

2021

# **A Report on the 2020 Face to Face Virtual Sessions**

## **Indigenous Community of Practice of Canada's Tobacco Strategy**

SUBMITTED TO INDIGENOUS SERVICES CANADA

## Table of Contents

1.0	SESSION 1: MARCH 12, 2021 .....	2
2.0	SESSION 2: MARCH 19, 2021 .....	7
3.0	SESSION 3: MARCH 26, 2021 .....	10

## 1.0 SESSION 1: MARCH 12, 2021

### Ceremony and Welcome – Treffrey Deerfoot Assikotoyomahka

Treffrey shared that his name was gifted name from his grandfather. He stated that we are in difficult times with the pandemic and continual efforts of resource extraction. At the foothills of Rocky Mountains, governments are pushing for mining for iron. Our water source comes from the mountains. The animals who protect us live there. They communicate with the Creator. It is sad what some are willing to give up for progression. We create the balance for the people, yet people don't listen to us.

He shared a teaching about the Beaver Bundle and how Turtle Island came to be. Tobacco was a first plant. Many of our stories are similar. They take us back to our origin, our history, where we come from. We go back to our family lineage and who are the achievers within our families. We have to bring back the names. The stories, the bundle, and lineage tell us who we are.

Treffrey shared offered a prayer and shared that he lit a smudge hours earlier. He is the Chair of Sacred Tobacco which was a group initiated several years ago. Tobacco is sacred to us as people of the earth. The pipe brings together rock and tree and is a form of communication to the Creator. Being a part of a Warrior Society, becoming an elder advisor, being a sun dancer - these are hard undertakings. They are not meant for people who cannot fulfill a commitment. A person is in a state of no food and water – another level of being. You have clarity on what you want to achieve. These things are the foundation. The many ways for us to reach our Creator. When we smudge, we call on the Creator for many things. The bundles are there to help and so they must be honoured.

When talking about tobacco, it is important to go back to the origin. The tobacco of today has nicotine and unhealthy ingredients. The tobacco they created is harmful. A Spring ceremony is conducted when the first thunder comes. Seeds are planted. All our cultures speak of little people, who are the guardians of these plants. We have faith that the Creator will help the seeds grow. In the fall, the plants are harvested. These are the mysteries of our people and our ways, which we must be respected. We must be conscious of how our people did things in the past so that we have the guidance for the future. We must respect ancient ways.

We come here as students learning from each other. We take the good stuff and if it feeds you, give it back to your family and community. He is here because he has a commitment to empower and honour our old way, our old people. He sits with the elders to get his education. Nurture the foundation so that you can grow. We must help ourselves. We cannot expect people to come forward and show us things. We must invest in what we want to achieve. That is what these sessions are about - investments into our people by sharing what is working. Our way of being is different. There is different programming in different areas. We must keep the integrity with our grassroots and knowledge base.

Treffrey shared that he must gift these sacred items to other people, so that when he passes, he would have fulfilled his obligation while on earth to give that story to other people. He was gifted much and in turn, he must give them back to people so that it will help them.

### Opening Comments – Jeff LaPlante, Executive Director, National Indigenous Diabetes Association

In this new year, a new path is being charted because of the expansion of the tobacco strategy. These virtual sessions will provide everyone with an opportunity to meet. Communities of practice can share with each other what people are doing, what has led to people picking up new activities, and new ways of reaching out to people. There is a Facebook page through NIDA, which is another means of way of sharing. All projects are welcome to share at this site. We have explored ways to share files. We are always looking for new ideas on how to do that because we are interested in learning from others. There must be different options to do this because some people cannot access Facebook at work.

We understand that some had to shift work from tobacco cessation to the pandemic response. We are aware that some are interested in other areas such as vaping.

Apologies are extended to the French speakers for no translators. We have not been able to work that out through Zoom.

## Roundtable Introductions

### Atlantic Region:

Elizabeth Comeau is a new program officer with Indigenous Services Canada.

### Quebec Region:

Victoria Grey is in northern Quebec and worked on file in the 1990s. She went to teaching, and then returned to the file 3 years ago at Nunavut Regional Board of Health and Social Services. She works with Elaine and wonderful team. They have not come back to tobacco file since the pandemic started. They were going on radio and public health announcements for Inuit, and now getting back to file.

