

# KNOWING THE LAND AND OURSELVES IS ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT

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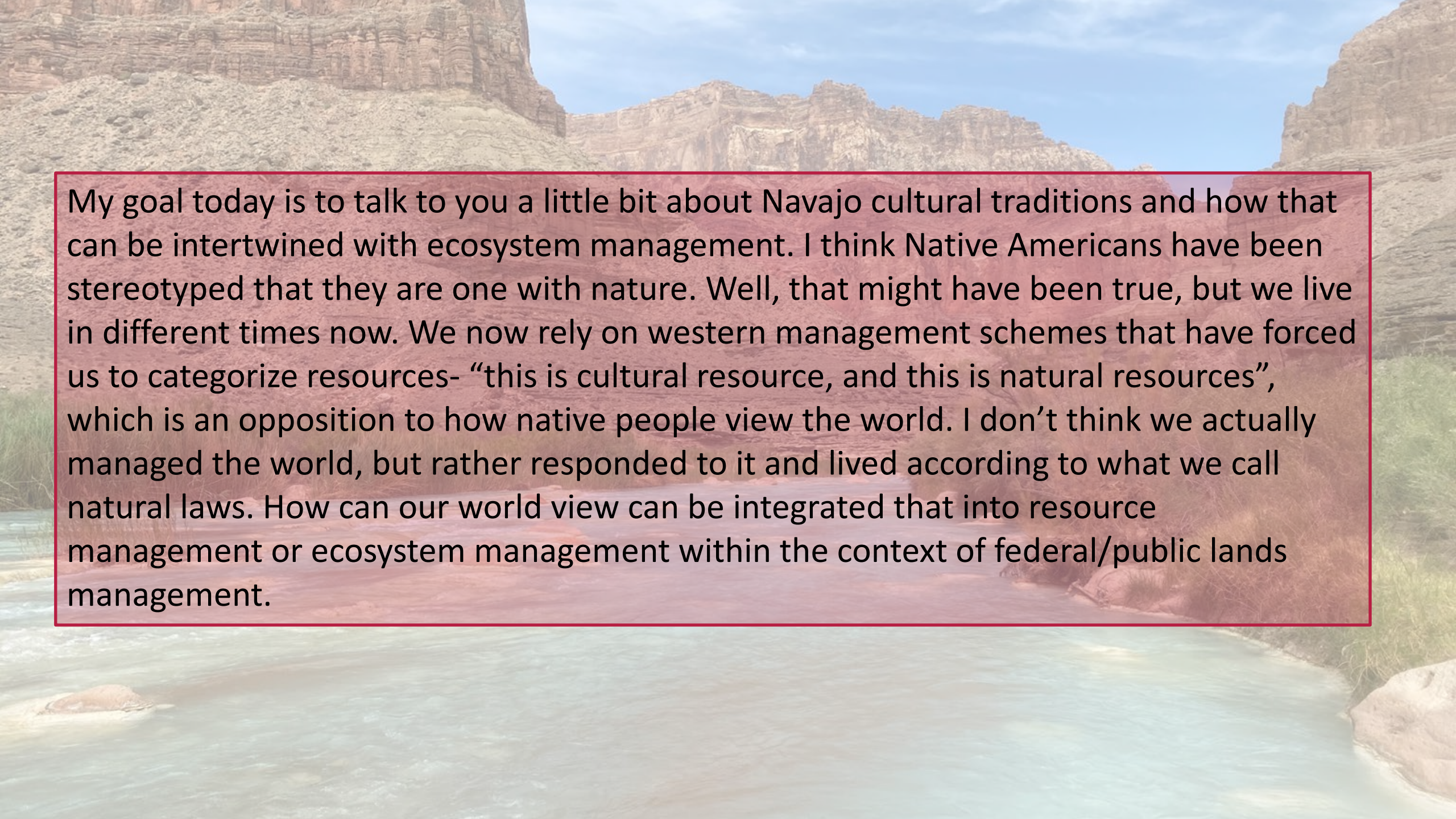
Navajo Nation Heritage & Historic preservation Department  
(HHPD)

**Plenary Session**

**A Community on Ecosystem Services - ACES**

**Austin, Texas**



A scenic view of a river flowing through a canyon with red rock walls and a blue sky. The river is in the foreground, and the canyon walls rise steeply on either side. The sky is a clear, bright blue. The overall scene is a natural, rugged landscape.

