



AIR IS LIFE
Nítch'í éí bee iiná

*The Navajo Nation Nit'ch' éí Bee Ííńá –
Air is Life Act: The Passing of a Historic
Commercial Tobacco Policy in the
Navajo Nation”*

Hershel W. Clark, MPH
Air is Life Health Coalition

AIR IS LIFE

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The 18-Year Journey...

- SNTEPP: Background
- Advocacy and Coalitions
- Commercial Tobacco Policy Efforts
- Research & Data
- Passing of the Navajo Air is Life Act
- Moving Forward



Dr. Patricia Nez-Henderson

Difference Between Commercial Tobacco vs. Dzil Nat'oh (Mountain Smoke)

Dzil Nat'oh

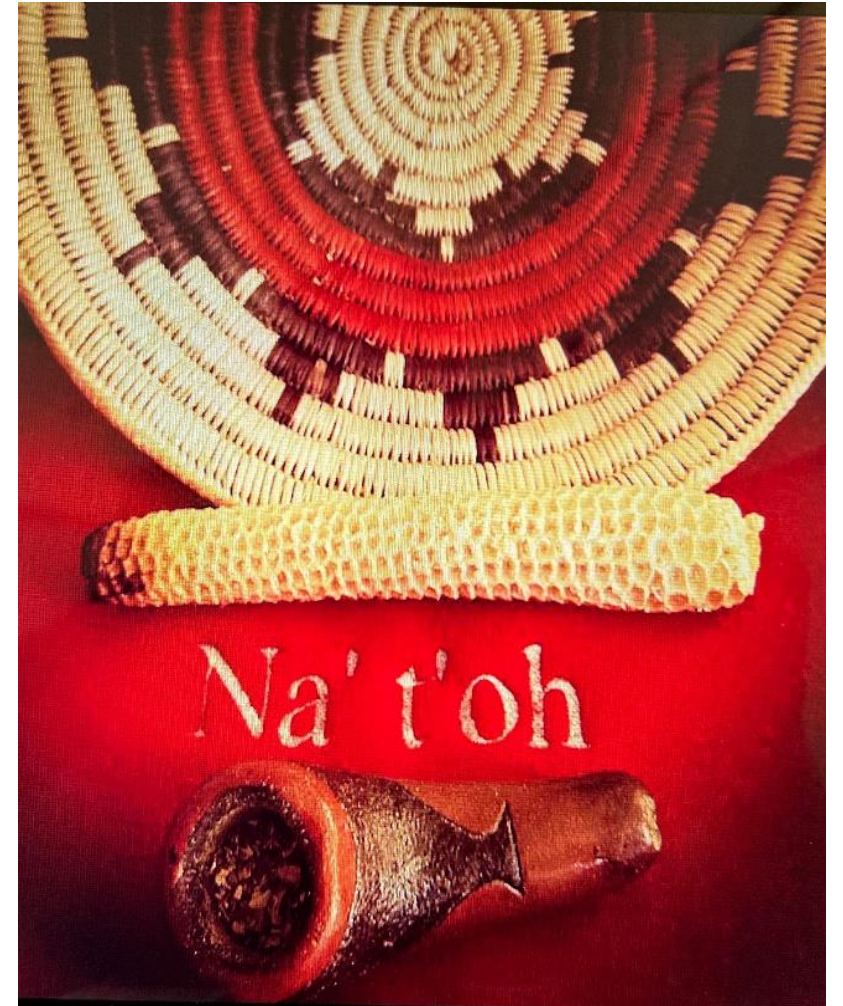


Commercial Tobacco



Tobacco and Navajo Culture

- Navajo Nation is a sovereign nation in 3 states: Arizona, New Mexico and Utah – 400,000 tribal members – state policy does not apply to tribes.
- Diné beliefs recognize four sacred plants: corn (east), beans (south), quash (west), and tobacco (north) – diet and health.
- Dził Nat'oh (ceremonial tobacco) plays a significant role in Navajo culture (tobacco songs, prayers, offerings, oral stories, and health).



