

MARCH 19, 2018

Missoula County Native Outreach Project

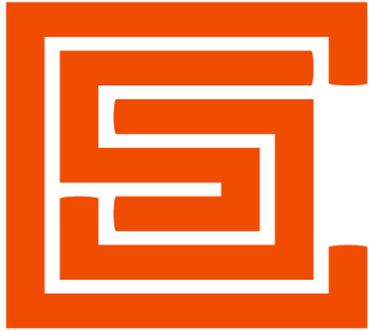
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Evelyn McCoy Carla Vasquez-Noriega

Agenda

- Background of the issue
- Overview of project
- Project implementation
- Findings and research analysis
- Recommendations for future work: **facilitated discussion**

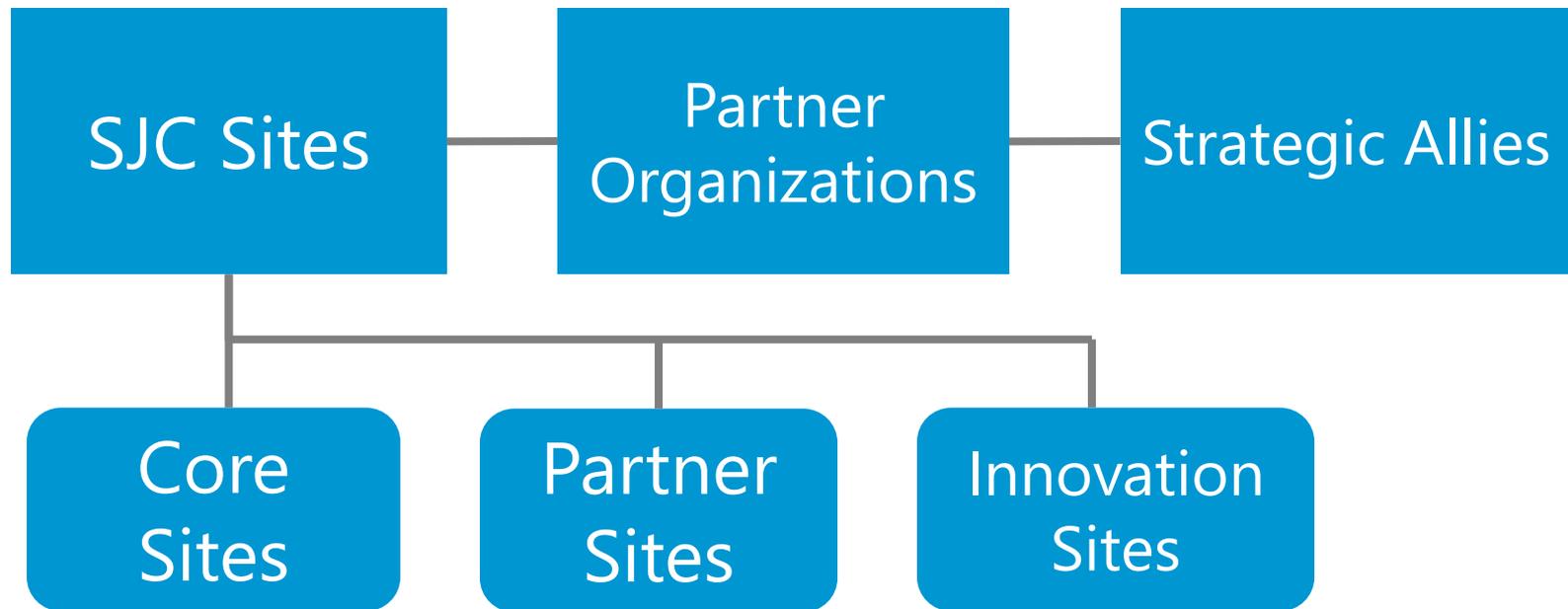


SAFETY + JUSTICE CHALLENGE

The Safety and Justice Challenge is an initiative to reduce over-incarceration by changing the way America thinks about and uses jails. The initiative—an initial five-year, \$100 million investment by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation—features a competition to help jurisdictions across the country create fairer, more effective local justice systems.

<http://www.safetyandjusticechallenge.org/about-the-challenge/>

MacArthur Foundation



The Challenge Network



The Innovation Fund

- **What did Innovation Fund sites receive?**

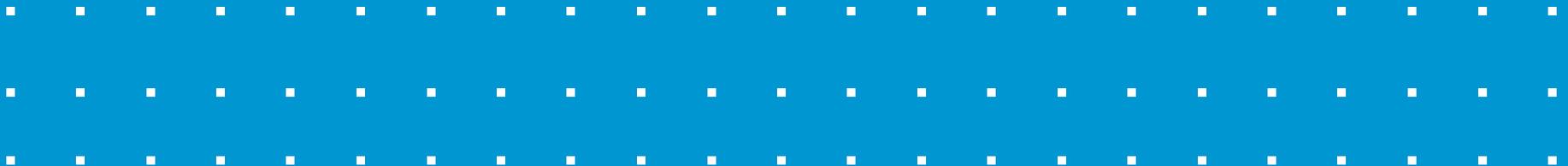
- Jurisdictions received a grant of \$50k, peer learning opportunities via webinars, trainings, and biannual meetings, and technical assistance from the Urban Institute

- **Goals of the Innovation Fund:**

- Expand the SJC Network
- Provide a space to test new ideas
- Enhance the capacity of jurisdictions for greater system reform
- Disseminate lessons learned to a wide audience to implement in future initiatives

Native Outreach Project

Interviews with Native American Inmates in MCDF



Who is our target population?

