

Traditional Use of Tobacco

A Presentation on the Cultural & Spiritual Interpretations of Tobacco Among Native Americans

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STOP Tobacco Use! Clearinghouse Library

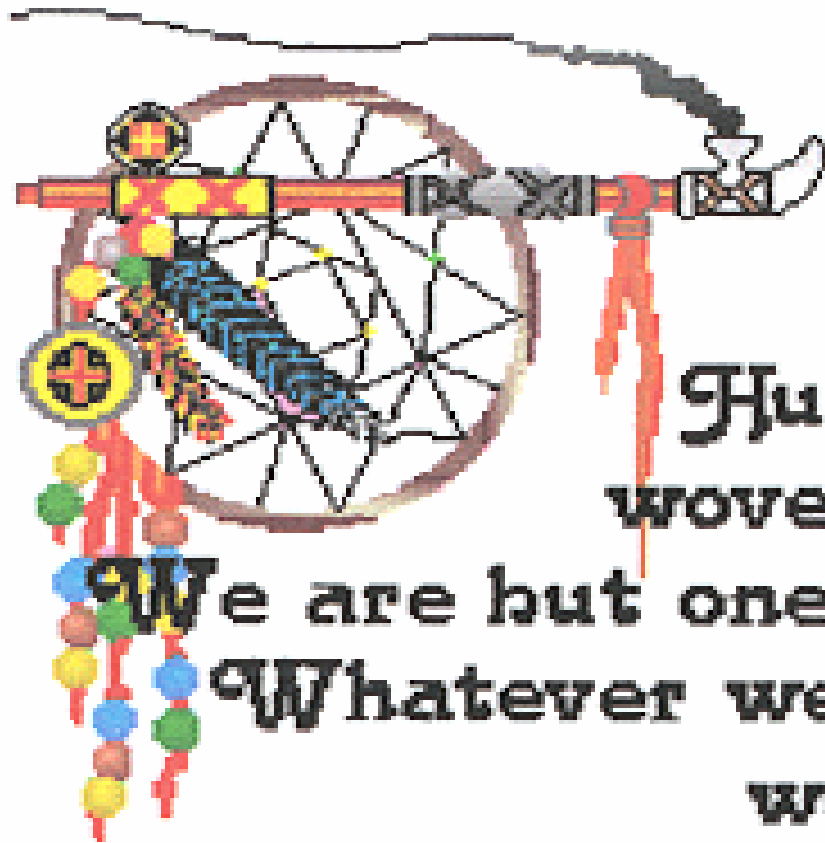
Mansfield Library, College of Technology

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Prepared by Danny Vollin



Humankind has not
woven the web of life.
We are but one thread within it.
Whatever we do to the web,
we do to ourselves.
All things are bound together.
All things connect.

-Chief Seattle-

The Wolf Ceremony



I wanted to give something of my past to my grandson. So I took him into the woods, to a quiet spot. Seated at my feet he listened as I told him of the powers that were given to each creature. He moved not a muscle as I explained how the woods had always provided us with food, homes, comfort, and religion.

The Wolf Ceremony



He was awed when I related to him how the wolf became our guardian, and when I told him that I would sing the sacred wolf song over him, he was overjoyed.

In my song, I appealed to the wolf to come and preside over us while I would perform the wolf ceremony so that the bondage between my grandson and the wolf would be lifelong.

The Wolf Ceremony



I sang.

In my voice was the hope that clings to every heartbeat

I sang.

In my words were the powers I inherited from my forefathers.

I sang.

In my cupped hands lay a spruce seed---the link to creation.

I sang.

And the song floated on the sun's rays from tree to tree.

The Wolf Ceremony



When I had ended, it was if the whole world listened with us to hear the wolf's reply. We waited a long time but none came.

Again I sang, humbly but as invitingly as I could, until my throat ached and my voice gave out. All of a sudden I realized why no wolves had heard my sacred song. There were none left! My heart fills with tears. I could no longer give my grandson faith in the past, our past.

The Wolf Ceremony



At last I could whisper to him: “It is finished!”

“Can I go now?” He asked, checking his watch to see if he would still be in time to catch his favorite program on TV. I watch him disappear and wept in silence. All is finished

Tobacco Plains



The extreme northwestern corner of Montana has been known as the Tobacco Plains for more than a century. The 'Tobacco Plains' name came from the tobacco that was planted by the Kootenai Indians in the Tobacco Valley. The Kootenai live in Alberta, and British Columbia, Canada, as well as Idaho and western Montana.

Keep Tobacco Sacred

***Tobacco abuse is not traditional
use of tobacco!***

Tobacco has been used for many generations as offerings to the spirits, for planting, for gathering food, for healings, and for ceremonies. Tobacco is medicine.



