

# Montana Tribal Transportation

## Safety Summit

### *Summit Report*



June 7, 2011

The Gateway Center

Helena, Montana

*Prepared by Cambridge Systematics, Inc.*



U.S. Department of Transportation  
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16. Abstract  <p>In 2005 the Montana Tribal Safety Conscious Planning (SCP) Forum was conducted as a critical first step in an effort to reverse these statistics and work toward safer transportation conditions for Native Americans in the State. The focus on Tribal safety in the years following the Forum was evident in an increase in Tribal safety initiatives, development of Tribal-specific safety plans, and inclusion of Tribal safety priorities in Montana's statewide Comprehensive Highway Safety Plan (CHSP).</p> <p>The Montana Tribal Transportation Safety Summit held June 7, 2011 was another important step toward reducing traffic fatalities and injuries among Tribal members. The Summit brought together the full range of interested parties to discuss transportation safety issues and to advance coordinated strategies toward the ultimate goal of reducing crash-related injuries and deaths within Native American communities.</p> <p>Specifically, the objectives of the Summit were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Review Montana's Tribal safety issues and prior safety efforts.</li> <li>2. Share experiences, highlight progress, and showcase successful programs.</li> <li>3. Improve crash data collection, analysis, and sharing.</li> <li>4. Develop recommendations for action moving forward.</li> </ol> <p>The following report includes background information, themes discussed by Summit speakers and participants, Summit results, and next steps for moving forward.</p>			
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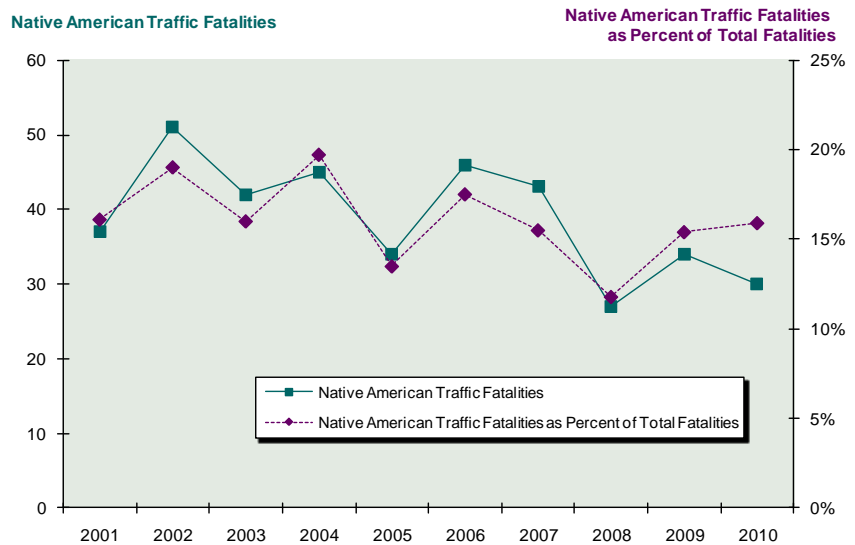
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# Background

Every year, more than 30,000 motorists die and almost 3,000,000 are injured on our Nation's roadways. For ages 4 to 34, motor vehicle-related injuries are the leading cause of death in the United States, and Native Americans are at particularly high risk.<sup>1</sup> Among the Native American population, motor vehicle-related injuries are the leading cause of death up to age 44.<sup>2</sup> Considering all roadways, Native Americans are between two and three times more likely to be killed in motor vehicle crashes than other citizens. The full impact of severe crashes on Native Americans is not known as researchers and traffic safety experts agree Tribal roadway crash data is under reported.

Montana is no exception to the trend. Historically, Native American fatalities represent between 11.8 percent and 19.7 percent of all fatalities on Montana's roadways, while Native Americans represent only 6.2 percent of the statewide population.



<sup>1</sup>Subramanian R., Motor Vehicle Traffic Crashes as a Leading Cause of Death in the United States, 2005, DOT HS 810 936. April 2008. U.S. DOT, National Center for Statistics and Analysis.

<sup>2</sup>Hilton J., Race and Ethnicity in Fatal Motor Vehicle Traffic Crashes 1999-2004, DOT HS 809 956. May 2006. U.S. DOT, NHTSA.

