

Literature Review

Traditional Use of Tobacco among  
Indigenous Peoples of North America

March 28, 2014

Dr. Tonio Sadik

Chippewas of the Thames First Nation

## 1. Overview

This literature review arises as one part of the Chippewas of the Thames<sup>1</sup> First Nation's (CoTTFN) engagement with the Province of Ontario regarding tobacco issues and related First Nation interests (the "Tobacco Initiative"). The specific focus of this review is on existing academic literature pertaining to the traditional use of tobacco by indigenous peoples in North America. For the purposes of this review, traditional use refers to those uses of tobacco by indigenous peoples<sup>2</sup> that may be distinct from the contemporary commercial use of tobacco, that is, recreational smoking.

Most current knowledge about tobacco is dominated by the history of European and Euro-American tobacco use, despite the fact that the growing and harvesting of tobacco by indigenous peoples predates the arrival of Europeans (Pego, Hill, Solomon, Chisholm, and Ivey 1995). Tobacco was first introduced to Europeans shortly after Columbus' landfall in the Americas in 1492, and was likely the first plant to have been domesticated in the so-called New World.

Generally speaking, indigenous peoples of North America had four uses for tobacco: for prayers, offerings, and ceremonies; as medicine; as gifts to visitors; and as ordinary smoking tobacco.<sup>3</sup> The traditional use of tobacco can in many cases be traced back to the creation stories of a respective indigenous nation. Although the meanings associated with such stories vary, tobacco is consistently described for its sacred elements: to bring people together; for its medicinal or healing properties; or as an offering.

The published literature on the indigenous use of tobacco in North America is surprisingly voluminous (see Appendix A) – which is not to say that it is particularly rich. While a significant body of literature exists specific to the Anishinaabeg context, its focus is not primarily on tobacco. Appendix B provides a brief overview of Anishinaabe uses of tobacco gleaned from these sources, coupled with some reflections specific to the CoTTFN context.

The majority of contemporary indigenous tobacco-related academic literature makes some reference to traditional use, but typically does so as a secondary focus and often in a superficial manner. While there are a wide variety of important insights to be garnered from the literature, its contemporary orientation is predominantly on smoking cessation, and where this is the case, the approach typically begins by citing the high rates of recreational tobacco use, followed by a description of the respective research and findings, and concluding with a pronouncement about the importance of the role of traditional tobacco when working with indigenous peoples.

---

<sup>1</sup> The Chippewas of the Thames are *Anishinaabeg* (also referred to as Chippewa or Ojibway) located in Southern Ontario. They are related linguistically and culturally to other Anishinaabeg tribes in Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Quebec, as well as Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, North Dakota and Montana.

<sup>2</sup> The term indigenous is used as a generic reference to First Nations in Canada and Native Americans in the United States. More specific terms are used where appropriate.

<sup>3</sup> To be clear, not everything smoked was tobacco.

While the focus of this review has not sought to arbitrarily limit its scope temporally or otherwise, after having conducted a wide scan of available materials, its focus is centred predominantly on some two-dozen sources set out in the bibliography. The most comprehensive of these – and far and away the richest – is Joseph Winter’s edited volume “Tobacco Use by Native North Americans: Sacred Smoke and Silent Killer” (2000). This text is relied upon heavily in this review and establishes the high watermark for all of the other works examined.

## **2. The Literature**

There is, of course, much that can be said about the traditional use of tobacco in North America; there are several rich and detailed accounts of particular practices that could be focused on to this end. However, rather than regurgitate details that are better left to the original authors, this literature review seeks to summarize a large body of work based on its relevance to the CoTTFN and its engagement in the Tobacco Initiative. As such, it does not purport to become a definitive source in and of itself, but rather, seeks to canvass issues that may be of relevance and point to questions that may have some bearing.

The following three sub-sections set out the primary focal points in regard to the traditional use of tobacco in North America: (1) its composition and origin; (2) traditional use in contemporary times; and (3) sacred tobacco.

### 2.1. Composition and Origin of Tobacco

The evolution of tobacco as a plant and the relationships among its many species is complex. Having originated in South America some 65 million years ago, the tobacco genus belongs to the Solanaceae family of plants, and is a part of the Cestroideae subfamily, which includes nine genera that fall under the Nicotianeae heading. Of the 95 distinct species of tobacco that have been identified globally, 74 originate in the Americas (largely South America), seven of which have documented evidence of historical use by indigenous peoples of the Americas:

1. *Nicotiana tabacum*
2. *Nicotiana rustica*
3. *Nicotiana glauca*
4. *Nicotiana attenuata*
5. *Nicotiana quadrivalvis*
6. *Nicotiana clevelandii*
7. *Nicotiana trigonophylla*

The evolution of the two domesticated species – *N. tabacum* and *N. rustica* – are most dominant globally, with the former representing the most important species in modern agriculture and international trade. In 1992, the estimated worldwide production of *N. tabacum* was 18 billion pounds, and was grown in almost every part of the world with the exception of the Arctic and sub-arctic zones (Winter 2000:87-93).

1. *N. tabacum*, the most prominent species, includes thousands of commercial varieties, none of which can grow for more than one or two generations (as a weed) without cultivation. The chemical, morphological, and physical characteristics of this plant vary widely, and have a variety of commercial uses. For example, flue-cured varieties of *N. tabacum* are used mainly for cigarette blends; burley is used for cigarettes and some pipe tobacco; and fermented varieties are typically used for cigars (Winter 2000:92-97).
2. *N. rustica* was likely domesticated prior to *N. tabacum*, having its origin further to the south in South America. Because of its high nicotine content, this species may have been used more extensively to produce altered states of consciousness by shamans and others dealing with the supernatural. There is evidence of this plant having been grown by the Huron's as far north as the northern shore of Lake Ontario, with evidence of its presence in Ontario as early as 700 A.D. (Winter 2000:97-108).
3. *N. glauca*, or "tree" tobacco, is native to Argentina and now common in other warm temperature climates to the north, including California and Arizona. It has not, however, been recovered from any prehistoric archaeological sites in North America (Winter 2000:108-10).
4. *N. attenuata* is widely used throughout western North America and has a long record of prehistoric use in the American Southwest. Indigenous use is thought to have expanded its range, especially to the north, where it grows mainly under cultivation. In fact, the earliest tobacco (seed) ever found was of this variety, traced to a village site near Tucson, Arizona, radiocarbon dated to some three centuries B.C. (Winter 2000:110-14).
5. *N. quadrivalvis* comes under a variety of names (e.g., *N. bigelovii*, *N. multivalvis*), and is thought to have originated in what is now California, but can be found in its cultivated form as far north as Haida Gwaii (Queen Charlotte Islands). It is a species important to many indigenous groups and is considered by some so sacred that it is not even smoked. Its extensive use has contributed to its near-domestication wherein it has difficulty seeding itself (Winter 2000:115-21).
6. *N. clevelandii* is thought to be a hybrid of *N. quadrivalvis* and *N. attenuata* and does not have any further distinctive features of note.
7. *Nicotiana trigonophylla* is another wild or semi-wild species that is particularly suited to very hot and dry conditions and is, therefore, not found in Canada (Winter 2000:122-26).

All tobacco species contain nicotine, nor nicotine, anabasine, and/or similar alkaloids, which can make them both addictive and mood-altering (Winter 2000:126).

