



SRNT

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SRNT Indigenous Circle Listening Session February 7, 2025

The Indigenous Circle, a group that has been meeting for several years as part of the Oceania Chapter, was introduced. They outlined the topics to be discussed, including harm from an indigenous perspective, the influence of the industry on sovereignty, policy, targeting of indigenous peoples, and the effects on sciences. The meeting also acknowledged the recent Waitangi Day in New Zealand and the impact of the vaping industry on policy.

Discussions addressed the concerns of Indigenous and racialized researchers regarding the influence of the tobacco and vaping industries on academic spaces. The speakers emphasized the need for a safe and supportive environment free from industry influence, particularly for early career researchers. Members of the Indigenous Circle believe the nicotine and tobacco industries are one and the same, not two industries, and highlighted the industry's strategic targeting of low-income and indigenous communities as well as the importance of cultural safety in public health practices. Speakers also stressed the need for the industry to be prohibited from influencing research and for the creation of spaces that prioritize the well-being of indigenous researchers. The meeting involved discussions about the relationship between the tobacco and nicotine industries and public health organizations. Concerns were expressed about the harm caused by these industries and the need to do no harm in public health; the importance of excluding these industries from the organization to ensure equity, cultural safety, and research integrity was stressed, as was the need for a safe space free from conflicts of interest.

The importance of creating safe spaces for indigenous peoples to speak and the need to avoid industry interference was reiterated, as well as the New Zealand experience, where legislation was repealed due to industry influence, and the harm caused to Indigenous peoples. The need for clear declarations of conflicts of interest was emphasized and the importance of Indigenous views being prioritized over industry

views. They expressed their viewpoint that the tobacco industry manipulates science and distorts findings to serve their own interests. One member shared her personal experiences of feeling outnumbered by industry representatives at conferences and emphasized the need for a safe space for honest research.

Challenges faced by young people in navigating the complexities of the tobacco industry were discussed, including the need for a shift from individual blame to addressing the systemic issues within the industry. Also highlighted was the importance of protecting the health of all people, not just Indigenous people, and the need for the scientific community to take a stand against harm.

The concept of harm reduction and its implications in the context of tobacco and nicotine use was brought up, the importance of understanding harm in a holistic manner, considering its diverse and holistic nature.

Based on these comments, the board members asked about the safety of the conference, particularly in relation to the industry's influence. They also asked for suggestions on how to make the SRNT conferences safer and more inclusive, especially for younger generations. One answer was to look at the efforts made in the Oceania Tobacco Control Conference to create a safe and inclusive space, noting the importance of community involvement and engagement with traditional owners of the land.

The group proposed banning anyone receiving funding from the tobacco/nicotine industry, not just employees. When questioned, one member suggested starting with current funding and drawing a line at \$10,000, but noted the industry would find ways to circumvent such a threshold. Another emphasized the importance of not taking industry funding to maintain integrity in research and shared concerns about rolling back policies and the potential for industry influence in publications.

In closing, the group emphasized the importance of considering the broader concept of health, including sovereignty and well-being, particularly for young people.

The Board expressed appreciation for the Circle's input and hoped to see them in person at a future event.