



UP CLOSE WITH TOBACCO AND AMERICAN INDIANS



American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) people are those who are members of any of the Indigenous peoples of North, Central, and South America. Wisconsin is home to 11 federally recognized tribes. Wisconsin's urban Natives are from many different tribal nations due to economic relocation. Many Native people have a complex relationship with tobacco.

TRADITIONAL TOBACCO USE PROMOTES WELL-BEING.



Tobacco is used by American Indians as **spiritual medicine** for healing of mind, body and spirit. It is used in **prayer** to the Creator or other spiritual beings. The smoke is used to **cleanse, purify, or bless**. It is believed to be a great spiritual “commodity” that can be offered as a gift, to say thank you, as a sign of respect, and to ask for prayers, advice, or favors

Source: Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Council (GLITC)



Because of its importance in tribal ceremonies and culture, tobacco use in traditional ways is protected by a U.S. federal law known as the **American Indian Religious Freedom Act (AIRFA)**. AIRFA was created in 1978 to **protect and preserve** traditional religious rights and cultural practices, and prevents governmental agencies from interfering with the free exercise of those religions.

Source: University of Idaho



Examples of ceremonial tobacco use in some AI/AN cultures

Tobacco is put down at a tree, next to harvested plants and animals, or in a body of water for prayers. This is an act of powerful meditation and gratitude, both of which have positive benefits for personal well-being.



Consequences of commercial tobacco use

The amount of cigarettes sold in Wisconsin in 2018 could wrap around the Earth **7 times**. Cigarette butts are the most common man-made contaminant. They've been found throughout rivers and inside fish, which are vitally important to protect. Improperly discarded cigarettes can also lead to forest and home fires.

Sources: GLITC, WI Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), and Anglia Ruskin University



For culturally tailored help to quit commercial tobacco,
American Indians in Wisconsin can contact:
American Indian Quitline at 1-888-7AI-QUIT





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COMMERCIALIZED TOBACCO USE BRINGS DESPAIR.



Tobacco companies **research** and **exploit** AI/AN culture as a way to sell more product. These companies have **corrupted** the sacred meaning of the traditional tobacco plant with their commercial tactics.

Source: Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)



Due to cultural infiltration of commercial tobacco products, **37%** of AI/AN smoke in Wisconsin, more than **double** that of the general population.

Source: BRFSS



AI/AN have a **higher risk** of experiencing tobacco-related disease, such as diabetes, than others due to high prevalence of cigarette smoking and other commercial tobacco use. The risk of developing diabetes is **30-40%** higher for smokers than nonsmokers.

Source: CDC



Compared to white Wisconsinites, American Indians have a **34%** higher risk of dying from **cardiovascular disease**, **70%** higher risk of dying from **lung cancer**, and **250%** higher risk of dying from **diabetes**, all of which are known to be caused or worsened by cigarette smoking.

Source: GLITC



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