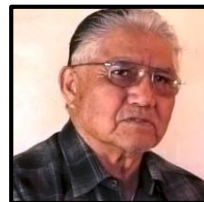


# Navajo Traditional Healer Perspectives on Commercial Tobacco: A Digital Story Project

## A 4-Part Educational Video Series

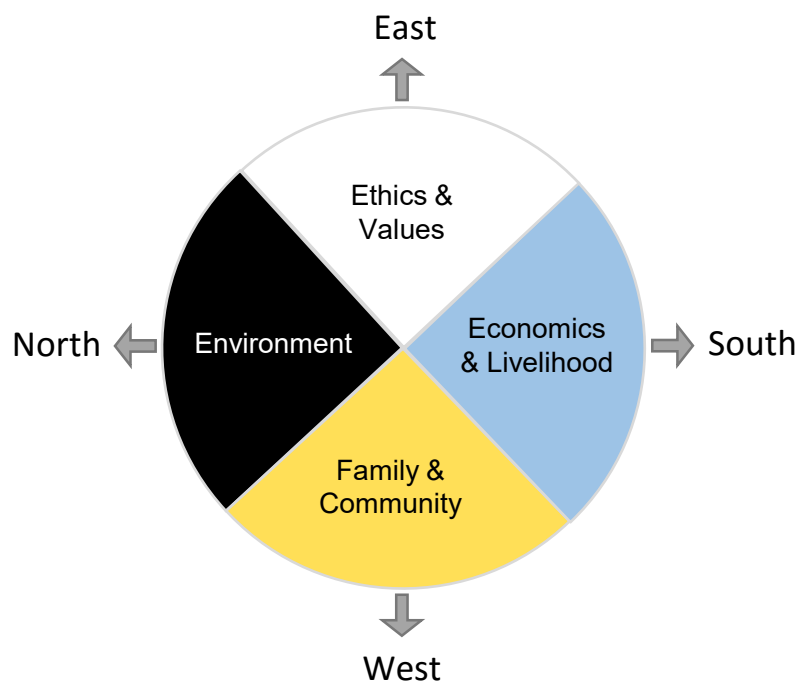
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## Understanding & Using the Video Discussion Guides

Each video in this digital story project is accompanied by a video discussion guide that is designed to stimulate discussion on topics related to commercial tobacco smoke-free policy and secondhand smoke prevention in ceremonial settings, from a **Diné worldview**. This worldview considers all things in the terrestrial and cosmic environments as being connected and interrelated. The foundation for the Diné worldview is *Sq'áh Naaghái Bik'eh Hózhóo*.

**Sq'áh Naaghái Bik'eh Hózhóo** is a traditional system that places human life in harmony with the natural world and the universe. SNBH provides principles for 1) protection from the imperfections in life, and 2) the development of wellbeing. Through SNBH, the wellness of the whole person must consider the body, mind, and spirit – as well as the environment in which they exist.



### What makes up SNBH?

SNBH is composed of four equal and interdependent components: 1) ethics and values, 2) economics and livelihood, 3) family and community, and 4) environment.<sup>1</sup>

Each component is associated with a specific direction and position in the universe, and each one contributes to an individual's holistic wellness.

Together, these components bring about a state of *hózhó* for an individual. **Hózhó** is the state of perfect harmony, order, and balance.

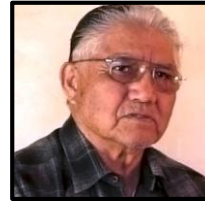
1. Benally, H. (1992). Spiritual Knowledge for a Secular Society: Traditional Navajo Spirituality Offers Lessons for the Nation. *Tribal College: Journal of American Higher Education*, 3(4), 19-22.



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## DISCUSSION GUIDE

### Video 1:

### “A Historical Overview of Commercial Tobacco in American Indian Life”

#### Video Summary

Video 1 provides an overview of key federal Indian policies and events in United States history that contributed to the introduction of commercial tobacco among various American Indian tribes, and closes with a description of the two types of Navajo healers featured in this video series.

