



HOW ONE NATIVE AMERICAN COMMUNITY RECOVERED FROM A DISASTER

IN THE NEWS

In 2014, fire departments, emergency management agencies, and relief organizations across the U.S. adopted *The Red Guide to Recovery – Resource Handbook for Disaster Survivors* as a tool to help build their community's resiliency to disaster events. We want to say a special thank you to them for their support:

A Wildfire Destroys an Entire Community

With September being National Disaster Preparedness Month, we wanted to share a story on how one Native American community faced a devastating wildfire and what one Tribal leader did to help his community recover and rebuild their lives.



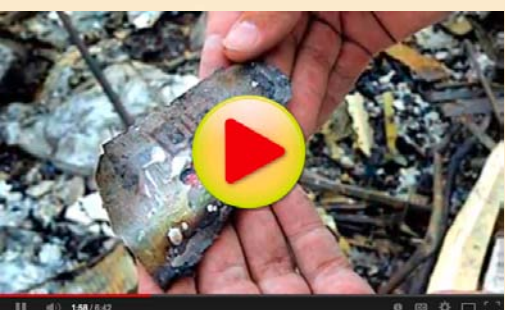
On October 20th 2007, wildfires swept through San Diego County destroying over 2,322 homes and damaging countless others. One community that was hardest hit was the home of the La Jolla Band of Luiseño Indians. Located in the rural Northeastern part of the county, the La Jolla Indian reservation found itself in the path of the Witch Creek and Poomacha Fires, which consumed 92% of the

homes on the reservation, leaving most of its Native citizens homeless and community infrastructure inoperable. Once the smoke cleared, the survivors returned only to find their homes and everything they owned was forever lost. Most if not all of the residents had never experienced a disaster before and certainly not one of this magnitude. Adam Geisler (now Tribal Council Secretary), whose Grandmother, Uncle, and Cousins also lost their homes, stepped in to facilitate the recovery and communications between Tribal, Federal, State, and local agencies to rebuild his community. With the help of his mother, LaVonne Peck (now Tribal Chairwoman) to lean on for advice, Adam began the long term recovery process that the community was about to endure. Mr. Geisler quickly saw what was needed and worked tirelessly with numerous faith-based and community organizations, including Mennonite Disaster Services, Jewish Family Services, The San Diego Foundation, and the Regional Community Response Team. Through continued partnership with a variety of agencies and Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters (VOAD's), Adam helped guide his Tribe through the Federal Declaration, the FEMA Individual and Public Assistance process, and the rebuilding of over 39 homes lost in the wildfires and subsequent mudslides.



After this event, Adam realized that other Tribes in San Diego County were vulnerable to disasters and wanted to establish an organization where all 18 local Tribes could work together to build a better preparedness future. Necessity became the Mother of invention and with the support of several Tribal leaders, the San Diego Foundation, and the American Red Cross, the Inter Tribal Long Term Recovery Foundation (ITLTRF) was born. The ITLTRF is a non-profit, public benefit corporation with a mission to strengthen area-wide disaster coordination on Tribal lands affected by wildfires and other disasters by sharing information, simplifying resident access to services, and jointly resolving cases with disaster-caused recovery needs.

Recognized as a leader in disaster preparedness and recovery for Native American communities, Adam has now contributed his experience into a brand new Native American & Alaska Native edition of *The Red Guide to Recovery – Resource Handbook for Disaster Survivors*. This edition addresses the unique challenges that individuals and families in Native communities face after a disaster along with tools and resources to help them prepare for recovery in advance.



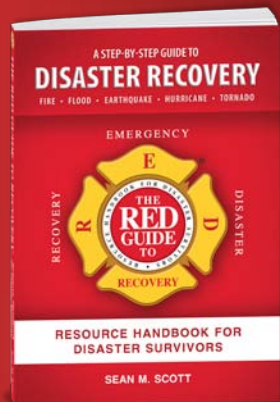
Check out this short video to hear the stories of Native leaders who went through the Poomacha and Witch Creek Fires.



Donations to disaster survivors: Earlier this month we donated copies of *The Red Guide to Recovery* to Okanogan County, Washington to help the families who lost their homes in The Carlton Complex Fire. Our hearts and prayers are with you!

Get
The Red Guide to Recovery
and don't let a disaster make you a victim!

Click on the book for more info



::: FREE RESOURCES :::

[Click here](#) for resource links and tools to help you prepare or recover from a disaster.