Sacred Tobacco Use in Ojibwe Communities

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A sacred relationship exists between tobacco and American Indian ceremonial activities and beliefs. This ancient connection continues to play an important role in American Indian communities including the Anishinabe (Ojibwe). Six Ojibwe traditional healers and spiritual leaders described the sacred use of tobacco during interviews. The research provides information on key-informant smoking behaviors, influence of tobacco-industry media, and 3 essential themes: the origin of sacred traditional tobacco; contemporary use and abuse of tobacco; and cultural strengths and meaning of tobacco in Anishinabe (Ojibwe) communities. Health professionals must recognize, be amenable to learn, and understand that sacred tobacco use and smoking commercial cigarette tobacco have separate purposes and functions. The challenge for health professionals, including nurses, is to retain the cultural use and value of tobacco while addressing the abuse and chronic effects of cigarette smoking when providing health care to American Indian clients.

Keywords: tobacco; sacred tobacco; American Indian; Ojibwe; Anishinabe

There is a special relationship between tobacco and American Indian ceremonial activities and beliefs (Hodge, 2001). Traditionally, sacred tobacco played a large role in the cultural milieu of tribes and was a symbol for peace and healing. Today, sacred tobacco continues...
to play an important role in American Indian communities like the Anishinabe (Ojibwe for original man), also known as the Ojibwe.

In contrast to sacred use, commercial tobacco in manufactured cigarettes serves a different function. In this way, tobacco is an addictive substance in which the traditional practices are no longer employed. The challenge of health care providers, including nurses, is to retain the cultural value of the tobacco product yet reduce the harmful effects of smoking in a manner that is culturally appropriate, informative, and nonthreatening. Healthier lifestyles can be improved by addressing the abuse of tobacco while still encouraging the cultural traditions to continue resulting in the reduction of recreational smoking among American Indians.

Smoking of commercial tobacco has become a leading cause of death and illness among the Indian population. American Indian adults and adolescents have the highest prevalence of smoking in the United States (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1998). Tobacco use via cigarette smoking can no longer be seen solely in a cultural context because the smoking of tobacco has been transformed from a healing herb to an abusive, addictive habit (Winter, 2000) and deadly carcinogen.

The purpose of this article is to provide a description of the sacred use of tobacco in Ojibwe communities as told by 6 Anishinabe traditional healers and spiritual leaders. To examine the sacred use of tobacco in these select communities, tribal spiritual leaders and traditional healers were interviewed. These persons play important roles within their tribes. They hold ancient wisdom and thus are knowledgeable about the American Indian culture, which includes the use of sacred tobacco.

BACKGROUND

Tobacco has long played a significant role in the American Indian culture (Paper, 1988; Seig, 1971). Tobacco provides American Indian people a connection between their own culture and the spirit world (Flannery, Sisk-Franco, & Glover, 1995; Hirschfelder & Molin, 1992; Paper, 1988; Winter, 2000). Historically, tobacco was used in medicinal and healing rituals, in ceremonial or religious practices, and as an instructional or educational device. Sacred tobacco was seen as a gift of the earth. It was burned, and the rising smoke was used to cleanse and heal. Often, sacred tobacco was sprinkled around the bed of the
ailing individual to protect and to act as a healing agent. Tobacco was also used for social and peaceful purposes to promote well-being and good thoughts (Linton, 1924). Prior to important meetings, sacred tobacco was smoked as a ritualistic exchange and was also used as a powerful teaching tool. Elders, healers, and tribal leaders used tobacco leaves in their storytelling. Symbolically, smoke from sacred tobacco was called “spirits paths” (Linton, 1924, p. 1). It served as a channel to the evil or bad spirits.

Specific rules are to be followed when smoking sacred tobacco, which are just as important as the act of smoking itself. Small puffs of smoke were taken and held in the mouth. Deep inhaling was not encouraged because the smoke was not to be enjoyed but was a symbolic gesture meant to cleanse the air, the heart, and the mind. It became a facilitator to the spirits so that peaceful exchange could be obtained and prayers could be heard (Hodge, 2001).

