

## PROJECT SUN (STOP THE USE OF NICOTINE)

*An Evidence-Based Smoking Cessation Program Culturally Adapted for American Indian Youth*

If you would like to know more about this topic or have questions about other commercial tobacco control topics, please contact [trdrp@ucop.edu](mailto:trdrp@ucop.edu).

- Project SUN (Stop the Use of Nicotine) began with Project EX, a smoking cessation program for youth that was developed by Dr. Steve Sussman, a professor at USC Keck School of Medicine that has been previously adapted for different countries and cultures.
- Native American USC professor Claradina Soto and Community Consultant Lou Moerner, worked with a team of others to culturally adapt the curriculum from the name to the activities within. This marks the first time such a curriculum has been tailored for American Indian/Alaska Native (AIAN) youth, who have of the highest commercial tobacco use of all ethnic and racial groups in the U.S., up to 42% by some measures.
- Examples of modification include the use of Talking Circles and differentiating between commercial smoking and tobacco use and traditional or sacred tobacco, which has been used by AIAN groups for generations as a spiritual practice.
- After development, a research study was designed to test its effectiveness at helping Native youth stop tobacco use, reduce or plan to stop commercial smoking, as well as learning healthy stress reduction habits that can replace tobacco use. Youth were recruited from American Indian Education Centers and other urban centers throughout California.
- The study, published in the *Journal of Drug Education: Substance Abuse Research and Prevention*, recruited 126 youth ages 13 through 19 of which 34 were using commercial tobacco; there were some challenges in recruiting reported in the study. They trained 57 facilitators. The study found an adjusted cessation rate of 32%. This rate is significantly higher than those in most control groups which range from 1 to 7%.

Ramos GG, Sussman S, Moerner L, Unger JB, Soto C. Project SUN: Pilot Study of a Culturally Adapted Smoking Cessation Curriculum for American Indian Youth. *J Drug Educ.* 2022;51(1-2):10-31. doi:10.1177/00472379221111542. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/35788160/>.

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### KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- Project SUN is a culturally adapted youth smoking cessation program tailored to the needs of American Indian/Alaska Native (AIAN) youth.
- AIAN youth have the highest commercial tobacco use of all ethnic and racial groups in the U.S., up to 42%
- A TRDRP-funded study found an adjusted cessation rate of 32% after 3 months, substantially greater than most studies with controls which range from 3-7%.
- The study detailed challenges with research and implementation of evidence-based research on AIAN populations, emphasizing their need for greater support.