

# Smoking Sucks Workshops

Training Cree youth as peer-educators  
in tobacco reduction



Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay



# Smoking Sucks: Kick Butt!

## Training peer-educators for tobacco reduction among Cree youth



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## Foreword

*Congratulations to the youth participants and the facilitators for a job well done, all the more so, because we know how difficult it is to get people interested in quitting smoking. Your dedication, innovation and courage are much appreciated.*

*Smoking is everywhere around us. We live with it and unfortunately, too many of us get sick and will die from it. The toll it takes on the health and financial well-being of our people, and the resources diverted in our health system, make smoking a deadly business indeed. Smoking leads to breathing problems and lung diseases such as asthma, chronic bronchitis, and emphysema and certain types of cancers. It is associated with circulatory problems which can lead to heart disease and strokes, and smoking is a strong risk factor for complications associated with diabetes. We are also aware that the prevalence of smoking among youth in Eeyou Istchee is very high.*

*So we applaud the efforts of our youth in helping each other, their families and friends to try to get to grips with smoking as a major public health problem. I would also like to acknowledge the support our youth received from their parents, teachers and principals, health workers and others in the communities – thank you all!*

*I hope everyone enjoys this book as much as we have at the Cree Board of Health and Social Services. We certainly look forward to more initiatives like this in the future.*

Bella M. Petawabano

Chair, Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay. October 2012.

## Introduction

*The need for this project comes from the extremely high rates of smoking in the region – from 55% to 75% (varying by community), higher among youth than adults. The initial idea was to train two youth from each community: eighteen peer-educators were to be trained in two workshops (one for the coastal and another for the inland communities).*

*However, on reconsidering this, we decided to have workshops in each community instead, reaching a wider audience of youth and adults while learning more about the circumstances in the communities. This would help us to better focus our strategy in our efforts to reduce smoking among Cree youth and adults.*

*We are happy that this project achieved much more than was expected. First, seventy five youth were trained as peer-educators in eight of our nine communities. (one couldn't take part at the time, and we hope to make it up later.)*

*Second, these youth reached an audience of several hundred of their peers through presentations at schools during the workshops, and later.*

*Third, many of the youth took home what they learned each day, teaching their parents and siblings about the benefits of being smoke-free.*

*Fourth, most of the youth who were smokers decided to quit during the workshops.*

*Let us keep it up!*

Paul Linton,

Director of Chishaayiyuu, Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay.

### The workshops

The Smoking Sucks workshops were open to smokers as well as non-smokers: the main conditions for taking part were that participants should be willing to learn about the problems of tobacco, and to share their learning with others.

We held eight workshops in two tours of four communities, spending four to six days in each before moving to the next. Each workshop was quite different – mainly due to how the input of each group of participants shaped the proceedings but also to take into account the different circumstances in each community.

We varied the timing and content of the sessions according to the ages of participants, their smoking status, other activities going on in town or at school, and to accommodate their individual needs. For example, one of the youth was absent for a day because she had to look after her mother. Two of her colleagues from the workshop went to her home that evening to help her catch up, and we provided one-on-one tuition between sessions. She was able to complete the workshop with everyone else, and what's more, she made a profound contribution to our learning. This example captures the spirit of the workshops: by helping each other – even just a little – we all gain a lot.

The workshops would not have been possible without the excellent collaboration from the teachers and principals of each school. They helped to advertise the workshops, provided facilities and made us welcome. A very big thank you to those teachers who gave up their classrooms so we could have the use of a room with natural light for taking photos.

### Asking “But why?”

Our approach in these workshops can be summed up in the seemingly innocent question: “**But why?**” We begin by posing the question “Why is smoking so widespread in Cree communities?” There are of course several answers to this, such as “because people are so addicted to it” or “because everyone is doing it”. From these immediate reasons, we continue to dig deeper, always asking “but why?” to get at the underlying causes of smoking. This way, participants learn to think critically. They becoming empowered by the realization that there is much more to it than simply accepting the situation, or blaming smokers as the “victims” of smoking, or feeling helpless or guilty if they are smokers. The youth quickly came to understand that raising critical awareness is also an excellent tool for teaching their peers, families and communities about quitting smoking or not starting to smoke.