Tobacco plants are highly adapted to move and flourish in recently opened habitats (e.g., through human disturbance). This is due to the plant's enormous production of tiny seeds that are easily dispersed by wind, water, and humans / animals (Adams and Toll 2000:143). Fire, also, has a profound impact on the natural growth of wild tobacco, dramatically enhancing its productivity. The human cultivation of tobacco, through fire, seeding, and other means, has contributed to the emergence of indehiscent seed capsules (i.e., domesticated species dependent upon humans for propagation), in part, as a response to the effects of fire, as well as the cultural rather than natural selection of plants for seeding (Hammett 2000:137).

The archaeological record regarding the origin and diffusion of cultivated tobacco in the Americas suggests that the plant emerged in west-central South America, and was brought north from both the east and the west to Central America. From there, it moved up to what is now the south-western United States, and continued to move north across the Great Plains. Access to the east was largely via the Plains (Winter 2000).

Ethnohistoric accounts of tobacco in the early-Contact period (i.e., 1500 to the mid-1600s) are also interesting given that the smoking of tobacco was a concept foreign to the rest of the world. At the beginning of this period, Europeans penned awkward descriptions of what was to them a strange habit that, by the mid-1600s, had not only been appropriated, but had become a central focus of some commercial trade between North America and Europe (von Gernet 2000:59).

Tobacco is unique in that it became the only commodity to cross the Atlantic both east and west during this period, with markets on both sides of the Atlantic (von Gernet 2000:65). Spaniards were cultivating tobacco commercially in the West Indies by 1531, and by 1628, Virginia was exporting 380,000 pounds of tobacco to England annually (Wagner 2000:186).

The prevalence of pipes for smoking tobacco is significant from both an archaeological and ethnohistoric perspective. Not only are pipes notable for their general visibility, but the remains of pipes can often be identified where plant remains would long ago have decomposed (Wagner 2000). The first indisputable reference to pipe smoking is found in an account by the French explorer Jacques Cartier, in 1535-1536 (von Gernet 2000: 59). However, archaeologically, pipe remains have been extensively examined from a wide variety of sites to determine their origins and the composition of the tobacco used. Chemical residues, as well as pollen and charred seeds, often provide an abundance of information about the historical use of tobacco where pipe remains are uncovered. For example, the examination of remains at a single Iroquoian archaeological site recovered more than 4,000 fragments of ceramic and stone smoking devices (von Gernet 2000:73). Such early sources are indicative of pipes made not only from pottery, stone, and bone but also from wood, reeds, and even lobster claws. However, because some materials breakdown over time faster than others, both the spatial and temporal

extent of pipe use (and any related activities) cannot be fully represented by the archaeological record.

## 2.2. Traditional Tobacco in Contemporary Times

Although contemporary smoking habits lead us to think of wild tobacco as the natural precursor to smoking in ancient times, there is ample archaeological and ethnographic evidence to demonstrate that many other botanicals were smoked as well, for example: red willow<sup>4</sup>, bearberry<sup>5</sup>, cedar, pine needles, and mint (Adams and Toll 2000). Nevertheless, a wealth of evidence supports the widespread use of *Nicotiana* throughout much of the Americas, with a commensurate acknowledgement that its widespread cultivation stems from the movement of tobacco plants / seeds by indigenous groups in ancient times (Adams and Toll 2000; Adair 2000).

The uses that tobacco was put to traditionally are various. In the Great Plains of Central North America, for example, almost all nations either grew or traded tobacco, and no other plant figured so prominently in religious and secular ceremonies, rites of passage, economic and political alliances, social events, and for relaxation (Adair 2000). The calumet or “peace pipe” ceremony involved smoking tobacco using a distinctive pipe, an associated dance, and the establishment / affirmation of kinship relations, and is highlighted as having arisen in prehistoric times as part of vast intertribal trading networks (Adair 2000:171).

In eastern North America, the earliest evidence of tobacco use dates back to between the first century B.C. and the second century A.D. at sites in Illinois (Wagner 2000). Tobacco has been recovered from more than 100 archaeological sites across this region – from the lower and upper reaches of the Mississippi and from the Great Plains to the Appalachians and Southern Ontario. Tobacco is overwhelmingly recovered from domestic rather than special (e.g., ceremonial) contexts. In nearly every case, tobacco remains were found in direct association with common cultivated food-plant remains. In tracking the distribution and dispersion of tobacco, the most common element to be identified are seeds – particularly charred seeds. However, the distribution of seeds in the archaeological record does not necessarily reflect the actual prehistoric spread and distribution of tobacco (Wagner 2000).

Although the active ingredients in tobacco may be ingested in a variety of manners, smoking provides the most efficient means of doing so with respect to combustion and inhalation (von Gernet 2000), leading to concentrations upwards of 40 to 100 times those found in a fresh leaf (Adair 2000:183). Moreover, von Gernet suggests that transforming a leaf into smoke has unparalleled symbolic importance; not only can both interior and exterior parts of the body be exposed to smoke, but smoke can also reach “lofty and normally inaccessible realms” where some spirit beings are seen to reside (2000:72-3).

---

<sup>4</sup> Often referred to in traditional terms as “asemaa” or “cansasa”.

<sup>5</sup> Often referred to in traditional terms as “kinnikinnick”.

Tobacco use, its psychoactive effects and addiction in the pre-Contact and early-Contact periods, is a matter of some debate. For example, von Gernet concludes that “there is abundant evidence to reject any opinion that the use of tobacco to produce major dissociative states was confined to South America” (2000:74).<sup>6</sup> Further, with respect to addiction, that indigenous tobacco use was necessarily limited to spiritual and ceremonial occasions is also alleged to be erroneous. To support this, von Gernet documents a long list of verbatim accounts dating back to the early 1500s that describe a heavy dependence on tobacco across North American tribes (2000:75-8). This includes an account of some Huron’s asking a Jesuit “whether tobacco was available in heaven” as a basis for assessing the viability of the Christian “afterlife” (von Gernet 2000:78). However, by focusing on addiction, and the potential secularization of tobacco in this regard from a Western perspective, von Gernet (2000) stresses the need to acknowledge that much of everyday life from an indigenous perspective is imbued with a sense of sacredness, thereby challenging an oversimplified dichotomy between the secular and the sacred.

Today, tobacco continues to be used in a variety of ways and for a variety of purposes. However, a study involving thirty Lakota Elders affirmed the need for a clear distinction between traditional and commercial tobacco use (Margalit, Watanabe-Galloway, Kennedy, Lacy, Red Shirt, Vinson, & Kills Small 2013). Tribal Elders conveyed strong positive messages connected to traditional tobacco, and strong negative messages associated with commercial tobacco. These Elders described traditional tobacco as playing an important role in “binding social ties as demonstrated in gifting customs and its ability to broker contracts” (Margalit et al. 2013:539); these kinds of social roles for tobacco, while not inherently religious in origin, arise from the sacred construct of tobacco in Lakota culture. However, some Elders also expressed concern about younger generations who lacked this knowledge, suggesting that commercial tobacco would be used in its place (Margalit et al. 2013).

While the literature is not definitive about the prevalence of traditional tobacco use in the contemporary context, some studies demonstrate that its prevalence is likely very significant. In one sample of 300 indigenous Ojibwe and Lakota/Dakota adults in Minneapolis, researchers reported that 72 percent of respondents had used tobacco for “ceremonial, prayer or traditional reasons” in the past 12 months (Forster, Rhodes, Poupart, Baker, & Davey 2007:S32). A similar study focusing on 336 youth in the same region of the United States found that 63 percent had used tobacco for “ceremonial prayer or traditional reasons” (Forster, Brokenleg, Rhodes, Lamont, & Poupart 2008:S451-2). And another study involving more than 1000 American Indian youth in California found that 66 percent had “some” or “a lot” of knowledge regarding “ceremonial tobacco use” (USC 2009:5). And, finally, in a sample of almost 1000 American Indian adults in the Midwest, Daley, Faseru, Nazir, Solomon, Greiner, Ahluwalia, and Choi (2011) found that 24 and 48 percent of women and men smokers respectively used traditional tobacco weekly. While not definitive, this data provides support for the recognition that there is still a very strong role for traditional tobacco in the contemporary context.

