

MARCH 16, 2005

ATTENTION: NEWS DIRECTORS/ASSIGNMENT EDITORS/WRITERS/REPORTERS

Statewide Pow-Wow Unites Indian Tribes, Emphasizes Tobacco Prevention

First-ever Smoke-free Indian Unity Conference Takes Innovative Stand

Raleigh, NC (March 16, 2005) – Once deeply rooted in Native American culture, tobacco is no longer welcome at the 30th annual North Carolina Indian Unity Conference, which kicks off at the North Raleigh Hilton on Thursday, March 17th. This change comes in response to the fact that the Native American population suffers from the highest death rates of tobacco-related diseases.

Keeping young people away from tobacco products will be the subject of the “Many Voices, One Message: Stop Tobacco Addiction” Initiative panel discussion that is open to the press on Thursday from 3 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. Tobacco addiction is one of the many provocative issues that leaders will address at the conference, which is the first event in North Carolina to bring together all of the state's Native American tribes.

The tobacco-free effort is the work of the North Carolina Commission of Indian Affairs and is funded by the NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund (HWTF) as part of its statewide teen tobacco use prevention initiative. At the Thursday seminar, Unity leaders will announce a new “crusade” in public schools to help young Native Americans both appreciate the historic uses of tobacco among tribes and understand the grave health risks that tobacco products pose.

In addition to Thursday afternoon's tobacco prevention seminar, a colorful pow-wow on Thursday evening will celebrate traditional Native American music, dance and dress.

The tribes represented at the Unity Conference include the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina, Coharie Indian Tribe, Haliwa-Saponi Indian Tribe, Sappony, Meherrin Indian Tribe, Occaneechi Band of Saponi Nation, Waccamaw-Siouan Tribe and the Eastern Band of Cherokee.

WHO: Native Americans from across the state representing every tribe in North Carolina
American Indian N-O-T (Not on Tobacco) coordinators

WHAT: Panel discussion on Native American tobacco issues and introduction to the “Many Voices One Message: Stop Tobacco Addiction” Initiative

WHERE: North Raleigh Hilton, 3415 Wake Forest Road, Raleigh, NC 27609

WHEN: Thursday, March 17th from 3:00 to 4:30 p.m.

ABOUT THE NC HEALTH AND WELLNESS TRUST FUND:

The NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund makes North Carolina stronger, both physically and economically, by funding programs that promote preventive health. Created by the General Assembly in 2000 to allocate a portion of North Carolina's share of the national tobacco settlement, HWTF has invested \$127 million to support preventive health initiatives and \$78 million to fund a prescription drug assistance program. For more information, please visit www.hwtfc.org.