Alain Ishac works with Vicki at that NRBHSS for the past several years. He worked as a nutritionist for 7 communities. There are a few people on the team. With the first wave, they had to stop everything. Now they are back on their files and are working on an awareness campaign and structure for those who want to stop. They have a high (80%) of the population who are smokers. They have many challenges. There are 14 isolated communities, and it is not easy to have a structure or program to apply in all of them. The internet is slow and sometimes does not work. Using technology is a challenge to reach all people. He is eager to hear from other communities.

Francine Vincent is in Wendaki and works at the FNHSSC in the healthy lifestyle program. Since 2018, she has coordinated the tobacco file. 31 First Nations support work of the interpreters. They recently held 2 training sessions on motivational interviews. They are interested in the presentation on vaping. They would like to develop or adapt a tool for the youth because it is a huge problem, and they need to work on prevention.

### Manitoba Region:

Lori Rudolph-Crawford, Indigenous Services Canada, works for national office but is based in Winnipeg. She is looking forward to hearing from everyone across the country. She used to work in the Manitoba region with the communities there as they got up and running prior to working with headquarters starting this past spring. She also works on food security, nutrition, and other areas.

### Nunavut Region:

Eriq Ipirq recently joined as acting manager in January. The "It's Time" program and revised to be more Nunavut-specific and Inuit-friendly. He has adapted to do radio shows since covid.

### Saskatchewan Region:

Elaine Carter is Assoc Director with Onion Lake Health Board on the tobacco and vaping program. Because of covid, the program was delayed and so obtained an extension. They have land-based camps to teach youth survival skills which they have tried to expand from 4 to more to include not only youth but families. Bernadine Harper is on call too for the land-based camps and incorporates cultural teachings into the program. They would like to include a dietician who does gardening. They would like to teach how to grow tobacco and pass on the teachings that go with traditional tobacco. It is a new project but long overdue. There are 5,000 people on reserve and 1500 off reserve. There are 4 schools with a 5<sup>th</sup> coming up. They are focusing on the youth demographic and their families. A large majority of the population are smokers.

Bernadine Harper works in the community healing and wellness program at Onion Lake First Nation. The Traditional Team has been busy doing protocol teachings on traditional use of tobacco. For the past 2 days, they taught drum making, rattle making, and making medicine pouches and why people need to carry this - you never know when you are going to need to make an offering. The team has been busy sharing teachings. They had 18 participants yesterday with fathers who brought their sons. The main teaching is tobacco use. With all camps, tobacco is the first thing they use – they put tobacco down. They are doing an awesome job on traditional teachings to youth. They will also be teaching about the chemicals in commercial tobacco and how traditionally tobacco was pure. People seem to want to learn about traditional uses of tobacco.

Roger Stevenson, Yorktown Tribal Council, is the Tobacco Vaping Coordinator. He is new and they have been working with 6 communities, both youth in school and the general community. He is gathering information from various meetings which will help him in his programming.

Charmaine Mirasty, Meadow Lake, is the Tobacco Strategy Coordinator. She has been working from home. They have a radio station which has allowed them conduct tobacco education sessions or clips on vaping and covid and second-hand smoke and quitting. They have had to try something different because of covid. She works with 9 communities - 4 Cree and 5 Dene - but has not been able to travel to them.

Renee Ramikie, Fort Aberti Grand Council, works with 12 communities. Since the pandemic, they have used social media for education.

Maggie King, Lac LaRonge Indian Band, works with the tobacco strategy and health promotion. It involves 5 satellite communities. They have worked with the Canadian Cancer Society and the Running Room on the 10-week long run to quit program. Gift certificates for running shoes are provided to participants. 6 out of the 10 weeks there were about 12 registrants. Of these, six completed. Partners were flexible because of our rural communities and where can go running. Therefore, trekking poles and online training for leadership were provided for those leading the program. Partners were supportive and hands on. Then, they were hit with covid and had to shut down when arena for running closed. A school curriculum has been developed and was introduced to the teachers. They worked with the Teach Program which involves learning about the cannabis and tobacco cessation.

## **Roundtable Discussion – Project Activities During COVID-19**

Alain Ishac shared that they were also working with the schools. Approximately more than 50% start smoking before the age of 14 and 16 years. When they start so young, they become addicted, and it is hard to quit. The Council of Quebec had its own programs which were adapted to work with the schools. Their team makes the link between the schools and this council, to adapt to work with parents and school staff. The program is offered by the Quebec government and there are no costs for the schools. Vicki has been working with the schools for a while. Some teachers smoke in front of the students during recess. They know from research that when students are surrounded by adults who smoke, there is an increase in the likelihood they will smoke. A letter was sent to school staff to refrain from smoking. They must be role models. In Nunavut, they do not cultivate tobacco because it is cold.

