

Envisioning Diné Bikeyah  
For Our Families 102 Years  
From Now

Intergenerational Family Voices

Álchíní bizaad ílí

Álchíní hózhóójí bá Nahat'á

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# Timera Begay

Many Farms

In order to envision the future, one must first know the roots of their past



My great-grandfather Zhealy Tso's vision of the very first store location in Bitter Water Canyon.



In Bitter Water Canyon, my great grandparents planted the roots of our foundation.



Always  
envisioning to a  
brighter future.



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# Kelsey Dahozy

## Rocksprings

Hi I'm Kelsey. I am 25 years old and I just had a few thoughts on this topic. It's about my experience with my family selling at the flea market.

Growing up I was blessed with having both my maternal grandparents in my life. We lived on my grandpa's land, and they had a food stand. All together as a family, we sell Navajo traditional food at the Gallup flea market on Saturdays. Early Saturday mornings before the sun rises, we would have to load up the truck with supplies and some of the food my grandma prepared to sell.

Those Saturdays were long, hot, busy days. Helping my grandparents wasn't their choice. We had to help our elders because selling was an extra source of income for everyday living. But for my two older sisters and me it was a way to make a little money for us to be able to buy candy, toys, or something we really wanted. It was nice being altogether on a Saturday selling food and even browsing around the flea market when we weren't busy, and even running into relatives. Thinking about it now those days were the happiest days of my life growing up as a native kid. It was also a way for us to spend time together.

With that experience, these days when I go to the flea market anywhere on the reservations to get my mutton roast fix, I still see some kids that were like me, listening and learning from their elders on how to do everyday living from making bread to learning how to count money.

I was taught if you are going to get something done, make sure it's done right. When our elders aren't here with us anymore, all we're going to have is the teachings and words left behind. That hopefully can pass down generations to keep the flea market tradition alive 102 years from now. I hope to still see the community gather to walk these flea markets as families and customers friends to buy and support local Navajo families' small businesses.

Their world today has changed so much and there is a lot of struggle and negativity. Saturdays are for hanging out together and going to the flea market together. To get something to eat or to get some new beaded earrings.

Our culture and traditions are what makes us known for where we come from and who we are. We are



connected as brothers and sisters and the amazing thing about being Native is we are never alone.

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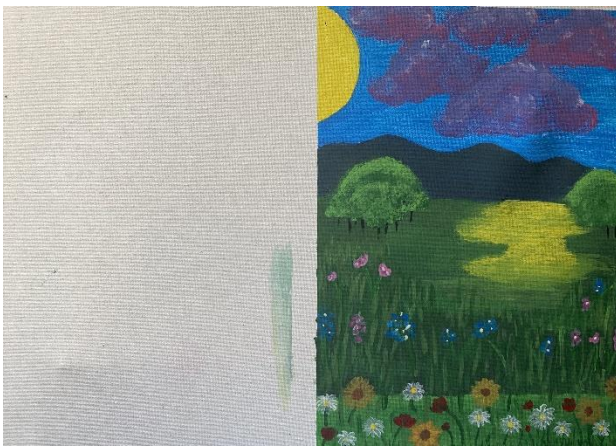
# Kyleigh Garter

Naschitti

Today many youth are dealing with mental and behavioral health alone.

The left side of the canvas represents: Negative Behaviors. Once I was lost, feeling alone, searching to find answers, like a blank canvas. Feeling nothing, no emotions, seeing nothing, no colors, like a blank canvas.

The right side is what I see in 102 years from now: Positive life, believing that life is sacred and should be embraced surrounded by your culture, land, language, family, spirituality



# Shandiin DeGroat

## Churchrock

Diné Bikéyah 102 years from now? So much could happen in that span of time but the first thing that popped into my mind was, of course, memories of myself growing up. It posed a lot of questions about what could've been done differently, and what I hope for future generations of families especially my own.

I thought about this photograph my mom took of me when I was in kindergarten. We were at my grandmother's house, and she had given me a baby bottle so I could help her feed the baby sheep. The photograph itself is long gone, but in this new era of technology I was able to take a photo of the original photo and keep it hovered in the "cloud."

When I think about the future, I don't worry so much about what we've already seemingly have lost but what else we will continue to lose. Today with social media, advanced AI, and technology with unlimited access to the internet has in some ways erased the way many of us grew up. There's no more running barefoot through the hot sands on a summer day, or playing hide and seek in the arroyos, or even helping grandma bottle feed her sheep. I've witnessed kids addicted to their iPads, game systems, and phones. Living life but not experiencing life.

