

# SUCCESS STORY

## Communities Putting Prevention to Work

New Mexico

### New Mexico's Southwestern Tribes "Have a Heart" Campaign Recognizes Secondhand Smoke and Diabetes as a Dangerous Combination

The facts are clear—there is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke!<sup>1</sup> In fact, breathing cigarette smoke has immediate harmful effects on the cardiovascular system.<sup>1</sup> Given that people with diabetes are more likely to have heart problems<sup>2</sup> and breathing secondhand smoke increases the risk of a heart attack<sup>3</sup>; people with diabetes have urgent health reasons to avoid exposure to secondhand smoke. Although the state of New Mexico has a comprehensive smoke-free air law that prohibits smoking in worksites, restaurants, and bars; the law does not apply on tribal lands because tribes are sovereign nations. Thus, Native Americans in New Mexico living on tribal lands may continue to be exposed to secondhand smoke at tribal workplaces, restaurants and bars. Add in the 14% of Native Americans in New Mexico living with diabetes<sup>4</sup> and it is clear that exposure to secondhand smoke is an important issue for individuals living on tribal lands.

The New Mexico Department of Health decided to address these overlapping risk factors in the Southwest tribes. They capitalized on the existing recognition of diabetes in Native American communities by crafting a single message about diabetes and the less well known health dangers associated with secondhand smoke exposure. Using funding from Communities Putting Prevention to Work (CPPW), a collaboration was formed that brought together numerous partners, talent, and resources to develop an educational program focused on these two risk factors in Southwest tribal communities in New Mexico.

The partnerships' efforts resulted in the "Have a Heart" media campaign. The goal of the campaign is to communicate a health education message regarding secondhand smoke that takes into account the Native American values of preserving the beauty of their bodies (that includes addressing diabetes) and land. The campaign puts forth the message that secondhand smoke is jeopardizing the beauty of the Native American community because it creates a harmful environment for everyone and especially people living with diabetes. The campaign features heart-shaped pins that are attached to cards featuring artwork by various Native American artists from the communities where the cards are distributed. For example, cards distributed on the Navajo Nation feature the artwork of Navajo artists Anthony Chee Emerson and Emmi Whitehorse; cards distributed across the Jicarilla Apache Nation feature the artwork of Rod Velarde of the Jicarilla Apache Tribe. The message on the card encourages people to wear the pin to "show support and respect for people living with diabetes while reminding others to do their part to keep the air clear of secondhand cigarette smoke." This campaign also includes posters that echo the message and the artwork featured on the cards; radio ads in English and Diné placed on Navajo radio stations; and a video public service announcement featuring the photography of Navajo photographer Braden Nez that airs in Navajo Indian Health Service clinic waiting rooms.



"Fire Horses" by Anthony Chee Emerson



"Water Lily" by Emmi Whitehorse



"Bear Track Society" by Rod Velarde

The “Have a Heart” campaign is directed at friends and families of Native Americans living with diabetes. Although the campaign is currently tailored to the Navajo and Jicarilla Apache Nations, it will be expanded into other Native American communities and will be tailored to each individual group’s unique culture.

At the “Have a Heart” campaign’s midpoint this initiative is considered a success because

- It has brought together diverse partners such as the New Mexico Department of Health Tobacco Use Prevention and Control Program, the New Mexico Department of Health Diabetes Prevention and Control Program, the Southwest Tribal Tobacco Coalition, the San Juan County Partnership, the Black Hills Center for American Indian Health, the New Mexico Diabetes Advisory Council, the Navajo Nation Special Diabetes Project, the Southwest Navajo Tobacco Education Prevention Project and the Jicarilla Apache Health and Fitness Center.
- The campaign development process was inclusive and respectful of tribal cultures.
- The campaign has resulted in getting new partners interested in tobacco control.
- The campaign messages have received positive support from the Southwestern Tribal audience.
- The media campaign and materials also are being used to educate people about the dangers of secondhand smoke.

This educational campaign is expected to contribute to the public health effort in New Mexico to save lives and money by combining resources and leveraging messages to eliminate health disparities. Supporters of the “Have a Heart” campaign are hopeful that this hard work will result in an environment that supports the beauty and health of the community.

### Contact:

#### New Mexico Tobacco Use Prevention and Control Program

<http://www.nmtupac.com/>

### References:

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