

Hózhó: Balance and Beauty in the
Navajo World

Isaac H. Salay

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Introduction

In early November on the sandstone mesas behind Tuba City, one of the largest towns on the Navajo Nation, Renae Yellowhorse talked about the Navajo creation story and emergence into the Fourth World, the Glittering World. In this world, the sun was created bringing brightness and light to its inhabitants and thus the name glittering. Like some other Navajo, or *Diné* people, Renae believes that the Navajo emerged into the Fourth World at the confluence of the Colorado River and the Little Colorado River, a sacred site for the Navajo and other tribes. Renae passionately explained that this world was in fact “glittering” but for all the wrong reasons. The earth glittered from trash and broken glass scattered across the mesa north of Tuba City, from the lights of the nearby coal burning Navajo Generating Station and from development projects that disturb Navajo sacred sites. Like any grandmother, Renae hopes that her grandchildren will grow up with a good education, pride in their community and opportunities in the future. (Renae Yellowhorse, correspondence). Unfortunately the reservation cannot always ensure these things.

Others have different hopes for the *Diné* future. With over 300,000 Navajo people it is impossible to generalize. Council Delegate Nelson Begaye, who represents the districts around Tsaile in the Navajo Tribal Council, hopes that the Navajo can initiate economic development projects that will encourage youth to stay on the reservation. More than half of Navajos live off of the reservation in border towns or the mega-cities of the Southwest like Phoenix and Albuquerque. Although it is the largest in the United States, only about 47 percent of Navajo live on the reservation (2010 U.S. Census, Navajo Population Profile). Youth migrate off to find jobs or attend school. Begaye also

hopes that the Navajo can take more control of their public school curriculum, thereby encouraging the survival of the Navajo language and culture. Finally, he hopes to revitalize the farming and herding practices that sustained the Navajo for centuries, thereby encouraging healthier self-sufficient living (Nelson Begaye, correspondence).

Dr. Anthony Lee is president of the Diné Hataalii Association (DHA), a group of Navajo medicine men. He calls for education reform like Nelson Begaye and is working to build a school that will teach *Diné* youth the traditional uses of plants and healing ceremonies. Dr. Lee and DHA's biggest concern is protecting places that are held as sacred to the Navajo people. They are engaged in a legal battle against the Snowbowl Ski Resort in Flagstaff, Arizona, which has recently begun making snow with reclaimed water on the San Francisco Peaks, *Doko'oosliid*, an immensely sacred site to the Navajo. Dr. Lee compared this desecration to someone "relieving" themselves in the Mormon Tabernacle or the Sistine Chapel. Unfortunately Native people often have their religion and spirituality disregarded as well as their notions of sacredness (Anthony Lee, correspondence).

Jason Nez, an archaeologist for the U.S. Forest Service, has his own hopes and dreams for the future of the Navajo Nation. He hopes for strong leadership in Window Rock, the capital, that will respect the diverse desires of the Navajo population. He also hopes that the government will assert their tribal sovereignty in ways that are constructive and not threatening to sacred lands. He feels that the tribal government must resist the pulls of development projects that offer revenue but create cultural and societal woes. Finally, Nez wants the Navajo identity to be reaffirmed, for the Navajo to have pride in

their home and to walk in the path of Changing Woman, a holy person who represents the ideal way of living (Jason Nez, correspondence).

What all of these narratives have in common points to a key concept of the Navajo Way of Life: *hózhó*. In the *Diné* language, *hózhó* best translates to balance, harmony and beauty. In every sense this is exactly what Renae Yellowhorse, Nelson Begaye, Dr. Anthony Lee and Jason Nez are striving for. They want balance in the Navajo economy and government, balance between Mother Earth and its inhabitants, and harmony in the Navajo Nation that will ensure the future of the tribe and its culture. *Hózhó* is a guiding principle that provides direction for the Navajo people, although it holds a different meaning for each individual.

This thesis compiles historical and archival research and first hand experiences from time spent on the Navajo Reservation. Most of the interviews were conducted in the fall of 2015. This information aims to create a better understanding of the preservation and implications of *hózhó* to the Navajo people. It also traces the relationship between the Navajo and the United States that has created threats to the cultural beliefs and values that are important in the creation of *hózhó*.

Hózhó: A Guiding Principle

To understand how *hózhó* has manifested itself in the Navajo Nation you must begin with their creation story. In *God is Red*, Vine Deloria explores the struggles that Native religion, ceremonies and spirituality have endured at the hands of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and Christian Churches. Deloria concludes that to question the gods and sacred places of Native peoples is hypocritical when Christian thinkers believe the Bible

as the complete truth (Deloria 1973). Therefore, while many Navajos are affiliated with Christian churches of the Western World, their creation story provides spatial situating for the Navajo. Many Navajo practice a combination of their traditional religious ceremonies and Western religions like Mormonism and Catholicism. The creation story and other Navajo oral traditions are necessary in understanding the establishment of *hózhó* as a principle for Navajo life. This version, one of many, is adapted from a telling by Joseph Bruchac:

The Navajo believe that before our current world existed there was the First World that was dark. The First Man, First Woman, Salt Woman, Fire God, Coyote and Begochiddy lived here. Begochiddy began to create the mountains, plants and bugs. Knowing that they could not live in the dark, Begochiddy instructed the First Man to take these things and ascend into the Second World. In this world, Begochiddy created the clouds and other creatures. For a time people were happy but this world was still not correct so they ascended again, this time into the Third World. This world was beautiful but the tricky Coyote angered the Water Monster by stealing its children causing the world to flood. Begochiddy lead his creations up a great reed and emerged into the Fourth World where he created the Sun, Moon, Stars and the Four Sacred Mountains that mark the borders of the sacred Navajo Land. First Man and First Woman built the first Hogan. Everyone was happy in this world but they knew that just as the other three worlds had been abandoned, the Fourth World could also be abandoned if the Diné People do not live correctly. (Bruchac 1991).

Although abbreviated, this story provides a sense of spatial awareness. As the Navajo understand it, they were placed between four Sacred Mountains and this is where they reside to this day. Other versions include more worlds that are emerged into before reaching this world. In many cases the Fourth World is known as the “glittering world.” Emergence into these worlds occurs at different locations for different Navajo clans and families. Some believe they emerged into *Diné Tah*, an area located in Northwest New Mexico near Herfano Mesa and Gobanador Knob, two sacred sites for the *Diné*. Others

believe emergence occurred at the confluence of the Colorado and Little Colorado Rivers at the western border of the Navajo Reservation. By situating themselves in this geography, the creation story creates *hózhó*. The sacredness of the geography creates a spiritual connection, which is essential to balancing all things. In addition, by situating themselves here, the Navajo have gained a unique knowledge of their environment, allowing them to survive the often unforgiving climate of the Southwest.

Connection to place creates harmony for the Navajo. The Navajo's place is centered in the Southwestern United States, around the Four Corners. Scholar and activist Vine Deloria notes a key difference between Native people and the Western world, "Indians hold their lands—places—as having the highest possible meaning." (Deloria 1973:61) Contrary to western science, which tracked migrations of Athabaskan people, Navajos and Apaches, to the Southwest in the 1300 and 1400s, the Navajo believe they emerged into their homeland between the Four Sacred Peaks. Mt. Taylor near Grants, New Mexico, Mt. Blanca in Southern Colorado, Mt Hesperus near Durango, Colorado and the San Francisco Peaks in Northern Arizona mark the boundaries and cardinal directions of the Navajo homeland. The present day, US formed, Navajo Reservation does not include any of these Four Sacred Peaks leaving their protection largely out of Navajo hands and limiting access to these ceremonial centers.

