

THE NAVAJO NATION

DINÉ: BELIEFS, TRADITIONS, AND SACRED PRACTICES

Hózhó — The Path of Beauty, Balance, and Harmony

Hózhó: beauty, balance, harmony, and right relationship with all things.

The four sacred mountains define the Diné homeland.

Changing Woman, the most beloved Holy Person, renews herself with the seasons.

The sandpainting is not art. It is medicine — made, used, and dissolved.

The Blessing Way calls hózhó back into the life that has lost it.

Every ceremony returns the person to the path of beauty.

Hózhóogo naasháa doo. I walk in beauty.

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A Note on Diné Sacred Knowledge

The Navajo Nation (Diné Bikéyah — the Diné homeland) is a sovereign nation with its own protocols regarding sacred knowledge. This guide draws on the extensive ethnographic and collaborative scholarly record — including Washington Matthews's foundational documentation of the Night Chant and Mountain Chant (conducted in the 1880s-1890s with Diné ceremonial practitioners' involvement), Charlotte Frisbie's collaborative work, the Diné Policy Institute's materials, and materials shared by Diné scholars and cultural institutions. The Navajo Nation Museum and cultural programs have been significant sources of community-authorized information.

The specific wording of ceremonial chants, certain sandpainting designs considered too sacred for reproduction, and specific ceremonial protocols maintained within the hataalii (ceremonial practitioner) tradition are not included in detail here. The level of description provided reflects what is documented in the public scholarly record with the understanding that the Diné community's own protocols regarding sacred knowledge are primary.

Introduction

The Navajo Nation (Diné — 'the People,' from the term Naabeehó, which is the Nation's own name in English) is the largest Indigenous nation in the United States by land area — the Navajo Nation Reservation covers approximately 27,000 square miles of the Colorado Plateau in present-day Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah, with additional allotted lands and trust areas. The Diné people number approximately 173,000-200,000 enrolled members, making the Navajo Nation also one of the most populous Indigenous nations in North America.

The Diné are a people whose identity is inseparable from a specific landscape: the Colorado Plateau's red sandstone mesas, the deep canyons (including Canyon de Chelly, where Diné have lived continuously for centuries), the vast open sky of the high desert, and the four sacred mountains that define the boundaries of the Diné homeland. The land is not a backdrop — it is a participant in Diné sacred life, marked at its boundaries by the four sacred mountains, governed at its center by the sacred forces that the Diné ceremonies maintain in balance.

The central concept of Diné sacred life is Hózhó — usually translated as 'beauty,' 'harmony,' or 'balance,' but encompassing all three simultaneously and more besides. Hózhó is the state of right relationship between all things: between the individual and their family, between the family and the community, between humans and the Holy People (the divine beings), between humans and the natural world, between the visible world and the sacred world. The entire Diné ceremonial system — hundreds of specific ceremonies, each with its specific songs, sandpaintings, and protocols — exists to restore Hózhó when it has been disrupted.

The Four Sacred Mountains

The Boundaries of the Diné Homeland

The four sacred mountains define the boundaries of Diné Bikéyah — the Diné homeland — in all four directions. They are not merely geographical landmarks; they are sacred beings whose spiritual character sustains the Diné homeland's sacred integrity. Each mountain is associated with a specific direction, a specific color, a specific Holy Person, and a specific sacred plant.

THE FOUR SACRED MOUNTAINS

EAST — SISNAAJINÍ (BLANCA PEAK, COLORADO): The white mountain of the east — associated with dawn, with white shell (yoogaii), with the beginning of things, and with White Corn. The east mountain is the direction of new beginnings, of the rising sun, of the first prayers of the day. The Holy Person associated with the east is Dawn Boy.

SOUTH — TSOODZIL (MOUNT TAYLOR, NEW MEXICO): The turquoise mountain of the south — associated with blue/turquoise (doot'ízh), with midday, with turquoise (the stone most sacred to the Diné), and with Blue Corn. The south mountain is the direction of the growing light, of warmth, of abundance.