### This booklet

We produced this booklet firstly to fulfil a promise to the participants: we hope that it will help you remember what you learned about being smoke-free. That it will encourage you to stay smoke-free and inspire you to be a resource for other youth and adults.

We also wanted to share some of the experiences of the workshops with those who weren't there: to show what these youth were able to accomplish. They were often unsure or even skeptical at first, but soon found the enthusiasm to try and the willingness to venture outside their comfort zone, take on the challenge of tackling the problem of tobacco by teaching at home, at school and in the community.

The photographs you'll see in the pages that follow were taken mainly by the participants, taking turns to use the camera. This booklet starts with the larger workshops (rather than in chronological order), because these provide more activities to illustrate. After showing each of the eight workshops that took place, we conclude with the evaluation results from the participants, and a few comments.

We hope you'll enjoy meeting each of the youth peer-educators in this booklet and finding out more about what these awesome people did in such a short time. Thank you all.

And one more thing: may we invite you to take a quick quiz? Answers are at the back, page 28.

### Quiz

1. **Let's start with second-hand smoke. Can you explain what you understand by the term second-hand smoke. Why is it so bad for us?**
2. **When did the Cree of Eeyou Istchee start smoking (as we know it today)?**
3. **Why do so many First Nations youth smoke?**
4. **What % of kids who smoke before age 16 will stay smokers for the rest of their lives?**
5. **Do you think that smoking is part of Cree culture?**

Thanks for going along with this. We believe the youth in the workshops would certainly approve of your co-operation!

Ron Shisheesh and Rob Collins, October 2012.



# Mistissini Smoking Sucks Workshop

– Mistissini Voyageur School, 4<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> March, 2012



Crystal Mianscum



Justice Debassige



Carrie MacLeod



Ian Saganash



Ariel Mattawashish



Nikki Shecapio



Shayna Blacksmith



Trina Sandy-Onalik



Clayton Iserhoff



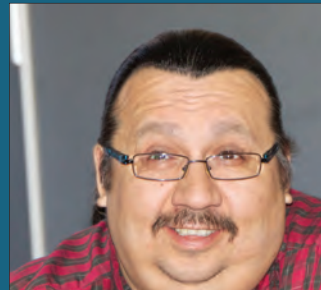
Savannah Blacksmith



Emerald Ottereyes



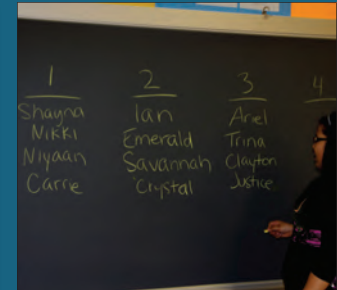
Niyaan Gunner



Ron Shisheesh (co-trainer)



Rob Collins (co-trainer)



## The setup: Mistissini Voyageur School

In our meeting with the senior students at Mistissini Voyageur School, we found that many more were keen to attend than the twelve we could accept for the workshop. Nevertheless, even those who could not be included visited occasionally, watched videos with us and came to the community presentation. The interest in Mistissini – among students, teachers, parents and especially the outstanding participants opposite, made this workshop a huge success.

## A climate for learning, and Tobacco 101

We started the workshop in the evening with introductions and snacks, aiming to establish an open and inquiring learning climate for our time together over the next few days. We explained our plans to the group and asked for input on how to adapt or improve them according to the circumstances of the participants and the community. We received excellent suggestions and showed participants at the outset that the workshop genuinely 'belonged' to everyone in it.

We then watched a video about youth who were exposed first-hand to people who were seriously sick from smoking, followed by a quiz. This to explain the effects of smoking on health while learning about the diseases, the harmful chemicals used in making cigarettes, the deception of the tobacco industry, the myths about smoking, and the addictive effect of nicotine.

## Developing critical awareness among participants

On the second and following days, we used the book *Smoking Sucks: Kick Butt!*, taking turns to read aloud, discuss the issues and break into smaller groups to summarize and report back. *Smoking Sucks* helps participants progress from being merely aware of the problems of tobacco to becoming **critically aware** of them. This means understanding the immediate as well as the root causes of the problems of smoking, their effects, and **why** they need to be tackled before going on to learn **how** to tackle them.