### The Seven Tribal Reservations in Montana

- Blackfeet
- Crow
- Flathead
- Fort Belknap
- Fort Peck
- Northern Cheyenne
- Rocky Boy

In 2005 the Montana Tribal Safety Conscious Planning (SCP) Forum was conducted as a critical first step in an effort to reverse these statistics and work toward safer transportation conditions for Native Americans in the State. The focus on Tribal safety in the years following the Forum was evident in an increase in Tribal safety initiatives, development of Tribal-specific safety plans, and inclusion of Tribal safety priorities in Montana's statewide Comprehensive Highway Safety Plan (CHSP).

The Montana Tribal Transportation Safety Summit held June 7, 2011 was another important step toward reducing traffic fatalities and injuries among Tribal members. This document describes the Summit, focusing on the insights gained, lessons learned, and ideas for moving forward.

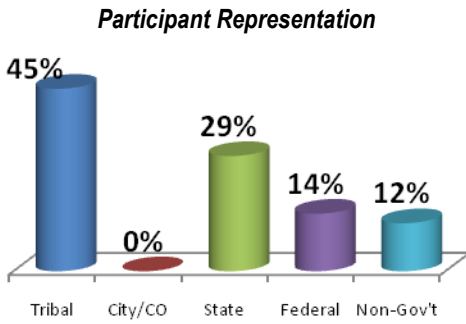
The Summit was carried out through the collaborative efforts of Tribal representatives (Councilmen, law enforcement, injury prevention, planners, and safety program staff), Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Federal Lands Highway and Montana Division Offices, Indian Health Service, Montana Department of Transportation (MDT), Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS), Montana Highway Patrol (MHP), Montana-Wyoming Tribal Leaders Council, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), and Northern Plains Tribal Technical Assistance Program (TTAP).

## ■ Purpose of the Summit

Montana is home to 11 Indian Tribes that occupy 7 reservations: Blackfeet, Crow, Flathead (Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes), Fort Belknap (Assiniboine and Gros Ventre), Fort Peck (Assiniboine and Sioux), Northern Cheyenne, and Rocky Boy (Chippewa/Cree).

The Montana Tribal Transportation Safety Summit brought together representatives from these Tribes, along with a full range of interested parties. The purpose was to build upon the 2005 Forum and related efforts in recent years to further communication and cooperation toward the ultimate goal of reducing transportation-related injuries and deaths within Tribal communities. Specifically, the objectives of the Summit were:

1. Review Montana's Tribal safety issues and prior safety efforts;
2. Share experiences, highlight progress, and showcase successful programs;



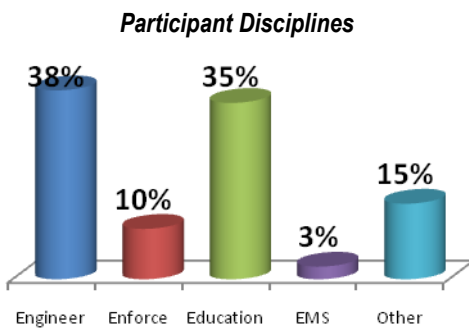
3. Improve crash data collection, analysis, and sharing; and
4. Develop recommendations for action moving forward

The Summit began with the invocation given by Matt See Walker, Northern Plains TTAP and opening words from Jim Lynch, MDT Director, Kevin McLaury, FHWA Division Administrator, and Jay St. Goddard, Montana Wyoming Tribal Leaders Council Chairman. The opening session provided an opportunity for Tribal leaders and other Tribal representatives to speak about the importance and their commitment to Tribal safety efforts. Presentations demonstrated successful Tribal safety initiatives, related state safety programs, and MHP's new crash reporting system. Polling exercises and facilitated discussion offered participants the opportunity to weigh in on safety issues and recommendations for improving Tribal transportation safety. A detailed Summit agenda, listing all speakers and activities, is included in Appendix A.

The Summit is a step in the longer process. Follow-up within and among Montana's Tribes in collaboration with local, state, and Federal partners, as well as other safety stakeholders, is needed for further progress.