- Male and female adult inmates (people age of 18 or older) who identify as Native American/American Indian.
- There were no restrictions based on pod type, type of offense, and whether they were there on a federal hold.

What are our goals?

- To explore inmate perceptions of and experiences with culturally-relevant services and programming available in MCDF
- To learn how inmates engage with their cultural identity while incarcerated
- To understand how incarceration may affect their life plans and future goals

How will we meet these goals?

- Conduct **semi-structured interviews** with inmates

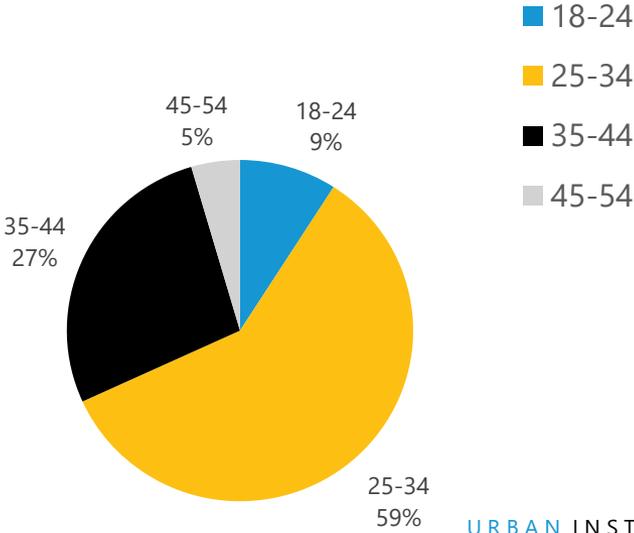
Data Collection

- **Recruitment:**

- Jail administration posted fliers within MCDF describing the interviews and inviting inmates who identify as Native American/American Indian to participate.
- Interested inmates were invited to send a kite message to indicate interest.
- Researchers responded to inmate to confirm date and time for the interview.
- Inmates were explained the purpose of the interview and how the data will be used in order to provide their **active, affirmed consent** to participate in the interview and to be audio recorded. Inmates were guaranteed **confidentiality** in their responses.
- From **October 2017 – January 2018**, Kevin Kicking Woman, Kathy Little Leaf, and Danielle Vazquez conducted a total of **22 interviews with Native American inmates**.

MCDF Sample

Age Range

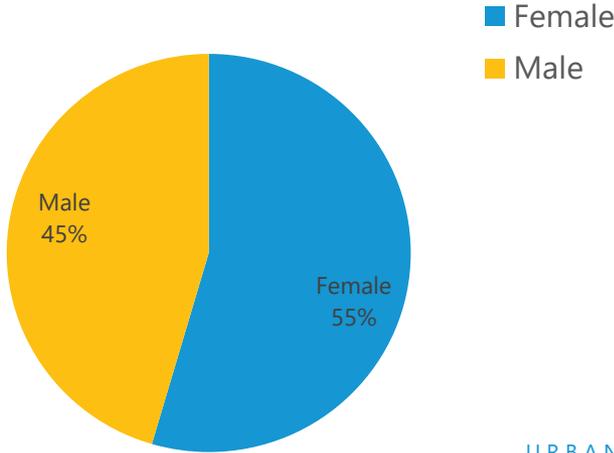


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MCDF Native Sample

Gender Distribution

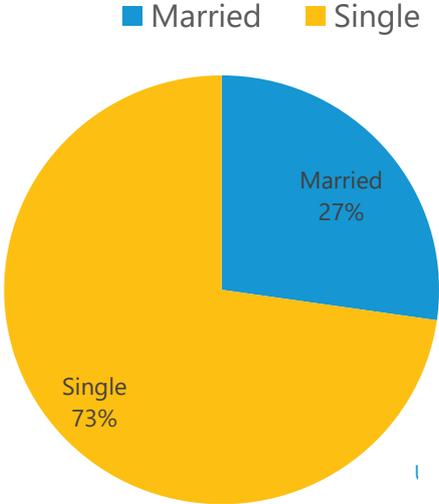
Percentage of Inmates



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MCDF Sample

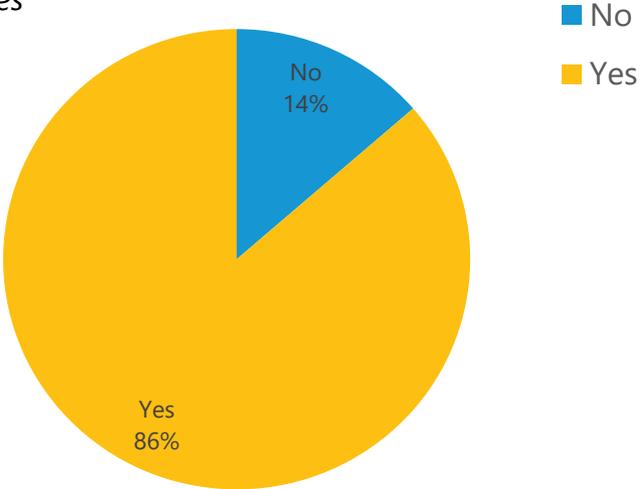
Marital Status



MCDF Native Sample

Do you have children?

