



sʔulíp: Northeast Washington Indigenous Peoples Burning Network

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INTRODUCTION

Indigenous Peoples have been using fire to steward the land since time immemorial. In 2015, the Indigenous Peoples Burning Network (IPBN) was established to provide a support network among Native American communities that are revitalizing their traditional fire cultures in a contemporary context. The network is led by Indigenous cultural practitioners and is centered on Indigenous cultural burning to help bring people back into balance with fire. The Nature Conservancy provides sponsorship and administrative support for the network.

In Northeast Washington, the desire to restore cultural burning practices and support Indigenous fire sovereignty led to the formation of sʔulíp* (pronounced *s-ooleep*), the Northeast Washington Indigenous Peoples Burning Network (NE WA IPBN). The word sʔulíp is the Spokane Salish word for flame. Before starting sʔulíp, a group of Indigenous fire practitioners from Northeast Washington got to know each other at various local cultural events and fire/fuels meetings over the years. Through conversations around the need for a cultural burning program in the area and looking to other examples, such as the Yurok-Hupa-Karuk IPBN in California, an idea took hold. In 2023, the group reached out to Mary Huffmann (IPBN Director) and began setting up regular meetings and events. Since then, the sʔulíp planning group has helped facilitate and grow the IPBN into a local Indigenous-led network of cultural practitioners and partners that support each other.



Image 1. Group discussion and work identifying priorities at the 2025 Good Fire Gathering.

The Northern Rockies Fire Science Network (NRFSN) serves as a go-to resource for managers and scientists involved in fire and fuels management in the Northern Rockies. Funded by the Joint Fire Science Program, NRFSN is one of 15 Fire Science Exchange Networks across the country. The network facilitates knowledge exchange by bringing people together to strengthen collaborations, synthesize science, and enhance science application around critical management issues.



* Editors Note: The Spokane language does not use upper case, therefore the name of the group "sʔulíp" has not been capitalized.

SʔULÍP EMERGES

The NE WA IPBN is comprised of nineteen different entities, ranging from Tribal Nations, inter-Tribal and nongovernment organizations, academic and education institutions, and state and federal agencies. The group is led by its Core Team, made up of participants from The Nature Conservancy Indigenous Peoples' Burning Network, L.I.G.H.T. Foundation, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), the Yakama Nation, the Kalispel Tribe of Indians, and the Spokane Tribal Network. A full list of the composition of the NE WA IPBN can be viewed on the L.I.G.H.T. Foundation's website.

sʔulíp held its first in-person event in October 2025, a two-day Good Fire Gathering where participants could share ideas, build relationships, and inspire action. It was at this gathering that the name sʔulíp was identified as the moniker for the group. The event was hosted on the Spokane Reservation by the staff of the Spokane Tribal Network (STN), an Indigenous nonprofit. After assisting the STN with putting their food sovereignty demonstration garden to bed for the winter, participants of the Good Fire Gathering workshop began laying out broader goals for the network.



Image 2. Hybrid meeting at the 2025 Good Fire Gathering

NEXT STEPS

As sʔulíp continues to develop cultural protocols, capacity, and objectives, the group will carry on supporting Indigenous grassroots efforts for revitalizing cultural fire while balancing the sharing and protection of cultural knowledge. There are plans to stand up a website, but in the meantime, you can learn more about sʔulíp on the [Indigenous Peoples' Burning Network website](#).

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Learn more about the Indigenous Peoples Burning Network (IPBN): <https://firenetworks.org/ipbn/>
- Good Fire zine from the Red Bird Camp Collective: <https://tinyurl.com/NRFSN>
- L.I.G.H.T. Foundation recap of 2025 Good Fire Gathering: <https://thepnwlf.org/our-voices>
- NRFSN Hot Topic: Fire & Traditional Knowledge: <https://nrfirescience.org/hot-topics/fire-traditional-knowledge>



Image 3. Discussions at the STN Food Sovereignty Demonstration Site Garden during the 2025 Good Fire Gathering.

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