WEST — DOOK'O'OOSÍÍD (SAN FRANCISCO PEAKS, ARIZONA): The yellow mountain of the west — associated with yellow (íitso), with sunset, with abalone shell (diyogii), and with Yellow Corn. The west mountain is the direction of completion, of the setting sun, of the evening prayers.

NORTH — DIBÉ NITSAA (HESPERUS MOUNTAIN, COLORADO): The black mountain of the north — associated with darkness (yizhiin), with jet black stone (bááshzhinii), and with White Corn in the night aspect. The north mountain is the direction of the night, of the sacred dark, of the deep teachings.

THE SACRED BUNDLE: When the Diné were created, Changing Woman filled a sacred mountain bundle with soil from each of the four sacred mountains, and other sacred materials. This bundle represents the entire Diné homeland in miniature — it is used in specific ceremonies to connect the ceremony's participants to the four mountains' sacred power.

Hózhó

The Central Sacred Principle

Hózhó (pronounced approximately HO-zho, with the first syllable carrying a high tone) is the most important concept in the entire Diné sacred universe — the condition of right relationship, harmony, balance, and beauty that is simultaneously the goal of all Diné ceremonial practice and the natural state of the sacred world when human beings are living properly within it.

What Hózhó Encompasses

Hózhó cannot be adequately translated by any single English word. When it is called 'beauty,' the beauty referred to is not aesthetic preference but the specific quality of beauty that belongs to a world in right relationship — the beauty of the healthy body, of the harmonious family, of the community at peace, of the land properly cared for, of the relationship between humans and the Holy People properly maintained. When it is called 'harmony,' the harmony is not merely an absence of conflict but the active, sustained alignment of all things with their proper place in the sacred order.

HÓZHÓ AND ITS OPPOSITES

HÓCHXÓ' (THE CONDITION OPPOSING HÓZHÓ): The state of disharmony, ugliness, sickness, and wrong relationship — the condition that Diné ceremonies are specifically designed to address. Hóchxó' is not evil in a moral sense; it is the state of things being out of alignment with the sacred order. Illness, accident, drought, community conflict — all of these are expressions of hóchxó' at different scales. THE CAUSES OF HÓCHXÓ': Hóchxó' may be caused by: violation of specific taboos (contact with the dead — chindi — is the most common), lightning strike (which carries a specific spiritual disruption), contact with enemies (particularly in warfare), violation of the protocols governing relationships with specific sacred beings, or simply by the accumulated weight of living that gradually displaces hózhó. RESTORING HÓZHÓ: The Diné ceremonial system — the hundreds of specific ceremonies (sings/chants) that exist in the tradition — all have the restoration of hózhó as their primary purpose. The specific ceremony required depends on the specific cause of the hóchxó': a disruption caused by the dead requires the Enemy Way; a disruption caused by lightning requires the Shooting Chant; a general loss of wellbeing and harmony requires the Blessing Way. THE BEAUTY WAY: The closing phrase of many Diné prayers — 'Hózhóogo naasháa doo' (In beauty I walk, I walk in beauty) — is not a prayer for beauty in the aesthetic sense but the declaration of the practitioner's intention to walk in the condition of right relationship with all things. This walking in beauty is the practical expression of hózhó in daily life.

CONNECTION TO HALIGRICITY

Hózhó — the Diné name for the sacred state of right relationship, balance, beauty, and harmony that the entire ceremonial system works to maintain and restore — is the Diné articulation of what every tradition in the Haligrity library recognizes under its own name: Asha (Zoroastrian), Ma'at (Egyptian), Tao (Chinese), Dharma (Hindu/Buddhist), Ubuntu (Bantu), Asha again (in the Yoruba tradition of balance and right relationship). The Haligrity Tetralty's alignment principle — that genuine sacred practice requires the correspondence of Feeling, Thinking, Speaking, and Doing with the sacred order — is the Haligrity formulation of hózhó. Alignment is hózhó. Hózhó is alignment.

Part Four

The Holy People (Diyin Dine'é) The Sacred Beings of the Diné Universe

The Diyin Dine'é (Holy People) are the sacred beings of the Diné universe — beings who existed before humans, who created the conditions for human life, who established the ceremonial system through which humans can maintain hózhó, and who are invoked in every Diné ceremony. They are not gods in the Abrahamic sense — they are not omnipotent or omniscient, and their power is specific rather than universal.

