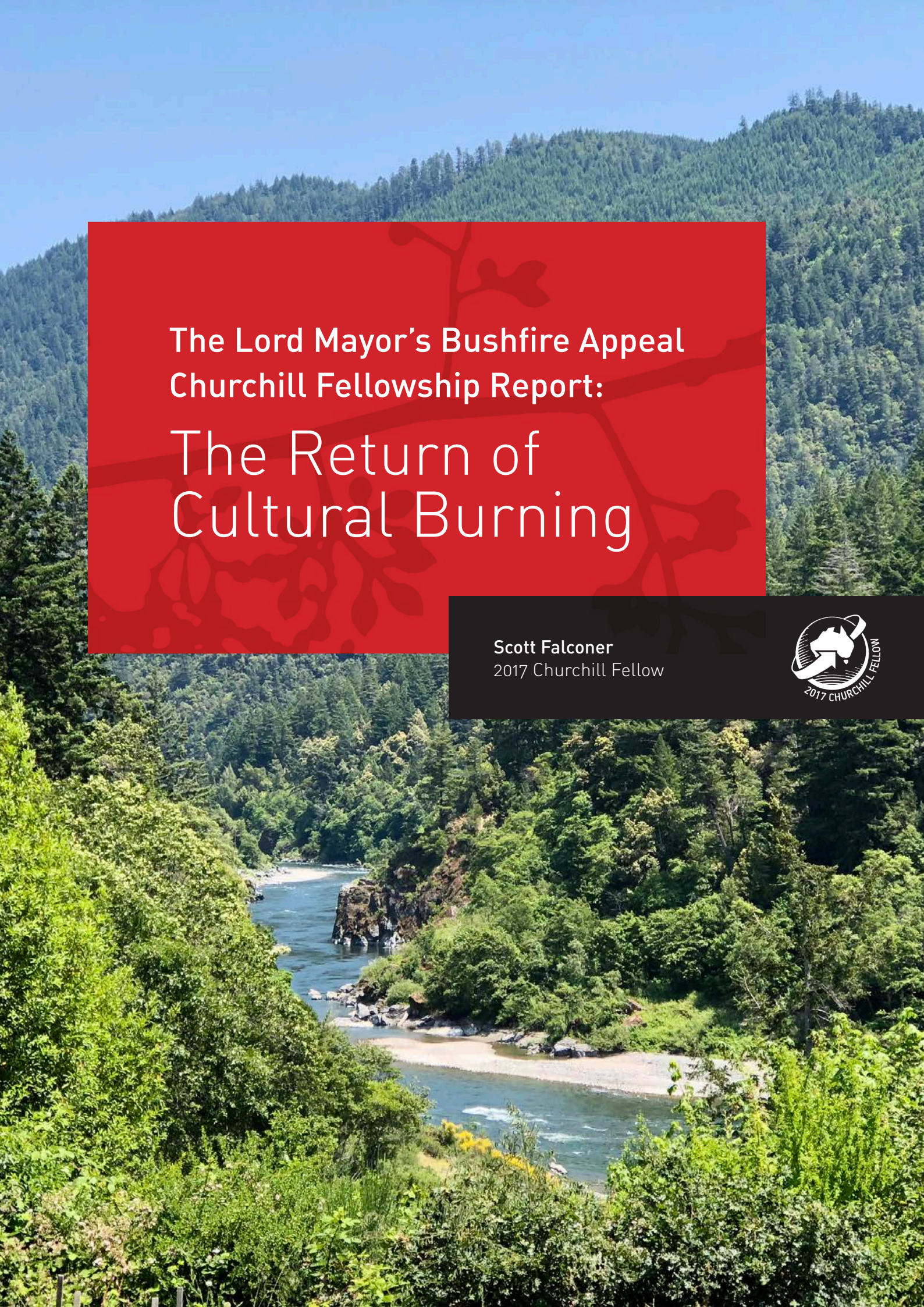

The Lord Mayor's Bushfire Appeal
Churchill Fellowship Report:

The Return of Cultural Burning

Scott Falconer
2017 Churchill Fellow

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THE WINSTON CHURCHILL MEMORIAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA

Report by Scott Falconer 2017 Churchill Fellow

Project Description:

The Lord Mayor's Bushfire Appeal Churchill Fellowship to create close partnerships with and employment for Traditional Owners in fire and land management.

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Signed: 

Dated: 18 January 2019

Acknowledgement

I open this report acknowledging that it has been composed on Dja Dja Wurrung Country.

I pay my respects to Dja Dja Wurrung Elders, past, present and emerging.

This report is a record of a study trip I took to North America, accompanied by two colleagues. I thank the many First Nations communities and community leaders in the United States and Canada who welcomed us to their Country as I undertook this fellowship. I am grateful for not only the warmth but also the honesty of their welcome to their lands and, in many instances, to their homes.

In ways not possible to convey in the text that follows, I must clearly state at the outset that whilst this is the record of a journey of learning undertaken through the United States and Canada, it is a story that begins on, and returns to, Dja Dja Wurrung Country.

I underline my thanks to the Dja Dja Wurrung community, a number of whom are my colleagues here at the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP), for the great trust they have placed in me. I hope I have shown myself worthy of that trust in the report that follows. Dja Dja Wurrung Elders will, rightfully, be the judges of that.

I wish to acknowledge all the individuals and the organisations that met with us on our journey and shared their knowledge and wisdom.

I would also like to sincerely thank DELWP for their support, for allowing me the time to undertake this research and I express my gratitude to the Churchill Trust, and broader Churchill community, for their faith in this work and for providing this unique opportunity.

Lastly, I wish to thank the Lord Mayor of Sydney for the generous support and sponsorship of this Churchill Fellowship from the funds donated to the Lord Mayor's Bushfire Appeal 1994.

Opening statement: Trent Nelson

Trent Nelson, Scott Falconer and Mick Bourke on Dja Dja Wurrung Country

Welcome to this report. I hope that, like me, you will find it shares important insights into the journey we need to keep taking together as we return Djandak Wi (Cultural Burning) to its rightful place here on Country.

Reading this report meant a lot to me. Not only because I was able to, in some sense, go again on the trip I took with Scott — I travelled with him at the start of his journey, as he took his first steps leading to its creation. It is an important document.

I wonder where you are reading this now? Are you in Bendigo? At home online? Or, are you in an office block somewhere, perhaps in central Melbourne?

Wherever you are, before you read any further, I will ask you to pause in a moment and put this document down. I know, not many reports open with the words "stop reading." But, I want you to honestly ask yourself: "am I in the right place to read this story?"

You're likely wondering, "how will I know?" The answer is wherever you are, and no matter how busy your day is, you'll be able to take a moment to stop, look away from this page and truly acknowledge Country and Elders.

It's time to do that now.

If you haven't taken that moment, I ask that you not read any further. Please put this report down and come back when you are truly ready.

I record these thoughts for you from here on Dja Dja Wurrung Country, my Country. I acknowledge my Elders, both past and present, and I acknowledge Country.

For those of you reading this who are not Traditional Owners, we've waited a long time, too long, for you to hear us, to acknowledge Country. In the case of the return of Djandak Wi here to Dja Dja Wurrung Country we waited for around 170 years, until 2017, when we joined together with Forest Fire Management Victoria to relight that fire.

As we prepared for that first relighting of Djandak Wi (just north of what is now called Maryborough) we stood with our Elders. One of them, Aunty Fay Carter, told us she could feel our Ancestor spirits coming out from the bush around us to greet us – they'd been waiting, too.

Without fire, water, culture — they are all knitted together — we're not healthy, and neither is Country. It's as simple as that.

In respect to this report, it is important for me to pause now, too, and to clearly acknowledge the people, First Nations Peoples like my own, on whose Country Scott and I travelled in North America so as to undertake the research that appears in it.

It was my first time overseas and, in a physical sense, I had a very different feeling of landscape, of Country, in being there with the North America Mob. I acknowledge that I had feelings of vulnerability. I'm sure Scott won't mind me saying that I could sense the same in him, too.

This was new territory for both of us, new in many ways. Yet I also felt deep similarities with my brothers and sisters there. It was great to connect with them and share true feelings, including of vulnerability, of sadness. It's a reality that some, not all, but some, of the things that bind us most closely are the things we share in loss. We share that, and we also move forward proudly and positively, bonded together by our connection to our own Country.

By the end of my first week over there, I was beginning to sense a meaningful connection, a connection which circled back here to my own Country when my brother, Tim Kanoa, joined Scott and I for two days before I left to head home.

At Tim's arrival, I must admit I wished I was staying on longer. As an Aboriginal man that time separated from my Mob, combined with Tim's arrival, brought my mind and heart back to the old people, to the feeling of Country and the many ways they were connected to and cared for it, including through the careful use of Djandak Wi.

Video: Djandak Wi: Traditional Burning Returns
https://youtu.be/akeB6uVKwWE

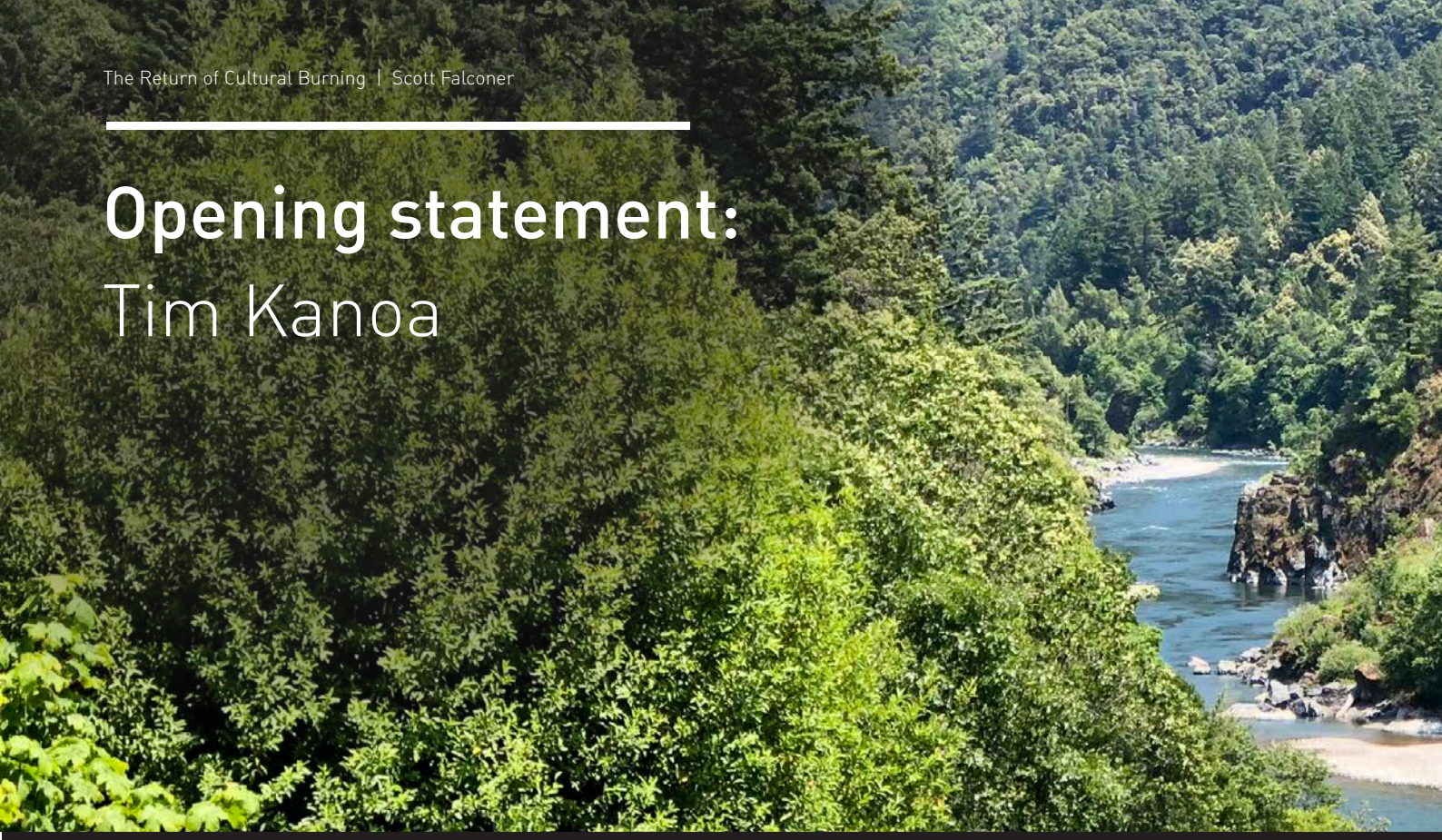
The unrelenting work we've done as a community here on Dja Dja Wurrung Country and the body of work this report records can and should be replicated across all levels of government and land management.

We must build on and expand this thinking and practice across other Tribes and Clans, too. Doing so will ensure we set in stone again what our Elders had been doing so successfully over so many thousands of years.

For now, I'll leave you to read this document. As for me? I'd love to go back to North America one day again, to revisit those lands and meet with those great people once more.

In the meantime, somehow via this report, when I read it, I feel moments when I can already do that, as I recall conversations, meetings and important ideas shared over there. I hope you will be able to experience that feeling in some way too yourself.

Trent Nelson
Chair, Dja Dja Wurrung



Opening statement: Tim Kanoa

As is our custom, and for the purposes of this forward, I acknowledge the Traditional Owners across the State of Victoria and pay my respects to their Elders both past and present, in particular to those that have fought hard to maintain a strong cultural connection to your land and waters.

To the Washoe Tribe of Navada and California, the Yurok and Karuk Tribes of Northern California on the Klamath River and the Confederate Tribes of Grand Ron, I honour you, and thank you for your acceptance of me to your tribal and spiritual lands and waters. Your willingness to share your experience, your profound cultural knowledge and wisdom, will forever be etched in my mind and heart.

As Director, Aboriginal Inclusion Support for the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP), the purpose of my participation on this journey was to gain knowledge and understanding of international approaches to strengthening partnerships and relationships between First Nations peoples and government agencies and, to identify practices that may support DELWP to strengthen its approach to achieving positive outcomes for Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians. As a Kerrupmara man of the Gunditjmara Nation, I was particularly interested in a cultural exchange with First Peoples in what is now called Northern America.

While initially we were strangers to one another, separated geographically by the Pacific Ocean, it did not take long to feel a deep sense of connection to a people with a similar cultural existence since time immemorial, and similar adverse experiences — experiences that could have pushed us away from our cultural existence and practice, but have not.

While it was not verbally communicated nor explained, culture was a centralised framework around which we conversed, interacted and engaged with one another.

Once settled, time morphed into a paradigm allowing for purposeful storytelling and deep listening. With the Klamath River and surrounding forests as our backdrop we were challenged, our thinking expanded. This essential exchange has and will assist in our endeavours to achieve positive outcomes for Victoria's Traditional Owners and Aboriginal community.

Additionally, we were fortunate to criss-cross five states to visit academic institutions, key government and non-government agencies so as to meet with academics and agency representatives to discuss approaches to meaningfully engage and genuinely partner with First Peoples.

Primarily, fire, natural resources, land and heritage management were the drivers for partnership and engagement between first peoples and agencies. Interestingly, as far as I could determine, partnerships and engagement with tribes was not a policy position for agencies. Where strong partnerships and engagement existed, it was achieved by the advocacy from a tribe,

champions within agencies or, in some cases, both.

Our journey to North America to learn from First Peoples, academics and agency representatives was charged by the magical and undeniable beauty of the natural world around us. Yellowstone National Park, Rocky Mountains, California Redwoods and the Klamath and Yellow Stone Rivers were truly remarkable landscapes, landscapes critically important to many first peoples.