The Anishinabe

The Anishinabe are contemporarily known as the Ojibwe. Residing in the northern midwestern United States and the southern portion of Canada, the Ojibwe are the fifth largest U.S. tribe numbering 149,669 (Census 2000 Brief, 2003). According to their migration story, they initially lived on the upper eastern North American shores and journeyed to their present geographic location many years ago (Benton-Beni, 1988). Today, traditional healing and spiritual customs continue to be used, the Ojibwe language is still spoken, and knowledge is customarily shared in the oral tradition.

Research Methods

Six Ojibwe traditional healers or spiritual leaders participated in key-informant interviews during April and July of 2002. Two key informants were recruited from each of the following Ojibwe reservations in northern and central Minnesota: Leech Lake, Mille Lacs, and White Earth. The interviews, which lasted from 45 min to 1.5 hr each, were conducted simultaneously in pairs at each reservation at the request of the key informants. Interviews were conducted in a tribal meeting room, a tribal clinic, and a home. Key-informant participant criteria included (a) age 18 years or older, (b) current smoker or non-smoker, (c) a member of the targeted reservation tribe, and (d)
recognized by the community as a traditional healer or spiritual leader. Tribal employees designated to work on the research study recruited the key informants using the selection criteria. As part of their tribal role as a traditional healer or spiritual leader, the informants were recognized as being capable of providing information on the sacred use of tobacco.

The researcher who conducted the interviews explained the nature and purpose of the study, offered commercial pipe tobacco to each key informant as an offering for sharing their knowledge, and informed them the research results would be published. The University of Minnesota’s Institutional Review Board approved the study. Written, informed consent was obtained as was permission to tape-record the interview. During the interviews, which were conducted in English, the key informants were asked about patterns of tobacco use and media advertising influences surrounding tobacco. The key informants were also requested to describe specific tribal ceremonies, stories, and traditional practices related to tobacco. Specific questions related to the topic of ceremonies, stories, and traditional practices were

- Can you describe to me any tribal ceremonies regarding sacred tobacco use?
- What is the significance of the ceremony?
- When, with whom, and where are the ceremonies held?
- Can you share with me any old or traditional stories of sacred tobacco?
- Can you share with me any traditional practices involving both sacred and/or commercial tobacco?

The data became saturated while conducting interviews with the third pair of key informants.

**Data Analysis**

The tapes were transcribed verbatim. The data were analyzed by hand using content analysis (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992; Morgan, 1993) to measure the frequency, order, or intensity of occurrences of words, phrases, or sentences. Content analysis facilitates the production of core constructs from textual data through a systematic method of reduction and analysis (Priest, Roberts, & Woods, 2002). The following process was used to analyze the data: (a) the text was read several times; (b) in each interview keywords, phrases, or sentences were
identified with labels that reflect concepts related to sacred tobacco use; (c) essential themes emerged from the concepts when rereading and interpreting the data in relation to similarities, differences, and trends; (d) interrater (interobserver) reliability (Polit & Hungler, 1995) was reached independently when the two researchers assigned analogous themes and interpreted the data similarly. Thus, pattern detections as well as interpretations were reached during data analysis. The researchers are both indigenous and familiar with the use of sacred tobacco; one is Anishinabe and one is Wailaki. Thus, the researchers were able to view the research results from an emic (Leininger & McFarland, 2002) or inside cultural knowledge point of view.

FINDINGS

The research data provided information on the key informants’ smoking status and behaviors, how they perceived media influences in the tobacco industry, and four essential themes on sacred tobacco. Five of the key-informant interviewees were male and 1 was female. Three were spiritual leaders, 2 were traditional healers, and 1 was an assistant to a traditional healer.

