July 24, 2020

Secondhand Smoke Protections in Tribal Communities

Mission and Core Values

To provide commercial tobacco secondhand smoke awareness and resources to New Mexico tribal communities, improving health outcomes.

Respect, Culture, Family Responsibility to Community, Humility, Health, Love, Empowerment, Sustainability, and Community

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Traditional Tobacco in Native Communities

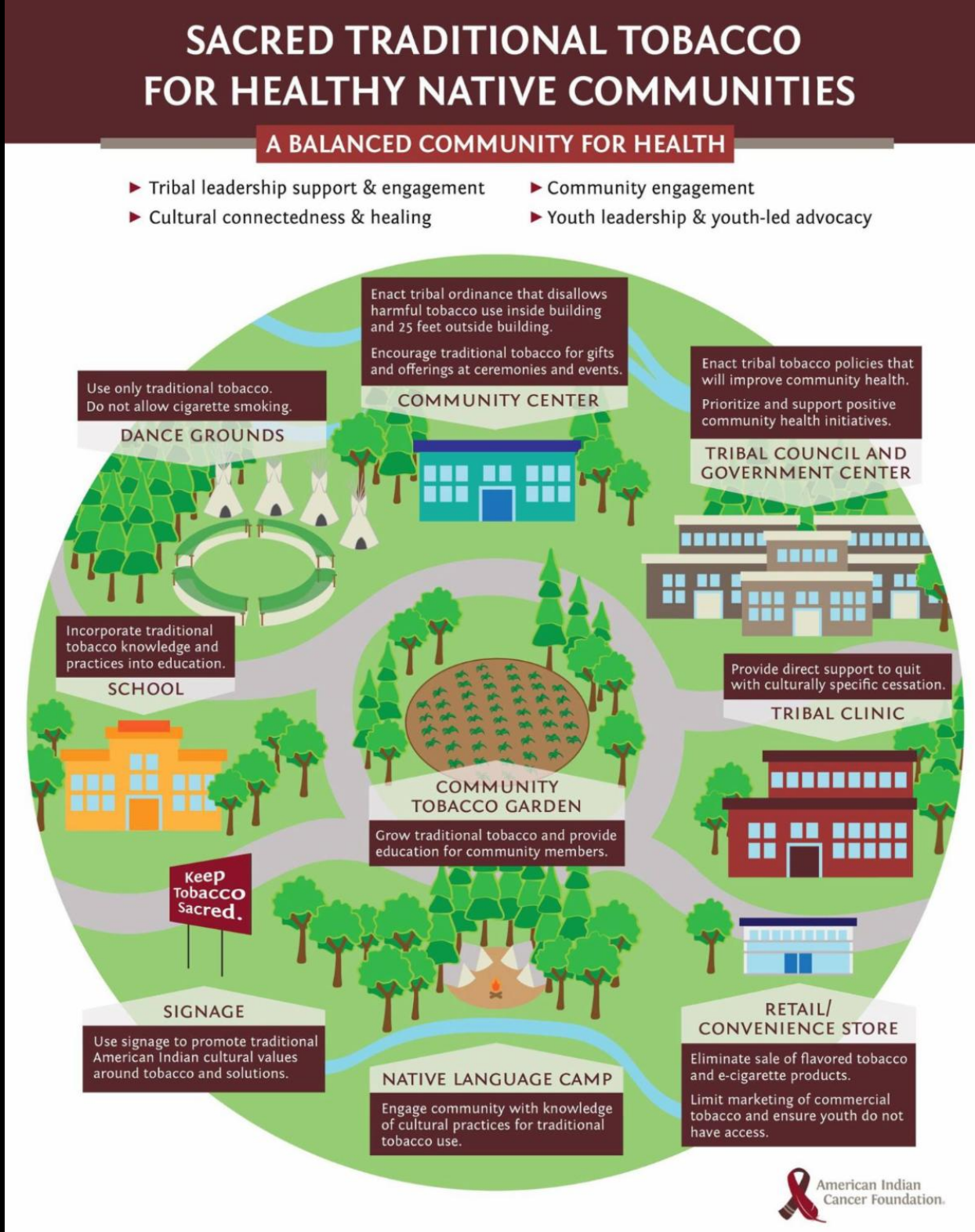
Traditional tobacco in many Native American and Alaskan Natives Communities is a resource used for physical, spiritual, emotional, and community well-being. If burned, the use of traditional tobacco serves the purpose to deliver prayers and spiritual guidance to the individual's spiritual journey. Sometimes tobacco is used for healing and can be burned in a fire. In some cases, the tobacco is not inhaled. Traditional tobacco can be grown or harvested and is commonly mixed with other native plants. The use of tobacco in tribal communities is treated with good thoughts and, most importantly, respect. For centuries, the preparation of this resource has brought youth, adults, elders, and communities together.

A Healthy Balanced Community

According to Keep It Sacred, there are four main components to keeping traditional tobacco sacred in healthy native communities. The first is having the support and engagement from tribal leadership. Secondly, is having an engaging community. Third is embracing the cultural connectedness and healing from tobacco. Lastly, the most important component is establishing a youth leadership program and developing youth-led advocacy.

By having all four parts of a community working together, it's possible to keep tobacco sacred. Creating a healthy environment in native communities is important because it's necessary to keep future generations healthy.

For more information CLICK HERE.



Community Health Leader Highlight

Protect Our Lungs Project

By: Justina Martinez (Taos Pueblo)

This project came about in efforts to find ways to get involved with tribal communities from a social justice perspective. What I found is many of the diseases that our

people face such as addiction, diabetes, heart disease are preventable and are linked to smoking and vaping and the harm it causes both directly and indirectly. I wanted to bring this knowledge and awareness to those who are impacted and those who have the power to share and promote change in my tribal communities (Taos/Acoma). Initially, I envisioned some work with the Day school or those about to enter mid-school as there is a trend of e-cigarettes among young people. All that I learned was very important and effects all in our pueblo, elders, women, men, children, youth, and my hope is a community member will continue this work.

Pre-COVID19 I had many ideas on how to engage the community in becoming aware the harmful effects of commercial tobacco products, while there were adjustments to be made now that we could not gather in groups, I sought out help from Taos Pueblo CHR program and Ezra Bayles connected me to Macrina Lefthand who was instrumental in facilitating and giving community insight on how we could bring awareness to provide some education and provide resources and opportunities for future community health leaders and resources for quitting (cessation). We decided to move forward and create a survey and find out what our young people did know and believe about E-cigarettes and what their use was while also using the quiz portion to provide some important facts about the harmful effects of e-cigarettes and commercial tobacco use.

Overall, 30% of those who responded with some use of e-cigarettes did lack some knowledge that the use of e-cigarettes has been linked to serious health problems, such as severe lung injuries, seizures, nicotine addiction and poisoning, and an increased risk of heart attacks and strokes. Our hope is that they took just one fact or piece of knowledge with them and it impacts their choices about health in the future. The survey shows overall that our young people are strong in their beliefs and choice, they show concern and awareness of staying healthy and committed to what they value most.

I want to thank the respondents, Macrina, and Taos Pueblo CHR. Tah-ah, May you all stay safe and well!

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