

SUCCESS STORY

OKLAHOMA

Talking Circles: *A Guide to Tribal Health Disparities*

Smoking is the leading cause of preventable death in the United States and Native Americans in Oklahoma use tobacco at rates higher than the state as a whole.^{1,2} To identify barriers preventing tribal members from learning about using available tobacco control programs, the Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH) and its tribal partners are using talking circles to better understand how to reduce tobacco use among Native Americans. The OSDH worked with tribal populations to develop a multimedia campaign, Honor What is Sacred, focused on honoring traditions, healthy lifestyles, and your body by distinguishing between ceremonial and commercial use of tobacco.

Oklahoma has 38 federally recognized tribal headquarters. Nearly one-third of the adult Native American population in Oklahoma currently smoke cigarettes.² Until recently no materials were tailored to the six distinct Southern Plains Tribes, a significant part of the population in Oklahoma. OSDH and Oklahoma Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust (TSET) used Communities Putting Prevention to Work (CPPW) funds to capitalize on existing relationships and provide additional resources to develop a tobacco cessation media campaign for these tribes. Honor What is Sacred encourages Native Americans to quit using commercial tobacco while still recognizing the importance of ceremonial tobacco.

Talking circles conducted by tribal members captured the voice and symbols of the different tribal nations for the media campaign. Talking circles are part of Native American culture, in which one person speaks while holding a Talking Stick. This allows for impartial listening, the time to speak, and demonstrates respect for elders by not feeling rushed by the typical focus group setting. With the tribes, OSDH and TSET created a campaign of billboards, print ads, and radio commercials tailored for six distinct Southern Plains Tribes, with a unified theme, to Honor What is Sacred. The same message is used across the campaign, but the symbols, colors, designs, and voices of other tribal leadership. The campaign will have a follow-up evaluation at a later date.



CPPW provided funding for billboards in tribal lands, ads in tribal newspapers and newsletters, statewide travel papers, and on tribal radio stations. CPPW also provided funds for the Oklahoma Tobacco Quitline to accommodate additional calls as an anticipated campaign result. The ads debuted September 2010 and tribal partners have expressed enthusiasm about the beauty and uniqueness of the campaign, which captures the voice of Tribal Nations in Oklahoma. Leaders and elders in a tribe are displayed on giant billboards in counties where tribal members live, are unique to a specific tribe, and have approval from chiefs and other tribal leadership. The campaign will have a follow-up evaluation at a later date.

Sustainability was ensured in that all tribes have full authority and ownership of the campaign; and some have purchased additional billboards and placed additional print ads beyond what was funded through CPPW. The OSDH also identified addition-

al funds to do additional runs of the campaign. "It's really been an effort of blending together these multiple partners, multiple tribal nations, multiple funding strengths, but with a singular vision of trying to do a better job of bridging out in a way that's deeply meaningful to our tribal partners, in a way that they believe is important to them," said Sally Carter, interim service

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chief, Tobacco Use Prevention Service and OSDH tribal liaison CPPW funding provided the OSDH the opportunity to continue working on the state's tobacco control program infrastructure by building relationships with tribal partners. It also supported an innovative media campaign specifically tailored to multiple Southern Plains Tribes in Oklahoma. Although a full evaluation has yet to be completed, based on early responses and expected results from media campaigns it is anticipated that Oklahoma will see increased numbers of calls to the quitline and quit attempts from members of these tribes—two outcomes that reflect the shared vision of the participating tribes and the state agencies involved.

REFERENCES

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Smoking-Attributable Mortality, Years of Potential Life Lost, and Productivity. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Smoking-Attributable Mortality, Years of Potential Life Lost, and Productivity Losses—United States, 2000-2004. *MMWR* 2008;57(45):1226-1228.
2. Oklahoma State Department of Health Tobacco Use Prevention Service. Key Facts Web site. Available at http://www.ok.gov/health/Disease,_Prevention,_Preparedness/Tobacco_Use_Prevention_Service/Facts_and_Data/Key_Facts.html.

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