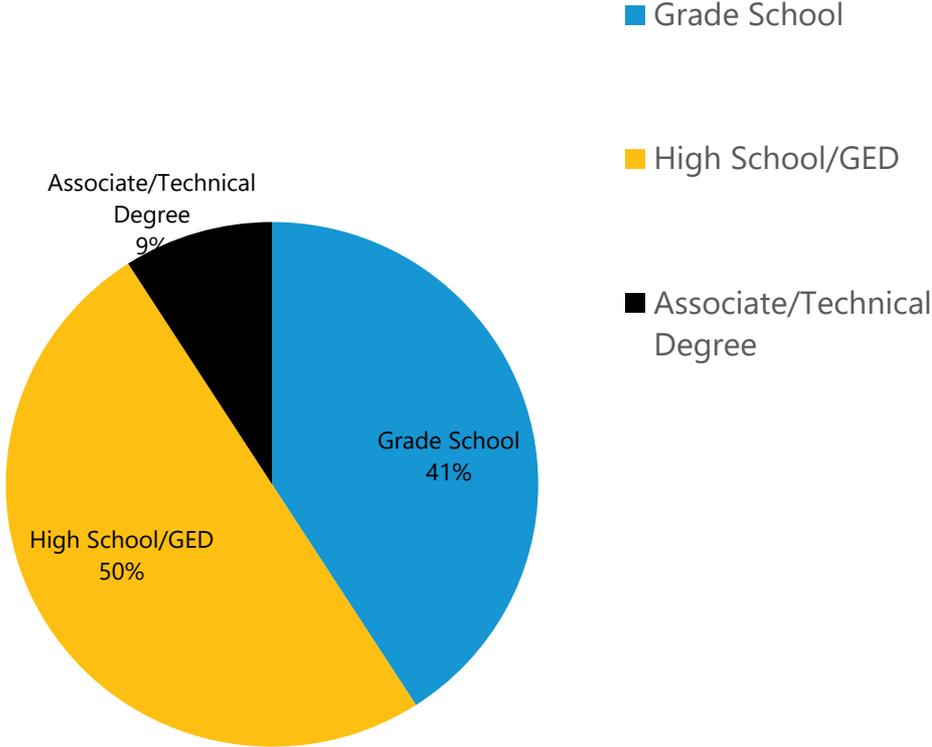
Percentage of Inmates



MCDF Native Sample

Highest Level of Education Attained

Percentage of Inmates



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Tribal Affiliation	Count	Percentage
Blackfeet	9	41%
Confederated Salish and Kootenai	3	14%
Chippewa-Cree	2	9%
Other	8	36%

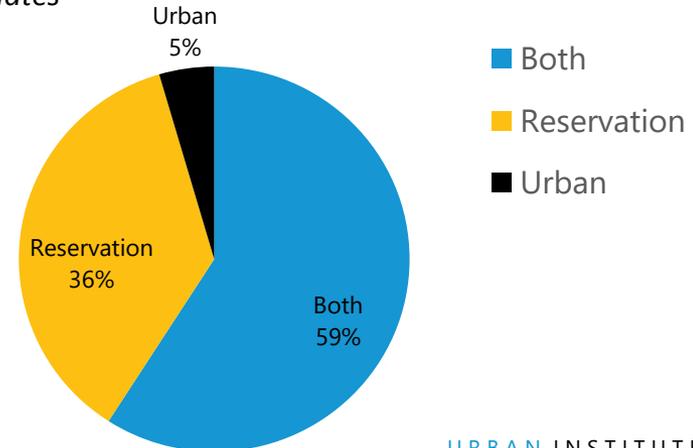
22% of inmates said they speak their native language. Languages included: Salish; Blackfeet; Crow; and Spanish.

Other
Blood band
Gros Ventre
Crow
KSNQT
RSKNCT
Northern Arapaho
Cherokee
Choctaw
Arikara
Mandan
Hidatsa

MCDF Native Sample

Where were you raised?

