

INTERTRIBAL SECONDHAND SMOKE CAMPAIGN: A BREATH OF FRESH AIR

(Rapid City, SD – May 16, 2006) The Aberdeen Area Tribal Chairman's Health Board's Northern Plains Tobacco Prevention Project has taken a grassroots approach to reduce the number of Native American children and pregnant women exposed to secondhand smoke.

The campaign, conceived in 2005, was driven by an increasing number of reports suggesting that the smoking prevalence of Native Americans residing in the Northern Plains were among the highest in the nation. Tobacco use surveillance conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and local state departments of health have consistently shown that Native American children are more frequently exposed to secondhand smoke in their homes and vehicles as compared to other children residing in the same state. Despite successful national and state initiatives to reduce the use of commercial tobacco and exposure to harmful secondhand smoke, efforts to include rural Native American communities have not been as consistent or specifically tailored to community needs.

The Smoke-Free Homes Campaign is designed to focus primarily on decreasing exposure of secondhand smoke to children and pregnant women because they are the most vulnerable and are at the greatest risk for developing serious health problems. Research studies have shown that children who breathe secondhand smoke are more likely to suffer from: bronchitis and pneumonia; wheezing; ear infections; and more frequent and severe asthma attacks. In general, children who are exposed to secondhand smoke experience more frequent trips to the hospital and are less healthy than those children who live in smoke-free environments. Infants and pregnant women who are exposed to smoke are placed at an even greater risk because secondhand smoke is directly related to Sudden Infant Death Syndrome and other poor pregnancy outcomes, such as low infant birth weight.

The Smoke-Free Homes Campaign is the first program of its kind to unite multiple tribal programs across four states and the media, with the sole intent of empowering the individual to make a commitment to secure the health of their younger family members. Tribal programs are able to access campaign resources, which can be incorporated into routine public health education on the local level.

The campaign set out to recruit 1,500 people in tribal communities in North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska and Iowa to pledge to maintain smoke-free homes and vehicles. The Northern Plains Tobacco Prevention Project is happy to announce that more than 2000 people have already made a commitment to protect the health of their families, which has surpassed the goal. Anyone interesting in pledging to make their home and vehicle smoke-free can call 1 (866) 203-1039 and make their pledge today.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SECOND-HAND SMOKE CAMPAIGN SEEKS NATIVE AMERICAN PLEDGES

(Rapid City, SD – February 27, 2006) A campaign designed to increase awareness of, and decrease exposure to, second-hand smoke has been launched in Indian Country.

The Aberdeen Area Tribal Chairman's Health Board in conjunction with the Northern Plains Tobacco Prevention Project (NPTPP) developed the three-part campaign set to launch this month across north Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska and Iowa. The campaign combines radio Public Service Announcements with an educational public relations component. The campaign will be monitored by NPTPP representatives who will conduct personal follow-up interviews with individuals pledging to provide smoke-free homes and cars.

The campaign has been designed to focus primarily on decreasing exposure to children and pregnant women as they are the most vulnerable to the negative effects of second-hand smoke. "Native American families understand that children are sacred. But smokers often don't realize the damage they are doing simply by smoking in the same house or car. Pledging to maintain a smoke-free environment is a way to take responsibility and show how much they respect each other" commented Terry Salway a tobacco specialist from the Northern Plains Tobacco Prevention Project.

Tobacco users will find pledge forms in local health and wellness offices or can call 1-866-203-1039 for a pledge packet. "The forms are very easy to fill out and once returned will be monitored by NPTPP personnel. We will provide a number of support options for people who have pledged to live smoke-free – everything from information on 24-hour Quitlines and how to talk to your kids about smoking, to health resources and prevention strategies. It's a hands on project and we are looking forward to working face to face with individuals and helping families maintain healthier environments" said Favian Kennedy Program Director for the Aberdeen Area Tribal Chairman's Health Board.

The campaign comes at a time when recent research reported by such sources as the Environmental Protection Agency, Center for Disease Control, as well as both State and local

health agencies, indicates that Native Americans residing in the Northern Plains have the highest commercial tobacco use rates in the nation.