Victoria Grey works with the KI school board in northern Quebec in preparing a campaign against tobacco. They are renewing a campaign on CBC aired locally in 14 communities on the harms of tobacco. In past, they did not include youth and expecting young mothers, but programming targeting them will air next week. They are also teaching about 2<sup>nd</sup> hand and 3<sup>rd</sup> hand smoke and have a campaign against mothers smoking with children on their backs. She is working with NRHSS Communications to develop a short video on tobacco for the Nunavik website. They are working with elders, youth, and role models. The KI school board has seen teachers smoking in front of students. They sent letter to them which Alain spoke of, to encourage them not to smoke with the students which she had seen when teaching. They are providing teachings for wellness workers not to smoke. It will be a challenge to find some who do not smoke. Teaching materials must be in 3 languages. There has been difficulty in getting wellness workers due to covid and many smoke. Regarding the on the land program which involves fishing, hunting, and camping, they will be working with them once they have the smoking counsellors. There are people who want to stop smoking, but they do not have the help. They have 2 coasts and 4 communities on Hudson Bay. They are working on meeting with the communities who are asking for help to stop smoking. They are happy to hear that. It takes a while to get French, English and Inuktitut translators. At the 2018 gathering in Winnipeg, people said what works well is going out on the land, and it does. Funding for food, gas, renting boats and snowmobiles is helpful. It is important to share what is working and take advantage of what others have learned and tried.

Treffrey Deerfoot shared that we had our governance and if someone needed help, we would expand past our territories. People came from different directions and exchanged medicines. His philosophy is to share this knowledge and bring seeds to share traditional tobacco. The role of mentors is important. It is important to see what is out there. He encouraged people to get in touch with him. There is no right or wrong way to do it, you just have to try. The elders tell us to just try hard, do the best that you can. When we smoke the pipe, we lift it up to the Creator. When we smoke pipe, don't bring the smoke down but blow it up. We need to understand ceremony and ritual to get to where we want. We need to do it the right way by bringing elders and knowledge keepers forward. Settlers want us to things their way. Going back to the land – that is where the answer is, on the land. He always thanks the Creator for the gifts. We need to go back to the elders because

we come from different geographic areas. There are a number of great things we are doing here – these are pan-treaty resources.

## **Update from Indigenous Services Canada**

Lori Rudolph-Crawford, Manager, Program Capacity Development, Community Supports, Indigenous Services Canada, stated that there has not been much movement on national front because of the pandemic. She has seen projects grow and flourish over the years and sees their impacts when there is an Indigenous-led approach and programs are grounded in culture especially on the land and connection with healthy living such as food security. This is what we are hearing today about the importance of going back to the land.

It is good to see the momentum of this group to share, connect, and learn from each other. At the Vancouver meeting, COPs shared diverse approaches and learning. The strength and momentum is continuing. Much has been accomplished over the past few years, especially during the transition.

Much work went into transforming from Canada's Tobacco Strategy to the Federal Strategy on respecting sacred and natural tobacco. NIDA has done much work and helped to pave the way forward for an Indigenous led approach and new projects coming on board.

There are many challenges in the work. As new projects come on, we can come together, and problem solve. Previously this program was the First Nation and Inuit component to the Strategy. In 2014-15, there were 16 projects and 3 strategies that reached 60% of First Nations and Inuit communities. Annual outcomes report demonstrated an increase in the number of smoke free spaces and an increase in the number of participants over time. There was much learning about on the land programming and its impact. In 2018, there was a renewed Canada's Tobacco Strategy with expanded funding across the country to address high rates of commercial tobacco use and continued implementation of Indigenous-determined programs. First Nations programs were largely informed by regional decision making to expand to more communities. There were discussions with ITK regarding Inuit programs. MNC is being supported for the 1<sup>st</sup> time for a Métis specific approach.

Many new communities of practice are just getting up and running. Covid has been a huge factor and has been a priority, which we have been hearing across the country. Therefore, programs are at various stages of implementation. FNIHB offices have a designated lead in the regions. They are there to support your work and take your lead in what support you need. If you'd like contact information for any of these regional contacts, contact Lori.

They are in the process of planning for 2021. There will be work to build upon strengths and NIDA will be a support. Communities of Practice will be engaged in how to include new and current communities. They are always interested in hearing about how to best support the projects and to hear about the successes, challenges, and any suggestions through regional leads or by directly contact her.

