

Appendix III: Focus Group Data

Three total focus groups were conducted March 2020. The following provides aggregate level data from each focus groups. Each focus group was asked the same question. Responses are anonymous, removing the identity of the participants. Questions from the facilitators are in **bold**. Follow up questions are numbered. The responses are in the words of the participants.

Focus Group 1:

Native Students

Location: Missoula

Participants: 4 students – 3 female, 1 male

Focus Group 2:

General Student Body

Location: Missoula

Participants: 6 students – 3 female, 3 male

Focus Group 3:

General Student Body

Location: Billings (facilitated via videoconference from Missoula)

Participants: 3 – all female – 1 student, 2 staff

How often do you vote in elections? (Main reason for voting/Main reason to not vote; are these tribal; statewide; national)

- 1) Why do you vote (e.g. often, infrequently – what type of election)?**
- 2) What is the main reason for you not to vote? (follow up: do you believe your vote matters)**

Focus Group 1

- I vote in all of them. I vote tribally. I'm distant from the tribe, but I get newspapers and meeting minutes. So, they send me my ballots regularly. And I make sure to vote I always call my local family and ask sort of what's happening how they feel because I think although my voice matters, it affects them a little more than it affects me. So, I always make sure kind of like ask them how's it going down there. They might know council members personally more than I might. But I always make sure to vote because I think in any election that your voice matters, and it's important. Yeah, so I vote locally as well. And every opportunity I get.
- I have yet to vote because I just turned 19 but for all the elections and stuff, the more local ones is what I know most about like the tribal ones and like all the local elections I know most about because like, my family knows a lot of people who's like running for those positions and stuff. And then when it gets like bigger, like, I know, a lot of state stuff going on, but like federal, I like kind of like oh, I don't know what's going on.

- Yeah. I turned 18 just before congressional elections in 2018. So, I voted in those and there's some local elections going on then. I was living down in Billings. So, I voted in those and then I voted in the municipal elections here. But for like tribal elections, I don't. I don't think we do voting for people who live off of our reservations.
- I didn't vote while I was on active duty. I was too busy deploying and working. And not really, the Army's a little funny. The DOD is a little funny about how you're involved in politics. They don't deter voting, but they don't provide the same access to information. So, for at least six years after I left the reservation, I turned 18 I didn't vote at all. Then I moved within Washington State and I was technically a resident was only there for college and my undergrad and I didn't really see it as important because I didn't see myself as a resident. Okay. So, it was it was kind of like an identification thing I just didn't know didn't care. And I knew was temporary. My time there was temporary. And at home, I voted when I went back to Nevada for a little bit before coming to Montana vote in local elections day Washington, federal elections. Same thing didn't really care as long as I was in the army until recently, because when I really started voting, because it really affects my military career going forward, where we're being deployed at. Our tribe recently started putting stuff on Facebook about the candidates. And that's where it really heavily started because they, our reservation sends out mail ballots. And so, they've started putting on Facebook information about upcoming candidates. So that now I have better access because before I still calling family, just trying to get word of mouth information, which is really hard not to like put a face to name, first got nickname nobody uses or I don't even know a lot of people's real nervous until they like vote. And then you're like, Oh, that's weird. Like, I thought your name was wiki the whole time. You know, you actually don't know people's formal names. And so yeah, for me, the Facebook portion really helps with voter information. And so, I've become more active since then. And then being in law school, it really, I didn't understand government processes in the army, you don't need to because somebody's always going to tell you what to do anyway. And that comes from the president and commander in chief. And the tribe, I wasn't leaving my reservation before that so it didn't care what was going on with them. The local state government didn't understand how much it impacted either.
- I didn't know like, a lot about it until last year, I took AP gov and my teacher was the mayor. And he, like really kept us up on stuff. And I was like, Oh, this is kind of cool. And like I've never like because I've always been like, super math nerd, and I didn't like that. And then with him, like, he would tell us like what was happening, and we would like watch stuff in class, and I was like, Oh, I like it. No idea. And then he would like to explain, like, offices, like what they would do and like Who gets it? how that affects everything? Like, just how everything works, because I had no idea like, I could do calculus, but I could not tell you how like the government worked at all, but he really like, showed me what's the scoop?

- I think like growing up in my family, my family is pretty open about, like talking about political topics and my grandparents and parents and like their generations are all in my family are fairly educated. And like my grandma ran for like state legislature and held office for a couple of terms. And so, I kind of knew like more about the issues that were like facing our communities. So, I don't really know that my education played a big part.
- I would say my upbringing never like I only started voting, sort of the same as ____, like when I came out in the world started to get educated and learn sort of, you know that my voice matters. I say that all the time. I think that's when I started really getting involved. I definitely not, you know, it was never instilled in me that it was important. I would say that none of my family votes, I would be the one who's constantly trying to encourage them to vote. But for the most part, it's not something that I learned, besides in my education.

Focus Group 2

- Every election. Primary, General.
- Yeah.
- Yeah. I was up for every election as well that I missed the city council one last year. That was my first miss, I think.
- I think so far, I've only voted in like county elections in my home county with like, the absentee ballot.
- I just switched. I'm from Texas.
- I mean, it just makes sense. But if you're a citizen, it's somewhat part of your duty and I feel like I've always been told that if you want to see change, you need to be a part of that. And so, I have always tried to be active in voting. I just I haven't had the chance to vote in a presidential election. So, this will be my first I'm excited to do that. But I worked on senatorial campaigns and like local campaigns too, and that again, was even before I could vote. And so that showed me the importance of being a democratic citizen.
- Just recent election, Medicaid expansion was a big issue for me. I wanted legislators to go to Helena to reauthorize that. And on the federal level, I was really invested in seeing our senior senator re-elected because I wanted that balance in Washington.
- Family is a huge driver for me. Both my grandfather and my uncle's run the Union for the railroad. So that's always been something that they forced upon us but like, it's, there's stated the importance of the growing up.

- I haven't really had like, family that would like drive that, so I look towards like my peers and everything that like, do that stuff and like definitely getting a higher education gave me a little bit of better understanding about what's happening around our community. So, yeah, that was kind of like my driving force.
- Yeah, I agree with _____, like, my parents often like will like sit out on voting and just because like, they don't like either option kind of thing. But especially with like our local county elections, like, we had a judge at home that like was not making great decisions. And so, I was like, super hyped about getting to vote in that. And I remember doing like ample research on each candidate and like, look at their background and like the reasons for running. So yeah, I think it's definitely just like, wanting to like see the change and like knowing that like, if you don't participate, then you know, you can't say much about not being happy with the current status quo.
- I've always seen political engagement, just as an important thing. And then also, I'm a part this organization called _____, and they do a lot of just registering voters on campus. So, I feel like because I'm registering people, I should of course vote myself.
- For my family, specifically, like they're just not educated, and they don't want to be, which is really problematic. But you know, I feel like that's a lot of things with a lot of families. So, I don't think that's super uncommon.
- I think that with my peers, it's overwhelming. I think that that not just the climate and the level of polarization being overwhelming just the idea of policy and engaging in laws and understanding all of the eccentricities that come together to make our political system work. But it's often just overwhelming for somebody who's not a political, you know, junkie like me. And I also think there's a level of apathy. I think there's a level of people just don't care either way.
- Yeah, I think, um, like for peers, a lot of my peers and colleagues, they have a lot of barriers like for voting. So, if it's like, not online and you have to go somewhere. There's like a bunch of barriers. I guess I could, like restrict somebody from voting.
- I would say, that's how it is for them. The majority like my family is that they Like, if they have to put in the extra effort to do it, it's not big enough priority for them to like, take those steps. And they're like, either way, like, what? Like, what's my vote? I don't like either option. Like, I don't want to be responsible for the outcome. Yeah. They're very private people.
- Yeah.
- People just don't feel like they truly have an impact in elections. They'll feel like they'll go the same way without them.

