



# NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS

## The National Congress of American Indians Resolution #SPO-16-046

### **TITLE: Supporting Policies to Reduce Commercial Tobacco Use, Secondhand Smoke Exposure and Tobacco-Related Disease among American Indians and Alaska Natives**

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**WHEREAS**, we, the members of the National Congress of American Indians of the United States, invoking the divine blessing of the Creator upon our efforts and purposes, in order to preserve for ourselves and our descendants the inherent sovereign rights of our Indian nations, rights secured under Indian treaties and agreements with the United States, and all other rights and benefits to which we are entitled under the laws and Constitution of the United States, to enlighten the public toward a better understanding of the Indian people, to preserve Indian cultural values, and otherwise promote the health, safety and welfare of the Indian people, do hereby establish and submit the following resolution; and

**WHEREAS**, the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) was established in 1944 and is the oldest and largest national organization of American Indian and Alaska Native tribal governments; and

**WHEREAS**, Alaska Natives and American Indians are carrying a disproportionate burden of disease and early death due to tobacco use and secondhand smoke exposure; cigarette smoking is the leading cause of preventable disease and death in the United States accounting for 1 of every 5 deaths (CDC Office on Smoking and Health, 2014); and

**WHEREAS**, tobacco use causes chronic diseases like cancer, cardiovascular disease, and pulmonary disease, and exacerbates diabetes, all of which are diseases that are increasing rapidly among Alaska Natives and American Indians; and

**WHEREAS**, American Indian adult rates of smoking are as high as 50% compared to 16.8% tobacco use rate of non-Native adults (BRFSS, 2012); and that American Indian high school students have the highest smoking prevalence of all racial/ethnic groups. (YRBS, 2013); and

**WHEREAS**, smokeless tobacco use is widely prevalent among certain regions, on the rise among Alaska Native and American Indians girls (YRBS 2013), and not a safe alternative to smoking; and

**WHEREAS**, children who breathe secondhand smoke are more likely to suffer from ear infections, decreased lung function, decreased cognitive function, and are at a significantly increased risk for sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS); and children are sacred and therefore steps should be taken to ensure that they have good quality of air to breathe and that they are sufficiently protected from secondhand smoke, which is a health hazard that is beyond their control; and

**WHEREAS**, it is estimated that 32.8% of government healthcare spending by Indian Health Service is attributable to smoking (Medical Expenditure Panel Survey, 2010); and

**WHEREAS**, the quality of commercial tobacco products has been compromised due to the chemical engineering by the tobacco industry and commercial tobacco contains 7,000 chemical additives (such as rat poison, formaldehyde, ammonia, acetone, arsenic and many more) that are harmful to health; and commercial tobacco disrespects the fundamental cultural traditions of American Indians and Alaska Natives; and

**WHEREAS**, Alaska Natives and American Indians have a right to not use commercial tobacco and to breathe smoke free air indoors; and

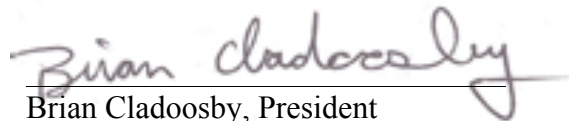
**WHEREAS**, interventions such as tobacco price increases, comprehensive tobacco-free laws, high impact mass media campaigns and barrier-free access to quitting assistance are proven to reduce tobacco use and tobacco-related disease and death.

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the National Congress of American Indians does hereby endorse policies for the protection of tribal community members from tobacco use and secondhand smoke exposure through comprehensive tribal commercial tobacco-free air policies (including all forms of commercial tobacco products) in indoor workplaces and public places (including tribal casinos), providing access to high quality tobacco cessation services, and promotes the creation of policy to dis-incentivize individuals from purchasing and using commercial tobacco products; and

**BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED**, that this resolution shall be the policy of NCAI until it is withdrawn or modified by subsequent resolution.

#### CERTIFICATION

The foregoing resolution was adopted by the General Assembly at the 2016 Midyear Session of the National Congress of American Indians, held at the Spokane Convention Center, June 27 to June 30, 2016, with a quorum present.

  
Brian Cladoosby, President

**ATTEST:**

  
Aaron Payment, Recording Secretary