It is humbling to realize that when people have a lot going on with kids or aren't financially secure, they don't have time to think about civic engagement. I've never had very much debt, and I was able to run for the legislature at a young age because I didn't have student loans. Someone who had 40k dollars in loans couldn't have afforded to do what I did. Likewise, someone who is middle-aged with a mortgage and kids likely couldn't have afforded it wither. You have to have support in your life. And the other thing is that civics education in this country is totally broken. I had a good civics education where I grew up but that is not standard nationally. I spend a lot of time talking to college students talking about what the legislature even is and the difference between the state and federal government.
- Those who engage have issues that affect their daily lives or families, or they are looking for professional networking opportunities
- Definitely depends on event or organization. If it is more political, or about certain causes, that attract over like-minded people, it is too homogenous in a way. People may just disagree with mission of organization.
- I think there is a multitude of reasons but focusing on low income women and poverty. I think the main reason they chose to or not to has to do with your privilege. Your time and money are your opportunity to engage. There are a lot of barriers to those who have low income or those who feel persecuted to feel connected to civic life. To some people, voting in our government feels like they don't have power. I completely get wanting to give up and let the people with all the money and time and privilege worry about that stuff and just focus on feeding my family. But we need to help those people to engage and be involved in the things that impact them.

**Question 3: Thinking about some of the activities you just described, can you think of some reasons why any person in your Montana Community could not or would not take part? [follow up questions]**

- Students are sometimes in a place in their lives where they are dealing with a lot (like family problems or trying to grow into their own identities). I wanted to

inspire students, but it is hard to stay motivated when you encounter a student who is not engaged.

- You want to help everyone, but you have to give people space and allow them to decide if they want to participate or not.
- I think people have no idea. They have no idea what city council does. We do not get a ton of education about local civic engagement – the focus in school is on National government. Not every city has the same governing structure. I don't think people have any idea. I have taught a course about how to run for office for Forward Montana – young people are interested but cautious.
- The first year I ran was when I was 26 – I had a lot to learn about how to even run. I have the flexibility to put civic engagement first, I do not have a family, and not everyone has that. It is a lot of time to commit. Instead of camping I am writing and researching resolutions. I made \$80 every two weeks to be on city council. It ends up being up to 20 hours per week sometimes. That is a lot of time for not a lot of money for basically volunteer labor. You are highly criticized, very thankless. Lots of people get really jaded from the experience.
- You intend to be involved with like people – you are like your friends. But there are other people – you are elderly, a shut-in- maybe you never signed up for ballot by mail or maybe you just don't care. My dad always used to say, “why should I vote in a school election, I don't have kids in school”. You have to be really committed to take the time to volunteer for an organization or for a local board the reason you may not vote is that you don't think that it matters.
- I think that politics is kind of cliquey. It's not necessarily welcoming. I don't know that people know how to get engaged. And I also think that people are caught up in their own lives. Some people, it's their thing, like me. Other people have soccer, and cub scouts. I think of early-pre-k. We don't have it because of the selfishness of sub-groups. That would make a big difference in the lives of low-income families. I come from a union background, but I am really disappointed in organized labor. They get exactly what they want, or no one gets anything, and I think it is shortsighted and selfish, quite frankly.
- The main reason people don't is that they have a distrust of the public process.
- Mostly because of the time and the commitment that it takes to get involved. A lot of the people that are involved in rotary club are older retirees that have time and want to give back to the community.
- There is a narrative of our state being really conservative, and people associate this as change not happening easily. Though our Stat has been progressive on a number of issues. So, people may think enacting positive changes, the narrative that paints the status quo makes change difficult It forces people to overestimate the lift and discourages from engagement.
- People would not participate because they would not want to be on jury duty. They don't understand we changed jury selection to also include vehicle registration. They fell like big brother is watching them.
- A lot of different barriers. Some people have multiple jobs while also supporting kids at home, often with odd hours that are not predictable with their work. They have no guaranteed hours that allow for civic engagement or participation. They

may also have a sense that the system is set up against people, and it will deter them from participating (set result from the beginning). In Montana we are very close to officials and can make an impact, but people still believe it is out of reach. Rural nature of the state makes it hard to work with group or community toward civic engagement goal.

