

**Testimony
Health Services Committee
Wednesday, January 8, 2014
North Dakota Indian Affairs Commission**

Good morning, Chairwoman Lee and members of the Health Services Committee. My name is Scott Davis. I am the Executive Director of North Dakota Indian Affairs Commission (NDIAC).

It is estimated that the tobacco plant has been used in a sacred way by Native Americans for over 18,000 years. Traditional tobacco is still used by many tribes often in prayer, or gifted to elders, or to people who share wisdom or prayers. Elders teach that tobacco was one of the four sacred medicines (Sacred Tobacco, Cedar, Sage and Sweetgrass) given to Tribal Nations. When used properly, Sacred Tobacco can be used to communicate with the Spirit World and the Creator. In its original form, tobacco had both honor and purpose. The chemical additives found in commercial tobacco take away from tobacco's original purpose in Tribal ceremonies. Smoking cigarettes and chewing tobacco have no connection to Native American spirituality.

According to a report from CDC in 2011, 31.5% of AI/AN adults smoke cigarettes compared to 19% of the US population

According to SAMHSA report from 2011, 7% of AI/AN adults have used smokeless tobacco in the last year compared to 3.3% US population

- **Tobacco Prevention and Control on North Dakota's Indian Reservations**
 - The North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH) has provided funding and technical assistance to each tribe to implement tobacco prevention and control initiatives since 2002 through funding from the Centers for Disease Control
 - In 2009, when funding for local public health unit tobacco programs shifted from the NDDoH to the Center for Tobacco Prevention and Control Policy
 - The increase in funding has enabled each tribal tobacco program to fund full-time positions, which has resulted in a corresponding increase in tobacco prevention work being done on each reservation. Each reservation has a Tribal Tobacco Prevention Coordinator, who is an enrolled member of the tribe.
 - Training for these coordinators consists of basic tobacco prevention, tribal tobacco prevention, tribal specific cessation program promotion, and NDQuits program promotion
- **Collaboration takes place on many levels within the Tribal Tobacco Prevention Programs**
 - Intertribal Tobacco Use Coalition (ITAC), which is made up of tribal tobacco and prevention staff from each reservation as well as community members and other stakeholders, including the NDIAC and the Northern Plains Tribal Tobacco Technical Assistance Center. ITAC meets quarterly and each tribal tobacco program hosts one meeting per year at their reservation. This group works to direct Tribal Tobacco Prevention activities in ND, as well as share resources and successes with other Tribal tobacco coordinators. The Cansasa Coalition exists to educate American Indians and the public on the differences between commercial and traditional tobacco use and to shift cultural norms so that commercial tobacco use is no longer seen as socially acceptable

- **Recent Activities:**

- Connecting all of the stakeholders to ensure there is not a duplication of efforts
 - Our office has participated in a meeting to talk about best practices on each reservation
 - The stakeholders included NDIAC, NDDoH, ND Center for Tobacco Prevention & Control Policy, and one of the local public health units
 - There are other agencies that are working in this area and we recommend that they utilize our efforts and the connections that have been established by NDDoH and our office
- NDIAC will lead the development of a strategic plan to coordinate the tobacco prevention efforts on the tribal communities
 - The need for a strategic plan came from the stakeholders meeting
 - This will include input from multiple agencies including each community
- Develop and promote tobacco prevention policies in Tribal buildings, schools, and public buildings
 - All reservations have smoke-free tribal buildings
 - Continually working to establish more public spaces and housing units as smoke-free
 - The NDDoH is partnering with ITAC to address the issue of smoke-free casinos on a statewide level. By working with all of the tribal casinos simultaneously, fears about lost revenue from patrons who might go to another North Dakota casino if one goes smoke-free can be eliminated
- Promote Tribal Cessation programs and NDQuits program usage
- Utilize community members and health professionals to promote tobacco prevention strategies (coalitions)

In conclusion, our office has worked with NDDoH and the Tribes to address tobacco use on each Tribal community. There are different items that have been discussed today that are all working towards a goal of having healthier communities. We are helping these communities to incorporate education of traditional tobacco in a good way. There are many assets and resources that are able to help our Tribal communities face many challenges. One of these challenges is the reduction of commercial tobacco use.

This finalizes my testimony. I will be more than happy to answer any questions you may have.