With a better critical awareness, students can situate smoking in its wider context of peer pressure and role models, the vested interests of those who advertize and sell tobacco, addiction and the ineffectiveness of programs to reduce tobacco use. Further, they get the point of not blaming the victims while taking responsibility for changing their own behaviour. They also learn about the concepts of colonization, underdevelopment and the historic transmission of trauma in Aboriginal societies, and how this affects addiction to tobacco.



## Raising awareness in the community

As suggested by its title, *Training Cree Youth as Peer-Educators for Tobacco Reduction*, this project aimed to prepare participants to spread awareness among other youth, as well as in their families and the community. At the same time as learning the fundamentals about smoking, participants learned how to share their new knowledge with others. The process of preparing presentations for each other in the workshop and then putting on a public performance to teach others gave a larger purpose to the workshop. It encouraged the participants and provided the excitement to give of their best to succeed. This all made for better learning – by the participants and their peers, family and community. Even early during the workshop, several students asked for videos and books to take home to share with their parents and siblings.

In Mistissini, the participants prepared a community presentation as the product of their learning. (In other workshops, groups either did community presentations or presented sessions to classes at school, or to the whole student body.) They worked out realistic objectives for the evening, prepared the agenda of activities to accomplish them, decided who to invite and circulated the invitations, arranged the venue, speakers, catering and cleanup.



# MISTISSINI SMOKING SUCKS WORKSHOP





## MISSISSINI SMOKING SUCKS WORKSHOP



We decided to include a very moving story by Carrie MacLeod in the presentation. We knew it wouldn't be easy – especially for the smokers present, and that there would be tears from most of us. Here are Carrie's words:

*"I am going to tell you a story about someone I know and love very much. I have known her since the day I was born. She started smoking when she was 17 because it was the socially acceptable thing to do. She was a teacher here who was well known by the students and staff. She always walked home with me. She knew that smoking was bad for her. Many people told her to stop, but she didn't listen until she got her wake-up call at 50 years old, after smoking for 33 years.*

*"I was at home that day, when my dad called and said, 'Your mom is in the hospital.' It just came over her like she couldn't breathe. Later, when she came home she wasn't the same person anymore, she had blue lips and was barely able to climb the stairs. From that day on she quit smoking, but it was too late. Her breathing got worse and she had to be put on home oxygen 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The machine sounds like Darth Vader from Star Wars.*

*"My mom has chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, better known as COPD – a lung disease caused by smoking, that over time makes it harder to breathe. It is when the airways – the tubes that carry oxygen in and out of the lungs – are partially blocked, making harder to get air in and out. There is no cure yet, but we are hopeful that there will be someday.*

*"It was then that my role in the family completely changed. I was no longer being cared for. I became the caregiver at the age of ten and I still am. There are many days when I can't go out, and unlike my friends, I can't simply have someone over – I have to check if they are or were sick because my mom has a very weak immune system as a result of her COPD. One day she could be fine, and the next she could be taken away by ambulance because the oxygen levels in her body are dangerously low – just because she caught a cold. Another complication from her COPD is sleep apnea (when you stop breathing at night). To see your mother, still so young, in that state of poor health, is devastating. And all because of smoking cigarettes. You may think she'll get better but really she won't. My family and I are so lucky to still have her here with us, and she looks at every new day as a gift.*

*"That is my story, and my mom wants me to end it with her message to everyone who smokes, just like she used to. 'The next time you light up, think about where smoking is going to take you. Think about how it will affect the people around you because they are the ones who will have to take care of you in the end. It's only a matter of time until my story becomes yours, unless you stop smoking.'"*





## MISTISSINI SMOKING SUCKS WORKSHOP



Above: At the community presentation, we gave everyone copies of the **Smoking Sucks** books to do an exam to “earn” their supper. Each participant then posed a question from the quiz prepared by the group, and invited the audience to answer, referring them to the relevant pages in the book when help was needed (it was).

Below: Guests follow a presentation by one of the teams. After the presentations we had supper while a slideshow about the activities during the workshop played on a large screen for all to see. Then we handed out certificates and the well-deserved iPods as prizes. An outstanding performance, Mistissini. Well done!