- People have to decide between going to work and getting by versus being civically involved. Income and time in general.
- The biggest one is running for the legislature and that activity is totally designed for someone who is retired and wealthy or self-employed. It is a frustrating part for candidate recruitment and as well as serving. The actual compensation is about \$10 per hour and the amount of time that you have to take off of your day job, you lose money. And it hurts your employability as well. Financial security, not having a partner that earns a living wage. I am very lucky to be subsidized by my partner— she subsidizes my civics habit.
- Certain events may be geared for broad array of people but if hosted by specific organization that will take some of the raised funds, people will not go because they disagree with the organization.
- To why they could, not-our satellite voting systems, particularly in native communities, are quite prohibitive. And to be blunt some staff are actively racist. So, there are a lot of barriers for tribal members. In terms of the conscious decision to not participate a lot of people don't see their priorities being displayed and it is hard to see politicians acting on their behalf. There is a lot of dangerous rhetoric and we have a toxic relationship with govt. in our mind where we don't see the govt. as being responsible for helping people. But in my mind, we need the govt and large institutions to actually help people. There are a lot of issues why people don't participate but you have to see why it will help you and your life and your pocketbook.

**a. What kinds of people in your community are most engaged in your community? Why?**

- The younger generation (people in their 30s) are engaged because they want the community to become better and more improved for their children. The younger generation is engaged because they have children.
- This younger generation is also trying to bring back culture that was lost by the middle generation. The elders are also engaged (60+).
- I suppose it is young liberal activists, and I think they are engaged because if they aren't the swell of the political fervor in our state would endanger them or their community. Example: Anti-Trans legislation, anti-gay legislation, anti-poverty legislation, anti-woman legislation (most prevalent – gets the most people rallied around)
- My general experience across the board is that those that are involved are the busiest people to begin with. The people seem to be busy for a reason – busy people are busy people because they genuinely want to make a difference and believe that their personal involvement will make a difference. The rule of thumb is if you want something done ask someone who thinks

they are already too busy. Somehow somehow if something is a priority you will find the time to make sure it gets the attention it needs.

- I am not sure there is and hard and fast rule. I guess what I would say is that I think that people are most engaged when they have a community of people to work with. A Community of people helps build understanding and show people the ropes. They also help them weather the storms of political disappointment. Hopefully, that community, because of the political will, also has some wins.
- I'm in the bubble. People that I know, and I go to a lot of fundraisers and I am always asked to participate. But that's also just true in the capital and working in state government. Even in the leg. Process, it is hard to run for office. If you're a woman, or with kids, it is hard to run. It is hard on a family to leave for 90 days and come to Helena. But we need more young people and women in the legislature. And it is a citizen legislature.
- The people that the most engaged are people with families because they feel a stronger sense of responsibility to the community. People that seek special needs from the community are also more likely to speak out. It's the ones with the unique problems that are often the loudest
- Families with kids at the high school age. Having kids make them more likely to get involved and having kids that are of an independent age makes it easier for them to get involved. Also, a lot of people that get involved are retirees that have a lot of free time.
- People are more inclined when there is an issue they can directly relate to. I see this a lot with schools, which tend to create communities around them and foster civic engagement.
- The people who have the easiest time imagining their voices counting. They see the decision makers closer to them, they have a common narrative. Retired people tend to be civically engaged to change things how they would like, it also creates a community for them.
- Those with high educations, pay high taxes, or are professionals. They engage at a higher frequency, but there are other who do it but not as often. Some groups are just more in touch with government; business owners, work with government officials professionally, people with interest in how tax dollars are spent.
- It is the people with the most time and resources, which make it easier to be active.
- The higher educated and higher socio-economic demographic. I think that if you are to stay engaged you need capacity and desire to see how engagement at road level impacts.
- Upper income folks who have the time to be engaged. Certainly, retired folks. People who are well educated and well fed and don't have to work necessarily. It is a big contrast between Missoula. It seems like Missoula has a more blue-collar atmosphere and culture in a lot of respects. People their seem to be more engaged or more visible. And that is just not the case in Bozeman.