A participant questioned, will the funding change allow for more direct programming with clients and include Indigenous land-based healing practices which would involve community efforts?

Lori responded that the approach is flexible, and this is not a prescriptive program. It is meant to be holistic and Indigenous-led and -driven. Programs can use the funding in the best way possible to meet their needs. For specific agreements, touch base with regional leads. She will talk with colleagues at Health Canada for more information on funding. She would like to stay in loop about effective approaches to learn about great outcomes and the support that is needed.

## **The Cedar Project: Supporting Indigenous young people who use drugs during a pandemic - Sherri Pooyak and Dr. Margo Pearce**

As of October, 97 project participants have passed away due to the opioid crisis and toxic drug supply across Canada. Their time, stories, and energy given to Cedar is acknowledged. Also acknowledged are the traditional territories where the project takes place, Elders, the staff, and partners.

Research conducted in the program aims to highlight the resilience and resistance to colonial harms to Indigenous people. An elder has said that self-esteem and self-worth are built into our culture. It is our culture that give us strength.

The Cedar Project is guided by a partnership. They strive to ensure research is always done in a good way. Their research approach is from an Indigenous-led perspective. Students are involved and undertake the research and co-investigators oversee. They observe Chapter 9 of Tri Council Policy. Cedar study design includes Indigenous methodology (incorporate Indigenous Knowledge) and cultural safety (paradigm is acknowledging grief and building on strengths, traditional foods on special occasions, memorials, resource support for food security and housing, safe setting where it's okay to be high, police free zone). The study started in 2003 and involves over 800+ Indigenous people who have used drugs and are at risk of HIV and hepatitis C, aged 14-20 at enrolment, and residing in Prince George or Vancouver. Follow-up interviews are conducted every 6 months and a case management approach is used.

Through the study, they have learned about baseline frequencies and colonial harms, as well as strengths and cultural factors, such as participants' families lived by traditional culture, spoke traditional language, know how to speak traditional language, frequently speak traditional language, participated in ceremony in the past 6 months, lived by traditional culture in past 6 months, and accessed alcohol and drug in the past 6 months.

In March 2020, major restrictions were put in place and services were shut down including programming available to Cedar Project participants. There were dual epidemics - the toxic drug supply and overdose crisis and the pandemic. In April 2020, the Cedar Project received REB exemption to remain open to continue programming and to provide PPE, harm reduction supplies, and resource lists, as examples. In May 2020, they started applying for funding CIHR and other grants for covid to:

- 1) Detect trends in covid-19 prevalence and describe engagement with pandemic response. Respiratory epidemics in the past had disproportionately impacted Indigenous people. The purpose of this was to identify: the need for changes in policies and legislation, identify trends and structural barriers to engage in public health measures, and impacts of covid, e.g., how much the disease and public health orders are impacting participants, especially women.
- 2) Identify secondary impacts of covid-19 and the impacts of provincial pandemic response especially on mental wellbeing and substance use (unexpected). This is to understand how covid and the response to covid impacted participants' dignity, e.g., homelessness impacts the ability to stay safe and lack of clean drinking water for bathing and consumption. Knowing this information allows understanding of what supports are required to uphold participants' dignity. They are looking at how to adapt, implement, and test feasibility of a bundle of strengths-based wrap around virtual supports to mitigate primary and secondary covid-19 impacts by phone, weekly text check-ins, and supports for increased participant resiliency, intervention support, and viral suppression of HIV.

This is a 1-year mixed methods study (qualitative and quantitative) with covid-19 sentinel surveillance at 3-month intervals (how many people have been exposed), a questionnaire on secondary impacts, and WellTelmHealth support for 200 participants. They are creating a culturally safe space and place for participants on the ground by honouring and supporting participants' identities and safety. Harm reduction is integrated into everything done in the study and project. They have dedicated staff and have collaborated for innovation in a range of supports. As an example, working with Telus for phones. The project promotes the need to work together and how to work together.

## **Closing Prayer and Song**

The day's gathering ended with a review of the agenda for the second virtual session, and a closing song and prayer by Treffery Deerfoot.

## **Session 1 Adjournment**

## 2.0 SESSION 2: MARCH 19, 2021

### Ceremony and Welcome – Treffrey Deerfoot Assikotoyomahka

Treffrey Deerfoot provided the opening and welcome to the second virtual gathering of the Indigenous Community of Practice, Canada's Tobacco Strategy. He shared teachings from his nation, how his ancestors made many sacrifices for the language, ceremonies etc. and how we are to preserve this for the future. He shared a story of how they utilized animals for their healing power, that this was Creator given and we continue to acknowledge this gift today.