My self-portrait represents my hopes for our future. In 102 years, I hope we find a way a better way to balance the modern world and traditional values. There is a way to live with both.



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## Kiera Charley

### Many Farms

To me, within the above-mentioned time period, I see generations of teachings being passed down from grandparents to parents and their children, continuing with each future generation. Though grandparents and those before us may not physically be with us, they are always watching and providing guidance. Children are indeed the future, and it is with these teachings that we

grow and continue to welcome the arrival of a new day,  
“walking into a new day/future.”



# Michele Ayala

Sanostee



My artwork I am submitting about the way I envision Diné Bikeyah 102 years from now shows the hands of my daughters and myself touching, being connected.

I believe that intergenerational sharing is very important to our families and to our Diné culture because it allows

for us to learn from one another and also to grow as a family, community, and can also make us feel connected to each other and something bigger.

My vision also includes our communities growing while still maintaining our roots which is very important. Our livestock, crops, weaving, have always been our livelihood, allowing us to be independent.

Intergenerational learning and sharing allows us to pass along life lessons which improves attitudes, behaviors which allows for happiness, empathy, compassion, and social intelligence.

All the images shown in my artwork are my hopes for our families 102 years from now. My artwork is done with several colors of a ballpoint ink pen. Thank you

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# Sharon Tsosie

## Chinle

Growing up through intergenerational living, I was taught to have reverence for Mother Earth since birth, for she gives and sustains life.

Working with natural elements of Mother Earth, I am reminded that nature can be quite beautiful yet just as powerful. Culturally, it has always been innate in us to have deep respect and awe for her. Using these precious elements is a rite of passage for children, an introduction to Mother Earth which has been passed down in the family from generation to generation.



In silence and stillness, I hear Mother Nature's old song.  
We carry warm potent memories of our Grandparents  
through their teaching; They are our moral compass.





# Deandre Francisco

Thoreau (11 years old)

102 years from now, problems we will face economically and the effects of our cultural/traditional beliefs.

My theory in the next 102 years is that there will be two main problems on the reservation and across America that will economically affect the world and will also effect the traditional beliefs of natives. Also, across the reservation the Navajo language will be forgotten among native families and will start to only speak English.

Possibly other Navajo families will lose their tradition about clans, which are used to identify relatives. Cultural practices that native Americans tend to use in religious ceremonies will no longer be in use and will eventually go extinct. Traditional teachings will no longer be used by elders that teach the kids/grandchildren.

Across the reservation native people will stop building hogans or other Navajo structures across the Navajo nation. Natives will also lose a good and valuable traditional teaching that we should cherish now before it is extinct.

The Navajo culture is very valuable and is taken for granted by many kids that their grandparents or their parents try and teach them. Kids now days are too into their electronics to want to learn about their Navajo culture more than they think or more than they want. Also, grandparents try and talk Navajo to their grandchildren but they don't want to listen or don't care at all about what their grandparents say.

Across America and across the world the atmosphere will be covered in air pollution, making it hard to breathe. Air pollution causes about 7 million deaths a year and if

air pollution grows worse, the humanity rate will continue to decrease. When air pollution continues, it will damage the O-zone layer causing it to get hotter each year.

Across America there have been financial problems with families which could lead to bankruptcies across America. Most vehicles will go into being electric and not gasoline, so non-renewable sources will eventually run out and may cause a crisis to the sources that they are using and may lead into higher demand, that economic principles broadly assume that and resources will become scarce. This will cause many economic downfalls globally and possibly across the reservation.

Then America will probably have conflict with other countries, as now, we are helping Ukraine to fight Russia, and Russia is threatening America to start a war.

I believe that in the next 102 years scientists will have figured out how to cure cancer and many other deadly diseases. No matter what happens in the next 102 years I hope it is helpful to many families across America and on the reservation.

That is my theory about what will happen in the next 102 years.

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## Sage Eriacho

Fort Defiance

This painting was inspired by the reflection of self that I've been doing the last few days.



The energy has been dense and powerful as we integrate and analyze our lives. We are looking at where we came from and giving credit to ourselves for where we are now. Looking at our limiting mindsets and seeing where we've abandoned our inner compass.

I've noticed that I have been playing small in so many areas of my life. Knowing that I am worthy of abundance because it is my birthright. I allow myself to feel my emotions and use my reasoning to find wisdom in every present moment. The practice of mindfulness.

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## Hope Gamble

Nazlini



We need to encourage this generation to keep the balance of Mother Earth with the Sun and Moon. This consistent equal harmony will sustain our great great great grandchildren.