SNTEPP – Prevention and Education



- 2005 SNTEPP established
- First Time commercial tobacco was discussed in **Navajo Nation** – limited education, resources, and data that is specific to Navajo
- **SNTEPP Team** outreach into Navajo communities – Prevention and Education activities with Navajo chapter houses, schools, traditional healers and organizations, grassroots efforts, etc.
- **2006 Team Navajo Health Coalition** established – grassroots organization comprises of health advocates, professionals, community stake holders, tribal members, students, elected leaders, traditional healers, state, tribal, and national representation, etc. (120 members)
- Goal is to involve Navajo communities in efforts to address tobacco control efforts in Navajo Nation
- **Advocacy, Education, Research, and Policy...**

TEAM Navajo Health Coalition





**The Navajo Nation Commercial Tobacco
Free Act 2008 **Vetoed****

**The Navajo Nation Commercial Tobacco
Free Act 2009 **Killed on Floor****

**Navajo Nation President Shelly's Executive
Order 2011 **Attorney General did not signed****

**The Navajo Nation Commercial Tobacco Free
Act 2011 **Did not get through Council
Committees****

**Navajo Nation Smoking Regulation
Act of 2011 **Gaming Enterprise Legislation
was Vetoed by President****

Navajo Nation Commercial Tobacco Free Act 2008

Navajo Nation President vetoed the 2008 Commercial Tobacco-free Policy based on 3 issues:

- Policy would infringe on the use of commercial tobacco in bone fide religious ceremonies
- It was an unfunded mandate
- Casinos would be at a financial disadvantage if policy was passed