He is a chair for a tobacco sacred group where he shares his knowledge and bundles from the ancestors, including the importance of lighting smudge and tobacco in our ceremonies. There are guiding principles shared across all nations in the world. His message was one of blessing as the creator is with us today.

### Tobacco Teachings - Gail Whitlow

Gail shared tobacco teachings including the different types she has been gifted from other Indigenous peoples in different countries. She shared the importance of being able to plant and be around old sacred tobacco which gave a different experience in ceremony.

She noted that we have always respected that tobacco is a powerful medicine, helps with physical, spiritual emotional and wellbeing and is offered to Creator and to others in our gifting process. Tobacco can bring deep healing and can change or alter or perception and helps to see things in a different way, it carries a powerful strength.

Tobacco has been used for centuries and there are different ways of making smudge blends. In her culture they do not use pipes but has been part of ceremony that uses them. In their culture they have long houses where they make collections of tobacco and they are burned on the stoves.

Another type of tobacco is commercial, also a plant spirit, but taken and altered with many chemicals, some say 7000 plus, changing the composition. Can make a strong connection with the tobacco plant, feel its spirit, and ask for help in going back to the core.

Her experiences led her to learn about medicines in a different way and took training to be able to blend Western and Indigenous thought. She noted that smoking is used by people to help relieve stress however it is really making them breathe deeper, that is what is relieving stress not the cigarettes. Breathing exercises would provide more help in de-stressing, including other techniques such as physical activity, essential oils etc.

She stated that if you put tobacco into your left hand and ask for dreams to put you onto a path of wellness and beauty, and if you only have cigarette tobacco make amends as the tobacco still has original energy of that beautiful plant.

### Updates from Projects

#### Quebec Region:

Alain Ishac thanked Treffrey and Gail for their inspiring stories. He noted that it is different in Nunavik as they do not grow tobacco there and there is no reference to tobacco in a positive form. It is all commercial tobacco introduced by European. He hopes that these stories and the history can be brought to their territory.

Tobacco is discussed in a logical and scientific way to help people stop tobacco. Many start before the age of 14, living in isolated communities and to start new initiatives is difficult but can utilize technology however the internet is slow and primitive at times.

Here are tools to support to stop however people always say not support or structure, most do not succeed without it. In comparison to statistics from 1992-1994, more people are smoking from 20 years ago meaning that what they are trying to do is not reaching the people. They continue to work with schools and communities on a campaigns and to build a structure that is sustainable. They are here to learn from others for success.



Treffery Deerfoot commented that success comes from Elder engagement and role models to become champions for initiatives. Need to engrain knowledge and teachings to the next generations.

Indigenous Services Canada representatives introduced themselves from the various regions and were pleased to join the virtual gathering and to hear the tobacco teachings.

#### Nunavut Region:

Eric Ipirq reported that their program was impacted by pandemic. They are developing a strategic plan to develop programs and get community health representatives to do messaging and activities.

#### Saskatchewan Region:

Roger Stevenson, Yorkton Tribal Council Tobacco Reduction, shared information from their program including, smoking surveys for communities to gather data and virtual education Q & A for office and staff. He works with 6 communities and they are undergoing strategic planning to educate schools and the general public.

Cory Gambler reported that their program has had little contact with their communities, many closed off due to the pandemic. Have started to hear from community schools to implement tower gardens and grow natural tobacco for traditional purposes. They also tried to do a quit smoking challenge on Facebook, however there was little response. Due to the pandemic, he was relocated to a different program to assist with a short-staffed addictions office.

Alton Michel shared that their tobacco cessation programming and workshop were put to a halt as their staff were shuffled to other duties for pandemic response. He noted that they can piggyback on a land-based program and ensure tobacco teachings and education on getting healthy and less smoking. He shared they need programming to help the mental health of their youth.

Justina Ndubuka from the Breath Easy program in northern Saskatchewan shared that their staff were deployed to COVID response. One of their best practices to share is the lessons planned and developed with a teacher for grades K to 9. There are resources and teaching book on vaping. With their communities in lock down they have resorted to social media to connect with community. They look forward to meeting in person again.

Dean Weenie, Indigenous Services Canada Regional Lead for the Tobacco Control Strategy, offered praise for the SK region for going out of their way to join the call today. A number of the project were not able to do their normal work, and many are trying through social media, word of mouth, etc.

