FACTS

• Smoking remains a major risk factor for two leading causes of death among Montana American Indians, cancer, heart disease, and COVID.\(^1\) Current cigarette smoking prevalence for American Indian adults is \(40\%\).\(^2\)

• 55\% of the American Indian adult current smokers have made a quit attempt in the past 12 months.\(^2\)

• Currently, 17\% of American Indian males use smokeless tobacco.\(^2\)

• A concerning 27\% of pregnant American Indian women smoke while pregnant,\(^4\) increasing the risk of low-birth rate babies and SIDS.

• E-cigarettes are the most popular nicotine product for youth! 29\% of American Indian youth currently use e-cigarettes and over 97\% of these users choose a flavored e-cigarette product.\(^3\)

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Indigenous Information

DID YOU KNOW?

- Indigenous People also refer to themselves as American Indian/Alaskan Native/Indigenous/Indian/Native.
- All American Indians, Alaskan Natives, first nations Tribes have some similar but very different identities and beliefs. For example, the word tobacco is a blanket word for many of the different Tribal blends and plants used for tobacco.
- Most Montana Tribes use a variety of Indigenous plants for their sacred and medicinal uses.
- Not every American Indian today is an enrolled member of their Tribe.
- Every American Indian, enrolled or non-enrolled, members or descendants, consider themselves to be a citizen of their Tribe and/or Tribes.

WORDS FROM THE FIELD:

“Our Culture is unique, but our addiction is not. For too long, Big Tobacco has exploited our people, manipulated our practices and profited from our addictions.” Rick Wolfname, Northern Cheyenne

“Many American Indian tribal nations and Indian people use tobacco or herbal blends referred to as tobacco for ceremonial purposes. Not all tribes may use tobacco in the same way but, in general, it is used for ceremony, prayers and healing.” Mike Jetty, Lakota

“When our practices were outlawed, picking tobacco in certain territories was restricted. The use of commercial tobacco made its way into the lives and ceremonies that way. Today, it is still prevalent but is used slightly different: used as an offering with prayer (not smoked), used as part of a mixture in the ceremonial pipe and not inhaled but sent back out of the mouth with prayers. Traditional Tobacco is treated with respect and the intent is far from abuse.” Diana Bigby, Nakoda

“In my 22 years of working in commercial tobacco prevention, it still shocks me when corporate companies exploit American Indians. To sell their deadly products American Spirit states: ‘If Native Americans can overlook, or at least tolerate, the unsolicited connection to their culture that these branding schemes inaccurately imply, techniques such as these are likely to increase sales’.” Charleena Penama, Salish

“American Indians do not get free stuff! There are 560 tribal governments recognized by the United States. These tribal governments have agreements with the federal government. This Doctrine of Trust Responsibility details services which may include accessing medicinal plants for traditional tobacco as part of the treaty agreements.” Dana Croff Kingfisher, Amskapi Pikuni/Aaniih

SOURCES


SIDENOTE

It’s important to recognize and dispel myths because their continuation only creates a static image of a community that is anything but uniform. The Indigenous community within the U.S. is incredibly complex, with its own political structure in relation to the federal and state governments, as well as varied culturally. Chelsea Hawkins, July 23, 2013, https://www.mic.com/articles/55557/3-myths-about-native-americans-that-need-to-be-put-to-rest