I wish to thank Scott Falconer, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Forest Fire Management Victoria, for inviting me to join him on his Churchill Fellowship to learn more about cultural fire. I started as a colleague of Scott's on this trip, however, we returned friends, united under a common cause: to achieve positive outcomes for Victoria's Tractional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians.

To my senior leadership, John Bradley, Secretary and Lee Miezis, Deputy Secretary, and Vivienne Clare, Executive Director, DELWP, thank you for supporting my participation on this journey.

To Trent Nelson, Chair Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation, it was deadly to share in this experience with you, brother, especially to participate with you in a cultural exchange at the Fire Continuum Conference.

To Dr Mary Huffman, Nature Conversancy, Professor Kari Norgaard, Oregon State University, John Cataldo, National Parks Service, Courtney Kratz, Nevada Division of Forestry, and Representatives of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, thank you for your willingness to meet with us and share your knowledge and insights.

Finally to all the brothers and sisters we met, Margo Robbins, Elizabeth Azzuz, Tommy Wilson (Yurok Tribe), Dr Frank Lake (Kuruk Tribe), Chuk-Chuk (Karuk Tribe), Darryl Cruze (Washoe Tribe), Dr Amy Christianson (Cree-Metis, Treaty Six), we are indebted to you for your teachings on your ancient ways and for allowing us into the "centre of your universe." We will take heed of your teachings and retain our commitment and drive back here in our ancient land.

The following report, informed by all the wonderful sharing and listening I've described above and the work already undertaken here — including Aboriginal employment— reveals to us a path of change; a path to a different way of listening, seeing, understanding and, most critically, of doing. The path takes us to a handing back of rightful authority to Traditional Owners to culturally burn.

I conclude by again acknowledging Elders, for keeping the knowledge of culture and its practice always burning within us.

Wuwurrk

Tim Kanoa
Director, Aboriginal Inclusion Support - DELWP

Introduction:

Scott Falconer, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Forest Fire Management Victoria

Fire and risk reduction

Land and fire management is a complex endeavour and has been fraught with controversy since the arrival of Europeans on this continent.

Even today, when the vast majority of Australians live in cities, largely disconnected from nature and any firsthand experience of land management, it is more than ever a subject that divides communities between pro-burning or no-burning ideologies and has become increasingly politicised by special interest groups. A polarisation that to some degree is understandable given that it is, quite literally, a matter of life or death.

Prescribed burning or planned burning as it is referred to here in Australia, is the primary tool used by land and fire management agencies, including my own, to reduce fuel loads with the aim of preventing catastrophic bushfires that are becoming ever more frequent in fire prone regions here in Australia and indeed around the world in a time of marked climate change.

In recent years there have been a number of seminal books and other publications shedding well overdue light on the profound impact Aboriginal peoples in Australia (and North America) have had in shaping and managing landscapes through the application of what many of their Elders and emerging young leaders term "right fire."

While Cultural Burning is a critical land management tool and profound expression of ongoing connection to place, it was — at least through European eyes — lost to sight. However, the reality is that Traditional Owners continue to express an unbroken connection to their Country and share stories of their tradition of deploying fire in myriad ways for a multitude of outcomes.

In 2017 DELWP's Forest Fire Management Victoria (FFMVic) walked together with the Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation to conduct the first Cultural Burns (as part of Victoria's wider risk reduction planned burning regime) on Dja Dja Wurrung Country in many generations. This was a reignition of what had been many thousands of years of careful land management and spiritual practise.

The Traditional Owner application of fire was complex, systematic and purposeful and became a powerful 'fire stick' technology, enshrined in ceremonial practice deeply connecting them to the land and all living things around them, in a kincentric ecological worldview.

In 2013 the Dja Dja Wurrung people of central Victoria entered into an historic native title settlement agreement with the State of Victoria. From this agreement, a truly collaborative approach commenced between the Dja Dja Wurrung peoples and the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning's (DELWP) Forest Fire Management Victoria (FFMVic).

This approach, built on mutual respect and trust, has seen the reintroduction — after an absence of some 170 years — of Traditional Burning, also known as Cultural Burning, to the lands of the Dja Dja Wurrung people.

The aim of this effort was to return burning practise in a way that ensured Cultural Burning, or Djandak Wi as it is referred to in the language of the Dja Dja Wurrung, was led by Dja Dja Wurrung people, actively supported by agency staff and fully integrated into the State's existing planned burning risk reduction program.

It must be underlined that a mutual strategic commitment has been initiated - with more work to do - to ensure Aboriginal people across the State of Victoria are employed in agency and departmental roles as part of this initiative.

To be genuine and have lasting outcomes, this effort will have to move beyond narrow concepts of 'community engagement' as a linear series of touch points (as worthy as that ambition may be in some other operating contexts) to a genuine place of ongoing collegiality, daily partnership and knowledge sharing.

A journey to North America

Recognising there were efforts to reintroduce Cultural Burning in other jurisdictions, including the United States of America and Canada and wanting to learn from others, exchange knowledge and build ongoing networks between agencies and Traditional Owners, I applied for and was awarded The Lord Mayor's Bushfire Appeal Churchill Fellowship.

I was honoured to travel with two Australian Aboriginal men: Trent Nelson, a Dja Dja Wurrung / Yorta Yorta man, Chairman of the Dja Dja Wurrung Aboriginal Corporation, and Tim Kanoa, a Kerrupmara man of the Gunditjmara Nation. Tim is also Director, Aboriginal Inclusion Support, at Victoria's Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP).

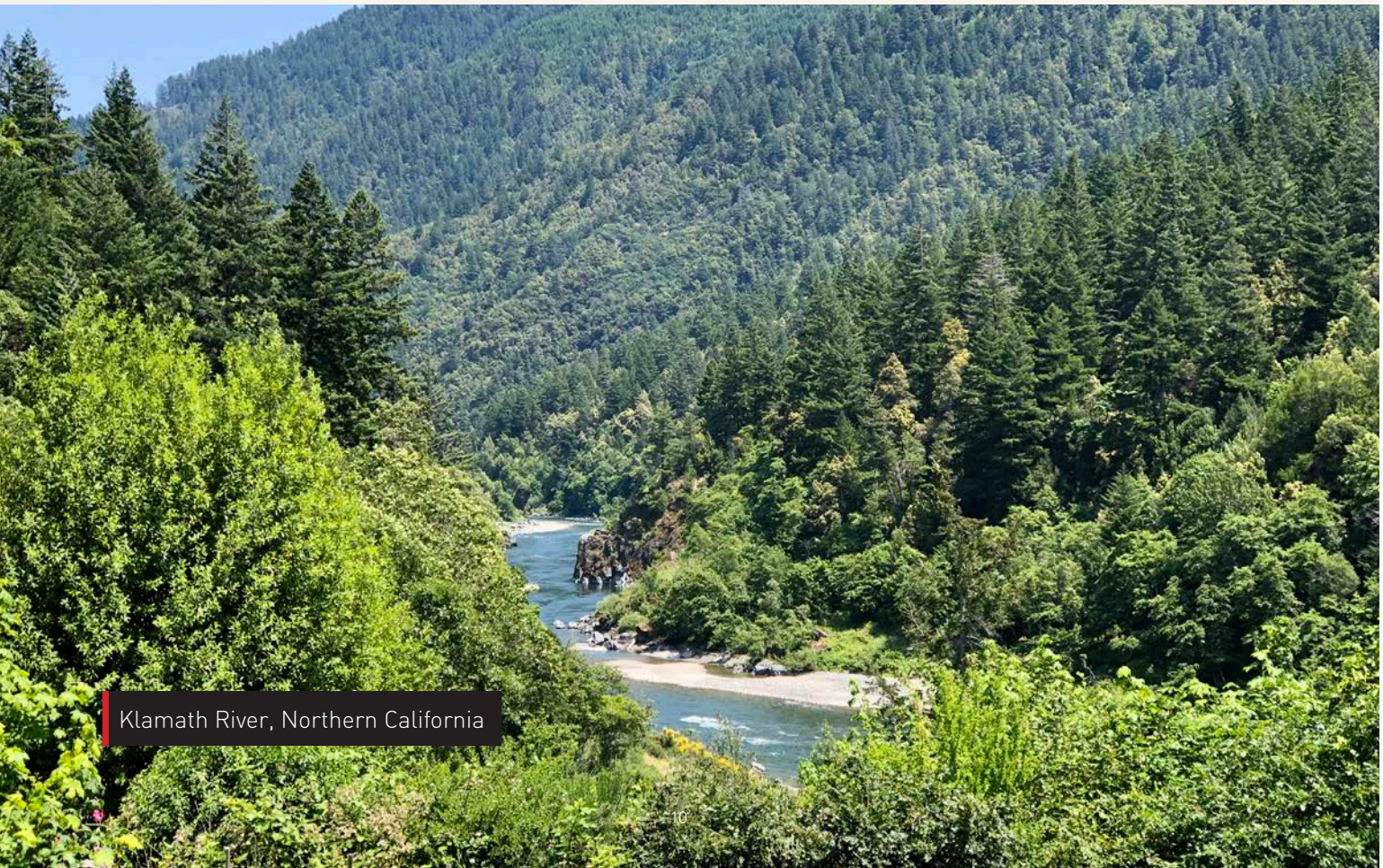
I express my sincere thanks to them both for joining me on this journey; Trent for the first part and Tim for the second. I am grateful for the generosity and understanding they have shown me as I've taken, sometimes awkward and stumbling, steps onto their Country and into the territory of foundational practises of their communities.

I also thank them both for having reviewed and provided their feedback on this report, and for the reflections they have recorded in opening this report.

Together, Trent, Tim and I explored the iconic landscapes of North America with truly generous people. In the act of doing so on a number of occasions we discovered surprising similarities across the Pacific; Cultural Fire and land management practises and some remarkable parallels in creation stories and the 'getting of fire' by the people. Unsurprisingly, we also heard of the shared devastating experiences and the lasting impacts of colonisation.

We learnt that in colonisation's devastating wake there is no single model that will bring back Cultural Burning and associated self-determination.

Most importantly, despite this legacy, we discovered there is a genuine desire by Traditional Owners to work in partnership with agencies in an open-hearted approach, an approach that will provide true caring for Country and healing and opportunity for Aboriginal people.



Klamath River, Northern California

CONTENTS

Forest meets coast in Northern California

Executive Summary

Contact Details

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Project Description

Explore and better understand how to engage and establish strong relationships and long-term partnerships with Traditional Owners, specifically relating to fire, land management activities and directly related employment, with a particular interest in how Traditional Owners are working with agencies to reintroduce Cultural Burning to Country.

Highlights

- Travelling and sharing the journey with Trent Nelson and Tim Kanoa, Aboriginal men from Australia.
- Visit to Big Cypress Reservation and the Seminole Tribe of Florida.
- Tour of Yellowstone National Park and discussions with Fire Manager, John Cataldo.
- Attending Missoula Fire Continuum Conference and meeting the many passionate people committed to bringing fire back to their Country; including seeing Trent Nelson and Dr Amy Christianson present together as Aboriginal people from Australia and Canada respectively.
- Meeting with Dr Mary Huffman, Director Indigenous Peoples Burning Network, and discussing what it means to support Traditional Owners as a non-Aboriginal person.
- Visiting 'the centre of the world' at Weitchpec, California with Margo Robbins and Dr Frank Lake and other members of the Yurok and Karuk Tribes to better understand the connection between the 'biophysical and metaphysical' worlds.
- Tour of Fort McMurray and Kamloops, Canada, with Dr Amy Christianson, Canadian Forest Service and meetings with various Traditional Owners and the First Nations Emergency Services Society.

Major Lessons and Recommendations

1. The legal rights and connection of Aboriginal people to Country must be recognised and, where possible, formal agreements established between government agencies and representative Aboriginal parties to guide and hold parties accountable.

2. Trust must be actively established between parties, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal. This must go beyond the normal understanding of external relationship management and will require new methods of engagement to create enduring personal and professional relationships.

3. Agency employees will need to go beyond their official roles to build ongoing relationships and build the requisite trust to sustain healthy ongoing partnerships and collaborations.

4. Develop guidance to ensure agencies recognise Aboriginal Sovereign Jurisdiction regarding Traditional Ecological Knowledge, including protection and management of Cultural Fire Knowledge.

5. Fire awareness and basic fire training should include integrated elements of fire management from western science perspectives and Traditional Ecological Knowledge perspectives.

6. Prioritisation needs to be given to creation of designated Aboriginal positions, and other employment pathways, to assist implementing Cultural Burning across Victoria and other jurisdictions.

7. Develop a knowledge repository and knowledge network to allow sharing of information across jurisdictions regarding Cultural Burning and related issues.

8. Develop flexibility in the existing fire regulatory framework to allow greater participation of Elders and family groups in Cultural Burning.

9. Support participation in interstate and international networks and exchanges that promote knowledge sharing and lessons learned about the reintroduction of Cultural Burning.

10. Support Traditional Owners to build a science based research program than enables them to realise their aspirations in cultural fire management and the custodianship of Country.

Dissemination and Implementation - Impact

Social Media:
Highlights of my fellowship were shared via social media on Twitter @ACFO_LoddonMall and Facebook @ scottfalconerchurchillfellowship. This helped promote the study tour with fire, emergency management and land management agencies and key Aboriginal communities and organisations in Australia, including the Federation of Vic Traditional Owner Corporations @FVTOC, and abroad.

Other Media:
I have participated in several radio interviews and been the subject of print articles in regional Victoria, prior to leaving for my fellowship trip that promoted the Churchill Fellowship program and my fellowship topic.

A communication plan has been developed for the launch of my report to help maximise further media opportunities.

General Engagement:
I have developed an educational outreach program that includes engagement activities to share my learnings and findings with key interest groups and the public.

To date I have presented to the Australian Red Cross in Melbourne, a contingent of USA and Canadian Fire and Forestry study group at the Victorian Emergency Management Institute in Macedon and given a lecture and tutorial at the University of Melbourne.

I am participating in a community-led one day Community Search Conference, exploring the possibilities and challenges of reviving and applying Cultural Burning practices with the Muckleford Forest Friends Group. Additional presentation requests are anticipated.

I will contribute to academic journal articles and contribute to the Australian Journal of Emergency Management. I will also participate in conference presentations including in a panel at the Native American Indigenous Studies Association at the University of Waikato in New Zealand in June 2019.

Key Words

Traditional Burning, Cultural Burning, Prescribed Fire, Self Determination, Bushfire.

Since returning from my travels I have been fortunate to be invited to lead a project associated with Safer Together, the Victorian Government's program to reduce bushfire risk on all land tenures — public and private — across Victoria.

In essence, Safer Together focuses on how effective our actions are in reducing bushfire risk, not simply the amount of activity we undertake — a philosophy that saw us move from a hectare target for planned burns to a risk reduction burning target for bushfire management.

As part of the broader program I have led a project to support Cultural Burning. Through this project several of the recommendations made in this report have already been adopted and others are being considered:

- A knowledge network and educational outreach program (for which funding has been secured) is now being created.
- The first dedicated Traditional Owner fire management officer has been appointed in DELWP in the Loddon Mallee as an ongoing role. Designed to encourage closer relationships with Traditional Owners and DELWP/ Country Fire Authority (CFA) and to support their efforts to undertake Cultural Burning.
- Six additional Traditional Owner positions of the same type have been proposed to work across Victoria.
- Institutional frameworks are being developed that support Cultural Burning and the Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework now includes a specific outcome for DELWP to report on the number of Cultural Burns conducted.

Training is being funded and provided by DELWP specifically for Traditional Owners in General Fire Fighting and Basic Wildfire Awareness.

Coquihalla River, Cascade Mountains, British Columbia

About this report

In keeping with the partnership nature of the work being undertaken between the Dja Dja Wurrung and DELWP to return Cultural Burning to Country, this report has been written to reflect the shared experience between Trent Nelson, Tim Kanoa and myself. I have attempted to accurately record, to the best of my ability, our time together.

