DINÉ POLICY INSTITUTE

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS ON THE NAVAJO NATION-LESSONS FROM A GLOBAL PANDEMIC

JANUARY 2024

MICHAEL LERMA - DIRECTOR
PERNALL PERRY - POLICY ANALYST
EMERY DENNY - RESEARCH ASSISTANT
MILTON BLUEHOUSE JR. - ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR

DINÉ POLICY INSTITUTE

CONTENTS

Acknowledgments	1
Introduction	2
Report Summary and Special Note	4
Sihasin – Intersected Mountain Philosophy & Cornstalk Philosophy	7
The Navajo Nation – The Institutional Perspective	10
COVID – 19 and a Traditional Diné Perspective	13
The Navajo Nation Response to the Pandemic	23
Specific Highlight of Funding Issues: Water Infrastructure	35
Recommendations	37
Conclusion	45
Work Cited	47
Appendix	54

Diné Policy Institute

This report is the product of collaboration and teamwork and would not have been possible without many people and great labor. We thank the many individuals that assisted with the research, development, and writing. We appreciate your dedication to assist our people.

Diné Policy Institute Staff Authors
Michael Lerma, Director
Pernall Perry, Policy Analyst
Emery Denny, Research Assistant
Milton Bluehouse Jr., Associate Professor

Contributors
Michael Parrish, Interim Director (2022)
Kiyana K. Honanie

Diné Bizaad Writing and Spelling*
Herman Cody, Professor

The research here was a product of a previously drafted document and would not be possible without the labors of our colleague Michael Parrish. He graciously served as interim director of DPI.

*Navajo language spelling is debated. We have worked hard to spell consistently but there are regional spelling differences and disagreements. DPI, in no way, is endorsing or disparaging methods of spelling Navajo language. Where possible, we have relied on primary and secondary documents for spelling.

Introduction

In November of 2019, people began taking notice of a problem emerging in other parts of the world. A “pandemic” was said to be taking form. Like most people, we had only heard of an epidemic. By Christmas time, a “corona virus” was taking hold in the Pacific Northwest of the United States. At Diné College, many staff were hoping there was no reason for concern. We hoped that the news reports were hyperbole. When Diné College President Roessel announced that the American Indian Higher Education Consortium was cancelling the in person annual meeting, Diné College staff began to second guess the impact of COVID. In late February of 2020, a meeting with Provost Geraldine Garrity and the various Deans concluded with the directive to no longer meet in person and switch to tele-conference software. That spring break allowed for students and staff to take a much needed respite and then we never really returned to class until fall 2023.

In early March of 2020, a Hataałii, medicine man, agreed to perform a dest’įį’ or crystal gazing to look into the forthcoming pandemic. He held the ceremony at his home. Representatives of the Navajo Nation governments’ branches attended with one member of the Navajo Nation president’s staff serving as patient. We learned that evening how something of a monster was coming within the Sacred Mountains and that we had better be ready. The word “monster” may be better understood within the context of accounts of the Separation of the Sexes in the third world of Diné Baa Hane’.

“We were told that this type of monster was killed off by the Warrior Twins at a time when monsters roamed the earth.”

Some readers may be familiar with the accounts related to the Separation of the Sexes in Diné creation. (Aronlith 1991, pg. 99-101). The twin warriors were born at a time of great calamity. They visited their father, the Sun Bearer, to obtain ceremonial teachings. They wished to destroy the “monsters” that roamed the earth. Their father taught Naayéé́neizghání or Monster Slayer the Protection Way songs and prayers. He armed Monster Slayer with weapons.

Introduction

Tóbájíshchiín or Born For Water was taught a different set of songs and prayers while being provided with a differing set of instruments. Born For Water was gifted the Healing Ceremonies. When the Twin Warriors returned to earth, they had a mind to save their people by ridding humankind of the monsters that wantonly roamed taking life.

The Twin Warriors had to work together or the monsters would surely defeat them. The Twin Warriors were the only hope for humanity. If they failed, the monsters would likely drive the five fingered earth surface people into extinction. One of the most profound lessons from this history is how, today, we need both a protection process to be followed by a healing process. We learned of this need through the tale of the Twin Warriors using protection ways to defeat the monsters only to have the defeat followed by a healing process. So the Twin Warriors sought, stalked, and killed the monsters one by one.

The process for ridding the earth of monsters was complex. As the Twin Warriors worked together, some monsters begged for their lives.

They sought empathy from the Twin Warriors and made an interesting promise they have kept to this day. There are varying accounts about how many monsters sought to save their lives through pleas. One reputable sources says these five monsters begged the Twin Warrior to spare them:

1. Té'é'ʃ́ Dine'é - Poverty
2. Dichin Dine'é - Hunger
3. Bił Dine'é - Sleep
4. Są́ Dine'é - Old Age
5. Yaa' Dine'é - Lice

Today, contemporary Hataałii theorize that Covid-19 was among the monsters killed by the Twin Warriors long ago. As a result, we were instructed to shun fear from our hearts as our first level of defense. Covid is a monster. It was killed off during the time when monsters roamed the earth. The Hero Twins buried Covid never to return. Sadly, we can never say never. The Hataałii instructed the attendees to sing the protection songs again. Covid would recognize the protection songs it heard during the third world destruction. The Covid monster would be sent away in fear. An understatement to be sure is that every single Navajo citizen, without exception within all families, regardless of social and economic status was impacted by the pandemic. And so our world transformed.

Introduction

Assembled here are various lessons we have learned surviving a global pandemic within Diné Bikéyah. What some believed would be a 3 month ordeal has turned into something that most of us are ill suited to declare over with. Even today, in the winter of 2024, news outlets are reporting a new wave of summer Covid infections (Vaziri, 2023). Still, it is important to attempt to learn from the events of the past few years. What follows is a documentation of the Navajo Nation Emergency Management system. Lessons learned from a pandemic.

Report Summary and Special Note

Researchers from the Diné Policy Institute (hereafter, DPI) investigated the impact of the Navajo Nation's COVID-19 public health policies on Navajo Government, communities, and people. Looking through the lens of Sihasin, the initial investigative findings are compartmentalized into three inter-related sections. The following constitutes Part 1 of the COVID-19 Impact Series and begins with two summarized findings. First, we review the literature on the impacts of COVID-19 through the lens of Navajo tradition. We also worked to document the impact of COVID-19 on contemporary culture, society, education, and politics.

Our findings are based on interviews with Hataałii[1] and Navajo citizens. The research examines Navajo Nation government's COVID-19 response from the centralized Navajo Nation government located in Window Rock, Arizona to include, primarily, the Navajo Nation's executive and legislative branches of government. A centralized or "National" government can be contrasted with the regional "Agency" and the localized "Chapter".

[1] Hataałii are ceremonial practitioners who incorporate traditional healing practices into the Navajo healthcare system.

Summary

"It is important to note that the rationale for identifying these infrastructural breakdowns provides a powerful learning opportunity for Navajo leadership"

Diné Policy Institute staff conducted interviews with government employees, including local Navajo chapter government staff, elected officials, and community leaders. Together, the literature review and a summary of the known governmental responses to COVID-19 provide a substantive understanding of the Coronavirus pandemic's impact on Navajo government, communities, and people.

Contained here is a comprehensive analysis and findings on the Navajo Nation's COVID-19 public health policies and the resulting impacts on Navajo government, communities, and people. At present, the research demonstrates three urgent findings:

1. Emergency response and resources management needs improvement.

2. Emergency communication technology, protocols and information sharing with tribal communities and people must improve.

3. Government-institutional partnerships, to include local government chapter personnel require improvement.

> **Special note - K'é**: These findings identify the Navajo Nation's infrastructural failures in a good faith attempt to apply Sihasin. Sihasin is commonly defined as "resiliency" or perhaps regeneration. It is important to note that the rationale for identifying these infrastructural breakdowns provides a powerful learning opportunity. Put differently, K'é implies accountability. Navajo leadership and people benefit from improved emergency preparedness. A clearer picture allows for more effective advocacy from Federal, State, and Non-Governmental Organizations attempting to improve public health resources. In the end, all parties involved are working tirelessly to save the lives of Navajo elders and Navajo citizens with immunocompromised health conditions. These conditions include diabetes or chronic respiratory illnesses. It is not the intent of the authors, Diné Policy Institute, or Diné College to lay blame. However, the authors do not mean to leave accountability aside. Again, Sihasin implores us to improve our strategy for surviving a pandemic as a matter of K'é.

Summary

Navajo cultural teachings, rooted in creation and emergence stories, recognize the importance of identifying where error and failure has occurred. These teachings are most readily understandable as K'é. The toughest part of K'é involves the element of accountability. The constellations serve as the celestial record of problems preserved for Navajo people to learn from mistakes. The learning process utilized in this research is the Navajo Paradigm of Nitsáhákees, Nahat'á, Iiná and Sihasin; the process of reflection and analysis and its resulting educational outcome of insight and wisdom. Wisdom can be a very hard lesson to learn especially when we are held accountable for our mistakes. The larger goal is to attain and utilize new found wisdom leading to Sá'ah Naagháí Bik'eh Hózhóón and the future avoidance of repeated mistakes. Being accountable through K'é means not repeating mistakes.

The Holy People recorded their stories after documenting their errors and learning from them. The stories of the Navajo, the Emergence, and the Division/Reunification of the Sexes were "written down" in order to learn from mistakes and preserve teachings. By written down we mean that these stories are recorded in the constellations as well as in songs and stories. It took failure, mistakes and the application of Sihasin to reflect on errors to gain the wisdom needed to create a new philosophy, one that would bring us closer to balance and peace. Today, we are able to gaze at the stars and think back on the beautiful stories that emerged only after acknowledging and learning from our ancestors' errors. This left us with tales and songs illustrating our predecessors' approaches to applying Sihasin to the problems of our contemporary society.

Prior mistakes and resolutions help us today to understand how to adjust to a world that is always changing. The Holy People are occasionally referred to as "Áłtsé da'ásiihígíí" which approximately translates to "The First Mistake Makers." The teachings leading to Sá'ah Naagháí Bik'eh Hózhóón serve as the foundation for this study. The path to recovery and success, however, is paved with errors.

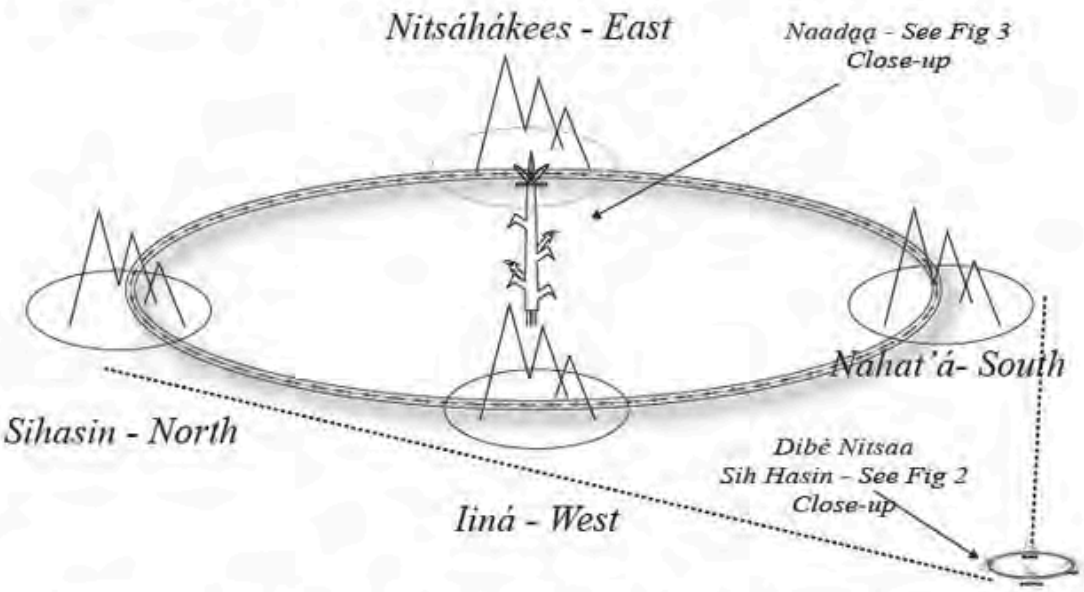
It is preferable to learn from our mistakes than to repeat them. The DPI staff recognize and acknowledge that any identified mistakes carried out by elected or appointed officials were likely made out of an urgent want to save lives and nothing more. This is our attempt to document the errors as well as the successes in supporting our community living through a pandemic.

Sihasin – Intersected Mountain Philosophy and Cornstalk Philosophy

There are multiple ways to discuss Sihasin as it relates to the pandemic and emergency management in general[2]. Figure 1 is an illustration from "Guided by the Mountains" (Lerma 2017 pg. 52) with modifications to address emergency management matters.

In the evening, after dinner, it is said that we should rest. People may relax and reflect on their day. A person may imagine things that went well and ponder the things that could have been better. The sun will set and our minds will drift into sleep. During our sleep, we continue to subconsciously reflect on matters of the day before. Our bodies and minds regenerate themselves during our slumber. Prior to dawn we typically rise and greet the sunrise with corn meal. This is the very basic definition of Sihasin. Readers may think of this analysis as Sihasin for a once in a century event.