# Oujé-Bougoumou S-S Workshop

– Waapihtiwewan School, 28<sup>th</sup> February – 3<sup>rd</sup> March, 2012



Rick Dixon



Sarah Cooper



Tyrone Dixon



Brandon Bosum



Terrilynn Gull



Emma-Rose Jolly



Lucas Shecapio



Jossée Bernier



Saabiel Bosum



Juanita Mianscum



Shanaia Shecapio



Marlena Cooper



Ron Shisheesh (co-trainer)



Rob Collins (co-trainer)

## OUJÉ-BOUGOUMOU SMOKING SUCKS WORKSHOP

On arriving in Oujé-Bougoumou we found that although the workshop had been advertized, there weren't very many who had signed up. With only 90 minutes before school closed to recruit participants, and with the go-ahead from the principal and the support of the staff, we went from class to class to "sell" the idea of the workshop. We can just remember the incredulous looks on the faces of some of the students – "I don't need this workshop because I don't smoke" or alternatively, "I don't need this because I know I can't quit".

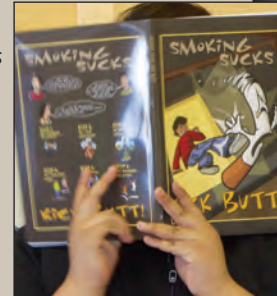
Hmm, resistance. So do judo: use the force of opposition as a source of energy to change direction. We challenged our audience, made them laugh at the situation and realize that the problem of smoking affects us all, so if we are going to do something about it we'll need smokers as well as non-smokers to work on it together. Soon every place in the workshop was taken and we arranged to have a short meeting after school to make plans for the next step. All who had expressed interest showed up for the meeting (serious people these). We asked about activities going on in the community and any commitments that the participants might have for the coming days to take stock of the situation. We agreed to start that same evening, so students made some calls to change their previous plans. We decided together what food to get for a light supper, what we would try to accomplish that evening, and how long it would go on for.

After the meeting was over and the students left to go home, we (Ron and Rob) agreed that things were looking good so far. But how many would actually show up? The answer was... everyone. We had twelve students: smokers and non-smokers, girls and boys, shy and outgoing, interested and skeptical – a mixed group indeed. But one that would, over the next four days, become a powerful force of co-operation, confidence and energy.

With the photos that follow we'd like to present the evidence for you, the reader, to consider.



Above: Terrilyn & Jossée  
Below: Juanita





## OUJÉ-BOUGOUMOU SMOKING SUCKS WORKSHOP



**Left:** Emma-Rose and Lucas present a topic to the class. We divided into pairs (not a problem for this pair!) to prepare and present different sections from the book *Smoking Sucks: Kick Butt!*

**Centre:** Sarah reads about the effects of smoking during pregnancy.

**Above:** If you show up without the compulsory uniform of hat under hoodie, you'd better be ready to improvise to be part of the group...



**Left:** After four days of preparing for the event, the group was ready to face the crowds of parents, friends, brothers and sisters, grandparents, neighbours and teachers.

Of course we were nervous, but with a little help from each other to rescue a few lost lines, some very talented performers, and an awesome audience, the show went on. It inspired everyone, including the older ones and the very young ones.



## OUJÉ-BOUGOUMOU SMOKING SUCKS WORKSHOP

**Right:** Jossée started the exercise “What’s in a cigarette?” by inviting guests to take a slip of paper from the giant cigarette and to read aloud what it said. Examples of some of the most harmful diseases and conditions from smoking cigarettes include emphysema; lung, throat and mouth cancers; low birth-weight babies; premature wrinkling of the skin; poor circulation complicating the widespread incidence of diabetes; stroke; and heart disease. The list of totally preventable diseases keeps mounting – to over 200 serious adverse health effects of smoking.



The chemicals in cigarettes (50 are known to cause cancer) include: tar, formaldehyde, nicotine, benzene and carbon monoxide to name just a few. Another problem is the cost to families. If one smoker smokes a pack a day for 30 years at \$10<sup>00</sup> per pack, there goes \$109,500 up in smoke. In other places in Canada, a pack costs over \$25<sup>00</sup>, so the total becomes \$273,750 in direct costs. Add to this the health care costs of smokers and then we get a truer picture of the financial cost of smoking.



