



A presentation (left) and preparing basketry materials (center) at the 2022 annual workshop. © Robert Gotchie; Burning longleaf pine (right) at the March 2023 Emerging Programs workshop © James Miller/TNC

FOCUS ON CULTURAL BURNING:

THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES BURNING NETWORK LIGHTS A PATH

The Indigenous Peoples Burning Network (IPBN) is a support network that brings together Native American communities committed to revitalizing their traditional fire cultures in a contemporary context. Led by Native American elders and practitioners, the IPBN focuses on Indigenous cultural burning to honor tribal fire sovereignty and restore balance with fire.

Coming Together: 2023 National Meeting in Hoopa

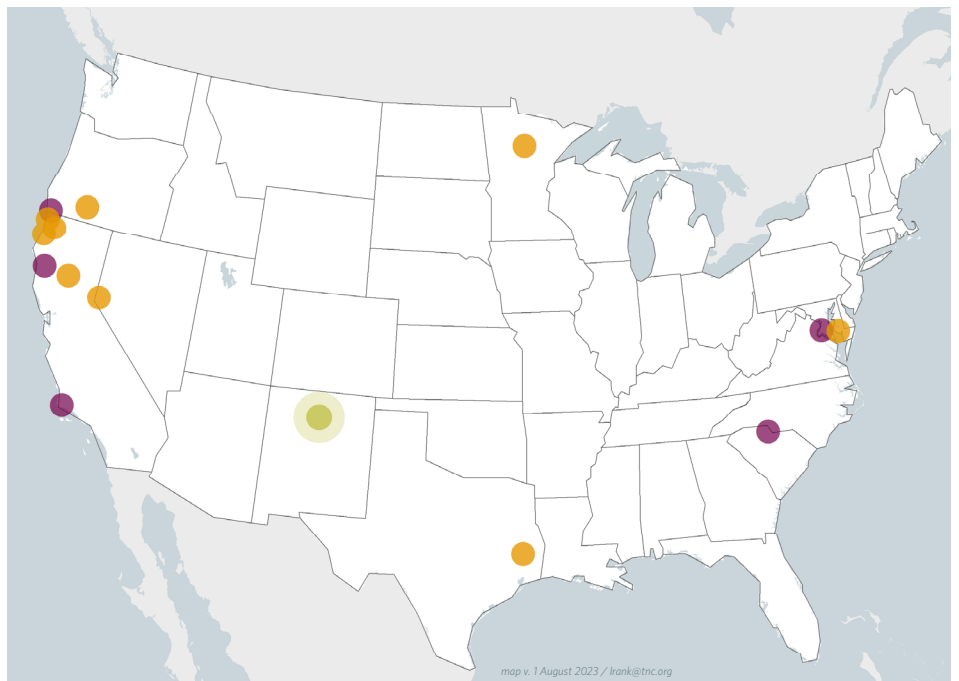
The IPBN held a national meeting hosted by the Hoopa Fire and Cultural Resources departments, where participants from various tribes and regions came together to share knowledge and experiences. Participants drafted recommendations to submit to the Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission, gained a better understanding of Hoopa elders' perspectives on cultural burning, strengthened connections with the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Reserved Treaty Rights Lands program, participated in pile burning for fuel reduction, and celebrated Hoopa elders' approval of a large project to reduce fuels on a sacred mountainside that encompasses a critical evacuation route.

In addition to this opportunity for collaboration and exchange, participants used the meeting to formally launch working groups that address specific areas of ongoing interest and concern.

Indigenous fire practitioners are engaging with the IPBN in a variety of ways.

- A team of co-leads and advisors is composed of people from the Hoopa, Karuk, Yurok and Plains Miwok tribes, The Klamath Tribes, Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California, Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas, Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe and Nause-Waiwash Band of Indians.
- Ten pueblos—the Cochiti, Jemez, Laguna, Nambé, Picuris, San Ildefonso, Sandia, Santa Clara, Taos and Tesuque—are participating in the New Mexico Tribal Fire Working Group.
- The Emerging Programs Working Group has members from the Tolowa Dee-ni' Nation, Round Valley Indian Tribes, Coastal Band of Chumash Nation, Catawba Nation and Piscataway Conoy Tribe.

Early exploratory conversations are also taking place in at least eight landscapes across the country.



Working Groups for Learning and Action

The **Emerging Programs** working group supports participants in the early stages of developing cultural burning programs within their tribes or organizations. Coached by Margo Robbins (Yurok) and Gesse Bullock (Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas), members receive guidance on program design, fire equipment, fire-dependent cultural resources, and federal funding sources. Participants gathered at a March 2023 workshop hosted by the Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas, an event that included hands-on experience conducting a controlled burn for culturally significant longleaf pine.

An **Intergenerational Learning and Training** working group is just getting started. It will focus on connecting elders and youth in Indigenous communities to support the transfer of cultural knowledge and prepare the next generation of cultural fire practitioners. The group will also connect participants with opportunities for federal fire training when requested.

Members of the **National Scope** working group share interests in working with federal and state agencies to elevate Indigenous cultural burning. Participants are often involved in federal fire initiatives in their homelands, such as the BIA Reserved Treaty Rights Lands program or USDA Forest Service Tribal Forest Protection Act projects. While neither the National Scope working group nor the IPBN conducts lobbying, participants exchange information about state and national committees on which they serve, interactions with upper-level government officials, ongoing policy discussions and government funding programs that could support Indigenous cultural burning.

The **Communications** working group assists Native American communities that want to share their stories about revitalizing their fire cultures with various media outlets. An important emphasis is working with reporters, photographers, documentarians and radio hosts to improve their understanding of Indigenous Peoples' intellectual property rights and the practice of Free, Prior and Informed Consent.



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In the early autumn of 2022, the first Women-in-Fire TRENCH (WTRENCH) for Indigenous women was hosted in Karuk ancestral territory in what is now northern California.

Read more: A *High Country News* [article](#) asked “What if Indigenous Women Ran Controlled Burns?” and the *Washington Post* published a [video](#) “California Needs to Burn. Native Women Are Leading the Way.”

Non-Indigenous Partners for Indigenous Burning

The IPBN actively engages with non-Indigenous partners who seek to develop equitable fire partnerships with Native American tribal nations. The Beginners Working Group, initiated by TNC land managers and Mary Huffman, provides a platform for non-Indigenous participants to learn about US history, deepen their understanding of tribes, and build relationships. Through these efforts, 59 non-Indigenous participants from the Fire Networks and TNC have gained insights into tribal partnerships and federal funding programs relevant to tribes.

LEARN MORE

Indigenous Peoples Burning Network:

<http://conservationgateway.org/ConservationPractices/FireLandscapes/Pages/IPBN.aspx>

Free, Prior and Informed Consent:

<https://www.fao.org/indigenous-peoples/our-pillars/fpic/en/>

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