



## Nottawaseppi Huron Band of the Potawatomi Protecting Our Community from Commercial Tobacco

When presented with data on Nottawaseppi Huron Band of the Potawatomi Indians (NHBP) smoking rates, tribal staff and leadership decided to be proactive in protecting the health of their membership and employees, now and for next seven generations. Partnering with the Inter-Tribal Council of Michigan's Tribal Support Center and using the CHANGE tool, NHBP staff formed a special Tobacco Coalition to investigate and develop commercial tobacco policies and to provide education and raise awareness of the dangers of commercial tobacco use. Within one short year, the Nottawaseppi Huron Band of the Potawatomi moved from having no written commercial tobacco control policies to passing a ground-breaking, comprehensive Commercial Tobacco Free Buildings; Public and Private Worksites and Public Places Code.

### Challenge

Tribe-specific rates of current smokers in Michigan have ranged from 34% to 72% of the population (American Indian Adult Tobacco Survey, 2010-2012); much higher rates than the estimated 23% of the general population rate of current smokers reported by the Michigan Behavioral Risk Factor Survey (2012). Knowing the current smoking rates of tribal membership, the NHBP Community Health Department assigned a dedicated and motivated community health/clinic nurse to work with the Tribal Support Center on implementing the Community Health Assessment and Group Evaluation (CHANGE) tool tobacco modules. A first step in the process was to create a Tobacco Coalition, which included tribal community members and staff from a broad spectrum of tribal departments such as health, housing, early childhood development, and tribal leadership who reported to a larger tribal Journey to Wellness Coalition. By working through the CHANGE tool tobacco modules, the Community Health Department found that while there were verbal smoke-free building policies, NHPB had no written or enforceable commercial tobacco control policies. Vice Chair Jamie Stuck said "I remember thinking of our members and staff having to walk through the smoky entrances and exits of our buildings, where people congregated to smoke. We needed to protect the health of community members and staff, protecting non-smokers and encouraging cessation."



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- NHBP Vice Chair Jamie Stuck

## Solution

The NHBP Community Health Department with assistance from the Tobacco Coalition pursued tribal community outreach, sharing tribal surveillance data, raising awareness of the dangers of commercial tobacco, and opening dialogues about the importance of using traditional tobacco appropriately. Community Health Department staff gave presentations to the Tribe's Elders Committee and government and health clinic staff, providing outreach and seeking input on community needs and ideas for commercial tobacco policy development. Using results from the CHANGE tool modules, the Community Health Department worked with the Tribe's Legal Department to begin developing culturally-appropriate commercial tobacco control policies, including youth, vending machines, advertising, sponsorship, and commercial tobacco-free zones. Throughout the policy development process, the Tobacco Coalition and Tribal Council were updated on the progress. Rather than developing one policy, the team of Departments and Coalition members developed a code of policies "to ensure that all Tribal members, family, friends, employees, and Tribal guests, and the next seven generations are not exposed to commercial tobacco use including secondhand smoke or to the uses of commercial tobacco products" and was "not intended to restrict the use of ceremonial and/or traditional tobacco use" (NHBP, 2012). The comprehensive code touched nearly every department in NHPB government and enacted protections for youth from exposure to commercial tobacco products and influences, to prevent them from starting to use commercial tobacco for non-ceremonial/traditional recreational use. The draft code was brought before NHBP Tribal Council and approved to be posted on the Tribe's website for a comment period of thirty days. Tribal members did use this opportunity and the community outreach activities conducted earlier by the Community Health Department and Tobacco Coalition to give input on the policies of the code. Community members commented on the rightful place of traditional tobacco in the community and shared widespread support for the policies. On December 20, 2012, the Nottawaseppi Huron Band of Potawatomi Tribal Council passed TITLE VIII – JUDICIARY; LAW & ORDER CHAPTER 15 – COMMERCIAL TOBACCO-FREE BUILDINGS; PUBLIC AND PRIVATE WORKSITES AND PUBLIC PLACES CODE.

Since implementing the code, NHBP has embraced and even surpassed code guidance. While the code provides that no more than



"I was pleasantly surprised at how quickly the tribal community recognized the health benefits of commercial tobacco control, acknowledged the appropriate use of tobacco and defined the rightful place of tobacco in the community. This Code was developed to improve the health of adults and change the behavior of youth."

Bill Brooks, NHBP Legal Council

25% of hotel rooms in the NHBP gaming facility shall be designated as “Smoking Rooms” the Tribe has designated all NHBP gaming facility hotel rooms as “Non-Smoking Rooms.” The Tribe has also expanded their gaming floor by adding a non-smoking slot area.

### *Future Directions*

News of the Code’s passing has spread across Michigan and other Tribes have expressed interest in using and adapting NHBP’s Code to develop comprehensive and culturally-appropriate commercial tobacco control policies within their own governments. The implementation and evaluation of the NHBP’s Code is currently under way within the NHBP government.

## **Commercial Tobacco Free Buildings Code Highlights**

- All NHBP Buildings are free of recreational tobacco use, with a few exceptions
- Recreational commercial tobacco use is prohibited within 50 feet of building entrances and windows, and along select walkways
- No Commercial Tobacco Use and the international “No Smoking” symbol signs shall be clearly posted in every building or area where commercial tobacco use is prohibited
- All used tobacco products must be disposed of in cigarette urns or trash receptacles in designated smoking areas
- While no more than 25% of hotel rooms at the NHBP gaming facility may be designated “Smoking” under the code, NHBP has designated 100% of hotel rooms as “Non-Smoking”
- Recreational commercial tobacco use is not authorized in rental homes owned by the Tribe
- Tobacco product advertising is prohibited outside of the specific retail outlet
- Tribal groups, organizations, and agencies are prohibited from accepting tobacco industry sponsorship to finance any community event
- Non-casino employees are prohibited from wearing clothing or other items that bear tobacco company brand logos at schools or other community events and venues during work hours
- Tobacco product sale to minors and minor possession of commercial tobacco for recreational use are prohibited
- Vending machines, individual cigarettes, candy cigarettes and tobacco-like candy, tobacco “blunts” are prohibited at government locations
- Enforcement is implemented by Tribal Police Department and Tribal Court
- Clear violations and penalties are described for adults and minors

Access the code on the Nottawaseppi Huron Band of the Potawatomi’s website at:

[www.nhbpi.com/sovereignty/tribal-code/](http://www.nhbpi.com/sovereignty/tribal-code/)

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