Through their creation story and other oral traditions the Navajo are intrinsically connected to their environment and landscape. Navajo cultural life centers on the relationship with their environment and land, "The bonds between Navajo families and their lands constitute a central, but often neglected, aspect of Navajo Society" (Kelley 1986:1). In *Wisdom Sits in Places*, Kieth Basso explores the connection between Native

peoples and their geographical setting and its importance in creating identity and maintaining culture. He notes, “Knowledge of places is closely linked to knowledge of the self, to grasping one's position in the larger scheme of things, including one's own community, and to securing a confident sense of who one is a person.” (Basso, 1996) The Navajo view many geographical locations within their homeland as sacred, knowledge holding, and important. The air, water, plants and animals in this landscape are also sacred. The land and its occupants provide sustenance, ceremonial plants and a connection to the creator and holy people. As Basso notes, these sacred landscapes are important for the creation of self and therefore the Navajo identity. They have supported the Navajo, economically, culturally and spiritually since creation and are essential in the preservation of *hózhó*.

Other Navajo stories also help create *hózhó*. When the *Diné* entered the Fourth World, this world, there were monsters that threatened, terrorized and killed the Navajo, creating imbalance and disorder. When only a few *Diné* remained, White Shell Woman gave birth to twin boys. The boys received guidance and prayers from the Holy people including Spider Woman, who taught the Navajo to weave, and Changing Woman. After this training, they would grow to become the Monster Slayer Twins: *Nayenezgáni* and *Tobadsistsini*. *Nayenezgáni*, the elder brother, defeated the monsters like *Yeitso* and *Teeglet* that terrorized the *Diné* homeland and thus restored *hózhó* to the Fourth World (Henderson 1956). Today, the twins are immortalized in stone at the Twin Rocks near Bluff, Utah, further connecting the Navajo to their traditions and environment.

Coyote and Changing Woman are other key figures in Navajo storytelling. Coyote is the trickster and provides opportunity for guidance and balance. “Coyote not only

shows the limits of acceptable social behavior by transgressing them...He shows what life would be like without social restraint” (Wilson 1997:170). In this way Coyote provides life lessons to the Navajo by showing them what not to do, thereby ensuring balance and harmony. Coyote tests the Navajo and appears in many forms. Coyote’s trickery was evident in the Navajo creation story when he stole the water monster’s children forcing the Navajo to abandon the third world to escape a great flood. Changing Woman, in contrast, shows Navajo the ideal path of life and represents fertility and the Earth (Jett 2001:127). Each morning she rises with the Sun in the East as a child, she then walks the entire Navajo Homeland every day and prays at the Sacred Peaks. She leads the ideal life and teaches the Navajo about this path. By the time the Sun sets Changing Woman has visited each direction and become an elderly woman (Jason Nez, correspondence). Coyote and Changing Woman offer a dialectical relationship that creates balance and *hózhó*.

Balance and order are also maintained through a traditional gender dichotomy in aspects of both the natural and unnatural world. By presenting the world with two equally important forces the Navajo way of life finds harmony and balance. In the cosmos the male Big Dipper interacts with the female Cassiopeia just as Father Sky counters Mother Earth. Male and female *hogans*, the traditional and still used Navajo dwelling, serve different ceremonial and domestic purposes. The four Sacred Peaks and four rivers that mark the boundary of *Diné Bikéyah*, the Navajo Homeland, also represent the male and female dichotomy. Black Mesa and the Chuska Mountains, two important and sacred geological features on the Navajo Nation are female and male respectively. These dialectical relationships provide the Navajo with knowledge and guidance within their

daily lives (McPherson 1992). This dichotomy does not purport any set gendered rules or suggest that gender is dichotomized but recognizes the need for balance, order and *hózhó*. Male and female aspects in the surrounding cosmology can be compared to the Navajo need to find balance in their collective and individual worlds.

Navajo tradition has provided many examples and opportunities for balance and order. Ceremonies, storytelling, sacred places and other aspects of Navajo culture are what *hózhó* is based in. Unfortunately, colonialism, settlement, capitalist economic structures and Federal Indian Policy have created threats to these aspects that create balance.

Today, an entirely new set of monsters has emerged in *Diné Bikeyah*, the Navajo homeland. These monsters have armed themselves with new weapons called poverty, unemployment, political disarray, domestic violence and suicide, loss of culture, the struggle for sovereignty and many more. *Yeitso* and *Teeglet* have been replaced by settler state colonialism and backwards Indian policies implemented by the United States federal government. The Monster Slayer Twins are no longer here to combat these monsters.

In the Fourth World, Coyote continues to create chaos. Jason Nez described Coyote as the casino lights urging gambling, the bartender urging one more drink and the greedy developers attempting to exploit and trick the Navajo people with promises of wealth and prosperity but may, in actuality, disturb sacred sites forever (Jason Nez, correspondence). The lessons of Changing Woman are not always there to counteract with the intrusions of the Western World. The gender dichotomy in Navajo cosmology has been replaced by seemingly conflicting narratives that the Navajo must confront. A similar dichotomy can be found between modernism and traditionalism, Navajo culture

and Western culture, economic development and the protection of sacred sites, and every other aspect of the Navajo world. Balance in these aspects, *hózhó*, may be key to the continued success of the *Diné*.

Federal Indian Policy and Colonialism

“The untransacted destiny of the American people is to subdue the continent--- to rush over the vast field to the Pacific Ocean...to set the principle of self government to work--to regenerate superannuated nations...to turn darkness into light. –William Gilpin (1846) (Wilson 1997:49)

Since the arrival of Europeans in the ‘New World’ in 1492, colonial tactics have been used to dismantle and marginalize indigenous populations. The European powers viewed Native populations as inferior and saw it as their mission to colonize the continent, to convert the inhabitants to Christianity and to “use the land better than they could” (Wolfe 2006:389). The Doctrine of Discovery was announced by Pope Alexander VI in 1493 and gave newly discovered land to the first European nation to set foot on it. This doctrine ignored the established, advanced societies that already lived on and interacted with these lands. Colonization was also justified in *Calvin’s Case* of 1608, which pronounced that any non-Christian was an infidel and therefore should be conquered and have their land colonized (Echo-Hawk 2010). Numerous European nations used these ideas to justify the taking of lands in the New World and commit acts of genocide upon indigenous populations (Wolfe 2006).

Once the United States gained its independence from Great Britain, the concept of Manifest Destiny became essential in understanding the relationship between Native Americans and the U.S. Manifest Destiny refers to the prevailing notion that it was the God given right of the U.S. to expand across the entire continent and reach the Pacific Ocean. To accomplish this, the new settler state, following in the footsteps of their European predecessors, committed acts of unspeakable violence against Native peoples, arguably committing genocide and forcibly removing entire tribes in an effort to make way for settlement (Wolfe 2006).

In 1830, President Jackson passed the Indian Removal Act, forcing the tribes of the Southeast to relocate to reservations in present day Oklahoma. The subsequent Cherokee Trail of Tears began an era of removal and relocations in which the United States took their land and forced them, often violently, onto reservations much smaller than their original territory. This cleared land for mining, agriculture, settlement and railroads and effectively subjugated Native Americans, separating them from their sacred spaces and traditional hunting and fishing territories. Frederick Jackson Turner's thesis on the American frontier claimed, "the existence of an area of free land, its continuous recession, and the advance of American settlement westward explain American development." (Turner 1893). He claims that westward expansion was essential to the creation of the American identity; ignoring that these lands were not "free" and that expansion required violent wars, assimilation and forced relocation.