- Yeah, it's like my vote. My one vote won't count, I guess would be their mentality.
- I think to echo that a little bit with Montana, just being a smaller state and we don't have a huge bulk of electoral votes. That that isn't as persuasive. We're going to go republican anyways. At federal level certainly.
- Also just for like, the more local elections, a lot of people, my age don't tend to end up voting because they like under the impression on it no matter what, they're still going to go to school and do their daily activities, and it's not really going to impact them on a personal level. And in that case, I feel like a lot of the people we connected, or I've connected with who have voted in local elections tend to be older and like, have more time to look over issues that may be locally centered.
- Yeah, I would agree with that. Like a lot of like my peers at home, like didn't know who is up for election as county commissioner kind of thing. And I think like the less sensationalized the election is like the less engagement he gets, especially from my peers, definitely.

Focus Group 3

- I have voted in every election since I turned 18. I think there is one midterm election that I didn't vote for when I was out of the country, but every other time I've been out of the country I voted on absentee.
- So, since 2013 when I met my husband and I have voted in every single election generally absentee because it's easier than going to the polls. He's a big political person. Yeah, well, because my dad. My dad doesn't vote. I'm fairly certain my grandparents don't vote. My mother doesn't vote. So, it's just kind of like I didn't vote.
- Yeah, and then like all the primaries midterms and everything pretty much.
- The same for me. With the exception of the, I think there's like I said just one midterm election. I was local that I did not vote for when I was abroad. I couldn't justify doing the absentee ballot in that situation.
- Yeah, I would say, you know, since I was 18, I voted for all everything at the federal level. Um, and then I would say it's more recent that I began to vote like at the local level. So probably in the past four or five years. And I would say that that was influenced by my peers.
- I guess just, I believe that voting is important and it's a part of our freedom and our choice to choose who we believe will you know, do good things for all Americans and our whole country. And so I guess I didn't always vote at the local level, because I didn't think it was as an important but now I'm learning as I'm getting older, that it

might, in some ways, it might be even more important as far as how it impacts your immediate life and those around you.

- How are you learning that? What's contributing to that sense of the importance of local elections?
- Yeah, I guess just really seeing like that sometimes decisions are being made when it's like the difference of, like, five or so people. And just especially at the local level and just realizing how important it is to vote.
- So, I guess really one of the biggest things is that it's important to have your voice heard. Even if like you say your choice isn't the one that selected. You never know if maybe the choice you wanted is like one vote away and had you not voted it would have been passed, I guess, had if you had voted and you didn't kind of thing. So, it's really important that you're engaged and you're making those choices because you never know, basically. And it's important that like you're voicing that whether it's your active on social media and active about talking about it. It's important that you're engaged in voicing that so that you're heard, and you can make you can potentially make an impact.
- I was raised in a, very not politically active, but just very informed family. Growing up, I always watched Nightly News. We always watch 20-20 we always watched 60 minutes. I mean, this was I didn't get a lot of fun, TV shows, we didn't have cable or anything so that I mean I was just surrounded by this since I was a kid. So, my parents always voted, they always stressed the importance of voting. And that's how it's always been so when it came time years ago when I turned 18, I was really excited to vote and I since have diverged from that, from not from voting. But from my political beliefs back then to where I am now and but still, I find it really important to the extent that my undergraduate was in political science. So, I clearly through from my upbringing and from my undergraduate education. I have recognized the importance of the political process on social frameworks within the United States and internationally as well and I have also come to realize later on in my life. The, the impact of local voting and local elections on individual lifestyles, as opposed to a broader scheme with the federal elections and so I have gained appreciation for local elections to a greater degree. I've always voted for local elections, but I always wasn't the most informed voter for local elections, I would have some information, but I wouldn't do in depth research, whereas now before going to the polls for local elections because that you don't hear about a lot of the policies as much, I will have judges, for example, I never used to vote for the judges I would just kind of leave that blank because I just didn't know and I didn't want to give an uninformed decision. So, I will now research the policies and for the individual judges and individual appointments or not appointments, but nominations and trying to have an informed decision on the local level predominantly just because it is so impactful on everyday lifestyle for myself and my community.

- I used to. Yes. Now, when I was younger, I think I put on those rose-colored glasses. And I said, oh, my vote makes a difference. And I had become a bit disenfranchised lately because I feel like it doesn't. And the situation last election, I'm sure you know about it and I don't know specifics, but in Colorado delegate voted against, the popular vote in Colorado, for example, and that went to court and I think it was upheld. So, it just kind of in the local elections. It is the popular vote the vote does make a difference. Whereas in a national elections there is, I believe, in electoral college. I think it's important, but I also think that there are some flaws in it. And I feel like the local voice, the individual voice is not heard at the level that it should be.
- Yeah, I would agree. I feel like I also am I'm already at 27 becoming somewhat disenfranchised, but with that, like I feel like I'm becoming more involved, which is strange, but yeah, so I'd say that's kind of where I'm at.
- I mean I'd agree definitely your vote doesn't make as big of an impact when you're voting for, like, say, the presidential election, but it's so important that you're voting, even if, like in the case of Colorado, the popular vote is not chosen.
- Why do you think some of your colleagues or your peers wouldn't vote, aside from that perception that my vote doesn't matter perception?
- Well, one of them that like I've heard at least from my parents is like it's just a waste of paper and stamps. Time and money.
- I talked to a lot of students who, who are international students, but I also talked to a lot of domestic students who are going abroad because I send them to different countries and I just interviewed a gentleman, the other day, and one of the questions was about politics. And his answer was essentially he doesn't know anything about politics and he's never voted in this life. So, I inquired about that because I get this every once in a while. And I think a lot of it is, especially with younger generations are not the younger generations just people in general in the United States, they're not as politically engaged. It's almost like a taboo to talk about politics with your family. I mean, there's that expression in the United States. You never talk religion or politics. So, it's something that, in a way, a lot of families have in a lot of societies and communities have diverged from. Whereas in a lot of parts of the world, particularly Europe, politics is a way of life. I mean, they talked about politics away Americans talk about weather so the younger people, and people my generation until they start to realize the effects that politics have on them. They don't feel like they are making a difference and that they can have any impact. On the plus side, I do tell them I do notice my students, a lot of times when I do, send them abroad and they come back, they become much more politically engaged because of their experiences with their peers who are very active and very open about discussing politics.

Community engagement is about is about working to make a difference in your own community. In what ways do you do you make an impact in your community? (e.g. volunteerism, community events, knocking on doors, Social Media, etc.?)

- 1) How often do you engage in these activities?
- 2) What has prevented you from being civically engaged?

Focus Group 1

- I was like one of the few people who started like the Native American club at my high school, which is on the reservation, but like we didn't, Polson is extremely, like, no culture at all. It is horrible, and I tried bringing it back. Because there's a whole bunch of suicides, like a whole bunch, I've, like, buried at least eight of my friends in high school. Like that's not even counting people that like just my peers. And I don't know, I just I'm like very happy person. And I'm very like, well, everyone's like lovey-dovey like, Hi, how are you? And I'm not like everyone was like, super down and like, okay, we need something good, like, I wanted to bring culture and stuff and like I want to bring something good and so do you know ___? I talked to him and he helped me get in touch with all the other schools on the reservation and we like did this youth conference and it was we had like 300 students last year go do it and we was all student at lied and I was like, last year I was like the head person of it. Like I organized all the meetings, I did everything, and I reached out to everyone and ___ one of Testers reps I like I got in touch with him and like, I really like just, we did a whole bunch of stuff like cultural stuff. We're like [inaudible] and we did like, self-defense stuff. And we did like little crafts and we had people come in and dance and like it was just to like show that there's good in the culture and like if you're struggling just, like turn to each other to help each other.
- Yeah, our principal is new. He's not native. And my Salish name means little dancing butterfly. And I wanted my name keeper to bead a butterfly on my cap. That's like, what I wanted, like I've always wanted and our school has ruled that you can only bead the outside of your cap but like the new Montana State law, I totally forget what it is like what numbers and everything but like you can't deny it. Yeah, you can't deny, like, cultural significance at a public event and I told him everything like whatever. And he told me that I couldn't do it. I couldn't put the butterfly, there was this tiny little butterfly in the corner, not even that big. And he's like, nope. And I fought with him for a few weeks on that. And I was like, well, screw you. I'm gonna talk to the superintendent.
- So, but didn't get into, like the legal side of it to get that change? The policy changes?
- I don't know. I know they're looking at it for sure. Because I definitely, yeah, it's already a state law, but like the school policy says, like contradicts up I'm like, well, the state versus Polson school district like yeah.
- I mentor every summer, every summer, I go back, and we have student interns that work throughout our community at different departments. And so, they will have

different speakers come in kind of like in classroom, you have guest speakers. And so, I'll come down and work with them. I do a presentation, explain my background, possibilities, future planning considerations. A lot of these kids are never challenged to think beyond tomorrow. And so, not only you know, I want to be this, but how do you get there type planning. And so, and then we'll usually connect with a mentor. If I got two or three, they're following more my train of thought or something. But yeah, all right. So that's what I do in the summers as often as I can. So, go back home and do that program.