Number of inmates

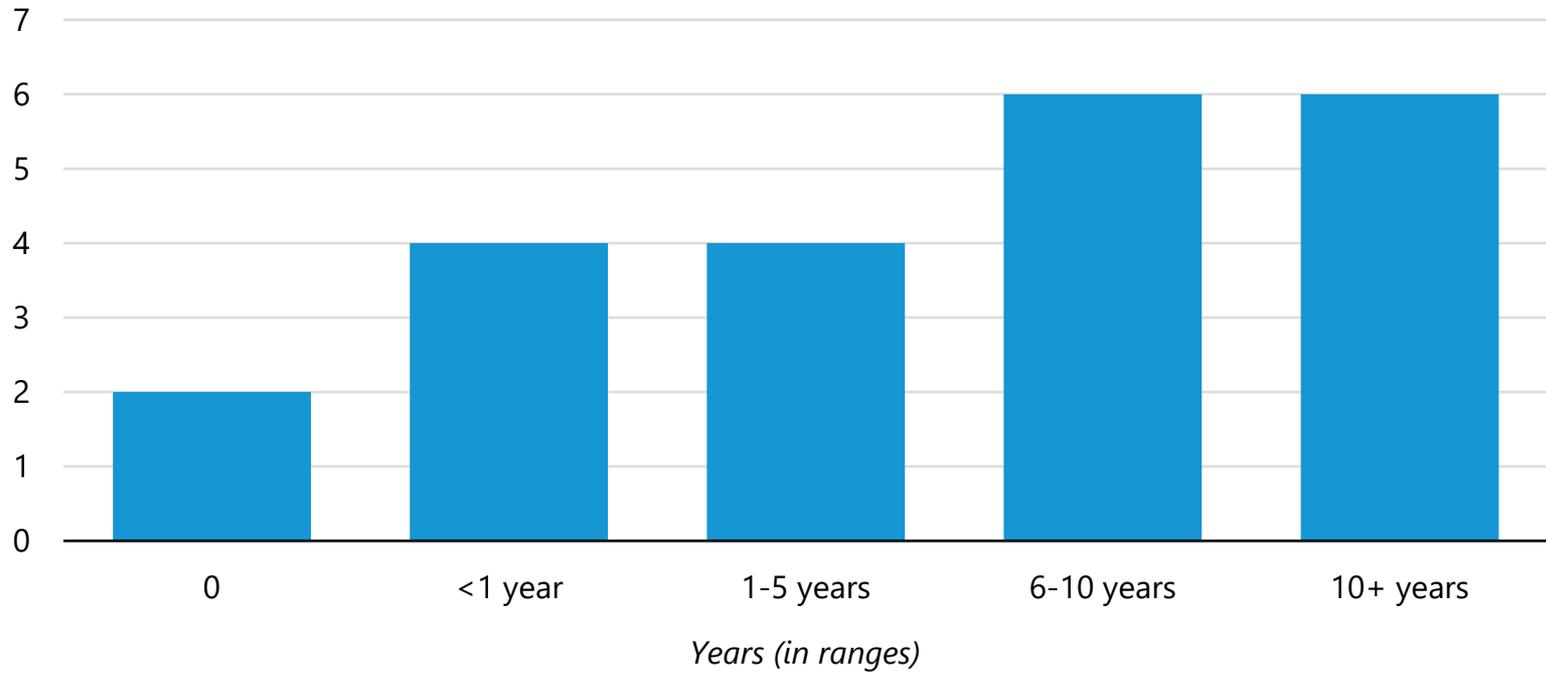


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MCDF Native Sample

Years lived in Missoula

Number of Inmates

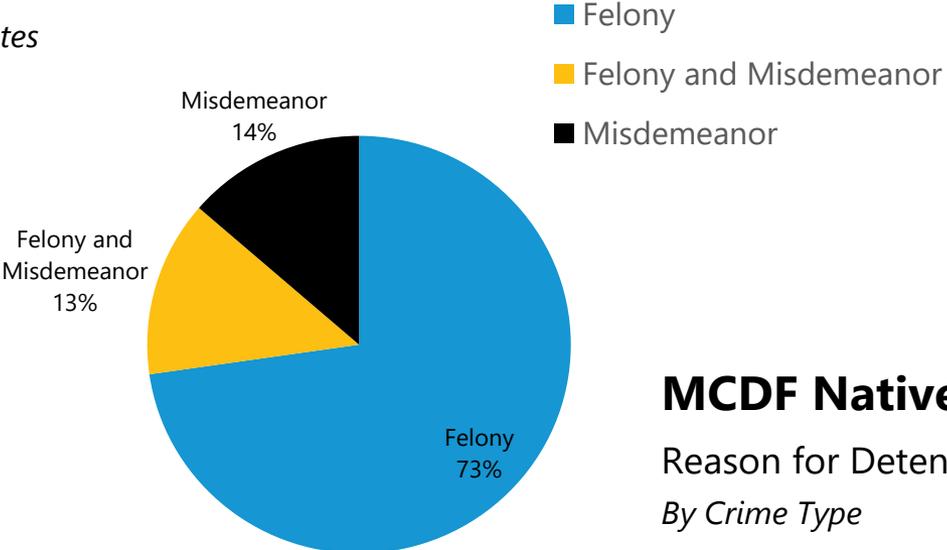


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MCDF Native Sample

Crime Classification

Number of Inmates

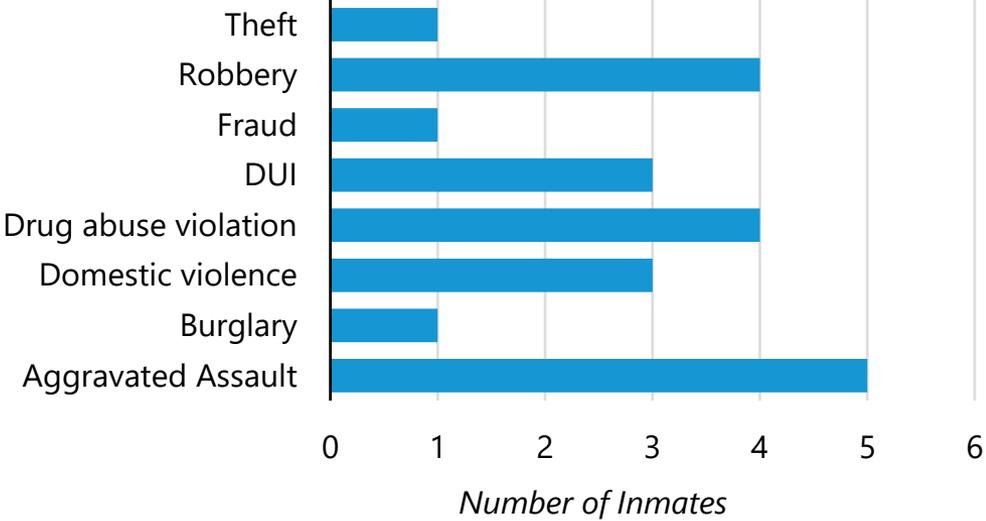


Average length of stay was 69 days with a range from 5 days to 7 months.