Throughout the subsequent years, Federal Indian Policy helped to facilitate the destruction of Native peoples and cultures. Most of these policies relied upon and received precedent from three court cases known as the Marshall Trilogy. Chief Justice

John Marshall, through the trilogy, effectively established the present day relationship between tribes and the federal government. Unfortunately, the cases were based on ideas of racial superiority and the doctrine of discovery, which gave the ‘New World’ to Europe and justified colonialism (Robert Williams 2005).

The first case, *Johnson v M’Intosh* (1823), confirmed these notions and established that while the tribes had a right to occupy the lands, they did not have ownership of the land; the discovering nation did. The land was held in trust by the United States and the U.S. had the right to extinguish any Native claims to land (Echo Hawk). The second case, *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia* (1831) established the tribes as ‘domestic dependent nations’ and formulated a guardian-ward relationship between the tribes and the government. Many tribes are still very dependent on the federal government and are treated like wards, thus diminishing any hope for complete tribal sovereignty. The third case, *Worcester v. Georgia* (1832) established that only the federal government, not states, would have power over tribal relations. This power is known as Plenary Power, and essentially means that the federal government can impose and implement any law or policy upon a tribe if it suits the best interests of the United States (Echo-Hawk 2010). The aftermath of these cases justified the policies implemented throughout the 19th and 20th centuries and served to create a “racialized dictatorship over the tribes.” (Williams 2005).

The Dawes Severalty or Allotment Act of 1887 looked to convert Native people to sedentary farmers by allotting acreage to individuals for agriculture. While potentially with good intentions, the allotment of Indian Territory disrupted local economies and communal societal structures. Any leftover lands following allotment were sold to

railroads and ranchers at bargain prices, effectively separating Native people from their homelands, sacred sites and life-ways.

There are numerous examples of policies implemented to assimilate the Native people to Western, American culture, which was and is viewed as superior by the dominant society. The most notable and well-known policy was the boarding school policy beginning in the 1860s. Its purpose was to acculturate Native children by removing them from their homes and forcing them into schools, often far from their homeland, in order to “Kill the Indian, save the man.” (Wilkinson 2005). At these boarding schools Native children had their hair cut, were converted to Christianity, forced to learn English and wear non-traditional clothing. Many consider long hair an extension of the sacred path of life and a connection to the spirit world. In effect, they were separated from their families and made to forget their traditions and language. Abuse, including sexual, was also commonplace at these the boarding schools. The collective trauma of these schools has contributed to many of the social problems that affect reservations today, including suicide, domestic and sexual abuse and alcohol addiction (Hirshberg, 2005). The U.S. white dominant society did its best to eliminate Native culture starting with Native children. The Bureau of Indian Affairs, with the backing of Churches, would also implement bans on many Native ceremonies throughout this time period (Echo-Hawk 2010).

In 1953, Congress passed legislation House Concurrent Resolution 108 which served to end federal services, promised in treaties, to five large tribes and numerous small tribes across four states. Known as the Termination Era, these tribes would no longer receive any funding from the federal government for education and healthcare and

would no longer be recognized as a tribe by the United States. Some were able to fight the legislation and maintain their sovereign status but many did not have the resources and support to resist, effectively losing all rights to their land and tribal ways of life (Wilkinson 2005).

By 1970, President Nixon, recognizing the often problematic history between the federal government and Native people, finally encouraged increased tribal sovereignty. Native America entered the Self-Determination Era. While strides have been made in tribal education, economic development, land reclamation and legal battles, issues have not ceased for Native people on and off of reservations. Undoubtedly, the fight for tribal sovereignty will continue into the coming years.

Native American people were removed from their homelands, forced onto reservations, starved, massacred, were forced to forget their language and culture in boarding schools, had their lands taken and sold, had their governments and economies uprooted in exchange for Western models, had their culture appropriated, had their inherent sovereignty questioned and have been forgotten and ignored in favor of the best national security and economic interests of the United States. Today, rates of suicide, crime, poverty, and unemployment are high on reservations. Native people struggle to maintain their culture within systems of forced assimilation, and fight for their inherent tribal sovereignty every day. The Navajo were subjected to every one of these horrors and still struggle to maintain their way of life and *hózhó* in the face of these plights.

The Way Things Were

The first *Diné* experience with a European entity came from the Spanish who introduced the Churra sheep and other livestock to the Navajo in the 1500s. The Navajo lived in *Diné Bikeyah*, in decentralized clan groups who only rarely interacted with one another. Some engaged in agriculture in areas like Canyon de Chelly while others, mostly men, hunted and raided the Pueblo communities along the Rio Grande River. Upon the arrival of the Spanish, sheep herding and pastoralism became the mainstays of the Navajo economy and lifestyle. The sheep provided food and sustenance to the Navajo, and wool for weaving. Up until 1864, the Navajo economy was self-sufficient (O'Neill 2005). Each clan and family group was connected to its respective landscape and geography for survival and ceremony. The system of kinship bonds, known as *K'é*, provided a sense of community and a support group in times of economic hardship. This economic structure, a natural economy, would function for the Navajo for centuries until Western capitalism, industrialization, and wage labor were introduced (Weiss 1984).

Early Navajo political structures were decentralized and focused at the clan level. Clans, or family groups were communal and geographical. Each of the over 60 Navajo clans largely handled the issues and decisions within their own community. The decisions were made at community meetings where men and women as well as elders were typically given equal input. Rarely, every few years, the headmen of each band would meet to discuss large-scale issues such as war and peace at a meeting called *Naachid*. Furthermore, these community meetings had little power of coercion; instead kinship ties and economic communalism created order. Early political boundaries were non-existent and large geographical knowledge was based in cosmology and stories. (Sachs 2012 & Jett 2001). As a matrilineal society, lands were passed down through the women and they

held decision-making power within the clan unit and within the local economy (Jett 2001:125). Kinship and clan communalism helped to reduce poverty by ensuring mutual assistance (Rosser 2005:257).

The decentralized political structure, matrilineal, clan based society, natural, pastoral economy and spiritual connection to sacred places through ceremony functioned within *Diné Bikeyah*. Each aspect provided balance and order, perpetuating *hózhó* for all. Over the next few centuries, these systems would be fundamentally changed for a variety of reasons, ultimately creating imbalances that the Navajo have had to confront.

Threats to *Hózhó*

In 1864, the United States Army led by Kit Carson forcibly rounded up thousands of Navajos and moved them to Fort Sumner, *Hwééldi*, in Eastern New Mexico, over 350 miles away. This collective removal is known as the Navajo Long Walk and is the most significant trauma inflicted upon the tribe. The removal was intended to stop raiding by the Navajo and Pueblo Tribes as well to force a sedentary agriculture based society upon them, the ideal of the Western world (Jett 2001). Removal was one colonial tactic used by the United States to subjugate and control Native people. Many Navajo died along the 350-mile trek and those that survived were given to arid, implantable land at Fort Sumner and were separated from the places they had called home since time immemorial.

This connection to their homeland was made clear in 1868 when the U.S. government and the Navajo signed a treaty ending their internment. One Navajo chief, Barboncito, professed, “I hope to God you will not ask me to go to any other country except my own.” General Sherman, the Indian Peace Commissioner, offered the Navajo

land in Oklahoma, what was then Indian Territory, and in the Arkansas Valley, but to the Navajo the choice was clear. (Navajo Treaty of 1868). *Begochiddy* had created the land between the Sacred Peaks for them and that is where they intended to reside. Their sacred places were there, their ceremonies are performed there, and the herbs and medicines are gathered on those lands. The treaty gave the Navajo a 100 square mile as well as seeds, food and livestock and the ending of their internment at Fort Sumner in return for the promise of peace (Navajo Treaty of 1868).

