

# WABANAKI

## Public Health District Profile and Outcomes

Maine's 9th Public Health District is the Wabanaki Public Health District. This district serves the four federally recognized Maine Tribes located on five reservations.

*District Tobacco Prevention Partner: Wabanaki Public Health*

### Understanding Data Limitations

Data from state and federal sources is often unreliable and does not accurately capture information about the tribal populations in Maine. These surveys do not collect a representative sample, as only self-identified racial data is collected. Additionally, the data does not reflect if those respondents are citizens of one of the four tribes in Maine, citizens of tribes outside of Maine, or live on tribal lands. For this reason, the 2010 Wabanaki Health Assessment (the largest health assessment/ data set of tribal people east of the Mississippi) was implemented. The findings support national data that shows that American Indians/Alaska Native (AI/AN) populations experience disproportionately higher rates of commercial tobacco use than all other U.S. populations.



### Culture is Prevention: The Wabanaki Public Health Approach

Wabanaki Public Health (WPH) approaches tobacco in two ways. First is the traditional use of tobacco as one the four medicines in Wabanaki Culture. The second focuses on reducing exposure to secondhand smoke through tribal policy, referrals to the Maine Tobacco HelpLine, and preventing initial use by our tribal youth.

#### Traditional Tobacco

A community tobacco garden was built at the Penobscot Nation Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Advocacy Center. Community health fairs are held regularly where WPH disseminates messages that reinforce keeping tobacco sacred and that Culture is Prevention.

#### Commercial Tobacco

WPH coordinates the tribal youth councils where youth are taught the Prime for Life and Sidekicks curriculum. We coordinate with tribal housing authorities around smoke-free housing policies. Currently, there is a smoke-free policy which is being considered by the four Wabanaki Tribes. WPH works with non-clinical settings, such as the tribal WIC office, to refer tribal members to the Maine Tobacco HelpLine.

### Smoke and Tobacco-Free Policies Implemented:

**Behavioral Health:** 1 policy passed for an organization that has 15 employees and 1,500 clients.

**Multi-Unit Housing:** 1 policy passed that covers 4 buildings with 35 units and 43 tenants.