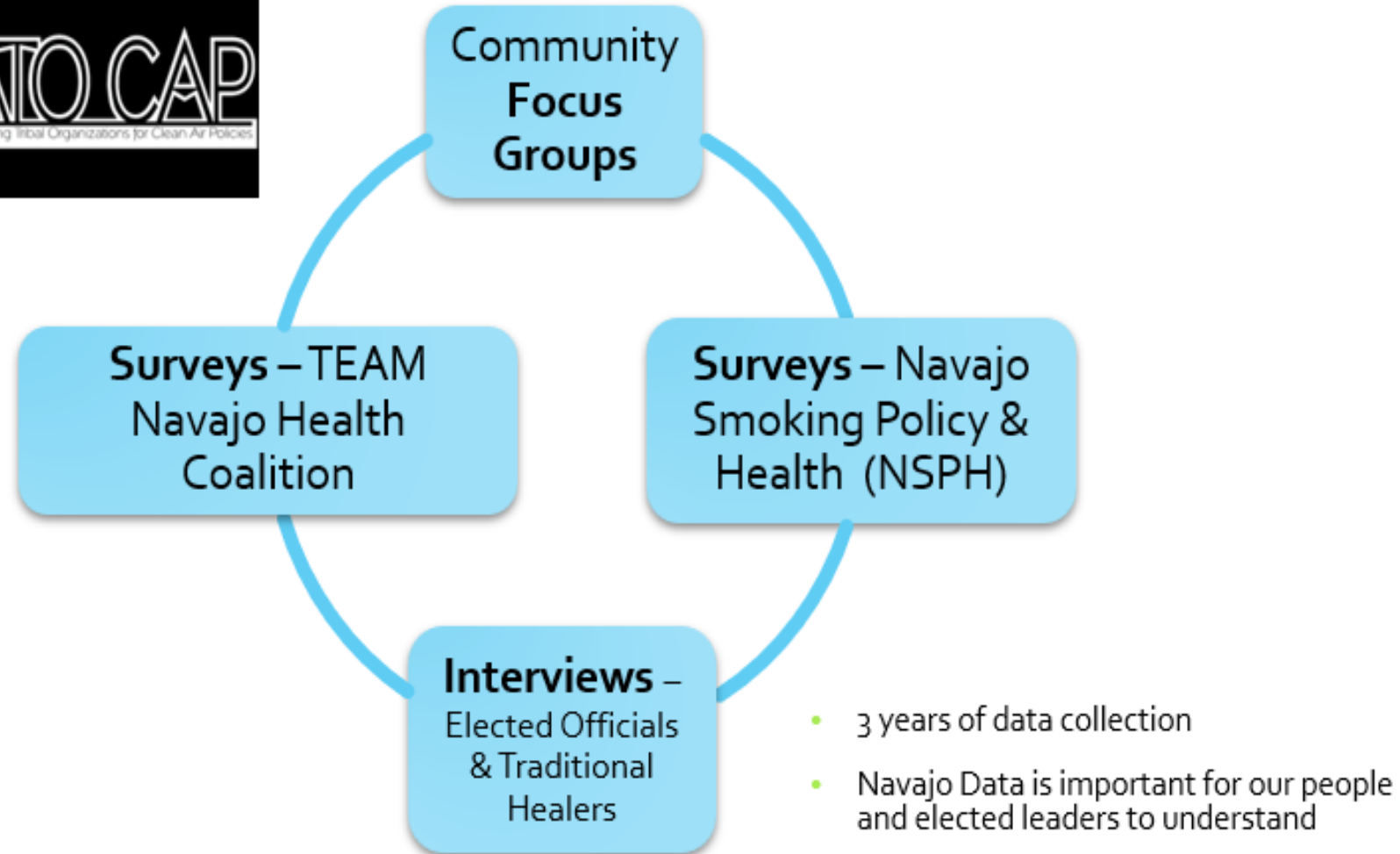


Commercial Tobacco-free Policy Efforts Continue Despite Challenges

- 2011- Navajo Nation Commercial Tobacco Taxation Act increased excise taxes on cigarette taxes by 60 cents.
- 2014- Navajo Nation Commercial Tobacco-free Executive Order 12-2014 was signed by Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly. Policy only covered the Executive Branch of the Navajo Nation.



Navajo Research Study



Networks Among Tribal Organizations for Clean Air Policy (NATO CAP) Attitudes, beliefs and discussions related to the debate about commercial smoke-free regulations in Navajo Nation

What We Learned from Our Data

Political support for commercial smoke-free environments is high, but concerns about economic impact were a main theme

Data highlighted the importance of Navajo cultural protocols, teachings and values related to tobacco use.

Navajo traditional healers play a vital role in tobacco control and prevention efforts and decision-making for the Navajo Nation.

Majority of participants were supportive of a no commercial tobacco smoking indoors, including Navajo Casinos.



Navajo Traditional Healer Perspectives

Navajo Traditional Healer Perspectives on Commercial Tobacco: A Digital Story Project

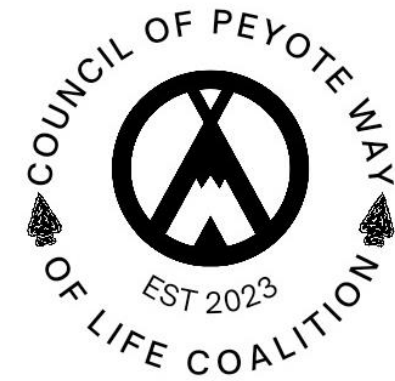
A 4-Part Educational Video Series

The Digital Story Project is a component of the National Cancer Institute funded "Networks Among Tribal Organizations for Clean Air Policies (NATO CAP)". NATO CAP is a community-based participatory research project aimed at studying efforts towards commercial tobacco smoke-free policy on Diné Nation and related discussions.