MCDF Native Sample

Reason for Detention

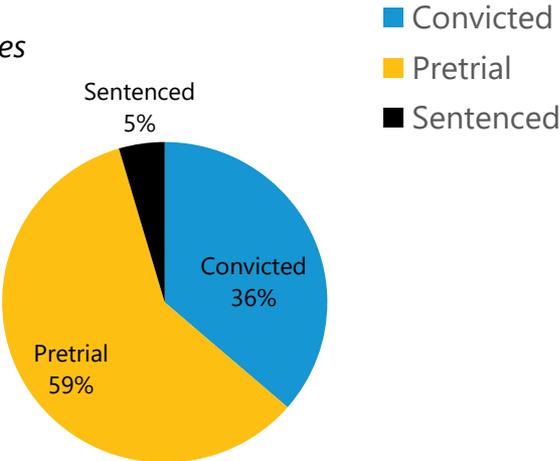
By Crime Type



Note: only counted most serious

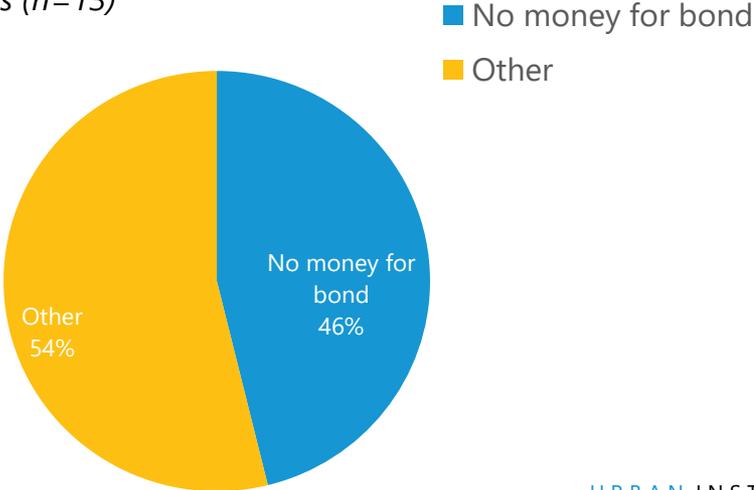
MCDF Native Sample

Detention Status
Percentage of Inmates



MCDF Native Sample

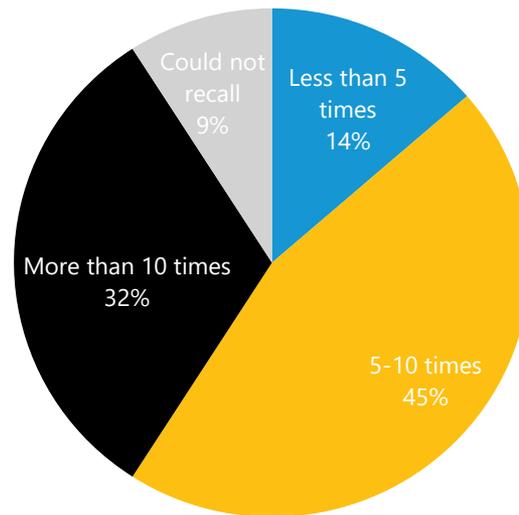
Reason for Remaining in Pretrial Status
Percentage of Pretrial Inmates (n=13)



All inmates interviewed said this was not their first time in jail.

MCDF Native Sample

Total Number of Times in Jail



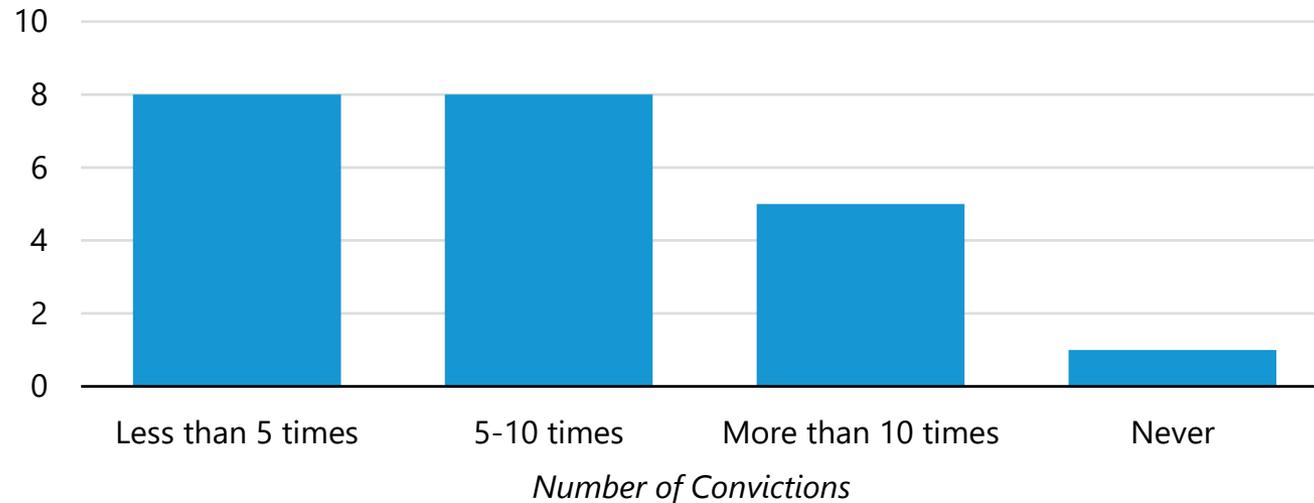
- Less than 5 times
- 5-10 times
- More than 10 times
- Could not recall

