

YOUR BODY IS YOUR TEEPEE

Preventing marijuana use among
American Indian Youth **2022**

**Ne'voe nehe hehe ve'nove, naa
o'no'ah'tsetotse ne've'nahme**

“Your body is your teepee and like a
teepee you need to respect your home”

The All Nations Partnerships for Success project
at the Rocky Mountain Tribal Leaders Council
aims to prevent marijuana use in American
Indian youth ages 9-20 in Montana.

This updated publication provides an overview
of marijuana use among American Indian youth
and the impacts of use on mental, emotional,
spiritual, and physical health. Resources at the
end of this publication may assist youth, families,
and communities in prevention efforts.

Crow Teepee

Daxúá Chikitá Ashé Alakoótkalakoota-k

“Body - Respect - Teepee. To be the same”



WHAT IS MARIJUANA AND WHAT DOES IT DO?

Marijuana is a psychoactive derived from the flower Cannabis Sativa and C. Indica that contains both cannabidiol (CBD) and delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC).¹ Other names for marijuana include, but are not limited to: “pot,” “weed,” or “herb.”

THC is the chemical that produces a mind-altering or “high” feeling when smoked, digested, or inhaled.² The amount of THC content in marijuana has been steadily increasing since the 1980s and higher levels of THC result in a greater risk for addiction, emergency room visits, and dangerous consequences.^{3,4} Using vaping devices to consume marijuana or cannabis products is becoming increasingly widespread.

RESEARCH SUGGESTS MARIJUANA USE:



IMPACTS OF MARIJUANA USE ON ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT:

Research indicates that adolescent marijuana use increases:

- depression
- suicidality
- psychosis
- unsafe sexual behaviors
- unhealthy eating habits

One study reported that 42% of adolescents that used cannabis before the age of 17 had shown suicidal ideation.⁶ Previous research suggests that marijuana negatively impacts memory and students who smoke marijuana are more likely to get lower grades and drop out of high school compared to non-student users.^{7,8} These short-term health impacts can lead to long-term health consequences like:

- obesity
- unplanned pregnancies
- sexually transmitted diseases
- mental health disorders

WHERE IS MARIJUANA LEGAL IN THE U.S.?

As of April 14, 2021, 36 states, District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, and U.S. Virgin Islands have approved comprehensive, publicly available medical marijuana/cannabis programs. Seventeen states, two territories and the District of Columbia have enacted legislation to regulate cannabis for recreational use.⁹

LEGALIZATION OF MARIJUANA IMPACT ON USE:

“People think that medical marijuana will not hurt them because they say it is a natural herb. But if it affects how your brain is going to function, it is not good for you.”

- Siaosi Taote, Project Coordinator

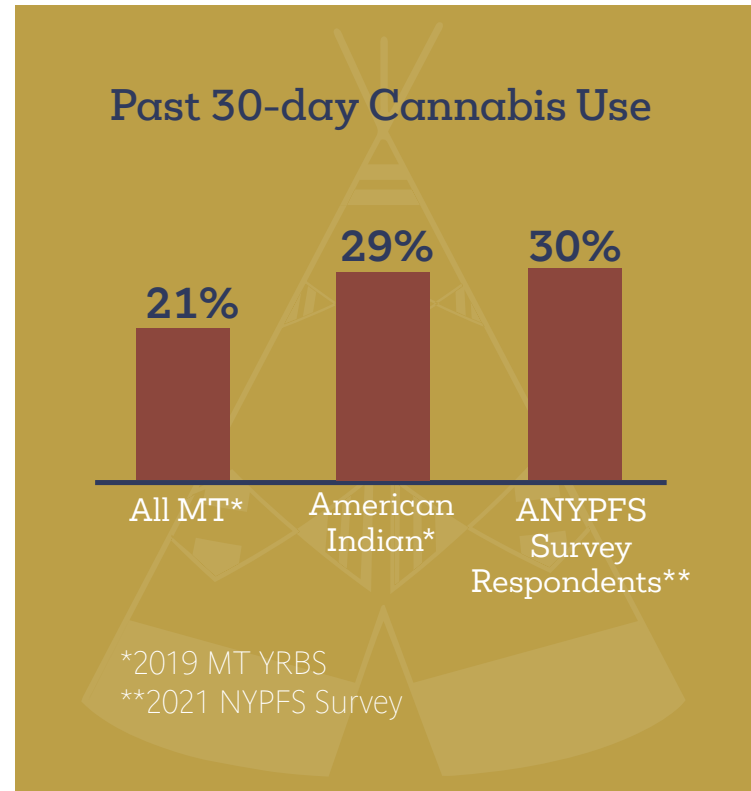
- American Indian reservations are sovereign nations. Their sovereignty means that even if states legalize marijuana, reservations may choose not to legalize marijuana use.
- There have been significant increases in youth consumption of marijuana in states that have legalized use.¹⁰⁻¹¹