#### Key Themes

- Western Expansion
- Forced disconnection of American Indians from homelands
- Colonization
- Suppression of American Indian cultural beliefs & practices
- Introduction of commercial tobacco
- Navajo ceremonies

We created this set of questions to accompany this video. These questions are designed to frame discussions using the Navajo worldview, which is centered on **Są'áh Naagháí Bik'eh Hózhóo** (SNBH). SNBH is composed of four components that contribute to holistic wellness and balance: ethics & values, economics & livelihood, family & community, and environment. This set of questions can be used to deepen viewers' understanding of key themes presented in this video.

1. What kind of relationship did American Indians have with tobacco before the arrival of Westerners? What type of values support this relationship? **[Ethics & Values]**
2. Before commercial tobacco was sold at trading posts, where did American Indians get the tobacco they used in their ceremonies? **[Economics & Livelihood]**
3. Why did American Indian families start to use commercial tobacco in place of traditional tobacco? **[Family & Community]**
4. How were American Indians disconnected from their homelands? How did this impact ceremonial life and practices? **[Environment]**



The Networks Among Tribal Organizations for Clean Air Policies (NATO CAP) project is funded by the National Cancer Institute State and Community Tobacco Control initiative grant U01-CA154300. The research and this material was approved by the Navajo Nation Human Research Review Board NNR-11.152.

# Video 1 Excerpts

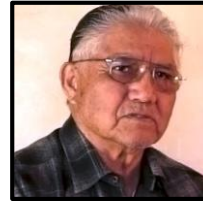
## Key information presented in the video:

- ❖ When the Indian Removal Act was passed in 1830, Native people were forced from their homelands to accommodate the expansion of white settlers into the West. Communities were disconnected from their traditional lands, and this really impacted ceremonial life and practices, which included traditional tobacco use.
- ❖ The Indian Religious Crimes Code in 1883 further suppressed the expression of Native religious beliefs when it restricted Native people from performing their dances, ceremonies, songs, and prayers. Use of ceremonial items, such as traditional tobacco, were also prohibited.
- ❖ As more and more settlers colonized the West during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, they introduced many foreign ideas and items into tribal communities. Among them was commercial tobacco. While Native ways were suppressed, the Anglo-American lifestyle was enforced. As time went on, tribes began substituting or mixing traditional tobacco with commercial tobacco in their cultural events and ceremonial settings, which were often held in secret.
- ❖ In 1978, the American Indian Religious Freedom Act was finally passed, and federal agencies could no longer interfere in a Native person's right to exercise their religious beliefs. This law was strengthened in 1994.
- ❖ To further understand the history, role, and influences of commercial tobacco within ceremonial settings, researchers from the Networks among Tribal Organizations for Clean Air Policies project interviewed Navajo healers from two distinct spiritual healing systems practiced on the Navajo Nation today.
- ❖ First is the traditional Diné healing way, known as *hataal*. In *hataal*, healers are known as *hataaliis*, and engage healing for their patients through elaborate songs, medicinal herbs (including *nát'oh*), sandpainting, and other diagnostic methods that include stargazing, hand trembling, and charcoal ember reading.
- ❖ The second is the peyote-based healing way commonly known as the Native American Church or NAC. The Native American Church ceremony was formed by intertribal cultures in the late 1800's and into the early 1900's, and still exists to this day. Healers who conduct NAC ceremonies are known as *azeé yee nahatáhi*, or road men.
- ❖ Both the *hataal* and the NAC ceremonies involve the use of *nát'oh* in their healing practices.

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## DISCUSSION GUIDE

### Video 2:

### “Navajo Healer Perspectives on the Differences Between Commercial Tobacco and Dził Nát’oh or Traditional Mountain Smoke”

#### Video Summary

Video 2 provides an overview of healer perspectives on the differences between commercial tobacco and Dził Nát’oh, or traditional mountain smoke. Healers make strong distinctions about the purpose and meaning of commercial tobacco versus Dził Nát’oh. Commercial tobacco is believed to be harmful to health and Dził Nát’oh as restorative to health and spiritual wellbeing.

#### Key Themes

- Commercial tobacco is used recreationally (not for spiritual purposes) and is harmful to health and wellbeing.
- Commercial tobacco is treated with chemicals and is readily disposable.
- Dził Nát’oh is all-natural and is not treated with any chemicals.
- Dził Nát’oh is a medicine and is used with specific prayers to restore spiritual and physical wellbeing.