Navajo Traditional Healer Organizations





Commercial Tobacco-Free Policies within Navajo Traditional Organizations

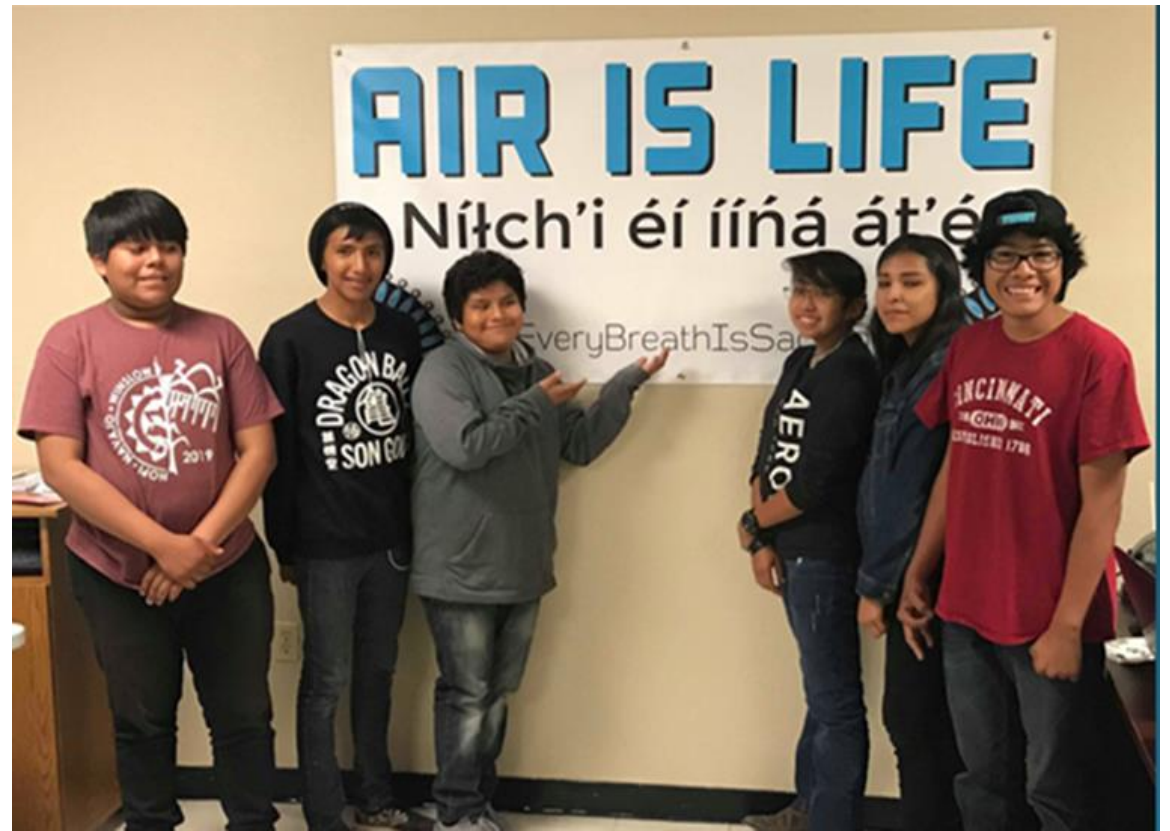


On February 8, 2014, Azeé Bee Nahaghá of Dine' Nation passed a commercial tobacco-free policy in the Constitution and Bylaws.

Peoples Initiative

2017 - Navajo Nation Peoples of Initiative for Commercial Tobacco-Free Policy of 2017 failed – lack of voter signatures





Air is Life Youth Coalition

- Develops Youth Leadership
- Addresses commercial tobacco with community
- Builds Team Workshop Skills
- Builds Leadership Skills in Activism
- Develop Skills in How To Take Action

