TRANSFORMING MISSOULA

CENTERING PEOPLE OF COLOR (POC) SOLUTIONS AND ACTION STRATEGIES

Acknowledgement

LEARN Missoula statement of appreciation and acknowledgment of the historical and contemporary stewardship of this land by Indigenous people groups

And commitment to come alongside Indigenous people, groups, & communities as partners and co-collaborators

Content Areas

I: Introduction and Overview of Project

II: Results - Audits

III: Results – Quantitative Survey of City Employees

IV: Findings – Qualitative Research Conversations with POC & Transformative Solutions Derived from Engagement

Introduction and Overview

LEARN MISSOULA TEAM, PROCESS, & FRAMEWORK

Introduction: Project Team

LEARN Missoula (Listening, Engaging, Action, Reflection Network)

Black Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) led and directed

With members having:
- Diverse repertoire of knowledge & skills
- Professional value base, and
- History of engaging in & commitment to equity and diversity work

Project Embodied Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Strategic Process & Scientific Inquiry

In any nonviolent campaign there are four basic steps:

◦ ***Collection of the facts to determine where injustices exist***

◦ *Negotiation*

◦ *Self purification*

◦ *Direct action*

Intention & Outcome of Steps:

◦ For people to rise from prejudicial and inequitable beliefs, assumptions, and practices to a deeper understanding and appreciation for justice, equity and inclusion

NECESSITY OF THE PROCESS

Without the process, there would be increased risks of unproductive efforts & outcomes

Premature, uniformed, and untimely assessments, judgements, and actions result in unfruitful efforts

Congruent with Dr. MLK King, Jr., strategic process & scientific inquiry

Primary Goals

To conduct antiracism audits and interview representatives of public facing City departments

To engage BIPOC residents in research conversations; ultimately, giving power to and elevating BIPOC experiences in epistemically credible ways

Key Outcomes Sought

Generation of data-informed practical and applied knowledge directly from BIPOC residents, collaborators, etc.

Acquisition of BIPOC-centered solutions and strategic actions steps to inform the transformative process

Obtaining objective and quantifiable information about the nature of municipal departments' practices and policies, etc.

Project Approach

Mixed Method
- Grounded in narrative & phenomenological traditions
- Informed by the transformative paradigm
  - Embodies a human rights, social justice & critical approach to research
- Rationale for using the transformative paradigm
  - It intentionally centers the voices and viewpoints of BIPOCs who are usually kept at the perimeter of the research process (Mertens, 2009).
  - More importantly, the two hallmarks of the transformative paradigm are: a) forming partnerships and b) instituting and implementing transformations

Project Approach

Cultivation of research partnerships with BIPOCs
◦ Research became participatory and action-oriented

Ethically well-designed research process that was placed-based

Facilitated the narrating & describing of lived experiences and substantiating through research
◦ Crucial to this process was inviting BIPOC residents to envision and design a just, safe, inclusive, and equitable Missoula where they can experience an ongoing sense of safety, place, belonging, and well-being.

Method and Rationale

Qualitative (QL)

One of the best ways to honor and value diversity while resisting the hegemony of Eurocentric universalizing narratives about ethno-racial groups and the injustices and inequalities they experience

Quantitative (QN)

One of the best methods to gain quantifiable information about departmental knowledge, responsiveness, and practices relating to equity, diversity, justice, and inclusion

Rationale

Without these conversations, BIPOC thoughts, ideas, and solutions might otherwise be ignored, lost, marginalized or unsolicited

Significance and Benefits

The voices, experiences, and viewpoints of BIPOCs traditionally absent or marginalized in research (Marten, 2009) that seek to address structural inequities and systemic oppression

With LEARN's project, BIPOCs are seen as uniquely qualified to provide germane and significant insights on effective ways to create just and equitable communities and municipal systems because of their lived experiences as ethno-racial minorities

Ungar (2012) has noted that the voices and perspectives of disadvantaged and marginalized individuals tend to go unheard in the development of policies and services that matter most to their wellbeing

LEARN seeks to ensure that solutions & recommended action strategies of diverse BIPOC groups, which have emerged from the data, will be integrated in policy development or modification, creation of initiatives, etc.

Significance and Benefits of Findings

The findings are significant because they can contribute to improved quality of life and well-being for BIPOCs in Missoula; thereby, reducing the overall cost attached to managing and responding to the deleterious effects of systemic oppression, institutionalized injustice, structural inequality, and discrimination

Overview of Data Examined, Collected, & Analyzed

Anti-racism audits of City documents, processes, policies, etc.

