

# Indigenous Peoples Burning Network



IPBN members at the Valles Caldera National Preserve in the homelands of the Tesuque Pueblo. © Autumn Bjugstad/TNC

## By the Numbers July 2023-June 2024

23

TRIBAL COMMUNITIES

10

STATES

23

INDIGENOUS  
LEADERS & ADVISORS

8

WORKSHOPS & EVENTS

90

WORKING GROUP  
PARTICIPANTS

For millennia, Indigenous peoples have been using sophisticated fire practices to care for landscapes and communities across what is now the United States. The Indigenous Peoples Burning Network (IPBN) is a support network among Native American communities that are revitalizing their traditional fire cultures in a contemporary context. The IPBN was founded in 2015 in the combined ancestral territories of the Yurok, Hoopa and Karuk Tribes of Northern California. From this base, the IPBN has expanded to include participants from an additional 20 communities.

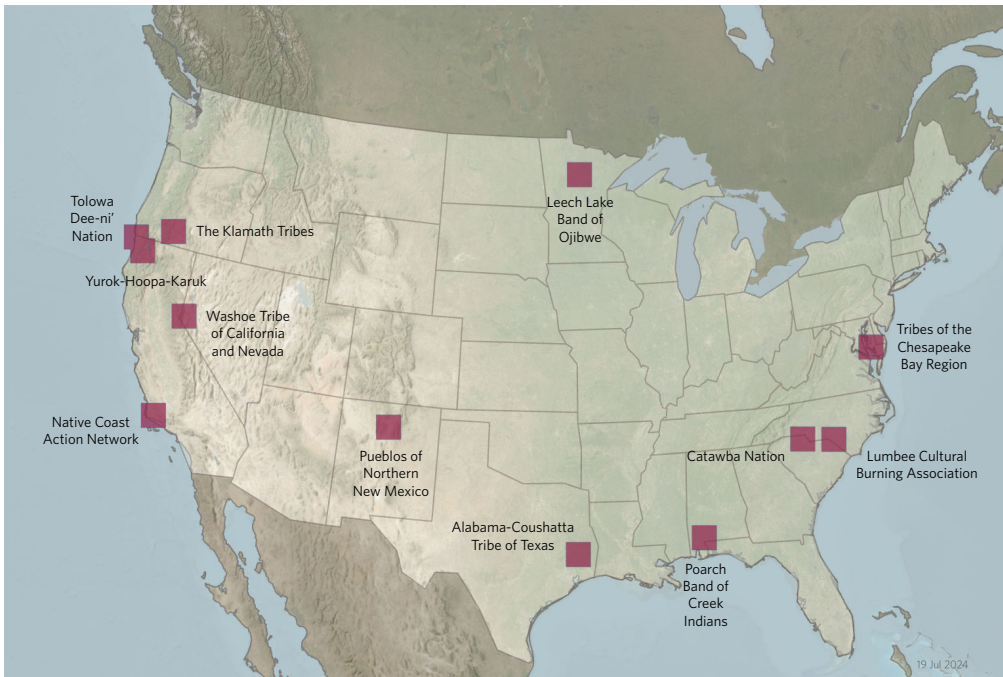
### How We Work

**Honor Self-Determination:** Each participating Native American community has a long-standing fire culture, and although most of these cultures have been interrupted, each of these communities has the right to shape its path to a better fire future. As such, the activities of the IPBN are customized by each community for that community. Sometimes the work is led by a tribal government—like a department of natural resources or fire department—sometimes by an Indigenous-led nonprofit organization, and sometimes by a few community members. No matter the path, the work is focused on locally determined revitalization of traditional fire culture in the context of today’s fire situation.

**Support Culturally Centered Fire:** IPBN members engage in learning exchanges, community- and family-based burning, fire training that supports Indigenous cultural burning, culturally centered fire planning and Indigenous-led research. They connect elders and youth to prepare the next generation of cultural fire practitioners. Members also come together in working groups to explore and address topics of shared interest.

**Reduce Barriers:** The IPBN works to help government agencies embrace Indigenous cultural burning. There is progress. Some agency partners are educating non-Indigenous staff about building equitable fire partnerships; others are examining ways their policies create undue burdens on cultural burning. Where tribes and government agencies are cross-walking prescribed burning regulations with Indigenous Peoples’ rights to cultural burning, a temporary hybrid solution is to do prescribed burning for cultural objectives.

**Focus on Indigenous Fire Cultures:** The IPBN is not designed to train fire practitioners in mainstream fire systems designed for mobile firefighting. While the IPBN honors those crews and the programs that support them, the network’s role is fundamentally different: to sustain permanent, place-based Indigenous fire cultures.



The IPBN in 2024

## The Network in Action

The IPBN supports participants who are straddling two worlds, helping make it possible for them to focus on learning, teaching and practicing cultural burning to meet traditional and contemporary needs. Careful burning for cultural purposes led by Indigenous elders and fire practitioners perpetuates traditions and supports ecological resilience.

### Activities and Working Groups

- > In-person learning exchanges
- > Culturally centered fire planning
- > Community-based strategic planning
- > Youth and elder engagement
- > Cultural burning and prescribed burning for cultural objectives
- > Emerging Cultural Burning Programs Working Group
- > National Scope Working Group
- > Beginners Working Group for non-Indigenous allies

**Growing the Network:** Building genuine partnerships centers on relationships. First steps may include people from one tribe visiting another's homeland. Others engage through Prescribed Fire Training Exchange (TREX) events where cultural connections to fire are integrated into fire training. The IPBN's team of Indigenous advisors guides network growth and adapts the network's structure to welcome new tribal landscapes.



While those in the IPBN work to create policy conditions that better enable Indigenous cultural burning, many also work with prescribed fire following federal agency standards, which allows work with a broader range of partners and access to other opportunities. An Emerging Programs workshop hosted by the Alabama-Coushatta Tribe in Texas included a prescribed burn following those standards (top), while an IPBN member expressed her commitment to traditional fire relationships by lighting part of the burn in a ceremonial manner (middle). IPBN members also exchanged knowledge during a field visit at the workshop (bottom). Photos © James Miller/TNC



### WHO WE ARE

The IPBN is part of a suite of networks and programs— together known as the Fire Networks—connecting people working in wildland fire management and community wildfire resilience, and coordinated by staff from The Nature Conservancy, Watershed Research and Training Center, University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources and USDA Forest Service.

The Fire Networks are supported in part by the Promoting Ecosystem Resilience and Fire Adapted Communities Together (PERFACT) cooperative agreement between The Nature Conservancy, USDA Forest Service and agencies of the Department of the Interior.

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Learn more: [firenetworks.org/IPBN](https://firenetworks.org/IPBN)

### IPBN CONTACTS

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