- Right now, I'm in the Native American Student Association, and so we put on, like, one of the big things is we put on a powwow every year. And but like historically that that isn't the only thing we do, we try to do like community engaging events. We all like family events, like bingo nights and, and things like that to try to, you know, encourage, I guess the indigenous community around Missoula. Yeah, we had a round dance to just come in, you know, participate in activities on campus. And before I came to the University, I was in active in our high school's Indian club. And as part of that I was on like, kind of like a steering committee is a council made up of leadership from all of the Billings, high schools, Indian clubs, and our group was part of the of pushing through that senate bill that ___ is actually talking about. And so, we did some work with that, getting that bill through. But another thing I did during that time was kind of like a started just as a drum circle for Native students in the Billings school district, and it kind of turned into a mentorship kind of program. Because a lot of younger kids, I was the only high schooler in that group. And I led that starting my sophomore year of high school up until I graduated. So that was kind of just encouraging Native youth through culture activities, and we combine that with a dancing group that so that our young native women could participate in that since our drum circle can only be like native boys and men for that.
- I would say, I guess where I come from, my family, because of like intergenerational trauma issues and things, there's like a lot of I guess this is harsh, but like hopelessness. And so, I think a lot of people think that it's so big that they wouldn't know where to start. So, I get that a lot where it's like, you know, I'm just one person, what could I do that would ever change something enough, you know, to really make a difference because the issues are so large. So, I think it's just a lot of that. And I also think that where we come from, there's so much to worry about every day and just surviving that there's not enough time to be worrying about other things like volunteer stuff. I mean, that's kind of those two things came to mind right away for me that I see.
- Economics. But what and I want to tack on before I go to the economic part what ___'s saying like there's a lot of shame and guilt behind the situations and how we've ended up where we've ended up and the drug issues, the poverty. We didn't choose it, you know, but we also struggle to develop economically just because of federal Indian law, that we are mired in it. And so, there's so much of that underlying that intergenerational trauma to and you're passing that on to your kids,

each generation and you see suicides increased with each generation. It's compounding. I was just thinking about that when you're talking about it. Because we don't talk about things, you know, we just get hopeless. I think economic developments a big part of it, and I'm a little bit primed for it because I just left Monty's class and I get frustrated on economic development in the country, but I'm, you know, trying to be active. We can't just go down to the Payne center and on meetup on Indian country, you know, we don't we can't just leave our reservations and go hang out at the Capitol Building every time we have an issue. And Western Native Voice. That's great. I didn't know about that till I got up here. But that's a great thing to help support Indian country, but just having the mental health support the economic development support, the understanding that we don't, some of us don't have internet. People forget that, like we think about telephones. My mom has to step outside her house in one specific spot, she's gonna get phone call. She doesn't have internet and so like, we take for granted, either being in the university and what we pay for tuition or just being in the cities, what we have access to and how are you going to engage when you can't even afford gas to go to work much less drive three hours to go to Helena to protest or talk to your legislators or lobby for Indian country. You know? So, I think economics versus right, people are hungry. We don't care about volunteering when you can't eat. Commodities don't feed you that well, unless it's the cheese.

Focus Group 2

- I can speak for a few of us in the room on Student Government has been an easy avenue through which to do that. Yeah, at least for the campus wide community, like passing fees, providing services, helping out student groups with funding.
- I've been working with the climate response club, and they're trying to lobby the administration to make changes to the combined heat and power plant. So, like taking an issue with climate change and trying to address it on the local level. So, I don't know if that falls into umbrella.
- I worked with _____ last year and then over the summer just remotely and then like I said, I worked on _____'s campaign. I was an intern at the Bozeman office. And then I like kind of here and there floated around I did campaigns and door knocking in Helena, Great Falls, Bozeman, Butte, Livingston. I've been pretty involved at the local level and then state level I haven't done anything national yet. But I actually worked on campaigns in Canada too, in Montreal, I didn't really affect me, but I just thought it would be cool to see how they do that. And then I think, I don't know, back to your original question of involvement. Right. Just how your involved? I don't know if you're looking for political involvement or not, but I also work with the Innocence Project. I just started there haven't really done much yet.
- To elaborate more on my work with _____, At the federal level, we've currently been advocating for the LWCF and that's like supporting all these funding for public lands and stuff as that's been going on and collecting comment cards, and then sent

to like Steve Daines, and I guess we kind of did see some impact from that because recently I think Trump is opposing a guy by 97%. But then it's like, Senator Steve Daines in this Colorado guy. I can't remember his name, but I have convinced him to commit to full funding for us.

- I do volunteer at the food bank, I work in the empower place which works with like the children who come in with their parents, and specifically they do a committee on Saturday's with the women in the community to just discuss poverty in their positions. So, I work specifically with those kids. And then I've also done some lobbying on behalf of like, the expanding of bandwidth in rural communities in Montana. And we were able to do like \$5 million in funding in 2018. for that. And then I am going to be working with Senator Grassley this summer, specifically with like health care and agricultural rural policy.
- I also serve on the International Rescue Committee to serve refugees, which has been really cool to do, because I think, like there's nothing [inaudible].
- Work obligations.
- I think time constraints.
- I think a lot of it too is like definitely like what your family thinks or like what you're involved in and stuff. I had like Senator Tester on Facebook like because follow all my local politicians and I had gotten a call from my uncle one afternoon who asked me if I was a liberal yet. I was like, cool. You never call me when you see that I like a liberal politician on Facebook. Like, I love that you care about that. Which like I definitely take with a grain of salt because, you know, that's how, it is. But I think that that definitely has less of an impact because I really don't value that as much as because of my prior experiences with my family. But yeah, that's definitely part of it.
- There definitely is some peer pressure. So, in Missoula like, if you hold like more of a liberal stance, like you can flaunt it more on social media and get less backlash, but I come from Ravalli County and it's the complete opposite Conservative area. The only socially acceptable posts would be something that would be more conservative. So, I know people in the North Ravalli County are afraid to post about liberal issues because they're probably like a fear of community retaliation or something saying nasty comments. And I guess the same could be true for Missoula as well on to anyone who espousing conservative beliefs.
- Exactly, like ground up conservative issues. Like if I supported like something with like women's issues, which is something very important to me. And like, you know, being willing to like to step out of the line on few issues and like, be vocal about it, there's backlash for that.