# Natalya Nez

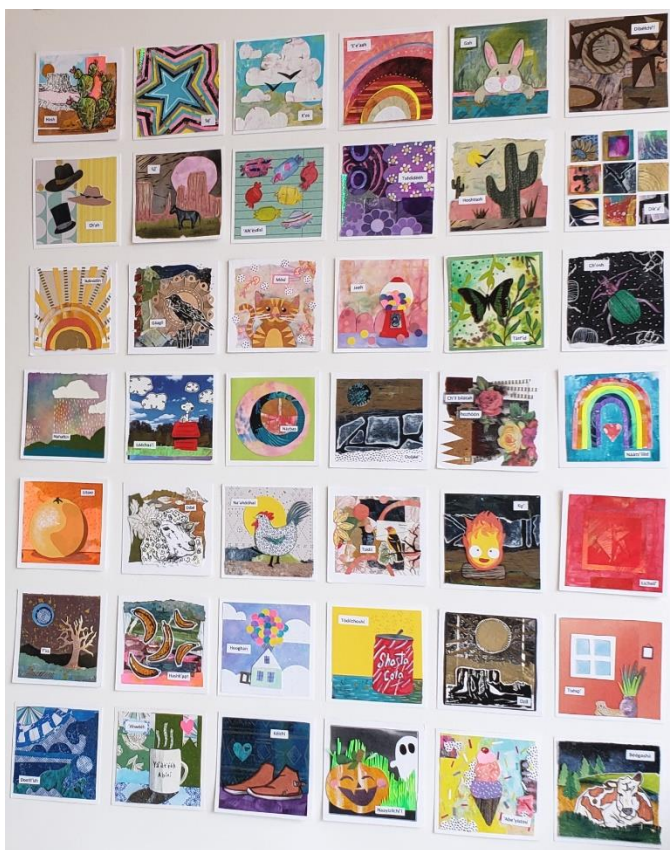
## Chichiltah

This is a series of small paper collages that I have been working on the past couple of years. Each card has a Navajo word and a collaged image that matches the specific word. Right now, I have over 30 collaged word cards that can be displayed together in a poster frame. I started this series as part of a personal language revitalization project and began sharing them online.

I grew up in a predominantly English-speaking home and so, the Navajo language wasn't something I was taught. It was only through vague conversations with my grandmothers and grandfathers was I able to recognize and speak some words. As an adult I became really interested in learning my language and being an artist, my way of learning is very visual. So, I started creating these collages to help me remember what words meant and how they are spelled. This project has not only helped me learn more about my language through research, but also helped me reconnect with family and friends who have helped me with translations and spelling.

When I think about Diné Bikéyah 102 years from now I think about language fluency and comprehension. I hope that I can learn enough so that it can be passed down to future generations. These cards represent the hope there is for the future. I will be 32 years old this coming summer and I am still learning. These cards are something I want to put out into the world to encourage others like myself that there is always an opportunity for self-growth and to reconnect to a part of ourselves that is rooted in our language.





# Betsy Yazzie

Shiprock

When I envision the next generation of Diné language speakers, I often reflect on the historical course that our



grandparents took and what attributes of that walk ensured the survival of our Diné language and culture.

When I was 5 years old my parents left me with my grandparents for the weekend on several occasions. My shame over language privation began to be felt then. Masani told me once, Ni Chei iyaa bi di ni (tell your grandpa to eat). I practiced the phrase all the way up the canyon to where he sat with the sheep. I yelled out to him, Shi Chei, eyaa, shi chii shi nil hi (grandpa, eat, my poop is killing me). He came into the hoghan and said to Masani, Ni tsoi hatishii nii, (I don't know what your grandchild is saying). Everyone laughed. I didn't understand.

A year later I was sent to a Mission school. I was taught to speak and write "correct" English. I was a good Christian child. No one knew of my loneliness or pain. It was at this juncture that I realized language loss. I was often told that I was trying to be a "Bilagaana" (Anglo person) when I could not understand what was being said to me in the Diné language. I was told, how hard can it be to learn since the Anglo traders can speak it? This kind of ridicule added to my fear and reluctance to try to learn my language. Are there Diné People who yearn to learn to speak their language? I would say yes! A resounding yes!

So, the burning question I now ask is, how do we preserve and sustain our beautiful Diné language and culture? Certainly, it has been an endeavor made by our people for centuries. We have written books, designed classes in our schools and colleges, printed coloring pages in our weekly newspaper. We have made a valiant effort, but we continue to see a decline in the number of Diné language speakers. I do not doubt that there are many who share a similar experience as mine. What is our collective thinking about how we should attack this situation? How do we ensure that our lan-

guage and culture thrive and continues to be passed down through the centuries.