Maggie King, La Ronge, SK works with the other programs in the region. She is planning on doing curriculum development to translate information into Cree so the Cree teachers can introduce concepts of quitting smoking. Their program is planning on walk/run to quit in partnership with Smoker's Health Line and Canadian Cancer Society and the Running Room, a second attempt as the pandemic interrupted previous plans.

Renee Ramikie shared that their program has also utilized social media engagement, video presentations and postings on tobacco education to communities.

#### Alberta Region:

Treffery Deerfoot, Sacred Tobacco Program, submitted a proposal to the government, the project is getting youth and elders together through province wide engagement. They are trying a pan treaty approach. He stated BC has been having tobacco gatherings and they acknowledge that work. For Alberta, their approach is with other partners focusing on bringing something back to the people, to challenge government to work with us. To work together versus in silos and bringing integrity back to tobacco.

#### Ontario Region:

Matthew Hutten, NNADP worker, introduced himself as a new program to develop the tobacco cessation program.

## **Closing Song and Prayer**

The gathering ended with a review of the agenda for the final virtual session, and a closing song and prayer by Treffery Deerfoot.

## **Session 2 Adjournment**

## 3.0 SESSION 3: MARCH 26, 2021

### Ceremony and Welcome - Laurie Ann Nicholas

Laurie Ann provided a drum song. She shared that red willow is used in the pipe. Traditional tobacco is not addictive and is used as an offering during ceremony.

### Tobacco Teachings - Allan Jamieson, Sr.

This information is from Cayuga. Tobacco is one of the sacred plants and medicines recognized throughout traditional teachings along with sweet grass, cedar, and sage. He was raised by his grandmother. He got to be around many leaders as a youngster and around those who were concerned with maintaining our ways and our survival. Later, he travelled around the US to meet with other Native people to strengthen the ties of traditional people.

He stated that when we refer to ourselves, we say the original people. He further stated that when we refer to our tobacco, it is the original tobacco. This tobacco came with Sky Woman when she came. It has not been altered and is the same plant she brought. The value of the original tobacco is exceptionally sacred. He does not know of anyone who can smoke it; rather, the smoke can maybe just get to the middle of your throat. It is used in ceremonial ways.

When you hear the first thunderstorms, take tobacco, and put it by a tree to give thanks that the Grandfathers have returned. You never pick the first medicine, but the third ones, to ensure some is left for others. When you pick tobacco, put down a pinch.

When someone is sick, and you want to offer prayers or messages for them to get better, burn a small amount of original tobacco. Allan stated that they keep it in special places so that it is readily available. Keep it in your bundle.

The medicine can be used several ways such as putting it in a metal bowl and sprinkle around your house. This particular tobacco is from the Sky Woman and continues to be grown today and used in our ceremonies.

When you make a fire, put a pinch down by some trees and say your prayers. The eagle sees who is burning that and carries that that message. We are still burning tobacco at sunrise to follow our own ways. The sunrise is bringing renewed life and energy and we want to be a part of it. This a good strong energy from brother sun. We want to be a part of that, to conduct the sunrise tobacco, and to send the messaging for the prayers of our people.

### Montana Tobacco Use Prevention Program: Montana's American Indian Tobacco Education Specialists

- **Rick Wolfname, Northern Cheyenne Tobacco Prevention, Lame Deer, MT**
- **Janet Sucha, Tribal Liaison, Ronan, MT**
- **Diana Bigby, Fort Belknap Tobacco Prevention, Fort Belknap, MT**
- **Charleena Penama Salish, Technical Advisor, Missoula, MT**

Rick Wolfname, Northern Cheyenne, shared that the program services seven reservations and three urban centres including Helena and Missoula.

Janet Sucha, Tribal Liaison, stated that they take a collaborative approach acknowledging that each reservation and tribe is unique culturally and historically; however, have a similar worldview and challenge of commercial tobacco use. They work closely on educating about the harms of using commercial tobacco and also about the ties between traditional tobacco and culture to help reclaim traditions.

Jennifer Floch is a cessation health educator. The American Indian Commercial Tobacco Quit Line is offered throughout state. It provides free nicotine patches, gum or lozenges, quit guides, phone coaching, and is free to enroll. There is always a live representative who answers the phone. There is a newly update website at [MTAmericanIndianQuitLine.com](http://MTAmericanIndianQuitLine.com). The percentage of callers who identified as American Indian accessing this line are 6.1% to 10%, and about 9% of MT population is American Indian.