- I experienced that struggle as well and my family's in Polson, very conservative, and there's a cultural backlash. So, I don't like just in the social media arena, I don't really share much of my beliefs or engage or try to persuade or evoke change, because of the backlash that comes from that.
- Yeah, I found that like, it's best like in conversations, especially When you can like poses, like challenging questions where you're like, Okay, but like, you're a woman you believe in these basic issues, I just encourage someone to like think a little bit outside of those lines or what they should, what they feel they should based on, like their background or their, you know, their environment.
- I would say like just to say the Democratic primaries and example this split divided between moderate and liberal Bernie and Biden, I see that amongst my peers, so there would be backlash if I were to say endorse or share the name of a moderate candidate. But then it's also generational. Like it would come from my uncle's my aunts and so it's double pronged there at least.
- I think a lot too is like I've seen like a lot of friends that are like still in high school, like being very vocal about a lot of things and it just, I mean, like, it's great that they're being vocal, I just like want to encourage them to like do their research before they, you know, a lot of them are very vocal on social media. And so, it's like, I just hope that they're getting their claims from all sources.
- And that's the other thing. I feel like social media engagement or over engagement can lead to a false sense of like, action. I feel like you know, I like this post. So that means I support this. So, you know, my work here is done once I share this post on whatever platform. I've, contributed my role as a citizen.
- So personally, I'm not very active on social media. But if I am, I try and keep that separate from political views just so it doesn't feed into that. I don't know.

Focus Group 3

- Yeah, so I am actually very involved in my church. My church does a lot of things with the community so like we volunteer for the MRN and we volunteer at schools and different things like that. And so, we're kind of very involved in that big circle and then also obviously with MSUB, we do some of that engagement with the community and different events and I haven't lately, but at one point I was somewhat more involved because my husband was working for a political organization. And so, we would go door to door, making phone calls and things like that.
- I grew up in a household where like everyone was keeping track of like politics and staying informed, but not very active, and so once I joined AmeriCorps when I was 22-23 I think that kind of made me want to be more engaged, you know, probably influence the way I will be engaged for the rest of my life. Just the importance of

volunteering and being a part of your community. And so, I'd say, now I kind of changes over time, but I do volunteer a lot for different organizations, a couple different organizations that does involve knocking on doors for certain issues and support certain candidates. And trying to think of anything else. And then just with the MPA program to like I took a nonprofit class, intro to nonprofit class, and then in that course we also had to volunteer for so many hours. So just, there's a lot of different ways. I guess I'm involved.

- Yeah, so I am not involved in many community activities. I have two little girls at home. Very little. So, my family life has taken up the vast majority of my time. I work full time up until last semester I was also studying for the MPA program. So, I used to be much more involved when I was a little younger, again, it was hard to get too involved in community after I graduated high school because I've lived in so many different places and especially when you start to live in bigger cities, it's, it's hard to really feel a community or even to know where to start. I've been in Billings for almost five years and it's the longest time I looked, anywhere, since I was 18 so it's a little bit changed in my situation here, but I do have a young family ever since I moved here so I haven't been very involved. I tried to, I think, ___ mentioned the MSUB has different volunteer community engagement opportunities. So, I tried to be involved in some of those, but most of the stuff I do is very focused on what our office outreach is.
- Right now, I'm not, because I'm taking on 12 credits to finish my second bachelor's in accounting and then I'm also doing an internship. Along with having a family and working full time. So that's kind of a skewed answer but prior to that, I mean like anytime, pretty much. There was an opportunity to participate with different things within the community like every, once a month, we do a meal for what's called child bridge. I don't know if you know about them, but they're basically it's a local nonprofit, who does a lot for foster children. And for families with young children low income families. And so, we do that every month and obviously I'm involved like with our youth group and just different capacities within our church welcoming people, things like that.
- I do not have a family, so I don't I have a little bit more free time than ___ and ___ but like I was saying my peers influenced me a lot. In Billings my roommate is both my roommate and my boyfriend are basically community organizers. So, I just say like my peers all around me. They kind of have meshed their jobs and their personal life and socializing together. So, most of the social events that I attend are either to support an issue or just supporting a candidate or to support an organization. So, I'm heavily involved at this point of my life.
- It sounds like the primary reasons. You do not engage civically are time. Are there other reasons other than time?
- Not for me.

- Yes. Same with me. I just, I don't get a lot of time with my children, as it is, and I want to spend that time with them. They're a little bit too young to drag along to some of these events and so when they get a little bit older, I will try to instill the importance of volunteering and different civic engagement projects into them. But right now, my youngest just turned a year. So, it would be more of a hassle to take them at this point, then it would be to just stay home and or do things that are kid related.

In what ways do you think could help make a difference in your community?

1) Follow ups

Daycare provided onsite

All mail in ballot

More polling places

Someone drives you to a polling place you trust

Focus Group 1

- So, some examples I can give you that ____ and I found successful over the summer is access to justice, access to education, university system voting. Everything comes from educating the public. I know where I come from, anything that's White is rejected on the reservation. It's not welcome. We don't like the ideas, the culture, it doesn't align with us. We don't seek it out. We take care of our own. And the way we're set up, we're set up to be forced that way. But the best thing I saw was at the Arlee powwow, the Indian Law Clinic started going out and being present in their spaces. They weren't expecting us to leave the reservations and come to these spaces to learn about stuff. We went to the source we were there and respected their culture and had Indians from all different tribes actually, one came up from Nevada from my tribe. And I saw him out of nowhere, which was I mean, that's one of the best opportunities to be educating the public and we were part of the public. We're also state citizens, people forget that. They keep separating us like we're just natives on the reservations. But we're also in these communities too. And pro bono clinics helped. Wilmot Collins came out to Arlee to the powwow. He intentionally went out of his way to go to those places. So instead of, you know, we are face to face. At least I know my trip is we, you want to teach me something you want to talk to you on negotiate? You need to show up and talk to me. I don't care what you sent me on paper. Hell, my grandparents couldn't read English and then went to boarding school. They just use them as child labor. If they can't read, my mom can kind of read her writing her grammars not great. So, assuming that we're all first language and educated on top of that, having materials that are basic enough for all of them to understand.
- Yeah, I think like translating stuff into what's understandable for communities is a big thing. Because with like I said, and that's with a lot of things, not even just like legal things, but like academics and stuff like that. It's all presented in terms that you

know; nobody uses on a regular basis. So why would you expect, you know, our communities to understand those well.

- And even thinking about the ballots that we receive and people not even understanding how to read the ballot.
- Or how to complete it correctly.
- Oh, I have to read the directions every time you do it. I don't understand why. And I think part of it is not even understanding why we do this. Yeah, you know, but yeah, then understanding making sure you do it in the right order. I have to read it every time.
- Or not knowing that if you don't have a stamp and you turn it in, it'll still be delivered.
- I didn't know that.
- Yeah, if you just turn it in without a stamp, you'll still it still be delivered.
- I didn't know that either until today.
- I think that just proves his point.
- Thank you like when you first I trust like, oh my like I just saw my grandpa because like, if you walked up to his door, he would be like, leave like, Yeah, I know, you're really like going into those schools. Like, I 'm the first generation on both sides of my family to not be raised with drugs and alcohol and in poverty. And that's why I want to help because I've seen it affect my whole family and I've seen how good my life has been without it like I'm going to school and paying less than two thousand dollars a semester because of scholarships and everything, like, I'm here, college when, like, half of my cousins can't even dream of coming here. And so, that's why I want to give back. And I did a lot with the youth because a lot of like native youth don't have good people to look up to. And that's why I always try doing stuff and I always went down to the middle school. And one year like, one of the middle schoolers died and he played baseball with my little brother. And like, and like all the other Native students were like, sitting in front of his locker crying the next day, and I was just down there like, comforting them, but like, no one else was like with them. There's like a few teachers, but there's like, there's just like a lack of like connection and like the connection is what I think to start building that bridge, and I think the schools would be a good way, like go into the schools, because you won't have to like deal with people like my grandpa, like, get off my property.
- Yeah, I think on top of that, I think we'll see the elders. There's not I guess it's kind of like they're a little bit decided and with what they've been through, valid, but I think

youth is a good way to sort of start creating that trust relationship and making those connections. Yeah, and then it's like, you know, us as a little bit older, voting and making that connection and the younger ones will see us doing it and want to follow. So, I think it does kind of start with younger people trying to make those connections.

