



Returning to Hózhó: How
Peacemakers Restore Harmony
and Balance through the Navajo
Peacemaking Program

Anna Scott and Harry Begay
Traditional Program Specialist
Dzil Yijiin Office

Hózhóji Naat'aah – Traditional Diné Peacemaking and Its Role in Navajo Culture

- Traditional Diné peacemaking begins in a place of chaos, *hóochxo'/anáhóót'i'*, a concept often avoided by Navajos due to historical trauma.
- The Peacemaker lays the foundation for facing turmoil and mastering a peaceful life.
- Engagement with the Peacemaker provides identity and pride from cultural foundations.
- The Peacemaker educates, persuades, and cajoles individuals or groups towards openness, listening, sharing, and decision-making.



Hózhóji Naat'aah – Traditional Diné Peacemaking and Its Role in Navajo Culture(cont.)

- Confronting chaos, *hóochxó'/anáhóót'i'*, allows individuals to learn to leave it, leading to self-realization of harmony and beauty.
- The Peacemaker dispenses knowledge and teachings to guide the whole toward a cathartic understanding of *hózhó*, a key issue for transformative healing.
- The Beauty Way moves inwards toward the core issue or underlying truth, leading to healing or mutual healing.
- The resolution of afflicted feelings is the core material of peacemaking sessions.



Áłchíní Bándazhnit'á

Diné Family Group Conferencing

Family Group Conferencing in New Zealand (FGC)

- Originated in New Zealand to align social work practice with Maori values and culture.
- In 1989, Family Group Conferencing became central to New Zealand's child-related call cases.

Diné Family Group Conferencing (Diné bándazhnit'á) DFGC

- An extension of peacemaking, DFGC assists in family preservation and reunification.
- Assists courts, agencies, and families in achieving family harmony.
- Provides traditional principles and skills in achieving hózhó.
- Arranges áłchíní bándazhnit'á upon referrals from the prosecutor and schools.

Foundation of áłchíní bándazhnit'á

- Addresses institutional factors impacting individual liberty and family preservation.
- Encourages generational responsibility and implementation plans by responsible agencies.

Nábináhaazláago Áłch'į' yáti' Life Value Engagements

Life Value Engagements in the Peacemaking Program

- Life value engagements, or *nábináhaazláago áłch'į' yáti'*, are traditional services provided through the Peacemaking Program.
- Engagements do not involve both sides in a dispute but focus on personal accountability and the first steps towards *hózhó*.
- Engagements can be dynamic dialogues where *hóochxó'/anáhóót'į'* is released through stories and teachings.
- Engagements can be intense, allowing individuals to self-realize teachings and often precede successful peacemaking outcomes.



Nábináhaazláago Áłch'į' yáti' Life Value Engagements (cont.)

- Group engagements involve a flow of feelings, with the first round focusing on the subject and teachings and the second round understanding all feelings in a fair way.
- Engagements are crucial in peacemaking sessions, ensuring participants have knowledge of the hózhóji naat'aah process.
- Engagements can also be requested by individuals, courts, agencies, and schools, serving as a guide in situations where an agreement is not sought.
- Individual engagements typically concern individuals seeking hózhó or needing personal accountability in difficult circumstances.
- Family or group engagements typically concern individuals experiencing a problem and need engagement to handle the situation properly.



Oral Bitsé Siléí

Bitsé Siléí and Navajo Nation Court Reform

- Bitsé siléí are documents used by the Harmonization Project to reform Navajo Nation courts.
- They provide a written basis for changes in a system heavily dependent on written papers.
- Bitsé siléí are foundational essence, describing what someone at the top has seen to lay down a path.
- Navajos attribute knowledge to revelations from their elders, not self-knowledge.
- The principles in bitsé siléí are intended to be passed down verbally, making them relevant to present life circumstances.
- Compiling oral bitsé siléí in written form is a complex task with many shortcomings.
- Bitsé siléí is expected to change over time.
- The emphasis on orality in Navajo culture is emphasized in the format of the bitsé siléí.



