Humanities Montana

Program Committee

January 9, 2023

**Present:** Jeannette Fregulia (Committee Chair), Glory Blue Earth, Beth Sullivan, Arian Randall

**Absent:** Ramey Growing Thunder

**Staff:** Kim Anderson (Interim Director), John Knight (Programs Manager)

The meeting was called together at 11:02 on Zoom. Jeanette welcomed new board member Arian Randall, and welcomed Kim Anderson back to the Program Committee. Arian gave a short introduction on her background, and excitement for joining the program committee at Humanities Montana. Jeanette then turned the discussion over to John, who presented on The Democracy Project, Montana Conversations, Speakers in the Schools, Informed Citizen, Hometown Humanities, Montana Center for the Book, the National Humanities Conference, and the Strategic Plan.

**The Democracy Project**

John updated the Program Committee on the Democracy Project outreach trip that he and coordinator Jenny Bevill took in October 2022. He spoke about visits to Tribal College Libraries: Aaniiih Nakoda College Library; Fort Peck Community College Library; High School Libraries: Gallatin High School, and Columbia Falls High School; and Public and Community Libraries: Billings Public Library; Choteau Community Library; George McCone County Library; Lewis and Clark Library, East Helena; Lewis and Clark and Whitehall Community Library. John also mentioned that Humanities Montana outreach took place at Bozeman Public Library, Harlem Public Library, and Stone Child Community College Library on the Rocky Boy reservation.

After updating the Program Committee on the outreach trip, John noted that the Democracy Project site at the Seeley Lake Public Library received criticism in November of 2022 for their participation with the program–noting that community members interpreted The Democracy Project as a democratic party-partisan project being funded by Humanities Montana. To support the Seeley Lake librarian, John and Randi Tanglen visited the site the day of their Democracy Project meeting with Humanities Montana speaker Mike Dennison to answer any questions by the community. No parents or private citizens came in person to meet with John and Randi, however, a journalist from the Seeley Lake Pathfinder newspaper interviewed the librarian. John and Randi provided support and answered questions about Humanities Montana. An article was released a few days later about The Democracy Project, which cast the program as non-partisan and teen-led. John then asked the committee if they had any questions regarding the Seeley Lake Public Library, and no concerns were raised by the board members.

John updated the Program Committee about an interview that Jenny Bevill conducted with Mae Nan Ellingson, who attended the 1972 Montana Constitutional Convention. The interview centered on Mae Nan’s experience as one of the youngest and only female delegates in attendance, and how youth can engage civically, both in their communities and Montana. The interview was then distributed to all Democracy Project sites, with a mid-winter deadline to watch and submit questions back to Mae Nan, who will answer in email form. John stated that the interview is part of a framework of tools that each Democracy Project site can access throughout the year, as teens sharpen their interests and concerns for their year-end Democracy Project culmination project.

To end the update on The Democracy Project, John announced that funding through the Charles Engelhard Foundation had been committed for 2023-2025. On November 20, 2022, following a scheduled meeting between Randi Tanglen, John Knight, Kim Anderson and Susan O’Conner of the Charles Engelhard Foundation, Susan committed to funding two more years of The Democracy Project with Humanities Montana. Jeanette then asked about other possible funding opportunities in the future. John and Kim responded that the next two years of Democracy Project funding allows Humanities Montana to continue strengthening the program, while building data sets and reporting criteria, which will be important when speaking to other funding sources for the program. Kim noted that we will make an official funding ask to the Charles Engelhard foundation in the spring of 2023.

**Montana Conversations (MC), Speakers in the Schools (SiS), and Informed Citizen**

John introduced five new speakers and their programs to the Program Committee. These speakers included: Aspen and Cameron Decker: A̓stqʷ, *Salish Cedar Bark Baskets* (MC and SiS); Aspen and Cameron Decker, *Sqelixʷ ‘Salish’ Storytelling* (MC and SiS); Sabre Moore, *Dark Skies, Light Pollution and the Story of Montana’s Night Skies* (MC); Buck Hitswithastick, *Bridging the Worlds* (MC and SiS); Janiana Viera-Marques, *Imagining More Diverse and Inclusive Montana Communities* (SiS).

