

Cultural Considerations

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Goal

- To improve cultural sensitivity to tobacco use by minority groups, including Alaska Natives and American Indians and immigrant populations

Objectives

- Name at least one challenge posed by ceremonial use of tobacco when counseling tobacco users to quit
- Name at least two tobacco use patterns in immigrant populations that differ from typical “US” patterns



Special Thanks

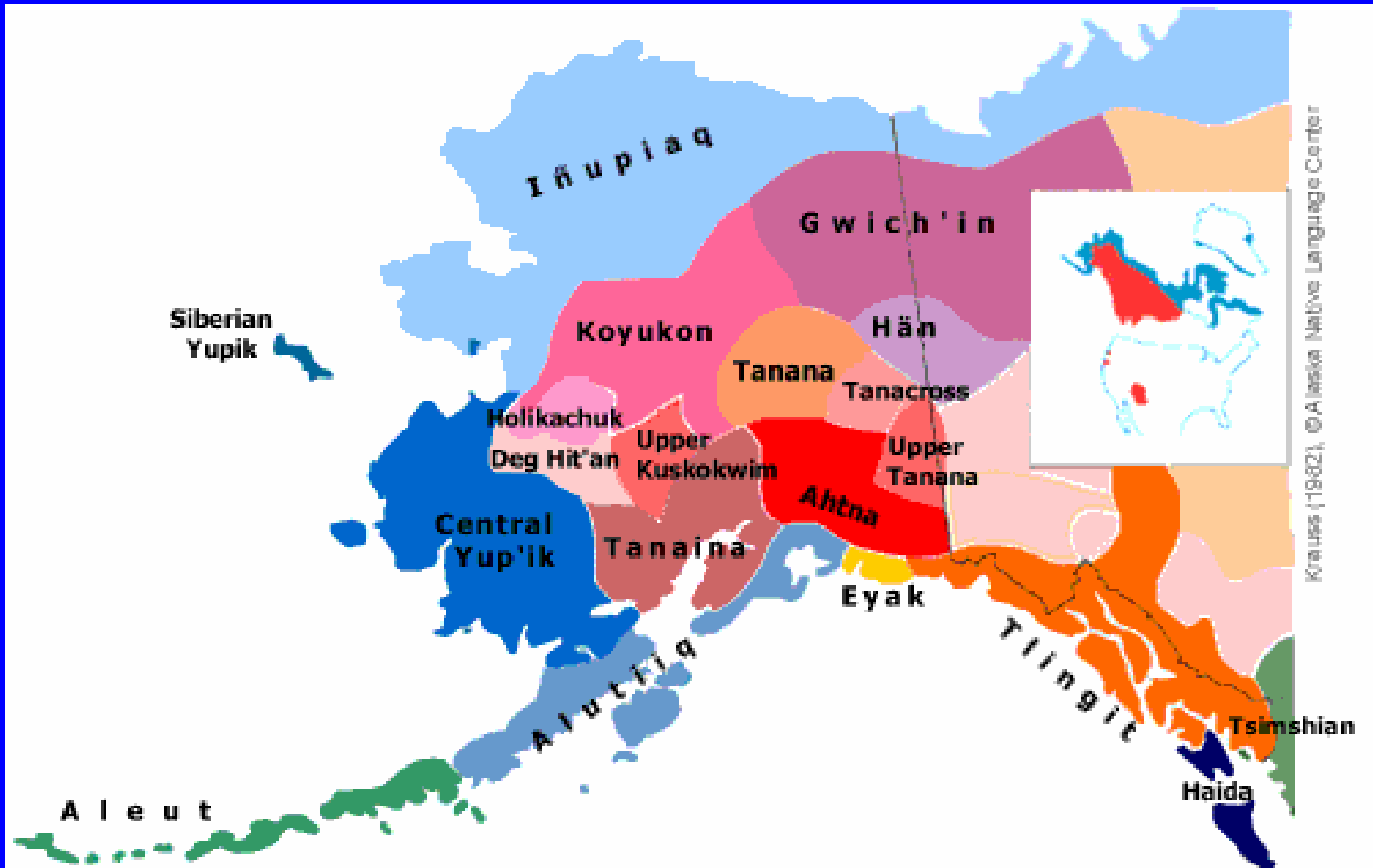
- Katherine Gottlieb, MBA
- Ted Mala, MD
- Michael Weakee, MBA