### ■ Summit Participants

An initial polling activity revealed several notable details about the roughly 48 Summit participants (a list of individual participants is included in Appendix B):



- Almost half (45 percent) represent Tribal communities. Thirty percent represent state agencies, and the remaining were Federal and nongovernment participants.
- Half indicated they are focused full-time on safety, with another 34 percent indicating at least half of their time is dedicated to safety.
- Most participants represent either engineering (38 percent) or education (35 percent). Fifteen percent of participants did not identify with any of the 4 E's of safety. Only 10 percent represent enforcement and 3 percent represent emergency response.

Recognizing the significance of building upon the 2005 Forum, participants also were asked about their participation in the earlier event. While only a quarter of Summit participants had

attended the Forum, two-thirds represent agencies that participated in the Forum, reflecting the enduring commitment of these partners to be part of the dialogue and cooperative efforts.

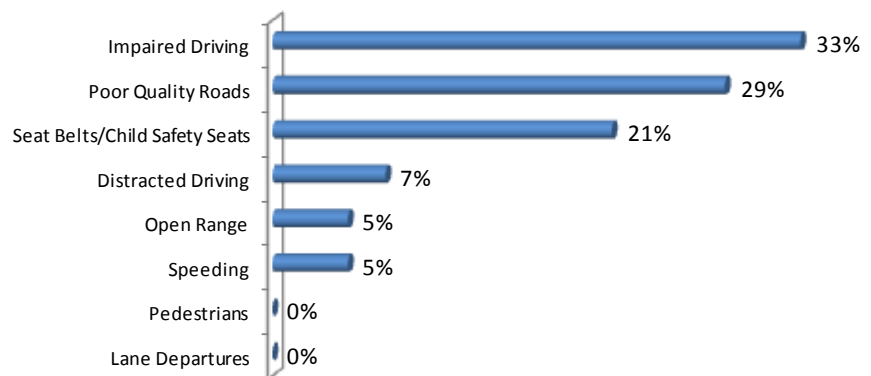
It also should be noted participation in the Summit was hampered due to significant flooding in the State, which particularly affected a number of Tribal representatives who had planned to attend but could not either because of difficult driving conditions or because they were having to assist with immediate needs resulting from the flooding.



# Themes

During opening statements, Frank Smith, Fort Peck Council Member, noted many BIA roadways designed a long time ago need improvements and also voiced support for cross-deputization efforts to improve safety enforcement. Fort Peck Council Member, Dale DeCoteau, emphasized the impact on children and emerging issues such as distracted driving. Peter (Rusty) Tatsey, Blackfeet Vice Chair, pointed to roadways designed for slower speeds and reflected on his own personal crash experience. Blackfeet Council Member, Jay Wells, supported many of the points raised and emphasized the need to “take care of our people.” Quoting Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribal Chairman, E.T. Bud Moran, Mike Brown summed it all up with the statement, “We have to stop the hurt.”

As part of setting the stage for the Tribal Transportation Safety Summit discussion, participants were asked about the leading transportation safety problem facing Native Americans in Montana. Following some feedback and revisions to the categories, participants identified impaired driving (33 percent), poor quality roads (29 percent), and seat belts/child safety seats (21 percent) as the most pressing issues.



The rest of the day focused on examining what is being done and what more can be done to address these issues and reduce transportation-related fatalities and injuries among Tribal members throughout the State. Toward that end, several key recurring themes emerged from Summit presentations and discussions: *collaboration, action, and evidence-driven decisions.*



## ■ Collaboration

In his opening statement, MDT Director Lynch emphasized the importance of collaboration between Tribal, state, and Federal stakeholders. He reflected on successful collaborative efforts such as the Safety on All Roads (SOAR) program, through which MDT has learned important lessons like the value of listening to Tribal partners about their needs. Montana's Comprehensive Highway Safety Plan's (CHSP) Native American emphasis area team provides an additional opportunity to collaborate safety efforts. Participants interested in being on a committee or co-chairing a Native American emphasis area team were asked to provide contact information.

Jay St. Goddard expressed optimism that collaboration is paying off in reduced fatalities and serious injuries among Native American communities, although, he stressed more needs to be done. He pointed to the issue of livestock and open range as a safety concern requiring attention from MDT, MHP, counties, and Tribal law enforcement, among others.