---

<sup>6</sup> Here, von Gernet is responding to popular conceptions about indigenous peoples and the use of psychoactive plants.

What these studies do not adequately address, however, is how “traditional use” might be perceived or defined by respondents. Meanings associated with traditional use likely vary widely. A one-year study involving some 40 American Indian Elders highlighted this fact when some of them expressed a discomfort about talking about tobacco based on their lack of clarity with respect to how exactly commercial consumption differed from traditional use (Nadeau, Blake, Poupart, Rhodes, & Forster, 2012) – a significant insight that must inform any work that presumes such a distinction. While this is a finding not generally made by others, it appears that it emerged from this particular study because it took place over a full year with regular and ongoing dialogue, and that it was only at the conclusion of the study that participants felt comfortable enough to identify this concern. One Elder expressed it this way:

*“...Last year when we started the program there was no way that I would have said anything about that because I was feeling uncomfortable about knowing the difference. I learned a lot in this tobacco project in regards to traditional and commercial tobacco.”*  
(Nadeau et al. 2012:S227)

This speaks to the need to avoid assuming that participants in a dialogue on tobacco understand how the concepts of traditional versus commercial tobacco differ, and also underscores how such an opportunity can be used to support learning and education for all involved. Rather than make assumptions about meanings associated with tobacco usage, a clear articulation of what is meant can help to provide clarity, reduce inhibitions, and may also become the subject of a more inclusive discussion in a given context.

This is particularly the case given that some commercial tobacco products seek to blur the distinction between commercial and traditional tobacco. Unger, Soto, and Baezconde-Garbanati (2006) speak to this by way of two examples that are relevant to their research pertaining to southern California:

*Some of the respondents in this study believed that commercial tobacco brands with American-Indian imagery were Indian-owned and that their profits benefited American-Indian communities. ... In reality, Red Man chewing tobacco is owned by Swedish Match/Pinkerton, and Natural American Spirit is owned by R.J. Reynolds (Winston-Salem, NC). (443e15)*

In addition, where commercial products are used as a substitute for tobacco in a traditional context, this, too, has the potential to be misleading for those uninformed about the various meanings associated with tobacco (Unger et al. 2006).

However, the use of commercial tobacco in traditional contexts has a variety of origins, most of which are *not* due to a failure to recognize the differences between these two products. In some cases, it is a matter of simple convenience. One study involving several Anishinabe spiritual leaders indicates that the relative availability of commercial tobacco contributes to its



use in a traditional context (Struthers and Hodge 2004). This includes the fact that many people have become addicted to nicotine:

*“So, the nicotine that is in here is the prime reason why they switched over. So that is why I feel like, that eventually this [commercial tobacco] just wiped out the original tobacco.” (Struthers and Hodge 2004:215)*

But that, of course, is not the only reason. Forster et al. (2007) recount the role that federal policies and institutional practices played in the United States in suppressing traditional activities during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Like Canada, the extermination or assimilation of American Indians in the United States made it dangerous for indigenous peoples to openly engage in traditional practices and ceremonies. As a result, a reliance on commercial tobacco for traditional purposes became the norm. In some cases, state officials even eradicated wild tobacco plants as a means to force American Indians to become reliant on commercial tobacco plants (Winter 2000:359-60); and this is certainly what has occurred.

In consequence, a large number of studies focus on smoking cessation, highlighting the role of traditional tobacco in this regard. While one study found the traditional use of tobacco to be a “risk factor” as regards smoking (USC 2009:11), Daley, James, Barnoskie, Segraves, Schupbach, and Choi (2006) conducted six focus groups with 41 participants from a variety of Prairie nations to inform the development of a smoking cessation programs that would be culturally appropriate in a diverse Native American population. The feedback provided by participants highlighted four focal issues with respect to such strategies, including the need to focus on traditional tobacco use. Specifically, participants highlighted the importance of having a “traditional use” component in any smoking cessation program (Daley et al. 2006:433). In addition, participants identified a need to acknowledge the importance of traditional tobacco use, and how it differs from recreational use. They explained that traditional use is different from recreational use, as ceremonial use of tobacco is not perceived as a daily occurrence. Furthermore, participants suggested that traditional tobacco may actually support an individual’s effort to quit smoking. For example, one participant indicated that the ceremonial use of tobacco helped him/her treat and understand tobacco as sacred, which could translate into not abusing cigarettes. Lastly, participants noted that even though tobacco is not sacred to all indigenous groups, it was important to discuss the diverse traditions relating to its use where this was the case.

In concluding this focus on traditional tobacco in the contemporary context, a final note is due: given that the predominant focus in the contemporary literature on indigenous tobacco use arises in response to the issue of smoking cessation, it would be in error not to highlight two findings that emerged in this context.

The first is that there is a “relatively robust relationship between cultural identification and smoker status” among indigenous populations (Angstman, Harris, Golbeck, and Swaney 2009:296). This is to say that indigenous adults who identify themselves most strongly as “Native American” (versus those that do not), are also more likely to be smokers than those

who do not (Angstman et al. 2009). However, this should not be misunderstood to mean that there is a direct correlation between indigenous identity and smoking – this is not the case. Angstman et al. (2009) found that education campaigns that highlight the difference between ceremonial tobacco use and recreational smoking may promote and reinforce the normative value of traditional use, while diminishing the belief that smoking is “normal” among Native Americans. Similarly, other researchers have used traditional tobacco teachings to initiate discussions about alternate uses of tobacco among Native American youth as part of preventative tobacco use group interventions (Moncher and Schinke, 1994).

In fact, and this relates to the second finding, other research suggests that the apparent correlation between indigenous identity and smoking may be due to the prevalence of commercial tobacco in traditional contexts (Forster et al. 2008:S454). The implication is that indigenous youth, in particular, are being exposed to tobacco at a younger age and that, when the tobacco being used is commercial tobacco, norms associated with tobacco use in these varied contexts become blurred. While this finding is not definitive, it is significant enough to warrant a reconsideration of where and how commercial products are used.

Given that some of the studies explored in this literature review have demonstrated a potentially significant awareness of traditional tobacco among indigenous youth and others (USC 2009; Forster et al. 2008; Forster, et al. 2007), it may be important to ensure that only non-commercial tobacco is used in traditional contexts.<sup>7</sup>

### 2.3. Sacred Tobacco

Winter (2000), in his edited volume focusing on indigenous tobacco use across North America, documents the use of tobacco by some 327 distinct indigenous groups. From this, Winter (2000:265) extrapolates on the sacred or “religious” meaning of tobacco, identifying three basic typologies of use:

- individual use by shamans, medicine men, other religious practitioners, and regular members of a tribe;
- group use by voluntary (sometimes secret) societies; and
- institutionalized uses by priests and other (religious) elites.

Winter (2000) clarifies, however, that distinctions between these three typologies – which seem premised on the distinction between *individuals*, *groups*, and *institutions* – are often subtle and not necessarily mutually exclusive. To this end, he explores several recognizable forms of indigenous religious organization in North America as a means to establish its close

---

<sup>7</sup> For example, while not all studies report on this distinction, Forster et al. (2008) indicates that, of the youth sampled that did use tobacco for ceremonial purposes, 62 percent had done so using commercial tobacco (p.S452).

association with the traditional use and the domestication of tobacco (Winter 2000:265-304), five of which are summarized here.