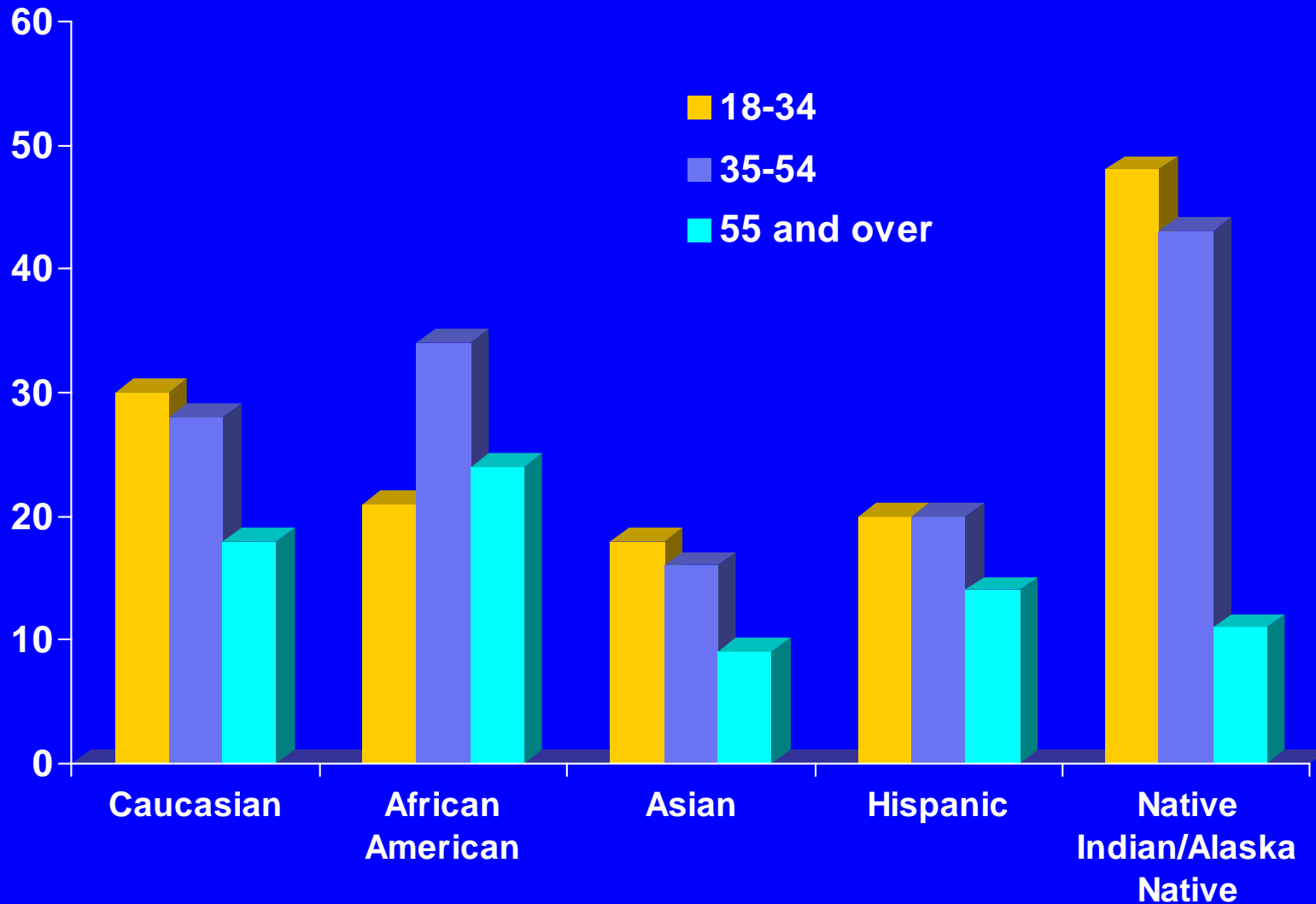
Ice fishing in Alaska

Native Americans are Diverse

- Over 229 different tribal groups in Alaska
- Hundreds of federally recognized tribes in the lower 48 states



