



*Aboriginal Student Council
2-20 North Power Plant
University of Alberta
Edmonton, AB T6G 2E8
acouncil@ualberta.ca*

Aboriginal Student Council Executive Statement

Treaty No.6 Territory and the Homeland of the Métis Nation — January 25, 2020

tân'si / twanshi / tunngasugit

Indigenous Peoples have a long and storied history of the use of tobacco. Tobacco is one of the sacred plants that the Creator has endowed upon us; considered to be a sacred medicine, it has been used in ceremonies by our peoples across Turtle Island long before contact with Europeans. We hold the belief that tobacco establishes a direct communication link between a person and the spiritual world with our Creator. Tobacco is a traditional gift that we exchange when we gift our knowledge to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people alike.

While it is important to note the difference between traditional and non-traditional tobacco usage, a complete blanket ban of “smoking and vaping of all products on all campuses” has the potential to harm Indigenous students at a disproportionate level.^[1] We recognize and understand that this proposal is given with the public health of students and everyone on campus in mind. We ask you to consider the historical context where settler peoples created an environment where Indigenous Peoples have turned to addictive substances to cope with generational trauma. We also share some security concerns for our students, particularly Indigenous students who identify as women and Two-Spirited peoples, who would be forced to leave campus for nicotine usage.

¹ University of Alberta, “General Faculties Council Open Agenda,” 25, <https://www.ualberta.ca/governance/media-library/documents/member-zone/gfc/meeting-material-and-presentations/amended-2021-01-25-gfc-meeting-materials.pdf>.



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Ceremony is important to Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous students, and we frequently use tobacco for such purposes. We strongly urge the General Faculties Council to consider the unique situation that Indigenous students face in relation to tobacco usage on campus. Furthermore we also urge this committee to consider the impacts on Indigenous students and to pursue alternative avenues of approach to fix this important health issue. We recommend that the General Faculties Council vote for two of the proposed options; that being that ***(a) Nothing changes or (b) That tobacco usage be permitted in certain areas.***

The Aboriginal Student Council is not afraid to use its political capital in order to stand up and represent our students' needs and views wherever and whatever they may be.

Aboriginal Student Council Executive