

# Human Impacts on the Environment – Fire on the Land

## Fast Facts

Curriculum Area: Social Studies

Grade Level: Grades 6-8

Suggested Duration: Three – Five Class Periods

## Stage 1 Desired Results

### Established Goals

#### Social Studies Standards

(3) The geography content standards for sixth through eighth grade are that each student will:  
(d) explain how the environment and geographic features have affected people and how people have affected the environment throughout Montana, the United States, and the world;  
(e) explain the role and impact of spatial patterns of settlement and movement in shaping societies and cultures, including Indigenous cultures.

#### Science Content Standard

Earth and Space Science content standards for fifth grade are that each student will: obtain and combine information from various sources about ways individual communities use science ideas to protect the Earth's resources, environment, and systems and describe examples of how American Indians use scientific knowledge and practices to maintain relationships with the natural world. (Note: Lesson reinforces this 5th grade science standard.)

### Understandings

- Students will understand aspects of traditional and contemporary uses of fire by the Salish and Pend d' Oreille tribes. (Essential Understanding 3)

### Essential Questions

- In general, how did American Indians perceive their relationship to the natural world?
- To what extent did this environmental perspective lead tribes, like the Salish and Pend d' Oreille, to use fire to revitalize plant and animal communities?

### Students will be able to...

- research, analyze, and discuss the use of fire by the Salish and Pend d' Oreille tribes.

### Students will know...

- the traditional and contemporary uses of fire by the Salish and Pend d' Oreille Tribes.



Indian Education for All Unit

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## Stage 2 Assessment Evidence

### Performance Tasks

1. Students will read articles and gather background information regarding historical and/or contemporary uses of fire and share their finding with the rest of the class via poster board/PowerPoint presentations and an oral summary of major points.

## Stage 3 Learning Plan

### Learning Activities

Introduce the lesson by sharing this video clip called “Carrying Fire the Pikunii Way.” The video provides an example of how Blackfeet people traditionally carried fire. Facilitate a class discussion after watching the clip and summarize key concepts and ideas from the video. Ask students if this was new information for them and inform them they will now have an opportunity to learn about other tribes and their relationship with fire.

background information with students

For thousands of years, the Salish, Pend d’ Oreille, and other tribes of the Northern Rockies periodically set fire to the land, profoundly shaping plant and animal communities.

**Fire on the Land: A Tribal Perspective** (excerpt taken from the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribal website):

#### Reason for the Project

- The landscape European-Americans first saw when they traveled west of the Mississippi was not a natural terrain in the sense of being untouched by humans. It was a cultural landscape, a landscape in which the plant and animal communities had been shaped in large part by many thousands of years of burning by Indian people.
- In many areas, tribal people more than doubled the frequency of fires.
- Today, as managers attempt to reintroduce fire after more than a century of fire exclusion, the extent to which Native Americans used fire as a land management tool is often left out of the public debate.

#### Brief Description

- This project will increase public awareness of and appreciation for the Indian use of fire as a land management tool and increase the public’s acceptance of prescribed fire by producing an integrated set of educational materials focusing on the use of fire by Indian people and the profound effects that Indian burning had on plant and animal communities.
- The materials produced will also discuss fundamental principles of fire ecology in the Northern Rockies, the changes that have occurred in vegetation as a result of one hundred years of fire exclusion, and how and why fire is being restored to the landscape. It will integrate the most up-to-date scientific knowledge and technology with traditional tribal knowledge about the use of fire.

On the Fire on the Land website you can hear elder interviews and learn about fire ecology, the traditional use of fire by the tribes, and today's efforts to restore landscapes by reintroducing fire. Tell

students they will be utilizing the web site to conduct research on various aspects of traditional and contemporary fire use. This assignment could be done individually or in small groups.

#### Topics for students to research

- Fire Ecology
- History
- Traditional Culture
- The Great Changes
- The 19th Century
- 20th and 21st Centuries
- Fire Management Today

#### Independent/Guided Research

Students will utilize the website to research their topics, share their finding with the rest of the class via poster board presentations, and give an oral summary of key concepts regarding their topic. Allow classroom time for research and presentation preparation. Suggested duration is two class periods for research and one-two class periods for student presentations.

#### Materials/Resources Needed

[Fire on The Land interactive website](#)

Students could also go to the library and check out a copy of the DVD entitled *Fire on The Land* which was sent to all Montana school libraries.

[Carrying Fire the Pikunii Way](#) Another tribal perspective regarding fire, which provides an example of how Blackfeet people traditionally carried fire.