

PRESS RELEASE
Karuk Tribe

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KARUK TRIBAL HERBARIA OPENING AUGUST 11
Native plant collections are among first managed by an indigenous people

Orleans, CA - The Karuk Tribe Department of Natural Resources is delighted to announce the official Grand Opening of the new Karuk Tribal Herbaria on August 11, 2016 from 4 – 6 pm. The public is invited to attend.

“The Karuk Tribal Herbaria provide a good representative sample of culturally significant food, fiber and medicinal resources collected from our Karuk homelands. With this resource, our staff can build upon a cumulative body of traditional ecological knowledge through shared learning with the next generation who will manage our natural resources,” said KDNR Deputy Director Bill Tripp. “While plants of importance to tribes are often collected by others, tribal herbaria are relatively rare. As one of the first herbaria created and managed by an indigenous people, this effort represents a valuable contribution to Tribal sovereignty.”

These collections of preserved and mounted Native plant specimens currently include over 100 culturally and regionally significant plants, photographs and related data. In developing this collection, the Tribe aims to increase people’s ability to recognize, locate and consume food plants, while building their knowledge about the importance of these plants for nutrition, health, and cultural preservation. The collections will be housed at the Karuk Office of Historic Preservation and the Karuk People’s Center in Happy Camp, CA.

The Tribal Herbaria were assembled by lead Tribal Food Security staff Ben Saxon with Heather Rickard, both Karuk Natural Resource Technicians. Guidance and support were provided by Kathy Barger-McCovey and other Karuk Cultural Practitioners, UC Berkeley Post-Doctoral Researcher Megan Mucioki, UC Berkeley Ethnobotany Professor Tom Carlson, and UC Berkeley Curator of Cultivated Plants Andrew Doran. The collections are being developed as part of a broad US Department of Agriculture funded Klamath Basin food security initiative, led by UC Berkeley’s Dr. Jennifer Sowerwine and a network of collaborators throughout the Klamath Basin and at external partnering institutions.

Related activities to date include plant collection, pressing and preservation workshops for area youth and adults, and development of new Herbaria-focused lessons in the Native Food Security K-12 Curriculum now being piloted in local schools. “A goal from the beginning has been to teach children about the importance of these plants to the Tribe and how to preserve them,” said Food Security Coordinator Lisa Hillman. “We’re thrilled that not only do Klamath Basin children and youth now have access to these plant specimens, but also that dozens of our tribal and non-tribal students are out learning plant identification, associated traditional ecological knowledge, and the tribal etiquette of proper collection, and in the classrooms gaining the western scientific-based skills of plant specimen mounting.”

Future plans include continued expansion of the collection, ongoing community workshops, and a digital database of the plants to be housed in the new Sipnuuk Digital Library, Archives and Museum (<https://sipnuuk.mukurtu.net>).

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