



PEACEMAKING STATEMENT TRADITIONS OF HEALING

This is a time of great tragedy for our People. Many of us have lost family members and friends to this disease, and to the hopelessness created by its harm in our communities.

What is our pathway back to strength, health, and hope? The tools to find these things are within us. It must start with remembering our teachings and seeing how they have led us through pain and loss in the past, back to strength.

We have faced Naayéé in the past. Now our people are being eaten again. How do we fight the Naayéé? The answer is that we follow the path of the Twins. We ask the Holy People to help us. Early in the morning, we make our prayers and offerings. We do this when the spirits are active and talking, when we hear them in the songs of the birds and see the herbal medicine and plants rising from the soil for the nourishment of the sun and water. Just as they do, we say our prayer, sing our song and greet the morning dawn with reverence.

We are mindful of the prophecy, that Naayéé would return and harm the People when there are too many people in the world. When we harm our Mother Earth with irreverent actions is when She will defend herself. To listen to her and restore our relationship with her we must respect ourselves and our place in the world, including our responsibilities. Western people look at the devastation in the Navajo Nation and believe we are unsophisticated, backward, need to be guided as children to take care of ourselves. They are wrong. Many of us have lost respect for ourselves and lost our way of Clan and K'e and our responsibilities to ourselves and our families to protect them by staying home, wearing a mask, and washing our hands. When we regain our respect for ourselves and meet our responsibilities, we will regain the respect of others.

When we don't respect ourselves, we lose the strength of our blood and open ourselves to be attacked by this disease. Our blood is strong and comes from First Man and First Woman, and it is in the colors of them - red, black, white and yellow. Red is the blood, black is the hair of thunder, yellow is muscle, white is bones. These are the colors of our strong bodies inherited from First Man and First Woman. The same colors are in our weaving. When we keep it strong it is tight and resilient and will protect us, but it is only strong when we respect ourselves and our traditions. Today, we are not teaching our ways or following our instructions for prayer and responsibility, and the disease is finding its way in to attack us.

Our blood is still good, we are still strong, but we must defend ourselves with our morning prayers and offerings, by doing our sacred things in a clockwise manner, and by respecting the responsibilities of Clan and K'e as we take actions to protect ourselves and those around us. We have done this before when we were under attack. The Diné people have defended ourselves from Spaniard and Mexican invaders, and from Americans when we survived the Long Walk and returned to Diné Bikéyah with a treaty through our prayers and actions.

Now, we have another invader from outside. It is Invisible Body, Bits'íís Dooyit'íinii or Air that Gives Evil Spell, Níłch'i Bi'íiníziinii. While it is invisible, it is as deadly as any monster or invader we have faced in the past. We need only look to the past to see what we must do now to defeat this invader and protect ourselves, our families, and Diné Bikéyah.