As I reached adulthood, I grew tired of the shaming attitude of my elders and some peers. I knew that to address my language loss, I had to learn to speak my language. How would I be able to become a proficient speaker? Is fluency in the Diné language possible for a non-speaker? Who would be able to assist me in this effort?

I can speak from personal experience about my journey to learn my language, and hopefully this will have a causal effect on others. Do I speak my language fluently? I speak what I refer to as “jack-Navajo.” Not very good. I signed up for Navajo language classes at Navajo Community College, now Diné College. I listened to conversations held in Navajo. I begged Navajo speakers in my family and circle of friends to speak to me in Navajo. I blamed the colonized education system which colored the way that I was parented and raised. I came to realize that I too, was colonized, and this realization was an affront to my soul. Understanding this state involved my becoming educated and informed, so thus, began a journey to decolonize myself, also my way of being in this world. This came only after understanding the historical context of the experience, acceptance of what was beyond my control, and healing.

I finally came to the realization that if I was to learn the Diné language, I had to believe that I could. I sat in a workshop under the tutelage of Larry W. Emerson and Herbert Benally. I heard words that impacted the way in which I began speaking my language and learning my culture. I believe it was Mr. Emerson who said, the Diné language is innate, it is within you, claim it. How encouraging and empowering that was to hear. My language was within me, so I claimed it.

I now listen to the Navajo station on the radio. I start conversations in Diné to see how long I can carry on a dialogue in my language. I attend Navajo services at the church I go to. I attend Ceremonies where I immerse myself in the songs, camaraderie, and stories. I continually shake off the shame that continues to plague me when I practice speaking and am harshly corrected. I attend cultural activities and ceremonies where relatives wait patiently for me to express myself and correct my imperfect dialect if I should say some words incorrectly. I ask for clarification or meaning of words I am unfamiliar with. I have embraced, and I love my language and culture. I stutter and often misinterpret words, but I am learning and one day I will speak with clarity and confidence. I must also say that I am now an elder, and this journey has taken me a lifetime. I have grandchildren, and I speak as much as I know to them. They will hear, and they will speak. They should not wait a lifetime to honor and claim what is theirs.

So, what is the vision I have for the next generation? How are we to ensure that we experience language and culture survival?

I have always been amazed by the work of home visitors. These are visits made by early childhood-trained providers who visit women who have just given birth to ensure that they and the new infant are supported in the best ways possible for a healthy start to life. I often wonder if it might be good to add a component to home visiting and that is to begin to talk to the baby and mother in the Diné language in simple descriptive language about the baby and home environment. One would hear the singing of lullabies to the baby by the home visitor and new mother.

I envision an education system that recognizes the value and importance of the Diné language. Support for bilingual education or immersion programs would be the

norm rather than a program at a certain school for a limited number of students. By the next century, I see our people speaking their language to order their food in restaurants or stores located within our homelands. Our Diné teachers will speak Diné in their classrooms, and our Diné students will understand. Our Diné youth will be making music on record labels in their language. Major movie productions directed by Diné people will be in the Diné language with English subtitles. Hospitals will have professionals who are communicating with their patients in their language. Our ranching and farming communities will practice age-old traditions of land, water, and animal protection and food sustainability. Prayers and Indigenous ways of knowing, that strengthen Diné families, will be honored and wholly practiced. We will live our lives in a way that minimizes the toxins that poison our air, water and land.

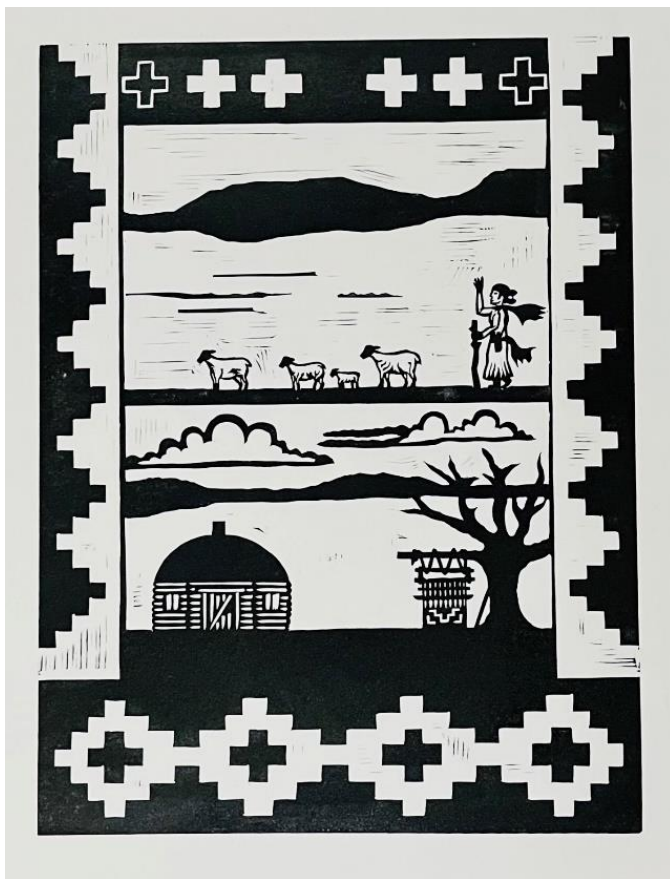
Our language will be alive. This will be a language and cultural revitalization happening on indigenous lands all over the world. We will hear laughter and we will realize safe communities where everyone will protect one another, their homes, and their communities in non-violent ways, in the ways of our ancestors. Can we imagine that? Yes! A resounding yes!