My goal today is to talk to you a little bit about Navajo cultural traditions and how that can be intertwined with ecosystem management. I think Native Americans have been stereotyped that they are one with nature. Well, that might have been true, but we live in different times now. We now rely on western management schemes that have forced us to categorize resources- “this is cultural resource, and this is natural resources”, which is an opposition to how native people view the world. I don’t think we actually managed the world, but rather responded to it and lived according to what we call natural laws. How can our world view can be integrated that into resource management or ecosystem management within the context of federal/public lands management.

# PRESENTATION OUTLINE

- I. Brief Background
- II. Kinship with Nature. What do we mean?
- III. Identity and Landscape
- IV. Making Ecosystem Management Meaningful
- V. Final Thoughts

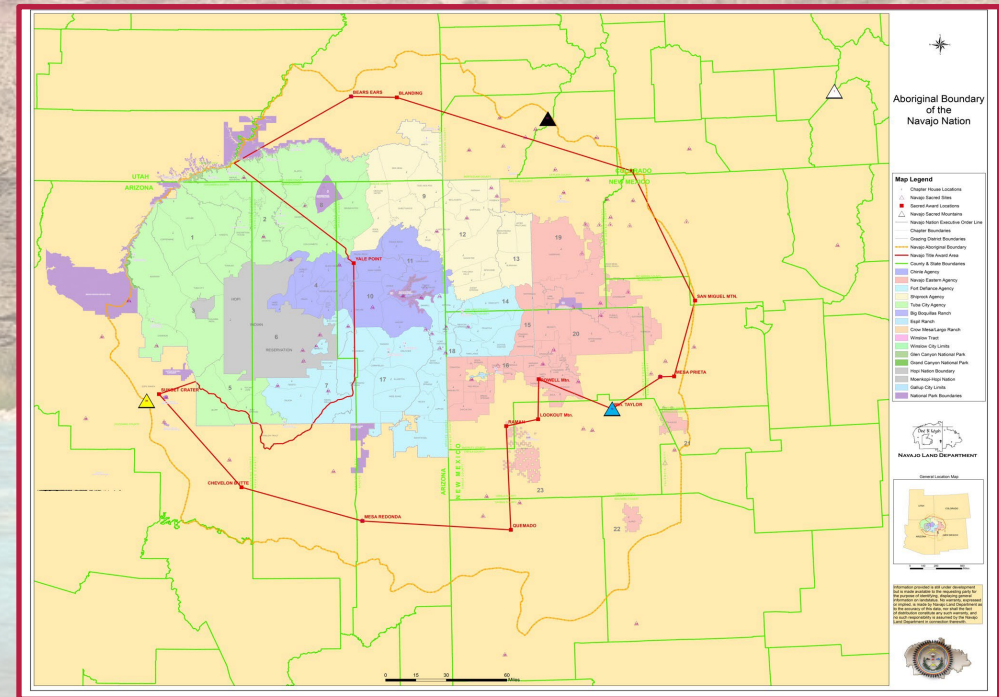
# I. BRIEF BACKGROUND-WORKING FOR THE PEOPLE



- Working in anthropology/archaeology means
  - Working with traditional elders
  - Going places to learn about the land and the resources
- Values, teachings, language, relation to land is passed down through cultural lifeways

# MY WORK FOR THE NAVAJO NATION

- THPO
- Work with federal and state land managing agencies in AZ, NM, UT and Colorado
- Work with numerous agencies in DOI, USDA, Defense, Transportation, others
  - About 26 NPS Parks
  - Traditional territory and the “Rez”