BOTANIST, JOHN GERARD, 1597



Wrote that tobacco induced vision, he also said that tobacco cured kidney pain, toothache, worms, ulcers, scabies, burns and gunshot wounds. It was also a snake-bite antidote and its oil cured deafness.

It was also noted that the Native People used tobacco sparingly and ceremonially.

Tobacco as a Sacred Offering



- Ceremonial Use of Tobacco
- Pipe Ceremony
- Sweat Lodges
- Sun Dances
- Offering of Prayers
- Tobacco as a spiritual gift with conditions for use

Ceremonial Smoking

Highlighted Many Important Activities...

- Rallying forces for warfare
- Trading goods
- Ritual dancing
- Medicine ceremonies (healing)
- To discuss war or peace
- To negotiate for a bride
- While settling disputes over land



"Giving Voice To Bear"

By David Rockwell



In the Winnebago Bear Dance, dancers circled like bears around a mound of earth called ma'warup'uru', which represented a bear den. The four sides represented the den entrances. The center of the mound was said to be the home of the bear. Dance leaders put tobacco and red feathers in the center and at each of the four entrance points.

"Giving Voice To Bear"

By David Rockwell



As they moved around the mound the dancers stretched out their arms, growled and huffed like bears. They took tobacco from the den and ate it. The sick people for whom the dance was preformed also took tobacco from the den, chewed it, and asked to live.

Told in 1968 by Louie Ninepipe, age 82



“In the 1880’s when I was born, we got the Grass Dance from the Crows and Shoshones. Anybody was allowed to join this dance, but only certain ones were leaders. The leader in my young days was Isaac Black Moon. He used to be the war dance leader, as well. He carried a whip that he had taken from an enemy. He used it to hit people on the legs with if they didn’t get up to dance.

Told in 1968 by Louie Ninepipe, age 82



One of his assistances carried a pipe. When there was going to be a break in the dance the drummers first sang the smoke song. Then the one with the pipe filled it and passed it among the singers. Later they did away with all those details and they just plain danced, like they still do.

Sacred Substance



A Navajo herbalist explained it this way. “Tobacco is *Diyin* – a *Holy Person*. Use it with respect and it rewards you. Use it the wrong way, it kills you”

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW!



- Tobacco abuse is a risk factor for heart disease, cancer, and stroke— all leading causes of death among American Indians and Alaska Natives.
- An estimated 47 million adults in the U.S. smoke cigarettes - though this results in the death or disability of half of regular users.
- Each year, exposure to ETS causes an estimated 3,000 nonsmoking Americans to die of lung cancer.

EFFECTS OF TOBACCO ABUSE



- Cancer is the second leading cause of death for all American Indians and Alaska Natives 45 years of age and over.
- Native people have very high rates of exposure to cancer risk factors, particularly cigarette smoking.
- The death rate among Native People due to tobacco abuse is twice that of the U.S. population. 2 out of every 5 Native American smokers die of tobacco abuse.

New Smokers



- CDC reports: Each day about 6,000 young people try a cigarette – 3,000 more become daily users. About 1/3 of these people will eventually die a “smoker’s death” from cancer, heart disease, or lung cancer.
- $3,000 \times 365 = 1,068,000$ New smokers/year

Smokeless Tobacco: *Snuff & Chew*



- Like cigarettes, smokeless tobacco contains many cancer-causing chemicals. Because it is held in the mouth for minutes at a time, more of these chemicals enter your body than when you smoke.
- Smokeless tobaccos are NOT safer than cigarettes.

Spit tobacco is highly addictive



- 1 “dip” delivers as much ***nicotine*** as approximately 3 to 4 cigarettes.
- Spit tobacco contains 28 known ***cancer causing agents***.
- Spit tobacco can cause oral cancers and 1 in 3 people who use it have a chance of dying from it.

Why Should You Care?

