

# COMMUNITY ADVISED SMOKING CESSATION PROJECT: FIRST NATIONS SHARING CIRCLE SUMMARY



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**LUNGNSPEI**

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# First Nations Sharing Circle Summary

**Aim:** To better understand the needs and challenges of reducing the use of commercial tobacco or quitting smoking for Indigenous Peoples.

Four sharing circles were held in partnership with Indigenous partners in Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island (PEI) over the course of the LungNSPEI's Community Advised Smoking Cessation Project. The first sharing circle took place in Lennox Island on July 5, 2023. Subsequent sharing circles took place at the Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre in Halifax on August 8, PEI Native Council in Charlottetown on August 24, and the final sharing circle took place in Halifax at the Hampton Inn in partnership with Healing our Nations on October 5, 2023.

These circles were significant as they were an opportunity to engage in a culturally safe way with Indigenous Peoples who are current smokers, or who had recently quit smoking. The circles provided an opportunity to gain participants' unique perspectives on why they smoke and the health and social effects of smoking.



# Key Themes

- 1. Diversity of Smoking Experiences:** Participants in each of the sharing circles expressed a range of experiences with tobacco, from active smokers to past smokers, and those using alternative tobacco products such as vaping.
- 2. Cultural Significance of Tobacco:** The sacredness and traditional use of tobacco, especially among First Nations/Indigenous communities, is a prominent theme. This includes its ceremonial role, its value as a gift or exchange, and its reverence as a sacred medicine.
- 3. Social and Psychological Factors:** The psychological elements of smoking, including its social role, the ritualistic aspects, and the psychological battles associated with quitting, were common in all sharing circles.
- 4. Challenges and Barriers to Quitting:** Numerous challenges to quitting were identified, including economic barriers, the influence of social circles, and other life stressors.
- 5. Support and Community Engagements:** Emphasis on collective support, community-based programs, mutual understanding, and the importance of consistent touchpoints (like weekly meetings / sharing circles) for those trying to quit or reduce smoking.



# Key Themes

**6. Economic Aspects:** Both the financial struggles associated with smoking and the economic drivers of addiction (like availability of discounted products on reserve) were discussed.

**7. Alternative Therapies and Approaches:** There's a recurring theme of openness to non-traditional methods, personalized approaches, harm reduction, and the use of alternative products like vaping or nicotine inhalers.

**8. Intrinsic Motivation and Personal Reasons:** Whether it's personal health, financial reasons, motherhood, or personal introspection, the underlying individual motivations for either continuing or quitting smoking were highlighted during most sharing circles.

**9. Educational and Awareness Aspects:** The need for broader education, especially for organizations and governments, about the cultural significance of tobacco and the challenges faced by smokers.

**10. Holistic and Harm Reduction Approach:** The circles emphasized the importance of taking a harm reduction approach to smoking cessation for individuals who are not ready to quit yet want to reduce their smoking behaviour. This approach also includes understanding the harmful effects of commercial tobacco while respecting its cultural significance.



**Thank you!**

Wela'liog! Thank you to everyone who joined our sharing circles! Your feedback will help LungNSPEI and its partners develop needs-based tobacco cessation programming. Visit <https://www.lungnspei.ca/casc> for more detailed findings.