



## Spring Service-Learning Camp 2019

For our 6<sup>th</sup> Spring Camp we gathered April 15-19 at Quaker Oaks Farm near Visalia. The theme was Shoyum Oh'set, Sacred Fire in Wukchumni, as we continue to build on the theme of the sacred elements: Water, Earth, Fire and Air. This year seemed especially appropriate to focus on Fire given the devastation of wild fires seen in California over the past 2 years.

Our time together felt deeply grounded by our growing understanding of and respect for Sacred Fire. Quakers and First People share an understanding of the Sacred Fire, or spark of Creator/Spirit in each of us, that animates and connects us. The Wukchumni and other First People extend that understanding to include the Sacred Fire in all creation, the plants, animals, and earth itself. Each prayer concludes with "All my relations" to remind us of the sacred connection to all creation.



We were able to learn about the use and impact of Fire in very concrete ways. We were introduced to the effects of Fire on the ecosystem in a clear and engaging power point presentation by Jeanette Acosta, a Chumash elder with both deep understanding of traditional uses of fire, its effect on the plants and ecosystem and also professional experience leading

controlled burn teams in the state park system. The first people of California used these frequent low intensity fires to promote the growth of the plants they used for food and materials. The smoke from fires fumigated the trees killing pests and promoting healthy trees. Intentional, managed fires also created open park like natural areas and prevented more devastating fires by reducing fuel loads.

That afternoon we went to an area of Quaker Oaks Farm designated for the Peace Garden designed by youth last summer. We worked together to safely burn foxtails and dead wood, cleaning the area in preparation for native plants to be planted in the fall.

The following days we traveled to Wishtoyo Chumash Village in Malibu. Perched on a plateau between the





Pacific Coast Highway and the ocean, Wishtoyo experienced the Hill and Woolsey wildfires last fall. They lost one of the Aps, a traditional Tule home, but all other structures narrowly escaped the fire. Where the fire and subsequent mud slide raced through the creek ravine, we now see a few skeletons of trees, but mostly a lush and beautiful growth of wild flowers. The plants exposed to fire are growing at a rate several

times their neighbors who did not experience fire. It was amazing to see how quickly the landscape is recovering from fire.

At Wishtoyo we also learned to shuck abalone, make cordage, played in the ocean, and learned about ways Native voices have not been heard in history and currently in some environmental planning processes.

Twenty youth participated in camp. Ages ranged from 11-17 years old, and included 12 Native youth -9 Wukchumni and 3 from Fresno American Indian Health Project representing various tribes and 8 Quakers from around the state. We were happy to have seven first time attenders, because we had a number of regular attenders who have now aged out.

The planning and direction of camp is a partnership between the Wukchumni Tribe, PYM Youth Programs and Quaker Oaks Farm.



Native and Quaker staff serve jointly in all leadership roles. We are proud to have such excellent support from all our partners and from donors like you. We could not do it without you!

Together we had fun, made friends and learned a lot!