John then gave an update on the Informed Citizen extension grant from the Mellon Foundation, which was received late in September 2023. He noted that a total of five programs were booked between September 30 - December 31, 2022 as Informed Citizen presentations. John described how a surplus of Informed Citizen funds were left over by December with no other programs being booked for the grant extension. It was noted that Randi Tanglen reached out to the Mellon Foundation, who asked that the funds not be returned. Instead, the foundation asked if the surplus grant funds could be awarded to a constituent organization in Montana. John and Randi identified the 2022-2023 Hometown Humanities partner site, the Lewistown Public Library as a site to award the funds to, as they had committed to continuing programming and literacy on media misinformation in their community. After a partnership agreement was signed, a total of $3415.00 of grant funding through the Mellon Foundation Informed Citizen extension grant was awarded to the Lewistown Public Library on December 23, 2022.

As part of his MC and SiS update, John informed the Program Committee of his ongoing outreach efforts to Judith Basin County, Golden Valley County, Petroleum County, Garfield County, and Powder River County. John noted that contact was established with the Petroleum County Community Center in October 2022, with a meeting occurring over Zoom that introduced Humanities Montana programs available to the community. He also stated that he and MC and SiS presenter Mary Jane Bradbury scheduled a series of programs at Stanford High School and Stanford Public Library in Stanford Montana. Students from Judith Basin, Petroleum County and Garfield County attended Mary Jane’s presentations, thanks to the efforts of the Stanford School District Superintendent working with neighboring school districts and students.

John noted that at the start of the 2022-2023 Fiscal Year, all MC, SiS, and Informed Citizen speakers were sent a memo regarding areas of concern in their contracts. These areas of concern include honoraria pay structure and expectations, and travel reimbursement. As a result, John is in the process of updating process guidelines in regards to the aforementioned areas of concern. He will also be working with HM staff to update 2023-2024 speaker contracts to include clearer language. Jeanette asked John to clarify concerns in the speaker's contracts and give an example. Both Kim and John clarified with contract examples, noting that clearer language will result in better stewardship of public funds.

**Hometown Humanities**

John discussed developments with the Hometown Humanities site, the Lewistown Public Library. He mentioned that he continues to meet bi-monthly with Director Alissa Wolentz and Librarian Brittney Uecker with ongoing program needs at the site. John updated the Program Committee that the Lewistown Public Library is planning on a Montana author’s dinner in the spring 2023. This event will close out the Hometown Humanities efforts in Lewistown for 2022-2023. He also noted that the library is developing a Montana Writers Institute for later in 2023. John set up a meeting between HM Grants Manager Megan Sundy and the library to discuss grant opportunities for the Montana Writers Institute.

**Montana Center for the Book**

John gave a brief update on the ongoing state of the Montana Center for the Book. He mentioned that the Center for the Book Prize is still on hold as he onboards at Humanities Montana. Kim and John both noted that the Montana Center for the Book would remain on hold until a new Executive Director was found, and that the program would need to be put through an evaluation screen, if the 2023 HM Strategic Plan was adopted by the Board of Trustees. Beth asked about the Strategic Plan and the Programs Evaluation Screen, and when the committee can move forward with evaluating programs. Kim clarified that the Strategic Plan will need to be adopted by the Board of Trustees before program evaluations can occur.

Regarding the Gather Round program, John noted that HM has sent out 180 Gather Round Kits in 2022, and with 20 kits remained. He mentioned that Gather Round special outreach with librarians occurred during the October 2022 Democracy Project trip, where kits were given out to interested constituents. John will distribute the remaining kits in 2023 at the Golden Triangle Curriculum Conference that he will attend in January 2023. During this conference he will conduct SiS outreach to various school districts by giving a public presentation on the resources available to schools through HM. John will also table at the conference, answering questions by interested schools and constituents.

**National Humanities Conference, Los Angeles, November 8-12, 2022**

John updated the Program Committee of he and Megan Sundy’s participation at the National Humanities Conference in Los Angeles in 2022. John spoke about how HM’s outreach and focus on rural, youth and indigenous communities in Montana was noted by various Humanities Councils in attendance. He noted breakout sessions with various councils, and how proud he was of the work and outreach that HM achieved in rural Montana. John mentioned that the conference was a great opportunity to meet other Program Managers and Officers, and realize all of the good humanities work already happening in Montana. Members of the Program Committee stated that they were happy to hear about how Humanities Montana’s work aligns with other state Humanities Councils.

**Strategic Plan**

To conclude the Program Committee meeting, John gave an update that he and Randi updated the HM Programs Year 1 Activities and Outcomes portion of the Strategic Plan, which will be up for review by the Board of Trustees. He noted that the programs department was already accomplishing strategic goals and outreach in regards to rural, indigenous, and youth communities.

Jeanette concluded the Program Committee meeting at 11:53am, and thanked all of those in attendance. John adjourned the meeting 11:55am.