As previously recorded, Trent and Tim have kindly reviewed this report and taken time to provide reflective comments prior to its submission. However, it must be clearly stated that should it contain any inaccuracies or a moment in which a Traditional Owner, whether in the United States, Canada or here in Australia, expresses concerns regarding either content or tone, I wish to unequivocally state my personal responsibility for that fault.

This report has deliberately been composed in an informal, conversational way, reflecting the style of engagement that is best suited to building meaningful relationships and ultimately trust between representatives of institutions and Aboriginal people.

The report follows the sequence of our travels and experiences along the way and is broken down in sections associated with major places and sites visited. It draws on the many informal conversations we had with people from tribal groups and agencies so as to highlight some major lessons and conclusions. These can be viewed in the Executive Summary.

Where individuals have been quoted, every endeavour has been made to represent them accurately and respectfully, and in several instances, information has been omitted to ensure, to the greatest degree possible, that nothing has been included that may be culturally sensitive.

First Nations artwork outside Vancouver

Context

> “How is it that our minds are not satisfied? What means this whispering in our hearts?”
>
> **Richard Windeyer, 1842**

The title of Australian historian Henry Reynolds’ book, This Whispering In Our Hearts, is taken from a public lecture delivered by Richard Windeyer, a prominent Sydney barrister, as part of a five night debate that took place in September 1842.

Henry Reynolds described the speech, called ‘On the rights of the Aborigines of Australia’, as “perhaps the most sustained and intellectually powerful attack on Aboriginal rights ever mounted in early colonial Australia.”

And yet, after denouncing traditional Aboriginal society and insisting that they had no claim on the land, Windeyer admitted at the end of the speech: “How is it that our minds are not satisfied? What means this whispering in our hearts?”

One of the unforeseen consequences I have experienced as a non-Aboriginal working closely with Traditional Owners in land management, and specifically in trying to bring back Cultural Burning in partnership, is the powerful realisation and deeper understanding of the profound impacts of colonisation on the landscape and its peoples. This has been the case for me both in working with the Dja Dja Wurrung here in Victoria, and whilst travelling abroad in North America.

It has been an experience that had created a dichotomy between feeling at once positive and uplifted about the relationships that are being created and the social and environmental benefits of the work being undertaken, while at the same time there is a deep sadness, a quiet yet persistent ‘whispering in our hearts’, an undeniable knowing that great injustices have been committed that are still not yet fully acknowledged by present day society.

I do not raise the matter of historic injustice to be overtly political or create controversy; this reality needs to be honestly and clearly acknowledged, as these issues are impossible to ignore in Australia and it would be morally wrong to do so.

This starting point is also necessary in showing the respect due to Aboriginal Elders and community; to considering aspirations and questions of meaningful partnerships and land management, with a direct line from there to Cultural Burning and the, in historical terms, relatively recent departmental risk reduction burning program.

Powerful stories of historic injustice were equally apparent during my Churchill journey to the United States of America and Canada. The stories of how the land once was, the cultures that created and nurtured it, and the social and economic challenges that many tribal groups continue to face due to colonisation is inescapable.

Understanding the uncomfortable truths of history has at times been both challenging and enlightening, no less so for having my own colonial forebears.

Getting to know and work with Aboriginal people, many of whom I work with daily and consider friends, has been informative and enriching, particularly for someone raised as I was in an era where we just weren’t taught this history. I have seen firsthand the resilience, generosity of spirit and wisdom that offers great lessons for contemporary land and fire management and more broadly for our society.

PROGRAM

USA

Plantation, Florida

- Visit to Seminole Reservation
- AH-TAH-THI-KI Museum Big Cypress National Preserve (Everglades) Ochepee, FL
- Meeting with Lucas Minton, Regional Fire Management Officer, and his team
- Grant Steelman, Forest/Fire Management Officer with Seminole Tribe
- James (Chris) Redman, Superintendent BIA
- Visit to Avian Fire Complex
- Everglades Fire Tour on Swamp Buggy
- Discussion with Joe Frank (Elder), Seminole Tribe
- Morning visit to Seminole HQ, Hollywood FL, meeting with Lucas Minton and Chris Redman

Missoula, Montana

- Fire Continuum Conference, various presentations and meetings held over four days
- Monique Wynecoop, Katie Sauerbrey and Craig Bienz
- Joseph O'Brien, Forest Service
- Tara McGee, Professor, Human Geography, University of Alberta
- Val Charlton, Managing Director, Landworks, South Africa
- Confederated Salish – Kootenai Tribal Fire and Forestry Field Trip
- Monique Wynecoop Presentation

Gardiner, Montana (Yellowstone National Park)

- Meeting with John Cataldo, Fire and Aviation Management Officer
- Meeting with Yellowstone Forever, Robert Petty, Senior Director of Education
- Tour of Yellowstone National Park

Boulder, Colorado

- Meeting with Dr Mary Huffman, Indigenous Burning Network (Director, Indigenous People's Burning Network and Fire Science at The Nature Conservancy)
- Tour of Rockies with Dr Mary Huffman and Sue Riffe including Lefthand Fire Rescue, fire and flood impacted communities and Rocky Mountain NP, CO

Carson City (Nevada), Lake Tahoe. Gardenerville

- Meeting and site tour with Courtney Kratz, Nevada District Forestry
- Meeting Darrell Cruz, Director of the Washoe Tribal Historic Preservation Office, Gardenerville, NV
- Meeting with Jeff Haas, Lake Tahoe, Nevada State Forester
- Meeting with Anna Higgins, Forester, NDF, western region. Site visit of Galena Creek Regional Park
- Meeting with Heather D Giger, Stewardship Legacy Program Coordinator, Nevada Division of Forestry

Weitchpec, California

- Meet with Thomas Wilson, Karuk Tribe, co-founder of the Cultural Fire Management Council
- Margo Robbins, Cultural Fire Management Council, Yurok Tribe
- Meeting with Elizabeth Azzuzz, Yurok Fire Learning Network. Site visit to recent burn adjacent to Klamath River
- Dinner with Thomas and Morneen Wilson and Margo Robbins
- Dr Frank K. Lake, Research Ecologist with the Orleans Forest Service Karuk Tribal Member. Various site visits around Orleans
- Rob McConnell Jnr, Fire Officer, Forest Service
- Meeting with Bob McConnell Snr (Elder) Karuk Tribe. Visited ceremonial site near old village
- Dinner with Margo Robbins, Rick and SunSun
- Breakfast meeting and site tours with David A. Medford, Assistant Fire Management Officer, Department of Natural Resources, Karuk Tribe
- Site Tours with Leaf Hillman Jnr (Chuk Chuk), Karuk Tribe

Eugene, Oregon

- Kari Marie Norgaard, Associate Professor of Sociology and Environmental Studies. University of Oregon, Eugene

Grand Ronde (Oregon)

- Meeting with Darron Williams, Fire Management Officer, Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA)
- Colby Drake, Silviculture and Fire Program Manager, The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde
- Kim L. Kelly, Fire Ecologist, BIA
- Jeffrey Moyer, Fire Prevention and WUI Specialist, BIA
- Michelle Porter, Oregon Public Broadcasting, Media Officer
- The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde Office
- Tour of Fire Department

Canada

Fort McMurray, Alberta

- Dinner meeting with Amy Christianson, Fire Social Scientist, Terri Lin Fedorus, Community Research Lead IHRD, and Kyrie Ransom, Tribal Member of Mohawk Nation (Akwesasne), at Fort McMurray
- Tour of fire impacted Fort McMurray and Metís Tribal Headquarters

Kamloops, British Columbia

- Meeting with First Nations Emergency Services Society, Brendan Mercer, Forest Fuel Management Liaison, Jeff Eustache, Manager, Darrick Andrew, Management Liaison, and Robert Mitchell, Management Specialist
- Shackan Indian Band Fire Dept (Lillooet BC) meeting at Ranger Seymour Memorial Hall
- Dinner with Thomas Blank, Assistant Manager, Security Emergency Management and Maintenance
- Bridge River Indian Band, Lillooet, BC, meeting with Gerald Michael, Xwisten Tribe, Lands and Resources Coordinator
- Meeting with Elder, Uncle Albert

Bendigo Office via Skype to Clovis (California)

- Meeting via Skype, Dinky Collaborative, Clovis
- Dr Jared Dahl Aldern, Historical Ecology and Eco/Cultural Restoration
- Dirk Charley, Tribal Secretary, Dunlap Band of Mono Indians
- Chip Ashley (land owner)
- Stephan Byrd

A journey

I would like to start here with a moment that took place some weeks into my trip. Tim Kanoa and I are walking up a steep hill, the vegetation around is thick and we have been warned not to touch the Poison Oak.

We had not been walking here on the land of the Karuk Tribe for long, but I am already puffing hard. We are near Orleans with members of the Karuk Tribe who have agreed to take us to a 'special place' to their People

As we walk upwards, Chuk-Chuk, a Karuk man we have just met, asked me what my role was in returning Cultural Burning and working with the Dja Dja Wurrung in doing so. On some occasions I feel I am on known ground as I respond to this question, and can do so with practised confidence and a degree of clarity. This was not one of those times. There was something about the direct, unadulterated nature of Chuk-Chuk's question, and the place we were walking.

After I briefly explained, Chuk-Chuk without blinking, said, "Tim, is Scott telling the truth?" Thankfully, Tim gave the thumbs up and the ice was broken. After that, information was freely given, cultural stories told and at the end of the day I got a man hug. (Can't explain how meaningful that feels when you are the only non-Native (NN) as they say in America.)

Prior to departing, Trent, Tim and I talked about how we would engage with tribal members and others on our journey. In keeping with the way we had engaged with each other working together in Australia, we agreed that the best approach was an informal, friendly and patient manner, emphasising building proper relationships, as people are meant to do, with a communication style in keeping with 'having a meaningful yarn' or, as I recently heard Bruce Pascoe say, "building relationships over a pot of tea."

It's the style that suits working with Traditional Owners, and most people I suspect, as suggested by them, and I think it was very successful in breaking down barriers and building genuine trust and respect.

I was consistently amazed at how tribal members were willing to share their knowledge, once the aforementioned were established, even after a very short time of meeting.

As a non-Indigenous man I found myself, at times, feeling mildly uncomfortable. Unexpectedly out of my comfort zone, no rank or hierarchy or all the trappings that go with a position of authority. You could say that at times I was the 'other'. This is something I have experienced during our work here in Bendigo, particularly when meeting Aboriginal communities, so it's not a completely foreign feeling to me but one that I think worth highlighting to others that wish to forge meaningful relationships with Traditional Owners. It's a healthy place to be, a place from which new thinking and change can be driven.

> There is something in this work that requires an adjustment in ego, a willingness to shed a skin, to open oneself to vulnerability.

Last but not least, and I will elaborate on this in my narrative, but there is also a requirement to 'just get out of the way,' and let Aboriginal people claim the space as theirs. Not always a natural response for staff who have invested their entire professional life in becoming a 'fire expert'. Regarding Cultural Burning, we non-Natives just can't be the experts, not ever. To do so would literally be another act of colonisation, another broken promise and a breach of trust.

UNITED STATES

Plantation, Florida

The first official leg of the tour and associated meetings occurred in Florida with the US Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), meeting with local fire management teams on the Seminole Indian Reservation at Big Cypress National Preserve in the Everglades.

Trent Nelson and I spoke with a diverse range of staff in fire and land management to get a better understanding of the overall function of the BIA and their important role in supporting Traditional Owners in land and fire management. One thing quickly became apparent: all agreed that Cultural Burning is vital to reinstate healthy fire regimes to the land, providing jobs for Traditional Owners and allowing access to manage Country.

Touring Seminole Indian Reservation

Over the course of three days, we were hosted by Lucas Minton, Regional Fire Management Officer with the Eastern Regional Office, who provided an overview of how the BIA, Branch of Wildland Fire, assists Tribes to manage land and fire with ecological and cultural objectives, using management techniques that take applied science and traditional ecological knowledge into consideration.

The BIA and the Seminole Tribe of Florida work together on a fire program, in a collaboration that allows the BIA to manage trust lands on behalf of the Tribe. To understand the relationships various Tribes have with the BIA and how this impacts access to services and resources, it is necessary to understand the role of the BIA and be aware of the type of governance arrangements that are in place and the options Tribes have in relation to agreements they may enter into with the BIA.

Indians Affairs is the oldest bureau of the United States Department of the Interior, established in 1824.

The BIA mission is to: "...enhance the quality of life, to promote economic opportunity, and to carry out the responsibility to protect and improve the trust assets of the American Indians, Indian Tribes, and Alaskan Natives."

The BIA carries out its mission to serve 567 federally recognised Tribes plus several hundred 'unrecognised' Tribes through 12 Regions and 86 agencies. Its role has changed dramatically over the course of the last 185 years, from a period when the Indian Affairs Office was part of the Department of War. Policies designed to subjugate and assimilate have changed to policies to promote self-governance and self-determination.

It may be a legacy of this history that explains the varied responses that we received from different Tribes across the US in relation to their perception of the BIA; these varied from a trusted partner, to a more cynical view of the department of 'Bossing Indians Around'.

The Office of Trust Services executes Indian Affairs trust responsibilities to Indian Tribes and individuals and oversees all headquarter activities associated with management and protection of trust and restricted lands, natural resources, and real estate services. The office provides land related functions to Indian trust owners including acquisition, disposal, right-of-way, leasing and sales, and assists them in the management, development, and protection of trust land and natural resource assets. Administered programs include real estate services; land title and records; probate; natural resources; forestry and wildland fire management; irrigation, power and safety of dams.

It is the Office of Self Governance (OSG) that has responsibility for implementation of the Tribal Self Governance Act of 1994, including development and implementation of regulations, policies and guidance in support of self-governance initiatives. This office negotiates annual funding agreements with eligible Tribes and consortia, coordinates the collection of budget and performance data from self-governance Tribes, and resolves issues that are identified in financial and program audits of self-governance operations. The office works with Tribal governments to protect and support Tribal sovereignty within government-to-government partnerships, and to advocate for the transfer of Federal resources to Tribal governments in accordance with Tribal self-governance statutes and policies.

Self-governing Tribes represent nearly 40 percent of all federally recognised Tribes nationwide. The Office provides financial management, budgeting, accounting and contracting services for an estimated $400 million US in funds annually, that are allocated or awarded to self-governance Tribes.

The Seminole Tribe has an active fire management program and completes an average of 10,000 to 14,000 acres of planned burning each year. The Seminole Tribe accomplish this through a Public Law 93-638 contract and Cooperative Agreement with the BIA.

Public Law 638

Everywhere we visited in the US we heard agency staff and Tribal members refer to 638 Contracts and Compacted Tribes. To the unfamiliar this was quite confusing and we soon realised that understanding these governance arrangements between the BIA and each Tribe was important, not only from a legal viewpoint but also as a guide to the level and type of engagement required with the BIA and also as an indicator of the level of self-determination of a particular Tribe.

In the early 1970s, the US Congress passed the Indian Self Determination and Education Assistance Act. This allowed Indian Tribes and Tribal organisations to acquire increased control over the management of federal programs that impacted their members, resources and governments. These agreements are referred to as '638 Contracts and Compacts.'

Contracts and Compacts are very similar. Self-Determined Contracts are authorised under the 1975 Indian Self Determination and Education Assistance Act. Self-Governance Compacts are made possible by 1994 amendments to the 1975 Indian Self Determination and Education Assistance Act.

The key distinction between the two programs is that a Contracted Tribe has an agreement between that Tribe and the BIA; the BIA administers and often implements actions on behalf of the Tribe. A Compacted Tribe administers and manages all its own programs under the Office of Self Governance.