Figure 1 - Regenerating Life - Post Emergency Resiliency



1. *Sisnaajini* - Regenerating our Thoughts - Which Practices Succeeded? Which Practices Need Improving?
2. *Tsoodzil* - Regenerating our Plans - New Plans Address the Practices That Need Improving
3. *Dook'o'oosliid* - Regenerating our Lives - Living with the New Plans and the Successful Old Plans Together
4. *Dibé Nitsaa* - Regenerating Ourselves - Allowing The New and Old To Combine

[2] DPI recognizes that this is not the only way to apply Sihasin. For example, each direction could instead replace the mountains with male and female hogans. We have elected to retain mountains throughout for the sake of consistency while recognizing that this decision may appear redundant to more knowledgeable readers.

Sihasin - Mountain and Cornstalk Philosophy

Readers should pay attention to the four Sacred Mountains demarcating Diné Bikéyah[3]. Within the center of the Navajo homeland is a cornstalk. Both the cornstalk and the mountains reflect the Sihasin aspect we are most interested in utilizing for our purposes in examining emergency management practices. DPI researchers will explain how both the cornstalk philosophy and the mountain philosophy explain the same principle.

Readers will note the two areas that can be magnified in figure 2. Figure 2 is a magnified view of the cornstalk in the center of figure 1. It is helpful to think of the roots of the cornstalk as the origin. For us we will call it Nitsáhákees. The main stalk can be considered Nahat'á. The actual corn ears is Iiná. At the very top are the corn tassels is where one will find tadidiin. This area is Sihasin. At the root we find the origin of life. The stalk serves as a plan for what is to be. The "fruit" of our plan is the corn itself. Our focus on corn pollen requires one more tidbit of information: within corn pollen is the regenerative properties of the cornstalk. Corn pollen contains the necessary conditions to make a new root, corn stalk, and corn. Still, one needs a way to regenerate the corn with pollen. At the risk of sounding redundant, within corn pollen is the next generation of corn pollen. This is the Sihasin within Sihasin. This model is similar to the mountain philosophy.

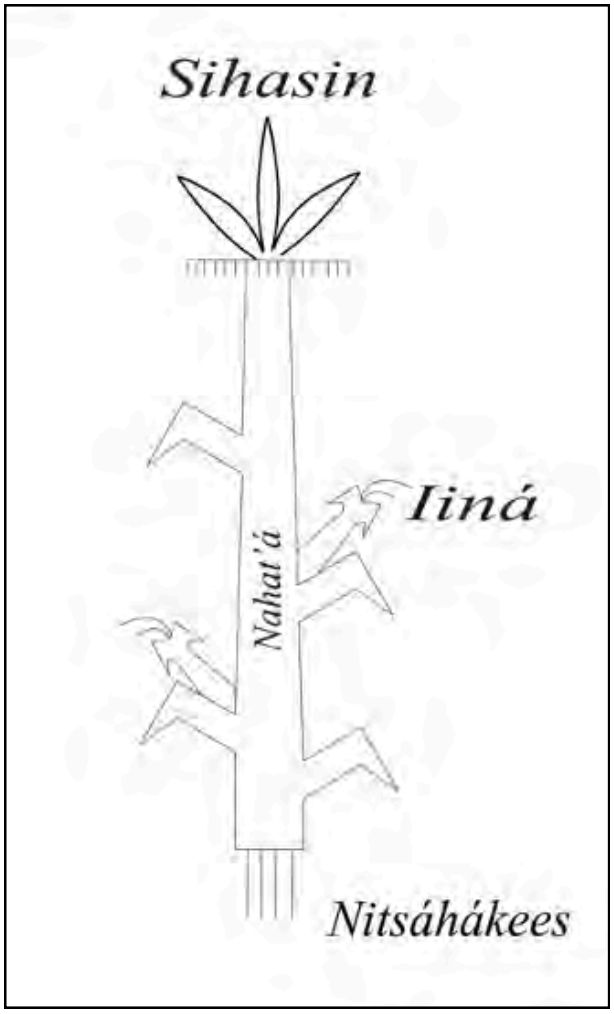
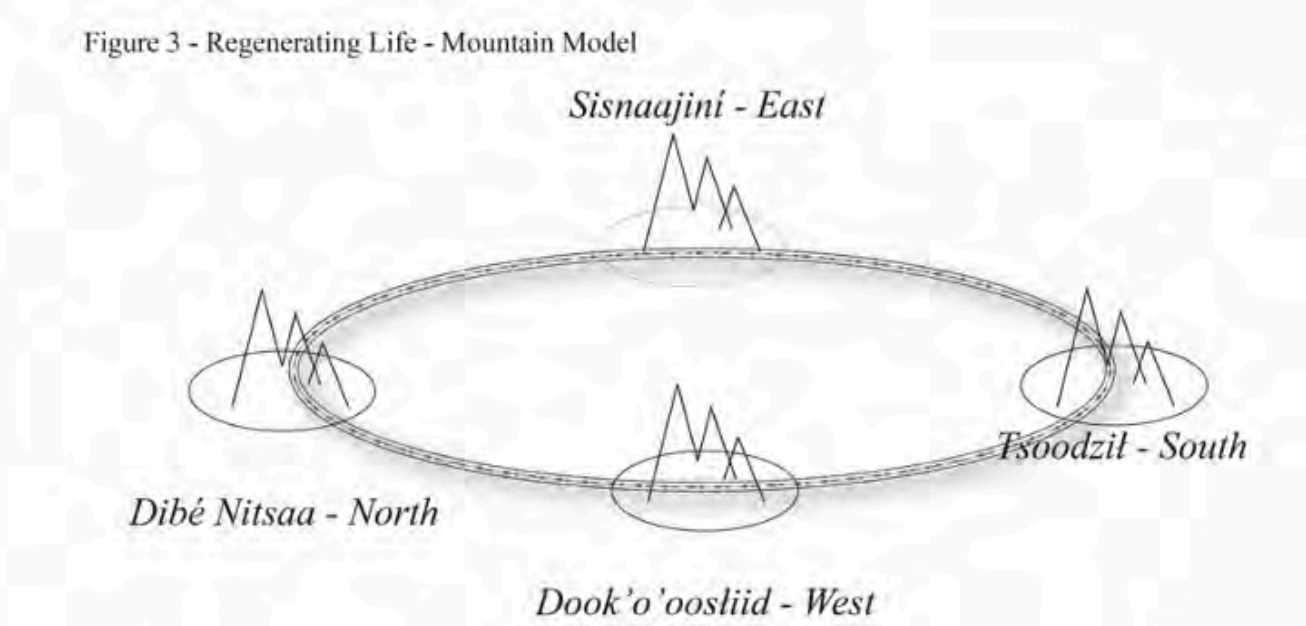


Figure 2 - Regenerating Life - Cornstalk Philosophy

[3] This work follows the four main mountain "pillar" teaching within the mountain philosophy which includes Dziłná'oodiłii and Ch'óol'į́'í.

Sihasin - Mountain and Cornstalk Philosophy



"we document problems for the purposes of our Sihasin: we will use these events to make our world better. Our nested cycles should allow us to confidently think about our regeneration (Nitsáhákees)"

Readers should now turn their attention to figure 3 which is an exploded view of the Sihasin mountain. As with the corn stalk philosophy, we understand that Sisnajiní is the mountain associated with Nistáhákees. Tzoodził is associated with Nahat'á. Dook'o'oosłiid is tied to Iiná. Dibé Nitsaa is connected to Sihasin[4]. Yet within the mountain philosophy is the nested cycle repeated as in the larger mountain model. Within Dibé Nitsaa is Sihasin but it is also a holding place for Nitsáhákees.

It is in the spirit of cornstalk philosophy or mountain philosophy that we approach emergency management. The roots of this project belong with the spark of Covid. The plans that once kept Navajo Nation together began to come apart due to our life rapidly changing. Our research will attempt to document these failures. Why? Not to criticize and not to blame.

[4] This work is overtly not mentioning Dziłná'oodiłii and Ch'óol'j'í for the sake of simplicity. This omission does not mean we disregard or find the relevancy of the mountains unimportant.

Sihasin - Mountain and Cornstalk Philosophy

Rather, we document problems for the purposes of our Sihasin: we will use these events to make our world better. Our nested cycles should allow us to confidently think about our regeneration (Nitsáhákees), plan our regeneration (Nahat'á), live our regeneration (Iiná), and regenerate our future (Sihasin). This is how the mountain philosophy allows us to learn from our lived experience. But this is also consistent with cornstalk philosophy. We are declaring here and now that this analysis is the tadidiiin that policy makers may utilize to plant our next corn field. If we carry out planning our new corn field with corrections to our mistakes in mind, our new field will be resistant to the pandemic.

The Navajo Nation – The Institutional Perspective

The first step in addressing a problem is to diagnose the situation. In academic circles, this may be known as "the context". From the Sihasin perspective, this is our reflection moment as we think about our event and consider how to modify our life in order to better survive the emergency. A detailed history of Navajo Nation can be located elsewhere (Bailey and Bailey 1986, Denetdale 2015, Iverson 2002, Lerma 2017, Wilkins 2013). However, we also add the layer of an "institutional perspective". All this means is that each branch of the Navajo Nation are pursuing their interests in a way that is compatible with their values. Each branch is constrained by laws, economics, and norms of practice. Navajo Nation is governed by an executive, legislative, and judicial branch. Regionally, it is divided into five tribal agencies that are geographically divided into 110 local governments known as chapters.

"From the Sihasin perspective, this is our reflection moment as we think about our event and consider how to modify our life in order to better survive the emergency"

The chapters are local sub-governmental entities tasked with addressing local issues, including support. In sum, we are talking about 3 national leaders, agency leaders, 110 chapter leaders all pursuing their responsibilities within the law and confined by economics operating according to norms of interaction. According to the US Census Bureau 2022 American Census Survey, the population of Navajo Nation exceeds 400,000, with a median household income of over $11,000. More than 35% of tribal households (about 170 thousand citizens) lack running water (Navajo Nation Profile, 2020).

The Navajo Nation – The Institutional Perspective

Navajo citizens experience health disparities that far outpace other groups in America. The out pacing is especially impactful in terms of diabetes, obesity, and chronic respiratory illnesses. All of these conditions are identified as underlying health issues that have made COVID-19 mortality rates higher than other people regionally and nationally.

Native American healthcare systems receive dangerously inadequate levels of federal funding to positively impact the challenging health conditions. The lack of funding problem, using the Sihasin lens, is nothing new nor groundbreaking. These factors are documented in the US Commission on Civil Rights report on federal funding for healthcare. This is a generations long lack of federal funding. The inadequate funding is compounded by the historical and contemporary impacts of Federal Indian policy, the federal-trust status of the Navajo Indian Reservation, and related federal and tribal bureaucracy. Collectively, these barriers created the perfect storm preventing coordination among federal and state emergency resources to address COVID-19 in a timely and organized manner.

In other words, multiple governmental jurisdictions and related bureaucratic processes created life threatening delays to healthcare coordination and delivery.Several long-standing premises need to be mentioned. These historically inadequate funding matters can all be contained within Sihasin. There is a lack of adequate governmental funding for healthcare accessibility and infrastructure, i.e., hospitals, clinics, equipment, and healthcare professionals. What's more, the lack of housing on the Navajo Nation is also classifiable as an infrastructure-related matter leading to multi-generational families sharing single family homes. State and federal mechanisms are well established to address these deficiencies that are not available to Navajo citizens. Hence, an important question arises: What impact would expanded taxing authority of tribal governments have on public health and roadway infrastructure? Again, this question is focused beyond other mechanisms currently available to Navajo Nation: examples include regressive sales taxes, business activity taxes in repressed tribal economies, and excise taxes on gasoline and natural resources. A counter-factual approach would have researchers imagining how things would be different had infrastructure revenue mechanisms been developed within Indian Country and Navajo Nation specifically.

The Navajo Nation – The Institutional Perspective

A more successful approach would have allowed more historical development of community and public health related infrastructure. Needed infrastructure might include roads for access to rural communities, emergency communication systems and technology, electric and water utilities for thousands of tribal households. Federal Indian law and policy and the federal trust status of Indian reservations preclude tribal government revenue generation from property taxes. The lack of an established income tax system also precludes additional revenue generation for tribal governments, which theoretically could have been used to support much needed public health infrastructure. Alas, these serious limitations have long been something Navajo Nation could afford to live with until a global pandemic emerged.

The Navajo Nation's general fund budget in the years during the pandemic are as follows:

- Fiscal Year 2020 - $163 million
- Fiscal Year 2021 - $167 million
- Fiscal Year 2022 - $173 million (Navajo Nation Office of Management and Budget)

The total operating budget was, generally, $1.3 billion on average for FY 2020, FY 2021, and FY 2022 combined. (Navajo Nation Office of Management and Budget). The Navajo Nation budget is primarily composed of federal and tribal funds, for which roughly 11 percent are tribal funds. During the pandemic there was an addition of CARES and ARPA funds specifically developed in response to the national economic and healthcare impacts of COVID-19. From the outset of the pandemic in 2020 and in 2021, the Navajo Nation's operating budget, depending on funding sources, was obligated to numerous tribal programs unrelated to a direct response to the public health emergency presented by COVID-19. These budgeted funds were assigned to diverse tribal programs and were limited to specific uses as established by federal funding agreements. The Navajo Nation could not utilize these funds except for which they are designated, further limiting the Navajo Nation's all out funding response to the pandemic. In short, there is a lot of money but there are also a lot of strings attached.

