

Team: EnviroEnthusiasts  
Username: ara.woo  
School: Jericho High School



**An Indigenous community or region with a TEK practice:**

Karuk and Yurok Tribes in Northern California



**Who are they?**

The **Karuk and Yurok tribes** are Indigenous tribes in the Klamath River region in Northern California. They use the **TEK practice of controlled burning** as a cultural practice.

**Their TEK practice:**

The Yurok and Karuk peoples have practiced cultural burning for thousands of years. This is the practice of using carefully timed, low-intensity fires to restore forest health, grassland health, and watersheds. The burns are carried out along with a ceremony, are guided by seasonal cues, and are designed to nurture the balance between people, plants and animals.

## Their practice:

### Controlled burning

This is the cultural practice of using **carefully times, low-intensity fires** to restore the health of forests, grasslands, and watersheds. They are carried out alongside a ceremony and are guided by seasonal cues.



### What it teaches about living in balance:

The Yurok and Karuk practice of cultural burning teaches us that living in balance requires reciprocation, observation, and respect for the environment. Though fire is often viewed as a force that is destructive, in these cases, it can be a tool for renewal. Through small, carefully timed burns, controlled burning allows land to breathe, nutrients to be recycled, and traditional foods, materials that stem from the forest to be replenished. The practice of controlled burning actually strengthens the amount of biodiversity, prevents catastrophic wildfires (which are common in California recently), and sustains the important and delicate balance between people and our forests. By listening to the signs from our environment such as soil moisture and plant cycles, the Yurok and Karuk tribes show their deep respect, awareness, and responsibility for nature, supporting how they sustain nature and their own community/traditions throughout generations.

### What it teaches about living in balance:

Requires:

- reciprocation
- observation
- respect for the environment
- **fire is a tool for renewal, not a destructive force**
- awareness about natural, cultural practices
- natural responsibility



### Modern Climate Lessons

#### Start integrating TEK and Indigenous Methods:

Fire management programs can be established that are modeled after Yurok and Kurak cultural controlled burns to reintroduce “good fire” to our environment.

#### Cultural burning/“Good Fire” is beneficial:

This can decrease the chances of catastrophic fires. By creating patchy areas, cultural burning can create natural firebreaks, stopping the spread of large, uncontrollable fires.

### Empower Indigenous Leadership:

By recognizing Indigenous tribes and their leaders, we can support their culture and practices. Supporting their controlled fire programs are key to sustainable climate resilience and a good balance for both us and those in Indigenous communities and all people and the environment.

### Use fire as a tool, not a threat!:

Controlled burns are beneficial!! By utilizing them, we can use them as a tool to prevent mass fire outbreaks and protect people by decreasing catastrophic fire events. As a plus, we can restore ecological balance and cultural continuity between us and the Indigenous.

#### Modern Climate Lessons

1. Start integrating TEK and Indigenous Methods
2. Cultural burning/'Good Fire' is beneficial
3. Empower Indigenous Leadership
4. Use fire as a tool, not a threat!



#### **Credit:**

This information regarding controlled burning in forests comes from the Yurok and Karuk Tribes! They live in the Klamath River region in Northern California and have lived and cared for these lands for an immeasurable amount of time. Currently, the leader of the Yurok Tribe is Chairman Joseph L. James and the leader of the Karuk Tribe is Russell "Buster" Attebery. They currently partner with the Karuk Tribe Department of Natural Resources Fire Program and Yurok Tribe Cultural Fire Management Council to continue this legacy, revitalizing tradition fire practices. Their practice is admirable and we respect their beloved culture!

#### Credit

ALL CREDIT GOES TO THE YUROK AND KARUK TRIBES!

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Leaders: Chairman Joseph L. James and Chairman Russell "Buster" Attebery

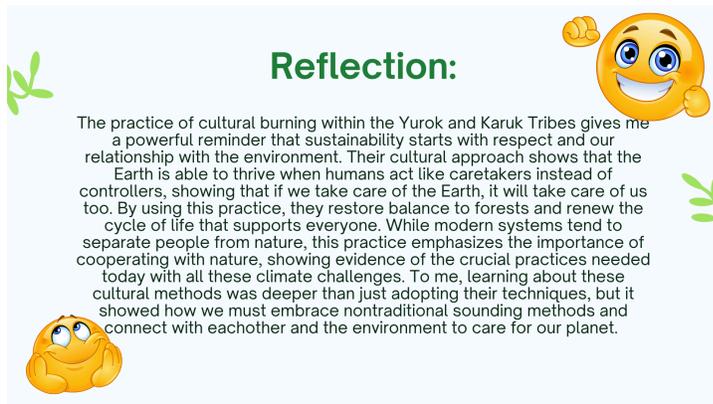


#### **Reflection:**

The practice of cultural burning within the Yurok and Karuk Tribes gives me a powerful reminder that sustainability starts with respect and our relationship with the environment. Their cultural approach shows that the Earth is able to thrive when humans act like caretakers instead of controllers, showing that if we take care of the Earth, it will take care of us too. By using this practice, they restore balance to forests and renew the cycle of life that supports everyone. While modern systems tend to separate people from nature, these practice emphasizes the importance of cooperating with nature, showing evidence of the crucial practices needed today with all these climate challenges. To me, learning about these cultural methods was deeper than just adopting their techniques, but it showed how we must embrace nontraditional sounding methods and connect with eachother and the environment to care for our planet.

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