- And I think the way like non-native groups or even native groups, the way they try to make connections to communities, a lot of the time it's not culturally appropriate, where they just kind of show up and demand space and demand respect and our time. And they don't, you know, they don't come in and respect like our cultural context that we live by.
- Go off a couple people's ideas. Youth interns, considering hiring Native students to do exactly what ___ is talking about. And I think, one you'll start building collaboration, you'll start building education within the tribes, and we listen to our children, our babies, are our world, like that's our future. And when it's coming from their mouths, and they believe it like they, but making sure they're endorsing what they truly believe. Because if our children, one of the reasons why we have a white-native divide is because it washes out our culture. And so, making sure it's culturally relevant, culturally significant, but one that would help with employment, it would help educating the tribes. And we're going to listen to our own people more likely than we're going to listen to some outsider. And then, on top of that, getting a permanent liaison located within the reservations or near them, instead of having one travel like, I hate seeing one hired for election season, and then they're gone. And there's all this trust, maybe tribal contacts trust is too big a word, created, and they're gone. And then it's somebody new trying asking the tribes to sit there and re-educate them every time like that's our job.
- Well, that's what I'm thinking with MUS, MUS Western native voice like doing nation to nation state institution collaborations. And then if you want that trust relationship made, to last, it needs to be maintained and there needs to be continuity. So at least having one permanent hire that's running this program, and having cultural awareness training, the army does it every time we deploy to a new area, you have to learn about, and it's not like, I'm gonna be able to teach you about this culture. It's basic awareness and competency, you know, that. We don't follow a hard timeline. Just, I know our reservation doesn't. You show up, things start on the end in time. Like there it's respectful for people to get together to have a little bit of food first, to talk to chat to have community first, and then start, it's not like oh, show up the doors open at this time we're starting 10 minutes later. It's just it's rushed and things for us don't work out well rushed. We want to talk we want to visit; we want to make sure that what's good is for the good of all of us, not just what's my benefit of this. So, I think it's just changing perspectives.
- It's like knowing what they value. Like I really value like community and family and friends. And like what I'm thinking of people who came into my schools and spoke,

we've had we had two native people come in and speak. And both times we did, one of the teachers made like whole bunch of soup for everyone and we had soup before during our lunch and he came in and sat with us and talked with us. And like that was when I'm like the only assembly that I remember was when with that connection and then listening to what he had to say. Not just going in there sitting down, talking and then leaving.

Focus Group 2

- I would say ease the registration process, I know it is, for people who aren't political junkies, or aren't as involved looks like they're not going to take the extra step to do that. They're like, I mean, I know we have same day here as well. I know, people can walk them through the process, but I mean, there's a way to make it easier or something.
- Automatically, when you turn 18?
- Yeah.
- Yeah.
- Yeah. registry. That's very smart.
- Yeah, I think to like, the less barriers like the less steps you can go through like, I think the engagement will automatically go up. Especially like having like extra-long breaks or like time off during election days.
- Mm hmm.
- Yeah.
- I think maybe like earlier education because I remember the first time, I heard about in school like I grew up in a family that was very politically active. But the first time I was told about it by my peers or in a school scholastic setting was senior year of high school, and if you go when you turn 18, there's your birthday present, go sign the form like okay, register and yeah, and before that, but there is no explanation before that of you know, once you vote, this is what happens or at this time can be impactful. And these are the voter turnout rates in our country versus other countries and look at the results or whatever, there were no causalities
- Yeah, or these are other ways that you can be involved.
- Yes.

- So, for most of you, the first time you heard about voting was senior in high school, not like in fourth grade or third grade you do like mock elections or something like that?
- It's very late in the game.
- I was aware of federal elections probably at the age of five, but I'm a little bit of an outlier.
- I would say if I heard about it from my family, but schooling, not until my government class my senior year.
- Actually, in other like foreign language classes, like in eighth grade, I remember talking about like, Oh, this is Germany's election system. That's actually seems, like whoa, crazy. You know, why are we learning about this and other classes?
- Is government required curriculum in Montana to graduate?
- It was for our high school.
- It was kind of like our senior year level history courses.
- Yeah.
- It wasn't for Texas.
- It was for California.
- Okay, so do you think that plays a role to an engagement if it's not within the curriculum and you're not being exposed to it?
- Oh, yeah, absolutely.
- I think to like just looking at like my class and the people, I don't think that the majority of my classmates would have taken a government class if they didn't have to.
- Yeah.
- Right. Where is there a polling place on campus? Is that just for federal elections?
- The UC.
- I think we had talked to some other campuses recently, Board of Regents, they have a harder time getting people more engaged on their campuses. I think Missoula is

kind of an outlier in that way easier than other MUS institutions. Think MSU Billings, so they had significant challenges with that about trying to get polling locations.

- One thing I know one of my friends who's in Nevada recently reached out to me to ask how we deal with like ballots and voting and voter registration on our campus. So, he's at University of Nevada, Reno, and he said that all of the residents who live on campus don't have a mailbox. So, they can't register to vote with their campus address because the PO box is limited. And so, he was just like working on like, I guess, like helping to fix that voter disenfranchisement just because they don't have access to that they don't have any way to register for voting. So that definitely made me appreciate it more here. But I don't know the MSU, like each of their residents on campus have their own mailing box as well.
- So, what percentage of the student body you think realizes that we have a polling place for the November election?
- At this point in time? Probably not many.
- Yeah.
- But it's mentioned for like the ASUM elections I've seen out on posters. It's on the app. So, it is publicized, but there are so many posters around campus that it kind of gets lost and looks whatever. Yeah. And I think I mean, I haven't Like I said, I haven't been here for an election year on the federal level, but I believe it's, I know that for the election last year, like it was a big thing to go a little I voted sticker.
- We started sending them out with absentee ballots. Now, the stickers, so I thought that was pretty groovy. I'll be honest, like, because the primary and the primary is in June and school won't be in session. So, I guess I hadn't really thought about that. And there's the election in November. So that's thought provoking for sure how to engage students more.
- I do know that there's, I mean, like MontPirg will stand outside and are you registered to vote and I'm sure if you asked me, they would have some knowledge I haven't actually registered through them.
- ASUM is collaborating with MontPirg to do voter registration drive, and we're trying to get the bat rolling after spring break. So that is one thing that we are working on.
- There have been a few students I've talked to like out of state saying why would I want to get registered here? So, trying to get them like wanting to do it here. It's been a bit of a struggle because they're like, well care more about my election. I go more, it's more competitive back home. My vote goes further kind of thing.

Focus Group 3

- Not really childcare because I want to be able to spend time with my kids. So, it's more so, like, because when you go to a lot of the events. They're not really child friendly.
- Yeah, I would agree. There's a definite deficit of childcare opportunities in this country affordable childcare opportunities which I won't even get into, but that's another story altogether, but I agree with ____ that there's a lot of the opportunities that you can do for volunteer and civic engagement. They're just not child friendly at all. And if you were to try to bring children, along with you, it's kind of like you're wasting people's time because you're spending more time trying to take care of your kids. If there were opportunities where there were other children involved and there's somebody that could engage the children while volunteering in a safe place, and I have no problem with that, personally, I have very social girls, they would love the opportunity, but I just don't see that a lot. Or maybe I'm not looking hard enough. It's hard to say.
- Yeah, I'm not sure. I think I guess if I were, ways that I could be better. Learning how to communicate and put myself out there to talk with all different types of people I think just continuing to learn how to communicate and empathize with other people, even if we don't agree on certain issues. I think that's if I could get better at that.
- What would be helpful in that situation? is if the communication methods, is it the tone of the communication?
- Maybe, yeah, maybe it's like not just like being trained on how to communicate, but also maybe having the option to have environments where I could communicate and discuss with people that I might not normally be communicating with. So, I do feel like I'm in a little bit of a bubble, I guess, as far as like issues.
- I think one of the barriers, at least in the Billings community is that there's not a lot of people involved. So, it's really hard to like if you want to say, plan an event or you be even be at an event you have, like, right now there's only three people here. And that's tends to be very wide among the whole Billings community.
- Basically, like, a lot of times, people just don't come or they're not like for whatever reason they say they're going to come and then last minute. They're like, oh sorry can't come.
- Do you see a disconnect between those actions and then the way people talk about it, like do people say they care and then their actions don't support that? Or do people say, I don't care. I'm not showing up.