# Eastmain Smoking Sucks Workshop

held at Wabannutao School from 23<sup>rd</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> January, 2012



Charlene Weapenicappo



Andrea Gilpin



Clarissa Weapenicappo



Saraly Hester



Jessica Moses



Michelle Cheezo



Nathalie Moses



Gracelynn Weapenicappo



Tina Brown



Tristan Cheezo



## EASTMAIN SMOKING SUCKS WORKSHOP



**Left, clockwise:** Trina, Jessica, Gracelynn, Ron and Clarissa prepare a tobacco education session, with the other groups in the background. Each group presents a topic to the rest of the workshop, and gets feedback to improve for the next time.

By planning and then practising on a small scale, we improve our knowledge, skills and confidence. Then we evaluate our work, adjust the plan, do it again, and get better and better at it so that we are really good at helping people change their smoking behaviour. We were surprised to find that more are ready to change than we think. When a critical number of people are smoke-free, we'll have reached the tipping point where smoking no longer seems the normal thing to do, and more and more youth won't become smokers in turn.

**Right, clockwise:** Trina, Gracelynn, Rob, Clarissa, Natalie, Andrea, Jessica, Saraly, Michelle and Charlene during the presentations by projects teams.

In this photo we are working in the staff room – thanks to the teachers who didn't mind sharing their space with us. Actually it happened like this in all the communities, with teachers giving up their classrooms for the workshop so that we could use a space that was better suited to group work, and to getting good photos too. This is just another example of the excellent support we had from the schools and public health services.





## EASTMAIN SMOKING SUCKS WORKSHOP



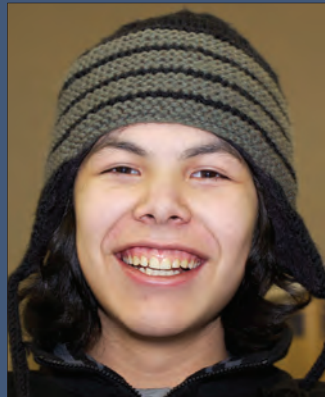
**Above left, clockwise:** Michelle, Charlene, Andrea and Saraly at work in their small group. **Above right, clockwise:** Natalie, Michelle and Clarissa.

**Below:** Over 50 people took part in a quiz about tobacco, enjoyed supper and the teaching and thanked the participants for their efforts over the past four days to bring the message about the crucial importance of reducing smoking to the community of Eastmain.



# Chisasibi Smoking Sucks Workshop

at James Bay Eeyou School from 17<sup>th</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup> January, 2012



Colin Perusse



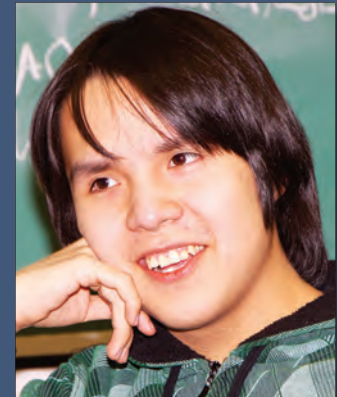
Misty Bobbish-Shisheesh



Wesley Washipabano



Angel Rodrique



Casey House



Faith Chakapash



Kyle Bobbish-House



DianaRose Cookish



Ron Shieesh (co-trainer)



Rob Collins (co-trainer)



## CHISASIBI SMOKING SUCKS WORKSHOP



The Chisasibi Smoking Sucks Workshop held at James Bay Eeyou School from 17<sup>th</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2012, was the very first one among the eight communities. The participants did their best every day to help their trainers' project get off to a good start! We had a varied group of ages and genders, but unusually, there was only one smoker in the group.

**Above:** Angel, Misty, Diana-Rose and Faith prepare a session based on sections in their Smoking Sucks books. **Below:** Angel and Misty prepare another session.



**Above, right:** Casey and Kyle build a model giant cigarette to hold slips of paper that list the deadly ingredients in a cigarette. These make the perfect "recipe for disaster": they are concealed, addictive, widely used, toxic chemicals that bring slow but sure harm to our bodies, to others around us, and to our communities. The good news is that our health improves as soon as we stop smoking.