Smoking Status and Behaviors

Three key informants were current smokers, 2 were former smokers, and 1 had never smoked. None currently chewed tobacco. The 3 current smokers smoked 10 to 30 Winston cigarettes per day, 20 to 22 Marlboro 100s, and 10 to 15 Marlboro cigarettes per day, respectively. They bought cigarettes at the Bingo Palace, a gas station, or no place in particular. None had purchased cigarettes on the Internet. The 3 smokers said they smoked mostly in the morning, whenever, and in social settings or gatherings.

All current and former smokers started smoking during preadolescence or adolescence. The former smokers started smoking at ages 12 and 16 years. Current smokers reported they started to smoke at ages 10, 14, and 15 years. Four of the former and current smokers had tried to quit multiple times; only the 5th had succeeded on the first time. All had quit cold turkey, except one quit attempt was augmented by pharmaceuticals and a smoking cessation clinic. All reported multiple members of their family currently smoked,
including some of their children. Three reported that smoking was allowed in their house and 3 said smoking was not allowed in their homes. All key informants identified community places where smoking was allowed or not allowed. The key informants conferred that smoking was not allowed in tribal buildings, tribal clinics, and in certain areas in restaurants. As well, the tribally owned casinos had small no-smoking sections.

Media Influences of Tobacco

Tobacco companies rely heavily on the media to sell their products. Three of the key informants were not cognizant of cigarette advertisements. Another stated he noticed posted cigarette prices and this helped him determine where to purchase cigarettes. Two noticed advertisements at reservation convenience stores and gas stations; 1 of these was able to identify family members who purchased cigarettes on the Internet. Thus, 3 key informants were not aware of media influences regarding tobacco; the other 3 noticed tobacco advertisements.

Essential Themes From the Data

Four essential themes on the sacred use of tobacco emerged from the interview data. These findings describe sacred use of tobacco in American Indian Ojibwe communities and include (a) the origin of sacred traditional tobacco, (b) contemporary use and abuse of tobacco, (c) cultural strengths and meaning of tobacco in Anishinabe (Ojibwe) communities, and (d) tobacco stories. In this article, three of the essential themes will be presented. The theme related to tobacco stories will not be published due to cultural sanctions against documenting the tobacco stories in written text. Sanctions to preserve the oral tradition are common, and it is necessary to respect this choice. In the remaining themes, words of the key informants are used whenever possible to explain the themes.

The Origin of Sacred Traditional Tobacco

The key informants on the three Ojibwe reservations talked about the origin of sacred traditional tobacco among their people. Tobacco was described as “one of the first things that the Creator [higher
being] gave us to talk to him, was that spirit of tobacco.” All key informants could pinpoint the origin and the actual story of how tobacco came to Anishinabe (Ojibwe) people. However, due to oral tradition, the story or stories could not be told in an interview session like this one and could traditionally be articulated only during approved times of the year.

All key informants agreed that a long time ago the original sacred tobacco the Anishinabe used was red willow (kinnikinnick). One key informant shared the following:

I know a story that relates to Waynaboozhoo and when in the beginning the Creator told Waynaboozhoo that we wouldn’t be able to communicate directly with the Creator. And so he gave Waynaboozhoo a seed to plant the kinnikinnick, which is the red willow. And he said to go and tell the Anishinabe people to plant the seed and that is where they would get the kinnikinnick. Then that is the way we would talk to the Creator. That is the way we would communicate with him by smoking our pipes and whatever message we had to convey to the Creator, that the smoke would relay that message. And to put that tobacco, asemaa, on the ground also, near a tree, and this would serve the purpose also of communicating with our Creator. Also, the Creator said that when we come into this world we have nothing. We come naked and we have nothing to offer. So that is why he gave Waynaboozhoo that seed to give to the Anishinabe people for that offering.

Waynaboozhoo refers to the spirit of Anishinabe or original man (Benton-Benai, 1988).