- A lot of it is, I just don't care. So, I'm not interested in. I'm not going to show up. It's just a lack of engagement basically
- I think people are afraid to say no and which they have that commitment. Oh yeah, you want me to do something. I'll do it. But it's worse to say yes to something and then just fall through all together. And that happens a lot and I again I haven't really been involved in much in the community and Billings, but I think that's a problem. I also think that the awareness of what type of engagement opportunities there are is very limited. We have the advantage working at MSU Billings, because there is a community outreach office and they're constantly filtering all these engagement opportunities and trying to get people volunteering and out in the community. So, we have that advantage, but the vast majority of the population does not so they have to actively go searching for volunteer opportunities and it can, they have to search too far too. It's too difficult, then they'll just "what's the point". Yeah, a lot of disconnect.
- I don't know. I mean, maybe I didn't see any of the NGO classes. So maybe ___ will have a better answer since you took an NGO class, but just my two cents. I think it would be is difficult because most people and younger generations, we don't read newspapers, for example. So, advertising this stuff and traditional media forums that doesn't get the publication or the awareness that traditionally does social media is good, but at the same time, people are so inundated with social media requests. So, they start to become numb to a lot of that stuff. From my perspective, personally, with a family, the more opportunities there are that are family friendly that can accommodate younger children or provide some type of atmosphere that's appropriate for younger children. I think that that could potentially have an impact, but again I digress, I will leave the rest of the answer to my colleagues.
- To drop in and feel like I can put my kid and so much familiar with some unfamiliar care provider or be able to bring my child into a setting and feel comfortable doing that. That's not disruptive.
- And have the children engaged. Exactly. And I have a friend who's actually running for a State congress seat and so she's constantly out in the in the community volunteering trying to boost her image and get votes, things like that. And she just said she's very volunteer minded anyone she always has been. But it's interesting. She also has a young daughter about four years old and I asked her, so do you can she also works full time and she's studying and I asked her, are you bringing your daughter with you to these events. She said, Oh, no, I would never bring my daughter, because a lot of the volunteering events there in places that are less than desirable. They're helping out in locations are semi dangerous and so she would never want to bring her daughter in those situations for fear that potentially could be abducted, or it's just not a clean environment that so I mean I'm not saying that you need to forego helping those situations. Absolutely. I think it's important, but to

be able to provide an environment that supports younger philanthropy could be a benefit and then these children and grow up with that mentality.

- Yeah, I mean, this is really making me see things in a different light. I mean especially Montana, like most events, they're also even if they're in nicer areas they're at bars they're later in the evening. So that's something like that. I just, I've been taking for granted. I think too, like it's a little bit separate here but like sometimes I feel like there's just so much information. That we're consuming and there's just so many different events going on, even if they're not political or they're not volunteer events that people have to choose which events they go to because there's only there's only so much you can do. And, maybe, you know, with not only not hearing about issues or not being able to hear about certain events. It's also just like focusing on like normalizing volunteering. And normalizing attending political events. And I guess that's like a part of, of making it friendlier to moms and to their young children. So just normalizing that like attending volunteering events or political events are for everyone.

Have you ever had an issue you felt strongly about? What was the issue? What did you do about it?

- 1) Follow ups: Did you let your government representatives know about it? (e.g. express on social media, letters, Protest, Public Meetings, Call offices, etc.)**

Focus Group 1

- I think it's been, I mean, we talked about like, it was a conversation that started right away when we came in the doors and now we're about to head out the doors. So, I think one thing that comes to mind is just sort of like not giving up. Like we have decided, like, look, this is a problem. We've had multiple meetings with the dean starting to try to create committees. It's definitely something that we, as a whole, as a group of 3Ls really didn't let up on. It was sort of like every opportunity there was to have a conversation about it. We talked about it.
- Well, and I think even before that, we realized we had to shift tactics and what we had to sit back and reassess what had and hadn't worked in the past, and how we're going to try it different if we're going to make this successful. And we realized some of the things we were trying were ineffective on paper instead of face to face, didn't work as well. And so, we shifted gears once August started. We sat down and talked to the dean and he was willing to come to the table literally, he took us out to lunch and came to the table and listened to our voices, you know, and we brought up, the nice thing about having long law school is that we brought it up with a legal connection too, you know. And so, having that constitutional focus that, hey, we the Montana State constitutional focus that recognizes the special, the specialness of native cultures and heritage, you know. So, we had more than just, we want this, but we also came with a plan, a vision on how we wanted to see it changed and a step by step plan. Right now, what's going on at the law school, the next group that's coming in, in clinic and hopefully, maybe speaking a little bit too early. Hopefully the next

future and also leadership is going to continue this. I have a meeting with two of them on Thursday, about additional things they can address in the future, like we have a continuity thing set up right now. And they're going to continue pushing for curriculum changes, visibility beyond just the walls in our classrooms, and so it's and then having we had undergrads come into the law school for the first time, for a law specific event we did. We hosted a luncheon last fall. And we had 25, undergrad, Native students show up to specifically be recruited for law. So, we brought them in because we hadn't invited them. We had never thought about how intentionally exclusive we were or unintentionally exclusive, but that all came out of these conversations. Now these guys show up over they know where the Indian Law Clinic is. They know it exists I didn't even know exist until I got to law school. And so, it's just collaboration, building bridges going back and forth. That's what the founder of Indian Law Clinic wanted, it's what Bonnie Heavy Runner, who created NIS, wanted. And it's something that native people seem to try to do, because we need to succeed. But the only time anyone was addressing our issues was when it's a real issue, not like a continued relationship.

- So, one of the things that I've been facing this year, and this started a little bit last year when I was involved with ____ was just kind of how, you know, we can't run our powwow. The way that we usually do that, like ours are usually run and there's a lot of policies through the university that we have to kind of maneuver around and some of the times we have to compromise our own culture to do that. And so, this year, there's been a big effort to work with the administration, but to also challenge the university to challenge the university to, you know, change so that we can hold a more culturally appropriate powwow. And so that, you know, and it's not even just the powwow because that's what we've been reduced to, but we want to, to get back into a place where we can hold cultural events again throughout the year. And so that we can, you know, do what we actually want so that we're actually engaging our native not only our native community, but the university community, the non-native community here so that they can be educated on our, on our culture, and you know, who we are as people, which I think is something that has been lost because of, you know, rising costs that are put on a student group and, you know, policies that we have to constantly dodge, and that's something we've been really challenging the ASUM, Bodnar, we've been challenging them to, to really, you know, uphold what should be their end of this relationship, instead of us doing all the work and then using the powwow as recruiting material. And that's going to be something that I don't think I'll be directly involved in, you know, planning the powwow in future years. But you know, that what we've started this year in our efforts to, you know, challenge the university, I think, is something I'll continue to be doing, you know, until I graduate, and, you know, preparing or helping people continue that fight, because it'll continue beyond that.

Focus Group 2

- Medicaid expansion last year. ASUM did a lot same with MUS, we sent a postcard to our legislators. I got to meet with Fred Thomas. He's like the senate leader

Stevensville. So, he is my representative. So, I got to talk with them about Medicaid expansion, then also the tuition freeze. So those channels are available, I guess on campus for people to get to meet their legislators or back home representatives. But that's basically been my main way through which I've been able to get access.

