

Indigenous Peoples Burning Network (IPBN)

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“Our culture is completely dependent upon fire. Without fire, our culture will not survive. It’s that simple.”

Margo Robbins
Cultural Fire Management Council
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The mission of the Yurok-Hupa-Karuk IPBN is to revitalize 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.

Members of the network have identified work priorities that will advance this mission. These include revitalization of fire use in ceremonies and family-based burning, holding Prescribed Fire Training Exchanges (TREX) that include training for NWCG positions that enhance support networks, integration of youth programs (Warrior Institute and Pikyav Field Institute), hands-on community education, fire effects monitoring, revision of National Forest management plans, as well as legal and policy review regarding sovereign rights to burning.

Actions that the group has taken to date include:

- holding twice-yearly TREX in Yurok territory since 2014;
- development of a conceptual framework for development of traditional fire practitioners;
- multi-media projects for inter-generational learning, including a draft video on the cultural significance of fire and concept design for a children’s coloring book about fire;
- firefighter certification class offered by the Hupa Wildland Fire Department and Hoopa Valley High School; and
- start-up of a tool cache for family-based burning.

In this northern California landscape, initial leadership is drawn from among the local basketweavers. At the continental scale, the Yurok-Hupa-Karuk IPBN is the first in what may grow into a network that includes the male and female leadership roles of multiple indigenous fire cultures in many geographies aimed at developing capacity in two worlds of fire—contemporary and traditional.



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Yurok Tribes

VISION

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 respectful 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.



Basketweavers from the Hupa and Yurok Tribes cool off after a hot summer field trip.
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Yurok basketweaver Margo Robbins explains the basics of processing hazel sticks for weaving.
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Participants in a Prescribed Fire Training Exchange (TREX) in Yurok ancestral territory learn the connections between fire and basketweaving culture.
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Basketweavers from the Yurok, Hupa and Karuk Tribes gather hazel sticks the second growing season after a controlled burn. Hazel sticks form the framework for many types of baskets.
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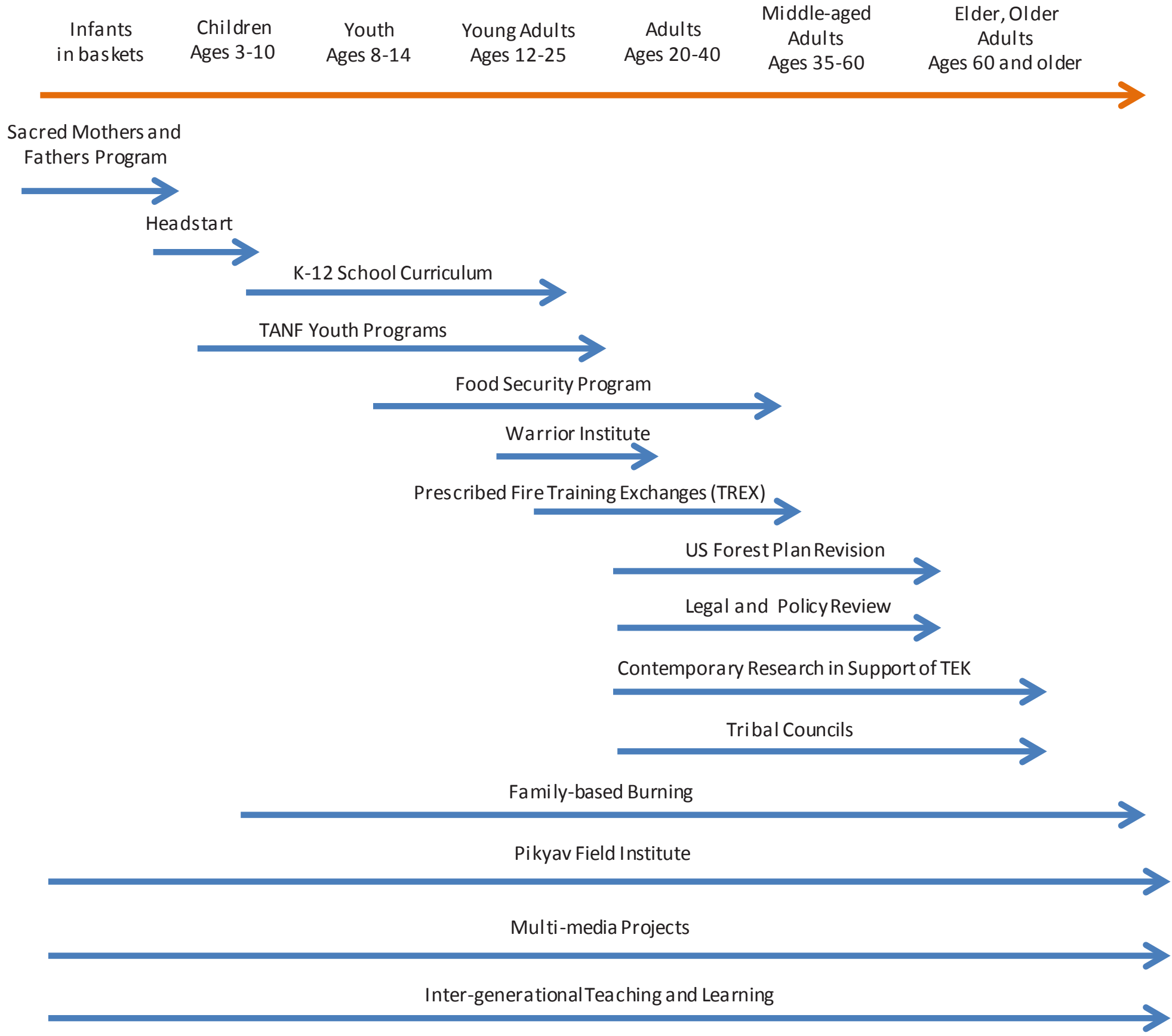


Workshop participants compare historical and current imagery of forest cover across their ancestral territories.
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During the spring 2015 TREX, crews burned about 120 acres for environmental enhancement, fuel reduction and cultural hazel production. The high-profile burning was also successful in increasing community involvement and collaboration.

Programs and Activities Relevant to the Life Stages in the Development of Traditional Yurok, Hupa and Karuk Fire Practitioners in a Contemporary Context



The Indigenous Peoples Burning Network—along with the Fire Learning Network, Prescribed Fire Training Exchanges and the Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network—is supported by *Promoting Ecosystem Resilience and Fire Adapted Communities Together* (PERFACT), a cooperative agreement between The Nature Conservancy, the USDA Forest Service and agencies of the Department of the Interior. For more information, contact Lynn Decker (ldecker@tnc.org).
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