The Navajo Nation – The Institutional Perspective

The Navajo Nation's timely response to the pandemic was hindered, arguably costing thousands of Navajo citizens' lives. A Sihasin approach demands that we address the hindrances that grew from a combination of many factors including the following:

·Inadequate federal funding for treaty-based healthcare services
·Federal and tribal governmental institutional bureaucracies
·Lack of tax revenue investments in public health related infrastructure
·Limitations on the Navajo Nation's operating budget
·Limited Human Capacity in Specific Areas - (Roads and Water Lines)
·Cultural Barriers

Various factors impacting the Navajo Nation are typically understood as "red tape". Yet, there co-exists a practice on Navajo Nation where the citizens work to take care of one another and themselves through traditional practices.

COVID – 19 and a Traditional Diné Perspective

On March 17th, 2020, the first reported covid case reached the Navajo Nation and spread rapidly to several Navajo communities beginning in Chilchinbito, Arizona. Within three days, fourteen individuals tested positive in Chilchinbito and surrounding rural home areas, prompting then Navajo President Nez to issue stay-at-home orders for the entire Navajo Nation. By April 18th, more than 1,197 cases were reported. At the conclusion of the national health emergency in 2023, more than 84,206 Navajo citizens were infected with COVID-19, with more than 2,126 confirmed deaths. Most of the fatalities impacted people ages 60 – 69, followed by age groups from 80+ and 70 – 79 (Navajo Nation Department of Health, 2023).

The emergence of the pandemic was reminiscent of past health crises on Navajo. Within the last 125 years, Navajo people were exposed to the Influenza pandemic of 1918 and the Tuberculosis epidemic during the 1940's and 1950's, which, combined, killed thousands of Navajo people (Quintero, 2020). As with these earlier viral events, the impacts of COVID-19 disproportionately impacted Navajo people, and took an enormous emotional, spiritual, and physical toll on Navajo families. The lack of running water, electricity, access to public health information, and inaccessible undeveloped roads to remote homesites exacerbated the impacts of COVID-19 on Navajo citizens. Similarly, the COVID-19 pandemic triggered coordinated Federal and Tribal government responses. The nuances of the impact are telling.

COVID – 19 and a Traditional Diné Perspective

The Navajo Nation's COVID-19 mortality data reveals that Navajo elders were disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. The impact was compounded by a general lack of access to adequate public health-related infrastructure, including access to basic personal protective equipment and sanitation supplies.

Correlated to the loss of Navajo elders is the loss of the cultural-ceremonial knowledge and Navajo language that Navajo elders possessed – the loss of Navajo elders and their ceremonial knowledge and language was worsened by the pandemic.

As with the previous large-scale viral illnesses in 1918 and the 1940's, Navajo people utilized cultural knowledge to opine on the origins of COVID-19 and its numerous variants. Cultural knowledge used Sihasin to counterbalance the behavioral and mental health related impacts of the pandemic. For this reason, Sihasin permits dismantling and adjusting to certain circumstances that lead to rebirth (Lerma 2017). The interviews conducted by DPI investigators with Navajo hataałii (traditional ceremonial healers), Navajo elders and culture keepers, and Navajo citizens reveal cultural understandings of the origin of COVID-19.

"the loss of Navajo elders and their ceremonial knowledge and language was exacerbated by the pandemic."

In short, the origin of the pandemic is causally linked to the present imbalances between and among human beings, and human imbalances with the natural world. The culturally rooted understandings of COVID-19 begin with the Navajo naming of the virus. Navajo Nation leaders developed a new Navajo name drawn from the literal translation of the physical symptom – heavy coughing – and numeric designation of the coronavirus from the Centers for Disease Control – 19. In Navajo COVID-19 is known as Dikos Nitsaa'ígíí-Náhást'éíts'áadah (Quintero, 2020). Dikos Nistaaígíí-Náhást'éíts'áadah became the official national term for COVID-19. Tribal government leaders and officials took steps to provide public health updates using radio, print, and social media resources. But the "official" name was not used by traditional Navajo healers. They, instead, referred to the coronavirus using previous Navajo terms for other serious viral illnesses. Ch'osh doo yit'íinii means an unseen parasitic illness.

COVID – 19 and a Traditional Diné Perspective

Under microscopic observation the virus resembles a spider, ha'át'ííshʃ́ʃ́ naałniihii, or something transmitted among people. The transmission includes from the natural world to people (Quintero, 2020). Traditional Navajo healers and elders, using their culturally founded understanding, sought to determine the origins of the virus. This is the ideal moment to turn to Sihasin and gather the necessary pollen of information for regeneration and identify the gaps in our knowledge (Lerma 2017). The basis for cultural interpretations of the origins are rooted in Navajo oral creation and emergence stories. Navajo Philosophy cannot maintain an endless cycle of resilience and knowledge without Sihasin (Lerma 2017). There is a basic premise acceptable by most observers in that society has impacted the balance of our contemporary world: our inability to live a balanced life within the confines of Hózhó has harmed us all. Hózhó is a balance and harmony within ourselves and within one's families and communities. Only after putting the Navajo principle of Hózhó dóó k'é into practice—establishing a relationship with everything in the cosmos and living in harmony with all can this happen through the process of Sihasin.

"Hataałii have routinely carried out ceremonies to further understand the physical and spiritual impacts of the pandemic"

Not living within Hózhǫ́ with the natural world is evidenced in societal activities contributing to global climate change outcomes. Today, our world is impacted by drought, forest fires, abnormal extremes in seasonal weather patterns such as more powerful hurricanes driven by warming seas, uncharacteristically formidable winter storms, tornadoes and floods.

Navajo Hataałii, or traditional healers, expressed this interpretation of human and natural world imbalances. Traditional Navajo ways would not exist without the regenerative characteristic of Sihasin (Lerma 2017). They point to the impact of mining within the Navajo Nation and elsewhere, and the pollution emitted by regional coal fired powerplants. Globally, a Hataałii also cited the Australian conflagration in 2019 as contributing to the biological and environmental conditions leading to the creation of the coronavirus in which 24 million hectares (59 million acres) burned (Quintero, 2020).

COVID – 19 and a Traditional Diné Perspective

By contrast since 2001, the world has lost 126 million hectares (or nearly 310 million acres) of forest to wildfires[5]. Though it may be challenging to explain, readers should be aware that the viewpoint of Sihasin forms the basis of a Hataałii point of view, which is rooted in Navajo ceremonial and cultural knowledge of our world and the cosmos. The spiritual essence of Sihasin is how the natural world and the universe are fundamentally inter-related. The global magnitude of forest fires, compounded by human activity disrupting the natural food chain transformed the environment. All of these occurrences allowed for the mutation and transmission of the coronavirus from animals to humans. This observation is shared by many traditional Navajo healers who have divined through ceremonial practices the origin of COVID-19. Hataałii have routinely carried out ceremonies to further understand the physical and spiritual impacts of the pandemic, and to offer Sihasin balance restoring ceremonies for the earth and people.

As briefly mentioned earlier, the Navajo Nation government's response to COVID-19 after the first outbreak occurred in Chilchinbito, Arizona was to issue stay-at-home public health orders enforced by Navajo police. The Navajo Nation made an additional order to halt Navajo religious ceremonial gatherings to avoid community spread of COVID-19. Additionally, all social, sporting, and community events were ceased, in addition to federal and state coordination to establish remote learning for pre-K through high school students, including local colleges and universities. The cessation of ceremonies, events and gatherings, and school participation impacted the mental and behavioral health conditions of Navajo people. Navajo cultural adaptation in light of the pandemic and Navajo Nation public health orders saw the use of cell phones, and web-conferencing methods for people to continue ceremonial practices.

[5] Global Deforestation Rates and Statistics www.https//globalforestwatch.org

The creative ceremonial workarounds utilizing technology intending to slow the spread of COVID-19 had some positive impact. COVID genuinely pushed the boundaries of acceptable ceremonial practices. Many Hataałii have criticized the practice of performing while being recorded, praying while on the phone, and requiring patients to receive healing while in a hogan. Social distancing was necessary during this difficult transition to a post-COVID environment. To say that the shift was challenging would be an understatement. Still, the sociological and psychological impacts of COVID-19 have been detrimental to the culturally rooted elements of mental and behavioral health. Particularly curbed are the social-behavioral health benefits from cultural settings supported by Navajo family, extended Navajo clan-family gatherings, and ceremony. As noted in interviews, the health threat posed by the highly transmissible coronavirus during gatherings redefined what was once seen as an integral part of Navajo society and family.

"The Ndáá', or Navajo summer ceremony a.k.a. Enemy Way, was suspended by Navajo Nation public health orders . . . This is the longest cessation of Navajo ceremonial life since . . . Hwéeldí"

For example, the handshake is an important Navajo cultural etiquette rooted in teachings handed down by Navajo deities. Additionally, the handshake embodied the cultural message of respect, acceptance, family, humility, and kindness. As a result, part of Sihasin is the act of thinking about how one's recent actions may affect individuals nearby. COVID-19 redefined the importance of this cultural etiquette. The handshake now possessed the perceived threat of transmitting serious illness, and even death. An additional example is provided by interviewees who noted that COVID-19 presented an enormous threat to the safety of Navajo elders and Hataałii.

COVID – 19 and a Traditional Diné Perspective

The curbing of social interaction impacted the sharing of cultural ceremonial knowledge, wisdom, and teachings all contained within the Navajo language. The specific impacts on ceremonial life can anecdotally be conveyed by looking at the impact on the Ndáá'. The Ndáá', or Navajo summer ceremony a.k.a. Enemy Way, was suspended by Navajo Nation public health orders. The suspension started at the beginning of the pandemic in February 2020 to the recent lifting of protective public health measures in June of 2023. This is the longest cessation of Navajo ceremonial life since the mass removal and imprisonment of Navajo people by the United States government in 1864 – 1868 known as the Long Walk or Hwéeldí (Fort Sumner, New Mexico). The word "Hwéél̨di" is translated from the Navajo language as The Place of Suffering and Sadness. Interviews demonstrated that Hataałii and Navajo citizens understood that the suspension of Ndáá' had a negative systemic impact on the holistic elements of Navajo ceremonial life. Ndáá' is considered to be one of the most effective ceremonies for treating physical and mental health impacts caused by trauma and shock related illnesses which can include COVID-19.

The activities of the seven day Ndáá' event include the following:

- The time family comes together for planning
- The ceremony itself
- The sharing and learning of ceremonial knowledge and responsibilities
- The use of Navajo language
- The family-clan system supporting Ndáá' including cooking
- The giving of gifts
- The horse riding journey

The correlated impacts on Navajo wellbeing and harmony were felt in the personal multi-generational maternal and paternal clan relationships. These relationships include k'é connections across grandparents and grandchildren, children and parents, and siblings, and uncles and aunts.

COVID – 19 and a Traditional Diné Perspective

The 30 month long suspension of ceremonial practices and related family gatherings was counterintuitive; the very ceremonies needed most during the pandemic to heal the people were no longer available. Thus far, there has not been any conclusive evidence that the suspension of ceremonies either saved lives or cost lives. However, it is key to understand the role of family in the healing of a patient.

K'é is an integral component to all Navajo ceremonies. K'é does all of the heavy lifting to include wood hauling and chopping, butchering, cooking, labor in building necessary structures such as a shade house or hogan and gathering of materials. This allows the patient to focus on the ceremony itself and to be mindfully present during the songs, prayers and application of medicine. This is an excellent example of Sihasin reflecting, thinking, or even meditating over ceremonies that are being performed and becomes one's thoughts, plan, and way of life.

A patient focused on healing is also created, in part, by the presence of a supportive and functional family setting. This setting then directly mitigates the effects stress can have on the patient's body, putting the patient in the position of being ready to be healed or made whole through Sihasin. As a result, internalizing the ceremonies and wisdom of Sihasin becomes essential and a way of life. In contrast to the Navajo approach to medicine, the western method is usually between patient and their doctor. From a western point of view, although this has changed in recent times, stress is counted into the equation only at the end if at all. Regardless, there is limited data to indicate how Covid impacted ceremonial life. What can be offered here is evidence about the impact of the pandemic on everyday ceremonial life interaction among a limited population. Readers should review the following data as a snapshot with limited predictive or causal capability.

Kiyanna K. Honani, a Diné College student, has graciously provided her original research submitted for her class on Indigenous Research Methods or NAS 413. Her research project addresses some of the questions regarding the impact of ceremonial knowledge on defenses against COVID. Her study is a collection of 72 participants of which most (57) were female. Between February 22 and March 28, 2022 Honani carried out a small N survey asking the 72 participants 36 questions related to the impact of Covid on ceremonial practices.

What follows is brief summary of the survey results:

Table 1: Summary of COVID Impact on Ceremonial Practices

Description	Magnitude	Percent Change
Impact on Ceremonial Family Visits	Decrease	61.8%
Impact on Singing In Ceremony	Drastic Decrease	73.6%
Impact on Hopefulness	Unchanged Slight Decrease Drastic Decrease	33.3% 19.4% 20.8%
Impact on Happiness	Unchanged Slight Decrease Drastic Decrease	43.1% 36.1% 25%
Attending Ceremonies	Unchanged Increased Slightly Increased Drastically	41.7% 26.4% 6.9%
Ability to Make Healthy Decisions	Unchanged Decreased Slightly	19.4% 51.4%
Adjusting to Unexpected Challenges	Unchanged Decreased Slightly Decreased Drastically	45.8% 18.1% 12.5%
Spiritual Connections	Increased Drastically Increased Slightly Unchanged Decreased Slightly Decreased Drastically	18.3% 11.3% 26.8% 19.7% 23.9%
Efforts to Learn Ceremonial Knowledge: Songs, Prayers, Stories	Increased Drastically Increased Slightly Unchanged	20.8% 20.8% 31.9%

COVID – 19 and a Traditional Diné Perspective

Readers should understand that Honani's research is limited not due to her own immense talents but due to time and funding. Her work was to be completed during a semester which is merely 16 weeks. DPI also acknowledges that her research was conducted with zero support funding which is typical of undergraduate analysis. We have opted to share her research as it provides a glimpse into the mindset of Diné College students, faculty, and staff during the pandemic. The responses are based on a self report model in which respondents had a great deal of latitude in defining terms such as "drastic" and "unchanged". This snapshot indicates how some were addressing the pandemic in terms of ceremonial attendance, learning, and personal traits such as hope. A major area of impact, sadly, was the loss of relatives among families creating more community trauma.