COURT PROCEDURE

REFORMING THE DINÉ LIFE WAY IN COURT PROCESSES

- The Anglo-American-style courts have been present in Diné Bikeyah for over a century, establishing the bilagáana bi nahaz'áanii or the Anglo-American judicial system.
- Although courts have tended to follow the Anglo-American judicial system, Dine judges have included the Diné LifeWay in their rulings.
- The court system has displaced the processes and procedures of Navajo culture, leading to resentment and dissatisfaction among Navajos.
- Courtroom protocols often silence discussion and introduction of good evidence, leading to a lack of satisfaction with court outcomes.
- Punishment by incarceration without a community component adds to the public sense that the court system is removed from Navajo life.
- The courts are adversarial, keeping parties in a confrontational position until the end of the proceedings, countering the cultural value of a middle way.
- The Rules Harmonization Project aims to return the Diné Life Way to modern court processes.

NAACHID - NAACHID IN PEACEMAKING AND REFORM

Concept of Naachid

- Naachid is a complex term that signifies a process, a person with a plan, and a relationship between the planner and the people.
- It is the way Dine solved their problems.

Introduction to Naachid

- The original Naachid was used as gestures and signs, first known by insects, birds, and animals.
- The 12 founding clans of the Naachid constituted a council, with each leader handling a conflict resolution issue.

Peacetime and Wartime Naachid

- Peacetime gatherings addressed drought, deep snow, windstorms, and bad weather. Natural disasters
- The Holy People were invoked for help.
- In wartime, the council used Where, When, How, and Whys concept.

Pragmatism in Naachid

- Naachid is based on pragmatism in Navajo culture, ensuring the council process is enlightened and natural.

NITSÁHAKKEES, NAHAT'Á, IINÁ, SIHASIN

Diné Thought Process and Navajo Cultural Teachings

- Diné k'ehgo nitsáhákees is a holistic life process involving thinking, living, planning, and achieving solutions.
- The process is paramount in Navajo cultural teachings, emphasizing the importance of the manner in which a thing is done.
- The Diné Bina'nitin Bitsé Siléí, a foundation of Diné teachings, comprises nitsáhakees (thinking process), nahat'á (planning together), iiná (doing the plan), and sihasin (the result).
- The teller uses the circle as a springboard for reformers, referencing it repeatedly after exploring stories, history, and other bitsé siléí.



CORE PRINCIPLES

(to some common aspect of the principles that is relevant to Navajo Nation Court reform)

Peacemaking

1. Comprehensiveness
2. Fairness
3. Personal Responsibility
4. Cornerstones of Navajo Culture



NAACHID - NAACHID IN PEACEMAKING AND REFORM

Nahat'á:

- Part of the core circle, involving preventive measures and problem-solving.

Ná bináhaazláo:

- Provides parties with a sense of completeness and fairness.
- Involves bringing all problems into the discussion.

Baa gé'ahónáago:

- Means taking time to do things right.
- Requires careful consideration and brain use.

Haleebee:

- Means given the opportunity.

Nabík'iyáti':

- Denotes the particularity of the discussion.

Na'ák'iyáníli':

- Defines defending oneself through talking.
- In Navajo, it includes the right to apologize, make it right, and plead for mercy.

Fairness - Fair Dispute Resolution in Indigenous Laws

- Ná bináhaazláo: Provides parties with a sense of completeness and fairness.
- Naat'ááh: Leaders' decisions made according to existing laws.
- Natahnii': To lead, specifically to look out for.
- Yíni dílyínee: Means modestly, humbly.
- Aheelt'éigo: Emphasizes equal treatment of people.
- Ádił'ídlj: Respect for self and others.



Personal Responsibility

"Bee K'éndzísdlį́'" and Fundamental Laws in Diné Society

- Offender has personal responsibility to confront and rectify violations.
- Offender must face consequences of their actions.
- Offenders may hide truth but will be held accountable.
- Fundamental laws are necessary for maintaining order in modern society.
- Violations of these laws result in consequences.
- "Kana'adá" means experiencing consequences.
- "Bik'ee kana'adá / bini'dineesdlį́" means the consequences obsess the mind.

Cornerstones of Navajo Culture - Navajo Philosophy and Diné Values

Navajo Values:

- Iiná dóó á'ál'į́: Defines Diné life and culture.
- Shábik'ehgo: Defines the natural path of the sun.
- Bee yis'ah go oodááł: Defines strength of body and mind.
- Hózhó/Akehi hozhoon: Defines harmony, beauty, and balance.

