

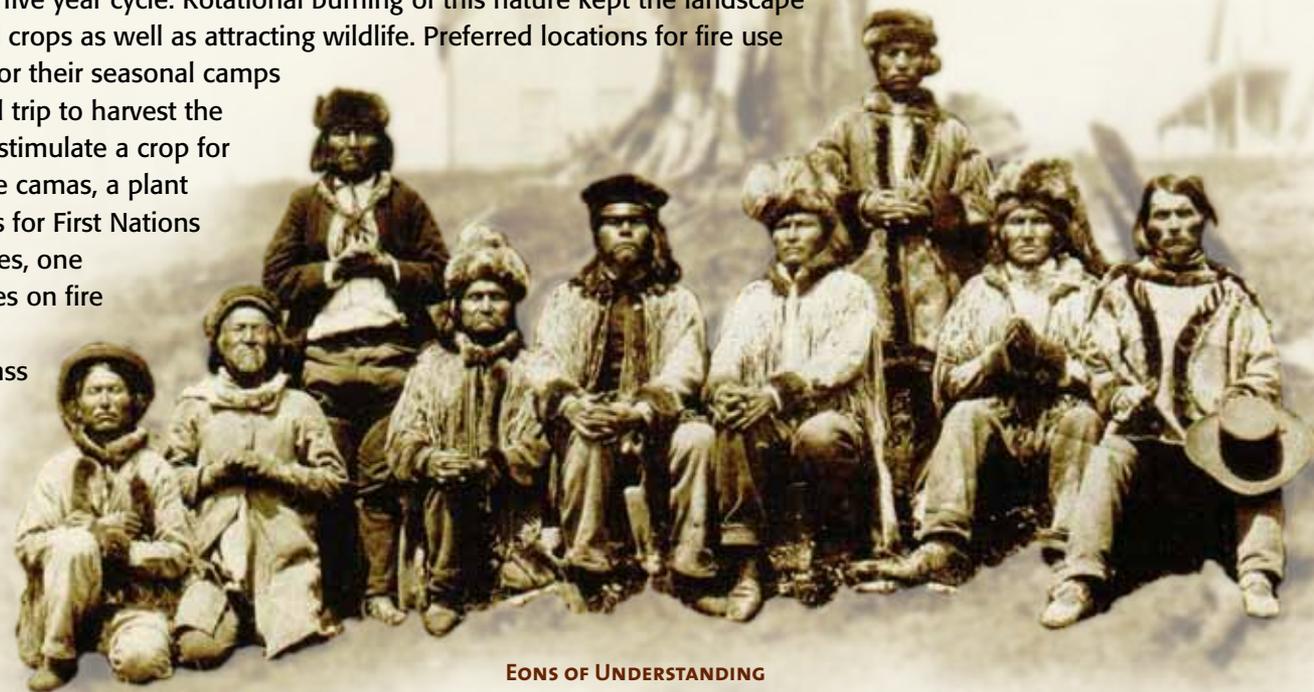
# THE FIRE CULTURE

**F**or First Nations, fire was a tool in resource management and community sustainability. It was used to manage food and medicinal plants, create the habitat that would attract desirable wildlife and reduce the risk of fuel loading around communities.

Burning was done at times of the year when it would achieve intended results and it required knowledge of fire behaviour and vegetation response. At least 12 fruit bearing shrubs and six plants with edible roots were encouraged by traditional burning practices.

Certain areas were treated with fire on a four or five year cycle. Rotational burning of this nature kept the landscape area in constant production with desired natural crops as well as attracting wildlife. Preferred locations for fire use would have been close to First Nations' villages or their seasonal camps or could be far enough away to require a special trip to harvest the current year's crop and then carry out a burn to stimulate a crop for the following year. An example of this is the blue camas, a plant whose bulbs provided a source of carbohydrates for First Nations people on south Vancouver Island. On the prairies, one historian noted, "Indians...willfully set the prairies on fire in the autumn so that the bison would come to their part of the country to get the rich green grass that would follow in the spring."

In the northern boreal forests, spring burning kept meadows open while in the fur trapping areas, the fires of spring encouraged aspen and willow to support beaver and moose populations. *(Acknowledgements: BC Forest Professional: John Parminter, Peter Murphy)*



EONS OF UNDERSTANDING