

# Indigenous Peoples Burning Network

The goal of the IPBN is to achieve fire-related cultural restoration—knowledge and practices—in large landscapes to perpetuate traditions and quality of the environment.

Leaders in the IPBN are beginning to step beyond the Klamath region for tribal partnership opportunities.

## Yurok-Hupa-Karuk Landscape

In the Yurok-Hupa-Karuk landscape, controlled burning was traditionally done along family lines. Families maintained specific areas for gathering acorns and other resources by burning in specific ways at specific times. Preparation for burning included training, the right conditions, and the proper mindset. Reaffirming family-led burning is a high priority in this landscape.

In this reporting period, the family-led burning program advanced to a new level. Local coordinators went to work in two of the three tribal territories. These coordinators arranged visits with community members to assess fire needs on private properties. Twenty



This traditional Yurok baby basket was woven from hazel sticks gathered after a recent controlled burn.  
© Margo Robbins



A Yurok community coordinator (left), who is also a TREX coach, worked with community members to prepare a family-led burn.  
© Margo Robbins

families expressed interest in bringing fire back to their land for hazard reduction and cultural purposes. Together with the coordinators, the Cultural Fire Management Council designed and delivered two community trainings for interested families. Twelve family-led burns were accomplished this spring, involving people in all three tribal territories. Abundant, high

quality hazel sticks were gathered in areas burned by families last year. Areas burned in the Yurok TREX and the Klamath TREX are also providing weaving materials. Some of the longest sticks are being woven in to traditional baby baskets.

## NETWORK EXPANSION

IPBN participants continued conversations with members of several tribes, according to the network's expansion plan. Conservancy staff from various offices also contacted the IPBN. Currently the IPBN leadership team is evaluating possibilities among 12 tribes in California, Minnesota, Oregon and Washington.

## Pueblo Tribes of New Mexico

This reporting period, the IPBN transitioned from working in a single landscape to a multi-site network. In March, two members of the IPBN leadership team made the trip from California to New Mexico to meet with tribal community members, the USDA Forest Service, a tree-ring researcher and the collections manager of the Pueblo Indian Cultural Center. Four outcomes resulted from the trip:

1. Plans were made for a youth exchange between the Yurok, Hupa and Karuk communities and Pueblo youth from the Flower Hill Institute.



From top:

Two members of the IPBN leadership team visited with the collections management specialist at the Pueblo Indian Cultural Center in Santa Fe.

The IPBN group was joined by a USFS restoration partnership coordinator on a visit to Santa Clara Canyon to observe the damaging effects of the Las Conchas Fire, and restoration work in progress. They were hosted by the vice-chair and natural resource staff members of the Santa Clara Pueblo.

The IPBN co-lead examined the work of a young basketweaver from the Jemez Pueblo, and offered encouragement. While basketweaving is a widely practiced cultural art in Northern California, it is nearly a lost art in the Jemez tribal community.

© TNC (Mary Huffman)

*As a U.S. Forest Service research ecologist, working with the IPBN has enriched and greatly informed my understanding of the fuels and wildland fire values and interest of tribes for collaboratively developing applicable science for evaluating cultural resources, forest management and landscape restoration strategies.*

Frank K. Lake  
Pacific Southwest Fire and Fuels program

2. Pueblo fire practitioners will go to the Yurok TREX, with the intent of developing a culturally based TREX in New Mexico.
3. A priority shared by the Cibola National Forest and National Grassland and Pueblo communities—restoration of freshwater springs through forest thinning and fire—was discussed.
4. The restoration partnership coordinator for USFS Region 3 is interested in connecting IPBN projects with the Rio Grande Water Fund, a 50-partner, public and private restoration initiative that includes the homelands of 16 Pueblos and the Jicarilla Apache Tribe.



Cultural leaders from the Quinault Indian Nation provided a tour of the controlled burn area of Moses Prairie. © TNC (Mary Huffman)

prairies in need of burning, cultural practitioners indicated that they want to progress further with their cultural revitalization efforts before engaging with the IPBN.

#### Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe — Sand Plain Pines FLN

A new partnership project was funded in the homeland of the Leech Lake



TNC's Water Recovery Specialist and lead forester from the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe look forward to success of the new Sand Plain Pines collaboration in north-central Minnesota. © TNC (Mary Huffman)

Band of Ojibwe, which led to the birth of the new Sand Plain Pines FLN. The Sand Plain Pines project will take place on 4,000 acres of a 40,000-acre area of red pine and spruce pine forests in the headwaters of the Mississippi River. Various silvicultural treatments informed by vegetation monitoring will begin returning plantation pine stands to their natural condition,

as described by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. The Leech Lake Band is particularly interested in enhancing habitat for snowshoe hares. Though not included at this stage, partners in the project anticipate that fire management will become part of future management prescriptions. The Resource Management Department of the Leech Lake Band, the Chippewa National Forest, timber companies, The Nature Conservancy and the Bureau of Indian Affairs are cooperating in the project. Staff members from the Conservancy's Minnesota Chapter have invited FLN and IPBN staff to provide coaching and facilitation assistance for a series of workshops and field trips associated with the project.

