

# Differences of Traditional vs. Commercial Tobacco

It is important to understand the difference between the two types of tobacco that may be used by American Indian and Alaskan Native people (AI/AN)<sup>1</sup>. Making a distinction between traditional tobacco and commercial tobacco means respecting sacred, religious, and traditional use of the tobacco plant, an important part of AI/AN culture.

## What is Traditional Tobacco?<sup>1,2,3</sup>



Tobacco and other plant mixtures that are grown or harvested with no added chemicals and have been used by AI/AN nations for thousands of years as a medicine with cultural and spiritual importance. Traditional tobacco use varies with each Tribe.

The common understanding is that traditional tobacco focuses on the process of tending, gathering and using the tobacco in a respectful manner in accordance with Tribal guidance.

### Traditional tobacco is:

- Sacred, ceremonial
- Rarely inhaled into the lungs
- Gathered or grown locally
- Prayerful
- Natural
- Deliberate, thoughtful
- Not addictive
- Healing, medicinal
- Process Driven
- Respected
- Used as an offering

## What is Commercial Tobacco?<sup>1,3</sup>



Tobacco products that contain altered tobacco plants with added chemicals. Made by companies and sold in stores and online. These products include harmful toxins. Commercial tobacco is product and profit-driven, with no connection to spiritual or respectful use.

### Commercial Tobacco is:

- Recreational
- Inhaled
- Not sacred
- For profit
- Addictive, habitual
- Disease causing
- Processed
- Casual
- Product Driven

## Commercial Tobacco Use Health Risks<sup>4</sup>

The health risks of commercial tobacco use are well known and include:

- » Lung Cancer
- » Colon Cancer
- » Breast Cancer
- » Liver Cancer
- » Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)
- » Diabetes
- » Cardiovascular (strokes, heart attacks)
- » Secondhand Smoke

Connect your client with KIC to get free help to quit commercial tobacco.



"Quit Smoking"  
to 66819



800-300-8086



kickitca.org

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## How to Assist Patients to Quit Commercial Tobacco<sup>5</sup>

Research has shown that patients are more likely to attempt to quit if it is recommended by a healthcare provider. Kick It California coaches are trained to work with AI/AN clients and understand the cultural and spiritual importance of traditional tobacco.



### **ASK - at every reasonable opportunity**

*Do you (or anyone you live with) smoke commercial tobacco?  
How interested are you in quitting commercial tobacco?*



### **ADVISE - without lecturing**

*Quitting commercial tobacco is one of the best things you can do for yourself.  
What do you know about how smoking commercial tobacco affects health?  
I have some information, if you'd like to hear.*



### **REFER - [kickitca.org/patient-referral](https://kickitca.org/patient-referral)**

*I'd like to let you know about a free, confidential quit smoking service called Kick It California.  
If you're interested, they can also connect you with a Quit Coach.*



Instead of asking a patient to call, now a provider can tell a patient they will receive a call. People's lives are busy and they forget to call.

– Dr. Elisa Tong, M.D. UC Davis



1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2022, June 27). American Indian and Alaska native people. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved April 21, 2023, from <https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/health-equity/aian/index>.
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Tobacco Where You Live: Native Communities. Atlanta, GA: 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, 2022.
3. Preserving traditions. American Indian - Preserving Traditions | American Indian Commercial Tobacco Program. (n.d.). Retrieved April 21, 2023, from <https://aiquitline.com/en-US/About-Program/Preserving-Traditions>.
4. Keep it sacred: National native network. Keep It Sacred | National Native Network. (n.d.). <https://keepitsacred.itcmi.org/>
5. (N.d.). [https://crihb.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/TobaccoResourceGuide\\_Sohab\\_12.21.16-FINAL.pdf](https://crihb.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/TobaccoResourceGuide_Sohab_12.21.16-FINAL.pdf).