- They are people who live and work in those communities and who are affected by public policy. They are passionate about a variety of issues – they are passionate about what they do or the ways they engage.
- People are more likely to stay engaged if they believe with what they are doing and identify with whatever mission that is.
- I think that the people who are most engage are people who have been given the tools and training necessary and realize the importance and what it can do for communities who are trying to build power I think the internet is a really interesting place where people have begun to engage around politics. An example is in the last leg session, there were a large amount of indigenous people who came to the capital to talk about missing and murdered indigenous women and these are people who expressed never having been in this building before and not being involved but this was an issue that affected their lives and they needed lawmakers to do something about it. So that's when people get involved is when they see that direct connection between voting and their lives.

**b. What kinds of people in your community are least engaged in your community? Why?**

- People that are in their 40s or late 50s are not engaged. They are tired and have work to do. There is no motivation for them to get involved, as the situation in and around Indian country has been pretty bleak for a long time. From boarding schools to other historical traumas, they have lost a lot of our culture.
- The least engaged people are the most marginalized. I would also say that rural people are less engaged because there is less infrastructure to engage. Rural communities are often cut off from attending events in person or they get reached out to less and therefore engaged less.
- I would not want to classify a certain group as least involved. Across the board I see people from senior citizens to teenagers involved at some level civically. It is not an age thing. For those that are not involved, my general sense is that they may have a sense that it doesn't matter. This notion of cynicism that people believe that their personal involvement isn't important and that one person can't make a difference, etc. What could they possibly do to influence whatever it happens to be. I think it has more to do with their personal belief that it won't matter.
- I don't know that many people who are not super engaged. In conversations, professionally, for example with people who refuse to register to vote. The things that I have heard – lack of belief that the system operates to their benefit or gives a crap about them as people at all.
  - How do those conversations affect you? You are being rejected, so its disappointing. It is an opening to an actual genuine conversation. People can have any number of conversations when you ask them to participate. I don't think people are wrong when they say the system is against them and cannot respond to their needs. I don't argue with

them, there is more of an attempt to empathize and relate to them. Their perception comes from experience and then it is more motivating for me because I don't disagree them. MT [organization] – the more we engage women and nonbinary and gender nonconforming in the system of policy making, the way that policy making changes, the more they are engaged in the process the process itself becomes important and slows. The end policy result and the process itself. It motivates me more to people involved.

- I think people that it impacts the most are least engaged. I think that single young people have the most to lose and they are the least engaged—if we're talking about politics—that is my idea of civic engagement.
- People who feel disenfranchised by the community. Those that don't think others will listen to them. Many people are too busy fulfilling the basic needs for themselves and their families, so they don't have time to get involved.
- Young families – they are busy taking care of kids and making a living. People that aren't engaged are also often lower income people – people that don't work and don't get involved in their community in any way.
- The ones who do not have time to engage, because they are serving their immediate needs. They do not see their role in their community and don't understand they can make a difference. Because they are uninformed, they feel they cannot contribute to the conversation.
- They do not see themselves represented in mainstream narratives. It is also people who do not have surplus time or are socially exhausted.
- People who distrust government and the election process. Feel vote/voice has no impact and that government is full of red tape. They do not realize that there are humans working in government trying to get the job done.
- It is the people strapped for cash and time. Not because they do not want to me.
- Being not as educated they do not have the understanding or ability to understand how activities in the community have impact. There are many other sociological reasons that cannot be separated from this. There are structural issues creating barriers; access to education, and the historically disadvantaged.
- Young people are less engaged. I spend a lot of time with college students. But that comes back to financial security, or they're more focused on skiing than the rest of their lives. Or they don't have the time, capacity, or bandwidth. They don't see people like themselves engaging civically. Maybe they didn't have the examples in their lives like I did.
- The people who are least engaged are hard to characterize. Parents with young families are hard to engage, they are busy with day-to-day activities. It has to do with bandwidth to get engaged. Alternatively, I would say those who do not read or watch local or national news are also not engaged. Not motivated by anything. They don't know or they just don't care, and it doesn't matter to them.