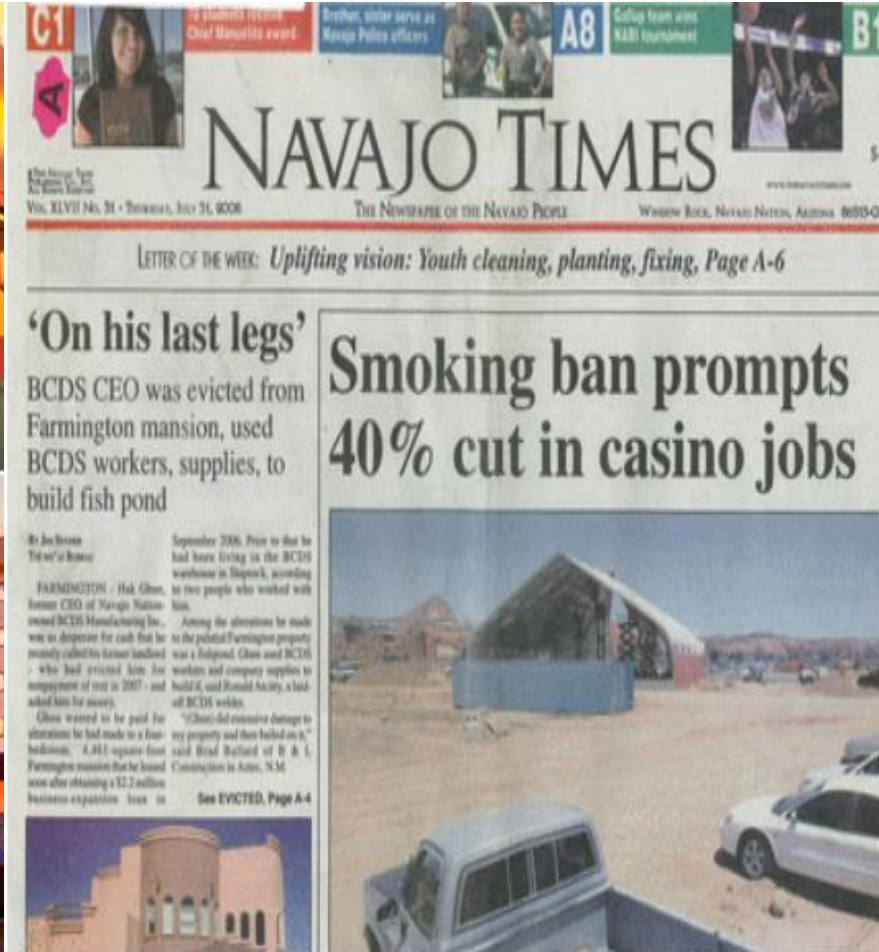


What Happened During COVID-19?

Tribal Casino Re-opening 100% Smoke-Free



Navajo Nation Gaming Enterprise has 3,000 employees





★ I SUPPORT A SMOKE FREE ★
NAVAJO NATION

AIR IS LIFE

Nítch'í éí ííńá át'é

**Our Navajo Casino Workers
have the RIGHT to Work in
a SMOKEFREE Workplace!**



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Passing of the Navajo Air is Life Act

- Traditional Healers: Tobacco ceremony & offering – spiritual guidance
- Tribal Policy reflects the culture: Navajo Nation Nítch' éí Bee Ííńá - Air is Life Act of 2021 (Fundamental Law)
- The Air is Life Act prohibited only CT in public places & workplaces –
- Educate communities: webinars, tribal radio forums, newspaper ads, flyers, word of mouth etc.
- Social media: Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter pages
- Online Petition: tribal and non-tribal
- Community LOS (36 Chapter House)
- Agency LOS (4 of 5)
- Over 100 LOS were submitted to the Navajo Nation
- Create educational packages for elected leaders (Tribal Data, CDC, etc.)
- Send emails to tribal leaders! (1K emails)
- Coalition Meetings (over 30 times)
- Identifying a sponsor that will fight for the cause & passionate about the issue!

