

# 2023 | CAPITOL INFORMATION & EDUCATION DAYS



## The Fight is Not Over: The Tobacco Industry Continues to Target American Indian/Alaska Native Communities

*Tribal communities throughout California have grown or harvested tobacco and/or other plants for ceremonial or medicinal purposes for several centuries. The tobacco industry has exploited these traditions contributing to Tribal communities having the highest commercial tobacco use rates in California. Many Tribal communities are working to restore traditional tobacco practices and reduce commercial tobacco abuse.*

### The Tobacco Industry has targeted Tribal communities for decades by:

- Sponsoring powwows and other cultural events.<sup>1</sup>
- Offering coupons and discounts on already lower tobacco prices.<sup>2</sup>
- Appropriating symbols and Tribal imagery (e.g. Natural American Spirits brand depicts an Indian smoking a pipe).<sup>3</sup>
- Exposing AIAN communities with higher levels of marketing in store and via email.<sup>4</sup>
- Exploiting Tribal sovereignty to sell cheaper tobacco products in Tribal lands.<sup>5</sup>
- Vape shops using Tribal designs on vaping devices and e-liquids (e.g. Tribal Vape shop with e-liquids flavors “Cherokee,” “Joe” and “Pow Wow”).<sup>3</sup>

### Tribal communities are disproportionately impacted by tobacco:

- Tobacco-related diseases like cardiovascular disease and lung cancer are the leading causes of death among American Indians/Alaska Natives.<sup>6</sup>
- American Indians have the highest cigarette smoking rate compared to all other racial/ethnic groups in California.<sup>7</sup>
- 19.7% of American Indian high school students in California use tobacco, exceeding the statewide average of 12.7%.<sup>4</sup>



*Redwood Valley Rancheria Breathe Again Tobacco Project*

## 17 Tribal Community Projects are building capacity and developing leadership from within. Recent progress:

- Tribes and Tribal-serving organizations have formed coalitions to educate and engage their youth through activities including, art contests, digital storytelling events, social media challenges, and community education events.
- Tribal youth are engaging leaders from Tribal council to the California State Legislature to advocate for the health of their communities and future.

- Tribes are developing smoke free policies in their places of business to protect their patrons and staff.
- Tribes have developed smoke-free housing policies and pledges that include single dwelling and multiunit homes, including common areas, balconies, and patios.
- Communities are developing interventions that incorporate traditional values and knowledge for their healing and protective properties.

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