



National Indigenous  
Fire Safety Council

Conseil national  
autochtone de la sécurité incendie

# Fire Prevention Education and Outreach

Traditional Fire Knowledge:  
Creating a Cultural Burn Pathway



# Cultural Burning



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# Brett Pituka

- Sr. Deputy Fire Marshal
- Director of Training & Accreditation
- National Indigenous Fire Safety Council



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# NIFSC

- The NIFSC is Indigenous inspired, designed, and led in collaboration with regional and national Indigenous communities, organizations and leaders
- Mandate is to support Indigenous communities in the development of their internal capacity to support community safety and resiliency



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# Activities

- Advocacy
- Research
- Governance Support
- National Incident Reporting System
- Fire Services technical support
- Public Education – Torch the Turtle
- **Training - Interactive Cultural Burning Course**



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# Why Cultural Burning Matters

- Rebuilds our relationship with fire
- Protects medicines, food plants, and wildlife habitat
- Builds resilience to climate change
- Integrates ecological, cultural, and spiritual goals



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# Course Foundation & Workbook

- Facilitated, conversation-based workshop
- Seven worksheets:
  - 1, 2, and 7 build the broad pathway for a cultural burn program
  - 3–6 guide planning, performing, and evaluating specific burns



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# 1: Creating a Cultural Burn Pathway

- Explores your community's geography, flora & fauna
- Health of forested areas
- Experience with out-of-control fires
- Previous cultural burning practices
- Knowledge and governance

**Knowledge & Governance**

How important is it to have a traditional **GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE** for fire, at the level of:

☐ community ☐ clan ☐ family

Does your Indigenous language have specific words for "fire" or "cultural burning"?

How is traditional language being included in your cultural burn practices?

Who determined where, when and why to set fire on the land?

Do we have the right people working on this burn to inform our decisions for tomorrow and the future?

How are local ceremonies and traditional teachings used in cultural burning?

Pre-burn During Post-burn



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## 2: Retaining and Sharing Fire Knowledge in Your Community

- Historical and contemporary cultural burning practices
- Legislative Impact
- Climate Change

**History of Cultural Burning**

Do you use cultural burns in your community?

Who taught you? What is your earliest memory of cultural burning?

Why did you burn?

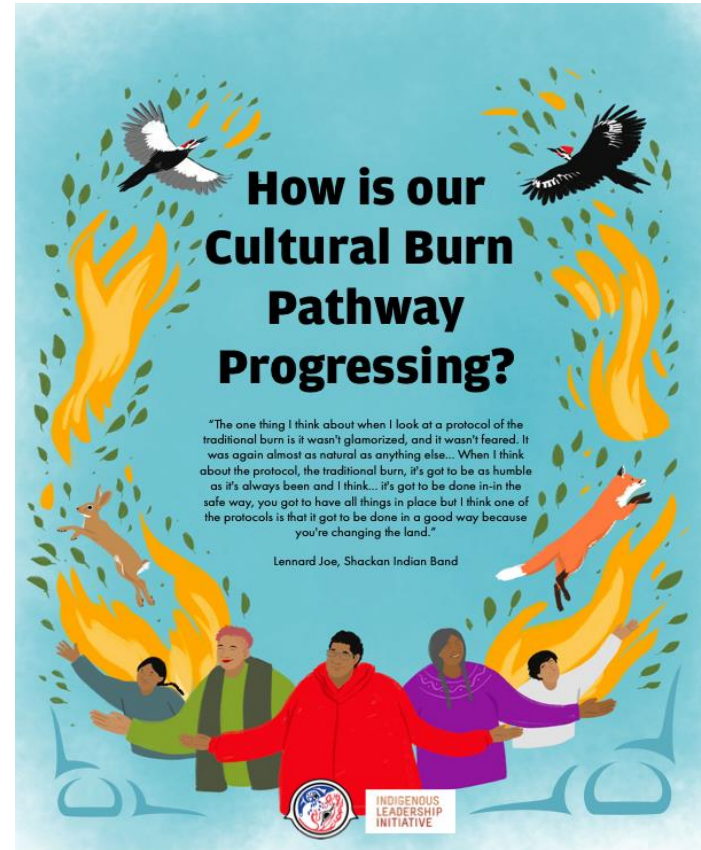
Where did cultural burning take place? (e.g. reserve lands, your own property, specific locations)



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# 7: Reviewing the Cultural Burn Program

- Number of burns
- Successes, challenges and opportunities
- Community support and capacity



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# 3: Planning a Burn

- Cultural use of the land
- Health of the land, air, water
- Cultural purposes of the burn
- Type, duration, and frequency of burn
- Intended outcomes

**Cultural Burn**

Is there a ceremony that needs to be conducted before the burn? If unsure, how can you ensure the burn is done in a good way?

What should the land look like after the burn? How will you clean the land?

Who needs to be notified about the burn?

Who should be involved in a cultural burn?