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MCDF Native Sample

Times Convicted (Adult)

Number of Inmates



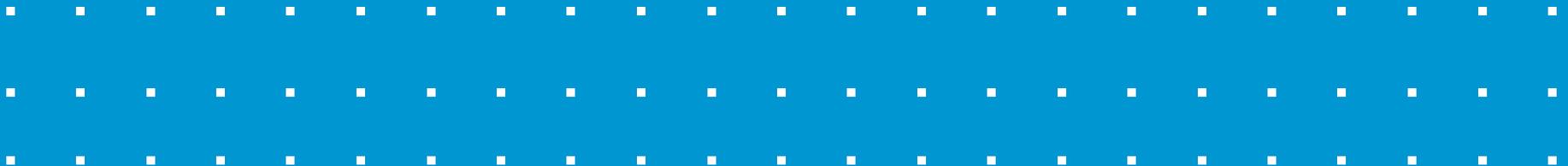
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Average length of stay was 99 days, with a range of 4 days to 9 months.

68% of inmates had a LOS of 60 days or more.

Native American Identity

We asked Native American inmates questions about their cultural identity, including family roles and responsibilities, use of Native language, sacred religion and/or cultural practices, creation story, Native song, tribal name, and support from MCDF of cultural practices.



Native American Language

- About half of Native inmates (59%) **do not speak their native language.**
- Only 14% of inmates **confidently say yes, they do speak their Native language.**
- Of those who do not speak their native language, 33% of inmates said they **would like to learn their Native language.**
- One inmate mentioned being exposed to their Native language by older family members speaking it.
- One inmate said they learned their Native language in school.

What does language mean?

- Native language is their culture, a source of cultural pride, and a connection to their culture

"I see our language as a dying—us as a dying breed. It's slowly falling off, and there's only so many people in our tribe that could speak Kootenai fluently, and then there's only a few that do speak Salish, and so I figured I want to try getting the—at least the heritage of the Salish down" (MCDF 04).

- Language is a way to foster deeper spiritual connection with the Creator.
- For those who do not speak their Native language, inmates expressed that they **would like their children to learn to preserve their culture and/or communicate with other family members.**

Family Roles and Structure

- The majority of inmates (41%) said their **mother** was the key decision-maker in their family.
- Designated decision-makers within the family included:
 - Mother/father
 - Grandparents
 - Siblings
 - Non-immediate family members
- Extended family plays a key role in supporting inmates financially or with childcare.
- 18% of inmates said they had a family member who is incarcerated or had previously been incarcerated.

Sacred beliefs and cultural practices

- Belief in the Creator and Mother Earth
- Smudging
- Medicine bundles
- Sweet grass
- Sweats
- Beading
- Rituals
- Pow-wows
- Medicine dance
- Jump dance
- Burial practices
- Native language

Missing out on cultural practices because of being incarcerated was a common theme.

This creates a **disconnect** between the inmate and their cultural identity.

"It-it cleanses me. Like, when you smudge and you pray and everything, it just—it releases so much. It just makes you feel so much better. It gives you that—I always feel that—uh, kinda, like, that connection" (MCDF 24).

Cultural beliefs & practices

- **Cosmos Beliefs & Practices**

- 36% of inmates expressed that they have some sort of belief and practice around the cosmos.
 - This depended upon whether it was a family practice.
 - One inmate made reference to how the cosmos and star alignment affects their mood, which can lead to negative behaviors.

- **Creation Story**

- Very few inmates could confidently say that their tribe had a creation story. One inmate said they **learned it from family members.**
- Those who did not know the creation story, said it was because they had no connection to their family.

- **Native Song**

- Source of pride and connection to culture
- Provides relaxation, energy, and joy
- Forms part of religious practice

Cultural beliefs & practices (continued)

- **Indian/Tribal Name**

- More than half (57%) had an Indian/tribal name, but only few could remember what their name was.
- Some inmates wanted to receive an Indian name if they did not have one because they felt “lost without one” (MCDF 03)
- Indian/tribal names are **sacred** and **important**. They are a **representation of your personality**.

“Just because it, you know, it helps me define the man I am, become to be to this day. And you know, uh, as when I got that name, as a kid growing up, it’s White Horse, you know, and like now, to this day, it defines the man who I am. You know, like I really do see and, uh, why they—why I was named that” (MCDF 18).

Ability to practice customs

- **Song & Ceremony**

- Inmates are currently unable to use song and ceremony freely in MCDF.
 - One inmate expressed that it is because there are not enough natives in MCDF to be able to practice: “they don't let you right now, um, but I've spoken with some of the guards about it, and they—you know, and it's kind of a situation where their hands are tied” (MCDF 08).

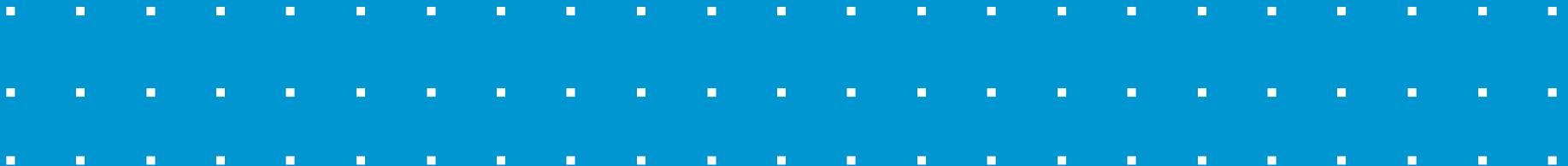
- **Religion**

- Inmates have been told they cannot perform certain religious actions because of safety concerns.
- The only religion supported within MCDF is Christianity, according to inmates.