Passing of the Navajo Air is Life Act

Honorable Daniel Tso, Chair of the HEHSC
main sponsor

Act went through all 4 Navajo Committees

Multiple attempts to add an exemption for
Navajo Gaming to be excluded

On October 19, 24th Navajo Nation Council
passed Legislation with a vote of 20 in favor
& 3 opposed

Health message echo by our leaders

Ten Day period... President Nez



[Final Vote Oct 14: Navajo Air Is Life Act – YouTube](#)

**Navajo Nation Nítch' éí Bee Ííná –Air is
Life Act of 2021**

CO-58-21

RESOLUTION OF THE
NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL
24th NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL - THIRD YEAR, 2021

AN ACT
RELATING TO HEALTH, EDUCATION AND HUMAN SERVICES, LAW AND ORDER,
BUDGET AND FINANCE AND NAABIK'ÍYÁTI' COMMITTEES AND THE NAVAJO
NATION COUNCIL; ENACTING THE NAVAJO NATION NÍTCH' ÉÍ BEE ÍÍNÁ -
AIR IS LIFE ACT OF 2021

“The health of our people is important to our future.” “Health studies and the data show us that you live a shorter life with every cigarette you light or secondhand smoke you inhale.”
– *Speaker Seth Damon*



“Niitch’ éí Bee Ííńá represents the oxygen we breathe to live and exist everyday.” “We need to protect our people at all costs and this includes our hard-working staff employed by the casinos.”

– *Delegate Nate Brownn*

The Air is Life Act is important to the livelihood of our families. Now more than ever, we need to protect the quality of our sacred, life-giving force, our air,”

– *Delegate Carl Slater*

Final Vote Oct 14: Navajo Air Is Life Act



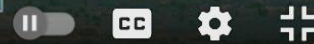
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15 in favor
8 opposed



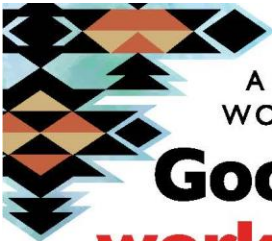
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[Final Vote Oct 14: Navajo Air Is Life Act – YouTube](#)



On November 6, 2021, President Nez and VP Myron Lizer signed the historic health policy Navajo Nation Nítch' éí Bee Íiná Air is Life Act of 2021 into law. (Note: It took 13 years to pass the law).



A SMOKEFREE
WORKPLACE IS

Good for workers & businesses

100% smokefree workplaces = cost savings for employers.

Lower fire and liability insurance

Lower cleaning costs

Fewer employee sick days

Lower employee turnover

AIR IS LIFE
Nítch'i éí ííná át'é

Higher worker productivity

Lower maintenance costs

Lower healthcare costs

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Save Lives, Save Money: Make Your Business Smoke-Free. Atlanta, Georgia: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, June 2006.



Ahéhee'



Thank You
Navajo Nation
for Reopening
Our Navajo Casinos
100% SMOKE-FREE!



#BreathingCleanAirlsHozhó
#EveryBreathIsSacred #AirlsLife



TOBACCO TAX INCREASE FOR NAVAJO NATION

- **Commercial Tobacco Tax Increase** on all commercial tobacco products include;
 - Cigarettes, cigars, smokeless (chew) tobacco, hookah, etc.
 - **E-cigarettes** (currently not taxed)
 - All other nicotine products at 45%
 - Earmark funds toward the Navajo Department of Health.
 - 20% to Navajo Traditional healers and organizations
 - Office of Tradition, Cultural, & Spiritual Healing Advisory
 - Seed Funds
- **Air is Life Petition, LOS, etc.**

The Air is Life Health Coalition will be proposing the **Navajo Nation Commercial Tobacco Tax of 2024** to the 25th Navajo Nation Council. This legislation will increase all commercial tobacco taxes, including e-cigarettes/vaping in Navajo Nation.

Let us make Navajo Nation a Healthier Nation.

