

## **Karuk Tribe of California**

### **PRESS RELEASE**

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*Happy Camp, CA* – In response to a structural fire, which destroyed a ceremonial dance house at the Karuk ceremonial area of Katimin near Somes Bar on July 2, 2006 an emergency session of the Karuk Tribal Council was convened last Friday by Vice Chairman, Leaf Hillman.

Following Friday's emergency session, the Tribal Council announced it had approved a plan to offer a reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of those responsible for the destruction. "We are working closely with several law enforcement agencies including the Siskiyou County Sheriff's Department, the Klamath National Forest, and the FBI to assist in the investigation" said Vice Chairman, Leaf Hillman. Hillman also stated that he expected a \$10,000 reward would be announced by the end of the week. In addition, the Tribal Council has established a special fund to accept donations that will be used to increase the reward amount and to assist with the rebuilding efforts.

The physical investigation of the site has been completed and law enforcement will now focus on conducting interviews with individuals to develop additional information and leads. Over the next few weeks investigators will be in the area conducting interviews and gathering information, and the Tribal Council is calling on the local community to cooperate with the investigation. If individuals have information concerning this matter we are asking that you step forward.

Until the motive for this egregious act becomes known to us, the Tribal Council is insisting that this matter be pursued as a crime of hate committed against the Indian community. Hate crimes being committed against Tribal communities is certainly not new. What is new however, is a broader acceptance within our society that the hate crime label applies to religions other than Christianity. If you burn a Baptist Church in the South everyone knows it will be pursued and prosecuted at the highest level as a hate crime.

In speaking with ceremonial and traditional leaders they feel that this site is sacred to them as a site where Karuk customs are practiced in the traditional ways. This is consistent in their opinion and held in the same regard as a Church is to other widely accepted religions.

For more information contact Leaf Hillman or Florence Conrad at (530) 493-1600.