Adrian Spotted Bird presented on Fort Peck's Injury Prevention Program and described the range of initiatives made possible through collaboration among Tribal stakeholders and city, county, and state partners. He emphasized "it is not 'I', it's 'we'" and credited the success of the Injury Prevention Coalition to the efforts of many individuals. Working together, the Coalition has implemented successful activities such as, child car seat clinics, training officers as technicians, bicycle rodeos, seat belt awareness, the "Sober behind the Wheel" campaign, and education in the schools about what to look for to identify drunk drivers, and more.

Michael Brown described collaborative efforts to improve safety along The Peoples Way, Route 93, which is part of the National Highway System running through the Flathead Reservation. Tribal agencies, MDT, and FHWA, meet monthly and safety is always part of the discussion. Together they have implemented numerous roadway safety improvements over the last 10 years, including flattening slopes, installing guardrails, animal fencing and wildlife crossings, widening lanes and shoulders, and separating pathways from the highway. A current project involves work on a bike path to get safely across the busy four-lane highway.

Recognizing the important role of transit in safety, Avis Spencer pointed to Fort Belknap's transit safety program working with

other communities to pick up community members and ensure safe transportation to college, work, etc.

In addition to SOAR and other efforts described above, Director Lynch pointed to several other initiatives on which MDT does or can work with Tribal partners, including DUI courts, standardized field sobriety testing (SFST) and drug recognition expert (DRE) training, child passenger safety training, rollover vehicles, and the statewide CHSP. He emphasized MDT's efforts to break down barriers both within the agency and with other partners.

Henri Headdress pointed to mistrust as one of the significant barriers to collaboration. He cited cross-deputization as a successful initiative that takes time and patience to build the necessary relationships, but which is worth the effort.

In his opening statement, Director Lynch stressed the importance of listening to Tribal members about the issues they are facing in order to work together successfully to address safety. Avis Spencer noted the significance of the Summit where all the Tribal participants were seated in front so Tribal members can listen and share. Further emphasizing the point, Vicki Turner described the key to DPHHS' prevention efforts as communities identifying the problems, communities identifying the solutions, and communities making it work.

## ■ Action

FHWA Division Administrator, Kevin McLaury opened by encouraging participants to take action and get engaged. Noting there is no silver bullet, he emphasized the need not only to engage every partner but also to exploit every opportunity to help improve safety.

Henri Headdress described how Fort Peck had not been satisfied with the safety support coming from the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), indicating it was too sporadic and limited. They researched legislation and found a provision allowing them to take over administration of their road safety program and became one of the first five Tribes in the nation to do so. Fort Peck now manages between five and six million dollars per year for road safety projects. Fort Peck and other reservations also have taken it upon themselves to pass primary seatbelt laws and social host ordinances even though the legislation has not been successfully passed by the State.

Don White presented on Blackfeet's guidelines for road safety audits, which has become a regular maintenance tool. They use the guidelines to determine what maintenance should do, which included putting together a safety management plan. They have since worked collaboratively with various agencies passing a responsible alcohol sale and service resolution and organizing a DUI task force, among other initiatives. The DUI Task Force is funded through a \$25 DUI fine increase and is tasked with promoting education efforts.

In addition to work on The Peoples Way, Michael Brown pointed to Flathead initiatives addressing winter weather, reducing volume through transit, and building cell-phone turnouts. He also indicated education efforts were turning the tide and changing mind sets about impaired driving.

Changes in driver attitudes suggest an opportunity to take advantage of such initiatives as DPHHS' Prime for Life. Vicki Turner described the program as a little different from the usual course and treatment. The program is rolling out across the State with the goal of reducing repeat DUIs and youth DUIs. Activities vary by site and are very adaptable, while there also is a lot of fidelity to the program so certified trainers are necessary. Vicki Turner encouraged individual reservations to get certified.

## ■ Evidence-Driven Decisions

Understanding the problem and the appropriate solutions is the basis for evidence-driven decision-making. Tribes in Montana have taken the initiative to pass primary seatbelt laws recognizing the proven effectiveness of such a measure and using information, such as Fort Peck's safety belt survey, to educate and garner support.

The Blackfeet road safety audit guidelines resulted from the need to understand what was occurring on 900 miles of roadway through the reservation but covered by various jurisdictions (i.e., county, state, BIA). Significant summer tourism, as well as agriculture business, cattle, motorcyclists, and poor road conditions were adding up to major safety concerns. In 2008, Blackfeet identified a route with a cluster of crashes and conducted a road safety audit, which ended up as a model. The audit resulted in pages of things wrong along the roadway. This evidence was used to inform the Tribe's safety management plan.