To obtain the original sacred tobacco, kinnikinnick has to be gathered: “Get the bark off, then shave it down and dry it.” However, when commercial tobacco became available, because it was grown readily, it was easier for many Anishinabe people to just smoke it rather than gather and prepare the kinnikinnick. “People just started using it [commercial tobacco] because it was a lot easier.” One key informant added that some quit gathering, preparing, and utilizing the traditional kinnikinnick tobacco because “I think they eventually got addicted. So, the nicotine that is in here is the prime reason why they switched over. So that is what I feel like, that eventually this [commercial tobacco] just wiped out the original tobacco.”

Even though Winter (2000) speculated that tobacco may have been the first plant to be domesticated in the New World, one spiritual leader disagrees:
I've been out in the woods for many years and I have never come across a tobacco plant other than red willow. . . . I never heard my grandparents, they are the ones who raised all of us, ever talk about tobacco like that [commercial tobacco]. But they talked about kinnikinnick. They taught us how to make it. I never heard them talk about tobacco or leaves. We never used it [commercial tobacco] or passed it on to the next generation. It is not our way. . . . I think the tobacco that we have nowadays, that started when they did the big tobacco farms.

Another added that it seemed “if tobacco was natural, they would be perennials” that would not have to be “replanted every year, because our medicines and sacred plants grow in the bush [the woods] naturally.”

There are a few Ojibwe who still harvest kinnikinnick. “My husband will gather that kinnikinnick for me again this summer. That is what we give to the ceremonies then, when we have ceremonies.” Another said that you will see right here on our reservation “that there is a lot of the elderly people that actually go out and make a daily offering of that original tobacco, kinnikinnick. It is still used among the people.” Another key informant added that sacred tobacco “is pretty good tobacco, what the Indians make. They have varieties of tobaccos, too, that they made their own ways.” There are different mixes of sacred tobacco; one said dogwood may also be used. “I used to smoke pipe and my ma used to make a certain type of tobacco. That really smelled good and tasted good. I don’t remember what she used. It was some of the old stuff.”

Contemporary Use and Abuse of Tobacco

All 6 key informants agreed that all Anishinabe ceremonies and cultural functions include sacred tobacco or asemaa (Ojibwe for tobacco). They described sacred tobacco as used everywhere, anywhere, anytime, wherever you have people, in the house, the bush, or a roundhouse. “You never know when somebody is going to come through the door with tobacco. Or meet you on the street with tobacco—or anyplace.” Another added that before he came in to be interviewed about tobacco, “I sat out in the car and smoked my little personal pipe.”

Tobacco is the very root, the foundation, of Anishinabe culture: “Anything you do, anything you say, you offer tobacco. . . . The important thing is always, always, always, tobacco first. Without
that [offering tobacco], you just end up with empty words.” Tobacco is offered in every ceremony and in many other circumstances. Tobacco is used in funerals, weddings, for praying over and offering food, for picking medicines, for hunting, for thanking people, asking for help, praying for information, and sharing stories. Other specific ceremonies that use tobacco include pipe ceremonies, sweat ceremonies, naming ceremonies, Big Drum ceremonies, and initiation into the Midewiwin, the religious society of the Ojibwe (Hirschfelder & Molin, 1992). One key informant said, “There is not a specific time, except they say maybe Midewiwin, spring and fall, and Big Drum ceremonies.” One traditional healer said,

The way I look at it, the Creator made four great races, white, black, yellow and red. He gave us all a way to pray. Even though it is the same God, he gave us all four distinct ways to do it.

The Anishinabe’s way of prayer is with tobacco.

At the beginning of every ceremony, tobacco is talked about. “Somebody offered tobacco, I accepted it. Now this why they offered the tobacco and this is what we are going to do. . . . It is always something along that line.” One key informant further added,

Every ceremony you go to, there is a bowl, there is a rock, there is a box, something for you to put your tobacco in. Big Drum, you go right to that drum. We have a bowl, other ones have a box. Go to a sweat, there will be a bowl and a rock. Soon as you go there, even if you are not going into that sweat, out of respect for what is going on there, you put tobacco in that fire. Just by saying mi-gwetch [thank you] for me seeing this, for me being a tiny part of it. That tobacco begins and holds everything together. It starts everything and holds it together too.

