



# Inter- Nation Trade & Commerce





Photo credit: Janice Bran. Tobacco Flowers

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Photo credit: AIAI, Janice Brant's Collection,

# Tobacco: A Gift from Creator

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Sometimes we need to take a step back to remember that we are the spirit that we talk about from our Creation stories. From the beginning of time, we have been given all we need to live on this earth with responsibilities and obligations. These obligations are the rules by which our society conducts itself based on teachings of kindness, sharing, and respect that are endowed within the individual.

One particular gift we have been given is tobacco. Tobacco plays a significant role in our spiritualities and cultures, connecting us to Creation. Tobacco is offered for many reasons and in many different contexts. It is appropriate, when asking for assistance from an Elder or Knowledge Keeper, to offer tobacco.

A theme that runs through many traditional stories is that tobacco is one of the first plants that the Creator gave to First Peoples/Nations.

First Peoples/Nations have their own stories about how tobacco came to them and their own knowledge and relationship with it.

## First Peoples/Nations

The Nation is the expression of the political, cultural, social, economic, and spiritual unity of our families/clans. Through traditional systems, First Peoples/Nations have been endowed with the responsibility to authorize, regulate, and establish standards to ensure balance, harmony, and prosperity under the laws of their Nations.



## Never-Ending Responsibility

Never-ending responsibility to all of Creation can best be described in English as sovereignty.\* This encompasses the physical and spiritual wellbeing of all living beings, the natural world, and the relationships between them. It is guided by ceremony, language, traditional teachings, and stories. It is in our histories, our cultures, our connections to our lands, ancestors, and ways of life.

\*author unknown

**Tobacco was vital in the creation and maintenance of political, economic, and trade alliances amongst First Peoples & Nations for thousands of years prior to European contact. It also became important in the Nation-to-Nation trading relationship between First Peoples/Nations and Europeans.**

**Today, tobacco remains a gift from Creation and a plant Indigenous only to Turtle Island. The spiritual and cultural importance of tobacco to First Peoples/Nations has never changed. Our responsibilities to maintain balanced relations with all of Creation remain. Our sacred relationship with tobacco is forever.**



Photo credit: Janice Brant. Tobacco Flowers





Photo credit: Janice Brant. Tobacco salve



Photo credit: Janice Brant. Tobacco leaves drying



# Tobacco: Role in Community Economy

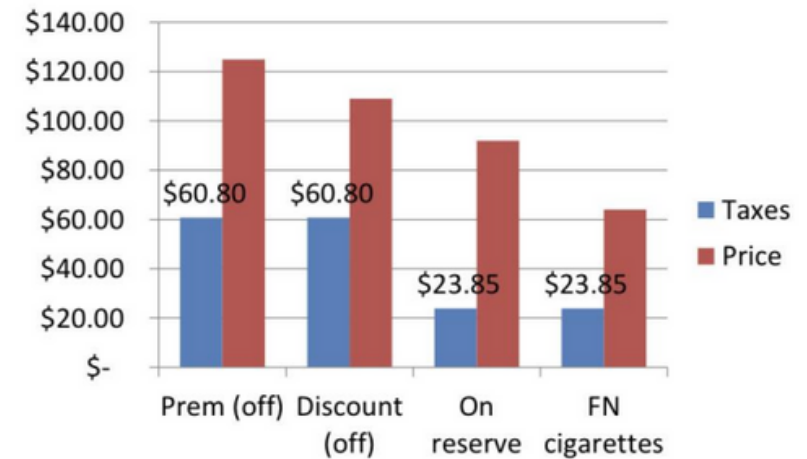
There is a strong entrepreneurial spirit within the communities.

An economic study completed by AIAI in 2018 shows that tobacco plays a significant role within community economies. Tobacco businesses create jobs and other local opportunities. Individuals have done well in the industry due to their ingenuity and entrepreneurship skills, as well as the quality of our products.

For the most part, however, First Peoples/Nations are the not big players in the tobacco market. First Peoples/ Nations' tobacco products are often purchased, repackaged, and re-sold by external parties outside of communities at higher prices and for greater profit.

Our products have the potential to be marketed for higher profit.

Price Differentials





# Political Standards

First Peoples/Nations have never surrendered our authority to carry out our never-ending responsibilities (jurisdiction) and we continue to remind foreign governments of this fact. We have never provided our consent to change any Treaty arrangements, including in the area of trade and commerce.

We have a collective right to be immune from the taxation policies of foreign governments, including Ontario and Canada. This is different from individual tax exemptions, which are currently derived from provincial and federal laws and policy.

Our never-ending responsibility exists and we will not debate its existence with any other government.