- People who do not feel like there is a place for them in engagement. I see it more on political lines, I am biased. Whether or not they feel connected.
- People who don't really need anything. It is hard to get to the connection to how your problems, daily life, and community can be improved by engaging in this work if you feel that your life and your community is doing fine. Honestly, I'd have to say that I don't interact with a whole bunch of people who aren't movable or who can't see the importance of civic life. It can be easy to say "everything is so bad, so what is that point" they've had such a bad experience that it just feels easier to not.

**Question 4: Do you believe that you have the ability to influence your government's decision-making [e.g. local or state] in Montana? [Why/why not?]**

- I believe that there is a lot of power in native people when we organize together, especially when we go to the state to ask for a change. It can be difficult and there are some players at the state level who disagree with us and who do not support native people's organizing efforts. I do believe that through our efforts, change can happen.
- At the local level, it is very tribally based. On Rocky Boy's, it is a lot more difficult to make change because there are so many different issues and problems that are going on. People are just trying to survive on the reservation so we are not even in the place where we can make change because everyone is focusing on survival at the moment. How are we going to pay for our programs? How are we going to feed our people? Before we can get to the next step of creating laws or initiatives, we need to have those foundational basic needs met like food and housing.
- I think I do. But I think that's a little bit of two things: 1 is I have been actively engaged in the legislature since I was 16. It feels hopeful and invigorating to defeat a bill, for example an anti-choice bill. Whether that means attending rallies or lobbying or calling/letter writing, it feels like that gives the legislators cover for when they do vote the way they do. E.g., they had 100 people call me about this. On the other hand I also think that, and this is cynical, that I cannot give in to the cynicism that nothing that I do matters. If I do that, then I stop fighting and I can't afford to do that.
- Absolutely I do. I was recently having a conversation with someone and I was indicating to them how easy it is access the levers of influence in MT. When I think that we are relatively unique in that regard, whether it is your city council or mayor or the legislature or the governor or department directors or even our federal congressional folks – in MT for the most part those decisionmakers are a phone call or email away. My personal experience is that you don't get shuffled aside or ignored. Because we are a small state – everyone knows each other, particularly those individuals that are involved civically at a high level. There is a cadre of individuals that kind of know each other – it is not an exclusive club, but I think that access to the levers of power in Montana are far more accessible than in other states.
- Yes (sigh). At the local level and the state level, I don't believe that I as one individual can do that. I don't have the kinds of political or donor leverage as a

singular individual do that. But I do believe that my participation combined with peoples whose values align with mine can impact local and state government.

- I think absolutely yes. I think we are a small enough community that a handful of engaged voters can make a difference. Even statewide. On the city scale – you get 12 people in the chamber you will change minds. No one shows up. You have a huge chance to make a difference on a local level. In Bozeman or Missoula, it might be more difficult, but even in those places, but if you rally people you could still make a difference.
- Yep, I do. I really do. Probably because I see it firsthand. I always use this example: In 2011, there was a rep out of Billings to abolish pit bulls in Montana because one of her constituents Dogs had been killed by a Pitbull. 110 pit bulls and their owners came to the capital so the legislators could come meet these dogs. This group of owners organized and killed that bill in committee. On a local level, there was proof positive because the group got organized and testified. Maybe not so much nationally, but locally, even more so. Letting them know your opinions and feelings. There are some legislators who have their opinions and won't change it no matter what, but the majority will listen to the public. We can talk to our legislators and change their minds.
- Absolutely. Because I am involved, and people would listen. But I do think that one person has the ability to make change in Montana. I work for the gov. and Lt. gov.; I know people in the legislature.
- Yes, mostly because I've seen it action and have experience there.
- I do – a lot of that is facilitated by my title, it lets me get a lot more done in the community. But I also attend a lot of meetings and participate in the community, so seeing that I can make a difference makes me surer about it.
- Absolutely, and that has been buoyed by social media. A student from a small town in Montana can directly message the president or a state senator, it has become a dynamic world of engagement
- Yes, but I also recognize that I have navigated the systems and understand more about how things work. Not everyone is informed, I was fortunate to get involved young. Not many people understand they can just drive to Helena and go to a committee hearing and tell people how things impact them.
- At County Level, Yes. At State and Federal, no. I have direct communication with local commissioners (more dialogue). Higher up you go, voice goes into a black hole. State level, If I am going against the political grain, nothing is going to get through.
- Yes, I have always thought it was important to show up and take up space, to be a part of the public narrative regardless if you win or lose. You are able to change the narrative, though I believe this is becoming less true at the federal level (lack of access to delegation).
- Yes, I do. Mostly because of my professional position. My own understanding and level of education adds to my credibility.
- Absolutely. Yes. It takes someone with good social awareness and skills, and to some extent time and passion and creativity to make substantial change happen. But I could pump you full of anecdotes of average people bringing an issue forward and bringing about change. That is a very cool thing about Montana that is different from