Just because marijuana is legal, does not make it safe

- High school seniors in states with medical marijuana laws are more likely to have vaped marijuana and consumed marijuana edibles than their counterparts in states without such laws. Additionally, the number of teens who think marijuana use is harmful is declining and this is likely due to legalization and normalization of use.¹²
- A national study found that the most at risk for using marijuana changed from 18 years of age to 16 years of age.¹⁴ This raises greater concern for American Indian youth living on reservations who are already vulnerable to drug use. This suggests a need for more aggressive prevention efforts in the American Indian communities.

AMERICAN INDIAN CONSIDERATIONS:

- American Indian youth living in states with Recreational Marijuana Legalization (RML) reported increased marijuana use.¹⁴
- American Indian adults and adolescents who reside on reservations report the highest levels of marijuana use among various ethnic/racial groups in the U.S.¹⁵ In Montana, American Indian high school students are more likely to report past 30-day use than non-American Indian students. Use also increases as students age.¹⁶
- American Indian 8th graders living on or near reservations were over three times more likely to have ever tried marijuana. Also, 54% of 7th-8th graders reported using marijuana at least once while 62% of 9-10th and 69% of 11th-12th graders reported using marijuana at least once.¹⁵
- ANYPFS collected surveys from 409 youth from 2021 to 2022. Most youth begin using marijuana at age 13, and 30% of youth surveyed used marijuana in the past 30-days.



PREVENTION HELP

Effective prevention should begin early as elementary school due to early initiation marijuana use among American Indian youth.¹⁷

Peer pressure is associated with marijuana use among adolescents. Providing opportunities for American Indian youth to engage in prosocial activities with their peers will prevent marijuana use.¹⁹⁻²⁰

Parent and tribal community norms play an essential role in reducing the likelihood of marijuana use in American Indian youth.¹⁸⁻²⁰

Culture is prevention. One study of American Indian youth in Montana found that involvement in cultural activities increased feelings of social support and connection-both reduce risk of marijuana use.²¹

TIPS FOR PREVENTION

Youth: Get involved in your community. Find a friend or someone that you can talk to. Ask for help. Check out Healthy Native Youth at www.healthynativeyouth.org

Parents: Talk with your child in elementary or middle school about the consequences of marijuana use. Check out parentingmontana.org

Programs & Professionals: Utilize cultural resources in the community. Raise awareness, increase access to cultural activities and social support.

Teachers: Checkout NIDA's Classroom Resources on Drug Effects, www.teens.drugabuse.gov/teachers

Everyone:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, www.cdc.gov/marijuana/factsheets/teens.htm
- Center for Native American Youth has examples, stories, and resources, www.cnay.org
- SAMHSA's National Helpline is a free, confidential, 24/7, 365-day-a-year treatment referral and information service for individuals and families facing mental and/or substance use disorders. SAMHSA's National Helpline: 1-800-662-HELP (4357), www.samhsa.gov/marijuana
- NIDA's website: www.teens.drugabuse.gov
- Partnership to End Addiction, Vaping, <https://drugfree.org/article/vaping-and-marijuana-what-you-need-to-know/>

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Developed by AKA, PLLC
and AKA interns Brighton
Crawford and Ashley Weigum.

For more information:
Project Director, Les Left Hand
lefthand@rmtlc.org
Project Coordinator, Siaoosi Taoete
Siaoosi.Taoete@rmtlc.org