The formation of this reservation was based on the idea that these lands were unproductive, lacked mineral wealth and that the Navajo would not impede the construction of the railroads sweeping across the West (Kelley 1986). This colonial tactic would backfire on the U.S. government when vast reserves of mineral wealth were found beneath Navajo land in the early 20th century. The reservation policy, implemented on tribes across the United States, created immediate imbalance as the Navajo and their herds were restricted to a small area, separated from many of their sacred sites and limited in their movement. The unfortunate truth is that the growth of the Southwest and its numerous metropolis centers depended and continues to rely largely on the manipulation, exploitation and marginalization of the Navajo Nation and its residents (O'Neill 2005:154).

In 1868, after the Navajo Treaty was signed, the United States appointed a Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) agent to the Navajo Reservation to serve as a liaison between the parties. Communal clan groups continued to dominate the societal and economic structure on Navajo land, yet, many failed to recover their herds and land base following their internment and relied heavily on meager government rations for survival (Weiss

1984:39). By 1900, the Navajo Nation had nearly quadrupled in size as population of humans and livestock grew, thus requiring a larger land base (Wilkins 2013). The expansion of the reservation further symbolizes the Navajo connection to this place and the need for land economically and culturally. Still, the United States saw the land as barren and unproductive to their needs throughout the early 20th century.

By 1890, large changes began occurring within the Navajo economic structure. The largest shift came from the introduction of capitalism and wage labor due to the construction of railroads sweeping the West. These railroads are intrinsically connected to Manifest Destiny and the U.S. mission to conquer the continent. Many Navajo left the reservation to help build these systems while others found employment with the BIA as policemen or messengers (Weiss 1984). In conjuncture with wage labor came trading posts offering commodity goods to the Navajo, and another disruption to the natural economy. Unfortunately, wages were often insufficient to support a family and those most apt to herd the sheep were now employed away from their flocks and land. In essence, Navajo society became stratified, “individualism replaced more egalitarian and collective values...clan rivalry developed”. (Francisconi 1998:7). *K'é*, the Navajo kinship bond, was affected as families were separated. The BIA also implemented grazing laws that required permits for livestock and grazing rights further disrupting in place systems. The western capitalist model was clearly ineffective and created immediate imbalance.

Around the same time another large shift occurred as the US wealthy elite became obsessed with “primitive” Indian art and craft. Described as “domestic Imperialism” by Erika Bsumek, the commodification of Native art allowed the Western world to “reinforce their identity as civilized members of society” while, at the same time,

painting Native groups like the Navajo as primitive, uncivilized and dying. (Bsumek 2008:121) This stigma continues to marginalize the Navajo as they interact with the modern world.

Trading posts, like those run by Lorenzo Hubbell on *Diné Bikeyah*, served as the middle man in these situations by trading Navajo rugs and jewelry for commodities like flour and coffee. These white traders went to great lengths to ensure that the Navajo remained primitive in the eyes of their buyers and often marked the goods up 600 percent, generating a substantial profit off the Navajo wears. The Navajo received artificially low prices for their goods, which benefited the traders and buyers and as described by Francisconi “this is the definition of imperialism.” (Francisconi 1998:42) This relationship, “tended to evenly impoverish the Navajo petty commodity producers rather than disintegrating them into classes of capitalists.” (Weiss 1984:157). Again, the Western model, imposed capitalism, was inefficient and created issues directly affecting *hózhó*. Capitalist models that are integral to imperialism will continue to emerge on the Navajo Nation, not without consequences.

By 1920, large oil reserves were discovered in the northern reaches of the now expanded Navajo Reservation. This discovery prompted the need for a centralized government to sign and approve leases with mineral extraction companies. These negotiations required a centralized voice to represent the entire nation, which contrasted early communal decision making processes. The BIA promptly formed a new government that centralized power, created clearly demarcated boundaries within the reservation and created the bureaucratic ruling class that runs the tribe today. The new government, headquartered in Window Rock, Arizona, would make decisions that

affected the entire tribe but did not have the community input that early political forms had (Sachs 2012). Despite much opposition to the centralization of the government it still exists and has created problems of nepotism, corruption and fraud begging the question of whether the Western model is effective for the Navajo?

The oil leases, although technically approved by the tribal government, were largely negotiated by BIA agents and BIA appointed lawyers and did little to improve the economic situation of the Navajo. Language barriers existing between the parties further complicated the negotiations and served only to harm the Navajo position and give away Navajo land. Royalties from the extraction of these minerals was supposed to provide funds to improve education, healthcare, infrastructure, and allow the new tribal government to invest in other economic development projects. Tribal chairman in the 1930s, Jacob Morgan, made attempts to resist the taking of Navajo land by outside energy corporations and secure fairer leases, yet, by 1980 the tribe was only receiving 13.3% of the world market value of the oil on their land (Evers 1982). In addition, the BIA intentionally redistributed Navajo oil royalties for pork-barrel projects off the reservation to develop tourism in the Southwest (O'Neill 2005:22). This narrative, corporations and the United States government winning while the Navajo lose, is repeated constantly. Furthermore, while becoming wealthy these industrial corporations were also scarring the sacred Navajo environment and removing living aspects from Mother Earth thereby affecting the balance that has existed between the *Diné* and their land.

In the 1930s and early 1940s the Bureau of Indian Affairs, led by then commissioner John Collier, forcibly reduced, through slaughter, the number of livestock

on the Navajo Reservation by half. Conservationists with the New Deal fervor for change saw erosion and range deterioration across the reservation, in their belief directly related to Navajo pastoralism. While many Navajo resisted the reductions, their livestock were taken by BIA agents and shot, clubbed and burned in huge piles in front of their owners. Navajo leadership, political and religious, was unable to contribute to the decision-making surrounding the reductions. Some had their entire subsistence livelihood erased. Sheep provide food, wool for Navajo rugs and some income when sold. To many, the sheep corral “was like a bank. When you need money, you can go to your corral take out a sheep and sell it.” (Evers 1982:218). Many Navajo consider these years the second worst event in their collective memory, only rivaled by the Navajo Long Walk (Weisiger 2009).

What John Collier, a staunch supporter of Native peoples, and his employees failed to realize was the cultural, societal and economic importance of livestock, especially sheep, to the Navajo way of life. Prior to the 1930s and following the introduction of the Churra Sheep by the Spanish in the 1500s, pastoralism defined the Navajo economy and cultural makeup. Here we find one of many differences between Western thinking and the thinking of Native America. Where the BIA saw overgrazing as the cause of erosion and ecosystem degradation in the Southwest, the Navajo people believed in the animate, living qualities of Mother Earth, and understood that a cyclical lack of rain was causing these problems, and that ceremonies would renew *hózhó* between the landscape and the sheep (Weisiger 2009). Others recognized the importance of sheep in providing the natural manure and tilling to keep the land functional. George Blueeyes shared this knowledge:

“Plants come up only where there are sheep and horses. Those are the places where it rains. If the ground is hard, when it rains the water just flows. It doesn’t soak in. It soaks in only when the sheep walk on it. They walk over their dried manure and mix it with the earth. When it rains it soaks into the ground with the seed.” (Evers 1982:177).

Western science and the BIA ignored this traditional knowledge, integral to survival of the people and environment in the region.

Another important narrative about the reductions is the evidence that erosion across the Southwest was causing large-scale sediment build-up behind the Hoover Dam, threatening one of America’s greatest structural masterpieces and the reservoir providing water to the Southwest. The dam was necessary for the so-called “Big Buildup” of the Southwestern United States. Mega-cities like Phoenix, Las Vegas and Los Angeles required the water reservoir created by the dam and the power produced by its hydroelectric capabilities (Wilkinson 2005). The Navajo became the scapegoat to blame for the structural threats to the Hoover Dam. The Navajo were marginalized in order to defend the best national security and economic interests of the United States government (Weisiger 2009). This narrative is repeated often in *Diné Bikéyah*.