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1. What are the main differences in how commercial tobacco and Dził Nát’oh or mountain smoke are used? What is the purpose of using commercial tobacco compared to Dził Nát’oh? **[Ethics & Values]**
2. Where and how is Dził Nát’oh made? Where and how is commercial tobacco made? Who benefits from the production and sale of commercial tobacco compared to Dził Nát’oh? **[Economics & Livelihood]**
3. How have families been affected by commercial tobacco and exposure to secondhand smoke from commercial tobacco? How have families and communities benefitted from Dził Nát’oh? **[Family & Community]**
4. How does smoke from commercial tobacco affect the air we breathe? How can Dził Nát’oh strengthen one’s relationship to their environment and the natural world? **[Environment]**



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## Video 2 Excerpts

### Key information presented in the video:

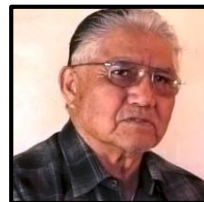
- ❖ Commercial tobacco is processed and traditional mountain smoke is natural. It's organic: no additives, no chemicals.
- ❖ The traditional Navajo tobacco is used in terms of (treating) different conditions and different symptoms that people have. It is considered a medicine that is used to help in healing and restoration and giving back to the natural environment. I think that commercial tobacco is more geared for profit making, the continuing support of an economy that is new in introduction of monetary (commerce) today. And that is what I think are main differences between the two.
- ❖ This commercial tobacco is a plant, but there are additives that are not healthy for the body and mind – even bodily fluids and blood. All that bad stuff is in there. Mountain smoke is not like that, even though it may have some natural chemicals in it. When mountain smoke is used, there is an offering and it has a purpose. It's not used socially without purpose. It's only used to heal a person's mind and body. This is how mountain tobacco is used.
- ❖ When a person really wants to restore their balance in themselves, either spiritually – or perhaps a person has not said any prayers for quite a while or has not communicated with the Great Spirit, or has forgotten the traditional ways (so they want) to restore (their) emotional state of mind. Maybe (it is) their physical body – perhaps there might some illness they are concerned about.
- ❖ Yes, there is a difference. Mountain smoke grows here among us, locally. Yes, we see it among us. We make offerings to harvest the mountain smoke in spring and autumn. This commercial tobacco, I am not certain where it comes from or how it is made. And yes, there's a difference. It's not the same.
- ❖ Yes, the difference is obvious. When the tobacco plant is growing, there are no chemicals. When the tobacco is moved to the manufacturing facility, chemicals are added. The commercial tobacco is chemically enhanced and becomes habit-forming.
- ❖ As for commercial tobacco, it's more for recreational use. When you use commercial tobacco, you're still thinking, but you have no reverence or purpose in using it. You can throw the unfinished commercial tobacco away just like that.
- ❖ And I believe that the difference in this is that our dził nát'oh, mountain smoke, is organic. It comes from nature. There is no mixture of any kind of chemicals or pesticides or whatever other (additives) they use to grow these other commercial tobaccos that comes from the Western side. I think that ours is natural. That's the difference.



# Navajo Traditional Healer Perspectives on Commercial Tobacco: A Digital Story Project

## A 4-Part Educational Video Series

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## DISCUSSION GUIDE

### Video 3:

### “The History and Impact of Commercial Tobacco in Ceremonial Settings”

#### Video Summary

Video 3 provides a historical overview of when and why healers began using commercial tobacco in ceremonies. Commercial tobacco is used more often in certain ceremonies compared to others. Commercial tobacco is often mixed with Dził Nát'oh (DN) for various reasons. Healers are aware of the health risks of secondhand smoke from commercial tobacco and expressed concern for its use in ceremonies, especially among youth and others with existing health conditions.