This snapshot indicates how some were addressing the pandemic in terms of ceremonial attendance, learning, and personal traits such as hope.

The Navajo Nation's public health orders that prohibited family gatherings and travel between communities compounded the pandemic's impact. Some of the components displaced include the community and family trauma created by COVID-19, the cultural rituals and grieving practices surrounding the burial of Navajo people who died during the pandemic. The Navajo Nation's public health orders prohibiting family gatherings and, for a time, travel between communities compounded the pandemic's impact.

> "In Navajo tradition, communities gather for four days of mourning before a burial. Sacred stories are told. Elders talk to the young about coping with death. Donations are collected to cover funeral costs. In a culture where death is rarely spoken about, it's a chance to openly grieve." (Fonseca & Sullvin, 2020).

COVID – 19 and a Traditional Diné Perspective

The Navajo cultural teachings and practices related to death supported a grieving process that involved family, extended matrilineal clan relations, and elders with knowledge on appropriate grieving practices. Prior to the pandemic, Navajo people observed the cultural timeframe of four days. The individual who passed away requires four days to complete their spiritual journey. During this time, gatherings are held for family members to receive grieving support, cultural teachings on grieving, and financial support to pay for funeral related expenses. These final expenses can typically cost as much as the median income of most Navajo people. In response to public health orders prohibiting community gatherings and enforcing social distancing, Navajo people resorted to social media, text messaging, and web-conferencing to provide support for grieving family members, and used money transfer apps to provide financial support.

Navajo people who were interviewed by DPI staff shared that not being able to gather, being prevented from grieving with family and clan relations, or even the ignorance on what to do culturally added to the trauma created by COVID-19. The fear of the unknown related to the pandemic bewildered the population and the knowledge holders alike. For many, the use of social media felt culturally inappropriate, insensitive to grieving needs of family, and seemed disrespectful to the deceased loved one's spiritual journey. The technologically distant means of communication and support resulted in spiritual, cultural, and cognitive dissonance for families and communities. Navajo people "sidestepped tradition" (Fonseca & Sullivan, 2020).

"The fear of the unknown related to the pandemic bewildered the population and the knowledge holders alike."

The Navajo Nation Response to the Pandemic

“We have an obligation, in accordance with k’é (clan relations), to review our actions and learn from our mistakes in order to apply the Sihasin element of Navajo philosophy.”

The Áłtse da’ásiihígii, also known as "The Ones Who Made the First Mistakes," provide insight in this section of the research on emergency management procedures. We have an obligation, in accordance with k’é (clan relations), to review our actions and learn from our mistakes in order to apply the Sihasin element of Navajo philosophy. As of July 2023, the Navajo Nation Department of Health reports that more than 84,206 Navajo people tested positive for COVID-19, and more than 2,126 Navajo people died from the virus. The Navajo Nation government took unprecedented measures to limit the spread of the coronavirus among Navajo families and communities.

Public health orders prohibited social gatherings, enforced social distancing, and mandated the use of personal protection equipment.

Mandates went so far as to prohibit Navajo traditional ceremony and Christian church services to mitigate the spread of the virus in group settings. At the peak of the pandemic, the Navajo Nation had the highest rates of COVID-19 infections per capita surpassing the infection rates of many states including New York and New Jersey, as well as several foreign countries (Navajo Nation Department of Health, 2022). With the arrival of COVID-19 vaccines and anti-viral therapies, the transmission of COVID-19 and related deaths decreased substantially. One of the main purposes of this writing is to highlight the lessons learned from activities carried out to prevent the loss of life. We aim to examine how we as a nation thought through the impending peril (Nitsáhákees), how we set policy in reaction with the best available data at hand in the moment (Nahat’á) how we implemented those policies (Iiná) and now how we can be more efficient to people in future emergencies (Sihasin) .

The Navajo Nation Response to the Pandemic

This section focuses on the Navajo Nation government's response to COVID-19. This response included the issuance and enforcement of tribal public health orders prohibiting social gathering, mandates for using protective health protocols by Navajo citizens, and enforcement of social distancing and the use of PPE. In addition to public health orders, the Navajo Nation also coordinated a multi-government response by developing a Unified Command Group with emergency response representatives from the Federal Emergency Management Agency or FEMA, Navajo Nation Emergency Management, the Center for Disease Control, the Indian Health Service, with coordination with state emergency management departments and health departments from New Mexico, Arizona, and Utah. Coordinating these various agencies was no easy or enviable task.

The Navajo Nation's early response to the coronavirus pandemic included the issuance of a travel advisory on March 4th, 2020 that limited travel to essential[6] tribal government employees. The intent of the travel advisory was to slow the spread of COVID-19. A week later, on March 11th, 2020, President Jonathan Nez issued an executive order declaring a Public Health State of Emergency (Public Health State of Emergency Executive Order NO.001-20). The declaration authorized the Navajo Nation Commission on Emergency Management to initiate government protocols related to emergency financial disbursement to Navajo chapters, coordination of emergency management resources, and oversight of various Navajo government divisions, departments, and offices critical to emergency management.

[6]It should be highlighted that there is no consensus on who qualifies as an essential worker. Without success, our research team looked for a CDC or WHO-specific classification. We can only fairly assume that our numerous Naat'áanii were trying their utmost to save lives in the middle of the critical situation. We are convinced that some of our leaders may have reached different decisions with the benefit of hindsight.

The Navajo Nation Response to the Pandemic

As COVID-19 transmissions increased to the status of "uncontrolled community spread," the Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President, and the Navajo Nation Council, increased public health safety measures. On March 13th, 2020, the Navajo Nation announced the temporary reduction of government operations and services to those deemed critical, i.e. tribal programs and services related to public safety, health, and finance. On March 19th, 2020, the Speaker of the Navajo Nation, Seth Damon, stated the Navajo Nation had not closed its borders, in response to concerns that major highways through the Navajo Nation would be closed, but that essential travel measures should be observed. A day later, Navajo Nation President, Jonathan Nez, with advisement from the Navajo Nation Department of Health, Navajo Nation Department of Emergency Management, and Navajo Area Indian Health Service issued a shelter in place order on March 20th, 2020. This order established curfews and limited access to businesses deemed essential such as grocery stores and gas stations.

The Navajo Nation's enforcement measures of various orders, including the shelter in place orders, included fines of $1,000, or detention in tribal jail depending on the circumstances. Law enforcement disclosed that they would consider repeated violations in pursuit of enforcing the orders. During the first week of curfew enforcement, Navajo law enforcement began issuing citations at traffic checkpoints. Navajo police furnished a press release on April 13, 2020 disclosing the issuing of fines by the Navajo Nation Police (Smith, 2023). Navajo citizens assigned penalties had their names published in the newspaper. Navajo courts elected not to collect money nor impose jail time for cited drivers (Smith, 2023).

Navajo Nation instituted a 57-hour curfew from 8:00 a.m. Friday to 5:00 a.m Monday beginning in April of 2020. Travel restrictions were generally meant to limit weekend travel off the Navajo Nation where rates of infection were skyrocketing. These restrictive measures were not only undertaken by the Navajo Nation government (Navajo Human Rights Commission, 2020). On May 1st, 2020, the Navajo Reservation border-town of Gallup, New Mexico initiated a 7-day lockdown that prohibited non-residents from entering the town, restricted to movement and travel of townspeople.

The Navajo Nation Response to the Pandemic

> “The governor [of New Mexico] used the Riot Control Act and a state of emergency to prohibit any person from being on public streets, certain highways, and other emergency restrictions. Failure to comply with restrictions will result in a misdemeanor. Repeated offenses will result in a fourth-degree felony.” (Shorty, 2020).

Navajo Reservation border towns are major economic hubs for retail commerce and a multitude of services. Previous research conducted by DPI estimates that $0.65 cents of every dollar that originates within the Navajo Nation is spent in Gallup, NM, Farmington, NM, Holbrook, AZ, Winslow, AZ, Flagstaff, AZ, and Page, AZ (Eldridge et al. 2014 p. 58). Navajo citizens typically refer to these cities as “border towns”. The economic impact on Navajo families was significant given the combination of tribal curfews and limited business access with similar restrictions in border towns surrounding the Navajo Nation. This fact was, sadly, on full display. The Diné Food Sovereignty report findings forecast that it would not take much of a breakdown in the supply chain to create chaos on and around Navajo Nation. As the pandemic exemplified, it did not take long for store shelves to empty as our world shut down leading to long lines and elevated prices.

One example is the change in Walmart's capacity restrictions imposed on customers to limit community contact. Walmart's approach was to limit stores to 5 customers per 1,000 feet at any given time, roughly 20% of a store’s capacity. Once this threshold was reached, Walmart admitted customers in to stores on a “1-out-1-in" basis. (Smith 2020). This reduction in customers allowed into the stores helped Walmart reach their goals of social distancing inside the store, but contributed to long lines outside of the store.

The Navajo Nation Response to the Pandemic

Although inconvenient at the time for many shoppers, with the lens of Sihasin, we can see that the conglomerate of policies had an impact on slowing down the virus. The slow down allowed policy makers more time to formulate the next plan, which would reflect the changing data coming in from varying agencies such as the World Health Organization, and the Center for Disease Control.

The actions of the Navajo Nation government were to protect the health and safety of Navajo people. That said, the measures had negative impacts on local businesses and the economy, as well as on families. The economic impact of COVID-19 created scarcity issues for essential household items in high demand. Some highly desired items included cleaning products, personal protective equipment, disinfectants, and groceries. There were reports that some businesses and individuals engaged in price gouging (Navajo Human Rights Commission, 2020). Food prices, on a national average, during the pandemic years from 2020 – 2022 increased by 11 percent, which was an increase on top of already higher costs for groceries within the Navajo Nation ("Human Human Rights Commission," 2020). The Navajo Human Rights Commission issued a press release alerting the Navajo public about price gouging while calling for ethical business activities related to retail pricing (Navajo Human Rights Commission, 2020).

An additional impact on Navajo people was limited access to healthcare. In some cases, such as access to medical care, Sihasin repeated what was already obvious but probably overlooked, that Navajo Nation medical facilities were unprepared to take on a new event or disease with the current medical infrastructure. Determinations were made by the Navajo Area Indian Health Service and by the health boards of locally controlled and operated healthcare facilities to allow only emergency healthcare services. This limitation was meant to ensure medical personnel and resources would be available for the onslaught of COVID-19 cases and hospitalization.

During the height of the pandemic, all Navajo healthcare facilities and regional non-Navajo healthcare facilities were operating beyond 100 percent of capacity. The capacity issues required auxiliary medical personnel from the U.S. military and non-profit organizations to assist due to high demand for medical treatment. The additional personnel had access to the Strategic National Stockpile for medical equipment.

The Navajo Nation Response to the Pandemic

"During the height of the pandemic, all Navajo healthcare facilities and regional non-Navajo healthcare facilities were operating beyond 100 percent capacity."

Access to hospitals outside of the Navajo Nation was also curtailed due to the crushing weight of thousands of cases of COVID-19. Resources were stretched beyond their limits to care for COVID-19 patients.

Residents of Navajo Nation are likely familiar, to one degree or another, with the make up of the current Navajo Nation Chapter government system. At the community level, Navajo Nation Chapter Houses function as local governments, similar to municipal governments. Chapters are political sub-entities in the structure of Navajo Nation government. Navajo chapters serve as the hub of community governance, information sharing, and as a gathering place for community members and elders.

During the pandemic, the 110 Chapters across the Navajo Nation were shuttered during the first few weeks of the pandemic. The closures were in response to Navajo Nation public health orders to control the spread of COVID-19. Historically, Chapters have played a substantial role in previous weather-related emergency declarations and as distribution hubs for water, food, firewood, and information. Readers can surmise that Chapter closures drastically reduced community services. It is not a big leap to conclude that the pandemic related Chapter closures had a predictable impact of contributing to the inaccessibility of much needed resources, including personal protection equipment. DPI interviews with Chapter officials revealed that many Chapter leaders and staff reported isolation from information in general, Navajo central government information, and from Navajo government funding to purchase PPE, food and water, and sanitation supplies, i.e., disinfectants, hand soap, and hand sanitizer. The inability to purchase these critically needed items was compounded by national and regional shortages. The only exception to Navajo chapter house closures were the Local Government Act (LGA) chapters.