### 2.3.1. Navajo

Similar to other Athabaskan-speaking peoples to the north (e.g., the Gwitch'in), the Navajo ceremonial system is transmitted by singer to apprentice, based on an origin story, and consistent with a large body of legends or "chantways". Tobacco is woven throughout this context, reflected most poignantly in the fact that creation itself was brought about when "Sky Father and Earth Mother smoked this sacred [tobacco] plant" (Winter 2000:269). All Navajo ceremonies require the use of tobacco, and it is considered one of four sacred plants, along with corn, beans, and squash. Tobacco is regarded as a supernatural food that is offered to deities in the form of reed "prayer sticks" that are uniquely adorned, filled with tobacco, and ritualistically lighted by holding a crystal to the sun (i.e., cigarettes). In the Navajo context, tobacco is used to *attract* deities in association with different chantways as a basis for bringing good luck or staving off bad luck, injury or illness.

### 2.3.2. Huichol

The Huichol of west-central Mexico are farmers and deer hunters who have shamanism at the heart of their culture and religion. Shamans are able to communicate with deities through hallucinations that are produced by smoking a combination of peyote and tobacco. In this context, tobacco is seen to have been created by Deer Person who, in turn, turned into peyote, and it is through the combination of smoking these two ingredients together that shamans reach "greater depths in... visionary experiences"<sup>8</sup> (Winter 2000:277). The shamans guard both the physical and spiritual well-being of the Huichol and act as mediators between the gods and the sick. Tobacco is considered essential to the survival of Huichol deities and embodies what is considered an essential life force. The main deity of the Huichol is Tatevari – "Grandfather Fire" – who owns tobacco and is the patron of life and health. In this respect, tobacco is the "food" of deities, and it is consumed by fire (Winter 2000:278).

### 2.3.3. Haudenosaunee

As Iroquois-speaking peoples of the Eastern Woodlands, the Haudenosaunee are focused on by Winter (2000) as an example of indigenous peoples that have formed medicine *societies* composed of ordinary men and women who have been given power to cure the sick. Tobacco use is a fundamental aspect of this context, and is described as having been used by the Haudenosaunee in practically "every part of their religious, social, and political lives" (Winter 2000:281). Along with corn, beans, and squash, tobacco is believed to have

---

<sup>8</sup> Winter (2000:277) notes that other studies have found Huichol ceremonial tobacco (*N. rustica*) to contain extremely high levels of nicotine – up to 18.8 percent in one sample, as compared to an average of 2.0 percent in American commercial tobacco.

sprung from the grave of the Earth Mother, who died after having given birth to twins: the Great Creator and the Great World Rim Dweller. Like the Huichol, the Haudenosaunee also have shamans, but the basis of their medical and religious system is grounded in particular societies, the central one of which is the Company of False Faces<sup>9</sup> (Winter 2000:283). Its inception is traced to the Iroquois creation story, the birth of the twins, and Great World Rim Dweller's addiction to tobacco. There are several False Faces masks that represent Great World Rim Dweller ("Shagadyoweh" in this context) and other gods, all of whom subsist on corn and tobacco. In describing Haudenosaunee tobacco use, Winter (2000) seeks to distinguish between groups that rely centrally upon *shamans*, who have a personal relationship with supernatural deities, and *societies*, where their power comes from a covenant reached previously with a deity. Both, he points out, have abilities based upon the use of tobacco as a food of the gods (Winter 2000:284).

#### 2.3.4. Crow

The Crow are Siouan-speaking peoples of the Great Plains / Central North America. Winter (2000) suggests that the Crow are so dedicated to the growth and worship of tobacco that their members revere it as a deity whose existence is essential for the survival of their tribe. As such, their most sacred tobacco (a variant of *N. quadrivalvis* referred to as "short tobacco") is not smoked, but only danced with in tobacco society ceremonies.<sup>10</sup> The basis of Crow religion and the tobacco society is the individual vision quest. While the Crow, too, have shamans, most Crow members seek to communicate directly with the supernatural by inducing visions through periods of fasting, going without water and, sometimes, self-torture. While Winter (2000) describes a variety of creation stories associated with the Crow and other related tribes, perhaps the most interesting pertains to Lone Man who carried a pipe but did not know what to do with it. In this creation story, First Created makes Male Buffalo and orders him to make tobacco (Winter 2000:288) and, hence, one must presume that the pipe precedes tobacco. For both the Crow and other Plains tribes with tobacco societies, tobacco is considered a mystical, sentient being with magical powers.

#### 2.3.5. Aztec

The Aztec's of what is now central Mexico had full-time priests and religious specialists who held public office and who served as intermediaries between the inhabitants of the Aztec empire and the gods of the supernatural world (Winter 2000:298). In contrast with shamans, Aztec priests did not enter into trances, nor were they possessed by spirits, but they did use tobacco, peyote, and other substances to intoxicate themselves so that they could better communicate with their gods.<sup>11</sup> All Aztec priests used tobacco, and tobacco

---

<sup>9</sup> Winter (2000:286) cites William Fenton (1987), "False Faces of the Iroquois" as an excellent source for further information on this topic.

<sup>10</sup> Another variant of *N. quadrivalvis* ("tall tobacco") is smoked by the Crow in ceremonies and recreationally. Both variants of this wild tobacco are very low in nicotine.

<sup>11</sup> However, the Aztecs, too, had shamans or "sorcerers."

was the main ingredient of an ointment referred to as “divine meat” that priests applied in healing and offered to the gods (Winter 2000:298). Aztec priests served as surrogates for the general population, shedding their own blood (as well as that of others), and carrying out arduous tasks as a form of penance. The most revered of the Aztec gods was Cihuacoatl, the goddess whose body was manifested on earth as the tobacco plant. Because tobacco was her manifestation on earth, it was considered a living, sentient, divine being, to which prayers, human sacrifices, and other gifts were offered on an almost daily basis. As a result, the Aztec had “proprietors of tobacco” – merchants who spent most of their time producing and selling tobacco, tubes, pipes, cigars, and bowls – to meet the Aztec’s “insatiable demand for tobacco” (Winter 2000:301). Tobacco was not only the living body of the earth goddess Cihuacoatl and the subject of veneration by her priests, but it also filled the lives of the Aztec, from the lowest captive and humblest servant to the divine ruler himself.

In summarizing examples of the three typologies set out above, Winter (2000) seeks to establish an inseparable association between the traditional use of indigenous tobacco and its sacredness. Regardless of the indigenous group that is focused upon, the manner in which tobacco is produced or otherwise acquired, or the structures and institutions that are deployed in its consumption, the symbolic meanings associated with tobacco are largely consistent: it is revered as something *sacred*. It is this point that arises most significantly from the literature that has been reviewed as a part of this project.

### **3. Discussion**

Smoking rates among indigenous peoples are significantly higher than any other cultural / ethnic group in North America. Study after study points out that smoking rates among indigenous peoples are somewhere in the order of two to three times higher than the general population (Samji and Wardman 2009; Forster et al. 2008; Rhoades, Rhoades, Jones, and Collins 2000; Winter 2000). Accordingly, the negative health effects on indigenous peoples are also disproportionately high, although, Daley et al. note that nicotine dependence is generally more prevalent in “poor” communities, rather than just Native communities (2006:424).