#### Key Themes

- Commercial tobacco is often mixed with DN
- DN is scarce and in high demand
- Collection of DN involves cultural protocols (i.e. offerings) and resources
- Healers are concerned about exposure to secondhand smoke in ceremonies

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1. How and why is commercial tobacco used in American Indian ceremonies? Should commercial tobacco be mixed with Dził Nát'oh in ceremonies? Why or why not? **[Ethics & Values]**
2. Why are Navajo healers concerned about the dangers of secondhand smoke in ceremonies? How can this issue be addressed? **[Economics & Livelihood]**
3. Have you ever noticed or thought about the use of commercial tobacco in ceremonies? What do you and your family know about commercial tobacco? **[Family & Community]**
4. What has been done by your community to create a safe environment that is free from secondhand smoke? What else can be done to create a healthier environment for your community? **[Environment]**



# Video 3 Excerpts

## Key information presented in the video:

- ❖ Back in the early 1900s, when these various tribes came to the reservation and started sharing their proceedings with our people. I think at the time, they had already begun using Bull Durham tobacco in their proceedings. I think that it was like, "That's the way it's done and that's the way we were doing it," kind of a thing.
- ❖ Back then, Pall Mall, Viceroy and Virginia Slims --a lot of different names, all commercially advertised tobacco --and if you smoked them, you were classified as a "high-class citizen." Elderly men believe(d) the ads and were convinced; they were not formally educated. They emulated the advertisements and the sellers of commercial tobacco, copying them, making themselves, or believing that they, themselves, were of a higher class distinct from others, even at ceremonies. I believed it. We believed it. They would say, "Sprinkle some of that tobacco in here," as they would be rolling or smoking.
- ❖ I became aware of its use many years ago, in 1947. Since I was a child, I was aware of commercial tobacco being used in ceremonies. Commercial tobacco is treated with something. I, myself, also smoked cigarettes (commercial tobacco) and I realized that it had some negative effects on me. And I realized that men were using the commercial tobacco in their ceremonies, mixing it with traditional mountain tobacco. It has a different smell.
- ❖ My grandpa was a medicine man and he used to perform Blessing Way ceremonies. I noticed he used mountain smoke in his ceremonies, when I was a young boy. He was given commercial tobacco as a goodwill gesture from the host family. As a host family, they gave commercial tobacco to the medicine man. He was bringing the commercial tobacco home. So, I started smoking commercial tobacco too.
- ❖ Within the Diné traditional ceremonies, while people are praying, I have not seen healers use commercial tobacco as part of the ceremony. This has not happened in traditional ceremonies. In the Azeé' Bee Nahagaha' (Native American Church) ceremonies, Bull Durham has always been used. However, before and after many ceremonies, people do smoke cigarettes.

## Why did Navajo healers start using commercial tobacco in ceremonies?

- ❖ There's a lot of responsibility that goes in the process of healing. A practitioner is taught that everything is alive, everything has a spirit. (They are taught) that there is a way to approach plants, there is a way to talk to plants; there is a way to collect plants. Commercial tobacco is readily available. It's more convenient to spend a few bucks than to have something prepared.
- ❖ The traditional mountain tobacco ingredients are only available far away. It requires a lot traveling and resources (gas, time, offerings) to gather traditional mountain smoke. You can't gather a lot -- you make an offering to one plant for one purpose only. When you smoke the small amount that you gathered, it will not last long. In the Azeé' Bee Nahagaha' ceremony, there are many people that use the tobacco to pray. Pipe tobacco and Bull Durham are mixed in so that the ceremonial tobacco lasts longer.

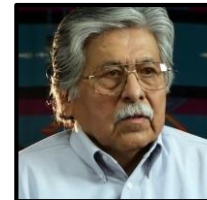
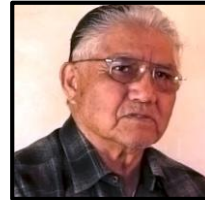
## How do you think the second-hand smoke from commercial tobacco affects people's health within ceremonial settings?

- ❖ While we are smoking in a ceremony, people sit around us. Smoke is blown on everyone sitting in the ceremony; some of those individuals may have health issues. They all inhale the smoke into their bodies. That is the danger. Like a cold and other health ailments, being exposed is what concerns me. However, when nothing is added to the old traditional mountain smoke, there are no negative effects.
- ❖ This is very sensitive and it's very controversial, as you might already know. There's a claim that the commercial tobacco is safe within the context of an actual NAC ceremony -- whether that's ABND. They say it is safe, but I really don't think so. I wish there was a case study by young people that could look at (the effects of) that (exposure to secondhand smoke after) 5 years, (or) 10 years. And you'll find that these people who utilize commercial tobacco within a NAC ceremony will develop those problems associated with cancer. That has never been done.