**Below:** Kyle, Colin and Casey strike a studied pose by way of introduction to their presentation from *Smoking Sucks: Kick Butt!*





## CHISASIBI SMOKING SUCKS WORKSHOP



**Left:** Participants in the Chisasibi Smoking Sucks Workshop put on two presentations at James Bay Eeyou School on the last day of the workshop. Here the group screened the video *Smoking: Truth or Dare?* followed by a question-and-answer session. Some examples:

**Q:** What was the attitude towards smoking of most of the teenagers in the video *before* they met people living with mouth cancer, cancer of the larynx (voicebox), early wrinkling of the face and hands and (possibly the worst of all) emphysema? **A:** Those youth couldn't care less about health effects; they thought smoking was cool, etc.

**Q:** Do you think most Cree youth have similar or different attitudes? (Why/not?). **A:** There is no fixed answer to this (each person may have a different point of view), but almost all the students in the class agreed that Cree youth did not take the health effects of smoking very seriously, just the same as the youth in the video.

Emphysema is an incurable disease from smoking that takes years to show itself. But how can we get youth to understand now how it may affect them later?

To explain, the team asked everyone to take a deep breath, filling their lungs so that they couldn't expand anymore. Then without breathing out, to quickly breathe in small amounts of air at a time. They then asked the class to describe how it felt: it's like not being able to breathe, and as soon as you try to walk or move around it becomes even worse. Someone said it is like having your lungs taken away from you. And that's just it: smoking takes your health, your looks, your money, and eventually – your life.

One teacher commenting afterwards said that the way the workshop team held the attention of two classes at the same time would be the envy of many experienced teachers!

**Right:** We rushed outside for a group photo – just in time to beat the snowsqualls blowing in.



# Wemindji Smoking Sucks Workshop

held at Wemindji MSDC from 27<sup>th</sup> – 31<sup>st</sup> January, 2012



Alyssa Miniquaken



Cain Stewart



Raven Mark



Dillon Hester



Chelsea Moses-Blackned



Breena Georgekish



Jaromir Georgekish



Leslie Mayappo



Trent Georgekish



Brandon Gull



## WEMINDJI SMOKING SUCKS WORKSHOP



In Wemindji, we held the workshop at the Multi Services Day Centre, from 27th — 31st January, 2012. The group ranged from 13 to 19 years old, more boys than girls, more non-smokers than smokers.

**Above:** Our first step was to discuss plans for the workshop in general terms: starting and closing times, activities, meals and the final presentation to the community. As the workshop progressed we made more specific decisions at the appropriate time, allowing for flexibility while keeping our objectives in mind.

**Below left:** Jaromir contemplates what's in a cigarette. Is it sickness from smoking that later in life means not being able to get around when you want? Is it the cost of smoking that means a future snowmobile will go up in smoke instead? The answer is yes to both of these and more, as participants would discover.

**Below centre and right:** Breena prepares notes about the contents of the book while Chelsey and Leslie adapt a quiz about why we say "Smoking Sucks". If you have the book, there are 13 reasons. Can you name some of them?





## WEMINDJI SMOKING SUCKS WORKSHOP



*Invitations were sent out in the community to join the group for supper and a show on the closing evening. But first the guests had to work for their meal: the group prepared one question for each participant to ask and to discuss further once answers were offered. Having mercy on the guests, the group provided copies of the book and gave clues about where to find the answers when needed.*

*Parents, siblings, teachers and frontline health workers were all among the guests taking part that evening. It is truer to say that many took part every day – when participants returned home and shared what they learned in the workshop.*

**Below:** the group photo.





# Waskaganish Smoking Sucks Workshop

held at Wiinibekuu High School from 1<sup>st</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> February, 2012



Karyl McLeod



Kaitlynn Hester



Maverick Moar



Neesha Shecapio



Tricia Hester



Roxanne Chalifoux



Annalisa Jacob



Marcus Moses

*"What has Waskaganish got in store for us?" we wondered as we drove from Eastmain where we had just enjoyed an inspiring workshop.*

*Our first task on arriving was to meet with staff at the school and then the health centre to see how we could fit in with the school schedule and any activities going on in town.*

*Next, we had to start recruiting, as we had only a few names of students who had expressed interest.*

*We met with a small group to once again talk about the workshop, and asked them to help find others who might be a good fit.*

*Off they went and soon we had enough participants to have our first planning meeting.*

