



Tribal Community Coordinating Center's Learning Institutes Support Tribal Communities

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Tobacco Industry has long targeted American Indian and Native Alaskan communities by promoting commercial tobacco using traditional American Indian images. This tactic has been successful and today American Indians have the highest cigarette smoking rate of any racial or ethnic group in California according to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Consequently, the California Department of Public Health cites tobacco-related diseases like cardiovascular disease and lung cancer as leading cause of death among American Indians/Alaska Natives.

Tackling this entrenched problem will take time and campaigns to undo the Tobacco Industry's deceitful targeting tactics. Tribal organizations are advancing new policies and designing interventions to safeguard their community. To further this work, the Tribal Community Coordinating Center, an organization that works with California tribal communities to assist in ongoing tobacco policy campaigns, held two in-person Learning Institutes in March 2023. The gatherings were a new approach to guiding local campaigns by offering comprehensive technical assistance in one location. The Institutes' strategies were developed based on tribal culture and traditions, such as storytelling and connection, and brought together representatives from 12 tribes and 5 tribal-serving organizations around California, most of whom had only previously met on Zoom. As a result of the support received at the Institutes, many tribal projects were able to make significant progress on their campaigns and foster lasting connections.



TCCC LEARNING INSTITUTE 2023-SAN PASQUAL

THE CHALLENGE

In California, there are 109 federally recognized tribes in California and many others without formal recognition, from the Oregon border to San Diego County, a distance of nearly 1,000 miles. Due to the vast distances between them, and the shelter-in-place restrictions of the pandemic, previous learning institutes had only been conducted online. But engagement at online trainings was lagging and turnover among tribal participants in tobacco-related projects was high.

Tribal staff possess the most important factor, lived experience and commitment to their communities, but some lack a formal background in policy and public health. Finally, mistrust among American Indian tribes toward outsiders remains high and tribal members often feel non-tribal members will be exploitative in their dealings. All of these factors make progress on tobacco awareness campaigns a challenge for tribal communities.

"The historic mistrust comes from the fact that policies have benefited outsiders at the expense of tribal communities. Even some well intended individuals do not have the background or cultural sensitivity to work in our communities."

-Ravena Soto, a project coordinator with the Tribal Community Coordinating Center

THE APPROACH

The in-person Learning Institutes used a culturally tailored approach to help tribes working on various tobacco policy campaigns to network, learn new skills and create roadmaps to further their policy goals. The events were held at Coyote Valley Rancheria in Mendocino County and San Pasqual Band of Mission Indians in San Diego County and gave activists from rural and remote communities a chance to form face-to-face relationships while learning new technical skills to accomplish their policy goals. At the Institutes, participants had an opportunity to meet with each technical assistance provider for approximately 30 minutes to develop a specific aspect of their campaign, before moving on to another station. This “one stop shop” approach allowed participants to build relationships with each other and with technical assistance providers to help move their campaign forward.

Participants learned skills that would assist them with their campaigns, such as how to use social media and Canva (a design program), media relations, campaign organizing, as well as more technical aspects of policy making. Participants also had a chance to engage in group activities during designated times, such as a basket weaving lesson and a dinner that allowed participants to get to know one another in a more informal manner.

Partner organizations that offered technical assistance included:

- ❖ The California Tobacco Endgame Center for Organizing and Engagement, a project of the American Heart Association, assisted with community engagement and coalition building
- ❖ The California Tobacco Control Program, provided general reporting and budgeting assistance
- ❖ The California Youth Advocacy Network focused on strategies for youth engagement
- ❖ The Public Health Law Center helped participants create individualized policy roadmaps
- ❖ The Tobacco Education Clearinghouse of California that provided media and materials training.

The Tribal Community Coordinating Center helped participants make progress in the following policy areas:

- ✓ Creating smoke-free spaces in tribal communities, including smoke-free housing
- ✓ Creating smoking cessation services
- ✓ Creating retailing policies for more responsible sales of tobacco products
- ✓ Mitigating tobacco product waste, including cigarette butts and electronic vaping products.



"I was not 100% sure what to expect. However, I gained so much from it and was left empowered to complete the rest of my activities within my SOW."

-2023 Learning Institute Participant

OUTCOMES

“It’s hard to work in tribal communities,” said Tribal Community Coordinating Center’s Soto. “You have to put in the time to build those connections. That’s what the learning institutes were able to do, put name and face to organizations and bring people together to collaborate.”

Following the learning institutes, 73 percent of survey respondents said that meeting with a technical assistance provider during the Learning Institute was “very helpful” to their project while the rest said it was “helpful.”

Additionally, more than 70 percent of the respondents said that they had learned “more” or “significantly more” about tools and resources for creating custom project materials, and 87 percent said they created an action plan to complete at least one activity from their Scope of Work.

Through a culturally tailored approach that brings people together to share their success stories and knowledge, the Learning Institutes provided a valuable and engaging experience for the participants to grow their expertise.

The Tribal Community Coordinating Center intends to build on its first successful in-person Learning Institutes by continuing to offer similar events in the future that celebrate traditions, storytelling, and social connection. These events will maintain a strong focus on building relationships and knowledge around campaign best practices to advance monumental public health policy in tribal lands.

“I was able to get one-on-one insight with specific programs that eliminated the hassle of trying to ask other people where to search for answers. The Tobacco Endgame [Center] really helped me find ways to engage with the community and assisted me in drafting a letter to the editor for our local newspaper. Public Health Law Center assisted me with reviewing a draft of our ‘In Home No Smoking Policy.’”

It was also nice to speak with a CTCP employee to get answers for specific activities that are implemented in our Scope of Work.”

*-Jaime Gutierrez, Redwood Valley Rancheria Tribal Member/Project Coordinator
Breathe Again*



Tribal Community Coordinating Center

The Tribal Community Coordinating Center is a statewide organization that provides culturally appropriate guidance and assistance to California Indian Tribes.

For more information: <https://www.ca-tccc.org/>

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