LGA certified Chapters possessed greater financial management autonomy having met requirements for receiving and expending Navajo government funds. Of the 46 LGA certified chapters, several opted to remain open with limited services throughout the duration of the pandemic as explained in Table 2 below:

Table 2: Listing of LGA Chapters Open or Closed Status		
Open	Closed	No Information Available
28	11	6
N=45		

The differences between non-LGA certified chapters and LGA certified chapters revealed, to an extent, differences in how local Navajo government responded to the pandemic. The data suggests that LGA Chapters may have experienced fewer bottlenecks in terms of receiving and expending government and non-profit funds. In short, LGA Chapters were able to independently keep doors open and spend funding more quickly than non-LGA Chapters. Further distinctions between LGA and Non-LGA Chapters deserve extensive attention beyond the scope of this research.

By March of 2020, several weeks after the COVID-19 outbreak in Chilchinbito and the rapid spread of COVID-19 across the Navajo Nation, the Navajo Nation Council responded to the pandemic. The Council passed a $4 million funding legislation using the Navajo Nation's general fund. Of the funding, $3 million was directed to be used by Navajo Nation Chapter government (0054-20) (Yurth, 2020). However, the Council would subsequently redirect the $4 million in funding to the Navajo Nation Department of Health and emergency response workers such as law enforcement, tracers, designated community health representatives, and other public health workers (0062-20).

Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez would go on to provide his reasoning behind his support for the Council redirecting the funding: “Chapter employees and volunteers may not be trained or have the equipment to safely deliver services, whereas medical and emergency personnel do” (Yurth, 2020). The legislative acts implied that Navajo Chapter employees were not considered essential personnel; a designation that was established by Navajo Nation public health orders, and further defined as emergency and public health personnel who interacted with Navajo communities. Since Navajo Chapter governments were closed and later reopened with limited capacities, Navajo Chapter staff, in practice, were not considered essential employees and not subject to receive supplemental compensation, or hazard pay.

Again, readers may surmise that Chapter affiliated staff likely disagreed with not being designated, in policy and in practice, essential workers. Tse Alnaozt’i’i (Sanostee Chatper) President, Frank Smith stated, “The Chapters are the backbone of the community… We’re the place people come in a crisis. We should be the last place that closes” (Yurth, 2020). Despite the initial closures and the subsequent offering of limited services provided through Chapters, Chapter leaders and staff implemented alternative pathways to support their communities.

> “McCabe [President of Bird Springs Chapter] said [public health orders] did not help when employees checks need to be printed and when food and supplies need to be found for the community. Everything needs to be approved by the president’s office. But despite all of this, the Chapter created a team that is making contact with people by telephone.” (Allen 2020).

The Navajo Nation Response to the Pandemic

Chapter government officials found support for their position to stay open in spite of the public health closure order. The Navajo Nation Council voted to override President Nez's veto of legislation that would have kept Navajo Chapters operating (Shorty, 2020). The Navajo Nation Council's press release stated the following:

> "[The] override addresses the need for Chapter officials to provide for community needs during the COVID-19 public health crisis. The Nez-Lizer administration closed Chapter houses with the Navajo nation's emergency declaration and have continued to restrict the authority of local communities by vetoing legislation passed earlier by the Navajo Nation Council. This override restores some of the balance between Navajo Nation Chapters and President Jonathan Nez." (Shorty, 2020).

Readers will note the two levels of Navajo government hard at work. There was a national level check and balance mechanism playing out as envisioned in Title II of the Navajo Nation Code. Meanwhile, Chapter officials and staff did what they could to respond to the pandemic and meet the needs of Navajo communities. According to Bird Springs Chapter President, Bessie McCabe,

> "[Chapter house] officials are also making lists of what the Chapter needs, such as hand sanitizers and disinfectant supplies, and ordering food – such as potatoes, flour, and beans – from Navajo Agricultural Products Industry at a discounted price for their communities." (Allen, 2020).

Other chapters also continued to provide important community services. In the Leupp area, Chapter staff opened a water hauling station. In Tolani Lake, the Chapter waived water station fees to ensure access to water without contributing to the financial burdens of Navajo families (Allen, 2020).

The Navajo Nation Response to the Pandemic

While the Navajo Nation and Navajo Chapters responded to the pandemic in earnest, the United States government pursued national funding legislation. The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES) was signed into law on March 27th, 2020. The CARES Act provided $2.2 trillion in government funding to federal agencies, state and local governments, and to tribal nations. In a matter of days, federally recognized tribes disagreed with the funding distribution formula that the U.S. Department of the Treasury and the Bureau of Indian Affairs created. A main source of scrutiny was the charge over disproportionate funding amounts and disagreements on whether Alaska Native Corporations should receive CARES funding. The Navajo Nation joined litigation against the United States delaying funding distribution pending resolution. On May 5th, 2020, The Navajo Nation received the first round of CARES funding. The influx of federal funding was intended to provide communities with resources to respond to COVID-19 in a timely manner (Shorty, 2020).

External timing setbacks aside, the Navajo Nation had a multitude of internal mechanisms with a side effect of creating more delays. The Navajo Nation's fiscal management system was purportedly put in place to prevent fraud which costs time. Regardless, the tribal government's burdensome funding related approval processes between the Navajo Nation Council and the Office of the President and Vice President delayed the timely funding allocation. It would be naïve to ignore how some in office have utilized the Navajo Nation's funding mechanisms beyond their original scope of addressing the potential for fraud. This issue will not be dwelt upon as it is an aside from the main point of delayed pandemic relief. Not surprisingly, the Navajo Chapters and government programs designated to address the many needs that COVID-19 created remained unaddressed for more time. Navajo Nation President, Jonathan Nez and his administration proposed to use CARES funding to support water infrastructure and accessibility projects throughout the Navajo Nation. On the other hand, the Navajo Nation Council proposed to utilize CARES funding for local communities and the purchase of PPE, food support, and supplies.

The Navajo Nation Response to the Pandemic

The disagreements between Navajo branches, again, delayed pandemic relief. To be certain, the debates regarding funding are a useful mechanism built into the Navajo Nation government system in order to prevent unilateral decision making.

While some funding was approved from the Navajo Nation's CARES Act federal allocation, most of the funds were not provided to Navajo Chapters and tribal programs deemed essential during the pandemic. Navajo owned small businesses were allocated $31,412,583 in the form of an economic support grant (Memorandum from Division of Economic Development Oct. 18, 2021). With the federally mandated deadline for the expenditure of CARES funds slated for the end of December 2020, the Navajo Nation opted to provide direct payments to Navajo citizens in the form of "hardship" checks. Still, distributing paper checks also proved time consuming. The distribution of hardship checks to more than 300,000 Navajo citizens was hindered by a lack of financial staffing within the Navajo Nation Office of the Controller.

The Controller has the primary financial responsibility to distribute CARES monies. To remedy this staffing shortfall, the Controller's office contracted with an outside accounting firm to support the distribution of nearly $600 million (including hardship check issued from federal American Rescue Plan funds for which the Navajo Nation received over $3 billion dollars).

The Navajo Nation's financial management system is a complex process for both approving funding plans and for expending and accounting for funds from federal coronavirus relief revenue sources. The Navajo Nation's funding process can be initiated in two ways. One way is for the Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President to develop a spending plan with development support from Navajo Nation divisions and departments. The second way is for the Navajo Nation council to introduce funding legislation that can be drafted by a council delegate with or without input from Navajo Nation divisions or departments.

Both measures, by tribal government rules and regulations will be either approved or denied by an internal Navajo intra-governmental review mechanism known as the "164 Review Process". This procedure may require the coordination of upwards of six Navajo entities. These entities include, for example, the Office of the President and Vice President, the Navajo Nation Council and Committee with legislative oversight, the Navajo Nation Department of Justice, the Navajo Nation Office of Management and Budget, and the Navajo Nation Controllers Office. The review process is intended to ensure financial accountability consistent with the Navajo Nation Code. On average, an expedited review approval can take weeks. Any one of the reviewing entities may deny approval based upon Management and Budget regulations for cause resulting in the 164-review process starting again.

To be certain, this process has the impact of emerging as a mechanism for a defacto unilateral "veto" procedure that can create immense delays. It is common for the review process to take months. The 164 Review Process does not negate the additional federal rules governing the expenditure for allowable costs and accounting and control measures. Readers can now likely further appreciate the magnitude of potential delays that impacted the speed with which Navajo Nation could fund pandemic relief. These general parameters impacted the Navajo Nation's attempt to address water infrastructure issues.

Specific Highlight of Funding Issues: Water Infrastructure

Reflecting on a lack of water infrastructure is also a function of Sihasin thinking. It is not limited to Navajo analysts even if others do not call it by the same name. On March 24th, 2021, the director of the Navajo Nation Water Resources Department, Mr. Jason John, testified before the US Senate Select Committee on Indian affairs. Mr. John stated that more than 40 percent of the 50,000 households on the Navajo Nation do not have access to running water (John, 2021). Astonishingly, Mr. John testified that the Navajo Nation's estimated water-related development costs are nearly $4 billion dollars. The following breakdown, in Table 3, provides water related project costs:

"the Navajo Nation's estimated water-related development costs are nearly $4 billion dollars."

Table 3: Navajo Nation Water Developments Needs Category	Total
Large Regional Municipal Water Supply Projects	632,000,000
Local Domestic and Municipal Water Infrastructure	1,806,057,000
Livestock and Agriculture	682,410,000
Service to Water Haulers	8,000,000
Completion of Navajo Indian Irrigation Project	760,000,000
Address Water Storage Facilities	47,500,000
Drought Response and Mitigation	10,000,000
Floodplain Delineations and Management	10,000,000
Watershed Restoration Demonstration Projects	8,308,000
Navajo Nation Total:	3,964,275,000

Note: Table does not include funds needed for housing and electricity needs. (John, 2021).

Specific Highlight of Funding Issues: Water Infrastructure

Accordingly, the Water Resources Department reported the total cost for Individual Navajo homes (under the "Local Domestic and Municipal Water Infrastructure Costs") to be an estimated $334.5 million. (Shorty, 2020). The Water Resource Department line-item budget sits at $87.6 million for large scale regional water infrastructure projects. The Navajo Nation's need far exceeds the Navajo Nation's budgeted amounts to address water infrastructure. In the spirit of Sihasin, it is our responsibility to point out the funding shortfalls. Furthermore, the total water infrastructure needs of the Navajo Nation exceeds the amount the federal government provided from both CARES Act funding and ARPA funding. An added point of reference will further exemplify funding shortfall issues. By comparison, the Navajo – Gallup Water Supply Project – was awarded $73 million. The project is meant to construct pumping plants and related water delivery pipelines from the San Juan River and Cutter Reservoir. However, the total estimated project cost ranges from $810 million to $2.175 billion.

Given these estimated amounts, it is easy to conclude that the CARES and ARPA funds that Navajo Nation received will not pay for delivering clean drinking water. As readers are aware, the needs on Navajo are grander. Navajo households will still continue to have issues with housing, utilities, and other desperately needed infrastructure. It is not possible to provide adequate water access for the purposes of meeting the minimum health related needs with current allocations set forth in CARES and ARPA.

These shortfalls are not going to be resolved rapidly and independent of collaboration. What follows are some more narrowly framed solutions that can be addressed with less time, less money, and with fewer collaborators.

Recommendations

The recommendations put forth below are informed by interviews DPI staff conducted as well as a review of the most current research. The findings apply to conditions that existed between 2020 to 2021 during the coronavirus pandemic. The authors have endeavored to keep things simple. These recommendations are intended to provide additional information to Navajo Nation leadership and decision makers, and for Navajo citizens as end-recipients of infrastructure and government services.

Policy Recommendations:

Recommendation 1. What is the coordinated relationship between Chapter Houses and the Navajo Nation (central) government?

> Context: All over the world, a pervasive method of governing is to not lead at all. A Sihasin model implores us to recognize a reactionary model of leadership and replace it with a forward thinking approach. It is clear that Navajo national, or central, elected leaders were not able to coordinate with Navajo Chapter leaders. Events continued on with little or no guidance. Chapter leaders and National leaders did not properly address the potential for delays in the midst of a pandemic. This practice is more commonly understood in other areas of political science research and can be best defined under “norms”. (Goertz 2003). In short, norms are practices that become ingrained by "having always been done a certain way”. Why do Navajos drive on the right side of the road? (We don’t know . . . they always have since the first chidí came to Navajo Nation). Rather than place blame upon any individuals, it is more constructive to point out the norms of interaction between the Chapter institutions and the National institutions. The norms of deference between the Chapter and the National institutions created delays in funding pandemic relief costing lives. Limited space and time prevent DPI from offering more than a theory that this approach has impacted a breakdown in coordination between the role of Chapter level government and other institutions. However, one of the lessons learned from this research is that coordination between Chapter institutions and National institutions can be improved. Navajo citizens deserve a well coordinated set of institutions to serve their needs during a national emergency.

Recommendations

Solution: DPI has identified an obvious problem in National and Chapter communication: a much more diverse approach to policy driven activities must occur. Thinking outside of the box is another outcome of Sihasin thinking. Readers can read through the voluminous two volumes on Navajo Chapter governments here. (Frank & Navajo Times, 2016; Yurth, 2017). This nearly 600 page volume provides descriptive data on each of the 110 Chapters. It should be clear to readers that the 110 Chapters have a diverse set of needs. One potential way to address the plethora of information needed is to consider quarterly conversations between Navajo Nation Council and Chapter officials which likely already happen. Five neighboring Chapters have a greater probability of sharing common interests. Should each of the 24 Council Delegates formally converse, not meet and hear reports, but sincerely have a discussion with 5 Chapter officials from differing Chapters in a Council Delegate district, there is a greater likelihood of fully understanding Chapter needs. Our suggestion is based on numbers. As such, one Navajo Nation President cannot meet with 110 Chapter officials quarterly but 24 Delegates can have honest dialogue with five Chapter officials. For our suggestion to work, there must be a reckoning between NNC and OPVP coordination as well.

