



Justin and Sacred Tobacco: Read Aloud

Justin hated the smell of tobacco. He knew that adults could choose to smoke if they wanted to, but he hated the smell! Every time he smelled the smoke from a cigarette he would say “yuck”

Justin went to his friend’s house, and his friend’s mom started to smoke.
Justin said “yuck!”

Justin was in a restaurant. Someone lit up a cigarette just outside where Justin was eating.
Justin said “Yuck!”

Justin’s older brother brought home an e-cigarette. When he saw it, he knew that was still tobacco like a cigarette.
Justin said “Yuck!”

When Justin went to Kokum’s house, she took out a bundle of tobacco and began to burn it.
Justin said “Yuck!”

“No, No,” said Kokum.

“This is sacred tobacco. It is not the same as cigarette tobacco because we use it in different ways. Our people have burned sacred tobacco for many, many years for —reasons— and when I burn sacred tobacco today, I burn it to honour our ancestors.”

“But isn’t it yucky?” Justin asked

“Tobacco is like water, my boy. Water can be fun to swim in, but it can be dangerous if you are not being safe. Boiling water is used to cook good food, or as a part of my rabbit stew, but if we touch the boiling water we can get burned. A glass of Water tastes good after a long day, but a whole lake of water can be dangerous to be in if you can’t swim. Just like water can be both good for us and bad for us, so can tobacco. Tobacco can be bad in cigarettes, but using sacred tobacco to honour our ancestors in celebrations and traditional activities is good!”

“Oh, I understand kokum” said Justin.

“Does that mean that I shouldn’t say yuck anymore when I see cigarettes?” Justin asked.

Kokum smile at him, and said “what do you think?”

Justin thought for a long, long time and then he smiled and said, “When I see sacred tobacco, I will say... Thanks!”

“But when I see cigarettes,” Justin said, “I am going to say ...yuck!”