- I personally don't have any time to meet with any representatives. So, I call. I don't know how effective that is, but I definitely call.
- Montana Women Vote has put together some materials for Medicaid expansion. So, I engage my state representative speaker Hertz in anticipation for that. There is a water compact that's being thrown around on the reservation with between the tribes and the federal government right now. Something that I'm supportive of and have sent letters as well.
- I've called, written letters to the editor for The Chronicle, and then yeah, also Medicaid expansion like, women's marches, the gun control, school shooting marches.
- Do you guys do the Women's March in Helena?
- I did in 2017.
- I think like doing more research, just so I'm more aware of like, all angles of the issue. I think it's something that I would prefer to do about anything too. So, like, I know that they know where I should stand like, what I should be advocating for. And then I think to just like engaging with my peers, just asking them questions and is just, that's where I like to invest. I haven't really other than like, broadband expansion or like the National FFA charter, like I haven't done any lobbying.
- I, I'm sort of, I think often in our society, we've been looking for those at the top to find solutions and invoke change. And I'm sort of believing more now that we need to engage people. And there's a polarization and a lot of misinformation in our society right now. And I ask often, how do we navigate this? How do we combat this? And just from some of the talks, I've had with some people like to try and engage on where we can find common ground more, rather than focusing on polarization. So for me, I'm uncomfortable just going back to what we were saying earlier, like engaging with our family and engaging with the people that disagree this because of that cultural backlash, but I really wish I could find a way to do it, to really just try and find common ground can change minds. And I'm still figuring how to do that.
- I think a lot of it too, like I like, regardless of what anybody believes, like, I will still respect them because it is their belief. I think a lot of it is like, it was like lack of education. And it's like awareness of issues like that. So, I think like, the more we can

just like, talk about those issues with our peers and like, bring them to focus. I think that that, I think has a bigger impact than you realize.

- I've noticed when I've had conversations with people in Missoula, I tend to have similar views. And I feel like that's less effective for goes for less. So, I would much rather like to go back to my own home and have conversation with people who disagree with me, because it's kind of an echo chamber, sometimes. Self-reinforcing, but I think it'd be better if you could talk to people. Yeah, to find that common ground.
- Yeah, I think that's an issue on every level. Like any political sphere is the fact that it's always like he said she said, it is so polarized and there needs to be more engagement. To tween, what the divide is. And that's typically between political parties or within political parties as we're seeing, and I think, but if I don't know, if I had more time and like the funding and whatever, I would definitely be a larger, like more active proponent of that idea and work on having like, bipartisan events, or, you know, this is our common goal, like climate change mitigation. Let's focus on that as a holistic community instead of just like, well, they're gonna do that and they're gonna do that and that's just Yeah. Oh, also I just remembered more engagement. The climate change march in Montreal, I saw Greta Thunberg speak which is incredible. Because it was like, half a million people were marching through the city, but I'd never experienced before it was just wild. But they had a lot of really cool things which I never gotten to see before.
- When I was in Canada last time I ran into like a conservative protest in front of a Capitol building, in Calgary. And it was like, it was the most like, mildly respectful, like, protests I've ever seen. Like they even waited for like the light to turn green before they cross the street and like moved cars. They had a lot of like, make Alberta great again posters, but they're really very talented people. I was like, Is this just Canadians? No, they're very kind and they like talk to us. Because like, they obviously could tell that we were Americans and like, a lot of them were very pro Trump, which I was very intrigued by. Just because it was, again, like, a lot of like, blue collar workers, like a lot of construction workers, like plumbers, a lot of people from the trades. But yeah, they were just it was really funny to see like how similar they were to like a lot of people in my hometown and it was just interesting.
- If it's regarding an issue, I usually go to Ballotpedia and like try and get a holistic sense of right and wrong and then I go, and like do some more. Honestly, it's probably Google if I don't know about it, and I'm trying to educate myself that's where I turn first. But usually I try to be pretty educated based on like the NPR, you know, the local newspapers.
- I would illustrate it like on a Montana level, like we have Senator Tester and the senator Daines, like, who am I going to trust? And like, I would just probably trust

John Tester's information over Steve Daines. I don't know if it depends on what information it is and it's from a speech if it's data. I mean, I don't know.

- I definitely try to pull from our sources and like read through this, like see where they contradict each other, we try to read through the lines like and then thinking to just like about that elected officials actual intentions, you know, like, who else is involved, like what other influences they might be facing, but yeah, definitely like trying to pull from multiple sources like whether it's like news sources or I have, like I'm involved in like, scientific research and so like, I always really appreciate like an actual published peer reviewed article. So like, if there is like, a, like a source or like a fact, something that I really questioned like I was trying to go to the source and like, try to decipher it myself or like, trusting what it's interpreted as on a website or something like that.
- I know with myself, it's just like level of exposure, like I tend to trust community, like city council members more than it was someone who's like a house representative senator and then more than a presidential candidate. But I think that's more just because like I've been able to have conversations with them that feels a little more human.
- I feel like sometimes they're a little closer to the issue too. They know who would actually impact.
- Yeah.
- I think those individuals are a little bit less polarizing as well. Sort of have those same barriers, fixing cracks in the sidewalk.
- Yeah.
- Right, right.
- Right. And everyone can agree on those types of things.

Focus Group 3

- So, a little while ago Billings was looking into the One Big Sky Center, which would have been huge on like increasing taxes and it would have been. Honestly, it would have been a detriment to the city because of how much of an impact it would have had with the cost associated with it. And so, my husband and I actually went, and we presented at city council meetings. We did all kinds of things because we're like, this is not okay, not only for the Billings community, but for downtown because basically what would have happened had it gone through is because of the cost of it. All of these businesses downtown would have been driven out because they wouldn't be able to afford the taxes to be downtown.

- How was the response that you got from that?
- I mean, they didn't do it. I mean I feel like it was overall positive because as we were informing people, they were getting more involved and kind of trying to also get city council to say no, basically.
- Yeah. And I'd say it's also really worth rewarding and the fact that they didn't end up going following through with it because it's like, it shows like our effort was impactful.
- Okay, so I think I tend to be more aligned with the silent minority or majority or whoever it is depending on situation. Maybe I'm just not wholly comfortable bringing political activity to the forefront and debating things. I'll debate things one on one, but I have no problem talking about what I know in a context that is in front of a lot of people, things like that, but I'm not really much into debating issues. Which is kind of funny. A lot of people say, why did you say political science? I like the policies behind political science and the structure and why people act the way they do. But I'm not a politician. I can never be a politician and so things that have resonated with me recently, the women's movement has resonated with me, but I have not been particularly active in that movement. Again, I am busy, but I also when social media is exploding. For example, I have done very little to spur that, I just show my solidarity and support in smaller ways. In terms of what my work is I work in immigration. I work in international relations and International Studies. So, a couple years ago with the travel ban, for example on specific countries in the world. I was very active on campus and mostly from an informational perspective of what it means for our students. What this means for our community. Economic impact, things like that to just try to provide the facts as they are. To decrease the potential negative effects on the local community and to provide some stability for those who are impacted. I'm not super politically active, I am very aware of what's going on. And I'm very active as far as voting and I try to make very informed decisions. But I'm just not a politically active person.
- I just say this probably a lot of issues that I've definitely been passionate about, and I would say, more recently, living in Montana, like I said, a lot of my peers are even more involved than I am. And I've had a couple peers run for various positions. So, I think that's where I've been somewhat passionate, I guess where I've knocked on doors for people that I know and believe will do good work. So I'd say yes, I've knocked on doors and phone banked for many issues I've been passionate about, but more so supporting people that I know and people that I believe will do good work.

Where do you receive the most information about current issues or events? (Social Media, News (e.g. print, television), word of mouth?)

Focus Group 1

- Turtle talk.

