

# Čanlí Coalition of CRST

## Statewide Press Release Announcing the Policy

*For Immediate Release*

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## **Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe goes smoke-free**

*Becomes first tribe in South Dakota to protect all indoor public places from second-hand smoke!*

Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe (CRST), SD (May 5, 2015) – The CRST Tribal Council has passed the Smoke-free Air Act – making CRST the first Tribe in South Dakota to ensure indoor public places, such as restaurants, workplaces, and tribal offices, are smoke-free. The Smoke-free Air Act also requires that cigarette smoke be kept 50 feet away from public building entrances and prohibits the use of electronic cigarettes in indoor public places. Smoking is still permitted outdoors, in private homes and vehicles, and in designated smoking rooms of motels/hotels. The ordinance took effect May 1<sup>st</sup>.

The effort was led by the Canli (Lakota for “tobacco”) Coalition of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, a group of healthcare providers, cultural leaders, educators, environmental workers, community elders and youth. The Canli Coalition has been promoting smoke-free air and educating the community about the dangers of commercial tobacco and second-hand smoke since 2009.

The state of South Dakota passed a similar law by public vote in November 2010. Because tribes are sovereign nations, the state’s law did not apply to the nine American Indian reservations of SD. Which left the Canli Coalition to fight for equal rights for the residents of the Cheyenne River Sioux Reservation.

“We are so proud of our Tribal Council leaders for taking action to protect their people from second-hand smoke,” says coalition organizer Rae O’Leary, a nurse and respiratory therapist. “This is not a 5<sup>th</sup> amendment issue, it is a public health issue. The Smoke-Free Air Ordinance will save lives now and 7 generations from now.”

The smoking rate among CRST members is 51%, compared to a national average of 19%. Despite the high smoking prevalence, a 2012 survey of 400 adult CRST members found that the vast majority of both smokers and non-smokers agree that indoor public places should be protected from second-hand smoke. More than 93% of respondents believe that non-smokers are entitled to breathe air free of tobacco smoke in public places and more than 75% believed smoking should not be permitted at all in restaurants, work areas, or tribal offices.

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157 letters of support poured in from across the reservation in support of the Smoke-Free Air Act during a 30 day public comment period. “The overwhelming support for smoke-free air from tribal members of all ages and testimonies from youth leaders seemed to make a big impression on council representatives,” says CRST Health Committee Chairman Wayne Ducheneaux. “I believe protecting our people from second-hand smoke in indoor public places will be a much needed, positive change for our tribe.”

Since the 1964 Surgeon General’s Report that first said smoking is dangerous to health, 2.5 million adults who were nonsmokers have died because they breathed second-hand smoke. There is no risk-free level of second hand smoke exposure – it has immediate and long-term negative health effects, including increased risk to cancer, heart disease, and stroke. Children and elderly are the most at risk to the effects of second-hand smoke.

Research has shown that a 100% smoke-free environment in enclosed public places is the only way to prevent the harmful effects of second-hand smoke. Canli Coalition members also hope providing more smoke-free environments will help prevent youth from starting to smoke and encourage smokers to quit.

Harold Frazier, CRST Tribal Chairman says, “It has been great to work with CRST Tribal Council members with such visionary leadership to protect people from second-hand smoke. The benefits of living on a smoke-free reservation will be both immediate and long lasting.”

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