## WASKAGANISH SMOKING SUCKS WORKSHOP



**Above:** After dividing the sections in *Smoking Sucks* amongst themselves, the group worked in pairs to study and then present their sections. This way everyone gets a chance to play an active part, to learn about the problems of smoking, to work as a team, and to practise presenting to others. **L–R:** Annalisa and Roxanne reviewed the section in *Smoking Sucks* about how youth can see quitting smoking as a way to regain something that has been lost: control over our lives. Tricia and Kaitlynn explained why so many Cree youth smoke: to act older, because of their role models and to deal with emotions of being sad, lonely, bored or nervous. Neesha and Karyl explained how tobacco companies lied to people when it was well known that their cigarettes do harm those who use them. Maverick and Marcus discussed nicotine addiction: most youth smokers believe they can quit anytime, but 80% will stay smokers for the rest of their lives and many will die from it.

So what did Waskaganish have in store for us? A very supportive group of students who made the workshop fun while doing outstanding work for their certificates. Bravo!





# Nemaska Smoking Sucks Workshop

at Luke Mettaweskum School, 23<sup>rd</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> February, 2012



Alexis Jolly



Glenda Visitor



Philip Jolly



Daisy Wapachee



Richard Moore-Edwards



Kayla Diamond



Alex Wapachee



Precious Jolly



The workshop in Nemaska spanned a weekend – a weekend in which most of the senior students (in a small community) would be out of town for a hockey tournament. But the younger students were keen to take part, so we adapted the objectives and activities accordingly. Instead of aiming for a community presentation, we set out to help those who were already smoking occasionally to avoid

becoming regular smokers, and to better prepare the non-smokers to stay smoke-free. As well, some of the participants wanted to help their teachers – who had been talking about quitting smoking – to finally set a date to quit.

**Right, top & bottom:** Philip and Alex discuss how smoking affects the community. Alexis and Glenda discuss a trick question for the quiz they will lead.



## NEMASKA SMOKING SUCKS WORKSHOP





# Waswanipi Smoking Sucks Workshop

– Willie Happyjack Memorial School, 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> March, 2012



KayLynn Nayassit



Terry Blacksmith



Celeste Otter



Robin Gull



Quinton Blacksmith



Selena Gull-Neeposh



Nathan Mianscum-Icebound



Ron Shisheesh (co-trainer)



Rob Collins (co-trainer)

At WHM School in Waswanipi, the teachers took us to the senior classes to meet those who had signed up for the workshop and to recruit additional participants. We held our planning meeting in the afternoon, and started the workshop in the library that evening with supper, then a video followed by a question-and-answer session. Over the next three days we analysed the effects of smoking in the community and prepared for the presentation the group would deliver in the school gym for the whole school.

**Right, L-R:** Quinton, Nathan, Celeste, Robin, KayLynn, Selena and Terry.





## WASWANIPi SMOKING SUCKS WORKSHOP



**Above:** KayLynn and Selena check the answers to questions for a game-show. **Right:** the group photo.

**Below:** A presentation to the senior classes using the video "Smoking: Truth or Dare?" followed by a quiz.



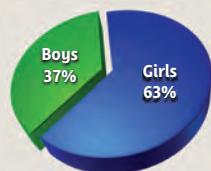


### Evaluation by participants

Participants in all eight workshops gave the workshops an average score of 95%. To get this rating, each person completed a written evaluation of 21 questions in 4 categories. They were asked to rate each point on a scale of 1 to 5 with a one being awful and a five being the very best. The comments at the end of the questions were equally positive.

### Some statistics from the workshops

Did more boys or girls take part in the workshops?



In all, 75 youth took part in 8 communities: 47 girls (63%) and 28 boys (37%). Having both genders is very helpful for the dynamics in the workshop, and for presenting to peers.

At the start, how many were smokers?

41 of 75 participants (55%) were smokers at the start of the workshop, varying by community. We found that it worked best to have a mix of both smokers and non-smokers.



At the end, how many were smokers?



By the end of the workshops, only 17 (23%) were smokers. It would not be surprising if some later relapsed – this is a normal part of quitting smoking.