There has been a decline in the number of American Indian callers, but this is being seen across all demographics. Those who enroll in the program remain in the same quit line. 50% of American Indians callers end up participating in the quit line. Promotional materials are free to all Montana residents.

Janet stated there has been a lot of back and forth with the communities to be responsive and appropriate for them. It is a work in progress. Educators meet once a month. An awareness video has been developed with Supaman, an American Indian entertainer. Local people are helping to create messaging.

As a Tobacco Education Specialist, Diana Bigby she conducts local community engagement on education, tabling, promotional items, etc. Tobacco is normalized in the communities and so there is a desire to be more inviting and ensure things are done in a positive way. They provide information on the effects of smoking on a person's lungs using visual and props. They teach that American Indian people have we have a different relationship with traditional tobacco using kits with pods and seeds which represents life. They teach about tobacco ties and their traditional and cultural use and significance. Education Specialists develop relationships with the local community to show that they are there to help rather than judge them. They collaborate as much as they can to reach different segments of the community.

Tobacco Talks are held monthly at the same time on Facebook and are conversations on reclaiming and decolonizing tobacco. A challenge is those who still use in the home or in the car as normalized behaviour. Another challenge appears to be that sometimes people do not want to use the quit line because they want to talk with someone they know. Natural remedies help with headaches when smokers are trying to quit. Being positive is important when working with people to educate and support them.

Rick Wolfname shared a story about the quit line involving a young lady going through cancer radiation treatment. It takes many attempts to quit. In the project, they also talk about smokeless tobacco or chew. They have much promotional material included in Natural Quit Kits packages. There are many collaborators. They go to local schools – head start centres, elementary and high schools – to teach about the harms of commercial tobacco and to talk about traditional tobacco.

Charleena Penama shared that they are creative in their approaches. The Tribal TPS (American Indian Tobacco Education Specialists) has much programming including hosting youth camps for 11 years where youth visit other reservations and learn about other tribe's tobacco because they all use different blends and varieties. They have a strong partnership with NTUP, which helps to make the program sustainable. They also work with the Rocky Mountain Area Tribal Health Board and with the individual tribes who are diverse and have the own protocols. The more culture included in programming, the better. They play many different traditional games and bring in sacred tobacco as education. The challenges are that people have become colonized and need to reclaim understanding of sacred tobacco. There were issues in the beginning with the protocols and intake form for the Quit Line; however, changes have been made. Another challenge was access to phones which a partner is working on to help resolve. Cessation is a component that is missing in the communities.

They use culture as much as possible through the tobacco blend and tobacco ties, especially in connection with the plant itself. Many clients have gone cold turkey because of that connection. The Natural Kits contain herbs and essential oils: lavender rubs to calm, black pepper to smell, and juniper spray for hands. These 3 essential oils work in the brain exactly as the Chantix® drug. The kits also contain tools for reflexology, cinnamon toothpicks (when combined with commercial tobacco gross taste); herbal tea blend for the respiratory system; and information on counselling supports and connecting with the quit line. Dr. Duran, Northern Cheyenne, teaches that if you misuse sacred tobacco, of course it is going to affect the body in a bad way because we have a contract with sacred tobacco.

Questions:

- *What forms do the herbs and oil come in?* Response: Black pepper (in a small bowl), a lavender roll-on, and a juniper spray mist.
- *Are the Natural Kits available to us?* Response: Send Charleena your address and she can send a sample.

## **Tools for Helping Youth Quit Vaping - Susan K. Hutt and Chantal Vallerand, Drug Free Kids Canada**

Chantel stated that they support families and parents, or anybody who plays a trusted role with a youth, so that they can convey and talk with kinds in an approachable, relatable way sparking curiosity. Connection is important.

Oil vape can contain 80-90% THC. In the illegal market, it is mixed with chemicals. The level of THC depends on the source. When talking about vaping, the approach they encourage parents take is for ongoing conversations take advantage of different situations, such as seeing people vaping, walking by a vaping store, to ask the youth if they are aware of potential

risks. Generally talking can help establish it so that the topic is not coming out of the blue. They also discuss facts and address myths. There are many resources out there, but parents may not have to have all the answers. The goal is not to lecture but to engage in an open conversation.