When the livestock reductions ended the Navajo Nation was out of balance. Some people experienced psychological pain so severe that deaths were reported. In *Diné*, the Navajo language, *ch’ééná* describes these deaths from loss related induced sadness. (Evers 1982). This policy represents yet another example of the federal action that has harmed and marginalized a Native population.

The livestock reductions provided the catalyst for another major shift in the Navajo economy. Although wage labor opportunities existed earlier through the railroad industry, the destruction of pastoralism created a complete shift to a western capitalist

model. While many left the reservation entirely to find work, on reservation jobs were provided either through the BIA or through external capitalist corporations, who were mostly concerned with extracting the natural resources, coal, oil and uranium, that existed in huge quantities beneath the Navajo Reservation. The oil companies of the 1920s and 30s were followed by coal companies in the 1950s and 1960s looking to extract the precious resources beneath *Diné Bikeyah*. Like the oil leases, the BIA negotiated the leases with minimal communication and discourse with tribal members (Hall 1994). This gave companies like Peabody Coal, Pittsburg & Midway and Conoco easy access to the Navajo resources. One company, Utah International, paid the tribe 15 cents per ton of coal and sold that same ton for 16 dollars in the world market (Wilkins 2013). The BIA, whose job was and is to represent and protect Native Tribal interests, failed to do just that.

Uranium also has a fateful history on the Navajo Reservation. In 1941, on the verge of the invention of the Atom Bomb, uranium bearing minerals were found in large quantities across the Navajo landscape. As uranium became a necessary material for national security, mining companies entered the Reservation and employed Navajo people to extract the resource. By necessity of the growing wage economy Navajos entered the industry in droves, taking minimal pay and not fully understanding the dire health consequences related to uranium radiation. Miners died early deaths from various cancers and lung diseases. The federal government avoided the health concerns related to these activities, again lending truth to the narrative that the Navajo people and Navajo landscape could be sacrificed to protect the best national interests of the United States. Today, although uranium mining was banned across the Reservation, the vestiges of the

thousands of open mines continue to pose health and ceremonial issues for the Navajo (Brugge Et Al. 2006). Although there is now a fund to compensate miners and their families, just west of Tuba City a large uranium tailings pile is visible from the highway signaling that its history remains alive on the Navajo Nation.

Resource extraction has a complex relationship with the Navajo people and has divided the Navajo. There are those who believe that extraction of these resources is causing harm to the sacred earth and effecting ceremonial power. Black Mesa, the site of the Peabody Coal Kayenta Mine, is an extremely sacred site to the Navajo. Others recognize the immense need for economic development, jobs and revenue for the tribe; mining offers these benefits.

So, without many other economic options, the extraction of resources became a mainstay on the reservation. In 2009, coal royalties injected \$54.9 million into the Navajo government and provided millions more in salaries. In addition, two coal power plants operate on the Navajo Reservation further creating jobs. In 2013, the Navajo tribe purchased the Navajo Coal Mine from BHP Billiton for \$85 million. In an effort to assert more tribal sovereignty and full control their resources the government approved the deal. This was the first instance of Navajo ownership of their resources yet, colonial tactics again seem at play here. Many believe that BHP Billiton, the former owner of the mine, “was trying to dump an unprofitable asset on the Navajo people” (Guerin 2014). Due to stricter EPA regulations the Four Corners Power Plant, owned by Arizona Public Service, would close three of its oldest units. These closures would cause a 30 percent decrease in coal purchased from the Navajo Mine. As natural gas and renewable energy sources become cheaper and cleaner, the Navajo are investing coal. In 2003, the Navajo began

talks with Sithe Global Power to construct a new 1,500 megawatt power plant that would bring an estimated 50 million dollar a year to the tribe (Powell 2015). These projects could help the Navajo exert control of the resources beneath their land, increasing sovereignty, but also ensure reliance on mineral extraction that threatens the landscape, sacred sites, Navajo health and feeds outside global corporations.

Joe Shirley, Navajo Nation President in the early 2000s, stated, “environmental activists and organizations are among the greatest threat to tribal sovereignty, tribal self-determination, and our quest for independence.” (Powell 2015) He saw arguments against coal mining as fundamentally limiting the goal of becoming independent from the US government. Yet, environmentalists argue that the Navajo are bearing an environmental injustice in order to power the Western U.S. (Powell 2015). With numerous discontinued uranium mines, continued coal mining and the burning of coal at numerous plants around the Navajo Reservation, environmental damages are clear. In 2015, the Animas River became contaminated with 3 million gallons of arsenic filled mining waste which eventually reached the San Juan River, that flows through the Northern reaches of the reservation causing an uproar from Navajos and more distrust of the federal government. The river not only provides water for farming and livestock for thousands of Navajos, it is also a living entity in Navajo cosmology (Paul 2015).

The culmination of these and other environmental disasters has caused concern from traditional Navajos. To them the healing power of their landscape and ceremonies is threatened by its environmental desecration. Robert Begay, a Navajo environmental activist, notes that, to the Navajo, “landscape and people are inseparable, each is a part of the other” but that economic development projects have, more often then not, destroyed

the environment and limited access by Navajo people to sacred places. Air and water pollution from mining and the burning of coal has further disrupted many important ceremonies that require a clean pristine earth (Begay 2001). Furthermore indigenous lands and their traditional lifeways are often the most vulnerable to the effects of climate change, whereas western religion and society does not require the same bonds with plants, water, air and land for their existence (Tsosie 2007).

Mining on the reservation has also forced the relocation of thousands of Navajo's from their traditional homes and sacred landscapes. When coal was discovered on Black Mesa, a sacred space shared by the Hopi and Navajo, the federal government decided that certain lands would become "Joint Use", between the two tribes, while other lands would be strictly for either Navajo or Hopi use. This ignored the sharing that had occurred for centuries in order to accommodate Peabody Coal's mining interest on Black Mesa. While both tribes believed that land could not be owned and did not have a price, political interests created a battle that still affects the tribes to this day. Harrison Loesch, the Assistant Secretary of the Interior at the time, worked hard to establish the leases for Peabody Coal on Black Mesa and separate the Navajo and Hopi use areas. Peabody Coal hired Loesch two years later (Evers 1982). The conflict between the two tribes became so severe that in 1966 the United States government initiated a freeze on all new development around the Joint Use Areas and much of the Western Portion of the Navajo reservation. This policy, the Bennett Freeze, created an economic disparity and extreme lack of opportunity as Navajo living in the freeze area could not even repair their homes. The Freeze was put in place to force resolution between the Navajo and Hopi but actually increased poverty, unemployment and forced many Navajo to leave their lands and

livelihoods for BIA housing projects in Tuba City and Kayenta (Jason Nez, correspondence). The freeze was not officially lifted until 2009 by President Obama. Misguided policies like the Bennett Freeze are difficult to believe yet they have been repeated on reservations across the nation for years.