“And so - and so I was trying to pick up Hinduism, but they don't even have Hinduism here in religion. It's one strict religion. Either you're Christian or you're Catholic, and ain't nothing else. I feel like it's forced upon you because in here, you're allowed three books. Your Bible makes four, and you're allowed three other books. I don't have a Bible. I don't do Bibles, and I can't—like, I can't—there's no - no Native American spiritual religion at all here in this county, and it's, I feel, um, pretty - pretty racial when I come in here, like a racial controversy. Yeah” (MCDF 04).

Programming & Services in MCDF

We asked Native American inmates questions about what kinds of programs and services they receive at MCDF, how these have helped to build skills, if any help with or are oriented to Native cultural identity, overall satisfaction, and challenges in receiving programs and services.



Programs & Services Offered in MCDF

- Art classes
- Mental health services
- Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)
- Church
- Coping skills
- Parenting classes
- Wellbriety class
- Regaining the Warrior class
- Yoga
- Creative writing
- Music appreciation

Of the 40% inmates who reported that there are culturally specific programs and services within MCDF, 78% mentioned the talking circles – Wellbriety and Regaining the Warrior.

Benefits of Programs & Services

- **Overall Benefits:**
 - Coping skills
 - Regaining hope
 - Building willpower to stay strong upon release
- **Church:** helpful in thinking beyond the current life, building spirituality, and strengthening resilience.
- **Wellbriety groups:** important program that provides relief, reduces anxiety, cleanses the soul, provides strength, and gives hope for inmates.
- **Yoga:** helpful in opening up endorphins and curing anxiety.
- **AA:** builds life goals for the future, provides emotional support, and builds hope.

"Um, the Wellbriety group, for me, is the best program there is, um, I think because it-it has the, you know, principles of AA, but it's—you can put anything there. And it's about wellness and sobriety, which is super important to me, because you can be sober without being well. And that's a big part of relapse, I think, and—for me, especially. And I know that's why I've ended up back here multiple times—is because I'll be sober, but I'm not happy, and I'm not well. And so that ends up with me relapsing—" (MCDF 08)

Challenge #1

- Depending on classification level, inmates are not allowed to attend certain programming.
- **Entire pods being excluded from programming:** "We're not allowed to go to, um, most of the programs that they offer us here. And most of us that are in classification are not allowed in population because of, um, keep-separates and stuff. So, it's not even our choice, you know...And all the girls in my pod, they're—we're all Native American too. There's like only a couple, you know, white girls in there with us, and well, most of them are Native American" (MCDF 01).
- **Preferential treatment towards inmates:** "And sometimes, like we feel like we have to bite our tongue and hold—you know, hold what we say because some of these—some of these girls in here, you know, they're—they're these cops' favorites and stuff, and they get their way no matter what. But that's when—that's when—like I'm—I'm the type of person that I don't—I don't put up with that, you know" (MCDF 02).

Challenge #2

- Hesitation of inmates to ask for help because of past trauma or prior negative experiences in the facility.
- **Past trauma affects willingness to ask for help:** "Well, for me, I guess there's probably er—um, programs and stuff, but I have a hard time asking, so—I—just because of in the past—my past things. I've—and when I have asked, I've never gotten answers, so I think they should, you know, before we leave or whatever, like mental health or something, they can offer places that help when we get out" (MCDF 05).

Challenge #3

- Jail administration can be unresponsive to repeated requests or leave issues unresolved despite multiple communications from inmates.
- **Complicated and repetitive processes that cause frustration:** "Okay, I'd like to get some more library books or like to get a new book, different book, anything. You put the kite in. Two or three hours later you hafta ask 'em again. Hey, um, anything—any—"Oh, that's done on this day." So okay, so you gotta wait 'til the following week. Or, you know, "Oh, you gotta fill out a different kite." "Okay, could I have that kite?" Okay. So about two or three hours later they might bring the actual formal kite for a library book in and then you get to fill that out. Well, then you get this piece of paper that says category, author, title, and you're supposed to fill it out. Well, I just wanna book. I-I don't remember the author. I don't remember the title. I just—okay, I like mystery books, so I write mystery down there. Turn that in. Then it goes away. And then a week comes by and you get your kite back, not available, fill out the information. Okay so where's that information at? Where—how-how do I know to fill this out? "Oh, well, you got a kite for that." Oh okay. So now another week goes by. By this time I've already got books from the other jail. But—so I fill out this other thing. And then you get this big book that has all the—all the books that the library has. And then you can fill it out" (MCDF 07)

Challenge #4

- Services are limited, for instance, NA is not available in addition to AA for inmates with substance use disorders.
- Lack of consistency in programs occurring because volunteers do not show up or programs are cancelled.