Feedback from teens are that they do not necessarily want to vape but do not know how to say no. It is suggested that they use different scenarios in how they can say no. Talk about some risks in an open-minded context. The “what” – what are they vaping – and to explore “why” – why are they doing it? Out of boredom? At the end of the day what is dangerous is long-term use and addiction. Offer support to the parents in encourage youth to be honest about why they started in the first place. What is at stake is a feeling of authenticity, feeling supported, and acknowledging that withdrawal may be difficult. Encourage them to find out what resources are available in the community including elders. It is not a one-time conversation. There are youth and vaping materials on Drug Free Kids website. Parents and families have a role to play, and the kids are listening. A vaping brochure is being prepared to help start the conversation.

## **Discussion: How National Indigenous Diabetes Association can support Communities of Practice in 2021**

Jeff LaPlante, Executive Director, National Indigenous Diabetes Association (NIDA), stated that they are looking at a new way forward. There are renewed CoPs and there will be new projects from different areas. The funding has gone out to all communities so that they will have some cessation program. He questioned, what role can NIDA play to foster that and support your work?

There will be new people. We would like to have a database with everyone’s contact information. We know people like share what they are doing. NIDA will distribute a spreadsheet for contact information.

At this point, we don’t know where the new projects will be. If participants at this session know of people from their territory, to reach out on NIDA’s behalf so that NIDA and all other CoPs can come to know them.

Hopefully, this time next year or in 2022, things we will be safer so that the Face to Face can be held in person. We can be able to have our friends from Montana visit again. NIDA will be holding a virtual conference on diabetes prevention and management, which is done every two years. CoPs have not had a presence in the past and maybe they can provide a presentation at that time. The past year has been tricky in convening quarterly conference calls. NIDA would like to pick up on these as people who were redirected to work on covid-19 return and become more available. NIDA will most likely hold quarterly Zoom meetings. Going forward, NIDA will not receive evaluation reports. The nature of NIDA’s involvement is to support networking and connections to share tools and resources. There will be discussions on how to build up the NIDA website and use around the NIDA Facebook page as we are aware some cannot access it at work. NIDA will be developing monthly newsletters which are now done seasonally. Projects are welcome to submit anything pertaining to health and wellness, success stories, etc. – anything to keep people involved and interested.

Participant feedback on ideas on working together:

- Maggie King stated she appreciated Charleena talking about the aversion towards taking NRTs and so they have developed natural kits. It is good to hear that there are alternatives.
- Lori Rudolph-Crawford acknowledged NIDA’s work and shared that she has observed how the file grow over the years.

## **Closing Comments and Prayer - Grandmother Renée Thomas-Hill**

Grandmother Renée Every stated that is a great honour to be here to share. This is how we learned – we observed everyone which showed that we are always doing. We must be disciplined and protect ourselves - not to touch, not to take. We have ethics and values. We are wrapped for nine months and is a time we observe. She is the eldest of 12 children, ¼ of which smoke. We do not have diabetes but some of our partners do. We were always groomed and were always doing.

Only through training can you hold sacred tobacco. We must be careful when holding it because that is how sacred it is. We get the spiritual ones to do the ceremonies because that is how we view the tobacco. When she was growing up, there was a jar with tobacco in it. If something were heard outside, we would go out and offer tobacco. The wind blew away the tobacco and then the rain, it was an acknowledgement of the offering.

You have to have a good mind to touch the sacred tobacco. No one was ever to pick it up if they had alcohol. They were not to breathe on a baby because the baby would associate the smell with love and belonging.

The body is sacred, and our body tells us it is not sacred. That is why we need to listen to our body. It goes back to the baby observing – if parents are smoking, then they will copy.

Sacred tobacco is a most powerful gift. You have to look after your spirit and be ready to hold it. When her spirit was not good, she would ask someone to do it, and when she was on her moon time. It was only used to give thanks and in ceremonies. Then it was found it to be addicting, and so it was used for bartering.

She was taught by her grandmother that the ladies' pipe is small and that the only time she would smoke it is to let the ancestors know. Our people need to see visual aids. That is when it really sinks in. That is the abuse of the sacredness of your body. The cradle board was created to teach coping skills.

Mullen is an alternative of mixture of sacred medicines to which herbs can be added in to clear the mind and lungs. There are alternatives. Learning how to eat properly is a first thing. The Trickster can change you, so you must be careful. Young people need to hear our stories.

Know that you are sacred, every part of you. We are going too fast. We need to slow down. The Peacemaker gave us coping skills and wants us to know that if we are ever in need, the Peacemaker is one breath away.

**Sessions Adjourned.**