Tobacco policy can play a role in addressing this issue. For example, a five year project working with 39 tribes in north-western United States found that consultation processes and materials, such as policy guidebooks that are mindful of tribal diversity and traditional use, can assist in developing policies that effectively reduce exposure to tobacco smoke (Glasgow, Lichtenstein, Wilder, Hall, McRae, and Liberty, 1995). Others suggest that lowering smoking rates among indigenous groups must aim to reduce the harmful effects of commercial tobacco, while being respectful of traditional tobacco, and that this must be done in a manner that is culturally appropriate, non-judgemental, non-threatening, and generally informative (Struthers and Hodge, 2004). And, yet, others, such as Samji and Wardman (2009), suggest that the taxation of tobacco is a strategy that prompts smoking cessation and reduces cigarette consumption.

However, if there is a single, consistent finding from amongst the majority of the research conducted pertaining to this field of inquiry, it is that advocates of smoking cessation need to distinguish traditional from commercial tobacco use as a basis for advancing any strategies among indigenous populations (Margalit et al. 2013; Angstman et al. 2009; Winter, Solomon, Hill, Pego, and Victoria 2000; Moncher and Schinke, 1994). Commensurate with this, and at least as important, is the finding that the line between traditional and commercial tobacco is becoming increasingly blurred, and that this may have a significant impact on smoking rates for indigenous peoples. This may be due to many factors – a lack of knowledge about the traditional use of tobacco, the appropriation of traditional imagery in commercial contexts, a lack of availability of traditional tobacco, the convenience of commercial tobacco – but the consequences are nevertheless the same: the sacredness of tobacco in an indigenous context is being jeopardized.

The consequences of this are many, but most obviously there are two:

- A loss of traditional culture / meaning / understanding consistent with the broader consequences of colonialism; and
- A greater risk that the lack of meaning that tobacco has in a commercial / secular context will contribute to higher rates of smoking and associated affects on health.

While at least one study found the use / awareness of traditional tobacco to be a greater risk factor with respect to recreational smoking (USC 2009), in most other cases the association is found to be positive or, at the very least, benign. While this could form the basis of a drawn-out debate, good sense would suggest that a meaningful connection to the sacred role of tobacco in an indigenous context would have a positive impact on perceptions of commercial tobacco dependence.

In addition to the sacred role of tobacco that has been discussed thus far, is a finding by Horn, McCracken, Dino, and Brayboy, in research that was carried out in so-called “tobacco country” – in this case North Carolina – that for some tribes “tobacco is viewed as ‘sacred’ because of the relationship with tobacco farming and economic survival rather than with spiritual practices” (2008:51). While this, too, may be a topic for debate, it highlights a factor that may also be relevant to the CoTTFN context where tobacco has a long history of commercial production.

All this is to say that it is easy to be “anti-tobacco” given the enormous consequences that commercial tobacco has had on overall health. Notwithstanding this emergent recognition, it is clear from the literature that the issue of tobacco – traditional use and otherwise – is not nearly as clear cut as all that. Yes, the casual consumption of tobacco is something that must be both avoided and regulated, but that, in and of itself, does not account for the significance, nor the opportunities associated with this plant in North America. All of these facets must be taken into account when dealing with tobacco.

Even use of the word “tobacco” can be seen to be problematic in some contexts. Margalit et al. describe how some Lakota Elders were uncomfortable about using this term when referring to traditional tobacco, citing a perception that “people think oh God you know they’re using an addictive product” (2013:541). This inherent bias against commercial tobacco use in the contemporary context has huge implications for any indigenous group considering the place of tobacco in its community. Good information, coupled with extensive community engagement, are perhaps the two most important aspects to emphasize in this respect.

Literature examining specific traditional uses is scarce, possibly due to the protection or private nature of traditional knowledge and practices (Samji and Wardman 2009; Struthers and Hodge 2004), the oral nature of knowledge transfer among many indigenous peoples, or the mistrust that some communities or individuals have of outside researchers. Nevertheless, traditional tobacco use is a significant element in the cultural identity of a majority of indigenous peoples in North America. Although the specific significance and practices relating to tobacco vary across nations, promoting and recognizing its sacred role can be beneficial in many ways, including the enhancement of cultural knowledge and pride among indigenous peoples and the development of initiatives that aim to reduce / regulate the recreational use of tobacco.

Winter (2000) concludes his text with an impassioned, collaborative summary that argues that commercial tobacco – its production, consumption, and associated meanings – represents the very antithesis of traditional tobacco (Winter, Solomon, Hill, Pego, and Victoria 2000). Whether or not one accepts this view, any indigenous community considering actively engaging in the production, manufacture, or sale of commercial tobacco products should take steps to ensure a clear separation from the role and meaning of traditional tobacco in their midst.

## Bibliography

- Adair, M. (2000). "Tobacco on the Plains: Historical Use, Ethnographic Accounts, and Archaeological Evidence." Pp. 171-184, in Winter, J. C. (ed.), *Tobacco Use by Native North Americans*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Adams, K., and M. Toll (2000). "Tobacco Use, Ecology, and Manipulation in the Prehistoric and Historic Southwestern United States." Pp. 143-70, in Winter, J. C. (ed.), *Tobacco Use by Native North Americans*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Angstman, S., Harris, K. J., Golbeck, A., and Swaney, G. (2009). "Cultural identification and smoking among American Indian adults in an urban setting." *Ethnicity & Health*, 14(3):289-302.
- Daley, C. M., Faseru, B., Nazir, N., Solomon, C., Greiner, K. A., Ahluwalia, J. S., and Choi, W. S. (2011). "Influence of traditional tobacco use on smoking cessation among American Indians." *Addiction*, 106(5):1003-9.
- Daley, C. M., James, A. S., Barnoskie, R. S., Segraves, M., Schupbach, R., and Choi, W. S. (2006). "'Tobacco Has a Purpose, Not Just a Past': Feasibility of Developing a Culturally Appropriate Smoking Cessation Program for a Pan-Tribal Native Population." *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, 20: 421-440.
- Densmore, Francis. (1929 / 1979). *Chippewa Customs*. United States: Minnesota Historical Society Press.
- Doerfler, Jill, Sinclair, J., and Stark, H. K. (eds.)(2013). *Centering Anishinaabeg Studies: Understanding the World through Stories*. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press & University of Manitoba Press.
- Fenton, William. (1987). *The False Faces of the Iroquois*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Forster, Jean L., Isaiah Brokenleg, Kristine L. Rhodes, Genelle R. Lamont, John Poupart. (2008). "Cigarette Smoking Among American Indian Youth in Minneapolis-St. Paul." *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 35(6S): S449-S456.
- Forster, J. L., Rhodes, K. L., Poupart, J., Baker, L. O., & Davey, C. S. (2007). "Patterns of tobacco use in a sample of American Indians in Minneapolis-St. Paul." *Nicotine & Tobacco Research*, 9(S1), S29-S37.
- Geniusz, W. M. (2009). *Our Knowledge is Not Primitive: Decolonizing Botanical Anishinaabe Teachings*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press.



