

Fond du Lac Builds a Smoke-free Culture of Health and Tradition

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A National Comprehensive Cancer Control Program Success Story

Summary

The 4,500 members of the Fond du Lac Reservation in Minnesota have reduced exposure to commercial tobacco products on some parts of the reservation thanks to new tribal policies that restrict its use in or near tribal buildings. This effort, led by the American Indian Cancer Foundation and three tribal health champions, educated Ojibwe tribal members about the danger of smoking commercial tobacco.

Challenge

Lung cancer is the second most commonly diagnosed cancer in Minnesota and the leading cause of cancer death in adults. American Indians have the highest rates of lung cancer and lung cancer deaths in Minnesota. Cigarette smoking is the number one risk factor.

In the United States, commercial tobacco is linked to about 80% to 90% of lung cancers.¹ Using other tobacco products such as cigars or pipes also increases the risk. More than 7,000 chemicals are found in tobacco smoke and at least 70 are known to cause cancer. Yet, close to 60% of American Indians in Minnesota smoke commercial tobacco.

The high smoking rates in Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa motivated tribal leaders and health educators to teach tribal members about the dangers of commercial tobacco and discourage its use.



Solution

Three Fond du Lac tribal health champion staff spent a decade laying the groundwork for an impactful smoke-free policy through strong, trusting relationships with tribal members and leaders. The champions advocated for cessation throughout the tribal system, explaining how important smoke-free environments are for quitting and the risks of second- and third-hand smoke to nonsmokers. In February 2015, these efforts led to the establishment of tobacco-free policies in tribal buildings, powwows, foster care, the first floor of one casino, and all dining and recreation areas of another casino.

The findings and conclusions in this success story are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official position of the funding agencies of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). To learn more about the National Comprehensive Cancer Control Program, visit www.cdc.gov/cancer/ncccp.



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Results

The smoke-free interventions initiated by the tribal champions led the Fond Du Lac Reservation Business Council to institute a policy requiring limited exposure to secondhand smoke in and around all tribal buildings, except casinos, in early 2015. Subsequently, restrictions on commercial tobacco use were implemented at five major outdoor powwows and on an entire floor of one casino. In 2016, tribal foster care environments and restaurants at Black Bear Casino Resort became smoke-free. This phased-in approach allowed champions to educate tribal members and get strong community support for the change.



“The Great Spirit put into place something (the tribal smoke-free policy) to help the people stop abusing his gift and use it in the proper cultural religious way.”

- Fond du Lac Elder

Future Directions

Increasing smoke-free environments and reducing commercial tobacco use will improve the health of the Fond du Lac tribal community. Fond du Lac’s enforceable commercial tobacco control policies will help make improvements in tribal health more sustainable.

Traditional tobacco, also known as *asemaa*, is and has been used in sacred ways by American Indians for centuries for cultural, spiritual and ceremonial purposes. Tribal health champions will continue to creatively encourage traditional tobacco use in tribal communities.

Your Involvement is Key

Any tribal health champion can tailor this framework to educate tribal governments and health care systems about ending the use of commercial tobacco. Success of the program is credited to dedicated staff and tribal champions focused on improving the environment. Fond du Lac provides ongoing educational trainings for tribal members throughout the week and on Saturdays. Find out more through the Fond du Lac Human Services Division by visiting <http://www.fdlrez.com/humanservices/index.htm>.

¹ https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/lung/basic_info/risk_factors.htm

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