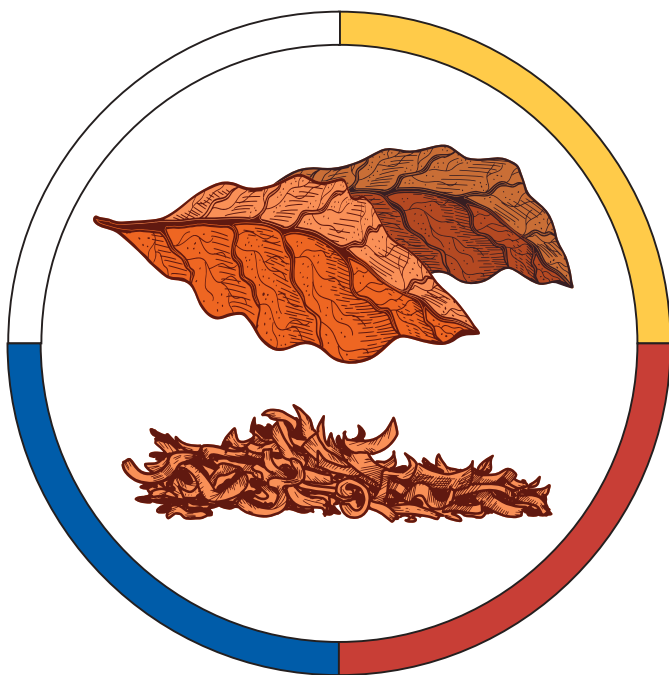


Let's Talk About Traditional Tobacco



A Gift from Mother Earth

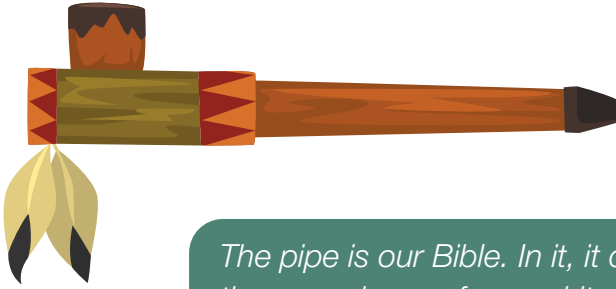
Traditional tobacco is a sacred plant and a gift given by the Creator to Indigenous people. It's important to honour the role tobacco plays in many Indigenous cultures.

Traditional tobacco may be burned, carrying prayers to the spirit world. It's used in medicines and has healing properties. It may be given as an offering to Mother Earth. Traditional tobacco can be given as a gift to an Elder. It's a symbol of gratitude and respect, and of the Elder's commitment to help you, often with prayers and spiritual guidance.



*In my heart, the tobacco,
once it's lit, the smoke is
going to take my message
to the Creator for whatever
my vows are.*

Elder Genevieve Bruised Head



The pipe is our Bible. In it, it contains all the sacredness of our spiritual beliefs. All of our ceremonies are held in that pipe, spiritually speaking.

Elder Andrew Bear Robe

Commercial Tobacco

Commercial tobacco is different. Chemicals have been added to make it more addictive and more harmful. Over time, commercial tobacco has become a dangerous drug of abuse.

In Indigenous communities, children start smoking, vaping, and using spit tobacco much younger than in other communities. In some cases, children as young as seven or eight are starting to use commercial tobacco. Recent studies have shown that vaping is also higher among Indigenous youth. While there's still a lot to learn about the harms associated with vaping, we do know that it's not safe and can damage lungs.

Every year, more than 4,000 Albertans die as a result of commercial tobacco use, while many more suffer from tobacco-related illnesses.

Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) is a serious lung disease linked to smoking. It's twice as common among Indigenous people as the general Canadian population. Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer death among First Nations people, and the most likely cause of lung cancer is smoking.

COVID-19 is an illness that can cause people to have mild to severe lung problems. Having lung disease or difficulties breathing because of smoking or vaping may increase the risk of serious illness if you get COVID-19.

At least half of all people who smoke are eventually killed by tobacco addiction and over half of all First Nations people smoke. This means that over 25% of First Nations people may die earlier because of smoking.

*Let's take the sweet grass,
there's three strands. Each
one of them represents
mind, body, and spirit. When
they smoke that cigarette,
because of all those toxics,
they all go separate. We get
lost.*

Elder Gordon Gladue





Ways to Heal – The Seven Grandfather Teachings

Moving away from tobacco abuse is one of the most important things you can do for your health and the health of your family. Think about the values below, based on the Seven Grandfather Teachings, as you make changes towards your healthy future.

Honesty

Be honest about using commercial tobacco. When you smoke, vape, or use spit tobacco, you are putting your health and the health of your family at risk.

Respect

The misuse of tobacco is not respecting the sacred place of tobacco in your culture. Giving prayer and thanks is honouring tobacco.

Humility

If you smoke tobacco, vape, or use spit tobacco, you are putting your needs ahead of your family. If you smoke, your family is being exposed to second- and third-hand smoke. Your family and friends want you to live a long and healthy life.

Wisdom

If you would like to quit using commercial tobacco, think about the strengths you have to make a change. You don't have to quit alone—reach out to others for help and support.



Truth

Sharing the truth about using traditional tobacco and commercial tobacco with others can make a big difference in your community.

Love

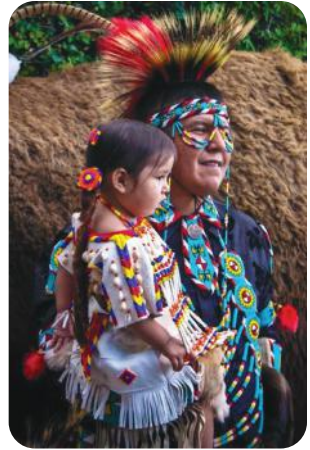
Quitting smoking, vaping, or spit tobacco is good for your health. Love yourself by making that change.

Bravery

Quitting smoking, vaping, or spit tobacco can be hard, but you can do it.

Second-Hand Smoke

Being exposed to second-hand smoke (smoke that is exhaled or comes from the burning end of the cigarette) is harmful. It's especially harmful to babies, because their lungs are still growing and developing.



Small children who live with people who smoke are at greater risk of developing diseases such as pneumonia, bronchitis, and middle-ear infection. They are also more likely to have problems with coughs, colds, and ear and throat infections. First Nations have higher infant death rates, and being exposed to tobacco smoke is a major risk factor for crib death or SIDS (sudden infant death syndrome).

Third-Hand Smoke

Third-hand smoke is the smoke that lingers on surfaces like clothes, walls, carpet and furniture. Babies and young children are more at risk than adults because they breathe faster, crawl on floors, explore surfaces with their hands and put things into their mouths.

Protect your family and friends from second-hand and third-hand smoke.

We are descendants of our strongest ancestors. In other words, all of us sitting here, in our DNA and in our blood, there's a reason we're still here, because we are descendants of those strongest people that walked away from all of the hardships that our people have endured...when you tell our young people that, it puts a different perspective on the way they think.

Elder Travis Plaited Hair

For more information and support to quit commercial tobacco addiction, please call 1-866-710-QUIT (7848) or visit myhealth.alberta.ca.