Compacted Tribes have greater autonomy and have contracted for or assumed several important economic, environmental, social and community programs that were once provided for by the BIA or other local, State and Federal agencies. This includes responsibility for probate, leasing and conveyances (acquisition and disposals).

As well as understanding the BIA and the various governance arrangements it has with Tribes, it is also important to understand the role of the Division of Forestry and Wildland Fire Management. This is a division of the BIA and is responsible for providing coordination, management, planning and monitoring for activities related to the development, enhancement and protection of trust forest resources including the National Wildland Fire Management Program.

Their mission is to:

"execute our fiduciary trust responsibilities by protecting lives, property and resources while restoring and maintaining healthy ecosystems through cost-effective and creative fire-management programs, collaboration and promoting Indian self-determination."

The Division exercises program oversight and provides planning and scheduling of Bureau-wide forestry activities at the national level to ensure regulatory and policy requirements are followed and that technical standards of sound forest management are utilised.

The reach and influence of the agency is huge. The Division has offices and staff in Washington, DC; Denver, CO; the National Interagency Fire Centre in Boise, ID; and inter-agency fire coordination centres in Missoula, MT; Albuquerque, NM; and Oklahoma, OK. It has responsibility for 57 million acres of Trust Lands and greatly influences how forests and fire are managed across the USA.

The BIA branch of Wildland Fire fulfils its mission by acknowledging Indian Country lands are not public property. This is an important distinction. The land is the source of the Tribe's spiritual, cultural, emotional and economic sustenance, which they and their future generations depend upon for survival.

The Indian Country Wildland Fire Management Program is implemented through either direct, self-determined or self-governance services. BIA provides direct program management services to just under two thirds of these units (89 in total). The remaining units exercise Indian self-determination and receive funding through self-determination or self-governance services.

Regardless of how the program is managed, Tribal members work and are involved with the direct protection and management of their natural and cultural resources. Throughout the USA and Canada, Tribal members stressed the importance of having access to their lands and being stewards of it.

On an operational level, the BIA collaborates with Tribes and provides funding programs and projects, undertakes program reviews, provides technical support and guidance and has a liaison function with other agencies.

Collaboration and consultation by all Federal agencies is determined by Executive Order 13175 of 2000, that charges all agencies with engaging in regular and meaningful consultation and collaboration with Tribal officials in the development of Federal policies that have tribal implications and are for strengthening the government to government relationships between the United States and Indian Tribes.

In conversations with Lucas and other BIA staff, we discussed not only the governance arrangements that

can lead to establishing successful relationships but also the less administrative, less tangible elements to building solid trusting relationships. The first thing that Lucas pointed out was acknowledging the different types of Tribal Governments. Understanding this was important, as they can vary significantly from formal Tribal Chiefs, Tribal Councils that may have a more historical form such as 'Clan Mothers', to more conventional program directors, managers and Tribal employees and members.

In all instances when working wildland fires on Tribal lands it is important to understand that you are working for an agency administrator who represents a sovereign, Tribal government. This means respecting Tribal laws, culture and traditions, developing unified objectives and sharing information and working very closely with Tribal representatives.

At all times, the US Federal government has an objective to support and encourage Tribal self-government and economic prosperity and protect Tribes and their interests. To do this Lucas reiterated that frequent and effective communication is needed to develop meaningful relationships and trust.

There are some common challenges to this, including the BIA and Tribes may not be on 'the same page'. Communication may be limited or difficult based on factors such as the geographic isolation of the Tribe, there may not be a good understanding of Tribal priorities by agencies or the cultural and historic importance of a place and or issue by non-Native people.

Breaking down stereotypes and building understanding and respecting government-to-government relationships was a key way to build dialogue and understanding according to Lucas, as was taking the time to really listen to Tribes, their concerns and aspirations and maintaining a sense of good will and, worthy of note, humour.

Focusing on developing personal relationships was an important way of building bridges between Tribes and agencies. This included going beyond what normally constitutes a stakeholder relationship. Agency staff needed to explore new methods of building relationships to create enduring personal and professional relationships to reach common agreed outcomes.

Trent and I were very fortunate to spend almost two days with members of the BIA local fire management teams on the Seminole Indian Reservation at Big Cypress National Preserve in the Everglades.

The Everglades is a well-known and iconic landscape. It lived up to its reputation as 'swamp country', and it wasn't long before we encountered wild alligators!

Despite the onset of the wet season, which started the day we arrived with torrential rain that had us pulling up on the side of the road, we were amazed to find there were planned burns being arranged for the next week and that a large wildfire was still burning in the area. It turns out that much of the vegetation in the Everglades is naturally highly flammable.

We toured the area and were fortunate to see and discuss numerous sites that had been recently burned at the request of Tribal members for cultural reasons.

There are numerous cultural reasons for burning, including promoting the growth of materials used in ceremonies and to keep certain ceremonial areas clear of plants.

Other burns are for more pragmatic economic reasons - to improve pasture for cattle and to reduce fuel hazard. The crucial element for the Seminole Tribe, and other Tribes we subsequently visited is that they are able to determine the reason for, and timing of these burns.

Again, we heard from Tribal members who said that building trust over time with the Tribe is critical to good relationships and positive outcomes. One factor that can assist this is continuity of agency staff. Relationships need to be built on personal interactions and develop over time. Regular staff movements within agencies can be a real obstacle to building the personal relationships that are required to work in true partnership.

The fire management program at the Seminole Indian Reservation provides jobs for about a dozen staff, including some seasonal fire staff. The jobs provided by these positions are important to providing employment and career development for many young Indian people on reservations around America. We met several Indian fire crew members from other parts of America, however no Seminole Tribe members are currently interested in fire roles. This appears to be because of the healthy stipend that Tribal members receive from the income of the very financially successful casino in Florida, owned by the Seminole Tribe.

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Enjoying a tour on a swamp buggy

Avian Fire Complex

Meeting with senior Seminole Tribe member, Joe Frank

We met with Mr Joe Frank, a Senior Seminole Tribe member and Big Cypress Board member. He shared some stories about the history of the area and said that the casino income was critical to the funding the Tribe's major programs. Low wages in the fire sector was a disincentive to their youth in participating in the fire program. The BIA had been working with the Seminole Tribe for about eight years, respecting Tribal wishes and Tribal law was critical to the successful relationship that had been established over time.

Joe stressed how important fire was to his people, how it has helped shape their landscape and continues to be important in land management and ceremonial practices.

Indian Preference Policy

The BIA has what is referred to as an Indian Preference Policy. This means that the policy of the BIA is to grant preference to Indian applicants at both the hiring and the promotion phase of recruitment actions. Given a situation where two individuals are both qualified for a promotion and one of them is an Indian, the Indian would receive preference over the non–Indian. This policy was upheld by the Supreme Court of the United States in Mortan v. Mandarin, 417 U.S. 535 (1974), a legal case about the constitutionality under the Fifth Amendment, of the hiring preferences given to Indians within the BIA.

The Supreme Court of the United States held that the hiring preferences given by the United States Congress does not breach the Due Process Clause of the Fifth Amendment. The court found that the hiring practice was not 'racial discrimination' nor was it even 'racial' preference. The Court compared it to the requirements of a Senator being from the state she represents, or a city council member being required to reside in the area he represents. The court said, "The preference as applied, is granted to Indians not as a discrete racial group, but rather, as members of quasi-sovereign tribal entities whose lives and activities are governed by the BIA in a unique fashion."

Further, the court also noted that this preference was reasonably and directly related to a legitimate non-racially based goal, thus preventing it from violating the Constitution.

As a result of this policy, more than eighty percent of all BIA employees are enrolled Tribal members.

To learn more, see link to the Bureau of Indian Affairs Mission Statements & Federal Trust Doctrine:

- Bureau of Indian Affairs Main – https://www.bia.gov/
- Bureau of Indian Affairs Mission Statement – https://www.bia.gov/biant
- The Federal Trust Doctrine – https://www.doi.gov/pmb/cadr/programs/native/gtgworkshop/The-Federal-Trust-Doctrine

Missoula, Montana

We were fortunate to attend The Fire Continuum Conference in Missoula; the theme was focussing on Preparing for the future of Wildland Fire.

Missoula is situated on the Clark Fork of the Columbia River, at the mouth of the Bitterroot River. It is a picturesque town, set in a broad valley surrounded by rolling hills and snow-capped mountains in the distance.

The township originated in the 1860s as a trading post. It was originally named Hellgate Village, a reference to a violent beginning, where the Plummer Gang took up residence and began a reign of terror against the townsfolk. Eventually, a vigilante group rounded up the outlaws and hung four of them in the main street of the town.

Thankfully the town is now a much more peaceful and civilised place, with a great university campus and what appeared to be a very outdoor-oriented life style including mountain bike riders, fly fishermen, hunters and rock climbers, and mix this with a thriving food and beer culture.

Forest on the Flathead Indian Reservation, after a Cultural Burn

Over 600 people including fire fighters, land managers, scientists and ecologists attended the conference from all over the globe to discuss a broad range of subjects relating to fire research and implications for future fire management.

The conference was made up of keynote presentations, social and networking events and workshops. The presentations were many in number, organised into major themes, with up to eight sessions running concurrently over three days; a true logistics triumph.

Mr Tony Incashola, Sr., Tribal Elder, a member of the Salish, Upper Kalispel (Pend d'Oreille) People, opened the conference with a Welcome to Country. He gave a brief outline of the history of his Tribe and stressed how important their language and culture are to his people, who still see their role primarily as caretakers; people who have always been connected to the land through a strong sense of stewardship, to preserve and protect Country.

He describes his people as the second caretakers of the land, saying that according to his culture the animals were the first caretakers, existing long before humans arrived.

"Animals prepared the environment, cultivated the ground before we got here. Then people came and changed things," he said.

"Traditional people were taught to watch, listen and learn from the animals and plants. You need to pay attention. We need to do so to protect our forests, water and animals."

"To do so, we need to remember what was done in the past, learn how to live within our environment, what we can do to help it and therefore all people. Everything has a reason, everything has a purpose." Adding that his grandparents taught him: "You respect all living things because those things provide for you today."

Tony went on to discuss some of the important plants used by Indian people in the local area including Camas (Camas quamash), and how it is still being actively cultivated today using fire.

Later in the week, Trent and I visited the lands being managed by local Tribes and saw purple fields of Camas in flower, actively cultivated through the application of cultural fire.

He explained that fire was, and remains, an important tool used by his people to manage the land.

"We used fire to clean the forest, cultivate it, encouraging food and medicinal plants. We used it to protect gathering areas. Our people knew when to burn; it was a well-organised thing, scientific and deliberate."

> "We would burn when leaving an area, just when the snow was to come."

This regular application of fire helped prevent, he was sure, the large bushfires that have become so prevalent today.

The opening keynote presentation was given by Vicki Christianson, Interim Chief US Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, who called on all participants to "make the connections to find solutions" to the complex and wicked problems that are facing current land and fire managers and scientists, in an ever increasing complex operating environment with "social and political dynamics that are largely out of our control."

The trends that are being experienced in many parts of the globe include more frequent and larger fires, longer fire seasons that virtually last all year and growing impacts on communities. The financial cost of fires in the USA is between $20-100 billion US dollars annually. None of this is sustainable, and a call to arms was made to work collaboratively to find solutions.

Over the course of the next three days, Trent and I attended many presentations and workshops and caught up with people interested in Cultural Burning and Aboriginal affairs generally. There were too many workshops to mention them all individually, however there were a couple that were directly relevant to our study area and I will briefly outline them both.

It is in Missoula that we met Dr Amy Christianson, Cree-Metis, Treaty Six, Tribal member, who works for the Canadian Forest Service. Amy gave a presentation entitled, "Resilient and Restless: Recognising Resilience of Indigenous Communities in Canada to Wildland Fire."

She outlined how large and complex the fire problem had become in Canada. This was a theme consistent throughout the conference. Agencies and researchers cannot fix the problem alone. We need to involve communities more, not engage more, but encourage active involvement in understanding the problem and finding community-based solutions.

Inspecting the positive results of a Cultural Burn

Amy and Trent presenting

Amy discussed how when Indigenous communities want to go back to their stewardship roles in their traditional territories, often they have been prevented from doing so. Many ecosystems have received very little or no active fire management and often the wrong fire regime or no fire at all. We need to draw on the traditional knowledge that Indigenous people have. As Amy said, "We are the experts too, with 50,000 years of land stewardship experience."

She went on to discuss the importance of fire and cultural practices to Traditional Owners: "The return of cultural practices equals resiliency," she explained.

One of the true highlights of the trip for me was watching Amy and Trent Nelson give an impromptu presentation together on how important Cultural fire was to their respective Tribes. The similarities regarding the aspirations of Indigenous peoples in North America and Australia were striking.

The impacts of colonisation, removal from Tribal lands, inability to practice land stewardship and culture were in many respects remarkably the same. Even the traditional stories about how Tribes came to obtain fire were uncannily similar.

Both spoke of the importance of Aboriginal people having access to look after the land, and how partnerships with fire and land management agencies can enable this. Both also stressed the literal connection between the land and the people. As Amy put it: "Helping the Country heal through wildfire is also a pathway for healing People", and Trent said: "Healing Country is directly linked to healing the People."

Trent went on to explain how important the relationships were between, as he put it, "the Mob and agencies." "Genuine partnerships must be forged based on mutual respect," he explained.

He quoted Elder Sir Doug Nicholls, a Yorta Yorta Man, who said: "You can play a tune on black keys, you can play a tune on white keys, but both are needed for perfect harmony. We want to walk with you, we don't want to walk alone."

[Sir Doug Nicholls was an amazing Australian and more can be read about his life and many achievements at amnesty.org.au.]

We also attended a presentation by, and later met with Monique D. Wynecoop, a Forest Fire Ecologist with the US Forest Service. Monique, a Mountain Maidu (her husband and children are Spokane Tribal members) presented on Incorporating Traditional Knowledge into Fuels Reduction Treatments on the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, situated on a large area of land between Washington State, Idaho and Canada.

Monique had conducted research on determining fuel

Waters running high through Missoula due to snow melt

treatments effectiveness, including determining how Tribal participants perceived the effects of the fuel treatments on cultural practices, such as hunting, fishing and gathering. She also looked at how Tribal participants felt that fuel treatments should be undertaken or avoided based upon their expected influence on Tribal cultural values.

She highlighted that the way that forests are managed, such as thinning and prescribed burning, affects the cultural practices of local Tribes and communities for generations to come. This includes hunting, fishing, gathering of medicinal plants, sacred sites and access to gathering and prayer sites for Elders.

In the spirit of "nothing about us without us," a concept that had been discussed by Amy Christianson, one of the overall goals was to have Tribal input and improve collaboration between groups to achieve better adaptive natural resource management.

A repeated conference theme was the degree to which an open and transparent approach was critical in building trust with Tribal members. Bridging the gap between scientists, agencies and Tribal communities was done by building the relationships, discussing treatment options, sharing methods and community expectations, collaborating in management approaches and monitoring, sharing results and getting more community feedback, then starting the cycle again.

Monique finished with a fitting quote: "Successful management of wildland fire and fuels requires collaborative partnerships that share traditional and western fire knowledge through culturally sensitive consultation, coordination, and communication for building trust." (Lake et al. 2017)

Another highlight was the field trip to the Flathead Indian Reservation, located approximately 30km north of Missoula. It is home to the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT) and covers 1.3 million acres (about 530,000 hectares).

The purpose of the field trip was to hear about the CSKT fire management program that has been active in reintroducing fire to the landscape by applying its Forest Management Plan. The tour began with a general discussion and some presentations on forestry and fire operations on the reservation, highlighting the landscape scale of the management plan and how treatments were being applied across boundaries through applications of the Tribal Forestry Protection Act. It also highlighted the fire management philosophy used to restore fire as an effective management tool.