1. Improved Coordination Between NNC and OPVP – Easier Said Than Done

   Context: There is a long history of animosity between the Navajo Nation Council and the Office of the President. This animosity dates back at least 30 years and likely longer. Our Sihasin model strongly advises us to address this difference in approach. Readers are free to orient themselves with these controversies through other reputable sources (Wilkins 2013; Yazzie 2011). We only mention the disagreements known to the public out of a duty to report accurately. It is very possible that the public disputes have nothing to do with the recent, pandemic related, differences of opinion.

   Solution: The role of Navajo Peace Making in the 21st century remains elusive and under applied (Neilsen and Zion, 2005; Austin, 2007). The phrase “K’é Náhásdl’įį́”, another outcome of Sihasin thinking, comes to mind: meaning our clan founded relations are restored. This is the purpose of bringing in peace making to any disagreement. Many Indigenous societies carried out peace making in this manner. One scholar states that a treaty between an Indigenous people and another group is greatly misunderstood. Westphalian style treaties are meant to divide people.

Recommendations

Indigenous treaties are meant to make a relative out of a former enemy (Williams, 1994). This is an incredibly difficult task. The task is much more arduous when individuals must be held accountable for their mistakes. Yet, without accountability, K'é is missing a great deal of impact. Diné ceremonial ways are meant to address such matters. If taken literally, Diné ceremonial practices have rescued the world from destruction at least four times. Comparatively speaking, restoring clan relations between the Navajo Nation Council and the President's office should be light lifting. But this is only possible if all parties are willing to put aside their differences and come together for the good of the Navajo constituency. We close on this rather admittedly esoteric suggestion with the following:

[I]f it is possible to get every single person in a room thinking about the exact same thing for only two seconds, then a miracle will happen. (Wilson 2008)

Recommendation 2. Streamline the Navajo Nation financial management system, financial control and accounting review and approval processes.

Context: A serious and honest reckoning must take place between Navajo citizens and the history of Navajo governmental spending practices. One of the most practical reasons for having such a burdensome bureaucratic processes to spend money in Indian Country has to do with its inherent susceptibility to fraud. Donald Fixico's analysis of the brutality and deception committed against the Creek, Osage, and other Indigenous nations by avaricious companies is a warning for Navajo Nation. Fixico details the wealth that each tribe possessed as well as how they were systematically defrauded of their resources (Fixico, 2012, pp. 3-22, 27- 49). In response, Indigenous nations developed new strategies. For example, the Council of Energy Resources Tribes used the legal system and forceful economic leadership to prevent mainstream America's capitalist intrusion, when federal laws intended to protect Indian interests instead were turned against the Indian nations (Fixico, 2012, pp.159-173). Certainly external fraud is the main concern but there are also examples internal to the Navajo Nation. Investigations into discretionary funds spending by the Navajo Nation Council in 2009 demonstrated problems related to relaxing spending regulations (Shebala 2009). Sihasin thinking advises us to weed out the motivations to commit fraud which is easier said than done.

Recommendations

Previous attempts to prevent fraud involved slowing down the payment process. As time went on, remedies to prevent fraud had a manner of functionally creeping away from their original intent. What's more, previously devised remedies seem to have not been revised to reflect contemporary challenges. Still, there appears to be less interest than ever in addressing the maze of accountability protections that are potentially redundant, outdated, or ineffective at protecting against fraud. Without much review and revision, it appears that the net result of redundant, outdated, ineffective and unnecessary spending regulations have had the primary impact of limiting fraud. That said, the spending procedures have also had the epiphenomenal impact of drastically slowing spending down. Readers are well aware by now of the dangerous impact of slow spending in the midst of a pandemic. Then there are those who have exploited the current system for their own ends.

Another thorny subject is the weaponization of funding regulations. It is unclear to what extent persons in positions of authority are intentionally slowing down or stopping projects due to interests beyond the building and rebuilding of the Navajo Nation. Sihasin philosophy tells us that our policies are not to be pointed at our own relatives. Wilkins and Deloria have famously been quoted as saying the following about federal Indian law and policy:

"Federal Indian Law," stripped of the hypocritical veneer given to it by law professors, has become a hodge podge of personal grudges, ad-hoc policies, inconsistent judicial decisions, and a general exercise of ignorance about Indians, framed in statutory language. (Deloria and Wilkins 1999 pg. 33-34)

Does this statement also apply to Navajo fiscal spending procedures? Debates aside, the answer lies within Sihasin analysis. The main area that should guide current and future policy makers is to divest ourselves of the idea that spending policies are sacred. They are not sacred. They are just tools and we humans should use our minds to make them work for the good of the Navajo Nation. Sometimes it appears people forget that they are in charge of their own nation and not the other way around. Perhaps this approach is far too aggressive. Somewhere in the spectrum of critical thinking is the proper balance between questioning and integrity in Navajo fiscal spending. It is the responsibility of Navajo citizens to locate this balance.

Recommendations

Solution: Untangling the Navajo Nation's financial system is going to be difficult and could take a lot of time. It may be best to identify multiple financial advisors to offer solutions toward addressing the present problems with a mind toward future, yet to be identified, priorities. Yet it is important to make clear that this matter is not a simple Certified Public Accountant issue. Rather than pretend there is no hidden agenda, Navajo Nation is in the best position to declare their agenda to be and behave as a sovereign nation. Navajo Nation citizens can demand that the Navajo Nation behave as a liberal democracy and utilize the talents of political scientists and economists to form a series of best practices guidelines. This approach would force Navajo citizens to determine what Nation they aspire to be. Yet, even this decision is difficult. Aspiring to be similar to any nation is often challenging because of the use of information manipulation typically identified as propaganda. The ability for any population in the 21st century to think critically seems to be ever more challenged to logically examine premises for validity (accuracy) and inductively draw a conclusion based on valid premises. This exercise is, by no means, unbiased and it should not be disguised as unbiased. Even staff at DPI would advocate for the biased approach of utilizing Diné Bibee Haz'áanii in lieu of other western models based on exploitation and the monopolized use of violence. The difference between those that would aspire to an ideal and never live up to it and those that would aspire to a less than perfect model is that those willing to admit to being less than perfect are likely honest.

Recommendation 3. Active implementation of culturally based and guided Navajo Fundamental Law to support the harmonious and balanced operation of government for the benefit of the Navajo people and Nation.

Context: One of the primary objectives of DPI is to provide policy recommendations founded within Są'ah Naagháí Bik'eh Hózhóón consistently applied using the Sihasin model. One aspect of this endeavor is to remind readers of the Navajo Fundamental Law or Diné Bibee Haz'áanii Bits'eé' Siléí. Within this document is the laws of Mother Earth and Father Sky or Shimá Nahasdzáán dóó Shitaa' Yádiłhił.

Recommendations

While the source material provides minimal guidance on the subject, a more nuanced interpretation can come from a body of knowledge within the ceremonial settings. Specifically, Nahadzáán Biyiin details a balance between Mother Earth and Father Sky which is known as Ałch'į' Silá. All aspects of Navajo philosophy are premised on balance between dual entities typically understood as female and male but even this is an oversimplification. This example is within our source knowledge just mentioned: Nahadzaan Biyiin. Within the set of songs are notions of balance between Mother Earth and Father Sky, between East and West, between soft goods and hard goods, etc. While it is not possible to cite a book on this matter, readers can consult with their local hataałii for more guidance on the very simplistically expressed ideas here. The caveat is that each community may interpret the concepts expressed here a bit differently. Beginning the conversation about reacting to emergencies while not over reacting is key. (Dine Fundamental Law, 2002)

Solution: There has long been an ebb and flow between Navajo Nation's executive and legislative branch. The two most recent drastic examples of the conflict involves the 1989 Title II amendments (Wilkins 2013, 29) and the Navajo Nation Council Reduction (Yazzie, 2011). Complicating matters is the role that local government plays in the ebb and flow. A lesson from natural law may suffice here. Just as night animals and day animals once disagreed on daylight and night time dominance, so do these three institutional entities disagree on which should dominate and when. When there was no clear winner, a balance was struck in which some would have night and some would have day. Even this division could not be left to be equal 365 days per year and so seasons came into being allowing for long winter nights and short summer nights as well as short winter days and long summer days. Allowing for ebbs and flows in order to maintain a proper distance and nearness toward or away from an issue is key. This balance could be better managed if the executive and legislative branch worked collectively to take responsibility given certain contexts such as within the declaration of an emergency. In the midst of a pending catastrophic event, an executive officer may be best suited to make sweeping decisions. However, a legislature is best suited to reconsider the sweeping decisions and modify accordingly. In a vacuum independent of real life needs, it is easy to suggest and live by the above suggestion. However, when a crisis hits, it is ever more important to be cognizant of such a delineation of power.

Recommendations

A more systematic approach to the power sharing inherent in the current Navajo Nation government can only serve to improve the lives of Navajo citizens. (Admittedly, this approach may also prove to be slower and, thus, inadvertently frustrate Navajo citizens but such an issue is an aside).

Recommendation 4. Navajo Nation must revisit the Navajo Nation Code section 201-206 (Diné Fundamental Law, 2002).

Context: Section 202 states the following, " . . . [T]he respect for, honor, belief and trust in the Diné Bibee Haz'áanii preserves, protects and enhances the following inherent rights, beliefs, practices, and freedoms: . . . E. A government structure consisting of Hózhóójí Nahat'á (Executive Branch), Naat'ájí Nahat'á (Legislative Branch), Hashkéédjí Nahat'á (Judicial Branch), and the Naayee'jï Nahat'á (National Security Branch): . . . " (Dine Fundamental Law, 2002). This is another example of Sihasin forcing us to address and remove hinderances to our goal of living a wisdom filled life. On its face, section 202 letter E states that the Navajo citizens are governed by an unwritten constitution known as Diné Bibee Haz'áanii. Contained within this body of governing laws is the ability to rely on a 4th branch of the Navajo government tasked with addressing the National Security of the Navajo Nation. That this has not, thus far, been explored is likely due to nervousness about the conflict such a branch might invite from the United States. As climate change continues to seemingly run amuck, this is yet another example on how the United States has failed to live up to its trust responsibility to Navajo Nation by carrying out centuries of policy bent on resource extraction leading to climate crises events. (Curley, 2023; Rosser, 2021; Needham, A. 2014; Nielsen & Robyn, 2019).

Recommendations

Solution: Section 202 letter E may be the authorization needed to create an emergency management system for Navajo citizen security. This approach has been historically abused by many around the world. One reaction to problems with cities in crisis was to have a state governor unilaterally appoint an emergency manager to govern cities such as Detroit and Flint. However, opponents of this move have cried foul arguing that the emergency management move is an attempt to politicize the process. One group argues that the city is in crisis, much like Navajo Nation during the pandemic, and needs immediate action. Another group argues that the emergency declaration is incorrect and the true motives are to displace a democratically elected city council (Bosman & Davey, 2016).

In short, any move to allow for oversight suspension in the face of an emergency must be carefully considered. Our Sihasin approach is likely one of the best methods of considering how emergency declarations may be utilized ethically according to Navajo philosophy. What types of safety measures can be installed that will allow for the protection of the Navajo citizens' voice in declaring or ending emergency declarations. Perhaps the most effective way to create a rapid method of suspending oversight in order to react properly to a legitimate crisis is to simply rely on time. Creating a mechanism to declare an emergency on Navajo Nation that simultaneously suspends oversight in order to address a crisis with a sunset clause may work best.

This means that a hard time line can be built into the mechanism requiring, for example, that any declaration of an emergency be set for 30 days. At the end of 30 days, more clarity will be visible to all and the emergency declaration will automatically end unless more action is taken by the Office of the President and Vice President in concert with the Navajo Nation Council. To offer more detail would be to cut off the voice of the people and, therefore, DPI will reserve their statements until a time when the public demands more discussion.

Conclusion

"The pandemic was most painful due to the loss of elders, ceremonial knowledge keepers, and Navajo speakers. This has become the latest challenge to the survivability and maintenance of the Navajo Language and culture."

In the Navajo perspective, it is understood that K'é places upon all five fingered people an obligation to be stewards of our clan relatives. Within K'é is accountability to one another. We are children, parents, or grandparents to one another through our clans. This means we are all woven together and responsible to each other. Neglecting this responsibility would fray the fabric of Navajo society. Yet, it is up to us to hold one another accountable when we do neglect our obligations to one another. It is an exercise of fundamental law to apply Sihasin in order to make visible the path out of the pandemic. The pandemic's impact upon the Navajo culture and Navajo people – their families and communities – will be felt for decades to come. The pandemic was most painful due to the loss of elders, ceremonial knowledge keepers, and Navajo speakers.

This has become the latest challenge to the survivability and maintenance of the Navajo Language and culture.

In retrospect (a tenant of Sihasin) it is understandable that the Navajo Nation government responded to the pandemic within the context of pre-existing bureaucratic policies, regulations, and procedures. It is painstakingly clear that the Navajo Nation's response was mired in the complexity of governmental processes, particularly related to the allocation and expenditure of tribal and federal funds. The delayed processes were compounded by competing governmental interests between the Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President (and its administration) and the Navajo Nation Council in responding to COVID-19.