While tourism, the government sector, and mining have created jobs, the Navajo Reservation lacks commercial development. A major cause of this lack of development on the Navajo Nation comes from another U.S. imposed policy. As established in *Johnson v. M'Intosh*, when the United States forced the Navajo and other tribes on to reservations the Federal government maintained ownership of the land. Today, most of the land on the Navajo Reservation is held in the trust by the United States federal government although the Navajo maintain rights to occupancy and use. Trust land policies pose a variety of problems for the Navajo. As mentioned above, it has allowed the BIA to lease lands to mineral extraction companies without much resistance. A second, equally harmful issue is that the approval process for building on or starting a business on trust land is incredibly difficult. The process thereby dissuades Navajo from starting businesses and outside commercial interests from creating jobs and economic revitalization on the reservation. This restrictive process requires applicants to receive approval from the local Navajo chapter house, local grazing officials, other tribal offices, the EPA, Public Health Service, BIA and ultimately the Department of the Interior, creating an "effective restraint on business development" (Rosser 2005). The process is restrictive for many small businesses but not for mineral extraction companies and large corporations who have the resources and time to navigate the convoluted application process. In 2000, the Indian Affairs Committee submitted Senate Report 106-511 to

Congress in attempt to streamline the process of business development and “enable the Navajo Nation to lease trust lands without having to obtain approval from the secretary of the Interior of Individual Leases” (Senate Report 106-511). The bill has yet to be approved and sits in Congress, now sixteen years later.

Trust land policies, deficient infrastructure, absence of access to loans and a current shortage of skilled labor on the reservation create another problem for the Navajo. Clarkson and Murphy term the issue “tribal leakage.” Not unique to the Navajo, tribal leakage refers to tribal money spent off of the reservation. Around 71% of Navajo incomes are spent off of the reservation in border towns like Flagstaff, Gallup, Farmington and Page. The Wal-Mart in Gallup is one of the most profitable in the nation as Navajos flock to these cities to buy groceries on payday. The Navajo Nation is a food desert; there are only 13 grocery stores on the reservation, approximately the size of West Virginia. Some Navajo drive up to 240 miles round-trip to purchase groceries, car parts or feed for animals. The average dollar cycles through a typical off-reservation community five times creating more employment and taxation power, unfortunately these dollars are spent off the reservation giving the revenue to non-Navajo companies and taxation power to the states and city governments (Clarkson and Murphy 2014). Without the creation of more commercial business on the reservation, Navajo dollars will continue to be spent in border towns.

The culmination of these deficiencies, unemployment and poverty has created economic dependency on resource extraction and on the federal government. Casino gaming and tourism also provide revenue to the tribe and employment opportunities. But, with over 300,000 citizens, casino gaming cannot provide the same benefits that it

provides for other small tribes. The Navajo own and operate four casinos. Beautiful landscapes like Monument Valley and Canyon de Chelly draw visitors but the affects of tourism are not always viable for creating lasting economic improvement. Therefore, the tribe relies heavily on the federal government to fund education, healthcare and social welfare programs on the reservation while the rest of the money comes from mineral extraction. This dependence limits tribal sovereignty immensely. Anthropologist Joseph Jorgenson argues that the entire process has fed into the best interests of the United States and he directly relates the economic issues on reservations to their incorporation into the U.S. political economy. He draws his conclusions from dependency theory that asserts that the colonization of Latin America and Africa led to dependence on the industrialized West rather than leading to beneficial modernization, essentially resulting in the “development of underdevelopment.” On the Navajo Nation, forced institutions of capitalism have undermined efforts to gain sovereignty by creating a dependence on the US government and economy (O’Neill 2005:147). This does not suggest that modernization cannot coexist with the Navajo traditional lifestyle but does raise the following question: can a balance exist if the Navajo and their decision-making powers are under the ultimate control of the United States government?

What makes all of these debates so difficult is the long list of economic and social problems that exist on Navajo land. Around 42 percent of Navajo live bellow the poverty line and rely on government welfare. 43 percent of on-reservation Navajo are unemployed, and those who do work are limited to employment in mining, by the tribal and federal governments or the few service jobs at on reservation businesses (Rosser). Infrastructure is also lacking. Some 16,000 families do not have electricity, while the

Navajo generate power for most of the Southwest with their coal and power plants. Also 44,000 homes must haul water while the Navajo Generating Station pumps millions of gallons from the Navajo Aquifer beneath the Navajo Nation every year (Nania and Cozzeto 2014). The remoteness of many homes creates these numbers but it is clear that some form of development is necessary. Mining and tourism do provide jobs but they also have negative effects. The concern becomes creating economic development, jobs and revenue without permanently damaging the environment and disrupting bonds with the Navajo landscape.

The cultural effects of US policy, and colonialism have also taken their toll on the Navajo tribe. Beginning in the 1860s, Navajo children were taken from their homes and forced to attend BIA run schools both on and off of the reservation. This policy separated Navajo children from their families, kinship bonds, their land and their cultural institutions. They were taught to hate their culture, language and spirituality and exchange them for Western models. Eulynda Toledo-Benalli, a Navajo who's parents attended catholic run boarding schools, recognized how the oppression of the boarding schools created internalized guilt and shame directly leading to generational violence and other social problems (Lynch 2012). Domestic violence accounts for a third of all 911 calls, and suicide rates on the reservation are drastically higher than national averages (Landry 2015). These issues can likely be directly correlated to the loss of culture and identity in the boarding schools as well as systemic poverty.

Another cultural disturbance created came from the loss of power by women on Navajo land. Land was passed down in matrilineal fashion through the mother's side of the family. When the livestock were reduced by the BIA and wage labor was introduced,

many moved into BIA built housing in towns or left the reservation entirely as they could no longer make a decent living from the land (Evers 1982). This took power away from the women who traditionally controlled the herd and life in the *Hogan*. Males also became the highest earners when wage labor was introduced in mines, on the railroads and with the BIA but often worked away from home and families off of the reservation (O'Neill 2005).

Issues of nepotism, corruption and greed exist in all governments but it seems that the Navajo are constantly facing these issues. Peter MacDonald, chairman of the tribe from in the 1970s and 80s, served eight years in federal prison for charges including fraud, bribery, extortion and corruption. The charges were largely based on kickbacks that MacDonald received from the Navajo's 33 million dollar purchase of Big Boquillas ranch south of the Grand Canyon. While this land was supposed to replace land taken from the Navajo during the Navajo-Hopi Land Dispute it has yet to be used for any purpose by the Navajo (Vanderpool 2001). In 2007, council delegates earmarked funds to purchase themselves gold rings to commemorate their service and one delegate was charged with diverting nearly \$300,000 to his extended family. In 2010 criminal complaints were filed against 78 of the 88 Navajo Tribal Council Delegates (Snell 2011). These examples mark just a few of the numerous instances of corruption within the Navajo Tribal Government.

Would these issues exist if the Navajo were still able to govern themselves based on communal kinship ties, *K'é*? This system functioned by providing communal input on decisions without a powerful bureaucracy. Widespread poverty inevitably contributes to the transfer of funds to family members and nepotism, but these issues are likely more

contributable to the inappropriate form of government that was imposed upon the Navajo. Governance is also difficult as the Navajo and other tribes cannot assert their full sovereignty in the face of federal policy.

Case Study: Grand Canyon Escalade

Today, the Navajo struggle with many of the same decisions that have plagued their economy, political sphere and cultural survival in years past. One recent decision faced by the Navajo has come from a proposed gondola tram from the rim of the Grand Canyon to the Confluence of the Colorado and Little Colorado Rivers. As mentioned many Navajo view the confluence of these rivers as their emergence place into the Fourth World. Numerous other tribes hold the location as sacred for a variety of reasons. In 2012, a development group based in Scottsdale, Arizona called Confluence Partners LLC approached the Navajo Nation Tribal Council and then President Ben Shelly to seek approval for the project. The completed project, a massive development, would include hotels, retail space, a campground, employee housing, and the gondola to the bottom of the Grand Canyon.