a lot of places. Sen. Baucus is a great example. When I was in school, I was able to build a relationship with his staff. So yeah, I think our govt. is way more accessible here than it is in other places. My friend from Maryland has no idea who his legislator is. I only have 10,000 constituents. If you put the time forward, you can talk to most everyone in your district in a campaign.

- I do believe I have the ability to influence. My work for the senator and for the state gives me a platform to engage with important groups and community members that are agents for change in their communities.
- I do, I have understandings of the workings of government. If you are not engaged, you will not feel remotely influential at all. The more engaged there is greater opportunity to lean and to impact. Certain folks may feel they can impact locally rather than statewide, based on their particular interest.
- Yes. I think that ultimately, we are their bosses. I don't think that it is easy, but at the end of the day, ultimately the decision maker is the voters and I think that is powerful. And I've seen it happen. In the last session, Dems were the minority, but Medicaid expansion happened. A couple moderates had to pay attention to the people in their own districts and they had to vote for a thing they did not want to vote for.

**a. Do you think everyone [e.g. underrepresented groups] in your community feels the same way? [Why/why not?]**

- If you were to go to Rocky Boy's and you were to talk to a young person, they would probably disagree with me. On the piece about the state level, they haven't been exposed to that yet. They haven't spoken at the legislature and haven't been engaged. I know that there are lots of organizers around the state, but my peers on Rocky Boy probably don't know them. Organizers tend to live in urban areas, and they are more exposed to more conversations and movements. People on the reservation are not.
- I think they feel more cynical about it. I think that most people in rural communities (and rural being the reservations as well) feel like what they do doesn't matter. I would say that in that vein they align but I don't think a lot of them view civic engagement as fruitful.
- I think one of the reasons I believe I can affect change is because of my privileged identity and access because of that. I think that there are some sections, within the communities/identifies of folks I work with, that do believe they can make change. I also think that there are communities within that don't believe that government reform is the way to make the change that they want. Those people are still politically engaged in the way that we figure out relationships to power, etc. But they are not engaged in government reform. Alluding to people who do pre-figurative organizing – coops, communes, and remove themselves from the systems that operate like they do.
- I think in my community most people do not understand how it works. But now I provide advice on how to get involved and engaged. When you have someone, you know who is serving, you have an access point, you can

understand what to do when you want to start. Knowing people in office is very helpful