Conclusion

The people paid for the devastating impacts on Navajo communities. It is the hope of DPI staff that this initial study and its recommendations not only offer insight into the need of Navajo governmental efficiencies, but also to serve as a reminder to develop government processes and policies that will more effectively address the next pandemic. Still, emergency management need not be in the form of a pandemic relief effort.

Maui's largest integrated outdoor siren warning system, with over 400 alarms, according to Adam Weintraub, a spokesperson for the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency, did not sound throughout the fire (Sanchez, 2023). The absence of sirens was confirmed by a representative of the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency (Mansoor, 2023). So, why did the emergency operation plan fail? The Federal Catastrophe Management Agency (FEMA) has highlighted common oversights in the supervision of catastrophe-related operations. There did not exist an impactful disaster strategy, there were insufficient resources for catastrophes and there was unclear leadership. Too much attention was given to unimportant and nameless operational personnel, all of which made the issue worse (Hughes, 2012).

Therefore, the Maui fires can also serve as a reminder to not only the Navajo Nation but also other indigenous communities, many of which live in rural areas. More time is needed for planning, training, and responses to emergency events. Additionally, as this report has shown, it is preferable to learn from our mistakes than to repeat the same ones which is the purpose of Sihasin. The missteps discussed in this report were likely the consequence of a rushed effort to save lives and nothing more. Our understanding of how to adapt to a world that is constantly changing now is aided by past errors and solutions. This study is built upon the teachings that lead to Są'ah Naagháí Bik'eh Hózhóón. But mistakes are a necessary part of the road to success, Sihasin allows us to see and apply the lessons of those mistakes to tomorrow's plan. All community within the Navajo reservation should have an emergency response in place to protect all Navajo citizens.

Works Cited

Books

Alesina, A., & Spolaore, E. (2005). *The size of Nations*. MIT.

Aronilth, W. (1992). *Foundation of Navajo culture*. W. Aronilth.

Austin, R. D. (2009). Navajo courts and Navajo common law: A tradition of tribal self-governance. U of Minnesota Press.

Bailey, G. A., & Bailey, R. G. (1986). *A history of the Navajos: The reservation years*. School of American Research Press; Distributed by University of Washington Press.

Cameron, C. M. (2001). Veto bargaining presidents and the politics of negative power. Cambridge University Press.

Curley, A. (2023). *Carbon Sovereignty: Coal, Development, and Energy Transition in the Navajo Nation*. University of Arizona Press.

Denetdale, J. N. (2015). *Reclaiming Diné History: The Legacies of Navajo Chief Manuelito and Juanita*. University of Arizona Press.

Eldridge, D. (2014) Diné Food Sovereignty: A Report on the Navajo Nation Food System and the Case to Rebuild a Self-Sufficient Food System for the Diné People. Diné Policy Institute.

Frank, L. F., & Times, N. (2016). *Exploring the Navajo Nation Chapter by Chapter Nazlini-Wide Ruins*: Salina Bookshelf Incorporated.

Goertz, G. (2003). *International norms and decision making: A punctuated equilibrium model.* Rowman & Littlefield.

Howell, W. G. (2003). *Power without persuasion: The Politics of Direct Presidential Action*. Princeton University Press.

Iverson, P. (2002). *Diné: A history of the Navajos*. UNM Press.

Lerma, M. (2017). *Guided by the mountains: Navajo political philosophy and governance*. Oxford University Press.

Mayhew, D. R. (1974). *Congress: The Electoral Connection*. Yale University Press.

Needham, A. (2014). *Power Lines: Phoenix and the Making of the Modern Southwest*. Princeton University Press. http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt6wpxx8

Neustadt, R. E. (1960). *Presidential Power*. New American Library.

Works Cited

Nielsen, M. O., & Zion, J. W. (Eds.). (2005). *Navajo Nation Peacemaking: Living Traditional Justice*. University of Arizona Press. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1jf2d4s

Nielsen, M., & Robyn, L. M. (2019). *Colonialism Is Crime*. Rutgers University Press, 2019.

Rosser, E. (2021). *A Nation Within: Navajo Land and Economic Development*. Cambridge University Press, 2021.

Wilkins, D. E. (2013). The Navajo Political Experience. Rowman & Littlefiled.

Williams, Robert A., Jr., 1955-. (1997). Linking arms together : American Indian treaty visions of law and peace, 1600-1800. New York :Oxford University Press,

Wilson, S. (2008). Research Is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods. Canada: Fernwood Publishing.

Yazzie, R. et al (2011). Recommendations for Restructuring the Navajo Nation Council. Diné Policy Institute.

Yurth, C. (2017) Exploring the Navajo Nation Chapter by Chapter. (https://books.google.com/booksid=RErsxQEACAAJ&dq=navajo+nation+chapters&hl=en&newbks=1&newbks_redir=0&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwizhrn16oaAAxUlMDQIHbtGBH8Q6AF6BAgDE_

WEBSITES / WEB PAGE

Burkhart, L. (2018, August 1). *Navajo Nation Electrification*. Retrieved April 30, 2020, from Public Utilities Fortnightly: https://www.fortnightly.com/fortnightly/2018/08/navajo-nation-electrification

Chen, G. (2020, February 14). *An Overview of the Funding of Public Schools*. Retrieved from Public School Review: https://www.publicschoolreview.com/blog/an-overview-of-the-funding-of-public-schools

Coon, L. (2003, May 9) Is the pandemic over? OSL HEALTHCARE. https://www.osfhealthcare.org/blog/is-the-pandemic

Fonseca, F. & Sullivan, T. (2020). The grief is so unbearable': Virus takes a toll on Navajo https://apnews.com/article/arizona-nm-state-wire-lifestyle-native-americans understanding-the-outbreak-c77cc3c537c9a2510b67dcb631b4d988

Works Cited

Giles, E. (2016, April 22). *The Navajo Are Fighting to Get Their Water Back.* Retrieved April 30, 2020, from Takepart: http://www.takepart.com/feature/2016/04/22/native-american-water-settlements

Gover, K. (2014, October 1). Nation to Nation: Treaties Between the United States and American Indian Nations. Washington D.C.

Groetzinger, K. (2020, April 22). *Navajo Families Without Internet Struggle To Home-School During COVID-19 Pandemic.* Retrieved from National Public Radio: https://www.npr.org/2020/04/22/839948923/navajo-families-without-internet-struggle-to-homeschool-during-covid-19-pandemic

Hughes, J. (2012) SEVEN COMMON MISTAKES IN EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT OPERATIONS. Seven Common Mistakes in Emergency Management Operations | Jensen Hughes

Mullan, D. (2020, April 17). *New Mexico Public Education Department directed to stop diverting federal school aid.* Retrieved from Santa Fe New Mexican: https://www.santafenewmexican.com/news/local_news/new-mexico-public-education-department-directed-to-stop-diverting-federal-school-aid/article_7491272e-80ba-11ea-ad9f-e7e0f5c17009.html

Navajo Nation Government. (2020, May 20). *Welcome to the Navajo Nation Government.* Retrieved from Navajo New Press Release: https://www.navajo-nsn.gov/

NTU Coronavirus (COVID-19) Information. (2020, March 20). *Student support is NTU's focus as it prepares for distance education in response to COVID-19.* Retrieved from Navajo Technical University: http://www.navajotech.edu/news/1019-student-support-is-ntus-focus-as-it-prepares-for-distance-education-in-response-to-covid-19

Shebala, M. (2009, Oct 22). *Discretionary Funds Records Subpoenaed.* Retrieved November 22, 2023, Retrieved from Navajo Times : https://navajotimes.com/politics/2009/1009/102209slush.php#top

Smalley, A. (2020, June 15). *National Conference of state legislatures.* Retrieved from Higher Education Responses to Coronavirus (COVID-19):https://www.ncsl.org/research/education/higher-education-responses-to-coronavirus-covid-19.aspx

Smith, D. (2020) Changes to Our Shopping Process to Encourage Social Distancing. Changes to Our Shopping Process to Encourage Social Distancing (walmart.com)

Thompson, J. (2020, April 16). *Diné College Students Get Laptops to Finish Out School Year.* Retrieved from News Release: https://www.dinecollege.edu/news-release-dine-college-students-gets-laptops/

Works Cited

Vaziri, A. (2023) *San Francisco Chronicle*. Covid numbers are ticking up in California. https://www.sfchronicle.com/health/article/california-covid-19-numbers-show-slight-rise-amid-18262205.php

JOURNAL ARTICLE

Canes-Wrone, B., Howell, W. G., & Lewis, D. E. (2008). Toward a broader understanding of Presidential Power: A reevaluation of the two presidencies thesis. *The Journal of Politics*, *70*(1), 1–16. https://doi.org/10.1017/s0022381607080061

Curley, C. (2020, February 28). *The Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President.* Retrieved April 30, 2020, from Navajo Nation COVID-19 Preparedness Team eatablished to address corona virus precautionary efforts: https://www.navajo-nsn.gov/News%20Releases/OPVP/2020/Feb/FOR%20IMMEDIATE%20RELEASE%20-%20Navajo%20Nation%20COVID-19%20Preparedness%20Team%20established%20to%20address%20coronavirus%20precautionary%20efforts.pdf

Dine Fundamental Law (2002). Diné Bi Beenahaz'áanii (1 N.N.C. §§ 201-206). *Dine Fundamental Law*. https://courts.navajo-nsn.gov/dine.htm#:~:text=That%20Din%C3%A9%20Bi%20beenahaz'%C3%A1anii%20provides%20for%20the%20establishment%20of,honor%20from%20such%20other%20nations.

Epstein, D., & O'Halloran, S. (1994). Administrative procedures, information, and agency discretion. *American Journal of Political Science*, *38*(3), 697. https://doi.org/10.2307/2111603.

Howell, W. G., & Lewis, D. E. (2002). Agencies by presidential design. *The Journal of Politics*, *64*(4), 1095–1114. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2508.00164

John, J. (2021) Build Back Better: Water Infrastructure Needs for Native Communities Jason John, Director, Navajo Nation Department of Water Resources March 24, 2021. 2021-03-22 24March2021 Testimony draft - final.pdf (senate.gov)

Lewis, D. E. (2007). Testing Pendleton's premise: Do political appointees make worse bureaucrats? *The Journal of Politics*, *69*(4), 1073–1088. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2508.2007.00608.x

Navajo Nation CARES Fund Act Veto issued by Jonathan Nez. (2020, May 31). Retrieved from The 24th Navajo Nation Council Speaker of the Council: http://www.navajonationcouncil.org/PressReleases/2020/MAY/Navajo_Nation_CARES_Fund_Act_vetoed_by_President_Jonathan_Nez_PR.pdf

Works Cited

Navajo Nation Office of the President & VP. (2020, March 29). *Curfew takes effect for Navajo Nation as COVID-19 cases reaches 128.* Retrieved from The Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President: https://www.navajo-nsn.gov/News%20Releases/OPVP/2020/Mar/FOR%20IMMEDIATE%20RELEASE%20-%20Curfew%20takes%20effect%20for%20Navajo%20Nation%20as%20COVID-19%20cases%20reaches%20128.pdf

Office of Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission. (2020, March 19). *Price gouging on and off the Navajo Nation.* Retrieved from Office of the Navajo Human Rights: Commission: https://www.nnhrc.navajo-nsn.gov/PressReleases/2020/March/PR_03192020.pdf.

Rosser, E. (2009). Displacing The Judiciary: Customary Law and the Threat of a Defensive Tribal Council: A Book Review Of Raymond D. Austin, "Navajo Courts and Navajo Common Law: A Tradition of Tribal Self-Governance" (2009). *American Indian Law Review*, *34*(2), 379–401. http://www.jstor.org/stable/41148657

Shorty, B. (2020, May 15). *The 24th Navajo Nation Council Office of the Speaker.* Retrieved May 20, 2020, from Navajo Nation Council addresses presidential veto abuse with overrides creating protections for Navajo People: http://www.navajonationcouncil.org/pressReleases/2020/MAY/Navajo_Nation_Council_addresses_presidential_veto_abuse_with_overrides_creating_protections_for_Navajo_People_PR.pdf

Shorty, B. C. (2020, May 1). *City of Gallup begins three-day lockdown at noon, May 1.* Retrieved from The 24th Navajo Nation Council: http://www.navajonationcouncil.org/PressReleases/2020/MAY/Gallup_and_Governor_Grisham_issue_city_lockdown_May_1_2020_PR.pdf

Shorty, B. C. (2020, May 15). *President Nez and Vice President Lizer request support for new CARES Act.* Retrieved from The Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President : https://www.opvp.navajo-nsn.gov/Portals/0/FILES/PRESS%20RELEASES/2020/May/New%20CARES%20Act%20comprehensive%20legislation_Legis_No_0115_20_opt.pdf

Shorty, B. C. (2020, May 19). *Navajo Nation CARES Fund Act approved by Navajo Nation Council.* Retrieved from The 24th Navajo Nation Council Office of the Speaker: http://www.navajonationcouncil.org/PressReleases/2020/MAY/NN_CARES_Fund_Act_approved_by_Navajo_Nation_Council.pdf

Shorty, B. C. (2020, May 22). *Navajo Nation Council receives DOJ and Legislative.* Retrieved from The 24th Navajo Nation Council: http://www.navajonationcouncil.org/pressReleases/2020/MAY/Council_receives_DOJ_Legislative_Counsel_guidance_on_allowable_coronavirus_relief_funding_costs_PR.pdf

