

Teaching Indigenous Youth about Tobacco Prevention

A Traditional Tobacco Garden Success Story

Summary: The Wetamaweyi (Tobacco) Educator at Wabanaki Public Health and Wellness (WPHW) uses strong community relationships to partner with Tribal Youth Programs to promote traditional tobacco education and prevent commercial tobacco usage. A Traditional Tobacco Garden was created to support tribal communities and are encouraging youth to build their connections to the land and each other through these cultural teachings.

Need/Issue (or "Challenge")

According to the Centers for Disease Control, "preventing tobacco product use among youth is critical to ending the tobacco epidemic in the United States. Commercial tobacco product use is started and established primarily during adolescence."¹

Rural Indigenous youth are considered an at risk population. Along with their social determinants of health, these youth are at higher risk than youth in the same geographic region to start using commercial tobacco.



Intervention/ Program Description

WPHW has developed a strong relationship with the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians: Boys and Girls Club. Together, we created a Traditional Tobacco Garden to promote tobacco prevention messages and teachings. For three weeks, Tribal youth attended program for four days per week to participate in traditional practices and learn about cultural and traditional tobacco.

Results/ Success

Planting the traditional medicine gardens encouraged strong cultural identity and offered educational opportunities for youth to learn the differences between commercial and traditional tobacco. These social and environmental factors will lower smoking levels among Indigenous youth.

"The Traditional Tobacco Garden is a great addition and education point for our program and environment!"
– Maliseet youth

Sustainability

The Traditional Tobacco Garden provides ties to cultural traditional tobacco education and will be presented as a traditional medicine that returns every year. The Traditional Tobacco Garden was planted and designed by youth participants who will maintain and care for the medicine with respect.

For more information, please contact:

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Wabanaki Public
Health & Wellness



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Maine Center for Disease Control & Prevention
Department of Health and Human Services

¹Youth and Tobacco Use | Smoking and Tobacco Use | CDC
https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/youth_data/tobacco_use/index.htm