THE MAJOR HOLY PEOPLE

CHANGING WOMAN (ASDZÁÁ NÁDLEEHEÉ): The most beloved and most widely honored of the Holy People — the Holy Person who most completely embodies hózhó and whose story is the closest to a central narrative in the Diné tradition. Changing Woman changes with the seasons: she is young in spring, mature in summer, old in fall, and renewed again in winter. She is the mother of the Hero Twins, the giver of the blessing way ceremony, and the creator of the Diné clans. Her connection to the earth, to corn, to the seasons, and to the cycles of women's lives makes her the most intimate of the Holy People.

FIRST MAN (ÁꞆTSÉ HASTIIN) AND FIRST WOMAN (ÁꞆTSÉ ASDZÁÁ): The first beings who emerged from the underworlds and who organized the world at the beginning — the primal couple whose wisdom and whose failings shaped the conditions of human life.

SPIDER WOMAN (NA'ASHJÉ'II ASDZÁÁ): The teacher of weaving — who taught the Diné women how to weave on the loom that Spider Man (her husband) designed. Spider Woman also played a crucial role in the Hero Twins' journey to find their father the Sun.

THE SUN (JÓHONAA'ÉÍ): Father of the Hero Twins, giver of light, and one of the most powerful Holy People. The Sun's power is immense but also dangerous — the Hero Twins' journey to find their father and receive his weapons for killing the monsters is one of the most important narratives in the Diné sacred tradition.

THE YEI (HOLY BEINGS OF CEREMONY): The specific sacred beings who appear in the Night Chant ceremony — tall, masked beings who communicate through a specific falsetto cry and who represent the specific sacred presences that the Night Chant invokes. The Yei are represented in the Yeibichai dances of the Night Chant.

Part Five

Changing Woman (Asdzáá Nádleehé) The Most Beloved Holy Person

Changing Woman is the central Holy Person of the Diné sacred tradition — the being who created the Diné clans from the skin of her own body (she rubbed her body and from the skin created the first people of each clan), who received the Blessing Way ceremony from the Holy People and gave it to the Diné, and whose cycles of renewal — young girl in spring, mature woman in summer, elderly in fall, renewed in winter — embody the deepest truth of hózhó: that the sacred order is not static but continuously self-renewing.

Changing Woman's Sacred Role

Changing Woman lives at the western ocean on a floating island — moving with the seasons in her own cycles of renewal. She is associated with the earth, with corn, with women's sacred cycles, and with the maintenance of life. When the Hero Twins went to find the Sun (their father) to get weapons to kill the monsters devastating the earth, it was Changing Woman who sent them — and it is Changing Woman's gift of the Blessing Way that provides the primary ceremonial means of maintaining hózhó in individual lives.

CHANGING WOMAN AND THE KINAALDA

The most direct expression of Changing Woman's continuing presence in Diné life is the Kinaalda — the coming-of-age ceremony for young women at their first menstruation (see Parts Twenty-One and Twenty-Two for the complete ceremony). The Kinaalda re-enacts Changing Woman's own first becoming — the ceremony establishes the young woman's identity with Changing Woman, acknowledges her entry into the fullness of her power, and blesses her with Changing Woman's specific gifts: the capacity to sustain life, to feed the people, and to embody the cycles of renewal that hózhó requires.

The Creation Narrative

The Emergence Through the Worlds

The Diné creation narrative is the story of emergence — the journey of the Diné ancestors through a series of underworlds (the specific number varies by account — commonly four or five worlds) to arrive at the present world (Glittering World). Each world was left when its conditions became impossible — when the beings in that world ran out of space, or when their conduct violated the sacred order, or when the world itself became inhospitable. The emergence through these worlds is the journey from lower states of existence toward the present world's specific quality of beauty.