Works Cited

Shorty, B. C. (2020, May 27). *Navajo Nation clean water infrastructure needs exceed $700 million.* Retrieved from The 24th Navajo Nation Council: http://www.navajonationcouncil.org/pressReleases/2020/MAY/Navajo_Nation_water_needs_exceed_700_million_PR.pdf

Shorty, B. C. (2020, May 7). *Navajo Nation CARES Fund Act legislation introduced*. Retrieved from The 24th Navajo Nation Council Office of the Speaker: http://www.navajonationcouncil.org/PressReleases/2020/MAY/Navajo_Nation_CARES_Fund_Act_legislation_introduced.pdf

The Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President. (2020, April 5). *Navajo Nation to initiate 57-hour weekend curfew to fight COVID-19.* Retrieved from The Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President: https://www.navajo-nsn.gov/News%20Releases/OPVP/2020/Apr/FOR%20IMMEDIATE%20RELEASE%20-%20Navajo%20Nation%20to%20initiate%2057-hour%20weekend%20curfew%20to%20fight%20COVID-19%20w%20health%20order.pdf

The Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President. (2020, March 20). *The Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President.* Retrieved from Navajo Nation issues "Stay at Home Order" for all:https://www.navajonsn.gov/News%20Releases/OPVP/2020/Mar/FOR%20IMMEDIATE%20RELEASE%20%20Navajo%20Nation%20issues%20Stay%20at%20Home%20Order%20for%20all%20residents%20of%20the%20Navajo%20Nation%20to%20fight%20the%20spread%20of%20COVID-19%20w%20order.pdf

Newspaper Articles

Allen, K. (2020, April 9). *Navajo Times.* Retrieved May 1 , 2020, from Chapter officials frustrated with lockdowns, work to meet needs: https://navajotimes.com/coronavirus-updates/chapter-officials-frustrated-with-lockdowns-work-to-meet-needs/

Bosman, J., & Davey M. (Jan. 22, 2016) Anger in Michigan Over Appointing Emergency Managers. https://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/23/us/anger-in-michigan-over-appointing- emergency-managers.html

Cronkite, J. (2019, May 23). *Fairfield The Sun Times.* Retrieved May 1, 2020, from Trump OKs Navajo Nation disaster declaration in wake of February storms: https://www.fairfieldsuntimes.com/news/national/trump-oks-navajo-nation-disaster-declaration-in-wake-of-february/article_0d2fa2ee-7ddd-11e9-9ed8-3b49aa303e2b.html

KRQE Media. (2020, April 2). *KQE local reporting you can trust*. Retrieved from Operation First of the Month' provides safe shopping experience for Navajo elders:

Works Cited

https://www.krqe.com/health/coronavirus-new-mexico/operation-first-of-the-month-provides-safe-shopping-experience-for-navajo-elders/

Mansoor, S. (2023) What to Know About the Government Response to the Maui Wildfires. ttps://time.com/6305152/maui-wildfires-government-response-fema/

McNeil, D. G. (2020, March 16). *The U.S. Now Leads the World in Confirmed Coronavirus Cases.* Retrieved April 30, 2020, from The New York TImes: https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/26/health/usa-coronavirus-cases.html

Navajo Hopi Observer. (2019, June 25). *Navajo Hopi Observer.* Retrieved April 29, 2020, from Navajo Nation finalizes disaster agreement with FEMA: https://www.nhonews.com/news/2019/jun/25/navajo-nation-finalizes-disaster-agreement-fema/

Navajo Hopi Observer. (2020, March 17). *Member of the Navajo Nation tests positive for COVID-19 coronavirus.* Retrieved April 30, 2020, from Navajo Hopi observer: https://www.nhonews.com/news/2020/mar/17/member-navajo-nation-tests-positive-covid-19-coron/

PBS NEWS HOUR (2023) Live updates: What's happening on Day 7 of the Israel-Hamas war. https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/live-updates-whats-happening-on-day-7-of- the-israel-hamas-war.

Quintero, Donavan (2020, April 19). A history of epidemics: In past, Navajos survived many epidemics. Spanish flu, virus pose danger. Retrieved from Navajo Times : https://navajotimes.com/ae/culture/a-history-of-epidemics-navajos-survived-many-epidemics-using-traditional-healing/

Readfearn, G. (2020, April 27). *The Guardian.* Retrieved April 30, 2020, from How did coronavirus start and where did it come from? Was it really Wuhan's animal market?: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/28/how-did-the-coronavirus-start-where-did-it-come-from-how-did-it-spread-humans-was-it-really-bats-pangolins-wuhan-animal-market

Ribakoff, S. (2020, April 21). *1220 North Fillmore Street, Suite 444.* Retrieved from Farmington Daily Times : https://www.daily-times.com/story/news/2020/04/21/new-mexico-told-change-how-distributes-impact-aid-schools/5167819002/

Sanchez, R. (2023) Hawaii has a robust emergency siren warning system. It sat silent during the deadly wildfires. Hawaii's emergency siren warning system was silent during Maui wildfires | CNN

Works Cited

Silverman, H., Toropin, K., & Sidner, S. (2020, May 18). *CNN*. Retrieved from Navajo Nation surpasses New York state for the highest Covid-19 infection rate in the US: https://www.cnn.com/2020/05/18/us/navajo-nation-infection-rate-trnd/index.html

Smith, N. (2023) Navajo Nation COVID-19 curfews saddled hundreds with citations, netted no money for police, news investigation finds. Fines from Navajo Nation curfew violations never collected because a fund to collect them was not set up (azpbs.org)

Smith, N. L. (2019, September 4). *Navajo Nation Council approves budget for fiscal year 2020, anticipates loss of revenue.* Retrieved April 20, 2020, from Farmington Daily Times: https://www.daily-times.com/story/news/local/navajo-nation/2019/09/04/2020-budget-fiscal-year-approved-navajo-nation-council/2210866001/

Smith, N. L. (2020, March 22). *Farmington Daily Times.* Retrieved April 30 , 2020, from Navajo Nation Council approves emergency funding for COVID-19 response: https://www.daily-times.com/story/news/local/navajo-nation/2020/03/22/navajo-nation-council-coronavirus-response-approves-funding/2890572001/

Yurth, C. (2020, March 24). *Navajo Times.* Retrieved April 30, 2020, from Chapters ordered to close; senior centers running low on supplies: https://navajotimes.com/coronavirus-updates/chapters-ordered-to-close-senior-centers-running-low-on-supplies/

Appendix - Table 1 Questions

***Dikos Nstaaígíí-19*:**

COVID-19 impacts on Diné people's ceremonial practices and wholistic wellbeing

Principal Investigator: Kiyanna Honani, Diné College Psychology BA Student **Survey**

Questions

Ya'at'teeh dóó ahee'hee'! Hello and thank you for taking time out to take this survey on behalf of my research. Your participation is greatly appreciated as it is helping me gather data for my project.This survey will take approximately 20 minutes.

The following questions will be addressing your **demographic information.** 1. What year were you born:

2. What Diné College site do you consider your main work/study area:
   - Aneth
   - Crownpoint
   - Shiprock
   - Tsaile
   - Tuba City
   - Window Rock

3. Gender you identity as:
   - Male
   - Female
   - Other

4. Chapter Affiliation:
   - _____

5. Primary Residency during Covid:
   - On the Navajo Nation
   - Off the Navajo Nation

6. Religious/Spiritual Way of Life:
   - Native American Church
   - Traditional Ceremonies
   - Christian Church

7. Prior to the onset of COVID 19, I frequently attended the following ceremonies (check all that apply):
   - Blessingway Ceremonies
   - Kinaaldá Ceremonies
   - Mountain Way Ceremonies
   - Enemy Way Ceremonies
   - Yei Bi Chei Ceremonies
   - Peyote Ceremonies
   - Other: _____

Appendix - Table 1 Questions

8. Since COVID started, my overall attendance at ceremonial activities has …

1. decreased drastically | 2. decreased slightly | 3. remained the same | 4. increased slightly | 5. increased drastically

9. Please identify what reasons impacted your decision to stop attending ceremonies (check all that apply)

- My attendance to ceremonies never changed
- Increased change of exposing myself to COVID
- Increased change of exposing COVID to others
- Navajo Nation Curfew/Lockdown Protocol
- Other: _____

The following questions are based on your reflection of how **COVID restrictions have impacted your ceremonial practices**. Please identify how strongly you agree with the following statements.

Physical Impact of COVID on Ceremonial Practices

10. Since the onset of COVID, my opportunity to see and visit with my ceremonial family has…

1. decreased drastically	2. decreased slightly	3. remained the same	4. increased slightly	5. increased drastically

11. Since the onset of COVID, my practice of preparing ceremonial foods has …

1. decreased drastically	2. decreased slightly	3. remained the same	4. increased slightly	5. increased drastically

12. Since the onset of COVID, my practice of gathering herbs has..

1. decreased drastically	2. decreased slightly	3. remained the same	4. increased slightly	5. increased drastically

13. Since the onset of COVID, my practices of sitting up all night to pray and sing have...

1. decreased drastically	2. decreased slightly	3. remained the same	4. increased slightly	5. increased drastically

14. Since the onset of COVID, the opportunity to dress for ceremonial purposes has...

1. decreased drastically	2. decreased slightly	3. remained the same	4. increased slightly	5. increased drastically

15. Since the onset of COVID, my individual effort to practice physical activities associated with ceremonies that I normally would have learned by attending a ceremony has …

1. decreased drastically	2. decreased slightly	3. remained the same	4. increased slightly	5. increased drastically

Appendix - Table 1 Questions

Emotional Impact of COVID on Ceremonial Practices

16. Since the onset of COVID, the emotional support from my ceremonial family has...

1. decreased drastically	2. decreased slightly	3. remained the same	4. increased slightly	5. increased drastically

17. Because of the change in my attendance to ceremonies due to COVID, my personal happiness has..

1. decreased drastically	2. decreased slightly	3. remained the same	4. increased slightly	5. increased drastically

18. Because of the change in my attendance to ceremonies due to COVID, my feelings of hopefulness have…

1. decreased drastically	2. decreased slightly	3. remained the same	4. increased slightly	5. increased drastically

19. Because of the change in my attendance to ceremonies due to COVID, my feelings of sadness/ loneliness have…

1. decreased drastically	2. decreased slightly	3. remained the same	4. increased slightly	5. increased drastically

20. Because of the change in my attendance to ceremonies due to COVID, my feelings of anger have….

1. decreased drastically	2. decreased slightly	3. remained the same	4. increased slightly	5. increased drastically

21. Since the one of COVID, my individual effort to stay emotionally connected to ceremonies has…

1. decreased drastically	2. decreased slightly	3. remained the same	4. increased slightly	5. increased drastically

Mental Impact of COVID on Ceremonial Practices

22. Because of the change in my attendance to ceremonies due to COVID, my anxiety level has…

1. decreased drastically	2. decreased slightly	3. remained the same	4. increased slightly	5. increased drastically

23. Because of the change in my attendance to ceremonies due to COVID, my thoughts about suicide have….

1. decreased drastically	2. decreased slightly	3. remained the same	4. increased slightly	5. increased drastically

24. Because of the change in my attendance to ceremonies due to COVID, my level of optimism

has...

1. decreased drastically	2. decreased slightly	3. remained the same	4. increased slightly	5. increased drastically

25. Because of the change in my attendance to ceremonies due to COVID, my ability to make healthy decisions has...

1. decreased drastically	2. decreased slightly	3. remained the same	4. increased slightly	5. increased drastically

26. Because of the change in my attendance to ceremonies due to COVID, my ability to adjust to unexpected challenges has...

1. decreased drastically	2. decreased slightly	3. remained the same	4. increased slightly	5. increased drastically

27. Since the onset of COVID, my individual effort to take care of my mental health that was usually addressed during ceremonies has…

1. decreased drastically	2. decreased slightly	3. remained the same	4. increased slightly	5. increased drastically

Spiritual Impact of COVID on Ceremonial Practices

28. Since the onset of COVID, the opportunity to learn prayers has ...

1. decreased drastically	2. decreased slightly	3. remained the same	4. increased slightly	5. increased drastically

29. Since the onset of COVID, the opportunity to learn songs for ceremonial purposes has..

1. decreased drastically	2. decreased slightly	3. remained the same	4. increased slightly	5. increased drastically

30. Since the onset of COVID, the opportunity to learn stories associated with ceremonies has…

1. decreased drastically	2. decreased slightly	3. remained the same	4. increased slightly	5. increased drastically

31. Since the onset of COVID, my level of spiritual connection with ceremonial songs, prayers, and stories has

1. decreased drastically	2. decreased slightly	3. remained the same	4. increased slightly	5. increased drastically

32. Since the onset of COVID, my level of spiritual connection with our holy people has…

1. decreased drastically	2. decreased slightly	3. remained the same	4. increased slightly	5. increased drastically

33. Since the onset of COVID, I make an extra effort to learn songs, prayers, and stories that I normally would have learned in ceremonies to avoid loss of cultural ways of knowing.

1. decreased	2. decreased	3. remained	4. increased	5. increased

Appendix - Table 1 Questions

drastically slightly the same slightly drastically

Future Participation

34. Would be interested in attending virtual workshops to help learn ceremonial practices during covid.

- no
- yes

35. Would you be interested in participating in a talking circle on this topic?

- no
- yes

36. Would you like an invitation to attend my presentation on this project in April?

- no
- yes: Please indication best email address to contact you: _____