Quantitative(QN) survey that included three areas & a few open-ended questions

Qualitative (QL) research conversations & engagement with diverse people of color residents, inclusive of designing a better, more just, & equitable Missoula

I. Results from Audits

ANTI-RACISM AUDITS

Antiracism Audits

First sets of results were antiracism audits

An important outcome was to raise awareness of congruence between City's stated commitment and what it actually presented in writing or engaged in (processes), etc.

Audits

City of Missoula Strategic Plan

City Council Rule 33 Appointments

Website

Human Resources Orientation PowerPoint

Parks and Recreation Activity/Recreation Guide

Missoula Redevelopment Agency

Stories and Stones

Guidebook - Sheriffs

Processes and practices for public engagement and participation

Diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice training and educational programming

Antiracism Audits

Purpose & Goal

To:

- Raise awareness of taken-for-granted, inherent or implicit assumptions or conventions

- Heighten City's ability to reflect on implicit biases while thoughtfully considering the voices & definitions that have been unwittingly ignored or marginalized

Importance of Questions

Why the Equity-Based Skill of Questioning?

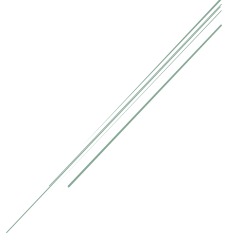Questioning is crucial to innovation.

Questions helps to develop insights and critical thoughts.

Questions invite new possibilities, dimensions and perspectives.

Questions stimulate change and inspire transformation

Questions function as an incentive to act!

PEOPLE SHOULD BE JUDGED BY THEIR QUESTIONS RATHER THAN BY THEIR ANSWERS. THE VALUE OF A GOOD QUESTION FAR SURPASSES A MULTITUDE OF ANSWERS.

Voltaire

Examples of Equity-based Questioning

Key Documents	Section	Evaluation of Written Appointment Procedural Process

*…**to assure the greatest citizen involvement and participation***

How does the City "assure" greatest involvement & participation? What does this look like? Who determines/ decides what *greatest citizen involvement* is and how it is achieved? What standard, evaluative criteria, or benchmarks are used? How often is greatest citizen involvement & participation assessed & by whom? How and who assure involvement of BIPOCs with varying intersecting social diversity dimensions? What might be creative ways to assure their involvement & participation? With whom might you partner in the community to assure involvement & participation? Might this be one form of participation & involvement?

*…**achieve competent and qualified appointments***

What standards, evaluative criteria, or benchmark are used to determine competence and qualifications? Whose definitions or voices are privileged? How often are these standards or criteria for competence & qualifications reviewed, modified, updated and by whom?

Are there specific competencies related to cultural knowledge, humility, intelligence, & skills including diversity, equity, justice, inclusiveness? With whom might Council consult with in the community to gain input on deciding and assessing what it means to be competent and qualified ☞

City Council
Rule 33
Appointments

Social Transformative Actions

I. Re-engage on a deeper level with the Rule 33, while reflecting on the questions raised. Allow the questions to stimulate change and innovation as well as inspire transformation.

II. Define and operationalize, ensuring that there are multiple perspectives, "*greatest citizen involvement and participation.*"

III. Grapple with and assess the historical and current steps, specific activities, mechanisms, benchmarks, etc., that have been used to "encourage" broad City participation. Has the encouragement been active or passive? Identify what needs to change and consider how will determine if efforts have been effective or successful.

IV. Delineate specific involvement opportunities desire for BIPOC with intersecting social diversity dimensions. Consider some non-traditional avenues for participation.

V. Incorporate evaluative, monitoring, and accountability processes/data for all procedural processes, (e.g., press release, application process, interviewing & assessment, etc.) that will serve as continuous quality improvement (CQI) feedback loops.

VI. Invite Council members and diverse individuals to go through the application, interviewing, & assessment processes to obtain honest and authentic feedback and solicit recommendations.

II. Results from Survey

QUANTITATIVE COMPONENT

Ethical Protocols

Voluntary & Non-Coercive Participation

Informed Consent

Confidentiality

Anonymity

City employees electing to participate offered their thoughts, viewpoints, and perspectives on equity, inclusion, justice and diversity in the community and municipality of Missoula.

