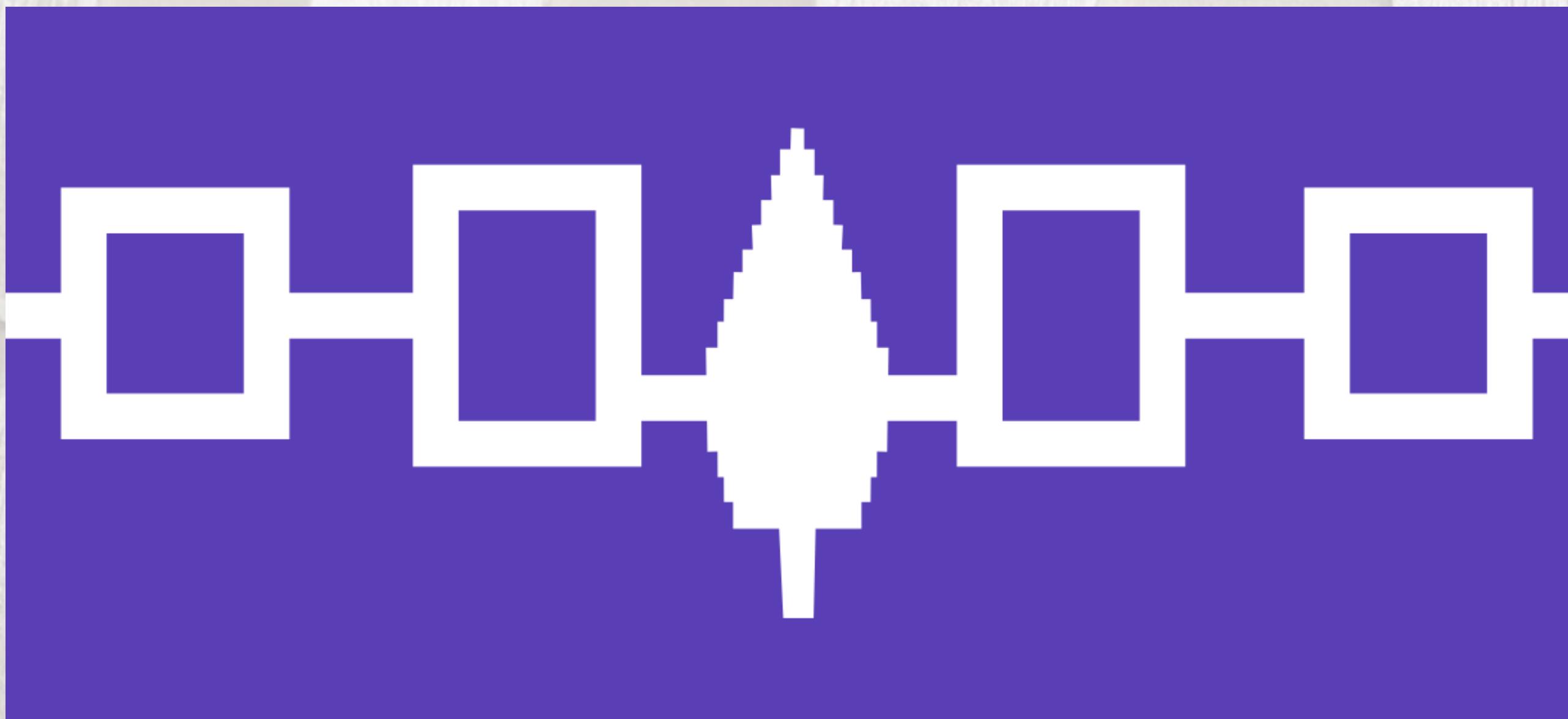


Black Ash Relations

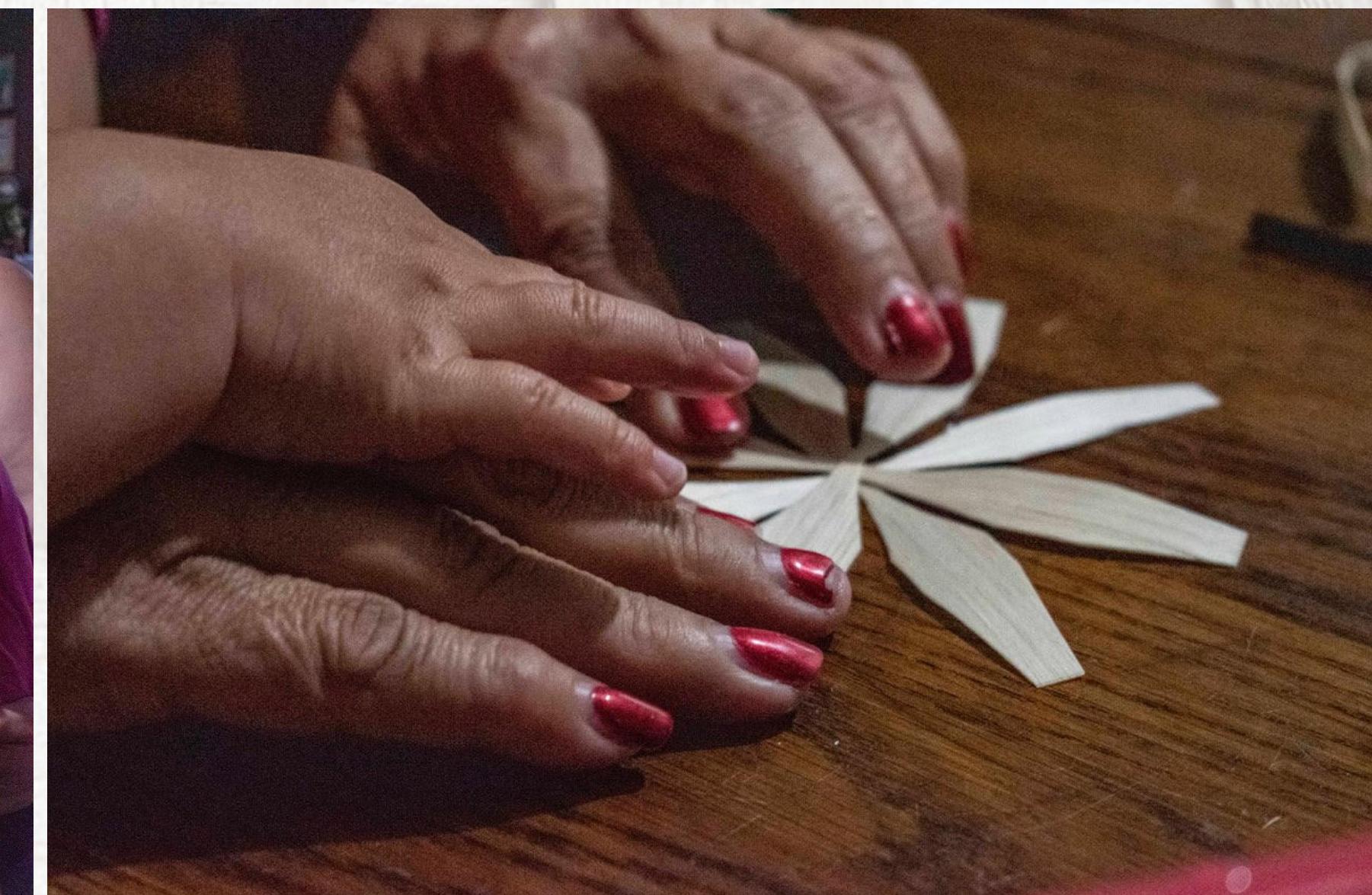
Ash trees are significant to many Indigenous communities in the northeastern United States and eastern Canada including Haudenosaunee people, a confederacy of six nations Indigenous to New York State. People in these communities use splint from black ash trees to make baskets—a fundamental way knowledge is transferred about plants, tradition, and culture to the next generation. This relationship with ash trees is vital to sustaining their closeness to the land and their ancestors.



The Hiawatha belt is the national belt of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. It records the five nations (Seneca, Cayuga, Onondaga, Oneida, and Mohawk) coming together to live in peace with one another. The central tree, the Tree of Peace, represents the Onondaga Nation. The two lines extending to each side welcomes other people to travel the path of peace and take shelter under the Tree of Peace.

Looking to the Future

Haudenosaunee basket makers are concerned about the loss of black ash trees and have explored ways to protect trees from further damage. A Task Force that addresses the environmental problems within the Mohawk territory of Akwesasne has been collecting seeds from black ash and storing them to preserve the trees and Haudenosaunee basket makers have been trying out alternative basket materials.



Cindy Garrow, a basket maker from Akwesasne, works with her daughter to create the flowers for a flower picking basket. Photo by Kyrie Ransom.

The Haudenosaunee Words Before All Else

Ash trees are incredibly significant to the Haudenosaunee, the Indigenous people of New York State. They acknowledge this relationship by giving thanks to all living things, including ash trees, at the beginning of community gatherings and events.

Alternative Materials

Some Haudenosaunee people are hopeful that ash will survive but are looking to alternative weaving materials while ash are struggling. Some of the alternatives they use include oak, willow, hickory, dogbane, and bullrush.

Bendable Black Ash

Black ash trees typically grow in wetlands which allows the wood itself to be very spongy and uniquely bendable. Emerald ash borer damage to the vascular system results in brittle ash splints. These are more difficult to work into basketry than splints from uninfected trees.