For now, let us begin to speak Diné, one word at a time. Let us live the ways which have sustained us as a people for centuries. To do so will be the cultural survival of our future.

Tabaaha nishli. Kinyaanii bashchischiin.  
Bitaani da shi chei. Todacheenii da shi nali.  
Betsy Yazzie, yinishye.  
Nataanii Nez di shi hoghan.

# Duhon James

Ganado



In this print, there's a lady who's a weaver and sheep herder, and that's her daily life. She's around sheep every single day and rarely has visitors, but when shearing day happens, she gets help from her grandchildren and others throughout the community. She just

lost her grandmother, who taught her how to weave and to take care of the sheep, and learning how to be on her own.

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# Chili Yazzie

## Shiprock

It urgent and necessary for the Diné people to consider the below paradigms of thought to understand our place in the Great Creator's creation and to prepare mentally, spiritually, and physically to face the future. We must honor and live our identity to assure that Diné has a comfortable survival. We are a good people, we have a strong history, we are resilient in the face of adversities. We remain.

### **Original Teachings**

At the creation of the four colors of humanity, the tribes of people each received instructions on how to live with all creation to attain life purpose and happiness. The times of creation were sacred as it was the birthing of life with the coalescing of the Creator Father and the Earth Mother. The foundational instruction is to maintain the exquisite matrix of balance between the Earth (nature and water), all the living, the seemingly non-living entities, and the Creator (the celestial powers, fire/light, and air).

In the sanctity of our origin, the instructions to maintain the balance are for physical care through stewardship of the Earth, her spiritual care with song and ceremony. The instructions are to honor all life as our relatives. The life span of our Earth planet is inextricably connected to

the faithful keeping of the instructions. The abuse of the Earth and diminished spiritual care have caused a precarious imbalance. The life of Earth appears to be waning, as evidenced by the decimation of species and the climate crisis.

In America, we descendants of the original inhabitants are less than one percent of the population. For the most part, the people of America are a lost people, severed from their original lands by choice or by force. The white tribe wandered the earth seeking gold and dominion over all, always attempting to justify the great sacrilege of separating the physical and spiritual, a violation of the Creator's instructions. The consequence of forsaking the Original Instructions is the unhealthy condition of the planet and people.

Our instructions require the equilibrium to be kept with a reciprocal life-sharing with the Earth by giving her our honor and gratitude. We take care of her, so she can continue her compassionate care for us. Her life depends on this reciprocity of care. This message of urgency must be heard and understood by the people of the world. The future of our life is in a precarious state. Humanity must live its responsibility.

### **Sovereignty**

We have been sovereign from time immemorial; from the time the Great Creator gave us breath, it is an inherent possession, we always had it. Our sovereignty is rooted in the moment of creation when we got sacred life rights with authority to live on lands blessed to us. It is a spiritual covenant bequeathed to us by the Creator, it defines our identity, our place in creation. It remains crystal, an indelible reality.

It is not possible to explain our true sovereignty in the context of contemporary government schemes. Our

sovereignty is of a different origin—it is inherent. The man-made designation of sovereign status is a means of subjugation, an act of colonialization, a label useful for its legal and political intents. The word sovereignty does not do justice to the essence of our Indigenous sovereignty.

We rejoiced coming home from Bosque Redondo, celebrating our lifeways and lands. We value the Treaty decrees against the heavy repressive tyranny of government. We have been conditioned and colonized to accept subjugation, some believing this to be patriotic. We are compelled to acquiesce to economic, legal, and political authoritarianism.