- Glasgow, R.E., Lichtenstein, E., Wilder, D., Hall, R., McRae, S. G., and Liberty, B. (1995). "The tribal tobacco policy project: working with Northwest Indian tribes on smoking policies." *Preventative Medicine*, 24(5):434-40.
- Hammett, J. (2000). "Out of California: Cultural Geography of Western North American Tobacco." Pp. 128-40, in Winter, J. C. (ed.), *Tobacco Use by Native North Americans*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Hoffman, W. J. (1891) "The Mide'wiwin or 'Grand Medicine Society' of the Ojibway." *Seventh Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology, 1885-1886*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office.
- Horn, Kimberly, Lyn McCracken, Geri Dino, and Missy Brayboy (2008). "Applying Community-Based Participatory Research Principles to the Development of a Smoking-Cessation Program for American Indian Teens: 'Telling Our Story'". *Health Education & Behavior*, Vol. 35 (1): 44-69.
- Margalit, R., Watanabe-Galloway, S., Kennedy, F., Lacy, N., Red Shirt, K., Vinson, L., and Kills Small, J. (2013). "Lakota elders' views on traditional versus commercial/addictive tobacco use; oral history depicting a fundamental distinction." *Journal of Community Health*, 38(3): 538-545.
- McCabe, G. (2008). "Mind, body, emotions and spirit: reaching to the ancestors for healing." *Counselling Psychology Quarterly*, Vol. 21, No. 2: 143-152.
- Momper, S. L., Reed, B. G., and Dennis, M. K. (2010). "'This tobacco has always been here for us', American Indian views of smoking: Risk and protective factors." *Journal of Indigenous Voices in Social Work*, 1(2): 1-18.
- Moncher, M, and Schinke, S. P. (1994). "Group intervention to prevent tobacco use among Native American youth. Special Issue: Empirical research on the outcomes of social work with groups." *Research on Social Work Practice*, 4(2):160-71.
- Mooney, J., and Ellison, G. (1992). *James Mooney's History, Myths, and Sacred Formulas of the Cherokees: Containing the Full Texts of Myths of the Cherokee (1900) and the Sacred Formulas of the Cherokees (1891) as Published by the Bureau of American Ethnography: With a New Biographical*. Fairview, NC: Bright Mountain Books.
- Nadeau, M., Blake, N., Poupart, J., Rhodes, K., and Forster, J. L. (2012). "Circles of Tobacco Wisdom: learning about traditional and commercial tobacco with Native elders." *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 43(5 Suppl 3): S222-228.
- Pego, C. M., Hill, R. F., Solomon, G. W., Chisholm, R. M., and Ivey, S. E. (1995). "Tobacco, Culture, and Health among American Indians: A Historical Review." *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*, 19(2): 143-164.

Rhoades, D.A., E. Rhoades, C. Jones, and R. Collins (2000). "Tobacco Use." Pp. 299-310, in E. Rhoades (ed.), *American Indian health: Innovations in health care, promotion, and policy*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Samji, H., and Wardman, D. (2009). "First Nations communities and tobacco taxation: A commentary." *American Indian & Alaska Native Mental Health Research: The Journal of the National Center*, 16(2): 1-10.

Struthers, R., and Hodge, F. S. (2004). "Sacred tobacco use in Ojibwe communities." *Journal of Holistic Nursing*, 22(3):209-25.

Unger, J.B., Soto, C., and Baezconde-Garbanati, L. (2006). "Perceptions of ceremonial and non-ceremonial uses of tobacco by American-Indian adolescents in California." *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 38(4):443.e9-16.

USC (University of Southern California) (2009). *Culture and Tobacco Among American Indian Adolescents: Final Report*. Keck School of Medicine, Institute for Health Promotion & Disease Prevention Research (November).

Von Gernet, A. (2000). "North American Indigenous *Nicotiana* Use and Tobacco Shamanism: The Early Documentary Record, 1520-1660." Pp. 59-80, in Winter, J. C. (ed.), *Tobacco Use by Native North Americans*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.

Wagner, G. (2000). "Tobacco in Prehistoric Eastern North America." Pp. 185-201, in Winter, J. C. (ed.), *Tobacco Use by Native North Americans*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.

Winter, J. C. (2000). *Tobacco Use by Native North Americans: Sacred Smoke and Silent Killer*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.

Winter, J, Solomon G., Hill R., Pego C., and Victoria S. (2000). "Native Americans and Tobacco: Deer Person's Gift or Columbus's Curse?" Pp. 353-381, in Winter, J. C. (ed.), *Tobacco Use by Native North Americans*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.

## Appendix A

### Select Literature on the Indigenous Use of Tobacco

Angstman, S., Harris, K. J., Golbeck, A., and Swaney, G. (2009). "Cultural identification and smoking among American Indian adults in an urban setting." *Ethnicity & Health*, 14(3):289-302.

Blondin, B. (1990). "Traditional use of tobacco among the Dene." *Arctic Medical Research*, 49 Suppl. 2:51-3.

Bottorff, J. L., Carey, J., Mowatt, R., Varcoe, C., Johnson, J. L., Hutchinson, P., Sullivan, D., Williams, W., and Wardman, D. (2009). "Bingo halls and smoking: perspectives of First Nations women." *Health & Place*, 15 (4):1014-21.

Brown, Ian W. (1989). "The Calumet Ceremony in the Southwest and Its Archaeological Manifestations." *American Antiquity*, 54:2.

Brown, J. E. (1964). *The spiritual legacy of the American Indian (No. 135)*. Wallingford, PA: Pendle Hill Publications.

Cancer Care Ontario (2008). *A case study approach: lessons learned In Ontario - Aboriginal tobacco cessation*. Toronto: Aboriginal Cancer Care Unit.

Castetter, E. F., and Bell, W. H. (1942). *Pima and Papago Indian Agriculture*. Inter-Americana Studies, vol. I. University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque.

Cohen, K. (1998). "Native American Medicine." *Alternative Therapies in Health and Medicine*, 4(6):45-57.

Daley, C. M., Faseru, B., Nazir, N., Solomon, C., Greiner, K. A., Ahluwalia, J. S., and Choi, W. S. (2011). "Influence of traditional tobacco use on smoking cessation among American Indians." *Addiction*, 106(5):1003-9.

Daley, C. M., James, A. S., Barnoskie, R. S., Segraves, M., Schupbach, R. and Choi, W. S. (2006). "Tobacco Has a Purpose, Not Just a Past": Feasibility of Developing a Culturally Appropriate Smoking Cessation Program for a Pan-Tribal Native Population. *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, 20: 421-440.

Densmore, Francis. (1929 / 1979). *Chippewa Customs*. United States: Minnesota Historical Society Press.

Deranger, S. (2006). *Keeping the sacred in tobacco: an Indigenous tobacco cessation strategy*. Muskoday, Saskatoon: National Native Addictions Partnership Foundation.

Elmore, F. H. (1944). *Ethnobotany of the Navajo*. University of New Mexico Bulletin and School of American Research Monograph Series 1(7). Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.

Flannery, D., Sisk-Franco, C., & Glover, P. N. (1995). "The conflict of tobacco education among American Indians." In K. Slama (Ed.), *Tobacco and Health* (pp. 903-905). New York: Plenum.

Forster, Jean L., Isaiah Brokenleg, Kristine L. Rhodes, Genelle R. Lamont, John Poupart. (2008). "Cigarette Smoking Among American Indian Youth in Minneapolis–St. Paul." *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 35(6S): S449–S456.

Forster, J. L., Rhodes, K. L., Poupart, J., Baker, L. O., & Davey, C. S. (2007). "Patterns of tobacco use in a sample of American Indians in Minneapolis-St. Paul." *Nicotine & Tobacco Research*, 9(S1), S29–S37.

Geniusz, Wendy Makoons. (2009). *Our Knowledge is not Primitive: decolonizing botanical Anishinaabe teachings*. New York: Syracuse University Press.

Glasgow, R.E., Lichtenstein, E., Wilder, D., Hall, R., McRae, S. G., and Liberty, B. (1995). "The tribal tobacco policy project: working with Northwest Indian tribes on smoking policies." *Preventative Medicine*, 24(5):434-40.

Godlaski, T. M. (2013). "Holy smoke: tobacco use among Native American tribes in North America." *Substance Use & Misuse*, 48(1-2):1-8.

