



December 2020 Story Archives

USDA Forest Service Appoints New Tribal Relations Director

The USDA Forest Service recently appointed a new director to the Tribal Relations program. Reed Robinson announced his new position in a blog post on the [Tribal Relations webpage](#). Here is a snippet of that post from November 5, 2020.

“November is National American Indian and Alaska Native Heritage Month and an excellent time to consider what ‘heritage’ means to Native Americans. My name is Reed Robinson and I am the newly appointed Director of Tribal Relations for the USDA Forest Service. I am also both Sicangu Lakota and an enrolled member of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe.”
-Reed Robinson, Director, Office of Tribal Relations

[Read more](#) about the USFS Tribal Relations Director Reed Robinson’s powerful message about what “heritage” means to Native Americans.



Reed Robinson has been appointed as the Director of the Office of Tribal Relations. Photo provided by USFS Tribal Relations.

Alarmed by scope of wildfires, officials turn to Native Americans for help

“Fire was absolutely a part of what we did all the time,’ she said. ‘It wasn’t a fearful thing.’

“Long before California was California, Native Americans used fire to keep the lands where they lived healthy. That meant intentionally burning excess vegetation at regular intervals, during times of the year when the weather would keep blazes smaller and cooler than the destructive wildfires burning today.

“The work requires a deep understanding of how winds would spread flames down a particular hillside or when lighting a fire in a forest would foster the growth of certain plants, and that knowledge has been

passed down through ceremony and practice. But until recently, it has been mostly dismissed as unscientific.

Now, as more Americans are being forced to confront the realities of climate change, firefighting experts and policymakers are increasingly turning to fundamental ecological principles that have long guided Indigenous communities.”

-[The Press Democrat](#)

Read the [article in The Press Democrat](#), by New York Times journalist Jill Cowan.

NE CASC Fellow’s Perspective: Our Place in This Place

NE CASC Undergraduate Fellow Jasmine Neosh, a student at the College of Menominee Nation, has published a [personal essay](#) that uses Robin Wall Kimmerer’s *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants* as a touchstone to explore the destructive politics underlying the negative representation of humanity’s relationship with the environment and the urgent need to recast that relationship in positive terms.