



AIN DAH YUNG CENTER

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September 20, 2017

Members of the Saint Paul City Council
15 W Kellogg Blvd #310
Saint Paul, MN 55102

Dear Council President Stark and Members of the Saint Paul City Council:

I am writing on behalf of Ain Dah Yung Center. Our mission is to provide a healing place within the community for American Indian youth and families to thrive in safety and wholeness. I am writing to ask that you vote in support of the ordinance that takes menthol commercial tobacco products out of stores visited by our youth.

The elders in our community teach that tobacco was one of the four sacred medicines (Sacred Tobacco, Cedar, Sage and Sweetgrass) given to many Aboriginal Nations. When used properly, Sacred Tobacco can be used to communicate with the Spirit World and the Creator. In its original form, tobacco had both honor and purpose. However, the chemical additives found in commercial tobacco take away from tobacco's original purpose in Aboriginal ceremonies. Using commercial tobacco such as menthol cigarettes, chew or snus, has no connection to Aboriginal spirituality.

American Indians in Minnesota smoke at rates drastically higher than any other population in our state. According to the 2013 American Indian Adult Tobacco Survey which surveyed metro-area American Indians, 59 percent of Native American adults smoke versus 16 percent of Minnesota's general population. Per the 2016 Minnesota Student Survey, 17.4 percent of 11th grade American Indian youth report using conventional tobacco products within the past thirty days. These disproportionate use rates show that it is imperative to ensure youth cannot easily access these products.

Please do all that you can to ensure all of St. Paul's youth are protected from the dangers of commercial tobacco products. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Deb Foster
Executive Director