SIGN OUR PETITION

FOR MORE INFO:

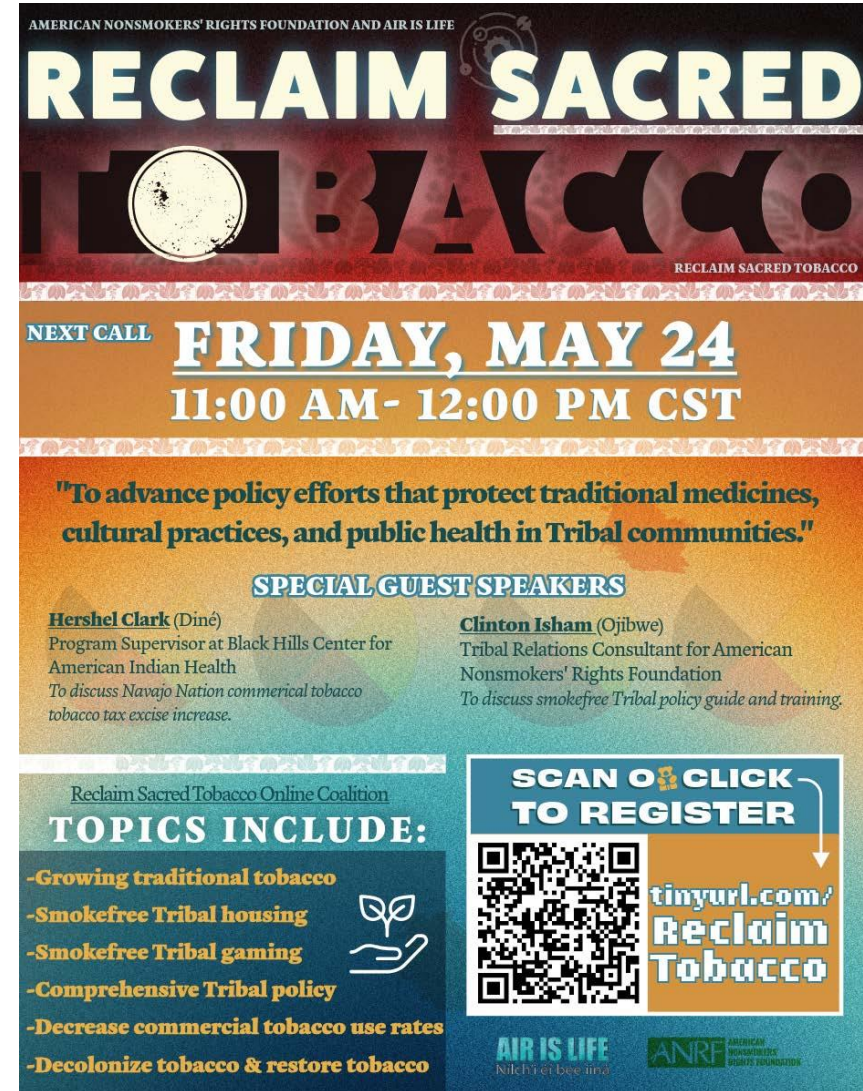
Visit: www.navajoairislife.com

SNTEPP **AIR IS LIFE**
NILCHTI ET BEE IINA

SCAN ME TO SIGN PETITION

RECLAIM SACRED TOBACCO COALITION

- Established the "Reclaim Sacred Tobacco" initiative with the American Nonsmokers' Rights Foundation
- Discuss policy efforts, challenges, highlights, and other topics on commercial tobacco prevention and control among Tribal communities nationwide.
- Share culturally appropriate approaches to reclaiming ceremonial tobacco, ways to strengthen Tribal sovereignty, and provide ceremonial tobacco to tribal communities.
- Working on developing a Tribal tobacco toolkit.
- **Casino Patron Survey** – Indoor Smoking Preference in Casinos



AMERICAN NONSMOKERS' RIGHTS FOUNDATION AND AIR IS LIFE

RECLAIM SACRED TOBACCO

RECLAIM SACRED TOBACCO

NEXT CALL **FRIDAY, MAY 24**
11:00 AM - 12:00 PM CST

"To advance policy efforts that protect traditional medicines, cultural practices, and public health in Tribal communities."