☐ Internal to community ☐ Multi-generational families

☐ External to community (provincial/territorial wildfire agencies) ☐ Neighbouring Indigenous communities

☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_



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# 4: Performing a Burn

- Weather and ecological conditions
- Community leaders and personnel
- Size, duration, intensity, and outcome of fire
- Ceremony

*Who is participating in the burn?*

Number of people? \_\_\_\_\_

Have they worked together before?  
☐ yes ☐ no other: \_\_\_\_\_

Why were they selected? \_\_\_\_\_

What are their roles? \_\_\_\_\_

What do you want to learn or have participants learn? \_\_\_\_\_

Is there a ceremony/ritual that needs to be done before you light the burn? \_\_\_\_\_

What role(s) do you want to have? \_\_\_\_\_



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# 5: Assessing Short Term Effects

- 1week - 1year
- Observing plants, animals, birds, insects, air quality
- Positive and negative outcomes
- Were cultural objectives achieved?
- Impact on community socially, relationship to land, knowledge transfer

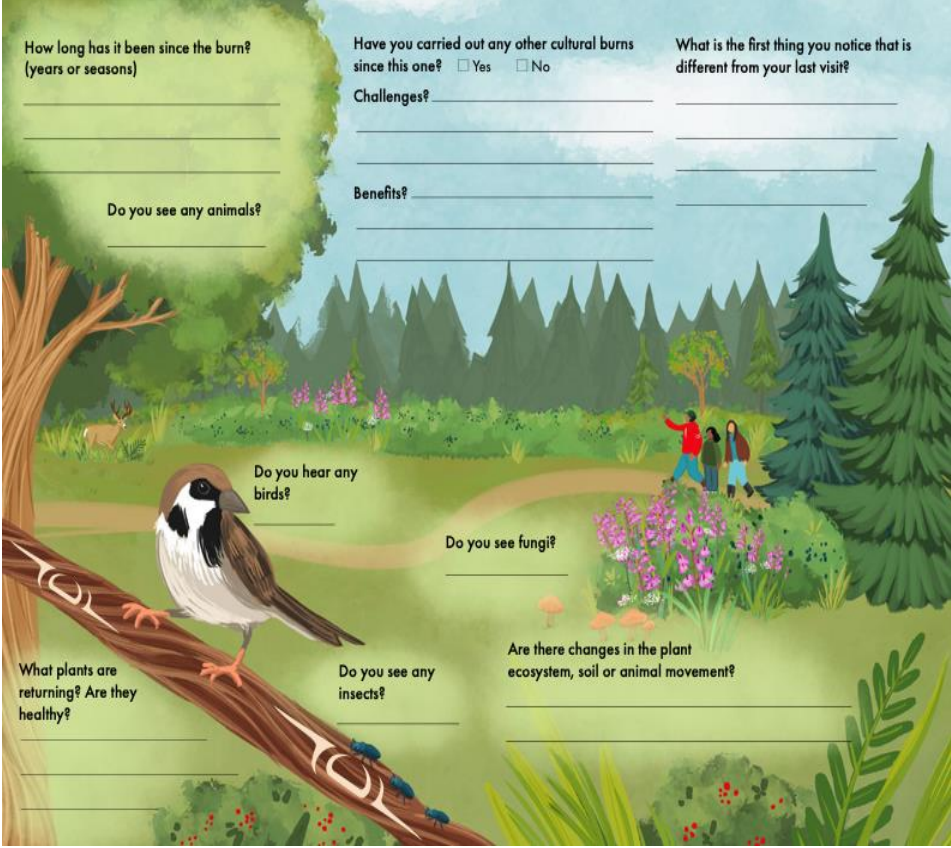


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# 6: Long Term Effects

- 3-4 years post burn
- Lessons learned
- Positive and negative outcomes
- Impact on wildfire
- Cultural and community connection



How long has it been since the burn?  
(years or seasons)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Do you see any animals?

\_\_\_\_\_

Have you carried out any other cultural burns  
since this one? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Challenges?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Benefits?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What is the first thing you notice that is  
different from your last visit?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Do you hear any  
birds?

\_\_\_\_\_

Do you see fungi?

\_\_\_\_\_

Are there changes in the plant  
ecosystem, soil or animal movement?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What plants are  
returning? Are they  
healthy?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



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# First Nations Fire Protection Strategy

- Fire Prevention and Education Pillar
- School-based program bringing Elders, community leaders, professionals, and youth together
- Community initiative to build readiness for cultural burning
- Delivered as a workshop, or in modules



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# Youth & Community Benefits

- Culturally relevant fire prevention
- Engages community in fire safety
- Promotes intergenerational learning through storytelling
- Preserves land-based knowledge that is at risk of being lost



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# Resource & Customization

- Open Source
- NIFSC can collaborate with Nations to tailor the course to local teachings and education systems.



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# Closing

- Thank you for your time and interest in revitalizing this knowledge within your communities



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