Bíla'ashdla'ii:

- An affirmation of the Diné name, nihízhí', Diné, or people with five fingers.
- A spiritual name, Diyin Nohookáá Dine'é, or Holy Earth-Surface-People.
- Bíla'ashdla'ii may also refer to the stories within the five fingered hand and the lines of the hand.

Cornerstones of Navajo Culture - Navajo Philosophy and Diné Values (cont.)

K'é:

- A basic beenahaz'áanii, indicating the Diné's connection to all creation.
- Emphasizes restorative justice and bringing individuals living in disharmony back into right relationships.

Sa'ah Naaghéí Bik'eh:

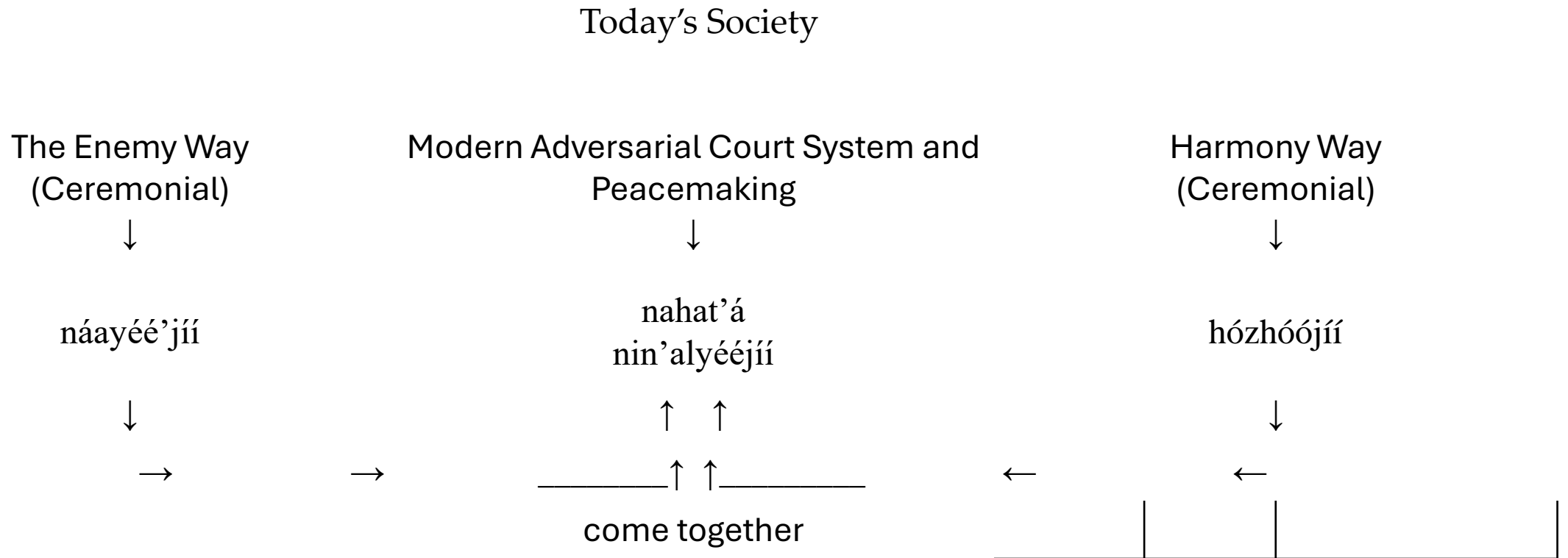
- Defines the balance of our lives with the natural path of the sun.
- Aims to follow the established path of life, signified by the natural path of Hózhóón Niidli the sun.
- The goal is to achieve the balance and complete our life cycle.

Sa'ah Naaghéí Bik'eh Hózhón Niidli:

- Defines the wholistic or holy path of male and female beings.

Navajo Philosophy:

- Reflects the Diné Origin, recognizing all as sacred people bounded by the laws of nature.
- Atones for what we violate, hurt, or destroy what is considered sacred in places, animals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and insects.





Ahehee' – Thank you

May the Holy People be with You