Goodman, Jordan. (1993). *Tobacco in History: the cultures of dependence*. New York: Routledge.

Hall, R., Lichtenstein, E., Burhansstipanov, L., Davis, S. M., Hodge, F., and Schinke, S. (1995). "Tobacco use policies and practices in diverse Indian settings." *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*, 19(3):165–180.

Herrick, J. W., and Snow, D. R. (1995). *Iroquois Medical Botany*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press.

Hirschfelder, A. B., and Molin, P. (1997). *The Encyclopedia of Native American religions: A Comprehensive Guide to the Spiritual Traditions and Practices of North American Indians*. New York: Facts on File.

Hirschfelder, A. B. (1999). *Encyclopedia of Smoking and Tobacco*. Phoenix, Arizona: Oryx Press.

Horn, Kimberly, Lyn McCracken, Geri Dino, and Missy Brayboy (2008). "Applying Community-Based Participatory Research Principles to the Development of a Smoking-Cessation Program for American Indian Teens: 'Telling Our Story'". *Health Education & Behavior*, Vol. 35 (1): 44-69.

Johnston, Basil. (1982). *Ojibway Ceremonies*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart.

Jones, W., and Michelson, T. (1917). *Ojibwa Texts*. New York: G.E. Stechert.

Josephy, Alvin, M. (1991). *America in 1492: The World of the Indian Peoples before the Arrival of Columbus*. New York: Vintage Books.

Kulis, S., Wagaman, M. A., Tso, C., and Brown, E. F. (2013). "Exploring Indigenous identities of urban American Indian youth of the southwest." *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 28(3):271-298.

Linton, R. (1924). *Use of tobacco among North American Indians*. University of Chicago: Field Museum of Natural History.

Margalit, R., Watanabe-Galloway, S., Kennedy, F., Lacy, N., Red Shirt, K., Vinson, L., and Kills Small, J. (2013). "Lakota elders' views on traditional versus commercial/addictive tobacco use; oral history depicting a fundamental distinction." *Journal of Community Health*, 38(3): 538-545.

Matheson, J. A. (2012). *Prices and Social Behavior: A study of adult smoking in Canadian Aboriginal communities*. University of Leicester: Working Paper.

McGuire, Joseph D. (1897). "Pipes and Smoking Customs of the American Aborigines Based on Material in the U.S. National Museum." *Report of the National Museum*. Elliot City, MD.

Moncher, M., and Schinke, S. P. (1994). "Group intervention to prevent tobacco use among Native American youth." *Research on Social Work Practice*, 4(2):160–71.

Momper, S. L., Reed, B. G., and Dennis, M. K. (2010). "'This tobacco has always been here for us', American Indian views of smoking: Risk and protective factors." *Journal of Indigenous Voices in Social Work*, 1(2): 1-18.

Mooney, J., and Ellison, G. (1992). *James Mooney's History, Myths, and Sacred Formulas of the Cherokees: Containing the Full Texts of Myths of the Cherokee (1900) and the Sacred Formulas of the Cherokees (1891) as Published by the Bureau of American Ethnography*. Fairview, NC: Bright Mountain Books.

Nadeau, M., Blake, N., Poupart, J., Rhodes, K., and Forster, J. L. (2012). "Circles of Tobacco Wisdom: learning about traditional and commercial tobacco with Native elders." *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 43: S222-228.

Orisatoki, R. (2013). "The public health implications of the use and misuse of tobacco among the Aborigines in Canada." *Global Journal Health Science*, 5(1):28-34.

Paper, J. (1988). *Offering smoke: The sacred pipe and Native American religion*. Moscow, ID: University of Idaho Press.

Patten, C. A., Enoch, C., Renner, C. C., Offord, K. P., Nevak, C., Kelley, S. F., Thomas, J., Decker, P. A., Hurt, R. D., Lanier, A., and Kaur, J. S. (2009). "Focus groups of Alaska Native adolescent tobacco users: preferences for tobacco cessation interventions and barriers to participation." *Health Education and Behavior*, 36(4):711-23.

Patten, C. A., Fadahunsi, O., Hanza, M., Smith, C. M., Hughes, C. A., Brockman, T. A., Boyer, R., Decker, P. A., Luger, E., Sinicrope, P. S., and Offord, K. P. (2013). "Development of a tobacco cessation intervention for Alaska Native youth." *Addiction Research and Theory*, 21(4):273-284.

Pearce, D., Schwartz, D., & Greaves, L. (2008). *No Gift: Tobacco Policy and Aboriginal People in Canada*. Vancouver: British Columbia Centre of Excellence for Women's Health.

Pego, C. M., Hill, R. F., Solomon, G. W., Chisholm, R. M., and Ivey, S. E. (1995). "Tobacco, Culture, and Health among American Indians: A Historical Review." *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*, 19(2): 143-164.

Poling, Jim, Sr. (2012) *Smoke Signals: The Native Takeback of North Americas Tobacco Industry*. Toronto: Dundurn.

Powers, W. K. (1982). *Yuwipi: Vision and Experience in Oglala Ritual*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Reading, J. L. (1996). *Eating smoke: A review of non-traditional use of tobacco among Aboriginal People*. Ottawa: Health Canada.

Rhoades, D.A., E. Rhoades, C. Jones, and R. Collins (2000). "Tobacco Use." Pp. 299-310, in E. Rhoades (ed.), *American Indian health: Innovations in health care, promotion, and policy*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Ritz, E., and Orth, S. R. (2000). "The cultural history of smoking." *Contributions to Nephrology*, 130:1-10.

Robert, Joseph C. (1949). *The Story of Tobacco in America*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Rumbaugh Whitesell, N., Kaufman, C. E., Keane, E. M., Big Crow, C., Shangreau, C., and Mitchell, C. M. (2012). "Patterns of substance use initiation among young adolescents in a northern plains American Indian tribe." *The American Journal of Drug and Alcohol Abuse*, 38(5): 383-388.

Samji, H., and Wardman, D. (2009). "First Nations communities and tobacco taxation: A commentary." *American Indian & Alaska Native Mental Health Research: The Journal of the National Center*, 16(2): 1-10.

- Seig, L. (1971) *Tobacco, peace pipes, and Indians*. Palmer Lake, Colorado: Filter Press.
- Spinden, H. J. (1950). *Tobacco is American: The story of tobacco before the coming of the white man*. New York: New York Public Library.
- Struthers, R., and Hodge, F. S. (2004). "Sacred tobacco use in Ojibwe communities." *Journal of Holistic Nursing*, 22(3):209-25.
- Unger, J.B., Soto, C., and Baezconde-Garbanati, L. (2006). "Perceptions of ceremonial and non-ceremonial uses of tobacco by American-Indian adolescents in California." *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 38(4):443.e9-16.
- USC (University of Southern California) (2009). *Culture and Tobacco among American Indian Adolescents: Final Report*. Keck School of Medicine, Institute for Health Promotion & Disease Prevention Research (November).
- Vogel, Virgil J. (1970). *American Indian Medicine*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Wardman, A. E., and Khan, N. A. (2005). "Registered Indians and tobacco taxation: a culturally-appropriate strategy?" *Canadian Journal of Public Health*, 96(6):451-3.
- West, G. A. (1934 / 2011). *Tobacco, Pipes and Smoking Customs of the American Indians, Parts 1-2*. United States: Unknown.
- Winter, J. C. (2000). *Tobacco Use by Native North Americans: Sacred Smoke and Silent Killer*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Wissler, C. (1966). *Indians of the United States*. New York: Doubleday.