#### Quinault Indian Nation

In May, another member of the IPBN leadership team and the IPBN director took part in the Annual Symposium of the Intertribal Timber Council, which was hosted by the Quinault Indian Nation in Ocean Shores, Washington. In part, the purpose was to explore any interest by the Quinault community in participating in the IPBN. After the symposium, two cultural practitioners offered a tour of Moses Prairie, a culturally significant site that received controlled burning a few years ago. While there are five such wet

#### Publications, Presentations and Training

USFS researcher and tribal descendent Frank Lake continued projects that address the juxtaposition of traditional knowledge and Western science. He recently began advocating use of the phrase *traditional knowledge* instead of *traditional ecological knowledge* to affirm the integration of social, spiritual and ecological dimensions of traditional (cultural) fire management.

IPBN leadership team members Bill Tripp and Frank Lake held the session “Moving from Fire Adapted Communities to Fire Dependent Cultures: Traditional Fire Knowledge and Wildland Fire Management” at the National Cohesive Strategy workshop in Reno. Bill Tripp wrote the FAC Net blog post “Integrating Traditional Ecological Knowledge and World Renewal Ceremonies into Fire Adaptation: An Indigenous Stewardship Model” (<https://fireadaptednetwork.org/traditional-ecological-knowledge-world-renewal-ceremonies-fire-adaptation/>).

Frank Lake included the IPBN in the Northwest Forest Plan Science Synthesis, as part of a case study about the Western Klamath Restoration Partnership ([https://www.fs.fed.us/pnw/pubs/pnw\\_gtr966\\_chapter11.pdf](https://www.fs.fed.us/pnw/pubs/pnw_gtr966_chapter11.pdf)).



Participants produced artwork as they discussed building equitable fire partnerships.

## Fire Networks Workshop Session: Building Equitable Fire Partnerships

For this year's annual workshop, IPBN leaders, staff from the Conservancy's Global Diversity, Equity and Inclusion team, and Jana Carp Consulting created the session "Working with Power in the Fire World." Its purpose was to enable indigenous and non-indigenous people to develop equitable partnerships with one another among the four PERFECT fire learning networks (FLN, FAC Net, IPBN and TREX Coaches Network).

For Native American people, the balance of power in fire partnerships is of great importance. During both wildfires and controlled burns, resources embedded in indigenous living culture are affected, as are historical artifacts. Items of living culture include native foods, habitat for regalia species, medicinal plants, ceremonial sites and places where families have ancient stewardship responsibilities.

Today, fires on most land across North America are regulated by federal, state and county governments. For tribal people, sovereign rights to use fire is an important issue. Some fire agencies have rules and practices that enable indigenous peoples to provide input for planning, implementing and evaluating fire management. California's state

fire agency, CAL FIRE, uses a Native American Advisory Council and a leader from the IPBN is participating. On federally managed fires, two avenues for inclusion are used: government-to-government consultation with tribes, and tribal liaison positions on incident management teams. Still, mainstream agencies hold most of the power in those relationships.

In this workshop we explored ways that building equitable partnerships raise the bar for sharing power, making decisions and shaping messages. It requires that everyone involved see fire through multiple ways of knowing. Here is a simple example from Karuk ancestral territory: For millennia, Karuk people burned proactively around their communities and from top to bottom on their mountainsides. Cool fires backed down from ridgetops toward the communities. Until a few years ago, a common firefighting practice was to pull fire away from the community, which in this landscape meant lighting from the bottom to the top. That enabled the fire to gain intensity as it burned upward, causing extensive tree mortality and erosion. In an equitable partnership, who decides which way to light? In this case, tribal liaisons serving on local wildfires and the USFS worked together to curb the practice.

## "Working with Power in the Fire World"

In this workshop session participants answered the question: What does equity of power look like? Concepts offered included:

- Establish a shared way of acting; start with an attitude and a mindset.
- An effective leader sets the tone. Make community relationships the first objective in the fire incident plan.
- Create more equity when you are communicating.
- The community will tell you what it needs, so be ready to listen to understand.
- If you are the firefighting agency, make the request for input authentic. Work to overcome the painful past of not listening.
- Recognize that lots of different powers are at play in communities. Pay attention to who is speaking.
- Empower the next generation to model the power sharing we are seeking. (See the Women in Fire TREX, for an example.)
- Have the courage to speak up about tribal resources. It's not unreasonable to point out what is important; don't go along with the story.
- Indigenous elders need to remind others in the community to tell firefighters if they want firefighters to do something.
- Be life-affirming in communities.
- Dig past the data and share stories.



The Nature Conservancy 

The Indigenous Peoples Burning Network is supported by *Promoting Ecosystem Resilience and Fire Adapted Communities Together* (PERFACT), a cooperative agreement between The Nature Conservancy, USDA Forest Service and agencies of the Department of the Interior. For more information, contact Mary Huffman (mhuffman@tnc.org). *An equal opportunity provider.*