Their Division of Fire is an important element of their natural resources division and consists of Fuels Manager, Fuels Specialist, Fuel Monitoring Specialist, Fuels Technician, Crew Foreman, Assistant Crew Foreman and about a 30 Person Seasonal Crew. Their mission is to: "enhance the quality of life, promote economic opportunity and to carry out the responsibility to protect and improve the trust assets of the Confederated Salish, Kootenai and Pend d Oreilles Tribes of the Flathead Indian Reservation." They are a Compacted Tribe and recognised for their excellence in natural resource management.

Walking outside Missoula

The primary goal of their Forest Management Plan is to balance the restoration of pre-European forest conditions with the needs of sensitive species and human uses. The Tribe chose Modified Restoration as it is acknowledged that full restoration would be very difficult to achieve. Prescribed fire is considered a major tool to achieve the plan's objectives.

Mr Tony Harwood and Mr Ron Swaney of the CSKT discussed how important the land was to their people and that the Tribe was self-governed, meaning it was the primary fire management agency and provided fire protection on the reservation. They also discussed how they had been undertaking a historical review of fire in the landscape and were working on returning fire, in a healthy way, working with traditional ecological knowledge and western fire sciences.

Their goal in many instances was to open the closed forests to "our perception of a restored landscape, restoring a healthy open woodland, rather than what would have once been an open prairie." This was a deliberate decision by the Tribe. Ron put it this way: "The landscape needs to be adaptive as does our culture." Nothing is static in nature.

We were taken to a site on the reservation that had been thinned and then treated with fire as part of the implementation of the management plan. Tribal members explained that the area we were viewing was, "An important area historically for gathering resources for the Tribe."

"Over time the area had been overgrown and depleted, so we have worked to restore the area, so members can come back and harvest in a traditional manner; it has been a big success.

"The focus was on restoring Camas, a traditional plant. Culturally it is significant for a couple of reasons. We ate it as a food source, but it was also a huge trading stock, that was the main thing.

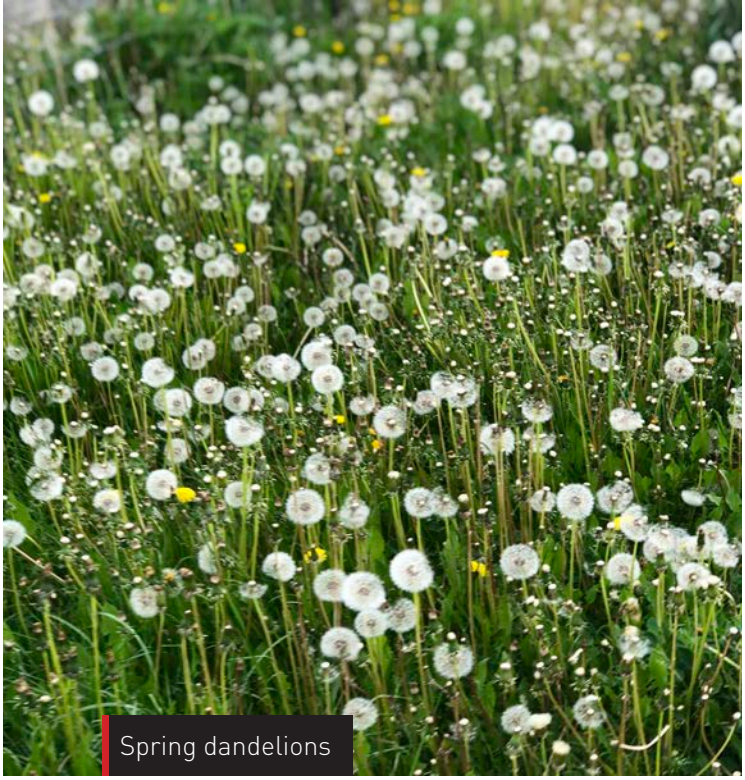
"We like salmon, but we don't have salmon here. We go over to the Nez Pearce at Colville and we trade for salmon. Camas when it is cooked is sweet, it made it significant for the Tribe because it was sought after."

We heard from Tony Incashola, Junior, the Tribe's Forest Manager. He talked about how important Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) is: "Our ancestors, our Grandparents came up here and treated the land, we had the first Fire Management Officer, I like to say. Western science is finally catching up," he explained.

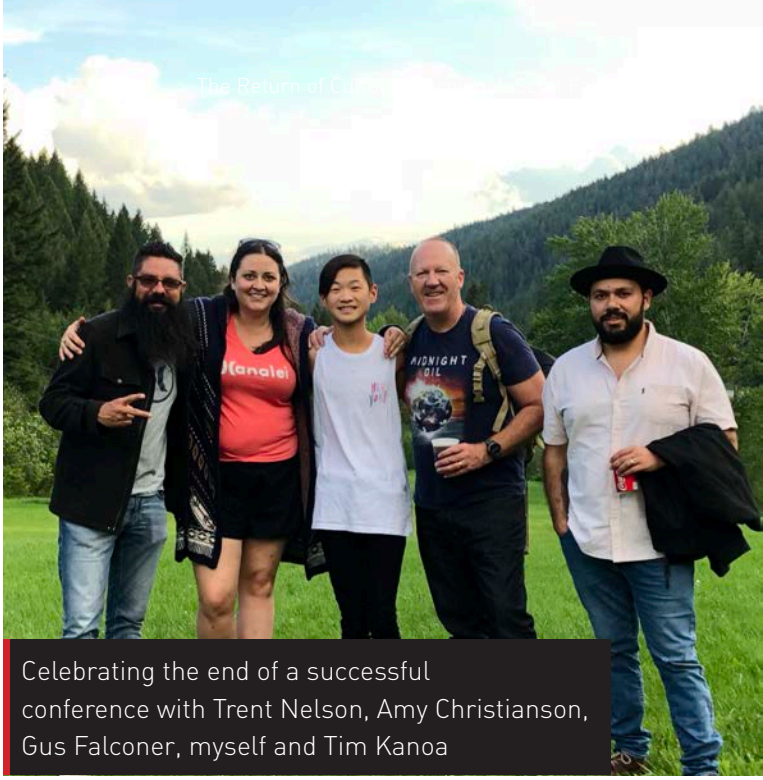
"The person in charge; when they left the areas, they lit the fire. They took care of the land, after we left and that showed on the landscape. That's why we had these big open landscapes; that's why Camas was here.

"They did it [burning] in Spring and they did it in the Fall; Camas responds better to Autumn burning. Then with the introduction of cattle and grazing, the trees and no fire, all those combined and took the Camas out... just by opening the area up using fire, reducing the competition, removing the cows, look what has happened. It shows the importance of that TEK that our ancestors possessed. We don't have a text book, we just go ask Grandma."

Tribe members explained the unique way in which they engage and work together across departments within the



Spring dandelions



Celebrating the end of a successful conference with Trent Nelson, Amy Christianson, Gus Falconer, myself and Tim Kanoa

Tribe to implement their management plan.

"We are all one Tribe, we are all for the one thing. To make our land better," they said.

The importance of educational outreach was discussed. It was considered vital to educate the entire Tribe and the broader local community about the benefits of fire and its positive impacts. This is a slow process, it takes time to inform and educate the community, but it is worth the investment and needs to be ongoing. Success has meant that people that were once against forest thinning and burning are now requesting more of it.

The Tribe is also collaborating to work with the landowners of land adjacent to the reservation, to introduce more fire off-reservation. Working collaboratively with the Nature Conservancy and other groups, working across boundaries to enhance cultural resources and wildlife.

A lot of research was undertaken to look at historical conditions and find Camas collection areas. It was important to Elders and others to "collect in ancient areas where you have a cultural relationship to past generations." Place names and old pictures and early aerial photographs were used to find key Camas areas. From these investigations it was discovered that the forest hadn't been there. Originally the area had been open prairie.

It is important to again note that the Tribe made a conscious decision to alter and maintain the forest rather than return the area to a prairie. The aim was to use mechanical thinning and fire to create an open 'park like' stand with big trees and an open understory conducive to the cultivation of Camas.

Learn more: Native Peoples and Fire in the Northern Rockies. Salish and Kootenai Tribes Fire History Project. (Includes interviews with Elders and Fire Managers). http://www.csktribes.org

Surveying the Yellowstone landscape and checking for bears!

Spring wildflowers in Yellowstone National Park

Gardiner, Montana - Yellowstone National Park

Yellowstone National Park is generally considered the first national park in the world. It is a designated UNESCO biosphere and covers a vast area of 8,992 square kilometres (3,472 square miles).

It is not an exaggeration to call this one of the most unique and wonderful natural places of the world. It's not just the stunning features of the landscape that make it so special, but the diversity of wildlife and spectacularly large mammals in vast numbers on open display in the wild that literally takes your breath away.

Tim Kanoa and I were there to meet with Mr John Cataldo, Fire Management Officer, with the U.S. National Park Service. John heads up the fire department in the Park that consists of 11 permanent staff and 12 seasonal staff during the summer period. In addition to the main National Park, his team also manage a 600-acre satellite park, the Little Bighorn National Monument.

He explained that the focus of fire management for the first hundred years of the Park's existence had been exclusively one of fire suppression, starting with the US Army undertaking fire suppression activities as early as 1886. However, attitudes are changing and it is now understood by ecologists and fire managers that fire has always been a key factor in shaping the ecology of the Greater Yellowstone ecosystem.

In a relatively recent change in policy, the National Parks Service now allows lightening fires to burn in Yellowstone provided they are not a threat to human life and property, acknowledging that fire needs to be allowed to carry out its ecological role in the landscape as much as possible. The new policy setting came out of the 2009 Federal Wildland Fire Policy and allows fire managers to manage natural fires for multiple objectives. So they can for example, suppress part of the fire to protect assets while allowing another section of the same fire to burn to achieve natural fire benefits.

There is no prescribed burning within the Park yet, and John was unaware of any discussions with local Traditional Owners about the history of Cultural Burning in the area and the role it played in shaping the landscape prior to European settlement or the wishes of Tribal groups to participate in fire management in the Park for cultural reasons.

John outlined how they work closely with members of the Crow Tribe, whose reservation is adjacent to the Little Bighorn National Monument, to undertake fire suppression activities, which includes protecting sensitive cultural areas.

Learn more: Yellowstone National Parks Fire Management Plan: http://www.nps.gov

Tim and I spent a weekend exploring the Park and were truly struck by its beauty and the diversity and abundance of animals, particularly the bison, bears and wolves roaming the forest and open plains and meadows of the Park. A walk in the Park here literally required the carriage of bear spray!

On the last day of our visit we met with Mr Robert Petty, Senior Director of Education at Yellowstone Forever, the Park's official education and fundraising non-profit partner. Yellowstone Forever's mission is: To partner with Yellowstone National Park to create opportunities for all people to experience, enhance, and preserve Yellowstone forever.

A traffic stopper! Bison migrating through the national park

A lovely moment with my son, Gus. Just outside Gardiner, Montana

They focus their efforts on connecting people to Yellowstone through visitor experiences and educational programs and gaining lifelong support for the Park and philanthropic investment to preserve and enhance the Park for the future.

Robert explained how they are working with local Tribal groups who will eventually teach courses that explain Tribal relationships with the Park and its plants and animals. This work was new and developing as relationships were established. He said that they were trying to understand what needs to be done, working with Tribes to better understand Tribal and cultural perspectives, and that they were at the start of that process.

He said that initially they met with Tribal representatives and simply and respectfully said, "What should we be doing here?"

Robert stressed the importance of having the conversation together and for non-Natives to "start looking inward, reflect and be open to their world. Don't just invite diversity into our world, understand theirs."

There were up to 26 Tribes that had a relationship to the Park prior to European settlement with at least one of them residing in the area permanently.

Tim and I had observed that there wasn't much in the way of detailed information about the Native American history of the area and, when we asked questions about pre-European history with Park visitors and even tour guides, there was only a superficial understanding of this deeper history and land management practices of the area. The history and stories of the pioneers of the Wild West and the conquest of wild places was still the dominant mythology. Stories of Buffalo Bill Cody and Crow Killer, Liver-Eating Johnston still dominate here.

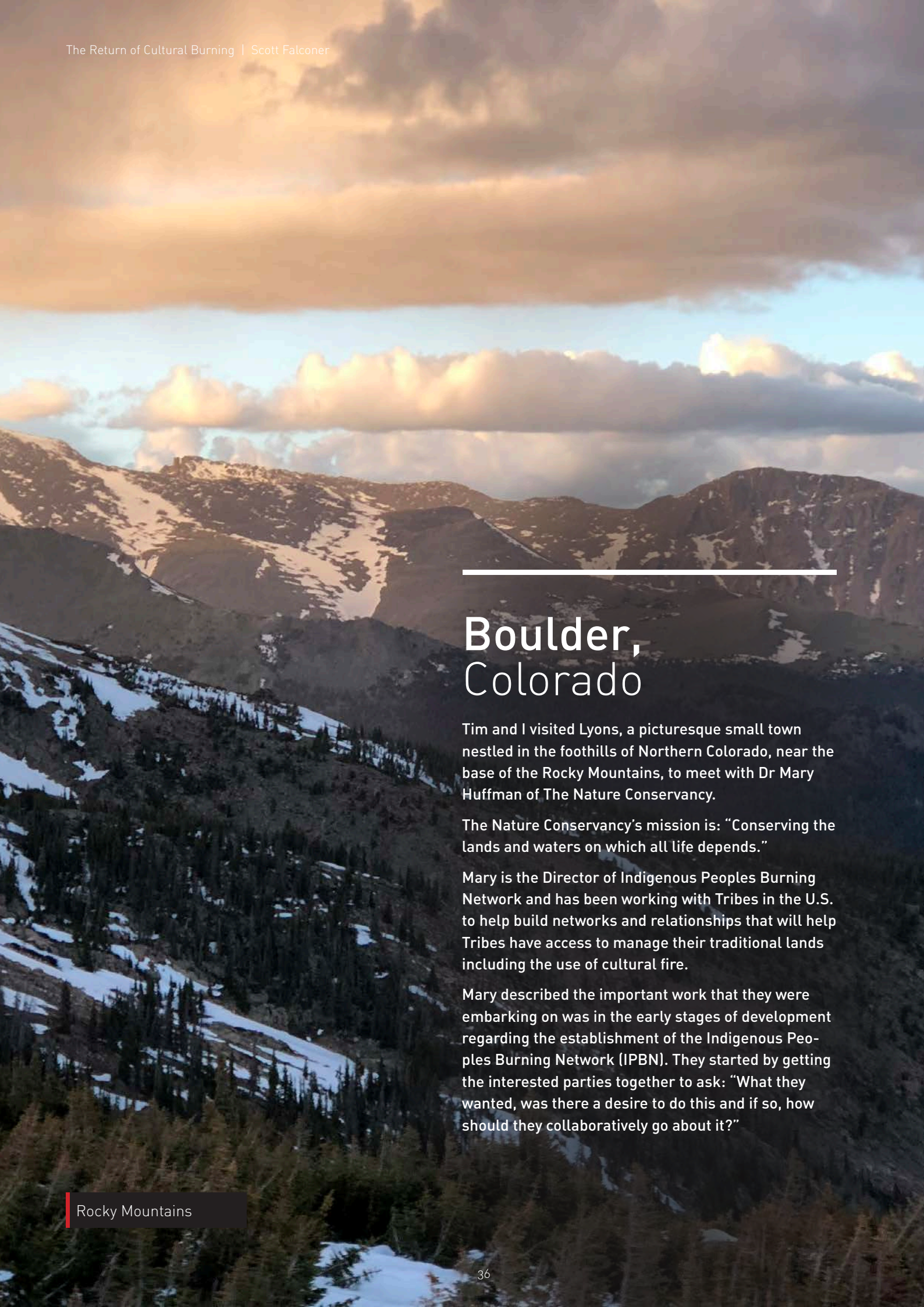
We all agreed that both the USA and Australia had a "dark, largely hidden and embarrassing aspect to our history." As Robert put it: "In the USA we don't recognise the dark, deeper history of who was here before."

