

## Maternal Essence of Diné Women

In Diné traditional society today, we should never tolerate and inflict such uncalled-for and destructive behavior such as, neglect and abuse amongst our people, especially in women and children. For, women are considered the vertebrae / backbone of Diné traditional society, because they are the life bearers, the nurturers and the “maternal essence” in the homes and the communities; while Diné men are considered as providers and “warrior-like” protectors of families, homesteads and the communities. Wherein, a child is a force of energy and a gift of life that breathes beauty, balance, love and harmony into every aspect of a family. This allows families to make ‘sound and well thought out’ choices and determinations that produce balance and harmony, regardless of situations and conditions within a home environment. If family members are raised in this manner, it is considered that they are well immersed in traditional traits, etiquettes and living a “Diné Way of Life”, a life in Diyin Dine’é Bina’nitin dóó Bik’ehgo Iná.

Where it has been told, that women folk are like ‘brandish and nourishing gardens’ in which an abundance in variety of nourishment are instilled in their beings; They are endowed with life sustaining elements and aspects of what ‘White Shell Woman’ whom was known to have been spiritually blessed and instilled with / by Diyin Dine’é. That, when she was created and sent into this world as “Yikáih Yizhchí”/ Born in the Morning Twilight Dawn or Dawn Child”; that as an infant, she developed into a young woman within a twelve days time through a spiritually endowed blessing. This is a reflection and a teaching that encompasses the Puberty Ceremony / Kinaaldá in which young girls become of age and become young women, a portion of an origin story based on White Shell Woman in her growing years. It was upon the said blessing, she became known as a maternal being to the Diné people, as she was adorned with the virtues of goodness in womanhood through songs and prayers in the Hózhóójíí Way Ceremonial Rite; She is love and the heart of a home, family, clanship and her people. She is cultural heritage, as it has been taught through the times that upon her virtues, a woman is the tower of strength to all Diné male beings, and that “Behind every successful man, there would be a good woman”. For the woman is considered the maternal essence, the foundation and a teacher in most family matters and acknowledges responsibility in her everyday life. She is the first to rise in the morning and the last to retire from a day’s work. It is through her fondness that she would rather protect, tend to and provide for her children, than worry about her self, as she provides nourishment for her children first, then partakes of whatever is left of a meal, and sometimes none at all. A conceptual teaching that “Children will actually eat out of your mouth and hands” / “Áłchíni hazéé’ hada’iinííł yileeh”, a literal perception that holds true of parents in moms and dads.