- The Forward MT class I taught discussed barriers to local politics. Race, gender, age, etc. Tribal governments are also in play with the younger generation. There are people pushing themselves to run because they have a voice they thought was missing.
- I think some do. I think the lobby organizations get their people to come and testify. Even if their beating a dead horse, they still want to come and influence the decision-making process. I think some of the underrepresented groups- the minority party try's real hard and gets the people to come and to show up. You got to love those people and give them kudos for trying. There's always going to be those who come and show up and those who say it won't matter and won't take the time.
- No. I think that's one of the reasons that people don't vote. Because they think their vote doesn't matter. And I don't know when that changed. That was one of the first things that I did when I turned 18, I thought that was my civic responsibility.
- Generally, no, since there are so many people that feel disenfranchised or don't trust the process. But in Helena there are plenty of people that think they do have influence.
- Not everyone. People that don't have the title or the experience especially.
- People in small rural communities need a little guidance. Not everyone is given the education and knowledge, you need to show them how to connect issues with hands on engagement.
- No, other young people and natives are all crunched for time. They also do not see themselves represented in government spheres. Combination of both factors make it difficult to engage.
- Probably not, they may have different experience or believes. I am more pessimistic about it.
- No, huge portion that do not think they can influence decision makers or feel their voice matters. Only 70% of the state is registered to vote, and only portion of that actually vote, the numbers show people are not engaged at the ballot.
- No, absolutely not. Two things; either the environment is so hyper-partisan that it has turned people away from engaging, and it's not knowing how to engage.
- No, I'm sure I have a weird perspective of that. Many voters couldn't tell you who their representative is. But I get a lot of phone calls from people on both sides of the issues. I got a letter from a fourth grader a few years ago. Fast forward, I wrote back, and we set up a meeting. He's a neat kid and wants to change the state flag. I just emailed him and were setting up a meeting with a professor to try and change the flag because they both had the same idea. And his email means that this may turn into a full-blown process and change.
- No, I do not think everyone feels similarly. They likely believe their influence extends to their right to vote, which in their mind perhaps rarely matters.

- No, most people will feel differently. Don't have my experience.
- No, I don't. I think that we all come from our own set of experiences and it is really easy to focus on ourselves and our own lives. It is easy to see where govt isn't helping us and hard to see how it is affecting other people. I wish more people were empathetic in that way. And maybe that can change. But I think that everything feels really divided right now and people are thinking more about themselves than other communities and other people.

**Question 5: What suggestions do you have to increase your community's participation in civic engagement processes?**

- It has to be a multi-pronged approach. You will get some who are more interested in direct action (participate in demonstrations, rallies) and then people who are more interested in the advocacy piece. Preparing them to go speak in front of the legislature or tribal council about an issue that is important to them. There is a piece of idea creation – young people have so many tools – social media, etc. – creative young native artists have a chance to influence people.
- One of the most important things is community organizing – getting out of the vote. Getting them to actively engage in democracy – who is running at all levels, and why their vote matters. County Commissioner races are important! They make a lot of laws that affect native people, especially when we leave the reservation. At Rocky Boy we go to Havre to buy groceries. There are issues in Havre that pertain to us.
- That's a tough question because there aren't any quick fixes. It is all about relationship building. When it comes to people who are experiencing low income or discrimination there needs to be work done within the community with people who are a part of the community. You can't helicopter someone in to increase civic engagement, there has to be trust before there can be action.
- I think that we need to be more overt and inclusive in our efforts to encourage people to become civically involved. Urban or rural, we have a tendency to go to the same people again and again. In some cases, it works, but in other cases, it doesn't. By doing that, we are missing those that want to be involved but have never been asked.
- There is a little bit of magic in asking the question – do you want to serve on a board or get involved? Oftentimes when I have done that – the individual that I am requesting it is honored to be considered. Understanding what volunteerism is and is not.
- We need to make a conscious effort to cast the net wider. The other part of that is – don't wait to be asked. If you have this notion that you would like to become involved, don't necessarily wait for the phone call to come. Seek fulfillment in whatever quarter of society you think you would like to become involved. That phone call won't come.
- I would want to identify what "my community" means, lots of overlapping spheres. Looking at women that I professional engage, it would-be low-income women. I think the best way to engage people is to help people understand how policy affects them on a day-to-day basis. We show up where low income women are, versus asking women to come to us. Helena is an imposing building that is meant to look

powerful, accessible, and welcoming to some and not to others. There are ways we make political engagement work for the communities we serve. We haven't figured it out. We are trying to serve as a bridge for that.