We are as sovereign as we believe ourselves to be. It is a matter of attitude; it is defined by the heart and will of the people. Our sovereignty is Creator-given, our right and authority to exercise, to uphold our Creator blessed sovereignty to live a life of free will, on our terms, true to our Original Teachings. We must cherish and honor our Indigenous Sovereignty.

### **Land Belonging**

There are two concepts of relationship to land. The concept rooted to our aboriginal beginning is Land Belonging; we are the children of the Earth Mother and Creator Father. Our concept is of belonging; we belong to the Earth and the Earth belongs to us, as a mother and child belong to each other. This bond cannot be broken or altered, no matter the circumstance. Our relationship with our Earth Mother is intrinsic—physically, emotionally, and spiritually. One cannot own land, water, air, or the fire.

The other concept is that one can own land as a commodified possession based on a piece of paper to prove land ownership. This strange land idea predates



imposition of the foreign system of government and land in 1923 as a Navajo government to which we did not consent. It began when the venerated Treaty of 1868 was “X”-ed by our Tribal headmen in order for the people to come home from Bosque Redondo. The Treaty is held sacred, perhaps because it was a moment when our sovereignty was recognized, albeit with false pretense. With the Treaty came this foreign concept of land-relationship. Our ancestors were perplexed about how one could “own” land with imagined boundaries.

With the 1848 Guadalupe Hidalgo land purchase, Mexico gave up lands it claimed from the southwest U.S. into the northwest. How did Mexico think they owned all this land? In 1493 the Pope gifted to Spain all of the Western Hemisphere, which caused the Great Intrusion, our land to be stolen from us, and which they term the Doctrine of Discovery. We the original people did not have a say.

The reality of belonging to our Earth Mother and the Earth Mother belonging to us is not changed by any doctrine or term or law. This is our understanding, our belief and our land-relationship. Those that think otherwise and intrude on this relationship, and take action to harm our Earth Mother, are wrong. We, the Water Protectors and Earth Defenders, defend Earth Mother, her life is our life, she is our only home. Our position is absolute.

### **Our Future**

Stories of future times by Indigenous people resonate a common theme—that difficult days will come and perhaps a time of completion. The Diné story of a false Glitter World, the prophecies of Hopi, the Mayan Calendar, and others tell of humanity’s departure from the balance, and of a completion of the world if the

people are not willing or able to return to the right path of life to retain and maintain the balance of life.

The warnings have been ample, the signs are clearly evident that we are in the prophesied difficult days. There is much suffering, despair, hatred, and dispossession all over the world. Sincere struggle is made by people of good hearts across the planet, but earth destroyers for profit and purveyors of hatred have no consciousness of the damage they do. Greed for money and domination are powerful enemies of the Earth.

Children of the Diné live in a fantastical, fanatical world. The eons-old prophesied description of our Fourth World as a Glitter World is accurate, the glitter is the illusory appeal of economic success, of getting rich, the hype of an artificially pretty world, technology and science. The fanatical world is the dangers we face, poverty/hunger, hatred, violence and narcissism of elites.

Our future does not appear to hold the promises we dream. Our children must transcend their everyday routines and aspirations to consider the reality of our Diné life in 102 years.

As parents and grandparents, we have the great obligation to prepare the children, it is deeply critical we hold dear our children, with their successes and limitations. They are all we have; they are who we are, they are our visions of hope.

# Charles Alton Begay

Piñon

Our People, the Diné, have always walked this world in a beautiful and harmonious way. It was our ancestors who figured out how to live a healthy and balanced way of life among Dinétah, our homelands. For hundreds of years our ancestors were able to live off the land, respect one another and prosper as a society in this world. Our culture originated from the Diyin Diné, the holy people, and was bestowed upon our people to help us walk in beauty throughout our day-to-day lives.

As a tribal nation we have been through years of suffering and strife which has shaped the current culture and lifestyles among the families living on and off Dinétah. The experiences of our past have taught us lessons which we should learn from and in these current times we must adapt to the ever-changing world around us. We cannot sit idly by as our unique cultural identity is lost, our people have to be proactive and we must strive for a future where the Diné are a prosperous society 102 years from now.

## **Stagnation**

If we as a people lose the will to fight for mother earth, our cultural identity or for our rights to a healthy and happy life, then we will become a stagnant society. When families are content with the way things are and do not seek any change, then our culture and life will cease to evolve.

This would be the case if the tribe were to operate with only the bare necessities being provided to the families, no major investment into the economy or development of the tribal lands. Things would stay the same as they are

without much change to our current way of life and the percentage of people keeping our culture would continue to grow steadily.