The survey solicited assessment of three main areas

Degree of support and welcome for discussions and conversations on topics focused on diversity, equity, inclusion, justice (1 = minimal to no support/welcome to 10 = support/welcome to the greatest degree

Regularity of inclusive and equity-based practices, processes, and activities (no/never, sometimes true, always true, or unknown)

Level at which departments has incorporated or actualized diversity, equity, justice, and inclusion in their operations (work not started in area as yet, plans exist to incorporate, in place with some evidence of use, an inherent part of routine and has been modeled for others, or unknown)

Area 1 Results: Support & Welcome for Conversations on Topics of Diversity, Equity, Justice and Inclusion

Conversation Topic Areas	Welcome and Support Scores	
	M	SD
Social Issues of inequity, racism, injustice, systems of oppression	7.26	2.31
White dominant culture	5.21	2.76
Possibility of inequities from decisions even unintentionally	6.18	2.80
Budget and ensuring accountability around equity	5.89	3.18
Leaders participation & support for discussions on equity, privilege, oppression, and power	6.53	3.02

Note. The maximum score is 10.

Area 2 Results: Regularity of Inclusive and Equity-based Practices, Processes and Activities

Leadership Applies Equity Lens
- No or Never
- Yes True Sometimes
- Yes True Always
- Unknown

Managers Describe DEIJ Value
- No or Never
- Yes True Sometimes
- Yes True Always
- Unknown
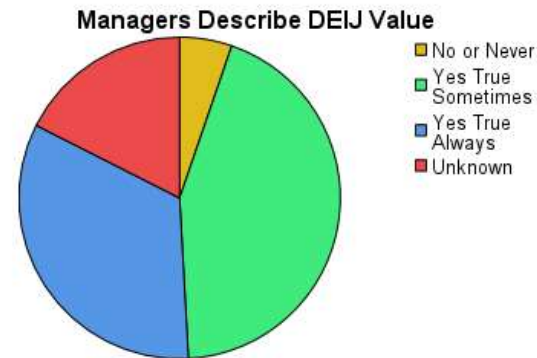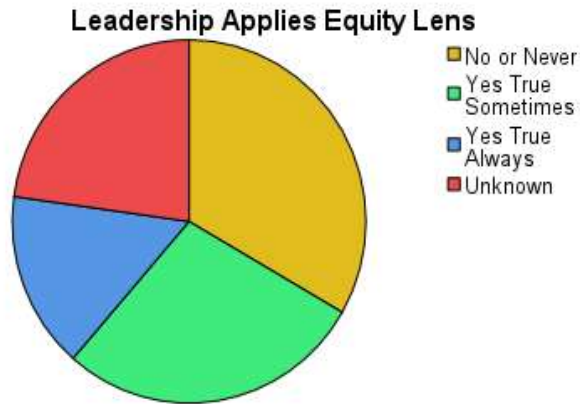
City employees reported most frequently not knowing whether leaders apply a social justice equity lens but noted that departmental leadership were able to articulate its value.

Area 3 Results: Incorporation and Actualization of Diversity, Equity, Justice and Inclusion in Operations

Department Consults with BIPOC Groups

Legend:
- Do Not Know Not Aware
- Department Hasn't Started Work in this Area Yet
- Department Plans Exist
- In Place in Department and Some Evidence
- Part of Department's Routine
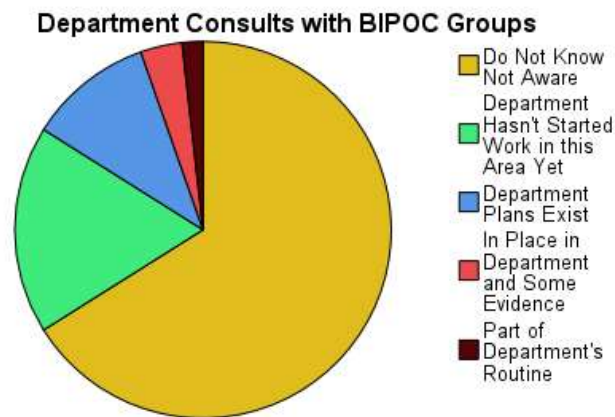
City employees stated that they did not know or, alternatively, reported that plans had not started in areas related to inviting in, building, and developing authentic collaborative relationships with BIPOC groups and communities or if the City uses equitable/effective communication strategies

Employees frequently reported not knowing whether evidence existed for practices or procedures <u>and</u> could not articulate whether these practices/procedures were part of departments' routine.