- Teaching kids in high school more about local government and giving them concrete examples of how to make a difference. "Imagine Red Lodge" asking them what they want to see in the community they grew up in – they came up with big ideas (high schoolers). Trying to bridge the dream with the path to the dream – difficult to do without discouraging them from pursuing it. They wanted to build a multiuse recreational facility, but then it costs multi-millions to build it. Tried to talk about barriers and why not to give up! It is definitely education – identify goals and how goals can be achieved through local engagement.
- Never use the word should. 'Should'-ing people never gets us anywhere.
- I was working with a librarian and we were trying to get a program for public libraries to put on about civic engagement. Get people into their libraries and have legislators interact with their constituents. It's a tough question—I was also on a national committee that struggled with the same question. I don't know the answer other than education. And making things easy for people. I love it, it's great. If I need to research an issue more, I can look it up. I think education is the key. The other thing is that people are so disenfranchised, so disillusioned, by the process. I was in DC before the last govt. shutdown and the tour talked about compromise. Just because my opinion is different from yours, we can still do what is best for the citizens. Education and technology are most important. You can do online meetings and townhalls with your legislator. Remote testimony – people go to the library or wherever and testify. Let people use their smartphones to do more remotely. It's a tough one. How do you force someone to do something that they don't want to or think isn't worth their time?
- To reach out to disenfranchised populations. Go to where they are at. I think you need volunteers to go to housing authorities, two-year colleges, people need to vote. I think our country is in a really sad place right now.
- Existing entities need to be more open and welcoming. They need to do a better job of informing communities of their groups/meeting times. People often don't get involved because they don't know about it or don't know how to get involved.
- A lot of volunteers are humble people – but if they want to get more people involved, they need to be more visible and toot their own horn. It's essential for them to raise awareness – show that you are making a difference by getting in the paper, or in the news, or just getting people curious. A lot of people that get involved in the community don't actually care about the recognition, so it is hard for them to push for recognition for their organization.
- Sometimes people just need to be asked, so we need to engage with citizens and ask them to participate. You educate them by asking them to be involved, and most of them will.
- Reaching out to under-engaged communities, let them know how civic engagement can impact their own community

- People need to know that if they offer public comments – where it goes and how data is compiled. They need to know their input is turned into an output, then they can see how ideas come together to influence public process.
- Make activities as meaningful as possible to different communities. This takes time and resources but will have real results with neighborhood to neighborhood engagement. Able to talk about things that impact neighborhoods, it eliminates barriers. This is true for under-represented communities; you need to make community engagement surrounding shared experiences. This helps make the time feel more meaningful.
- May sound ridiculous, but if we really want engagement, we need efforts toward family wage. If families can work a regular 30-40 hours a week and have enough money to support themselves then they can participate in civic engagement. We can do outreach campaigns and community education campaigns, but that doesn't matter if the people are working so hard just to make ends meet.
- One thing, I think more of an emphasis on civics education can only help. I'm sure my experience was somewhat unique. But that would have to be part of it. I think that there are some real limits to our term limited structure that limits participation. For example, professionalizing it either by giving us staff or increasing compensation would allow the job to be more accessible for all Montanans rather than just retirees. On the other hand, allowing a large salary could have negative effects. I don't have any staff; it is just my cell-phone number on my website. It makes it more personal rather than having a staff answer calls, etc. You want the legislature to look like Montana. If people see themselves in Government, they are more likely to engage in it. We could do more to promote diversity and representation. And if everybody had. A job and financial security and less hardship in their personal lives, then everyone would be able to strive for a more perfect union and civic engagement.
- Number 1: Bringing someone of influence and letting them hear and see the top. That is the easiest way to inspire young republicans. Another way to do that is to show them what sort of opportunities their engagements/volunteerism affords them. Job opportunities and events to participate in, business networks, etc. You need to give them an incentive to participate. Improving the general knowledge of ways to engage and how the system works. Hearing from different perspectives to understand the world around them.
- I think that there is a far better opportunity if we were to create space for more dialogue among dissenting opinion, facilitate disagreement. Too often people associate disagreement with conflict. Need to foster community that appreciates civil disagreement.
- Honestly, money. I think that for particularly in the areas that I work, indigenous and low income voters, there is the desire to do the organizing work on the ground to educate folks and help them find the power that they have, but it takes money to do that and it is not easy to fund work in communities that are low income. But the people who would give that money don't see the tangible change in their own lives. And it takes more than a two second conversation to register and convince someone to register voters who has never voted and doesn't want to vote. The money and

intentional long conversations and relationship building work that is needed to increase civic engagement in these communities just isn't there.

