



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **CREATING CONNECTIONS RECEIVES ADDITIONAL FUNDING FROM ROBERT WOOD JOHNSON FOUNDATION**

MINNEAPOLIS, MN - The American Indian Cancer Foundation (AICAF) is honored to receive additional funding for their Creating Connections program from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF). These additional funds will allow Creating Connections to expand their work on reducing commercial tobacco use among Native people with messaging that tobacco is sacred and culture is our greatest prevention strategy.

“Continued funding from RWJF will allow our staff to engage and interact with tribal communities to strengthen our connection with traditional tobacco and connect so many to this traditional plant,” said AICAF CEO, Melissa Buffalo.

Creating Connections first received funding from RWJF in 2021 and has since then brought national awareness to reducing commercial tobacco.

“I’m proud of everything Creating Connections has accomplished,” CoCo Villaluz, AICAF Healthy Equity Manager, said. “From collaborating with the University of Minnesota to hold a National Tribal Tobacco conference, to inviting Tribal leaders to share cultural wisdom on traditional tobacco. I look forward to seeing how this program grows.”

In the fall of 2021, Creating Connections collaborated with the University of Minnesota to hold a National Tribal Tobacco Conference, *Reclaiming and Restoring Traditional Tobacco in Today’s World*, in Minneapolis, MN with over 285 hybrid attendees.

Since then, Creating Connections has held five Traditional Tobacco Gathering of Native Americans (GONA) events, and convened a national advisory council to gather information on traditional tobacco and commercial tobacco use.

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AICAF is honored to continue working with RWJF with the mission to heal with culture and reclaim indigenous health.

**About the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation**

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) is committed to improving health and health equity in the United States. In partnership with others, we are working to develop a Culture of Health rooted in equity that provides every individual with a fair and just opportunity to thrive, no matter who they are, where they live, or how much money they have. For more information visit their website at [www.rwjf.org](http://www.rwjf.org).

**About the American Indian Cancer Foundation**

AICAF is a national Native-led and Native-governed non-profit organization established to address the cancer burdens faced by American Indian/Alaska Native people. AICAF strives to be a partner trusted by tribes and organizations, and is working toward effective and sustainable cancer solutions based on cultural teachings and wisdom. Visit our website today at [www.aicaf.org](http://www.aicaf.org).

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