Craig Genzlinger presented on Federal Lands Highway involvement in national Tribal safety initiatives and specific work with

Montana Tribes, which has in part dealt with improving data sharing. Discussions with the Tribes has emphasized the importance of sharing data, but also raised concerns about sharing personal identifiers. Coordination with MHP has since resolved some of the concerns but reporting is still limited.

Sergeant Calvin Schock opened a presentation about MHP's new crash reporting system, which currently is under development, with the statement, "If we're going to take all the time to get all the data, we need to make sure it is good data." Evolution of the new system has been driven by the desire to prevent crashes, which requires uniform, complete, accurate, and timely data.

The focus of the new system is on getting data in and analyzed quicker, to discover trends quicker, and get responses in place faster. Completeness means everything that can potentially identify contributing factors to the crash; not identifiers.

MHP expects to complete testing during the summer of 2011, after which they will train the largest agencies in the State, work out final bugs, and then conduct broader training in fiscal year 2012. The system will be configured to allow Tribal governments to use it, keeping in mind the personal identifying information concerns that each government has expressed, and moving toward a customized solution for each Tribal government.

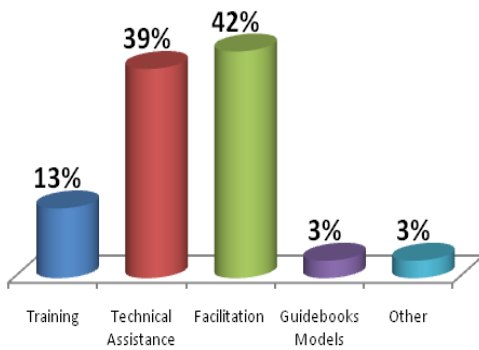
# Summit Results



A primary Summit objective was to develop coordinated approaches to help reduce fatalities and serious injuries on Tribal roadways. To achieve this, Summit participants discussed their experiences and offered potential opportunities for improving Tribal transportation safety. The following recommendations were developed during facilitated discussion.

- Examine all the Tribal safety plans together to get a better understanding of what is working and what can be improved;
- Focus the next Tribal safety meeting on Tribal safety plans;
- Conduct Tribal summits led by Tribal representatives, rotating hosting among the Tribes;
- Rather than open discussion, have small group conversations and then report out;
- Hold a Tribal safety meeting the day before the annual CHSP meeting and include a slot on the latter agenda for reporting Tribal recommendations;
- Improve data sharing, which should lead to strategies on how to improve the funding situation for the Tribes;
- Engage Tribal councils so the message to Tribal law enforcement about data improvement efforts comes from the top down, while also working with Tribal law enforcement to elevate the subject up to Tribal leadership;
- Conduct more in-depth analyses on Tribal-related crashes for a comprehensive understanding of roadway, behavioral, and vehicle factors;
- Develop data-driven countermeasures; and
- Consider proven effective strategies when trying to implement improvements.

### Needs for Moving Forward



Participant polling also revealed several notable details related to the above recommendations:

- Of Tribal representatives, half are familiar with their Tribe's transportation safety plan. A quarter are somewhat familiar and a quarter are not at all familiar.
- All but two participants think Tribal-specific safety plans are a valuable tool for improving transportation, with the other two agreeing somewhat.
- Asked what would be most helpful in moving Tribal safety forward in Montana, other than funding, most were split between facilitation to help continue coordination and collaboration (42 percent) and technical assistance (39 percent).
- Almost everyone is at least somewhat familiar with the Montana CHSP.
- Eighty-five percent of the attendees would participate on or chair a Tribal-led team focusing on Tribal safety issues and efforts.
- All participants indicated they would attend similar events in the future.
- Slightly more than half feel a Montana Tribal Transportation Safety Summit should be held annually (58 percent) versus every two years (42 percent).

# Moving Forward



The safety problem will not end in 60 days, or a year. This takes a commitment of a lifetime. Stakeholders in Montana are committed to take the next steps in the pursuit of safer Tribal transportation. As emphasized at the beginning of the Summit and throughout, an important component of any future direction should be to continue to foster collaboration around evidence-driven decisions and action.