**Question 6: Are there any other thoughts or insights you would like to add before we end today?**

- Native people are at the forefront of activism. They are the people who are out there who are risking their lives to go against corporate interests. That is not mentioned in mainstream media.
- I would like to relay that civic engagement is especially important at the local level and a lot of people don't understand or care about it because there are limited resources to understand it or get involved. People often feel neglected or cynical about things because when they think of civic engagement they think of the presidential race, which is this huge machine that often does not recognize the individual. People's day to day lives are affected by decisions made at the local level and that is where civic engagement has the most impact and is the most important.
- We need to refocus attention on civic engagement. We cannot rely on others to make decisions for us. I think that finding new and creative ways to engage individuals – regardless of age – in the workings of society – we cannot miss the boat in terms of having broad participation. What makes our communities wonderful places to live, work and build a business? We need to be far more inclusive on who we invite to sit at the table. Far easier to ask those and involve those who are like us. We have to focus more intently on diversity. It is easy and comfortable to ask those and engage those who are like us. For democracy to work best, we need the broadest diversity possible in the content of making efficient and good decisions is important.
- I do think – one of the things we do talk about – is that people feel the effects of policy on a daily basis, but do not connect that they have an influence or can affect change on how the policy came about. The behind the curtain mentality. The kinds of services we see for low income women – you know what low income family needs? Parenting classes, like that is going to actually solve why kids aren't meeting educational status. We have an organizational response – the reality is they need economic stability to care for themselves and their families, not parenting classes. When I say like what people need is to connect policy to their everyday lives, it's not that paternalistic. It's not that people need more education to get involved it's that the barriers need to be removed and the system has been built to keep people out of decision-making spaces. Education is not the be all end all.
- Once I got on city council, I am a mentor. I actually mentor a trans student, he came out in 7th grade to his whole school in an assembly. To be honest in 2016, when the administration changed, he was scared, and he relayed that to me. I asked him, what can we do? I talked to him about non-discrimination ordinances at the city level and state level. Human rights bill at the legislature that keeps failing. I didn't want to say this will help you, because that is not realistic. We ended up moving forward with the NDO – he rallied his friends and got this going. The goal is not to make everyone's life harder. I was ready to fight for what they wanted. After my student came into the chambers and spoke about his experience in high school in front of a

crowd that was... bigots. It was just an impressive stance. All spoke about how they felt what their community was telling them. It is also knowing people who will be allies.

- I am pretty lucky in some ways. I wanted to make a space for people who do not belong.
- I can't think of anything right now.
- No, I don't think so.
- A lot of the groups in my community are comprised of the same people. There is a small number of people getting involved in most of the local groups.
- The role of public education in civic engagement is profound, students need the opportunity to be civically engaged. They need to understand the consequences of not being engaged. With their whole lives to live, they have the most to lose by not engaging. Students need this knowledge when they leave high school.
- The public process can be complicated, and maybe if there is a way to utilize modern age with great tech, we can modernize public process and make it more accessible.
- Just re-iterate, we need to increase and support civic engagement, but there are structural issues that need to be addressed. If we are really serious about having people engage, we need to make sure those people have resources available (education and family wage)
- I could probably ramble, but that's enough for me today.
- In Montana it is easier than most other places. Our legislature and community leaders are much more available and transparent than those in other states and countries. Easier to civically engage than they ever would assume.
- I would like to reiterate, there are countless ways to get involved in your local community (ward, neighborhood, causes). Having people be brought together over a particular cause they are supportive of brings different opinions. Goes beyond people's perceptions of being involved civically.