THE FIVE WORLDS OF THE EMERGENCE

THE FIRST WORLD (BLACK WORLD): The beginning — inhabited by beings who are not yet fully formed humans. The world is dark, small, and eventually becomes too crowded. **THE SECOND WORLD (BLUE-GREEN WORLD):** Larger, with more beings. The people are driven out when conflict with the beings already inhabiting the world becomes unresolvable. **THE THIRD WORLD (YELLOW WORLD):** The world where many of the significant events of the pre-human story occur — where the first monsters arose, where First Man and First Woman make decisions that shape the subsequent world, and where the Great Flood eventually forces the emergence upward. **THE FOURTH WORLD (WHITE WORLD):** Some accounts combine or reorganize the worlds; many versions describe four worlds before the present one, with the fourth being the world of the most fully formed pre-human beings. **THE FIFTH WORLD (GLITTERING WORLD — THE PRESENT WORLD):** The current world — where the Diné live now. This world was prepared for human habitation by the Holy People: the four sacred mountains were placed at the four directions, the sacred plants were established, the sun and moon were set in motion, and the conditions of human life were established. The Glittering World gets its name from the specific quality of light — the sparkle of mica in the soil, the shimmer of the desert sun.

The Blessing Way (Hózhóójí) The Foundation Ceremony

The Blessing Way (Hózhóójí — the walking in beauty way) is the most fundamental and most widely performed ceremony in the Diné ceremonial system — the ceremony conducted to attract hózhó, to strengthen a person's relationship with the Holy People, to bless major life transitions (pregnancy, childbirth, military service, healing, marriage), and to maintain the general sacred wellbeing of the individual and their community.

What Makes the Blessing Way Central

The Blessing Way is the ceremony that Changing Woman herself established and gave to the Diné — it is her specific gift to her people. Unlike the Enemy Way (which addresses the disruption of hózhó) or the Night Chant (which addresses specific illnesses), the Blessing Way is primarily preventive and strengthening — it draws hózhó toward the person rather than removing what has disturbed it. It is the ceremony that is most frequently conducted and the one that most completely embodies the Diné understanding of what sacred ceremony is for.

THE BLESSING WAY — PREPARATION AND FIRST NIGHT (STEPS 1-5)

DURATION: Two nights and two days. The hataalii conducts a preliminary consultation to determine which form of the Blessing Way is required. **STEP 1 — THE SWEAT AND EMETIC:** The ceremony begins with purification — the person sung over takes an herbal emetic to cleanse internally and undergoes a sweat bath. This prepares the body to receive the hózhó the ceremony will call. **STEP 2 — THE SACRED BATH (HAIR WASHING):** The person's hair is washed in yucca suds — marking the boundary between ordinary state and the sacred state being entered. **STEP 3 — DRESSING IN SACRED GARMENTS:** The person is dressed in garments associated with the Holy People — white shell beads, turquoise, clothing that identifies them with the sacred beings whose blessing is sought. **STEP 4 — THE POLLEN APPLICATION:** Corn pollen (tadidiin) is applied in specific patterns: soles of the feet, palms, crown of the head, and lips. This aligns the person's body with the sacred directions and with the Holy People's blessing. **STEP 5 — NIGHT ONE — THE CHANTING:** The hataalii begins the specific chants of the Blessing Way, continuing for hours through the first night. Songs recount the story of Changing Woman, the Hero Twins' journey, the establishment of the sacred mountains. The person sits facing east, receiving the songs' sacred power.

THE BLESSING WAY — SECOND NIGHT THROUGH COMPLETION (STEPS 6-10)

STEP 6 — THE SANDPAINTING (SOME VERSIONS): In some versions, a sandpainting is made — the person sung over sits on the sacred image, connecting their body to the Holy People represented there. **STEP 7 — NIGHT TWO — THE PRAYER STICKS:** Sacred prayer sticks (kethawns) — small wands of specific wood — are made and placed in specific directions as material offerings to the Holy People. **STEP 8 — THE DAWN SONGS:** At dawn of the second morning, the Dawn Songs greet the sun's return and call the hózhó of the new day into the person's life. This is the ceremony's most powerful moment — the convergence of accumulated sacred energy with the sacred power of dawn. **STEP 9 — THE CLOSING PRAYER (HÓZHÓ NAHASDLÍÍ):** The ceremony closes with the Hózhó Prayer — 'Beauty before me, beauty behind me, beauty below me, beauty above me, beauty all around me, I walk in beauty' — the most widely known words in the entire Diné ceremonial tradition. **STEP 10 — THE FEAST:** A communal feast follows — the gathered community shares food as the physical expression of the hózhó that has been restored or strengthened.