### Answers to the quiz questions on page 3

#### 1. What do you understand by the term second-hand smoke. Why is it so bad for us?

Second-hand smoke is sidestream smoke (from the burning end of a cigarette) plus exhaled mainstream smoke (breathed out). Sidestream smoke is loaded with toxic chemicals (that's why it burns your eyes) that haven't been burned up when air is drawn through the burning end, increasing the temperature. When smokers smoke outside (not in a furnace room, and especially not in a vehicle), both smokers and non-smokers are protected from breathing second-hand smoke.

#### 2. When did the Cree of Eeyou Istchee start smoking (as we know it today)?

Cree only started smoking when they came in contact with traders, settlers and missionaries. So smoking started as a by-product of colonization. Historically, some First Nations used tobacco for ceremonial purposes, but none used the commercial form of tobacco that people smoke today.

#### 3. Why do so many First Nations youth smoke?

Adults are doing it, so are other youth, therefore the role models are all around to get them started, and keep them smoking.

Young kids start smoking because they want to look or act older, or because of peer pressure.

Smoking can feel comforting – as youth get addicted to nicotine and become part of the social network of smoking. Youth, just like adults – or perhaps more so – may be trying to escape from emotional pain, to distract themselves.

Although smoking rates have declined from 60%

to 19% over the past forty years in southern Canada, there has been almost no change in the high smoking rates among First Nations and Inuit. The difference may well be due to the after-effects of trans-generational trauma due to colonization and the residential school system. This is why we so urgently need practical solutions to tackle the problem of smoking in each community. We can't simply import the solutions that have been used elsewhere, although we can learn from them.

#### 4. What % of kids who smoke before age 16 will stay smokers for the rest of their lives?

Most think they'll simply quit when they want to. But sadly, 80% of kids who smoke before age 16 will stay smokers for the rest of their lives.

All the more reason to help kids not to start smoking in the first place. And to give the best possible help to those who want to quit. The sooner smokers stop after starting, the greater their chances of staying smoke free.

#### 5. Do you think smoking is part of Cree culture?

Smoking was not part of traditional Cree culture. But over the years, with so many people smoking, it has become normalized. So smoking is now part of contemporary Cree culture. But how can it be de-normalized?

Thanks for taking the quiz. If you haven't already done so, we'd like to invite you to take a look at the rest of the booklet to see what these outstanding youth were up to in their workshops called **Smoking Sucks: Kick Butt!**

Ron Shisheesh and Rob Collins



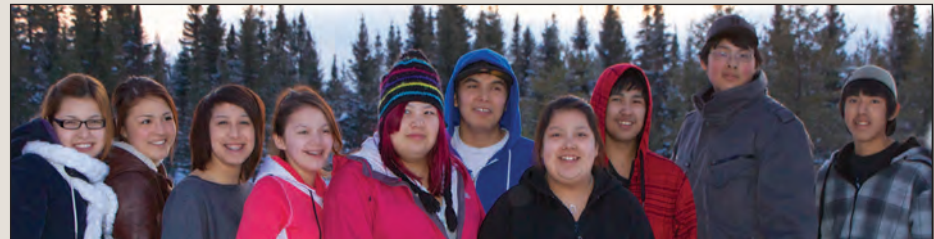
Mistissini Smoking Sucks Workshop



Waskaganish Smoking Sucks Workshop



Chisasibi Smoking Sucks Workshop



Oujé-Bougoumou Smoking Sucks Workshop



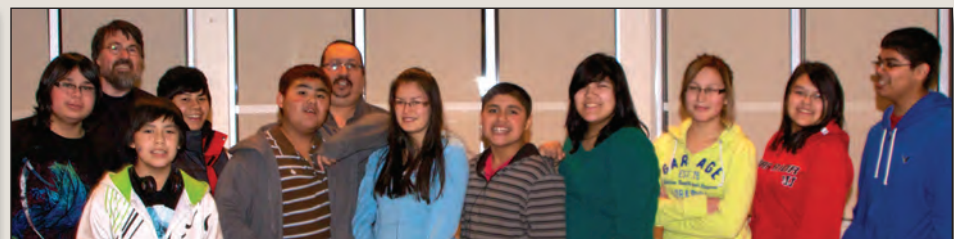
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Eastmain Smoking Sucks Workshop



Waswanipi Smoking Sucks Workshop



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