A key informant stressed that tobacco used as an offering to the Creator “completes the circle. . . . He put us here on earth and he put those plants here on earth, then he tells us, use this plant when you want to talk to me.” When we pick the plant (red willow), we take that plant’s life. In our offering, we talk with the plant. The instant we put it back on the ground, where it came from, the words or prayers that we said go back into the ground and the Creator takes it. Be it a prayer of thanks. Be it a prayer of gratitude, appreciation, you know, happiness, sadness, I am feeling really bad, can you take this away from me? I am really
sick—will you take this away from me? It is all part of completing the circle.

One participant said,

My husband usually makes me kinnikinnick, he will shave it for me and he will dry it. That is what he gives to me to smoke in my pipe. Because he respects me and I imagine he wants me to live a long time. But, when I get the tobacco like this [commercial tobacco], I still respect this tobacco. I know it is very powerful . . . when I do smoke it in my pipe, I don’t inhale it. I just offer it to the Creator. I bring it into my mouth and I just send it off. . . . Or, I may offer it to the tree.

Another added, “I smoke the pipe, smoke that tobacco, never inhaling. That is another misconception . . . that we inhale all that tobacco in that pipe. You are not supposed to do that.”

A spiritual leader said,

I always let the people know that I can’t read. I don’t know any letters or anything. . . . Nothing that I do has come out of a book. It was all handed to me, given to me by the elders. . . . I never know what I am going to say when I go to any ceremony. I am told what to say by the spirits when they accept that tobacco that was given to me. It always helps me to talk about whatever needs to be talked about. . . . It is like the spirits already know, beforehand. You have to kind of figure it out, using that tobacco. . . . That is the power of tobacco.

Five of the key informants were familiar with cigarette smoking, 3 were current smokers, and 2 were former smokers. The abusive nature of commercial tobacco was acknowledged by the key informants. One stated,

When I speak to the public I tell them that this tobacco, like alcohol, or any other kind of prescription drugs, they are very powerful and they are eventually going to get the best of you. So you have to have a great deal of respect for it.

Another added, “One of the things . . . when I smoke, sometimes I will tell somebody, maybe I will start coughing, I tell them if you smoke, this is what will happen to you later on, coughing like me.” Thus, cigarette smoking was viewed as unhealthy, and as leaders in their communities, they addressed it as such.
Cultural Strengths and Meanings of Tobacco in Anishinabe (Ojibwe) Communities

Tobacco is the center of Anishinabe culture. One key informant explained that the use of commercial tobacco to smoke and the use of sacred tobacco are in my opinion two different things…two very contradicting things. This tobacco, cigarette tobacco, is a tobacco of pleasure, and of a different purpose than the tobacco that I use for prayer…the tobacco in a cigarette and the tobacco I put in my pipe, and the tobacco I see other people put in their pipes, has a different purpose. A very different purpose…Some people have lost that understanding that the tobacco we use for our life, has come with the same purpose as a cigarette. It is not…it is not even close.

He further explained, “This tobacco [holding up a pack of Marlboros] holds no weight.” Sometimes people will use commercial cigarettes to pass tobacco—and that is acceptable. However, the sacred tobacco (kinnikinnick) is, by far, more powerful and greater than the tobacco in a commercial cigarette.

There was a mutual feeling among the key informants that sacred tobacco use has been somewhat lost and used less among the Anishinabe people. One key informant said,

I really feel like we have been tricked by the tobacco companies over the years. I think they have gradually increased the chemicals that they have added in our tobacco. I really feel that the indigenous people, or the Anishinabe people, have really been done an injustice, because our sacred tobacco has been hampered with.

Others corroborated this when saying, “I think that is really sad, because I believe if everyone knew it, maybe the tribes could become stronger.” Another said, “The troubles they [tribes] have, and continue to have, that is part of the disconnection from the circle.”

