

Sample 1.1: Excerpt from Navajo Nation Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan

The Navajo Nation and the Navajo People (Diné) find the subject of hazard mitigation hard to speak of and hard to prepare for. The idea of preparing for disaster from a traditional point of view is asking for disaster. One plans for the future well being of one's family, the planting of crops or the shearing of sheep. One does not plan for the proverbial rainy day, because it may offend the rain. The elements in traditional belief are living beings, wind, rain, earth, and sky, live and breathe as we do. The elements are holy, the Holy Wind brought the Diné to life, the rain is both male (heavy rains, thunder) and female (gentle), the earth is our mother, the sky our father. They protect us and provide us with food, shelter, medicines, and in turn we offer our prayers. An elderly Navajo woman was told that she must be relocated from her childhood home and moved to a new area, as part of a land exchange between the Navajo Nation and the Hopi Nation. The woman's only concern was that if she left she was afraid that the wind would not know her name.

To plan for protection from the elements may bring more of a disaster or worse yet, cause the elements to leave. The Diné Nation has suffered for many years from drought; the medicine people and the elderly believe that the rain has not come because the young have forgotten how to pray, and cut their hair (long hair represents rain). The Diné in this plan strive to find a balance between living in the 21st Century (western) and living in the traditional way. The Diné believe that balance must be found between the two in order to survive as a culture, for in the balance there is Hozho (beauty). This plan represents the combination of the two worlds, the western and the traditional. The Plan was prepared with beauty in our thoughts, with beauty above us, with beauty below us, with beauty surrounding us.