## II. KINSHIP WITH NATURE



# WE ARE THE LAND AND THE LAND IS US



- Knowledge passed through elders
- Teachings are put into action, that is, we live the teachings
- We must accept that we (the people) are not the only ones living on the earth
  - The earth, and the universe also have a life of their own
  - Animals, plants, insects, etc. gave us our language, our teachings, taught us who we are as a people

# THE 12 ELEMENTS OF HOZHOOJI- THE BASIS OF THE NAVAJO LIFEWAY

- Nihosdzaan (earth)
- Yadhilhil (Universe)
- Dzil Asdzaan (Mountains)
- To Asdzaan (Waters)
- Ch'ahalheel (Darkness)
- Ha'yoolkaal (Light)

- Hascheelt'I (Talking God)
- Hasche'ooghan (Calling God)
- Naadaa ligaii (White Corn)
- Naadaa litsoi (Yellow Corn)
- Tadidiin (Pollen)
- Anilt'anii (Pollinators)



# “KINSHIP WITH NATURE”; GREETINGS

- Nihosdzaan (F) Shima
  - Yadhilhil (M) Shitaa’
  - Dzil Asdzaan (F) Shima
  - To Yisdzaaan Asdzaan (F) Shima
  - Ch’ahalheel (F) Shichoh
  - Ha’yoolkaal (M) Shinaa’l
    - Keii Ashkii shinaa’i
- (6 Male/6 Female)

- Haschee’ yalti (M) Shicheii
- Hasche’ooghan (M) Shicheii
- Naadaa ligaii (M) Ashkii Shi’naa’i
- Naadaa litsoi (F) Ateed Shi’deezhi
- Tadidiin (M) Ashkii Shi’naai’
- Anilt’anii (F) Ateed Shi’deezhi

# III. IDENTITY AND LANDSCAPE – EXAMPLES



# *NILTSA' NAAJIIN, DOO DIBE EI IINA*



# SHAASHJAA' (BEARS EARS), SPIDER WOMAN



# HORSES, THE EARTH (SEASONS), KEEPING PLACES ALIVE



THE NATURAL WORLD REMINDS OF WHO WE ARE



# IV. MAKING ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT MEANINGFUL



- Meaningful for Tribes, communities, families so they can be good stewards of the lands
  - Grazing is the obvious example, on Navajo Nation
- Work with the land managers, both on/off the Navajo Nation

# FEDERALLY MANAGED LANDS, ACCESS AND ISSUES

- Access to resources, such as plants
  - Plants as leaders, nat'aanii
  - Food, medicine, indicators of land health
  - Ceremonial uses
  - Restricted access can lead to loss of knowledge
    - Landscape features can be mnemonic devices
    - Visiting places and using resources keeps knowledge alive

- Resources divided into categories:
  - Cultural
  - Natural resources
- Removal of native people from National Park lands, and other types of lands
  - Wupatki National Monument
  - Chaco Culture National Historical Park
  - Grand Canyon National Park



# BEARS EARS NATIONAL MONUMENT - SHAASHJAA



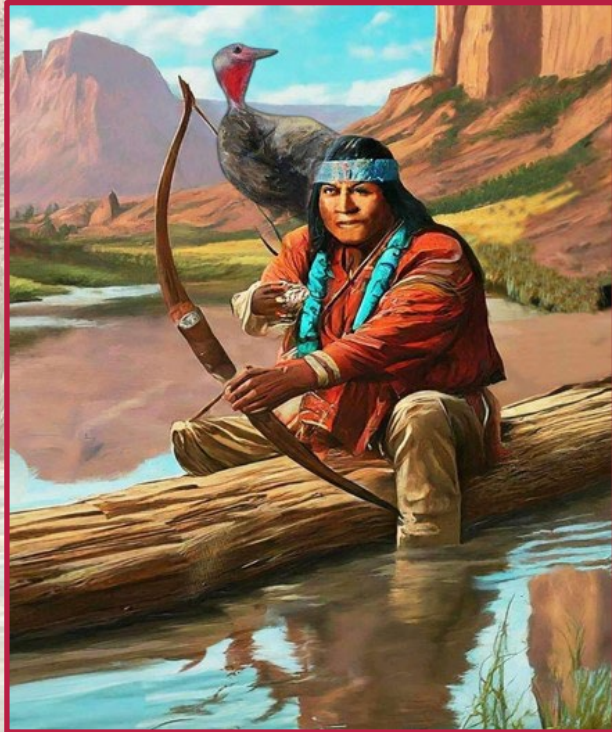
- Removal of Navajos by ranchers in the 1940-50s
- Obama, Trump, and Biden Proclamations
- Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition
  - Tribally led resource management planning
- Natural Resources are cultural resources
- What will happen in 2025?