### **Regression**

In a worst-case scenario, our total cultural identity, the homelands and the people of the Diné could be lost to time. If we continue not to have discussions on our past experiences, then we cannot heal and learn from them and therefore are more prone to repeat history. Without any knowledge of our history, culture or language being learned or passed on to younger generations, then all of the knowledge is doomed to fade away.

If crime and drugs continue to increase and the tribe does not address the issue, then families would suffer as these problems flood Diné Bikeyah and would begin to kill off our members. This is not the future which I choose to envision for Dinétah, we cannot lose our identity to time, so we must fight the regression of the Diné.

### **Progression**

If the people of today and tomorrow take an avid interest in the preservation of our language, teachings and practices, then the future of the tribe is poised for nothing but greatness. When our tribe is able to adapt to the invention of new technologies, new mindsets and begins to invest in the economy and development of the tribal lands, then life will become easier for families of Diné Bikeyah, especially 102 years from now.

When our people can hear, learn, extract and adapt new ideas to our culture, then our society can truly become extraordinary. In this future scenario, the population of the tribe has exploded for the best, we have a cultural renaissance and our language is spoken heavily among the tribe.

Envisioning the world of 2125 is hard for many people to do, but as for me I usually approach a scenario in which it will have three possible results.

There is either the outcome in which things remain the same (stagnation), the bad outcome (regression) or a good result (progression), and in this case I have described what can happen in the future. We can assure that our future is bright as long as our people, the Diné, continue to hold onto our cultural identity and strive for change.

Diné families have always been strong, smart and capable of passing on our cultural traditions and language. There is only a beautiful and harmonious way of life in our future, as it has been for the last 102 years and will be for the next 102 years.

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## Tifa Tong

Gallup (14 years old)

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wArH89TCoE>

### *Transcription*

An autistic girl was born into a family called the Towering House People clan. She was born during the gentle weather rain called the Female Rain and was given to the hands of her mother. The family named her Tifa Rain Tong. She lived quite a happy life in her childhood. She experienced many new places and new things.



Tifa also faced many tough feats. Tifa had strong and sensitive feelings. Although she was a toddler already, she didn't yet speak. People thought she might lose her temper because of how would she cry loudly.

Tifa was misunderstood and this made her feel very lonely. Her mother was worried about these meltdowns and because Tifa did not talk very much, so the mother took her to see a doctor. Mother was told that Tifa has autism. Having autism means that her brain acts differently from other children, and there is no cure for autism, and she was born with it.

The mother decides to learn more about her daughter's autism and reasons for Tifa's behavior, so she took tender care of her daughter. Years passed, and Tifa's life began to get much better, better and better and she grew bigger, bigger, and bigger. Tifa learned how to take care of herself and be gentle with her feelings even when she had meltdowns. Even as a teenager, she still faced many feats. However, she learned about herself and her autism, and about how to adapt whenever she felt overwhelmed.

One day, Tifa Rain Tong will grow up into an optimistic young adult who lives a life of her own and make her own choices. Whatever it takes and wherever she goes, she dreams that her life will be just as perfect as she was. Because Tifa cherished herself and believes in herself.

Tifa hopes that in 102 years the Navajo people will be more understanding of people like her. She hopes that they would learn more about autism because most people don't know enough about it. It can be very frustrating for autistic children when people don't understand them. It can also be very lonely. All it takes is some curiosity and a big heart to learn about autistic people to learn how and why autism makes them not only different, but autism makes them special and very capable of achieving in hobbies and skills that are perfect fit for them.

In 102 years, hopefully everybody on Navajo Nation will know that respecting everyone is different and has their own gifts is a good, wonderful thing. Hopefully today in the future we will always remember that caring for each other is a beautiful path, where our community love our children, especially autistic children.

One day, the Navajo people will be the best at caring for their loved ones with autism.

# Tyler Begay

Tsaile

*with brief response from Gloria Dennison (Naschitti)*



*Video:*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZEtMjyCTq90&t=63s>

## *Transcription*

TYLER:

For me it's the disconnect that I see from the community level. Like, my elderly, the stories they tell, they tell about how in their generation, you could farm. You could see 30, 40 farmers out there all irrigating at the same time. When someone is ready to bale hay or someone needs help moving water because they are injured, there is always that community aspect where everybody kind of comes together and really helps them out. When someone is having a hard time you don't really look down upon it, kind of like nit-pick at it, you put the time aside and say you're gonna help that next person out.



My cheii used to tell me how when people used to need help baling, it was a whole community baling effort. How someone would bring the baler, someone would bring the rake, and then the whole entire community would be in one field one day and in the next, some people would be preparing food for to feed the entire community all at once and try to turn it into a celebration. He told about how in the old days how when you go house to house there was kind of that community, like, "Come on inside, we have food ready," you always fed someone if they come to your house, you always provide food, you always provide them water, you always provide them anything they needed, if they needed shelter, or warmth for a little while, you always invited them inside.