Sandpainting

Sacred Medicine Made Visible

The Diné sandpainting (iikááh — 'place where the gods come and go') is one of the most visually extraordinary and most spiritually sophisticated sacred art forms in any tradition — the creation of a specific geometric design using colored sands (crushed minerals), pollens, cornmeal, and charcoal on a specially prepared sand base, for the specific purpose of inviting the Holy People to be present in the ceremony and to transmit their healing power to the person sung over.

The Sandpainting Is Not Art

The most important thing to understand about the Diné sandpainting is that it is not art. It is medicine. Its purpose is not to be beautiful (though it is beautiful — it embodies the beauty of hózhó) but to be effective — to create the specific sacred image that invites the specific Holy People whose presence is required for the specific ceremony. When its purpose is accomplished, it is dismantled — the sands are gathered and taken away, removing both the sacred image and the ceremonially concentrated energy from the ordinary world.

THE SANDPAINTING CEREMONY — COMPLETE STEP-BY-STEP

STEP 1 — THE PREPARATION OF THE SPACE: A specific area is cleared and leveled — a cleared area of clean sand (sometimes on a hide or clean surface) approximately five to eight feet in diameter. The space is oriented according to the specific ceremony's directional requirements. STEP 2 — THE GATHERING OF MATERIALS: The hataalii and their assistants gather the specific colored materials required for the specific design — colored sands (crushed minerals of specific colors), pollen, cornmeal, and charcoal. Each color has its specific sacred associations and its specific gathering protocol. STEP 3 — THE MAKING BEGINS FROM THE CENTER: The sandpainting is made from the center outward — establishing the central sacred figure or symbol first and building the design outward in all four directions. The hataalii and assistants work together, each responsible for specific sections of the design. STEP 4 — THE PRECISION OF THE DESIGN: Each sandpainting design is a specific, memorized composition — not improvised, not freely creative. The hataalii has learned each design through years of apprenticeship, and the specific design must be reproduced with precision. Any significant error in the design must be corrected before the ceremony can proceed. STEP 5 — THE INVITATION: When the sandpainting is complete, a specific song or prayer invites the Holy People represented in the design to be present — to inhabit the sacred image and make their healing power available through it. STEP 6 — THE PERSON SUNG OVER ENTERS: The person for whom the ceremony is being conducted is brought to the sandpainting and seated in its center (or on the central figure, depending on the specific design). The physical contact between the person's body and the sandpainting image is the moment of healing transmission — the Holy People's sacred power, concentrated in the image, flows directly into the person's body. STEP 7 — THE TRANSFER TOUCHES: The hataalii takes colored sands from specific parts of the sandpainting figure and applies them to the corresponding parts of the person's body — sand from the figure's feet is applied to the person's feet, from the figure's hands to the person's hands, etc. This specific transfer is the most intimate moment of the healing ceremony. STEP 8 — THE DISSOLUTION: After the ceremony is complete, the sandpainting is deliberately destroyed — the sands are gathered from the outside inward (reversing the order of creation) and removed from the ceremonial space. The sands are taken to a specific location (traditionally north, the direction of the night and of completion) and released. The image has done its work; it must not remain in the ordinary world.

The Sweat Lodge (Táchééh) Diné Practice

The Diné sweat lodge (táchééh) is a dome-shaped structure used for purification and sacred ceremony — similar in general structure to the sweat lodges of many other Indigenous nations but with specific Diné protocols, specific sacred associations, and specific positions within the Diné ceremonial system.

