

**Testimony**  
**Health Services Committee**  
**Wednesday, January 8, 2014**  
**North Dakota Department of Health**

Good morning, Chairwoman Lee and members of the Health Services Committee. My name is Krista Fremming, and I am the Tobacco Prevention and Control Program Director at the North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH).

Tobacco Prevention and Control on North Dakota's Indian Reservations

The NDDoH has provided funding and technical assistance to each tribe to implement tobacco prevention and control initiatives since 2002 through funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In 2009, when the responsibility to fund local public health unit tobacco programs shifted from the NDDoH to the Center for Tobacco Prevention and Control Policy, the NDDoH was able to increase funding to each tribe from \$10,000 annually to \$60,000 to \$80,000 annually, depending on the tribal program. The increase in funding has enabled each tribal tobacco program to fund full-time positions, which has resulted in a corresponding increase in tobacco prevention work being done on each reservation.

Each reservation has a Tribal Tobacco Prevention Coordinator, who is an enrolled member of the tribe. Each Coordinator has received training in basic tobacco prevention and tribal tobacco prevention. Some objectives each Tribal Tobacco Program staff have established include:

- Educate youth and the public on the dangers of commercial tobacco use.
- Engage health-care personnel and tribal health stakeholders to manage chronic diseases adversely affected by tobacco use.
- Implement tobacco-free policies in public buildings, on school campuses and in tribal housing.
- Collaborate with the Northern Plains Tribal Tobacco Technical Assistance Center to educate Community Health Representatives using culturally-specific materials on motivational interviewing to assess tobacco use with their clients.
- Educate reservation citizens on the dangers of secondhand smoke.
- Actively participate in the Intertribal Tobacco Abuse Coalition to coordinate statewide efforts to provide more effective tobacco prevention services and develop appropriate resources.

- Actively partner with Tribal Prevention Coordinators funded by the Department of Human Services to more effectively deliver prevention services.
- Evaluate readiness and implement tobacco taxes on reservations.

Collaboration takes place on many levels within the Tribal Tobacco Prevention Programs. On each reservation, the Tribal Tobacco Program staff work closely with the Tribal Prevention Program staff, funded by the North Dakota Department of Human Services, to coordinate activities between programs. In most cases, staff is co-located in the same office. Tribal Tobacco Program staff also collaborates with tribal health programs (cancer, diabetes, etc.) and health-care providers. The Tribal Coordinators ensure that their respective tribal councils are kept informed of tribal tobacco prevention activities.

On a statewide level, a great deal of collaboration takes place through the Intertribal Tobacco Use Coalition (ITAC), which is made up of tribal tobacco and prevention staff from each reservation as well as community members and other stakeholders, including the North Dakota Indian Affairs Commission and the Northern Plains Tribal Tobacco Technical Assistance Center. ITAC meets quarterly and each tribal tobacco program hosts one meeting per year at their reservation.

There are also regional collaborations that engage experts and representatives from several tribes from the upper Midwest through the Northern Plains Tribal Tobacco Technical Assistance Center and the Cansasa Coalition. The Cansasa Coalition exists to educate American Indians and the public on the differences between commercial and traditional tobacco use and to shift cultural norms so that commercial tobacco use is no longer seen as socially acceptable.

On December 13, 2013, the NDDoH coordinated a tribal tobacco strategic session to discuss effective processes to reduce tribal tobacco use. Organizations attending included the North Dakota Indian Affairs Commission, the Center for Tobacco Prevention and Control Policy, NDSU Master of Public Health program, local public health, and NDDoH. Attendees agreed formal tribal tobacco strategic planning is needed to identify the best strategy to address tobacco use on the reservations. The North Dakota Indian Affairs Commission will be taking the lead on moving this process forward.

Tobacco Prevention and Control Outcomes

Following are some of the outcomes that have been achieved through the tribal tobacco prevention and control programs.

**Tobacco/Smoke-Free Policies in Schools**

*MHA Nation*

<b>School Name</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>Tobacco-Free</b>	<b>Smoke-Free</b>
Edwin Loe Elementary School	New Town		
Four Bears Community College	New Town		X
Mandaree Public School	Mandaree	X	
New Town High School	New Town	X	
Parshall Elementary School	Parshall		
Parshall High School	Parshall		X
Twin Buttes	Twin Buttes	X	
White Shield Public School	White Shield	X	

*Spirit Lake*

<b>School Name</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>Tobacco-Free</b>	<b>Smoke-Free</b>
Cankdeska Cikana Community College	Fort Totten		
Four Winds Community High School	Fort Totten	X	
Oberon Public School	Oberon	X	
Tate Topa Tribal School	Fort Totten	X	
Warwick Public School	Warwick	X	

*Standing Rock*

<b>School Name</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>Tobacco-Free</b>	<b>Smoke-Free</b>
Cannonball Elementary School	Cannonball	X	
Fort Yates Middle School	Fort Yates	X	
Sitting Bull College	Fort Yates		
Selfridge Public School	Selfridge		
Solen High School	Cannonball	X	
Standing Rock Community Elementary School	Fort Yates	X	
Standing Rock Community Grant High School	Fort Yates	X	
St. Bernard Mission School	Fort Yates		

*Turtle Mountain*

<b>School Name</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>Tobacco-Free</b>	<b>Smoke-Free</b>
Ojibwa Indian School	Belcourt	X	
St. Ann’s Catholic School	Belcourt		
Turtle Mountain Community Elementary School	Belcourt	X	
Turtle Mountain Community Middle School	Belcourt	X	
Turtle Mountain Community High School	Belcourt	X	
Turtle Mountain Community College	Belcourt		X

**Tobacco/Smoke-Free Policies in Public Buildings and Tribal Housing**

All reservations have smoke-free tribal buildings; none have smoke-free housing at this point. Work will continue to establish more public spaces and housing units as smoke-free.

**NDQuits Enrollments**

Enrollments in NDDoH’s statewide cessation program, NDQuits, have been on the increase for American Indians in North Dakota. In FY13, a total of 152 enrollees were American Indian; in FY14 there have been 125 enrollees who were American Indian during the months of July through November.

**Smoke-Free Casino Project**

The NDDoH is partnering with the Intertribal Tobacco Abuse Coalition (ITAC) to address the issue of smoke-free casinos on a statewide level. By working with all of the tribal casinos simultaneously, fears about lost revenue from patrons who might go to another North Dakota casino if one goes smoke-free can be eliminated. The planning phase of this project is currently underway and education/implementation of the new policies can be expected within the next one to two years.

It should be noted that there have been successes in implementation of smoke-free policies already. Sky Dancer Casino in Belcourt has a ‘mini-casino’ with a comprehensive smoke-free policy. Four Bears Casino in New Town does not allow smoking in the main areas of the casino, only in a separate designated room. Steps like these are important because they foster community buy-in and pave the way for more comprehensive policies that will better protect casino patrons and workers in the future.

**Tobacco Tax**

Standing Rock implemented a tobacco user fee in the early 1990s that effectively taxes tobacco at the same rate as the state does. Turtle Mountain is currently in conversations with the Office of the State Tax Commissioner on implementation of a similar fee.

This concludes my testimony. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.