A development project like this became an especially heated topic in Northern Arizona for a variety of reasons. Advocates of the project, the Confluence Partners and some Navajo citizens, saw promise in the creation of thousands of jobs in the construction and service industries. As previously stated, unemployment for the Navajo fluctuates around 40 percent and work opportunities are especially lacking at the Western edge of the Navajo Reservation where the development is proposed. The Bodaway Gap Chapter, where the Grand Canyon Escalade would be built, is in the Bennett Freeze area

mentioned above (Proposed Legislation for Escalade). The development would bring tourists to the reservation, creating revenue for the tribe to improve education, healthcare and infrastructure. Some tribal politicians embraced the idea, hoping to improve the livelihoods of their constituents.

As convincing as the above argument is, those against the development see the Escalade Project in a very different light. Opponents like Jason Nez, a Navajo archaeologist, and Renae Yellowhorse, the voice of the grassroots Save the Confluence movement, have committed large portions of the past few years to opposing and preventing development at the Confluence. As mentioned, the confluence is a sacred place to the Navajo and many other tribes. Ms. Yellowhorse remembers spending her summers at the rim of the Grand Canyon, above the Confluence, where her grandmother and aunts would herd their sheep. If the project were ever approved, her family and others would have to relocate their herds, sheep stables, and *hogans*. Jason Nez sees the Confluence as a truly sacred place; “one of the few places that is the same as when the ancestors came.” To Nez, the development tempts the tribe with wealth and prosperity, but he believes would actually desecrate a sacred place, be an unwise investment with vestiges of colonialism, and produce a loss of Navajo identity. Also, while proponents of the project see development on reservations as an assertion of tribal sovereignty, Nez thinks Navajo tribal sovereignty would be reduced (Jason Nez, correspondence). As a large powerful tribe, the Navajo Nation sets a precedent if they cannot protect a sacred site. Thus, Nez thinks, smaller tribes and indigenous populations would have less incentive and power to protect their own sacred places at the hands of outside corporations and government.

The project has also received opposition from environmental groups like the Sierra Club, rafting companies who navigate the Colorado River, numerous other tribes who hold the Grand Canyon sacred, and the National Park Service. Both the National Park Service and the Hopi Tribe have threatened to sue the Navajo if they moved forward with the project. These legal battles would add costs to the tribe's investment and further fracture the relationship between the Navajo and Hopi tribes. The Park Service has also questioned whether the gondola might extend partially into the Grand Canyon National Park land, which is prohibited.

The Navajo Tribe may be further dissuaded by the lack of success from a similar project. In 2007, the Hualapai Tribe built the Grand Canyon Skywalk along the southern rim of the canyon. The tribe agreed to pay a Las Vegas developer 30 million dollars to build the development, which involves a glass walkway over the rim and allows visitors to peer 4000 feet down into the canyon. Upon completion of the Skywalk, the two parties feuded over who had to construct the visitor's center adjacent to the Skywalk. After expensive legal battles the Hualapai tribe was required to pay the developer the entire investment despite the project being incomplete. The Skywalk has brought an influx of tourists to the Hualapai Reservation, created jobs and over 10 million dollars in revenue to date, but it is unclear whether these benefits outweigh the legal expenses, publicity blows and other negative implications of the yet to be completed project (Guerin 2013). The Navajo must consider this story as they negotiate with current and future developers.

By the numbers, the Navajo tribe would receive just 18 percent of the profits in a good year. In a bad year they would make 8 percent of profits while Confluence Partners LLC, the development group, would make the other 92 percent. (Jason Nez, Presentation)

The Navajo would also be responsible for producing an 85 million dollar investment up-front to fund the development of hotels, a sewage plant, the gondola and a lengthy road from the highway to the rim of the Grand Canyon. Conversely, the project could provide millions of dollars in wages, revenue, and taxes to the tribe as well as the bolstering of surrounding businesses in the area. Under Russell Begaye, the Navajo Nation President elected in 2015 and Shelly's successor, approval of the project seems unlikely but as Navajos continue to struggle to find work or leave the reservation for better opportunities, the Grand Canyon Escalade, and projects like it will continue to emerge and tempt the Navajo. The Confluence Partners have maintained an active role in the Navajo Tribal Council in hopes that future governments will see promise in their project.

The project marks the culmination of the problematic relationship between the United States and the Navajo. It also raises numerous questions for the Navajo like whether these projects are neo-colonial, exploitative and destructive to culture, or, on the other hand, are they necessary decisions to bring the Navajo people out of poverty and assert full tribal sovereignty? In essence, are these projects monsters that need to be slain to preserve *hózhó* or are they the Monster Slayer Twins themselves looking to pull the Navajo out of poverty and provide jobs? Both choices require sacrifices. Perhaps, the correct answer comes from maintaining *hózhó*, balance and order.

In Canyon de Chelly and Antelope Canyon, two spectacular landscapes on the Navajo Reservation, the Navajo have managed tourism without affecting the ceremonial powers of these places. Navajo-run jeep tour companies bring tourists into these canyons, control the narrative about these places and create employment. Elsie Cly, a nursing assistant at the Chinle hospital leads hikes for non-Navajos on the lesser known trails of

Canyon de Chelly providing additional income for her family. Perhaps similar models could be used at the Confluence, allowing this place to be explored and admired on a smaller scale that would not disturb the sacred site to the scale of a large development. Nez and Yellowhorse also noted that the development could be constructed at other sites along the rim of the Grand Canyon, north and away from the sacred Confluence. The developers have resisted these suggestions due to the overwhelming natural beauty at the Confluence. The point is that there are alternatives that should be considered in this debate.

Nez and Yellowhorse are not opposed to economic development but would like to see it done in ways that do not threaten sacred lands and the Navajo identity. It is very possible that economic development on the reservation can be undertaken to both create job growth and revenue, while simultaneously protecting and sustaining the cultural resources and knowledge that make up the Navajo identity. This is *hózhó*. The Navajo must find balance between their economic, cultural, political, and societal needs. Each of these topics must also be balanced individually, to interact effectively with the modern world while maintaining the traditions that have sustained the Navajo for centuries.

Conclusion

To the Navajo, hózhó is the most desired quality in all things. The word describes the natural world, ideal family relationships and the beauty that is placed into arts and crafts. To live to an old age, to have close family, health and to be happy is to achieve hózhó. –Museum of Northern Arizona Plaque

Native American history, and the history of the Navajo, is often a grim reminder of the settlement and the policies enacted upon them. While colonialism, backwards federal policies, the growth of the Southwest, and a general lack of concern for Native culture and tribal sovereignty have created immense threats, the Navajo tribe has survived. This history is not always as depressing as it may appear. Their culture has survived the best efforts by the U.S. government to assimilate Native Americans to western Anglo culture. The *Diné* language has resisted boarding school policies meant to force English upon the Navajo. Stories are still told and the ceremonies are still performed at sacred places despite the desecration of these sites. *Hózhó* has been maintained in the face of immense threats.

The Navajo have learned to adapt the best qualities of the Western world with the best qualities of their traditional world. The western world versus the Navajo world is not unlike the gendered dichotomy that has provided guidance for the Navajo throughout time. This dichotomy is not about Western “Modernity” versus Navajo traditionalism because “modernity is culturally specific” and is not a universalized standard (O’Neill 2005:154). Instead, the Navajo need to navigate both worlds. They can enjoy the benefits of western modernism while maintaining the cultural values and systems that formulate the Navajo identity. The dichotomy, forces interacting with one another, is key for the creation of *hózhó*.

Unfortunately, the Western world often refutes the validity of Native American culture. Western science continues to reject the legitimacy native spirituality, connection to landscape and ceremonial life. This contrast stems from Western Positivism, which asserts “research as an objective, value-free and scientific process for observing and

making sense of human realities (Smith 1999:166). Positivist thinkers see science and observation as the only reasonable basis for knowledge, therefore denying the sacred ceremonies and traditional knowledge systems of the Navajo and other indigenous populations.