Representation of Three Areas

Actualization & Implementation (Most Work Needed)

Regularity of Activities and Processed--(True Sometimes)

Conversations on Topics of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Justice Welcomed & Supported (Best Area)
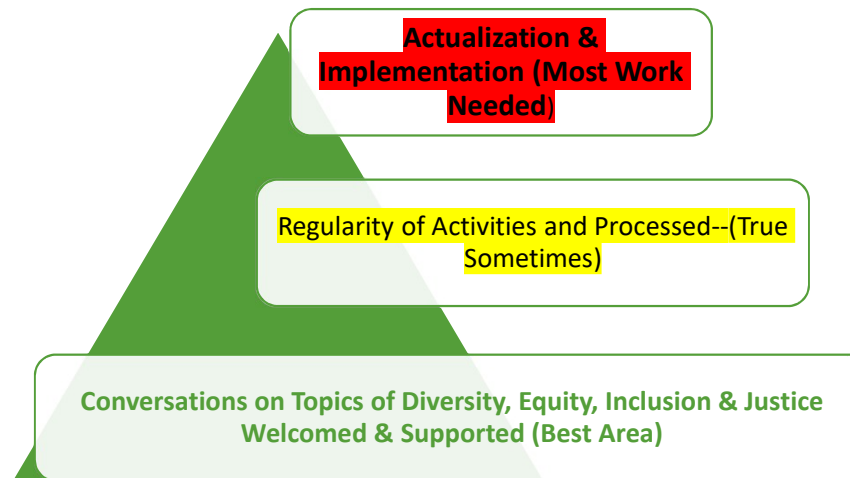
Results: Survey's Open-ended Questions

Strengths

- Manage public resources well
- Improved transparency
- Use evidence-based practices and have necessary tools
- People are competent, have a level of expertise, and do their jobs well
- Use a multidimensional perspective when addressing tasks & projects
- Positive, supportive work environment

Development Areas

- More diverse employees with intersecting diverse identities
- Advancing literacy of employees in important areas of inclusivity & equity
- Pay equity & promotional opportunities of women, especially those beyond young adulthood
- Community engagement
- Definable pathway for employee success, growth, & career trajectory
- Employee acknowledgement and recognition
- Data & evaluation tools

Results: Open-ended Survey Questions

Employees Recommendations to Enhance Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice Efforts

Repeated Areas:

1) Recruitment, hiring, and promotion
2) Knowledge building, i.e., cultural literacy and intelligence
3) Goal setting and accountability
4) Integrating equity as foundational
5) Soliciting authentic relationships with BIPOCs

III. Findings: Qualitative Research Conversations

ENGAGEMENT WITH PEOPLE OF COLOR

Ethical Protocols & Principles

Informed Consent

Confidentiality & Anonymity

Ethical Principles

Findings: Evaluation of Level of Comfortability Discussing and Acknowledging Racial Issues in Missoula

Degree of comfort discussing or acknowledging racial issues context dependent.

Personal social network

Professional circles/spaces

Broader Missoula community

One of the greatest factors in Whites' unwillingness is "it honestly doesn't affect their lives. They have the things and relationships that are valuable to them, so it leaves no room to really acknowledge."

Some Whites have been willing to acknowledge there are issues but others "really downplay because they haven't seen it, because they haven't been exposed to it, or anything like that. The majority might acknowledge that there's a little issue but really downplay how important it is."

Findings: Uninterrogated Assumptions

Awareness that a large percent of Missoula's White residents has the taken-for-granted perception of themselves as forward-thinking, open-minded, and accepting, especially in comparison to other areas of Montana. Do not disagree necessarily, but there are unexamined parts

Assumptions

- Assumption of Non-Belonging

- Presumption of Absence

- Assumptions about POC Identities and Heritages

"When White folks cannot place you or determine where or with whom you belong, they end up making these arbitrary decisions about who you are and your place in this world. If you can't be placed, then they'll classify you on who they think you are and treat you with the associative stereotypes."

Assumptions and presumption rooted in and exacerbated by "the lack of cultural influence." Cultural influence was defined as "having leaders...people of color in prominent roles and positions of power who are visible and public facing."