Cigarette Smoking by Race and Age



Source Data: 1998 Surgeon General's Report

Native American Tobacco Use

Smoking rates and consumption among American Indians and Alaska Natives vary by region and state

- Smoking rates highest in Alaska (45.1%) and Northern Plains (44.2%)
- Lowest in the Southwest (17.0%)

Outline

1. Sacred uses of tobacco plant
2. Traditional uses of tobacco
3. Distrust of Federal officials
4. Targeting by tobacco industry
5. Importance of tobacco commerce
6. Immigrant smoking patterns

Sacred uses of the tobacco plant by American Indians



“A basic understanding from which we can start our dialogue is that tobacco can both give life and take life. It is a very powerful, potent, and magical being whose physical properties can cause great harm when abused. The flip side... is that tobacco can also provide great healing when not abused. Of all the contributions Native Americans have given the world, tobacco is probably the best known.”

Tharon P. Weighill, Sr.-- Chumash Elder

“However, when most people think of tobacco today, they don’t consider the depths of its story, or the unique role this powerful plant has had throughout our story....a great many of our people have become habituated to the nicotine contained in this plant. This should be of great concern to us all, because we are connected to each other; what affects one affects us all.”

Tharon P. Weighill, Sr. -- Chumash Elder



- Many American Indians consider native tobacco to be a medicine that can improve their health and assist in spiritual growth when used in a sacred and respectful manner.
- Native tobacco and its smoke are effective for curing a number of ailments, including; muscle aches, ear aches, soothes swelling, skin infections, and tooth aches.

Sacred Tobacco Use

It is a curious fact that while the whites took over material tobacco from the Indians, they took it with no fragment of the world that accompanied it, nor were they at first aware that there was such a world.

Harrington JP, 1996

They didn't inhale!

Traditional Uses of Tobacco

- Traditional tobacco



Tree fungus

Mixed with tobacco



Distrust of Federal Officials

History of Distrust

Michael Bird describes a relationship and history that have witnessed a military war being waged against Indian country; Native Americans being dispossessed of millions of acres of land; and a nearly successful effort to wipe out Native American people and their traditions, beliefs, and culture.

Targeting by Tobacco Industry

Targeting by tobacco industry

Images, names, and icons from American Indian culture are used to "brand" and market products to US and overseas markets (with names like Noble, Geronimo, Red Man, American Spirit)



Targeting of Males

During World War I clever marketing techniques associated bravery in the front lines with smoking.



Importance of tobacco commerce

Sources of income

- Casinos (often smoky)
- “Smoke shops”
- Internet sales of tobacco

Sovereignty Issues

- Many state laws do not apply on Indian land
- Cigarettes sold without additional taxes

Online Tobacco Sales

- In 2005, smokers will spend \$5 billion on tobacco products online (14% of domestic tobacco sales)

Immigrant Smoking Patterns

Upper class immigrants may be more likely to smoke than lower classes

“Smoking is a necessary part of being professional, since business can rarely be carried out without an exchange of cigarettes.”

-- Chinese professional

Immigrant Smoking Patterns

- Among many immigrants, smoking decreases with increasing time in the US
- Immigrants may neither understand nor believe health risks associated with smoking



Widely-held Values of Alaska Native Communities and Non-Native Providers

Alaska Native Communities

Elders

Sharing

Cooperation

Humility

Conflict avoidance

Responsibility to community

Non-Native Providers

Youth

Ownership

Competition

Achievement

Direct communication

Individualism

Review

1. Sacred uses of tobacco plant
2. Traditional uses of tobacco
3. Distrust of Federal officials
4. Targeting by tobacco industry
5. Importance of internet sales
6. Immigrant smoking patterns

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American Indian Tobacco Education Network

To promote, support, and protect the health, traditions, and cultural values of American Indians as they relate to sacred tobacco use and commercial tobacco abuse.

For More Information...

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