



National Tribal Tobacco Prevention Network

Tribal Leaders' Tobacco Policy Summit

Draft Position Statement

Goal: Facilitate the reduction of commercial tobacco use among American Indians and Alaska Natives through the development, adoption, and implementation of tribally specific tobacco policies.

Background:

Tobacco has an important role in traditional American Indian life, and for many tribes throughout North America, the use of traditional tobacco plants for spiritual, ceremonial, and medicinal purposes goes back thousands of years. Many of our native nations have traditional stories explaining how tobacco was introduced to their communities, many of which emphasized the sacred properties of the plant. The teachings were clear; if used properly, tobacco had the power to heal and help; if used improperly; tobacco would hurt and cause harm.

Today, the use of tobacco has changed dramatically from those original purposes and for many of our communities, manufactured commercial tobacco use among our native communities is at epidemic proportions, with 34% of our native adults being smokers, the highest among all racial and ethnic groups in the U.S. A harsh reality, manufactured commercial tobacco use is devastating our communities, and is the main cause of 2 out of every 5 deaths in Indian Country, and costing the Indian Health Service alone, \$200 million per year to treat smoking-related illnesses.

Also, the facts are clear and documented! There are no safe levels of exposure to secondhand smoke, which contains more than 4000 chemicals, 500 of which are poisonous, and at least 43 are known to cause cancer! As a result, breathing in secondhand smoke causes heart disease, lung cancer, and is a known cause for sudden infant death syndrome.

In response, the National Tribal Tobacco Prevention Network, serving as an expanding alliance of tobacco prevention and education advocates, tribal leaders, community health specialists, and tribal health agency stakeholders, is committed to improving the wellness of American Indian and Alaska Native people by working to reduce manufactured commercial tobacco use, and with funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, NTPN convened a group of tribal leaders and advocates in Bloomington, MN on August 19-21st to discuss, strategize, and develop a national action-oriented response to this issue.

Given the fact that commercial tobacco use is a well-documented cause of death and disability, the most common cause of lung cancer and the single most preventable cause of premature death in Indian Country, the National Tribal Tobacco Prevention Network supports a nation-wide effort that includes youth prevention, reduction of exposure to secondhand smoke, cessation, eliminating the use of native imagery, and respects the ceremonial use of traditional tobacco. We strongly urge all native people, especially those with policy making authority and our elected tribal government leaders to support and adopt the following:





Recommendations:

Youth Prevention and Initiation

- Foster youth involvement in the planning and implementation of tobacco prevention and education activities and events
- Develop and sustain a national tobacco youth tribal council/network
- Educate all ages of the commercial tobacco effects on our health and how it complicates existing health problems
- Encourage and support native youth in their efforts to influence positive outcomes in our communities
- Encourage and support mentorship opportunities that empower our youth to address tobacco policy development
- Commit to providing leadership opportunities for our youth that include tobacco education and prevention
- Offer a forum for our youth to share their unique perspectives about developing policies that address initiation and prevention

Tribal Policies

- Provide tobacco education for tribal leaders (especially council and department leaders within the tribe)
- Develop a plan to inform and encourage tribal leaders to attend the future tobacco policy gatherings
- Identify and disseminate the successful passage and implementation of tribal tobacco policies on a national level
- Strive to create “commercial tobacco” free reservation/grounds/casinos and include appropriate signage and enforcement
- Evaluate the roles of smoke shops and their impact on funding drug abuse & mental health programs
- Compare health costs of communities with smoke-free policies with those that don’t
- Conduct and disseminate studies of economic impact of smoke-free policies
- Support our efforts as “advocates” for smoke free environments in tribal communities

Sacred/Ceremonial Use

- Respect traditional tobacco and use it in a sacred way, and as one of our first medicines
- Include an appropriate distinction between Sacred/Ceremonial Tobacco and Commercial/Manufactured Tobacco use
- Encourage the growing of original/traditional tobacco seeds/plants as part of a national effort to support/promote ceremonial uses of tobacco
- Educate our communities about Sacred use vs. Commercial, harmful effects, alternative healthy & spiritual activities for youth
- Respect the Spiritual practices that involve traditional tobacco
- Utilize the cultural/spiritual context of tobacco in our messaging
- Promote the use of tobacco as a Holistic medicine
- Reaffirm tobacco as Sacred, recognizing differences in tribal tobacco blends
- Recognize medicinal and spiritual purposes of traditional tobacco
- Have role models who practice using tobacco in a traditional way who do not use commercial tobacco to ensure that we have our elders for years to come
- Offer opportunities for those elders who carry the knowledge of tobacco to share their wisdom





Media, Counter-Marketing and Use of Native Imagery

Develop an educational campaign to inform Non-Native communities

Involve the media-tribal newspapers

Create and maintain a culturally appropriate media campaign to stop the use and exploitation of symbols, imagery, icons, and other elements considered sacred by native communities

Support the development of a national second-hand smoke campaign for Indian Country

Educate whenever possible about the unique relationships our native people have with tobacco

Prohibit any commercial tobacco vendors from exhibiting and providing free samples of their products at native conferences and gatherings

Promotion of Cessation efforts

Look at the other aspects of addiction (and its costs)

Compare health effects vs. funding

Support the continued development and sharing of culturally specific cessation curriculum, guides, and protocols

Identify best and promising cessation practices as defined by local tribal communities with the goal of sharing those successes with all native nations

Support regional and national workgroups that are addressing cessation in native communities

Community Advocacy and Building Capacity

Foster a sense of community among all native organizations

Create a national tobacco plan with health representatives from local, regional, and national native organizations like NCAI, IHS, NIHB, and regional health boards

Provide education about effective lobbying at both tribal level and state levels

Tribal leaders advocate for tobacco funding from federal government and other sources

Evaluation of MSA funding into tribal communities

Advance the health and well being of AI/AN populations

Demonstrate a commitment to finding funding and resources through taxes, formula (prevalence studies) etc.

Study healthcare costs as compared to the \$\$ tobacco industry is giving to tribes

Support efforts to mobilize tribal members from the bottom-up

Create a "clearinghouse" for info & locating funding resources

Continue communication back to this group on these recommendations

Amend NCAI ABQ-03-05 (existing resolution) to include our recommendations

Advocate for more equitable funding from both the state and federal governments

Native Principles for Tobacco Prevention and Education:

RESPECT-for the original purposes of traditional tobacco

COMPASSION-for those addicted to nicotine

VISION-to see a healthy Native community

COURAGE-to make the right decisions (7 generations)

ACTION-to initiate behavior and attitude change

HUMILITY-asking for guidance without fear

HOPE-belief that the future will be positive

TRUTH-seek, know the facts behind the industry

GENEROSITY-Share the knowledge