SPECIAL GUEST SPEAKERS

Hershel Clark (Diné)
Program Supervisor at Black Hills Center for American Indian Health
To discuss Navajo Nation commercial tobacco tobacco tax excise increase.


Clinton Isham (Ojibwe)
Tribal Relations Consultant for American Nonsmokers' Rights Foundation
To discuss smokefree Tribal policy guide and training.

Reclaim Sacred Tobacco Online Coalition

TOPICS INCLUDE:

- Growing traditional tobacco
- Smokefree Tribal housing
- Smokefree Tribal gaming
- Comprehensive Tribal policy
- Decrease commercial tobacco use rates
- Decolonize tobacco & restore tobacco

SCAN OR CLICK TO REGISTER

 tinyurl.com/ReclaimTobacco

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ANRF
AMERICAN NONSMOKERS' RIGHTS FOUNDATION

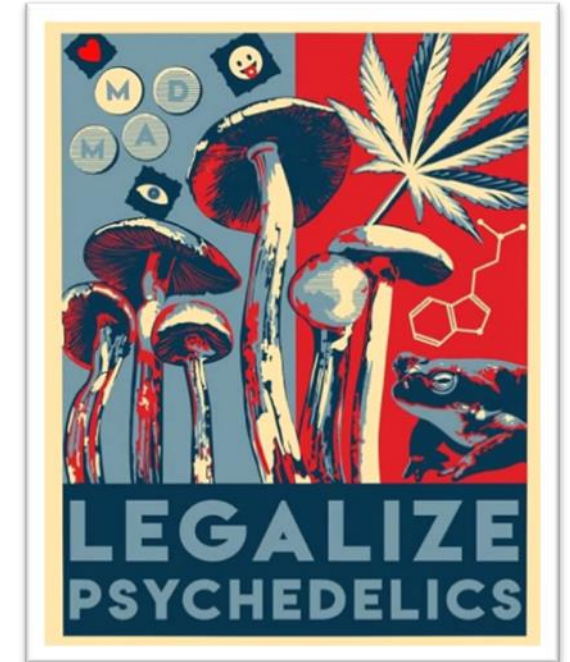
Reclaim & Protect Ceremonial Tobacco: It's a Process!

- ✓ Education & Prevention
- ✓ Research (History)
- ✓ Advocacy
- ✓ Policy
- ✓ Future Generation!



Psychedelic Movement: Interest in Indigenous Plants

- Non-Indians, public health, and pharmaceutical interest groups
- Expanding access to plant-based medicine for “Spiritual Growth”
- [This includes Nicotine and Indigenous tobacco plants...](#)
- Scientific studies/data to improve human health (public health reasons)
 - Treat for depression, anxiety, PTSD, and substance-related disorders.
 - Incorporate into healthcare systems (therapeutic models – serious concern!)
 - Financial Interest groups (pharmaceutical companies, private commercialization funders, etc.) - \$\$\$
 - Free thinking by non-Indians who believe what is “nature” belongs to everybody... (not understanding of Indigenous connections to plants).
 - Psychedelic Policy Drug Movement
 - Decriminalize and legalize plant-based medicines
 - Tribal Consultation is important!



More Information

Díí Kwe'é Aná'í Binát'oh
Doo Choo'íí Da



Ahéhee'!
Thank you!



Navajo Nation Code No. 58-21

Countdown to Law
Going Into Effect

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23 11 30 43
Days Hours Mins Secs

HOME ABOUT AIR IS LIFE DOWNLOAD THE COMMERCIAL SMOKE-FREE SIGN GET THE FACTS More

Welcome to:

Air is Life Health

www.navajoairislife.com



SCAN ME TO SIGN PETITON



**Sign the Petition in Support of
the Navajo Nation Commerical
Tobacco Tax of 2024**

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Ahe'hee!
(Thank You)

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Sierra Wilcox: swilcox@bhcaih.org