# Navajo Traditional Healer Perspectives on Commercial Tobacco: A Digital Story Project

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## DISCUSSION GUIDE

### Video 4:

### “Creating Smoke-free Ceremonial Environments: Thoughts on Solutions and Policies”

#### Video Summary

In Video 4, healers share their thoughts on how a commercial tobacco-free policy might affect ceremonial practices on the Navajo Nation. Healers highlight solutions to create healthy ceremonial environments free from commercial tobacco (CT) secondhand smoke. Healers recognize there are challenges to consider in this movement, such as sustainable harvesting of Dził Nát’oh and the need to create a supply of untreated tobacco for ceremonial use.

#### Key Themes

- A commercial tobacco-free policy may prompt the revitalization of cultural practices to collect Dził Nát’oh
- Healers recognize that secondhand smoke from CT is harmful to health
- Youth should be protected from secondhand smoke in ceremonial settings
- CT contributes to disharmony and imbalance

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1. Will a policy ban on commercial tobacco in ceremonies encourage healers to go out and collect Dził Nát’oh? **[Ethics & Values]**
2. Think about the resources and efforts that go into collecting dził nát’oh. What are the benefits and challenges of using only Dził Nát’oh within the ceremonial setting? **[Economics & Livelihood]**
3. How will a policy that bans commercial tobacco affect families and communities? Will this type of policy change benefit the health and well-being of people that participate in ceremonies? **[Family & Community]**
4. How would a policy ban on commercial tobacco improve the relationship that a healer has with nature? Is the relationship with nature important in your community? What type of relationship should people have with nature? **[Environment]**



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# Video 4 Excerpts

## Key information presented in the video:

**Have you heard about the ABNDN recent change in their constitution and by laws which bans the use of commercial tobacco during the ceremony? What do you think about this change?**

- ❖ I think it would affect it greatly. It would force practitioners to get up and get out and return to nature, to remember those songs and prayers to these spots where ancestors gathered these medicines, which is not practiced so much today. So if it (policy) was passed, it would benefit practitioners to bring them back to earth.
- ❖ In a ceremonial setting, the mixture and use of mountain smoke and commercial tobacco is being done. So, when a policy prohibits the use of commercial tobacco, it will present some difficulty. In the Navajo traditional ceremonies, the policy will not hinder their practices. Even if the policy passed, individuals will react differently. Even if the policy prohibits the use of commercial tobacco in ceremonies, some people will continue using it.
- ❖ In a prayer service, the whole intent is to restore harmony and balance to the patients and to all the participants, you know. It's about wellbeing. It's about getting well, you know, getting over whatever health impediments, you know, health imperfection (the patient has). That's the whole idea. So, to continue to utilize commercial tobacco... you're not really doing that. You're promoting the ill effects, disharmony. The person becomes out of sync with the natural elements.
- ❖ If all reservation-wide use dził nát'oh, too many tipis are held on Friday and Saturday night(s), people would go to mountains and get the dził nát'oh and there would be no more dził nát'oh until the following year(s) spring time. That's the point right there.
- ❖ The chemicals that are added to the commercial tobacco is the problem. The tobacco that is not yet treated, it is still good and clean until it gets treated with chemicals. How can we get untreated tobacco? That type of natural tobacco is good for our children and their future.
- ❖ In the ceremony, you pray all night long until the morning time when it is complete. Then, people take out their commercial tobacco and start smoking. This is not good for us. I became aware of it and understand it; that is why it is best that we don't use commercial tobacco. We should only use the mountain tobacco for ceremonial purposes. If they want to go outside and smoke commercial tobacco, then that's up to them. Inside the tipi/hogan, the children, youth and students are the most vulnerable and they are not allowed to smoke. There might be a risk that could affect them.
- ❖ Through scientific research, they are saying that smoking will affect the health of the people.
- ❖ That is why, in this country, they say, "No smoking," in certain places. They say, "No, that's enough, because it is dangerous." Secondhand smoke is dangerous to your health. Knowing that, why should we go against it?