One of the great success stories of the park is the rise in population of the bison or buffalo herd. Currently the herd is about 5,000 strong. It is estimated that buffalo once numbered 30 million across North America and they were crucial to the existence and culture of many Tribal groups across the open plains. In a very short period, by the end of the 19th century, there were as few as a couple of hundred animals remaining.

There were many reasons for the rapid decline of the vast buffalo herds, with settlers and hide-hunters killing huge numbers. But a more insidious reason for the animal's slaughter to near extinction can be attributed to the strongly held belief by many generals and politicians of the time, including President Ulysses S. Grant, that the destruction of the buffalo would see the resolution of the 'Indian problem'.

Thankfully a small number of bison survived this act of deliberate annihilation, and the herds now number 20,000-25,000 animals on public lands across the USA.

Article: 'Kill Every Buffalo You Can! Every Buffalo Dead Is an Indian Gone' The Atlantic https://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2016/05/the-buffalo-killers/482349/



Boulder, Colorado

Tim and I visited Lyons, a picturesque small town nestled in the foothills of Northern Colorado, near the base of the Rocky Mountains, to meet with Dr Mary Huffman of The Nature Conservancy.

The Nature Conservancy's mission is: "Conserving the lands and waters on which all life depends."

Mary is the Director of Indigenous Peoples Burning Network and has been working with Tribes in the U.S. to help build networks and relationships that will help Tribes have access to manage their traditional lands including the use of cultural fire.

Mary described the important work that they were embarking on was in the early stages of development regarding the establishment of the Indigenous Peoples Burning Network (IPBN). They started by getting the interested parties together to ask: "What they wanted, was there a desire to do this and if so, how should they collaboratively go about it?"

Rocky Mountains

One area of success to date had been working with the Yurok-Hupa-Karuk, in Northern California, to establish a burning network with a focus, "to revitalise the implementation of cultural burns in native communities through the cultivation of an intertribal support system in which traditional ecological knowledge is shared and our rights are protected."

Priorities for the group include the revitalisation of fire use in ceremonies and family-based application of burning in the landscape, holding targeted training programs with hands-on community education that will help connect people and enhance support networks.

The group holds twice-yearly Prescribed Fire Training Exchanges (TREX) through the FIRE Learning Network (FLN). The TREX program has been a success across the U.S. and has helped the FLNs strengthen partnerships, adopt new ideas and build capacity for wildland fire management.

The IPBN conducted by Yurok-Hupa-Karuk has a strong focus on integrating Cultural Burning and is providing learning opportunities from people who have extensive understanding of traditional fire and the role it has played in the ecosystem, helping all participants understand that fire and people are inseparable and that "a full exclusion approach to fire may not only be impossible, it may be inappropriate."

Mary discussed some of her personal learnings along the way, stressing the need for agencies and non-Natives to respect and acknowledge and, with permission, utilise Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK). This can be complex because of the intellectual property aspects involved, some Tribes will share and others choose not to. Either way their wishes must be respected.

Another key lesson is that, "we are at the early stages of learning how to engage with Tribes and it will be different for each group."

An Indigenous friend of Mary's described Tribal People as, "Forever People in a forever place, let them be who they are." And that, "Your role [as a non-Native] is really to just get out of the way."

We both agreed the primary role of agencies is an enabling one. We must let Tribes lead the way. Each group will determine the appropriate approach and time frame. It is often a challenge for agencies to adopt this approach, but the first step is to "learn how to do the work."

This strongly resonated with the work we have been doing in partnership with the Dja Dja Wurrung in

Mary, Tim and I touring fire impacted areas near Lyons, CO

Victoria, one of the mantras we have been using is, "We need to do the right thing, before we can do everything right."

We also discussed just how important it is for Tribes to be able to manage their lands and use fire as a cultural management tool. Mary consistently heard from Tribes about how deeply disrespectful it is not to allow Indigenous people to burn Country. Many individuals have important cultural obligations to burn for Cultural and ceremonial purposes. If they are not allowed to do so, they have three options: not burn and neglect important cultural obligations, burn illegally and be charged with an offence, or burn covertly and run away!

These predicaments remain for Tribal members in many areas where they do not have access or permission from land and fire management agencies to practice culture on public lands.

Fortunately, Tribes and relevant agencies are starting to forge relationships together, to build true collaborations, and Tribes like the Yurok-Hupa-Karuk in the U.S., are embracing working with agencies that are learning to, "include spiritual, cultural elements of fire, led by Aboriginal people. Non-Native people are helping to make space for Aboriginal people to thrive and teach and learn together."

The three Tribes have agreed on what success for them looks like:

> “When our work is successful, life will be thriving with deer, birds, mushrooms, open prairies, grasslands and clear creeks. There is laughing. Kids are playing all over. All of the brush is gone, and we can see the river. The land all the way down the road has been burned. It is like the pre-contact landscape, and we are able to truly live off the land. We get that humble and respected feeling. Our prayers with our ancestors are heard because our connection with the land is growing stronger and stronger. These prayers are carried by the smoke and answered by the fire. People are leading, and the agencies support it. A little ways back and a long ways out, we have the knowledge to make rain.”

Forester Jeff Haas and Courtney Kratz touring planned burns near Lake Tahoe

Carson City, Nevada - Lake Tahoe

The next leg of the trip took us from the Rocky Mountains to San Francisco, where we then drove several hours to Carson City. Tim and I met with Heather Giger and Courtney Kratz from the Nevada Division of Forestry.

We were introduced to Mr Darrel Cruz, Director of the Washoe Tribal Historic Preservation Office in Gardnerville. He explained how important it was to re-educate the general public about the complexities of fires and how the 'right fire' is a crucial element of a healthy forest and healthy landscape. There is a strong desire to undertake prescribed fire by the Washoe however it is still difficult to do so due to complex land tenure and associated management arrangements.

According to Darrel,

"Good leadership and a clear vision is needed so agencies and Tribes can work together. All Native people are part of the landscape, they are the missing element."

He saw the inclusion of Tribes in fire management as an important means of providing skills and potential employment opportunities for Tribal people.

Agency representatives explained that they were at the early stages of working with Tribes and looking for opportunities to collaborate. It was acknowledged that building these relationships takes time and can't be rushed.

Another key discussion included the need to build social licence to get broader community support for more prescribed burning, including Cultural Burning. In 2016, a planned burn implemented by State authorities breached containment lines and, as a result, private properties were damaged including numerous homes being destroyed. Similar issues have occurred in Victoria and other states. The risks of burning programs were discussed and how agencies can reduce the risks but not eliminate them completely.

Later in the day we drove to Lake Tahoe to meet with Mr Jeff Haas, a Forester with State of Nevada Tahoe Resource Team. Jeff showed us around some planned burns that had been undertaken near the Lake and nearby communities. He explained that the planned

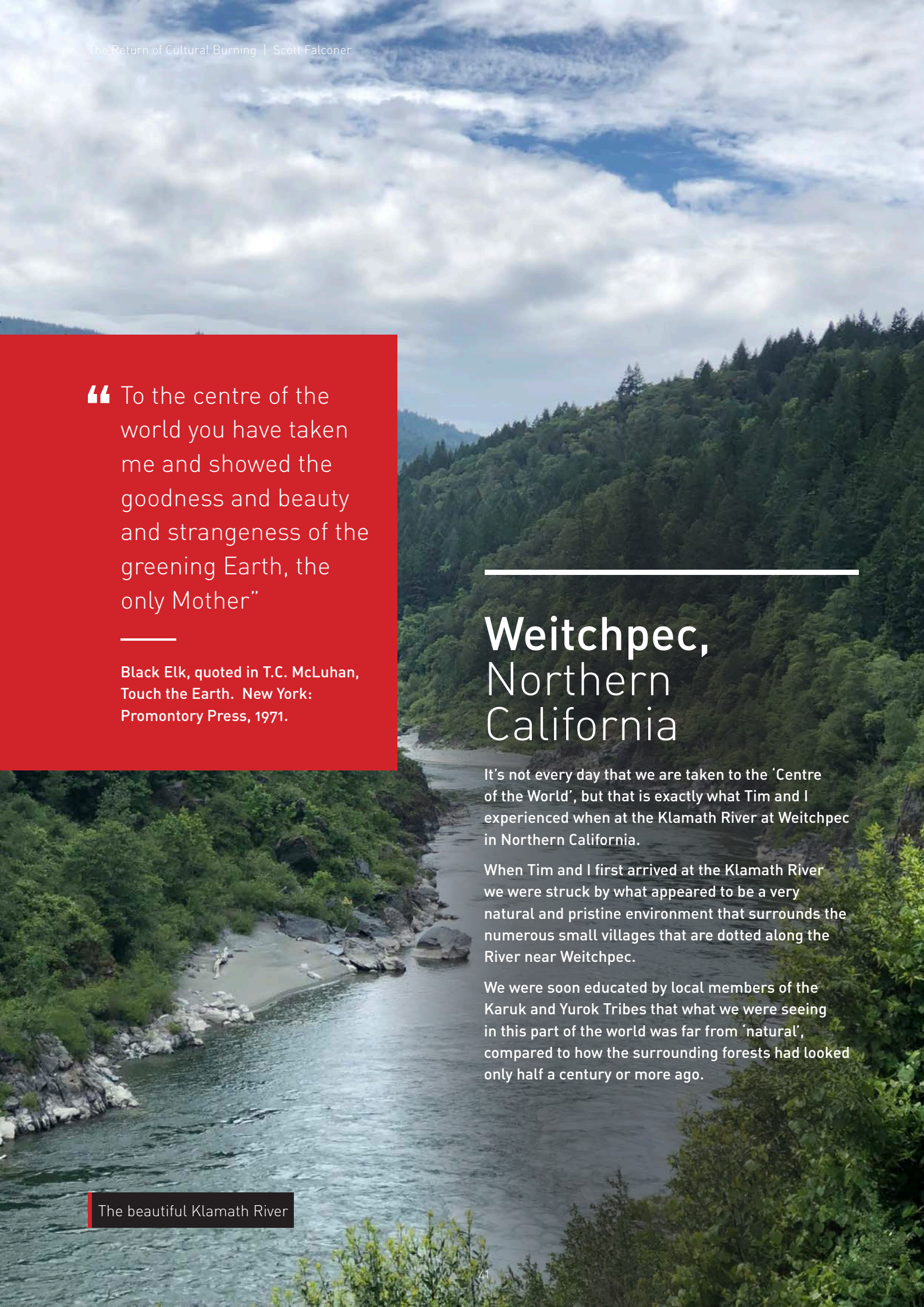
A pristine Lake Tahoe

Preparing a site for a planned burn at Galena Creek Regional Park

burning program was aimed at asset protection and protecting the water quality of the Lake. In the longer term, they wanted to restore the forests of the area to a more 'natural' state, one that was less overgrown and fire prone. The composition of the forest had changed over time due to an absence of fire. The challenge, of course, was how to achieve this on a landscape scale.

Impediments to burning included lack of community understanding and risk aversion to all fire. Most of the burning undertaken consisted of thinning and pile burning, and to date this had not been done in collaboration with local Tribes.

Ms Anna Higgins, a Management Officer at Galena Creek Park, took us on a site inspection of an area that was being prepared for prescribed burning. The program involves inmate crews as part of a formal arrangements that sees the inmates gain training and accreditations and on the job experience. This was being facilitated through the Nevada Prescribed Fire Alliance, a group made up of representatives from all sectors that manage natural resources and seek to improve the use of prescribed fire through collaboration and shared learning.



> “To the centre of the world you have taken me and showed the goodness and beauty and strangeness of the greening Earth, the only Mother”
>
> **Black Elk, quoted in T.C. McLuhan, Touch the Earth. New York: Promontory Press, 1971.**

Weitchpec, Northern California

It’s not every day that we are taken to the ‘Centre of the World’, but that is exactly what Tim and I experienced when at the Klamath River at Weitchpec in Northern California.

When Tim and I first arrived at the Klamath River we were struck by what appeared to be a very natural and pristine environment that surrounds the numerous small villages that are dotted along the River near Weitchpec.

We were soon educated by local members of the Karuk and Yurok Tribes that what we were seeing in this part of the world was far from ‘natural’, compared to how the surrounding forests had looked only half a century or more ago.

The beautiful Klamath River

In 1911, the federal government passed legislation that banned igniting fires on public lands. That decision made illegal the fire management practices that the local Tribes had been applying through their Traditional Ecological Knowledge for a millenia. This put a stop to cultural activities that had shaped the wilderness into what can be more accurately described as a carefully tended garden.

The result, as described by Mr Thomas Wilson is that, "The forest is now overgrown with too many Douglas Firs; it's so thick now that we can't walk through the forest. If we can't walk through it, neither can the animals like the elk. The big animals aren't here anymore. Without elk, the men can't hunt and provide food for the community."

He went on to say that the men wanted to use traditional fire to open the forest again with the aim of bringing the elk from near the coast to the high country. To do this they need to open up some corridors that allow the game to travel more freely so that they will once again calf in the area and remain.

The regular fires undertaken by Tribal groups, that once shaped the area, largely stopped being applied to the landscape once European fire suppression practices dominated. Fire exclusion coupled with industrial scale land use practices drastically altered fire regimes in the area and many other parts of the U.S.A. It also changed the tree density and forest composition.

Only a generation or two ago, the forests were more open with meadows and open forested areas with large Sugar Pines (Pinus Lambertiana) and Californian Black Oak (Quercus Kelloggii) that provided food for game and people.

(Fire as Medicine: Fire Dependent Cultures and Re-Empowering American Indian Tribes by Frank Kanawha Lake, PH.D., USDA Forest Service's Pacific Southwest Research Station, September 13, 2018).

In 2009, Tribes had been working in collaboration with local fire and land management agencies, including the Forest Service, to bring prescribed fire back to the landscape. The original partnership got off to a rocky start and collapsed after an area that was important to the Tribe was damaged by State sanctioned logging.

We spoke with many Tribal members during our stay and were keen to explore what they believed were the key elements of building productive partnerships and how they had gone about doing this. The collective advice was that collaboration is vital and must be actively strived for, with purpose and long-term commitment.

One Tribal member said, "Collaboration is the key, we won't always agree, but we can focus on shared values, healing the land and the people."

We were told that in recent years relationships between agencies and Tribes had improved. One of the reasons for this was the strong investment individuals from Tribes and agencies had placed on developing personal relationships over time to build genuine trust. An important step in this process had occurred when Tribal members were hired to work with the Forest Service. This alone had broken down some barriers.

All the Tribal members we spoke with said how important jobs in the agencies were for their youth.

We spent a morning with Elizabeth Azzuzz from the Yurok Cultural Fire Management Council. She took us to a Cultural Burn that had been implemented last autumn and showed us the hazel bush regeneration that had occurred. Reducing old overgrown woody material and

Margo Robbins and Thomas Wilson, both Yurok Tribe members, introducing Tim and myself to traditional ways of eating salmon, fresh caught from the river

Elizabeth Azzuz, Yurok Tribe, showing the fresh shoots of hazel bush after a Cultural Burn

promoting fresh shoots that can be used for basket weaving were the key reasons for undertaking this Cultural burn, and it had been a real success.