“This campaign is the first program of its kind to unite dozens of health related agencies and the media, with the sole intent of empowering the individual. It’s a refreshing approach to a troublesome problem” Kennedy added.

The goal of the program is to recruit as many as 1,500 people in tribal communities in North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska and Iowa. The Northern Plains Tobacco Prevention Project (NPTPP) will provide education and training for tribal members, tobacco coalition members, Healthy Start Case managers and local health professionals. The NPTPP will then track families pledging to maintain smoke-free homes and will monitor trends in American Indian children’s exposure to second-hand smoke.

Pledge cards, and more program information and is available through the Aberdeen Area Tribal Chairman’s Health Board and will be distributed to regional media and health facilities. Interviews can be scheduled by calling 1-866-203-1039.

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If Children Are Sacred, Shouldn't Their Air Be?

Families place a great value on the health and wellbeing of their children. Among Indian communities there is an understanding that children are sacred. However, many smokers are unaware of the potential dangers they expose their children, nieces, and nephews to when smoking in the home and in vehicles. Studies conducted by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) have shown that levels of indoor air pollution are far worse than outside.

Secondhand smoke, a toxic mixture of over 4,000 chemicals and 50 cancer causing agents, is known to be a killer. Secondhand smoke is a leading cause of preventable death in the United States, and is responsible for 30 times as many lung cancer deaths as all regulated air pollutants combined.

Children are placed at risk when they involuntarily inhale smoke emitted from a burning cigarette and smoke exhaled from others. The relationship between secondhand smoke and increased risk for cancer is so well documented that the EPA has listed it as a Group A carcinogen (compounds that are directly linked to cancer in humans).

Children are most vulnerable to secondhand smoke because their lungs and other organs are still developing. Consequently, studies have shown that secondhand smoke has negative effects on normal biological and cognitive development.

Children exposed to secondhand smoke are likely to have more difficulty in school, increased doctor visits for both middle ear and respiratory tract infections, and more frequent visits to the emergency room due to asthma and wheezing.

Secondhand smoke has been linked to between 8,000 to 26,000 new asthma cases, and 150,000 to 300,000 new cases of bronchitis and pneumonia in children annually. In addition, childhood exposure to secondhand smoke is associated with the development of asthma later on in life.

The Northern Plains Tobacco Prevention Project, an initiative of the Aberdeen Area Tribal Chairmen's Health Board offers parents 7 tips for preventing tobacco exposure in children. These include:

- **Stop Smoking!** More than half of all adults smokers have quit smoking. You can too!

- Do not allow smoking in your home or car. Children who breathe secondhand smoke are more likely to suffer from pneumonia, bronchitis, wheezing and coughing spells, ear infections, and more frequent and severe asthma attacks.
- If you must smoke, choose to smoke outside. Moving to another room or opening a window is **not** enough to protect your child from harm.
- Do not smoke while you are pregnant. Smoking while pregnant can lead to a number of complications such as low infant birth weight, Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), and problems with your baby's respiratory health.
- Be certain your child's school and/ or childcare facilities are smoke free.
- Do not allow people to smoke around your child. This includes babysitters, relatives, and friends.
- Talk to your child about the dangers of cigarettes, cigars, and other tobacco products.

Illness and disease caused by secondhand smoke are preventable. Those who understand Lakota language can remember hearing the phrase "wakanyeja wakanpi ca..." (the children are sacred), and understand that it is each community member's responsibility to protect the future generations. Changing our routine behavior, such as going outside to smoke may be difficult to some, but it is an excellent demonstration of love and respect for our relatives. If we believe that children are sacred we can take these important steps to ensure that the air they breathe is sacred by not smoking or allowing others to smoke in our homes and vehicles. To take the Smoke-Free Homes pledge or for more information about the harmful effects of secondhand smoke, call the Northern Plains Tobacco Prevention Project at (866) 203- 1039 or visit the project on the web at www.aatchb.org.

**Children who breathe secondhand smoke are more likely to suffer from lung disease, ear infections, and asthma?
Protect your children, Smoke Outside**