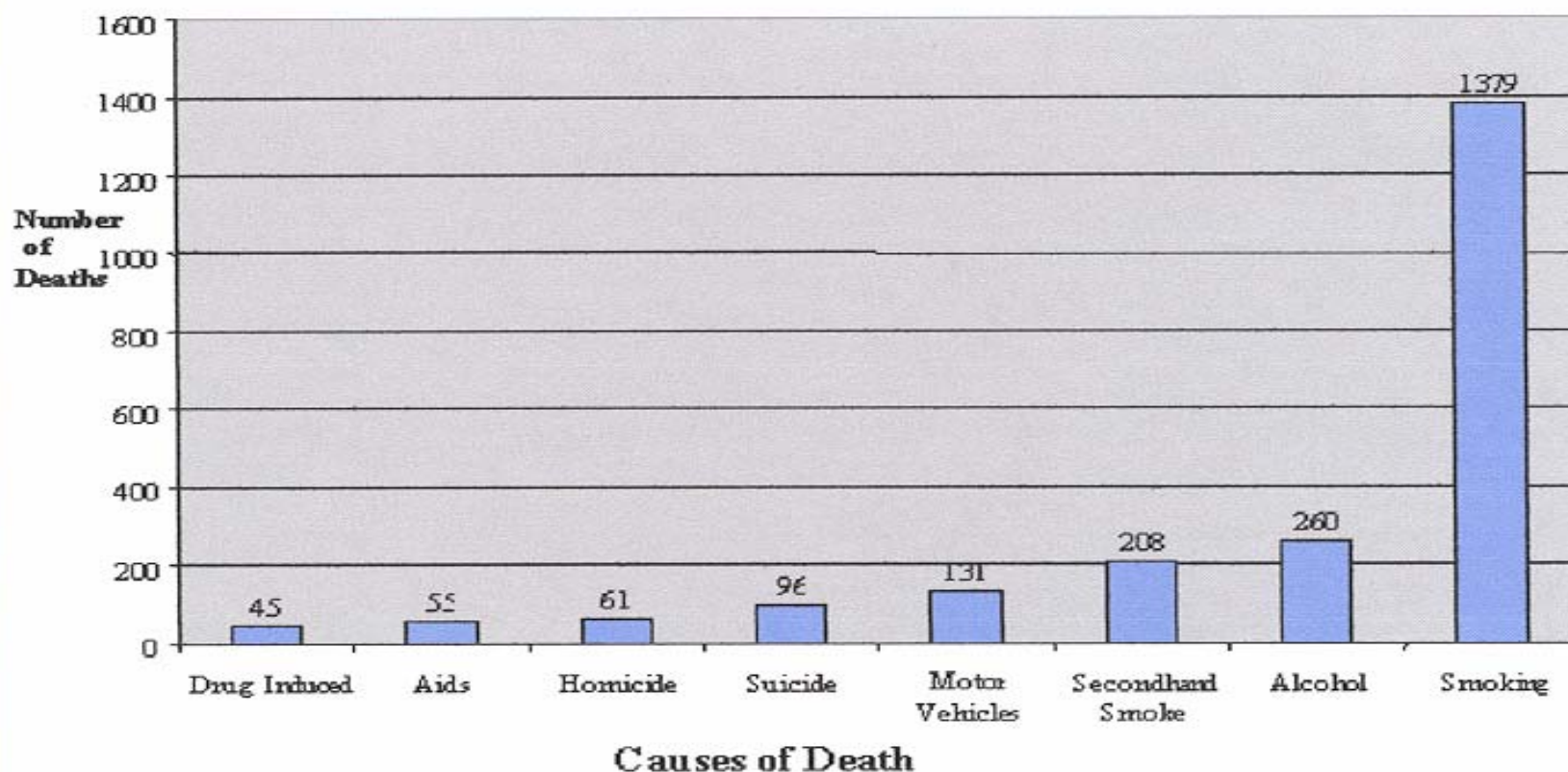


- Oral Cancer
- Other Cancers
- Tooth Abrasion
- Gum Recession
- Increased Tooth Decay
- Tooth Discoloration and Bad Breath
- Unhealthy Eating Habits
- Nicotine Dependence

TOBACCO IS A KILLER

More Montanans die each year from smoking than from car accidents, alcohol, drugs, AIDS, suicide, and murders **COMBINED!** Tobacco use is also the single most preventable cause of death and disease in our society.

Comparative Causes of Annual Deaths in Montana



[The number of Montana deaths per cause was extrapolated from national data.]

- On average, 12.6 years of potential life is lost for each Montanan who dies from smoking (calculated to life expectancy; based on data from 1990-1994)

The Sacred Peace Pipe

By *Joe Medicine Crow*, Crow Tribal Historian



The Pipe is Sacred to the earth people;
tobacco put into it is also Sacred.

The Pipe is like a double-edge
tomahawk:

One side is used to declare war and the
other side is used to make peace.

The man of the old world uses words on
paper to make peace

But later breaks it.

The Sacred Peace Pipe

By *Joe Medicine Crow*, Crow Tribal Historian



The man of the new world uses the
Pipe to make Scared peace.

Which he never breaks.

The earth people use their hearts
to find peace,

But his brother white men use
their heads instead.

The Sacred Peace Pipe

By *Joe Medicine Crow*, Crow Tribal Historian

When the Indian lives in harmony with
the flowing forces of his mother earth,

Then he is in peace with all his
relations-the plants, animals and
humans.

When we stand side by side in the
circle of no beginning and no ending,
The first maker, Creator of all things,
is in the center.



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The Sacred Peace Pipe

By *Joe Medicine Crow*, Crow Tribal Historian

He hears our words of
supplication and blesses us
with his infinite love which is
peace itself.

AHO AHO



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