And, with my generation, just being out in the community, you kind of don't see that, and I think that's where the disconnect is.

For us, we've been taught from predominant culture is that you have to do it on your own. It's all up to you and just you alone, when our last generation was really about if you're having hard times, you can lean on someone that's in your community, you can lean on someone that's around you, that kind of stuff. And I've kind of seen it, just like I talked about, a lot of people when you go farming or ranching, anything like that, they are always on their own and they don't really ask for help. Because they have always been taught, "I have do it on my own."

My family, we've tried not to be like that. Anytime anyone asks for help, we always put that extra effort to help out, because we've always grown up with that community from my grandparents. And, the other time I've seen it is going door to door for certain programs, you know, just knocking on that door, that next door neighbor maybe the person that's a few miles down the road, we've gone to them asked them for help; not ask for help but ask if they needed help with it like chopping wood, helping with

anything livestock related. We've always been able to ask that. And a couple of times, we've always been, "You can't come inside you have to stay outside on the porch where I can see you." They have that hesitancy to be involved with the community.

So, 102 years from now that's something I like to see different, is the return of that ké, that mutual respect for the people inside your community and how you kind of work together to solve a common goal, kind of thing. So for me, that's exactly what I would like to see 102 years from now, that kind of know who is around you, know your neighbor, have that kind of like support network to know that if I've ever needed help I can turn to someone who is around me or anyone ever needs help they know that they could come to me, kind of thing. So that is what I would like to see.

I was born down in the valley. I've grown up there till I was 10. I would come back to the reservation on weekends. But when I was down there, I was never really exposed to my language. I know my mom's tried, my grandparents have tried.

But for me, it always felt like, if I can't do it right then I shouldn't try it at all, kind of thing, which is not a good way to look at it. But for me, I internalized that a long time ago, is that if I can't do it right I just need to keep watching, keep observing, keep listening. But at a point it becomes where you kind of feel like, "I'm not going get it right, I'm not going be able to do good on that." So you kind of internalize it, that if I can't do it right I shouldn't do it all. But that's not really a good way to look at it. You should always be trying even though you don't do it right the first-time, kind of thing.

I always have that problem. And yeah, I don't like to admit it with my family, but that is how I feel sometimes, is that when you make those little mistakes when you

are trying, it really hurts you inside. So I think that's where my bind come from is that I grew up off the rez and I haven't ever really heard my language, and once I finally came back, anytime I would try I would be kind of nit-picked at. So that's where my bind comes from, I'm pretty sure it comes from that.

So, just like I said I grew up, the first 10 years of my life, I grew up off the rez, and when I came back, a lot of people saw me as different. I guess you would say. They thought, "Oh, you grew up down in the valley that's so cool, you been around so much different things," just because I was more involved with city life. But I wasn't really versed in how the reservation works, that kind of stuff. And then once I finally came home, well we worked on the ranch, so it's always—you got to do this in the morning, you always have to make sure you have clean water, you always have to make sure you have enough wood if it's cold outside. In the summer, you have to grow your crops, you have to grow your hay, you have to work outside. You have to check on your animals all the time, kind of thing. And over time I kind of finally learned what it means to live on the reservation. But I can always go back to living in the city, kind of thing. So, it has always been very, kind of like, a mix. I grew up on the rez one half of my life, and I grew off the reservation on the other half, kind of thing, so it's very, very different.

So, when I tell people I live on the reservation, they are so surprised. I told them about the hard work, what it takes to live out here, the kind of effort you need to put in, and how I could see it being hard if I was just on my own and I didn't have my family with me. At the same time, when you tell them that you grew up part of the time in the city, they kind of look down on you, they kind of look at you different, so it's a little bit of both. I've always grown up as a little bit of both, I suppose, living in

the city and living on the rez, so that's always been different.

I have so many thoughts, nothing I want to end the video with. I just love being a part of what I do. I love being a part of the community. I love being a source of help and I really thank my grandparents for that.

GLORIA:

I like his comments, and also he has spoken from the heart as to how he lived, and he came back and wanted to express his views, that it can be done, if you revive and celebrate as to where he is going, and he's happy about it.

That he's in that position to express his views as far as the 102 years, and he wishes to continue, that journey he's been talking about, he has gone through many, many, many journeys that he took, but it got him where he's at, so he has a lot of understanding as to what it means to make life on the reservation, and he's expressing his views and it can be done. That's how I saw him.

I liked the comment he made. Very, very thorough.









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