Tribes, along with Federal, state, and local partners, are encouraged to begin implementing applicable recommendations immediately. Participants will inform the Tribal elders, leaders, and other safety stakeholders in their communities about the Summit results and recommendations.

Efforts such as the Montana's CHSP are ongoing and offer significant opportunity to elevate Tribal safety issues. A National Tribal Safety Summit is being planned for 2012 to bring together all the stakeholders to share and explore best practices, including discussions about data improvements.

Other opportunities at the state and local level, such as Tribal gatherings, provide ideal forums for continuing to raise awareness of the safety issues facing Native American communities and the resources and strategies available for reducing fatalities and serious injuries on Tribal roadways.

More information about resources available from state, regional, and Federal partners involved in the Summit can be found at:

**MDT:** <http://www.mdt.mt.gov>;

**MHP:** <http://www.doj.mt.gov/enforcement/highwaypatrol>;

**MT DPHHS:** <http://www.dphhs.mt.gov>;

**FHWA Office of Federal Lands Highway:**  
<http://flh.fhwa.dot.gov/programs/irr/safety>;

**FHWA Office of Safety:** <http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov>;

**Northern Plains TTAP:**  
<http://www.uttc.edu/forum/ttap/ttap.asp>; and

**NHTSA:** <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov>.



# Appendix A: Agenda

JUNE 7, 2011

## MONTANA TRIBAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY SUMMIT AGENDA

### PURPOSE

1. Review Montana's Tribal safety issues and prior safety efforts.
2. Share experiences, highlight progress, and showcase successful programs.
3. Improve crash data collection, analysis, and sharing.
4. Develop recommendations for action moving forward.

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7:00 a.m. to 8:00 a.m.      **Registration**

8:00 a.m. to 8:10 a.m.      **Invocation**

8:10 a.m. to 9:00 a.m.      **Opening Session**

**U.S. Transportation Safety Issues**

*Kevin McLaury*, Division Administrator, FHWA Montana

**Montana Transportation Safety Issues**

*Jim Lynch*, Director, Montana Department of Transportation

**Safety Issues Affecting Montana's Native Americans**

*Jay St. Goddard*, Chairman, Montana-Wyoming Tribal Leaders Council

9:00 a.m. to 9:30 a.m.      **Identifying the Stakeholders and the Issues**

9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.      **Tribal Safety Initiatives**

**Injury Prevention**

*Adrian Spotted Bird*, Fort Peck

**Flathead Reservation Transportation Safety Issues**

*Michael Brown*, Flathead Reservation

**Public Safety in Communities**

*Don White*, Blackfeet Nation Blackfeet

*Jess Edwards*, Chief of Police, Blackfeet Nation

**Fort Belknap Safety Programs**

*Avis Spencer*, Fort Belknap

11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.      Lunch

- 12:30 p.m. to 1:15 p.m.      **Montana's State Safety Programs**
- Soaring into the Future**  
*Jim Lynch*, Director, Montana Department of Transportation
- Primer for Life**  
*Vicki Turner*, Director, DPHHS Prevention Resource Center
- 1:15 p.m. to 2:45 p.m.      **Safety Data**
- Importance of Safety Data**  
*Craig Genzlinger*, Federal Highway Administration
- New Highway Patrol Crash Report System**  
*Mike Tooley*, Colonel, Montana Highway Patrol  
*Calvin Schock*, Sergeant, Montana Highway Patrol
- 2:45 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.      Break
- 3:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.      **Recommendations for Moving Forward**
- 4:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.      **Closing Thoughts**

# Appendix B: Participants

Name	Affiliation	E-mail	Telephone
Adrian Spotted Bird Jr.	Fort Peck Tribal Health-Injury Prevention	<a href="mailto:acspottedbird@yahoo.com">acspottedbird@yahoo.com</a>	406-768-3491
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Angie Mullikin	MDT-SHTSO	<a href="mailto:amullikin@mt.gov">amullikin@mt.gov</a>	406-444-7301
Avis Spencer	Fort Belknap Tribe Injury Prevention – SOAR Coordinator	<a href="mailto:gvgram@gmail.com">gvgram@gmail.com</a>	406-353-3221
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