# GRAND STAIRCASE-ESCALANTE NATIONAL MONUMENT



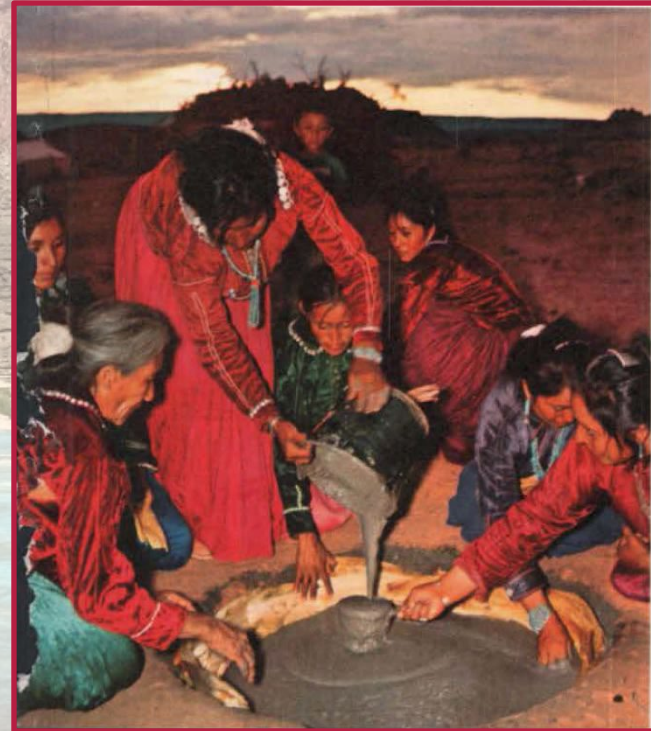
- Navajo cultural lifeways continue despite distance from the Navajo reservation
- Navajos tapped into traditional plant knowledge
  - Incorporated traditional songs, prayers, stories into their structures
    - Animals, insects in traditional narrative
- Loss of history of this place in local history retelling

# GLEN CANYON DAM ADAPTATIVE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM – GRAND CANYON NAT'L PARK



# CEREMONY KEEPS THE CONNECTION REAL AND ALIVE – NAVAJO COMMUNITY OF AGE CEREMONY

- Origins and narrative of Changing Woman and the ceremony tell us about how the world works
  - She was created from the elements
  - Young woman part of the Earth
    - Rain, Shoes, Running, Shouting/Yelling, grinding corn, hostess, etc.
  - Story is embodied in the Navajo Blessingway, Hozhooji



# V. FINAL THOUGHTS



- Tribes have fought very hard to stay alive, to keep their lands, and their identity
- We want to pass our legacy to our children; teach them the stories, the songs, the dances, the cultural lifeways
- We are Americans and we have a right to be who we are as a people

# WHAT CAN WE DO?

- Recognize that plants, rocks, insects, animals, water and other resources are medicines, teachers
- Ecosystem Services considers wellbeing as a central focus. Ecosystem wellbeing and human wellbeing are one in the same
- Federal Gov and Decision-makers must recognize Navajo traditional teachings and understandings of the world.



AHEHEE' – THANK YOU