This lack of consciousness affects how Anishinabe people perceive tobacco and how to use it in a sacred manner to survive, to be happy, and to be healthy.

First of all, a lot of people don’t know where it comes from, what it is used for, because of the disconnection that we have. That goes back once again to the government thing. Prior to the late 1800s, I think every Ojibwe person, or Indian person knew what tobacco was used for. But,
through the policies to date, and moving things away, moving people away, and trying to change Indians into Whites, a lot of the Indian people have lost a lot of their beliefs, their customs, and just don’t know.

Another explained further when stating, “What has happened is that we, as a people, have become ashamed of using our tobacco.”

The process by which the sacred tobacco use is handed down from generation to generation through oral tradition and storytelling further complicates this situation. One said,

All the old people are gone. The ones that the old people were teaching are gone. Some of the ones the old people were teaching don’t talk about it anymore. So, some of the teachings I have gotten come from a 7-year-old girl, meaning my mother when my grandma passed away, and what she learned in that 7 years. I think that the status of our reserve, and Anishinabe people all over, is because we have lost, we are on the edge of losing [sic] our purpose. Our purpose is to take care of the earth; to know the earth like the back of our hand. To know, and understand, and believe that if we offer tobacco, nothing is going to take over. Nothing.

Anishinabe people can start using tobacco in a sacred way by

becoming aware of the stories behind it, the history behind it, the reasons for doing it, getting back in touch with the basic meaning of tobacco. We can continue to use our traditional red willow tobacco, kinnikinnick, and that is what I really encourage the people to do.

Another agreed that a way to help bring that understanding back is when presenting to others: “Take kinnikinnick, red willow bark, with you” so people will recognize the original tobacco.

One key informant shared this story:

I started using tobacco, sporadically at first. When I look back at my life now, I can’t pinpoint the exact day of change. But I can pinpoint the period of when I went through sporadically … to offering my tobacco regularly. That is when my life started to change. When I started to live, learn, and be Anishinabe, by understanding that tobacco.

Anishinabe people may be confused regarding their original culture in which tobacco is viewed as the basis of the Anishinabe culture. In today’s assimilated culture
there are lots of people that just kind of sit on the fence. They will come to sweat, they will come and offer tobacco once in a while, and they will get their Indian name, but they will still go to church. They are just kind of sitting on the fence, not really knowing which way to go. Not really having a strong tie to either one.

But when individuals start using tobacco (either kinnikinnick or commercial tobacco) as an offering,

You can see the changes in them. . . . You can hear it in their voice. You see it in the way they carry themselves, the way they talk. . . . Everything changes. It is a gradual change. It is going to be a gradual change, because it was gradual when we lost it all. So, it only seems right that it will take just as long to bring it back full circle.

Using that tobacco is important. That is who we are. Without that, we become descendants of, we become Chippewa [A slang French word for Ojibwe], we become Indians, Native Americans—we are not Anishinabe. I wouldn’t even put all the pressure on the language. I would put all the pressure on that tobacco. Without our tobacco, we are nothing. We will cease to exist.

The power for the culture is in that tobacco.

Then you go from there and then the power is in the people. . . . I can’t re-iterate and say it enough times. It all comes down to—if we use our [sacred] tobacco, then we will get healthy as a people. Not just as a person, but as a people. . . . So much of our being is not lost, it is just harder to find now. . . . We have to go after it with the same intensity that we had when we hid it [the Anishinabe culture]. The same type of energy that our old people who had to go deeper and deeper, and deeper into the bush, to change our songs to singing them quieter and quieter and quieter. The same intensity and the same hopes that they had that this [Anishinabe culture] will still survive. This one kid that we have kept out of the village will keep this alive [sometimes one child was hidden and taught all the traditional ways]. The same intensity that they had in doing that and putting their tobacco down, everyday, is the same intensity that we have to have, so that we can bring . . . our Anishinabe ways, closer and closer. As an Anishinabe, part of doing life, is putting tobacco out [for use in the cultural way]. Everyday.
DISCUSSION