Fresh 'straight shoots', are vital for the women to make their beautiful traditional baskets. This is a practice that is intrinsically linked to womens' culture. The forest had become so overgrown and the paucity of straight shoots was threatening the ability of women to make their baskets at all. Elizabeth explained that families start teaching children their cultural responsibilities from an early age, and some are tasked specifically with fire responsibilities.

Margo Robbins, a Yurok basket weaver and member of the Yurok Tribe Cultural Fire Management Council also discussed with us just how important basket weaving was to their culture and showed us some of her family's beautiful baby baskets.

> "Our culture is completely dependent upon fire. Without fire, our culture will not survive. It's that simple."
>
> **Margo Robbins**

Margo discussed with us how important it was to "bring people together", she said people need to understand that they have a "whole culture that knows fire and this should be respected." She also stated how important it was for Tribal members to teach their young people how to make baskets and manage fire from a young age. Both men and women have responsibilities for burning, women for fibre and food and men for managing game to promote hunting.

Margo said that passing on fire knowledge to the next generation was vital to them. She said, "We want to train people to be who they are meant to be: citizen burners, doing it the way ancestors did."

The Yurok Prescribed Fire Training Exchange (TREX) provides an important means of bringing Tribal members and agency personnel together to learn and collaborate.

TREX whose motto is Learning Together, Burning Together, is a training program that started in 2008 and was implemented by the FIRE Learning Network, as a way of providing training in prescribed fire across agencies and jurisdictions. They train both seasoned wildland fire staff as well as students and new firefighters.

About 40 training events have been held in different parts of the USA. The courses can be tailored to meet local needs and, as well as providing fire related skills, these have been very effective in bringing a range of agencies and Tribes together to network and build relationships and trust.

The Yurok TREX has a specific objective to: "Provide prescribed fire training opportunities to local and regional practitioners while supporting management of cultural resources." This training will incorporate knowledge from the native Tribes of Northern California and develop understanding about their traditional and contemporary use of prescribed fire.

This model provides a unique opportunity to bring a diversity of people, knowledge and approaches to fire management that allows for great cross-pollination of ideas and perspectives that lead to understanding, respect and ultimately trust. The feedback we received from previous participants was that everyone gains

In this world view, people are integral components of the ecosystem and have a continuous interactive role to play. Now referred to in academic literature as kincentricity. An awareness "that life in any environment is viable only when humans view their surroundings as kin; that their mutual roles are essential for their survival." (Salmon 2000).

This extends to their relationship to and understanding of fire.

Table 3.1 Multidimensional Importance of Karuk Traditional Foods, Fibres and Medicines.

Chapter 3, Vulnerabilities of Traditional Foods and Culture Use Species Kirsten Vinyeta, Frank K. Lake and Kari Norgaard.

Basic sustenance	About 50% of tribal members living in Karuk ancestral territory get at least some portion of their food by hunting, fishing or gathering Native foods, whereby limited availability of these foods and the effects of climate change were seen by almost 40% of respondents to be barriers to sufficient healthy quantities.
Physical health	Eating traditional foods, especially salmon and acorns, prevents diet related diseases such as diabetes and heart disease. Cultivating and harvesting foods promotes both physical and mental health.
Emotional health	Participating in foods related activities strengthens mental health both through contact with nature and engagement with physical activity, and combats low self-esteem assicated with intergenerational trauma.
Cultural practice	Tending, harvesting, processing, storing and consuming traditional foods prepetuates Karuk culture (Salter 2003, Norgaard 2005).
Family structure and social relations	Sharing food is a social obligation. Tending, harvesting, processing, storing and consuming traditional food strengthens intergenerational relationships within families and across the community (Risling Baldy 2013).
Ceremonial practice	"Fix the World", or Pikyavish Ceremonies are carried out to ensure abndant harvests and restore social and personal balance. (Kroeber and Gifford 1949) First Salmon Ceremony invokes the spring salmon run and regulates harvest management (Swezey and Heizer 1977 cites Powers 1987, Krober 1925, Harrington 1932, Roberts 1932, Driver 1938, Krober and Gifford 1949).
Traditional Knowledge	Tending, harvesting, processing, storing and consuming traditional food perpetuates Karuk traditional ecological knowledge and its practice (Lake 2007, 2013).
Political sovereignty	Ongoing actions of tending, harvesting, processing, storing and consuming traditional food confirms Karuk occupancy on the land (Risling Baldy 2013).

insights and new ways of viewing fire.

Tim and I were lucky to spend a day with research ecologist Dr Frank Lake, a Karuk Tribal member who works for the US Forest Service based in Orleans. It was Dr Lake that took us to the 'Centre of the World', to discuss not only the tangible elements of fire knowledge, but also some of the intangibles including the spiritual values and cultural responsibilities associated with fire.

He talked about Tribal members as 'fire knowledge stewards', and how the Tribal ancestors had developed a complex, 'horticultural, agro-forestry system', through effective fire management and land stewardship. He explained that their culture was 'fire dependent' and emerged from the sense of a direct relationship and responsibility towards their surroundings.

In this world view, people are integral components of the ecosystem and have a continuous interactive role to play. Now referred to in academic literature as kincentricity. An awareness "that life in any environment is viable only when humans view their surroundings as kin; that their mutual roles are essential for their survival." (Salmon 2000). This extends to their relationship to and understanding of fire.

He is passionate about burning to promote Tribal cultural benefits and ecological restoration to landscapes. Noting that there are potentially significant other benefits, including social and economic gains to local Tribal communities; employment, food security and medicine, revival of language and the ability to practice ceremonies and other spiritual practices.

For Dr Lake, the metaphysical and biophysical worlds can't be completely separated. Science and spirituality can successfully co-exist.

This is reflected in the ethos of the 'World Renewal Ceremony,' that is still practiced by the Yurok, Karuk and some other Northern Californian Indian Nations. The ceremony is to ensure bountiful crops, abundance of salmon and game in the localised physical world, and simultaneously to restore spiritual balance and renew the entire world, 'to make again' on behalf of all human beings, plants and animals.

Video: Wildness, Enrique Salmon re: Kincentric ecology. Centre for Humans and Nature https://www.humansandnature.org

The sense of caring for people and the land is deeply embedded in their culture and it was an honour to be given a small insight into it.

Dr Frank Lake, Yuruk Tribe, discussing a recent Cultural Burn

Dr Lake took us to a research site near his home where he is investigating how low intensity fire may benefit the restoration of native oak trees. He explained that oaks play an important role in local cultures and provided a stable food source for people and a wide variety of animals including game species. They also provided fibre and wood used for structures, tools and weapons.

Californian Black Oak (Quercuss Kelloggii) was a particularly favoured species by Tribes in the area. There were rules for harvesting acorns; not all the acorns were harvested for human consumption, a proportion was always left for the benefit of other animals. The mash made from acorns is still an important food source prominent at gatherings and ceremonies.

Dr Lake advised that many Tribes actively managed oak stands and encouraged woodlands dominated by this species. They intervened and cared for these woodlands to ensure they remained disease free and productive.

In the absence of low intensity fire and active human management, the health of the trees has declined and today the acorns are heavily impacted by losses from insects and disease. The two insects causing the most damage are filbert worm (Cydia Latiferreana) and filbert weevils (Curculio Occidentalis).

Dr Lake said that weevils were having a particularly heavy impact on the acorns in the area and he and others were researching whether regular low intensity fires that were once traditionally timed to kill the insects that attack acorns, are effective and how they might be reintroduced as part of a modern agroforestry system.

> ...rather than the concept of an 'untouched' wilderness that European settlers had assumed, California landscapes were more akin to carefully tended gardens. What natural scientists have described as 'nature' and 'natural history' is in fact a human-natural history.
>
> [Karuk Traditional Ecological Knowledge and the Need for Knowledge Sovereignty: Social, Cultural and Economic Impacts of Denied Access to Traditional Knowledge. Prepared by Kari Marie Norgaard for the Karuk Tribe Department of Natural Resources 2014, page 13.]

We met with David Medford, the Assistant Fire Management Officer for the Karuk Tribe. He oversees the Karuk Tribes Fire and Fuels Management Program and leads a team of about 30 crew. He said, "We are starting to get agencies and others to understand the real need

The Return of Cultural Burning | Scott Falconer

for prescribed fire, and you can't talk about prescribed fire here without understanding Native American Indian Fire."

Like everyone else we talked to, he said that partnering with other agencies and academics was vital, "we can't fight academia; we need them on board."

Since visiting it has been announced that the Western Klamath Restoration Partnership, consisting of Indigenous people, the Forest Service, local landowners and councils have commenced a pilot project that has received over US$5 million to collaborate in land and fire management.

This is a great example of cross cultural collaboration to re-establish Cultural Burning practices that align well with ecological restoration and support Tribal practices and other positive social and cultural outcomes.

Tim and I later met with Kari Marie Norgaard, Associate Professor of Sociology and Environmental Studies at the University of Oregon. Kari has worked extensively with Tribal communities in the area and is the author of numerous academic articles including, The Politics of Fire and the Social Impacts of Fire Exclusion on the Klamath (Humboldt Journal of Social Relations - Issues 36, 2014) and she coordinated and compiled the Karuk Tribe Climate Vulnerability Assessment, Assessing Vulnerabilities from the Increased Frequency of High Severity Fire, Karuk Tribe Department of Natural Resources, 2016.

Video: Revitalizing Our Relationship With Fire
https://youtu.be/SF3MNpuqzSg

We discussed the need to challenge the current thinking regarding the place of Aboriginal knowledge and its influence on natural resource management and how academic theory can give legitimacy to traditional knowledge. Not that this should be necessary, as Traditional Ecological Knowledge is a legitimate knowledge set in its own right.

She also stressed the need for knowledge sovereignty.

The cultural revival around Cultural fire must be led by Native People as a means of empowerment and respect for intellectual property. It is only through the ownership and practice of culture that Traditional Knowledge will survive, as it should, as a living knowledge system.

Educational outreach was also vital, so the broader community understands the role Cultural Burning can play for better fire management outcomes for all communities.

Meeting with the Fire Team from the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde

Grand Ronde, Oregon

We met with members of the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde in Oregon. The confederation is made up of over twenty-seven tribes and bands from western Oregon, southern Washington and Northern California.

We heard of the history of land dispossession and of the long process to regain some sovereignty over land and the recent return of traditional fishing and hunting rights.

To learn more about Tribal History, see link to the Spirit Mountain Casino:

Tribal History: Spirit Mountain Casino
http://www.spiritmountain.com/tribal-history

There is a strong focus on conservation works on their lands and this includes returning traditional hunting and fishing practices as a means of maintaining culture and promoting healthy sustainable communities. Prescribed fire, 'the right fire' was a key component to restorative land management.

Mr Colby Drake, Silviculture and Fire Program Manager (Natural Resources) with The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde explained that they had recently undertaken a 'restorative burn', saying that, "It's all about restoration for us, we want to see cultural food and plants and recreate gathering sites. We want to create these close to our Tribal people, so Elders can easily access them."

The Natural Resources department serves the Grand Ronde Tribal membership through responsible stewardship of all-natural resources important to the cultural identity, self-sufficiency and sovereignty of current and future generations.

The reservation managed by the Tribe was still relatively small and Colby said that to access and influence other lands managed by private land owners and State agencies was critical. He said they were, "partnering and building those relationships; this is a critical factor that leads to shared understanding, learnings and opportunities for funding."

An important element of the natural resource management program was their fire program. We attended on a day where they were undertaking a pre-season review with the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Mr Darron Williams, Fire Management Officer, from the Northwest Regional Office explained the process of training, qualifications and certification processes involved, documented in the Integrated Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations.

The fire program for the Tribe had commenced in 1997 as a small program with a four-person fire crew. They have since developed into a full fire enterprise and provide fire teams and equipment that is available to be deployed to other regions when required, essentially contracting out their expert fire services. This gets charged directly to a fire and this model provides huge financial benefit to the Tribe, funding its own fire program and contributing to other natural resource activities on Tribal lands.

Darron and Colby explained The National Cohesive Strategy and its significance in shifting from a purely fire suppression model and looking at local and regional strategies for reducing and preventing wildfires. It's moving away from a 'one size fits all' approach, taking advantage of greater community and stakeholder input and engagement in fire management. It has been critical in helping the Tribe be actively and more effectively involved in a meaningful way in fire management.

The National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy is a collaborative effort involving federal and state agencies, local governments, Tribes and interested stakeholders throughout the USA to improve coordination across the various jurisdictions for managing fire.

The overall vision of the strategy is to safely and effectively extinguish fire, when needed; use fire where allowable; manage natural resources; and as a Nation, live with wildland fire.

The vision has three main components:

1. Resilient landscapes: Restore and maintain adaptive forest landscapes, using the best available science, to reduce and control the potential fuels of wildfires so that wildfire severity is reduced.
2. Fire-adapted communities: Encourage communities, localities, and property owners to take meaningful action to prevent wildfires and limit their destructive potential.
3. Safe and effective wildfire response: Use the smartest on-the ground strategies to maximise the effectiveness of agency responses to wildfires.

Taken from The National Cohesive Strategy Fire Facts Brochure.

More information: National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy https://www.forestsandrangelands.gov/strategy the strategy.shtml

CANADA

Fort McMurray, Alberta

Most of our trip to date had been focused on the ability of prescribed fire to restore healthy ecosystems and landscapes through application of the 'right fire'. My visit to Fort McMurray was a case study in the catastrophic results of large uncontrolled wildfires and the increasing damage they wreak on the landscapes and the communities residing in them.

An out-of-control fire that started on 1 May 2016, burned almost 1.5 million acres (600,000 Ha) of forest surrounding Fort McMurray in Alberta, Canada. This was the most destructive type of wildfire, raging uncontrolled through forest with extreme fuel loads.

A small section of the forest destroyed in the Fort McMurray 2016 fires

The rebuild after the 2016 Fort McMurray fires. Over 2500 homes were destroyed

Approximately 88,000 people were evacuated on short notice in a desperate attempt to save lives as the wildfire bore down on the town, eventually consuming 2,500 homes. It is the largest wildfire evacuation in Alberta's history. It is also the costliest disaster ever experienced in Canada with a total bill of C$9.9 billion.

The overall toll on the community has been huge, as is always the case when a disaster of this magnitude impacts a community.

I met with Ms Terry-Lin Fedorous and we toured the fire impacted area around Beacon Hill, one of the hardest hit areas. Terry-Lin is the Community Research Lead with Indigenous Health and Resilience through Disaster (IHRD) and has been heavily involved in the recovery efforts following the disaster. Many suburbs like Beacon Hill, were nearly entirely razed to the ground. Large scale evacuations occurred and miraculously no one was killed by the fires.

Video: Fort McMurray evacuation
https://youtu.be/kSPFt601FLI

The recovery effort is ongoing, and a noticeable amount of construction is still underway. Many people were still traumatised, and work continues to rebuild the community.

One of the many lessons learned was the need for tailored recovery programs for Indigenous communities, that include acknowledgement of cultural factors and an understanding of historical trauma and its cumulative, multigenerational impacts and how this is likely to add to the complexities of recovery.

This was stressed by Terry-Lin as vital in helping Native communities recover after any disaster. Respecting culture includes understanding various protocols. She said, "sometimes it's just about spending time with key members of the community, such as Elders, just hanging out showing respect for their culture and values and being flexible."

Spending time together helps build the relationship and develop trust. Being flexible may mean accommodation of other community priorities at short notice.

Community members will place more value on who you are as a person and how you go about developing relationships than on formal positions and qualifications. They may also value family relationships and rituals above more traditional governance arrangements.

Two years on from the fires, and about twenty percent of homes have been rebuilt. It is likely to be several more years before most houses are replaced. There has been some acknowledgement that more has to be done to understand the specific impacts of disasters on Indigenous populations in Canada and research has commenced into how the wildfire impacted the Indigenous population during this wildfire event.