Jason Nez is quick to note that these sides do not need to conflict. He is a traditional Navajo in many ways. He performs his ceremonies, takes care of his livestock, and maintains his connection to the spirit world. Jason is also fire archeologist with the Forest Service in Northern Arizona using his scientific knowledge and western education to protect archaeological artifacts and fight fires. He understands the need for both western, Cartesian science and his traditional Navajo ways of life. Jason's parents and grandparents were taught that "tradition is the enemy of progress", yet Navajo tradition and culture have survived in the face of threats (Jason Nez, correspondence).

Cora Maxx, board secretary of the Diné Hataalii Association commented on the same idea. She sees that cultural and spiritual values have been marginalized in the face of capitalism and greed, specifically for the Navajo. Cora believes that these differences can be reconciled if corporations understand the concept of sacredness. She also notes, for example, that quantum physics studies the connections and interactions between all matter. This is not unlike Navajo thought of the interrelatedness between all things animate and inanimate (Cora Maxx, correspondence). Jason and Cora realize that the Navajo world must accept some intrusions of western models but do not see these as limiting Navajo tradition and spirituality. In this way *hózhó* exists; there is and must be balance between the modern and the traditional ways.

The Navajo have learned to adapt in the face of the Western ideal model in many ways. The Miss Navajo contest held every year marks a key example of this adaptation. The early years of the contest crowned two winners, Miss Traditional and Miss Modern who exhibited different skills. In 1963 the contests merged with only one winner being crowned. The winner must adequately navigate both the traditional Navajo world, making frybread, weaving, speaking *Diné* and even butchering a sheep; and the non-Navajo world, which tests traditional pageant skills like public speaking (O'Neill 2005:153). The contest reveals both the beauty and *hózhó* within the Navajo world and the necessary interaction with the world outside of *Diné Bikeyah*. Similar examples are easy to find.

A drive through the Navajo Reservation quickly reveals that the Livestock Reductions of the 1930s and the introduction of wage labor could not completely eliminate the important connection between the Navajo, their land and their herds. Until recently one Navajo grandma would move her herd of sheep up the White House Trail in Canyon de Chelly every day to graze on the rim. She lived at the bottom of the canyon in her *hogan* with no electricity and no running water, just her sheep and connection to the sacred canyon. The sheep have created meaning, beauty and *hózhó* for this one Navajo. By retaining the importance of sacred places the Navajo hold on to what is most important: their connection to the landscape. While this is not well understood by outsiders, the Navajo have been able to portray this truth to the Western World.

Wage labor has definitely made a huge impact on the Navajo economy, but it has also provided Navajo with the income to live more comfortably within the capitalist US economy. Even unemployment numbers are deceptively pessimistic. They fail to

recognize the informal economy present on the reservation. Navajos sell jewelry, rugs and other art at stands across the landscape. Others set up frybread and Navajo taco stands at flea markets or sell traditional roasted corn from the back of their trucks. On the road between Chinle and Tsaile, on the verge of winter, Navajo families collected pinon nuts for their own consumption or for sale. Outside of Renae Yellowhorse's house a small, grey sedan drove by honking its horn. Renae explained that this neighbor sold snow cones out of her car, like the ice cream truck in suburbia. These jobs go unreported in the census, but they allow some Navajo to survive and maintain balanced lives without having to leave the reservation for work.

Some like Isaac Brett have taken change into their own hands. Brett owns Shonto Energy, which creates solar energy solutions for customers on the reservation, providing electricity to families, reducing reliance on coal and protecting the environment (Shonto Energy Facebook page). There is opportunity for innovation that is not forced by neo-colonial forces with ulterior motivations. Small businesses can develop despite the hurdles of trust land created by the federal government. The Navajo Department of Economic Development is responsible for creating opportunities for the Navajo in tourism and commercial industries while promoting small business. The Navajo Nation is increasingly exploring the viability of large-scale renewable energy projects. The tribe also owns and operates casinos, hotels, and restaurants that provide employment and revenue. The stunning beauty of the Navajo landscape will undoubtedly bring tourists to the reservation for years and years.

Behind these stories is a government that has taken steps to reconnect with its traditional roots while becoming one of the most influential tribes and a major voice in

the Southwest. One effective method has been the continued use of chapter houses to gain broader community input. The 110 chapter houses across the reservation give Navajo people access to their politicians and decentralize the government by ensuring that the bureaucracy in Window Rock is kept in check. Former Navajo Justice Robert Yazzie notes that traditional Navajo justice systems with designated peacemakers can and should be revived, “this revival ensures that Navajo justice will remain *Navajo* justice, and not be an imported or imposed system...it is a traditional justice method Navajos have used from time immemorial” (Yazzie 1994). Dr. Manley Begay, a professor at Northern Arizona University, explained one way that traditional justice worked. A candidate for tribal council had his campaign questioned because he was from a town outside of the reservation boundaries. With traditional justice methods in mind the court decided that, while the candidate was not from the Navajo Reservation, the US government arbitrarily formed the reservation boundaries. He was allowed to run for office because his home was within the traditional boundaries, formed by the creator between the Four Sacred Peaks (Manley Begay, lecture). This shows that traditional Navajo laws, set in stone by the creator can interact with the modern laws of the Navajo constitution.

In 2002 the Navajo Tribal Council adopted and codified *Diné* Fundamental Law into their Constitution. This served as another reform that has helped to return to their traditional ways of life. Essentially the adoption ensured that the Laws put in place by the Holy People, before European arrival, would be preserved for future generations. With these laws the Navajo confirm their right to sovereignty and self-government but also call for protection and preservation of traditional Navajo healing ceremonies, the *Diné*

language, protection, and respect for the Four Sacred Peaks and other sacred areas. Essentially they serve to preserve the Navajo Way of Life that was given to the Navajo by the creator (Bobroff 2005).

This strong government, truly Navajo government, can provide the tools and resources to bring sustainable development to the reservation. It can create employment to bring Navajo youth back to the reservation after they graduate from college. It can ensure that cultural resources and ways of life are retained for future generations. It can assert its sovereignty to the United States and state governments. It can protect sacred places on the reservation and fight to protect sacred places elsewhere. It can and must do these things to ensure *hózhó*, balance and beauty are forever present for Navajos.

Dr. Manley Begay, a professor at Northern Arizona University, describes *Hózhójíí* as “the state of harmony, peace, beauty and balance with all.” He considers it a lifetime goal and endeavor for Navajo people. In other words “if democracy is the United States’ guiding principle, the Navajos’ is *hózhó*” (Snell 2011). Although the term cannot be translated directly to English, it holds immense but unique meaning to every one of the over 300,000 Navajo people. It is an end goal and it exists within *Diné Bideyah*.

The Navajo have the ability to govern themselves in their own way, make their own economic decisions, create lasting cultural institutions and continue to be a powerful force in the Southwestern United States. There is no doubt that the futures imagined by Renae Yellowhorse, Council Delegate Nelson Begaye, Dr. Anthony Lee, and Jason Nez can be obtained in the era of self-determination. The ideal future of every Navajo has the ability to manifest itself with the guidance of *hózhó*, pushing the Navajo in their collective and individual journeys forward. *Hózhó*, balance and beauty, can ensure

generations of Navajo can live in harmony with the modern world and their traditional culture. It can provide the motivation for the Navajo to live in the path of Changing Woman, resist the temptations of the tricky coyote and become the Monster Slayers of the 21st century able to battle any arising threat. While the future will undoubtedly include hurdles and roadblocks stemming from years of marginalization and colonization, the Navajo will emerge, possibly into the Fifth World, with *hózhó* guiding their journey.

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