In the past and in the present, a special relationship exists between tobacco and Indian ceremonial activities and beliefs. In this research, 6 Ojibwe traditional healers and spiritual leaders confirm that sacred tobacco continues to play a paramount role in the community and provides a foundation for the American Indian Anishinabe or Ojibwe culture. They reiterated that using tobacco in the sacred way is vital for the Anishinabe culture; tobacco holds everything together and completes the circle. If tobacco is not used in a sacred manner, the circle is broken and a disconnect occurs in relation to the culture.

Tobacco, a symbol for peace and healing among American Indians, is fast becoming affiliated with death and illness from commercial cigarette smoking. Commercial cigarette smoking has become one of the leading causes for death and chronic disease among the American Indian population (Hodge, 2001). Thus, use of commercial cigarette tobacco has replaced traditional use (Winter, 2000), and tobacco has become an abusive habit in which the traditional practices are no longer employed and tobacco can no longer be seen solely in a cultural context.

The power of tradition and culture should not be overlooked and dismissed by health professionals. While use of sacred tobacco is still paramount, some American Indian people may perceive messages to quit smoking as another attempt to prohibit traditional practices and customs (Flannery, Sisk-Franco, & Glover, 1995). How to inform the community with appropriate messages related to sacred tobacco remains a challenge. Conceivably, a variety of avenues to deliver holistic educational messages through the media related to the cultural use of sacred tobacco is fitting. As revealed in the research, half of the interviewed key informants noticed a commercial tobacco message put forth by the media therefore demonstrating that the media is influential.

Furthermore, traditional healers and spiritual leaders are appropriate messengers that can become involved in relaying messages about appropriate techniques and respect of sacred tobacco use. The messages about tobacco could teach the history of sacred tobacco and utilize customary oral tradition as well as stories and other information that frame the issue in terms of traditional Anishinabe values and life ways. Foremost, the messages can convey that commercial ciga-
Cigarette smoking can cause imbalance and illness to their constituents as the key informants concur that smoking cigarettes is not a good thing.

Among the Ojibwe tribe, it is clear that original, traditional tobacco (Paper, 1988), or kinnikinnick, and commercial tobacco (usually bought in a large can or in a pouch of pipe tobacco) used today in ceremonies and for communications are not the same as tobacco smoked in cigarettes. These tobaccos serve two separate purposes and functions. Therefore, health professionals must recognize, be amenable to learn, and understand that sacred tobacco use and smoking tobacco in cigarettes have distinct meanings, purposes, and functions and address them as such when counseling and interacting with American Indian clients. Health professionals, including nurses, are challenged to retain the cultural value of tobacco while addressing the chronic abuse and effects of smoking in a manner that is culturally appropriate, informative, and nontreathing when working with American Indian clients.

**Conclusion**

This study describes three themes surrounding the use of sacred tobacco in the Ojibwe communities. The themes speak to the origin of sacred traditional tobacco, contemporary use and abuse of tobacco, and cultural strengths and meaning of tobacco among the Anishinabe. Holistic nurses are primed to comprehend tobacco use among the American Indian population. Holistic nurses possess expertise in a variety of roles and activities, practice from a holistic foundation that provides support and options in healing, and are particularly interested in health care that honors the body, mind, and spirit. Furthermore, the Standards of Holistic Nursing Care target cultural diversity and encompass a holistic caring process (American Holistic Nurses Association, 2003). For that reason, holistic nurses can help create a culturally appropriate circumstance that addresses the whole client and thus are extraordinarily poised to understand and assist this population with differentiating between abusive tobacco use and sacred tobacco use. Addressing the abuse of tobacco while encouraging the cultural traditions to continue can encourage healthier lifestyles resulting in reduction of smoking among American Indians.
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