## Appendix B

### Anishinaabe Uses of Tobacco

The Anishinaabe word for tobacco is *asemaa* (pronounced “ah-say-ma”). The use of the Anishinaabe language (*Anishinaabemowin*) in describing Anishinaabe practices with respect to tobacco is central to the appropriate characterization of traditional use – something absent in all but the most culturally-centered contemporary literature (e.g., Doerfler, Sinclair and Stark 2013; Geniusz 2009). Given this current gap in much of the academic literature, this description of Anishinaabe uses of tobacco is necessarily limited.<sup>12</sup>

Anishinaabe uses of tobacco are generally consistent with what is described elsewhere in the North American literature pertaining to indigenous uses of tobacco. This includes the use of tobacco for such things as prayers, offerings, ceremonies, medicine (*mashkiki*), and gifts. Struthers and Hodge describe a more contemporary relationship with tobacco:

To obtain the original sacred tobacco, kinnikinnick has to be gathered: “Get the bark off, then shave it down and dry it.” However, when commercial tobacco became available, because it was grown readily, it was easier for many Anishinabe people to just smoke it rather than gather and prepare the kinnikinnick. “People just started using it [commercial tobacco] because it was a lot easier.” One key informant added that some quit gathering, preparing, and utilizing the traditional kinnikinnick tobacco because “I think they eventually got addicted. So, the nicotine that is in here is the prime reason why they switched over. So that is what I feel like, that eventually this [commercial tobacco] just wiped out the original tobacco.” (2004:215)

*Asemaa* is often referred to as “kinnikinnick” in the literature – a word meaning “mixture”, but as an anglicized term, the meaning can vary by region. For example, Struthers and Hodge (2004) suggest that kinnikinnick refers specifically to red willow (red osier dogwood – *miskwaabiiminzh*), while the dried leaves of bearberry (*makwa-miskomin*) were clearly also used as a form of traditional tobacco by the Anishinaabe (Momper, Reed, and Dennis 2010; Densmore 1929). Hence, the term kinnikinnick may have become a more generic word for traditional tobacco in academic and other contexts as a means to distinguish it from commercial tobacco.

*Asemaa* is one of four sacred Anishinaabe plants, representing the Eastern direction / door corresponding to the Medicine Wheel, along with:

- sage (Western direction)
- cedar (Southern direction)
- sweet grass (Northern direction)

---

<sup>12</sup> Anishinaabe words are identified where available. They appear in italics when used for the first time.



More significantly, tobacco also forms a part of the Anishinaabe creation story. The Anishinaabe creation story is told in a variety of ways, but is subject to certain protocols. For example, Struthers and Hodge (2004) describe how six Ojibwe traditional healers and spiritual leaders limit what they are prepared to talk about:

All key informants could pinpoint the origin and the actual story of how tobacco came to Anishinabe (Ojibwe) people. However, due to oral tradition, the story or stories could not be told in an interview session like this one and could traditionally be articulated only during approved times of the year. (p.215)

However, the following story is recounted by Struthers and Hodge (2004:215):<sup>13</sup>

One key informant shared the following: I know a story that relates to Waynaboozhoo and when in the beginning the Creator told Waynaboozhoo that we wouldn't be able to communicate directly with the Creator. And so he gave Waynaboozhoo a seed to plant the kinnikinnick, which is the red willow. And he said to go and tell the Anishinabe people to plant the seed and that is where they would get the kinnikinnick. Then that is the way we would talk to the Creator. That is the way we would communicate with him by smoking our pipes and whatever message we had to convey to the Creator, that the smoke would relay that message. And to put that tobacco, asemaa, on the ground also, near a tree, and this would serve the purpose also of communicating with our Creator. Also, the Creator said that when we come into this world we have nothing. We come naked and we have nothing to offer. So that is why he gave Waynaboozhoo that seed to give to the Anishinabe people for that offering.

When used in prayers and ceremonies, asemaa helps to create a bridge / pathway to the Creator (*Gichi-manidoo*). When smoked in a sacred pipe, it can act as a medium for communication with the sky world where Anishinaabe ancestors reside. It is also used as an offering, whether sprinkled on a drum, on the ground, or in the water. Tobacco is also given as an expression of respect or gratitude, whether to an Elder for their advice, to a wild animal (*awesiinh*) for giving itself to a hunter, or when placed among the roots (*ojiibikan*) of a plant that is being picked. This can be accompanied by a prayer or song of thanks (Densmore 1929).

It is said that the Creator's spirit is in tobacco, and when it is used in a sacred manner, the spirit in the form of smoke enters the body and is then released to travel to the sky laden with thanksgiving. Because traditional tobacco is sometimes mixed with other forms of tobacco, there are also teachings about not abusing it (Pego et al. 1995). This includes the fact that tobacco, when smoked, should not be inhaled into the lungs but held in the mouth and blown out after taking a few small puffs. Struthers and Hodge include this quotation:

---

<sup>13</sup> Reference in this excerpt is to "Waynaboozhoo"; a half-spirit, half-human – the son of a manidoo. A more contemporary spelling of this figure is *Nenabozho* (Geniusz 2009:194).

“I smoke the pipe, smoke that tobacco, never inhaling. That is another misconception... that we inhale all that tobacco in that pipe. You are not supposed to do that.”  
(2004:218)

Tobacco represents a symbol of personal integrity, as well as respect for others and all of creation (McCabe 2008) – it is not a substance used merely for recreation (Pego et al. 1995)

There are many other examples of specific uses for asemaa by Anishinaabe peoples. Geniusz (2009) makes reference to “seventeen teachings” that describe when it is necessary to make an offering of asemaa to different beings (p.55). At the core, it is suggested, is *inaadiziwin* – the Anishinaabe way of being. This includes the fact that *inaadiziwin* divides the world into categories of animate beings and inanimate objects differently than the mainstream. For example, things such as rocks, trees, and plants are considered to be animate beings in an Anishinaabe context and, therefore, implicate human interaction in a reciprocal relationship (Geniusz 2009:56-8). As a result, an offering of tobacco must be made when, for example, harvesting a portion of a plant to reflect this relationship of reciprocity.

There is also a small body of literature focusing on the *Midewiwin* – sometimes described as the Grande Medicine Society (Hoffman 1891). The *Midewiwin*, an Anishinaabe religious organization, is comprised of spiritual healers (*Mide*) entrusted with varying degrees of knowledge (*gikendaasowin*). While much of the *gikendaasowin* is public, there is also *gikendaasowin* that is more guarded, including *Midewaajimowin* (knowledge taught by *Midewiwin*). This more guarded *gikendaasowin* is not commonly held by everyone and is only given to specific individuals who have gone through certain ceremonies and degrees of training (Geniusz 2009:65).

However, across all of the uses of tobacco described in the literature, one thing is consistent: that traditional tobacco is considered “sacred”; asemaa is connected with the Creator and must be treated with great respect. Understanding the various roles of tobacco in such a context cannot be confined to the description of a discrete set of “uses”. Rather, asemaa has been described as embodying a “relationship” between Anishinaabe people and the Gichi-manidoo (Creator). As a result, an examination of asemaa – particularly its traditional uses in contrast with commercial tobacco – must take account of the plant as an animate being. Consequently, a more appropriate question relating to the role of tobacco in an Anishinaabe context becomes: what has happened to our relative?<sup>14</sup>

This insight and many others not yet captured as a part of an emergent discussion amongst CoTTFN Traditional Knowledge-holders and community members, must necessarily be

---

<sup>14</sup> Some of the issues and questions presented in this paragraph were raised by CoTTFN community members as a part of a meeting with Traditional Knowledge-holders.

accounted for and further developed as this community considers its relationship with tobacco into the future.