Great Law of Peace

Following is a transcript from Kyrie Ransom, a member of the Mohawk Tribe and she is describing the story of The Great Law of Peace. It's a valuable insight into how they engage with external governments as First Nation peoples. She has been learning this narrative since she was four years old.

Kyrie Ransom:
The Mohawk Nation of Akwesasne
– Land Where the Partridge Drums
Mohawk Oral Story of The Great Law of Peace

I am Mohawk, part of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, and the Haudenosaunee Confederacy is located around New York State, Ontario Quebec, so we are an international community in both the U.S.A. and Canada.

So originally the way our stories kind of tie in together starts with creation story, which talks about how humans started here on the world, how they are given the gift of having that consciousness and part of the physiology of humans, because we stand upright, and our eyes are forward facing, and we have been given that gift of having that consciousness. With that comes responsibility and specifically the responsibility to be stewards over the rest of the earth.

Then it talks about how we were given our ceremonies which are about giving thanks for everything and aligned with the cycles of the world. Depending on what time of the year it is, we will have a different story; for strawberry coming, maple syrup running, for harvest and mid-winter renewal, things like that. Once we had all these things the communities started developing and they started fighting amongst one another, so going through war, and at one point a messenger came to us and he first came to the Mohawk people and he brought a message of peace and with that he bought three different principles.

The first one is Sken:nen, Peace. So, peace is not a natural state for humans, it is something that you are always striving for, and it is something that you have to make a conscious effort in pursuing and so part of existing within the cycle, always mindful of achieving a peaceful state, both internally but also amongst one another.

The second principle is Kasastensera, which means Strength. Specifically, strength in unity, so it's a relational principle, talking about relationships between people and the fact that a big part of being able to achieve unity is ensuring that your actions and words are matching, so it speaks of integrity.

So, if you promise to do something you should do it. Part of our ceremonies with giving thanks to creation, with that responsibility for stewardship, is that your actions match what those community values are.

The third principle is Ka'nikonri:io. With that principle you have a Good Mind. So, the idea is that you go about your day and be actively releasing any negative thoughts that you have or any negative intentions, which is hard to deal with people, but again it is about intentionally approaching situations, and trying to think of things and how you positively impact something. Anytime you are looking at a situation you could always think, oh this can go wrong, this could go wrong, but with Ka'nikonri:io, you are thinking of the different ways of how this can go right. And so, part of that good mind philosophy, coupled with the other two, it creates a principled system for individuals to exist within society, so together it is called the Kalanereko: wa , or the Great Law. So, it's kind of the expectation for individuals to conduct themselves within the Haudenosaunee Society.

So, when settlers first came to this continent, it was the Dutch who came up the St Lawrence River and they first came into contact with the Mohawk community along the St Lawrence and when they met them they decided to strike an agreement that would outline the relationship between the two different countries.

This is called the Two Row Wampum belt, we call it the Kaswentha, and within this that Wampum belt it takes those principles of the Kaianere-ko-wa (Great Law), and it uses it to guide the relationship between the two. What the belt actually looks like, is it is two purple lines that are parallel to each other and the belt itself is supposed to represent the river, so it is the river of life.

That is a deliberate choice, because the water is always moving, the water is always changing. At any point in the river you are never experiencing the same water twice, and the idea that the two vessels travel down the river together, side by side, one vessel is the ship and one vessel is the canoe. So, in each vessel represents each community's cultures, language and customs and people within that vessel. As they are travelling down the river together they are separated by the three white rows, which represents Sken:nen, Kasastensera and Ka'nikonri:io, and at no point should one vessel try to steer the other, and so it speaks to a relationship of having that autonomy and respecting each other and their ability to navigate their own vessel.

From time to time as they are travelling down the river together they will hit points where the waters become treacherous, or where it is difficult to navigate a specific section of the river. During those times the two vessels are able to extend aid to one another, they are able help each other get through these rough patches, as people are meant to do, and so the overall idea is that it creates a relationship of interdependence. So that way you are able to both safely make it through, back into safe waters.

So that is one of the relationships that our community uses when we are dealing as a first nation community with external governments. So, we will often bring these teachings to the forefront when developing our laws, when we are developing our agreements, as a way to guide our processes. And it is to acknowledge that the community itself, the Mohawk community, the Haudenosaunee community have the knowledge and the ability to be able to govern themselves, but we're there and open to talking about what's in the ship's lane, and visa versa, and so it creates the ability to have those types of long term relationships.

Meeting with First Nations Emergency Services Society of British Columbia

Kamloops, British Columbia

The final leg of my trip took me to Kamloops where I met with members of First Nations Emergency Services Society of British Columbia (FNESS).

FNESS evolved from the Society of Native Indian Fire Fighters of BC, originally established in 1986 to help reduce the number of fire related deaths on First Nation reserves. It has since evolved to focus on all emergency services and emergency events.

It aims to gain the recognition and trust of First Nations communities by helping them to build capacity and capability around fire training: education, prevention, emergency community planning, and leadership and governance.

One of their achievements has been the success of the National FireSmart Community Program. This program is designed to encourage local, self-organised groups of neighbours to implement solutions for wildfire safety by engaging and supporting homeowners, community leaders, and others in shared efforts to protect people and property from wildfires. Citizen involvement is the cornerstone of the FireSmart Canada Community Recognition Program. Participants learn how to decrease the risk of losing their homes and to best protect themselves in the event of wildfire.

More information: FireSmart Canada
http://www.firesmartcanada.ca

(Taken from FireSmart Community Brochure.)

Another important program commencing in October 2017 is their First Nation Adapt Project (FNAP). Revitalising traditional burning and integrating Indigenous cultural values into wildfire management and climate change adaptation planning are the priority of this program.

FNESS have also completed on-reserve operational fuel treatments. They assisted 26 BC First Nations communities to implement forest fuel reduction treatments that were identified as priorities in local Community Wildfire Protection Plans. These mostly focused on the wildland urban interface (WUI).

The work is viewed as extremely important by local First Nations groups in terms of asset and community protection.

Later Dr Amy Christianson and Darrick Andrew, the Forest Fuel Management Liaison Officer with FNESS took me to Bridge River to meet with Mr Gerald Michele, Lands and Resource Coordinator, to talk about the work he is doing to introduce more planned burning on the Bridge River Indian Band Tribal Lands and nearby public lands.

Gerald is a Tribal member and a 'fire man'. He has been working together with FNESS to establish protocols for burn plans with the aim of bringing back cultural burning.

At present he is restricted to being able to burn on Reservation land only, but hopes to expand the cultural burning program more broadly to adjacent public lands.

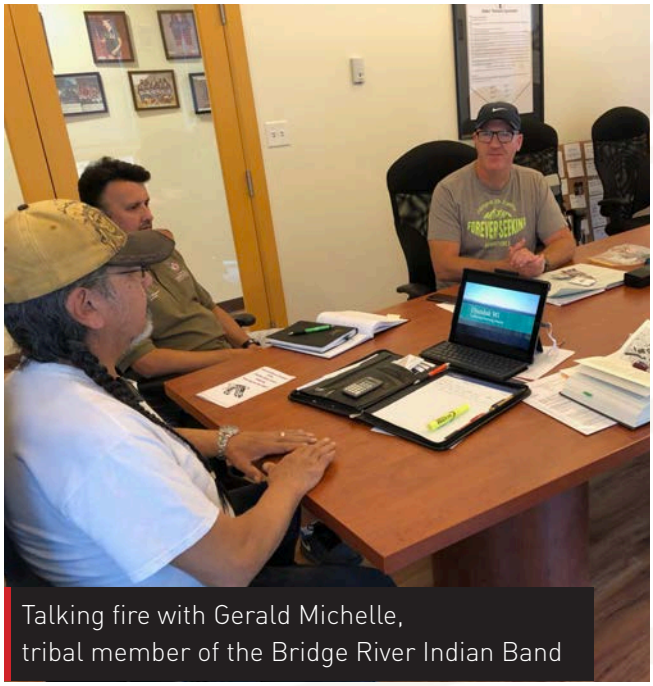
To do so he must work with fire agencies to make a case. There is a long history of wildland fire in the area and it is a priority to protect the valley and its community from wildfire.

He said that agencies are starting to listen, but progress is generally slow and there is frustration from having to complete complex burn plans and to continuously argue for traditional knowledge to be recognised.

There is a lack of flexibility in the regulatory framework.

He explained how fuel levels have continuously built up since the 1940s when the Forest Act was introduced and prevented local Tribes from burning. He said in the early days a local Chief had been arrested for undertaking a cultural burn; for doing what was a cultural responsibility.

He said since 2017, after large scale fires, attitudes were shifting and that the fire community wanted more prescribed fire, including cultural burning, back in the landscape to manage it more appropriately.



Talking fire with Gerald Michelle, tribal member of the Bridge River Indian Band

Forest thinning and Cultural Burning has been used to protect local properties and tribal lands

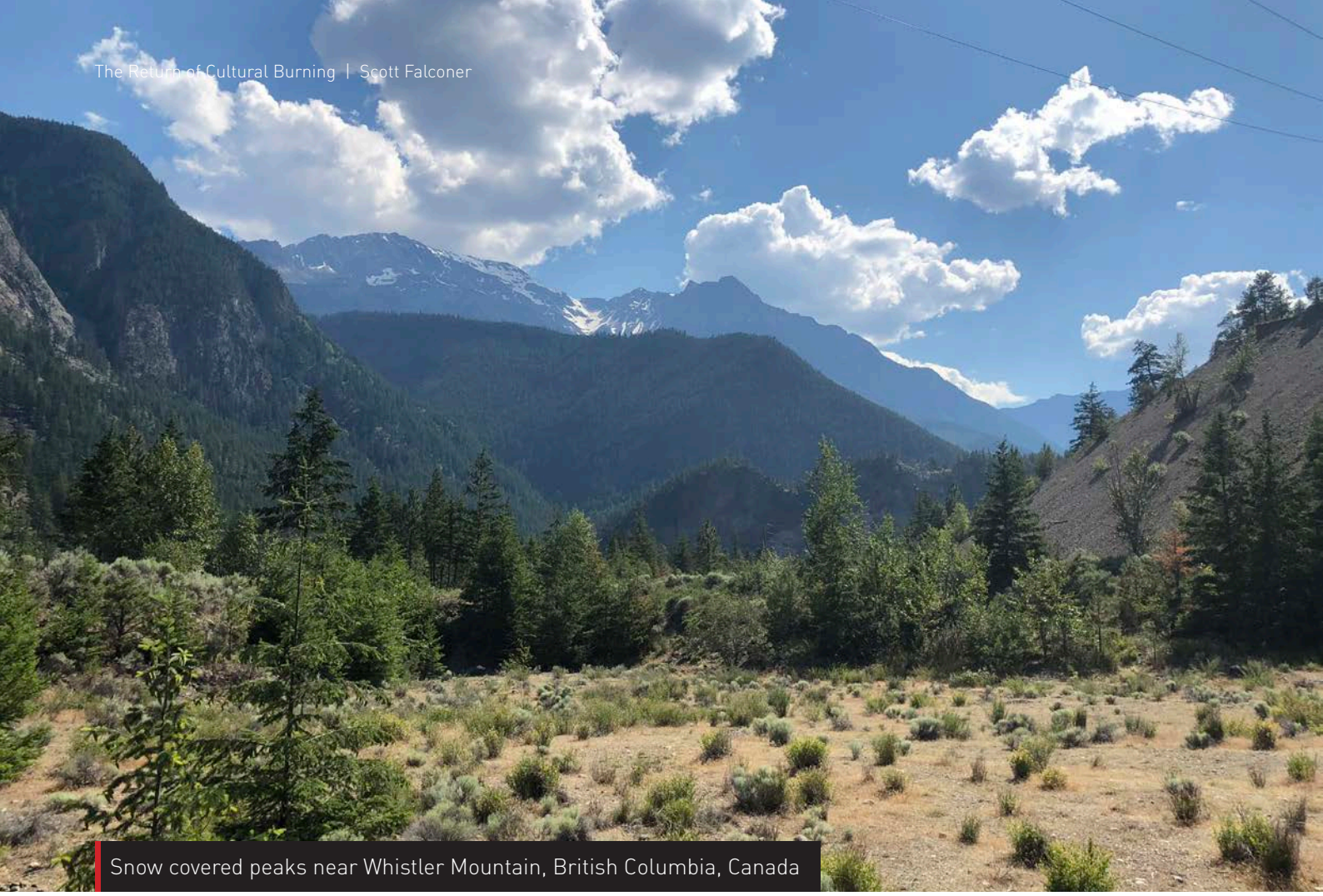
Gerald showing ceremonial regalia

**Bridge River Indian Band,
Lillooet, British Columbia
Traditional Indian Code of Ethics:**

1. Give thanks to the Creator each morning upon rising and evening before sleeping. Seek the courage and strength to be a better person.
2. Showing respect is a basic law of life.
3. Respect the wisdom of people in council. Once you give an idea it no longer belongs to you, it belongs to everyone.
4. Be truthful at all times.
5. Always treat your guests with honour and consideration. Give your best food and comforts to your guests.
6. The hurt of one is the hurt of all. The honour of one is the honour of all.
7. Receive strangers and outsiders kindly.
8. All races of children of the creator must be respected.
9. To serve others, to be of some use to family, community, or nation is one of the main purposes for which people are created. True happiness comes to those who dedicate their lives to the service of others.
10. Observe moderation and balance in all things.
11. Know those things that lead to your wellbeing and those that lead to your destruction.
12. Listen to and follow the guidance given to your heart. Expect guidance to come in many forms: in prayer, in dreams, in solitude and in the words and actions of elders and friends.

> “We would burn to the snow line as the snows were receding. We would burn an area and then return a few weeks later and burn again, maybe two or three times, as the snow continued to recede. This way there is no risk of an overly hot fire or a fire escape. Elders passed on this knowledge and showed us how to do this from a young age. Fire was used to reduce fuels and clean an area, killing wood ticks that impact Moose and Deer and to prevent plant disease. Fire has a life. When burning we must understand that we kill something to create other life.”

Gerald Michelle
Bridge River Indian Band



Snow covered peaks near Whistler Mountain, British Columbia, Canada

Dinky Collaborative, Clovis California Conversation

The last exchange of ideas occurred not in the Americas, but shortly after I had returned to Australia. Circumstances had prevented me from visiting members of the North Fork Mono Tribe in Sierra Nevada, California. So shortly after my return we arranged a Skype conversation.

Tim, Trent and I spoke with Dirk Charley (Dunlap Band of Mono Indians), Dr Jared Dahl Adern, (Historical Ecology and Eco/cultural Restoration Educator), Chip Charley (local landowner) and Stephen Byrd (Manager of Forestry).

We compared experiences in enabling the reintroduction of Cultural Burning. It was agreed that there must be good relationships between fire and land agencies and Tribal groups for there to be any success in developing the social licence required with broader communities to undertake prescribed burns of any description.

From a Tribal view, understanding and applying Cultural Burns is crucial to rejuvenating resources for a thriving and healthy forest.

We heard more stories about the importance of burning for food crops and basket material and works that had been undertaken to restore the three-leaf sumac otherwise known as the sourberry bush.

It was agreed by all that exchanging information about all aspects of Cultural Burning and how this was being introduced in various jurisdictions around the globe was worth sharing and there is an overwhelming desire for a continued exchange of ideas and support across the Pacific.

For information on what the North Fork Mono Tribe of California are doing:

Video: KCET Tending the Wild: Cultural Burning https://youtu.be/Z-EXQ9be8mE

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“ You can play a tune on black keys, you can play a tune on white keys, but both are needed for perfect harmony. We want to walk with you, we don’t want to walk alone.”

Sir Douglas Nicholls,
Yorta Yorta Elder