

Regeneration

By Marlene' Dusek

Take me to the lands where the chapparal, oak woodlands,
prairies, and the forest understory are burned in a traditional
cycle.

The lands during springtime yúulalash, deergrass, and many
other plant ancestors regenerate from kút, fire, in the fall.
The lands where my ancestor's DNA remains after managing
for generations.

Túutu, grandmother, told me that to have strong materials
for your basket, you must pray, sing, and manage with kút.

I was hoping you could take me to the lands where the oaks
are healthy, and the acorns are bug-free.
The lands where the seeds need kút to germinate.

The lands where kút has nourished tamáayawut's,
earthmother's, soils, where water cycles thrive.

Notice how I don't say "wildfire". That's a different concept
you see.

Our 'atáaxum have a word, 'akúumisa, meaning exposed to
fire and smoke for too long, or a wildfire, a high-intensity fire,
more detrimental than the kút I speak of.

Wildfire hit these lands with colonizers starting in 1542.

Genocide, forceful removal, harmful practices on the lands,
and outlawing of cultural traditions came with different
phases of colonization committed by Europeans, Spanish
mission systems, Mexican ranchos, and gold miners.

After this, most of the lands that were kút adapted became
grazing lands for cattle and livestock.

Overgrazing caused more and more destruction, and the
spread of seed that was alien to this ecosystem.

During California's first year of statehood in 1850 came

criminalization for cultural practices that had been carried out on these lands for millennia. The 1945 policies of suppression of kút continued. Maybe you are familiar with Smokey the Bear, the fire suppression propaganda that's lasted for 70+ years?

The chaparral got thicker, the forest understory became crowded. Dangerous levels of fuel were built and different managing styles are now on lands so broken up and divided; consequences our elders told us would come from constant extraction and mistreatment of tamáayawut.

WILDFIRE: APPARENT DEVASTATION.

I say kút not to scare you, but to remind you that

This relationship is an old one,
A natural one.

Regeneration of many cycles are dependent upon
kút for existence.
Our peoples have always been in tune with this.

The lands that I speak of are right here.
We must repair this balance, this way of living.

We must regenerate with kút.