Findings: Issues that Engender Worry & Concern

Lack of Diversity and Racism

Lack of diversity
- Lack of exposure to different ethno-racial groups
- Lack of exposure to different/other issues going on besides what's happening in the White community

Lack of cultural literacy & intelligence
- Results from resisting to learn/change *or* genuinely not knowing or lacking information
- Only going to know & increase repertoire based on what willing to learn and become exposed to

Racism Microaggressions
- Lead people to act/react & treat BIPOCs based on what they look like or their assumptions.
- Coming to know & increasing awareness tied to willing to expose self & learn

Findings: Issues that Engender Worry & Concern

Culture & deeply held beliefs

Law Enforcement

Believing they are inclusive and diverse

Seeing selves through own eyes rather than seeing through the lens of the people they're actually interacting with

Woke White Folks Shaming

Shaming other Whites

Creates animosity

Woke White Folks

Caling them out for not doing it "right"

Inaction because of fear doing it wrong

Disrupts dialogue and conversation
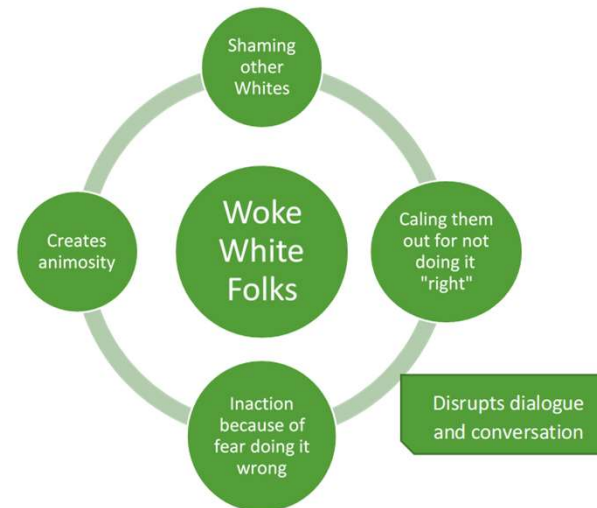
This group of Whites present themselves as learned and knowledgeable and the arbiter of what is the "right and best" way for doing equity work, antiracism efforts and advocacy, shaming other Whites who try, but make missteps or mistakes.

Findings: Envisioning

CREATING, DESIGNING, A BETTER, MORE JUST, AND EQUITABLE MISSOULA

Envisioning: Safety

Description of what safety would mean or look like in each context

Common Public Spaces

Contexts of Safety

Social Network

Professional/ Work

In common public spaces, feeling safe would mean able to just go about and do what need to do & treated the same way as anyone else. Not feeling threatened

Safety would be nonjudgement, feeling curious & feeling open that can be asked things or talked to about things, but also being mindful of what that would mean of the work it could put on people of color

Safety would mean they're not looking at BIPOCs for all the labor; the one pushing DEI forward or it's not going to happen. Safety would be others, no matter what they are, also wanting the same thing

Sample of Transformative Solutions & Action Strategies

Trainings need to have acknowledgement, actions, and accountability integrated

Focus on wage equity. Local wage, being able to have more connection, a sense of community, & understanding one another are all intertwined

Paid parental leave should be implemented in all businesses

How different it would feel to go into businesses knowing where they stand. Open acknowledgement would increase sense of safety

Human issues with real life impact are politicized. It would be great for MPD to have open conversations about Back the Blue vs. lives of BIPOCs. They need to communicate that it is not either/or but a "we." How great would that be

City Council needs to initiate conversations to inspire people to talk about diversity issues

Support Mountain Line. Get out and meet people on the bus. Good place to have conversations and mingle

Bring diverse entertainment to Missoula. Then feature cultural entertainment as featured stories so they get the recognition

Find ways to dismantle the 'good old boys network' out of law enforcement, courts, judgeships

Have community gardens that are designated just for people who can't afford food. Why is there not a garden supplying the Pov and food bank with free vegetables?

Having a cultural center

Bring diversity to City Council, local government, educatonal system, etc. in programs similar to congressional or legislaative interns, fellows, & pages. Implement this in Missoula focusing on BIPOCs

See resettled refugees as a resource for diversity, a cultural/social capital. They have played important role in bringing diversity to Missoula Right now it's untapped

Instead of excluding resettled refugees because of privileging English, evaluate City positions where they could fit and invite them to apply

Indigenous people groups are also an untapped social capital. Language requirement not an issue. Partner with high schools, tribal colleges, UM & create mentorship, internships & fellowships pipeline to City employment

Establish diversity-focused mentorship programs. Mentorship important in where BIPOCs are underrepresented

City needs to offer opportunities for experiential understanding. Build cultural literacy through experiential learning opportunities

Offer leadership & empowerment training to BIPOC employees, which help in navigating primarily White spaces

Develop cultural programs in partnership with nonprofits

Include BIPOC voices & perspectives in policy decisions. Connect with and collaborate with BIPOCs prior to making impactful decisions