MCDF Overall Support of Native Identity

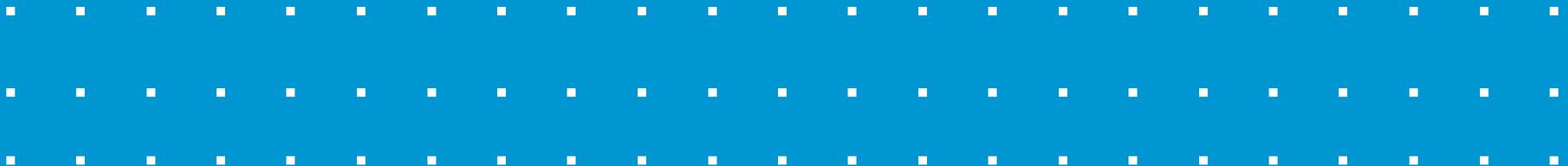
- 100% of inmates expressed that MCDF does not address language barriers for those who speak their native language.

"I know other correctional facilities that I've been in, they don't. Like, you have to speak English. They get mad when you speak other language, especially the prison I was in. There was no speakin'—you'd get in trouble" (MCDF 24).

- Some inmates expressed that they do not even ask for support because they are disrespected when they seek out opportunities to practice
- 91% of inmates agree that there is no support for Natives in MCDF.

Reentry into the Community

We asked Native American inmates questions about their future plans, whether MCDF has prepared them for release into the community, knowledge about general and culturally-specific services that are available, support upon release, and what they need from MCDF to meet reentry goals.



Post-release plans

- 59% of inmates plan on staying in Missoula after being incarcerated.
- **Future goals:**
 - 59% of inmates mentioned employment
 - 50% of inmates mentioned education (GED or high school diploma)
 - One inmate mentioned the desire to get into outpatient treatment

Release Preparation

- 86% of inmates stated that they feel that MCDF has **not prepared them** for release into the community.
- Some inmates said it is because **jail administration does not care**, while others stated that **it is not the system's job to help you, but rather to protect public safety**.

I think it's you don't come to jail to learn how to get better ever. You can—you can be a better criminal. You can be a—you know, better at hustlin' dice or hustlin' cards or, you know, hustlin' your food to make—to make commissary. I mean, and there's even guys that hustle themselves to get by. That's—you don't—you don't learn anything here that's gonna help you live a better life. (MCDF 07)

- Inmates mentioned a lack of support upon immediate release to the community, including being given a check with \$0.05, or being left at the doorstep of the jail with no one to pick them up.

And so to get on your f—I mean, and I feel like that's why a lot of us end up back here is because we get thrown into the exact same situations with no-no way out, no—you know. So we go back to what we know, whether we know—whether we want to or not, because we don't have options. (MCDF 08)

Knowledge of Resources

- Inmates were split approximately in half in terms of whether they were aware of general resources available to them (i.e. housing, employment, mental health, etc.)
- Out of the 68% of inmates that mentioned they know where culturally-specific resources are located in the community, 100% of them mentioned the Indian Health Center as a resource.
- **The availability of culturally-specific resources is important for Native inmates.**
 - “Because like—like, you know, like Turning Point, they don’t—or the other places, they don’t always, you know—like you have to approach us a certain way, uh, with things, and they—they don’t always do that, you know. And sometimes they don’t—they don’t even think like that. They sometimes, you know—their comments and the things that they say, you know, is really offensive” (MCDF 02)
 - “It’s important to me because I feel like if I’m with my own people, I can open up more. It’s more of a better vibe” (MCDF 06)

Recommendations for MCDF

- Provide books on wellbriety and recovery that are specific to Natives in MCDF's library.
- Provide a computer for inmates to learn skills and find employment.
- Allow Native inmates to participate in ceremonial practices, such as smudging, prayer, organized song, and carry medicine pouches.
- Provide additional programming to wellbriety and talking circles that are specific to Natives.
- Conduct additional research into what Native inmates need.
- Conduct additional cultural sensitivity training for MCDF staff.
- Provide Native language classes or cultural classes.
- Establish a peer mentorship program with people who are Native and have been previously incarcerated.
- Establish an NA group.
- Adjust classification to allow inmates in different pods to access programs.

Recommendations for reentry

- Expand programs and services specific to Natives, including employment placement services and housing specifically.
- Conduct direct outreach for Natives because many have a hard time asking for help when they most need it. This would include jail in-reach.
- Establish a tribal reentry program facilitated between MCDF and the Indian Health Center.
- Establish wellbriety groups within the community.

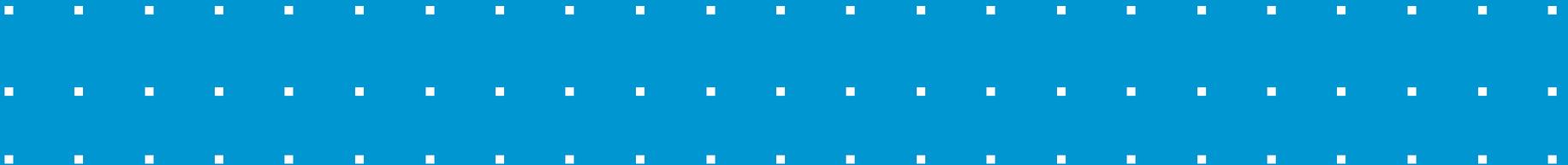
All of these recommendations must be Native-led and Native-informed.



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Questions?





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Discussion

- What are some next steps that can be taken to help Native inmates? What on the list of recommendations are feasible?
 - Identify short-term goals for MCDF & the community (reentry)
 - Identify long-term goals for MCDF & the community (reentry)
- What are the barriers to achieving those identified short-term and long-term goals?
- What additional ideas do you have to respond to Native inmate's needs?