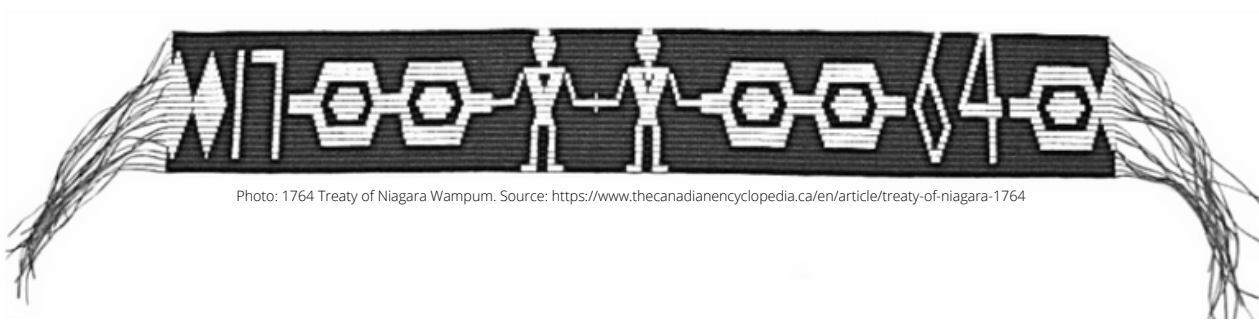


Photo: 1764 Treaty of Niagara Wampum. Source: <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/treaty-of-niagara-1764>

## Treaties/ International Instruments

Treaties were the means to establish peace, trade and commerce, and military alliances with the newcomers. Treaties set out the obligations of the parties involved, but they are not the source of our inherent rights. Within these Treaties, lands were shared with settlers.

# Protection

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In a 2018 study, we heard from tobacco businesses that there is a need for protection from intrusion of external governments.

Ontario views the sale of tobacco products in First Peoples/Nations' territories as lost tax revenue when these products are sold to non-Natives. In an attempt to collect these revenues, Ontario uses tactics such as, harassment of customers, seizure of bank accounts, and criminal charges.

There are two taxes the Government of Ontario wants to impose, a tobacco tax charged per cigarette and a retail tax.

First Peoples/Nations have made very clear that they have never consented or given permission to impose these taxes. They will not be tax collectors on behalf of any foreign government, including Ontario or Canada.



## Consent & Permission

First Peoples/Nations maintained processes of consent and permission prior to contact. This remains our ability to determine what happens in our territories. We must remain vigilante to external governments who want to extinguish our authority to give consent & permission by using tactics like drawn-down jurisdiction.





Photo credit: WWF

# Reclamation

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**The best way to reclaim our economies, prevent external intrusion, and protect our businesses is through the exercise of our own inherent rights/responsibilities.**

**Only First Peoples/Nations can determine their approaches for establishing regulations for trade, commerce, and tobacco. Through community-based processes, protections from external governments can be achieved.**

**While some communities may want to work within their established regulatory mechanisms (ie. economic development board), others may want to establish new regulatory bodies.**

## Sharing

Sharing has always been a key value of our Peoples given as a gift of Creation. Sharing is considered one of the highest forms of behaviour respecting the cohesion of the Peoples. This fundamental value produced a society in which there were no locks on doors, no orphanages, and no hungry people.

It is amazing that despite all we have endured, First Peoples/Nations have held firm to this value, still utilizing it for healing in sharing circles and other processes.

# Recovery & Resistance



Restoring our place in Creation and resisting external interference on our ways of life is every day work by every one of our citizens. The foundation of our world is our spiritual unity. There is a need for communities to control and create laws and policies that are based in their own cultural foundations and values. We need to bring culture to the forefront and have our worldview at the root of our laws. Key to developing our own processes is building capacity to restore our foundations and utilize the knowledge and values of our Peoples and ancestors.

Community involvement at every step is key. Law is not just about writing and developing, it is about implementing and operating. It is community processes that allow our laws and legal orders to function.

## Inherent Rights/ Responsibilities

Inherent rights and responsibilities flow from Creation and are rooted in our existence as First Peoples/ Nations. Inherent rights are collective rights that are deeply intertwined with our responsibilities given to us by Creation to have respect and care for all of our relations.

## Reconciliation

Reconciliation must start with understanding the damage done by the oppressor and an acceptance of their role in that damage. Any recognition or apology must include an action plan to correct the damages done and clearly show changed behavior going forward. Canada's federal governments have done none of this, so there is no reconciliation. An apology without action is manipulation.



***"To convince people it is possible to move beyond the Indian Act [and] believe in our own system of government... All the community members need to have input...and have some type of ownership of the solution put forward."***

- AIAI Summit Participant, 2019

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**More info:  
[tobacco.aiai.ca](http://tobacco.aiai.ca)**

## **The Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians**

The booklet is brought to you by the Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians (AIAI) in partnership with the AIAI Tobacco Task Force. Concepts: Gordon Peters, Special Projects Advisor; Editing: Tina Powell, Government Relations.

AIAI advocates for the political interests of seven First Nations. These First Nations include: Caldwell First Nation, Batchewana First Nation, Eelunaapeewi Lahkeewiit, Hiawatha First Nation, Oneida Nation of the Thames, Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte, and Wahta Mohawks.



# Aanii She:kon Shekoli Kuwiinga-neewulohmwa



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