THE DINÉ SWEAT LODGE — STEP-BY-STEP

STEP 1 — CONSTRUCTION: The sweat lodge is built as a dome frame of bent willows, covered with blankets or canvas. The door faces east. The central pit is prepared for the hot stones. The structure is typically small enough that occupants must sit or lie. STEP 2 — THE FIRE AND STONES: A fire is kindled outside and east of the lodge, and stones are heated in it. The Diné sweat lodge stones are greeted as grandfathers — acknowledged as ancient beings of earth. STEP 3 — SMUDGING AND PURIFICATION: Before entering, participants may be smudged with specific Diné sacred plants — sage (ch'il doot'izh, various *Artemisia* species) or cedar. STEP 4 — ENTRY WITH PRAYER: Participants enter clockwise, moving to their designated positions. Upon entering, each person offers a brief prayer acknowledging the purpose of the sweat. STEP 5 — THE STONES ENTER: The hot stones are brought in and placed in the central pit using deer antlers. Each stone is greeted and pollen may be offered on it. STEP 6 — THE FOUR ROUNDS: Water is poured on the stones in four rounds — each round dedicated to one of the four sacred directions. Between rounds, the door is opened; new stones may be brought in. Specific songs or prayers accompany each round. STEP 7 — THE POLLEN BLESSING: In Diné ceremonial sweat lodges, corn pollen is often offered to the stones or sprinkled in the four directions during the ceremony — connecting the purification practice to the most sacred Diné offering substance. STEP 8 — CLOSING PRAYER: The ceremony closes with the Hózhó prayer — 'Beauty before me, beauty behind me...' — the most fundamental Diné sacred closing. STEP 9 — EXIT AND GROUNDING: Participants exit and are often cooled with water poured over the body or by facing east in the open air.

The Kinaalda

Girl's Coming of Age Ceremony

The Kinaalda is the Diné coming-of-age ceremony for young women at their first menstruation — one of the most important lifecycle ceremonies in the tradition and the ceremony that most directly re-enacts Changing Woman's own first becoming. The Kinaalda establishes the young woman's identity as a being who participates in the sacred cycles of renewal that Changing Woman embodies.

The Sacred Significance of the Kinaalda

At the moment of first menstruation, a young woman becomes Changing Woman — not metaphorically but in a direct sacred sense. The ceremony acknowledges this becoming, establishes it in the community's awareness, and blesses the young woman with Changing Woman's specific gifts: the power of creation, the capacity to sustain life, and the sacred cycles of renewal. The Kinaalda is the most complete female initiation ceremony in any tradition in this library.

Kinaalda — Complete Step-by-Step

THE KINAALDA CEREMONY — COMPLETE SEQUENCE

DURATION: The ceremony lasts four days (four nights in some traditions). Four is the sacred number of the Diné ceremony, corresponding to the four sacred mountains and the four directions. **STEP 1 — ANNOUNCEMENT:** When a girl experiences her first menstruation, the family is informed and the preparations begin. An experienced woman elder (typically the girl's maternal grandmother or a highly regarded community elder) is asked to guide the girl through the ceremony. **STEP 2 — THE HAIR COMBING AND DRESSING:** The girl's hair is washed in yucca suds and combed smooth. She is dressed in the full traditional dress of Diné womanhood — typically a velveteen blouse and tiered skirt, with turquoise and shell jewelry, and her moccasins. This dressing is the visual declaration that she is now Changing Woman. **STEP 3 — THE FIRST RUN (DAWN OF DAY ONE):** At dawn of the first morning, the girl runs — east, toward the rising sun. This run is not optional; it is one of the most essential elements of the ceremony. She runs as far as she can and returns — her running embodies the vigor of Changing Woman's youth, and the distance she runs corresponds to the length and happiness of her life. Relatives and community members may run with her. **STEP 4 — THE RUNNING ON SUBSEQUENT DAYS:** The girl runs at dawn on each of the four mornings of the ceremony — each run potentially longer than the last, demonstrating her growing strength. The running is the most physically demanding element and the most publicly visible. **STEP 5 — THE MOLDING:** During the ceremony, the girl's body is formally 'molded' by the elder woman guiding her — the elder's hands press over the girl's body from head to foot, shaping her into her womanhood. This molding echoes Changing Woman's own first forming and establishes the girl's physical body as strong, capable, and blessed.

