

Aaniin>Hello MNACT members I would like to call to your attention the issue that we all face with the work that we do. That is the ability to provide non- commercial tobacco to the majority of Native American people in Minnesota. This issue has been discussed on many levels and some solutions have come out of these talks. For example, personal gardens and other small-scale operations but nothing to address the issue head on. If we are the advocates for traditional tobacco and want the elimination of commercial tobacco, then we should not contribute to the advancement of their corporations. We do this with the purchasing of commercial tobacco. We all know how much more convenient it is to just go to the store and buy some “TOPS’ tobacco for a ceremonial then it is to grow it in your backyard.

Tobacco, Sage, Sweet grass and Cedar are the four medicines of the people of Turtle Island and these items share adjoining history with the people themselves. Both Native American people and the four medicines were manipulated and altered for profit at the hands of the United States and European nations. This deception has taken the medicines and the people off the path that was set for them and has change how the rest of society perceives them. Tobacco in present terms is not seen as a medicine for healing purposes but as the number one killer of all Americans. If we our to heal as a people our medicines must heal with us.

The solution lies within all the tribal nations to rise up and say no more to commercial tobacco. Tribes must develop a valuable and resourceful way of providing for the need of traditional tobacco. Sovereignty is the greatest asset we have as Native American people. It is what separates us from the rest of the U.S. population but this power should be used an effeivate manner. One solution for the tobacco issue is to use

the power of sovereignty with all the tribes of Minnesota to work on purchase a plot of land with the attention of growing tobacco. This will fill the gap with Native American people's access to traditional tobacco from within the state. This land should also be made into trust land so that it is protected and will be collective own by all tribes in Minnesota. Other uses for the land can be to grow wild vegetables, fruit, herbs, trees, and medicines. This land can act as a teaching tool for all Native American people in the state on how to live a healthy life-style. It would address other issues beside tobacco abuse. For instance, diabetes, obesity and other health concerns in the Native American community.

Please respond back with question, concerns and other solutions when you get the time.

Thank you/Miigwetch