- Yeah, if I'm honest, I don't read much news from certain places anymore, like I just don't I know. I kind of live under a rock the last few months actually on purpose. I mean, because I just don't read it. Turtle talk, though. indians.com I read every day. I would say currently, I don't. I try not to get news from anywhere.
- So, I go on to the Missoulian. And Ravalli County has their own newspaper since I lived there. I've been I've been both because it goes to school here and impacts there. Turtle Talk, I wasn't joking about I really do. That's how we stay up on what's going on in Indian country or Indians.com. And nope, that's it for new sources really.
- I get like most of the stuff I know it's like what my dad when I'm home what my dad watches on TV in the morning and Twitter a lot, like a lot of like, I just see it on Twitter. I'm like, Oh, that's what happened. What's happening I don't like go in and look to see like, what's happening and I don't generally know like I know local issues like I'm all up on local issues. And like it's usually word of mouth that I get.
- I get my news mostly from social media between like Facebook and Twitter, but I mean I'm not trusting of a lot of the stuff I see but I feel like Indian Country stuff is like Indian country today Indians.com and I use those about like more native issues.

Focus Group 2

- I can start. I listen to The Daily every day, which is like the New York Times podcast and NPR hourly briefings. And then I read The New York Times daily as well.
- To support local press, I am a subscriber of Missoulian. I'll go there for most of my community events, but I also have a New York Times subscription. But my favorite would be the Atlantic just because it's essay based.
- I'm also a New York Times subscriber so that's where I get most of my news. I try not to get it from like social media.
- I think social media is probably my number one source just because that's probably where I spend the most time like exposed to those types of sources but also like being very cautious because like, it's very obvious like, relatives share things and be like, dude, Barbara, like [inaudible].
- I'm also in New York time subscriber, also Missoulian subscriber. NPR is probably my bulk of where I get my information. But, also just a lot of my own research, just, here's something correlates. If that academically lines up with that.
- I usually use some New York Times get my morning brief. And then I usually scroll through NPR on a regular basis. And I'm also subscribed to the economist.

Focus Group 3

- So, I mostly get my news online.
- I would say, NPR. I think it's called Al Jazeera isn't like an international when I go to, um, and then really just look at my some of my friends post on Facebook, to be honest, as well. Okay. Yeah.
- I tend to do a lot of the local news. I'm like, Q2 and color a or the Gazette, depending on what it is and then like sometimes my friends will come and tell me about different things, or I'll see it on Facebook and then go straight to the source whatever source it is that they posted.
- I am a huge proponent of BBC so I have BBC on my homepage. That kind of my primary source because I find them to be more independent and a lot of the American your sources. I also am constantly listening to NPR on my short route to and from work, but it's always on. Al Jazeera I tune into every once in a while, clips or full articles, depending on the availability of New York Times economist, things like that, as far as daily regular news.
- I do have Twitter and I get notifications every once in a while. So, then it sends me something about the news and I'll just actually go to the internet and look it up. I don't usually go directly to Twitter.
- Sometimes like if I hear from someone or I know that a political candidate is like currently running or something. I might look at their Twitter to see what their responses to an issue but it's like more specific. It's like what is their response to a specific issue.
- I do not have a Twitter account and I'm actually very thankful I do not have a Twitter account. I have Facebook and I use it sparingly; I would say. I do not use Facebook or really any social media for new sources. If something pops up, and I will go straight to the source and cross reference
- I don't have TV I use the internet for everything.
- I don't like to watch news on the TV.
- My husband watches it on the TV. So, sometimes I see it, but I don't intentionally engage with it.

Have you ever considered running for office?

- 1) If so, what prompted you to run?**
- 2) If you did not, what stopped you from running?**

Focus Group 1

- Have I ever considered running for office? No, and I think I've always thought that sort of my past and where I come from would prohibit me holding office. I don't

know if that's necessarily true, but anytime it's ever been brought up like, Oh, you should run for this like now. It would only take a little bit of digging and they'd tear me apart.

- For office, I considered it before I got to Montana. And before I sat for Lobby Day for when indigenous people day came up, I think it was two years ago. I had considered it. But seeing the type of systemic racism that was represented on the House floor that day during the conversations, not only about the indigenous people of this state, but also about indigenous beliefs in the right to die bill, and saying that we all have abortions anyway, and we don't have religion and watching a state representative, have that type of perspective on Native people publicly. And the only time he recanted is when he got lambasted in the newspapers the next day. There's so much deep felt, I do want to say hatred towards natives. It may not be on hold, but it's definitely represented in our legislature openly. And so, I don't want to have to defend myself and my people just so I can run for office. I also feel like only rich people run for office, and they buy their offices and we aren't rich, the funding. And I don't see many or almost any minority representations outside of those demographics here. So, for me, it really is kind of hopeless, I have great ideas and great with policy and hopefully with law in the future. But who's going to fund that? And where do I even start learning about that process? Like I know how to run for tribal government, within my reservation. It's super easy, and it's clear and I can find the instructions for it online or just, I know who to even go talk to here. I wouldn't even know who to talk to even start figuring it out. And I'm in law school. Which is and I took law, legislation and politics is great theory wise, but it didn't teach me practicum what I should even do so where would I start? So that's my answer.
- But for running for office. I don't think I ever could because I'm like, super nice, and I feel like they were just like, my feelings. Yeah, I couldn't take like the yelling like you look at me in the wrong direction. Like I'm so sorry.
- When I was growing up, I used to talk like I was going to hold office. I think when I was like, in like elementary school, I always said I was going to be like president someday and after seeing like, my grandma run for just the legislature and her holding that position for her terms. And she's like a super nice lady like soft spoken, but seeing like, how she had to, like, conduct herself in those arenas and how she liked what she had to put up with. And I was older by then I could kind of understand that really like that institutional hatred and violence against, you know, native peoples really made me, you know, distrustful of that entire system. I don't think I could ever hold office and would ever want to. Just because I think the way that, you know those areas exist, they exclude traditional values of leadership and they, you know, they eliminate a place for our traditional values of leadership. And that's, you know, I don't want to ever be in a position like that.

Focus Group 2

- Yes, and why not? Because you see how a candidate can be destroyed or mistakes they've made. Our society can beat people up pretty brutally, and that would be tough. Yeah, tough.
- Especially when they like pull up on candidates from like 30 years ago for the things that they said or voted on and expect them to be consistent throughout their lifetime. I think it's really unfair because like, people change a lot. We learn a lot like, I think it's really unfair to expect them to be consistent throughout their entire life.
- Yeah, just being in political science, everyone's a little bit of an egotist. So, I'm disposed to me I've interned for Tester, and knocked doors for Klobuchar. So, it's something I'm passionate about.
- Yeah, on a government level, I think I just now this just now it's got in my mind, but I'm running for Parks and Rec director, like for local government would be awesome.
- So, to be like a political appointee.
- Yeah, yeah.
- Yeah, I think everyone at some point is a political junkie or a poli sci major has entertained the idea of running for public office. I know that you know, as a young child I was like I want be the first woman president. But then I realized I want to do more internationally based things. And that's not what I want to do. So yeah, people change.
- Yeah, so happy like 30 years down the line on a municipal level.
- I think for me, like if I did ever get involved, it would be more like issue focus, like alternative models of health care or health care funding or something like that. Rather than just like a broad elected official position that focuses on issues like I want to be able to be very knowledgeable in my field.

Focus group 3

- I am not a politician. I'd be a horrible politician. I'm a researcher. I'm a strategist, I am the type of person who likes to work in the background and actually make things happen, be the person who knows the information I'm yeah, I would, I don't think I would ever run for political office.
- I don't think I would run for political office just because I don't feel that I have. I don't know how to put that but like a strong enough pressure on people to say like what I think is impactful. For example, sales wise, I'll put it this way is that if somebody doesn't think they need something I will tell them you're right, you don't need it. And so, I don't feel that I had the political like push to be able to run for

office. However, my husband has talked about it and contemplated it so if he were to, I absolutely would be 100% supportive and be kind of in the background saying like, let's do this. And like helping organize things and doing things for him.

- I don't believe so. I don't think I would be very good at that. But I think that I could definitely like and like I've done like support my peers and be heavily involved to support them and running. Maybe if like something very, very low at the local, local level like school board or something like that. Maybe I could run for something like that. But other than that, I, I don't see myself doing that.