THE KINAALDA — STEPS 6-10 (COMPLETION)

STEP 6 — THE GRINDING: The girl grinds corn — traditional corn grinding is long, physical work that demonstrates her capacity for the sustained labor that women's traditional work requires. The grinding is ceremonial as much as practical; the corn she grinds becomes part of the sacred cake. STEP 7 — THE ALKAAN (SACRED CAKE): The girl makes an alkaan — a large cornmeal cake baked in an earth oven (dug in the ground, lined with cornhusks, and covered with embers). The cake is the most sacred element of the Kinaalda: it is made by the girl herself, it embodies Changing Woman's gift of sustenance to the people, and it is shared with the entire community at the ceremony's conclusion. The making of the cake — the mixing, the lining of the pit, the careful baking — is conducted with specific songs and specific prayer. STEP 8 — THE NIGHT OF SINGING: On the last night of the ceremony, the entire community gathers and sings through the night. The songs are the specific songs of the Blessing Way and of Changing Woman — they fill the girl's life with sacred power and establish her in the community's sacred memory as a woman who has been properly initiated into her womanhood. STEP 9 — THE DAWN COMPLETION: At the final dawn, the girl runs one last time — her most significant run, toward the fully risen sun. This run is the ceremony's climax: she is now Changing Woman, running into her life. STEP 10 — THE FEAST AND DISTRIBUTION OF THE ALKAAN: The sacred cake is cut and distributed to every person present. The girl who will sustain the people begins by literally feeding them — the first act of her adult life as Changing Woman.

The Haligricity Lens

Hózhó, Pollen, and the Sandpainting

The Diné tradition offers Haligricity gifts of extraordinary philosophical depth and practical applicability: Hózhó as the most complete and most philosophically precise articulation of the alignment principle that the Haligric Tetrality embodies; corn pollen as the most universally applicable sacred offering in any tradition in this library; and the sandpainting as the most complete available ancient model of the use of sacred visual form as a healing technology.

Hózhó and the Haligric Tetrality

Hózhó — the condition of right relationship, harmony, balance, and beauty between all things — is the Diné name for what the Haligric Tetrality's alignment principle holds. The practitioner whose Feeling, Thinking, Speaking, and Doing are in genuine correspondence with each other and with the sacred order is walking in hózhó. The practitioner whose four dimensions are misaligned — who Feels one thing, Thinks another, Says another, and Does yet another — is living in hóchxó'. The entire Haligric practice is a technology for walking in beauty.

The Hózhó Prayer and Haligric Closing

The Hózhó Prayer — 'Beauty before me, beauty behind me, beauty below me, beauty above me, beauty all around me, I walk in beauty. It is finished in beauty. It is finished in beauty. It is finished in beauty.' — is one of the most complete and most beautiful ceremonial closing prayers in any tradition. It maps hózhó onto the six directions (before, behind, below, above, around, and the implied center of the walking self) and declares both the present condition and the intention of the practitioner walking within it. The Haligric practitioner who uses the Hózhó Prayer as the closing of the opening of the day is using the most complete available declaration of sacred alignment.

CONNECTION TO HALIGRICITY

The sandpainting takes hours to make and is destroyed in minutes. Its purpose is not preservation; its purpose is medicine. The healing is complete when the image has done its work and the sands are returned to the earth. This is the Diné teaching about the relationship between sacred form and sacred function: the form serves the function, and when the function is complete, the form releases. The haligric practitioner who makes an offering, who creates a sacred moment, who assembles a sacred meal — and then releases what has been assembled to its purpose — is operating in the same sacred logic. Hózhóogo naasháa doo. Grand Rising.

*"Beauty before me,
beauty behind me,
beauty below me,
beauty above me,
beauty all around me.
I walk in beauty.
It is finished in beauty.
It is finished in beauty.
It is finished in beauty."*

— The Hózhó Prayer, from the Blessing Way ceremony of the Diné / Navajo Nation

The four sacred mountains stand where they have always stood. Changing Woman renews herself with each season. The hataalii sings through the night and the person sung over receives the Holy People's blessing through the colored sands. At dawn, the girl runs toward the sun and becomes, in that moment, Changing Woman — the one who renews. Hózhó is not a belief. It is a condition maintained through practice, through ceremony, through the specific technologies of song and sand and pollen and running. Hózhóogo naasháa doo. Grand Rising.

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