

K'éyahk'i Hózhóoni K'ehji: The Way of Beautiful Land



The beauty and health of the land and the beauty and health of the Diné people are directly connected and reciprocal. Today's trash from modern conveniences threatens and pollutes this harmony. Open dumps and burning trash are common everyday occurrences that are the easiest to change and address in all Diné communities.

The **K'éyahk'i Hózhóoni K'ehji project**, developed by the Navajo Nation Environmental Protection Agency (NNEPA) Resource Conservation and Recovery Program (RCRP), aims to address these everyday dangerous practices by promoting environmentally friendly waste management practices and educating the public on the importance of maintaining a clean environment.

Let's take action today to protect our environment and uphold harmony and health with the land.

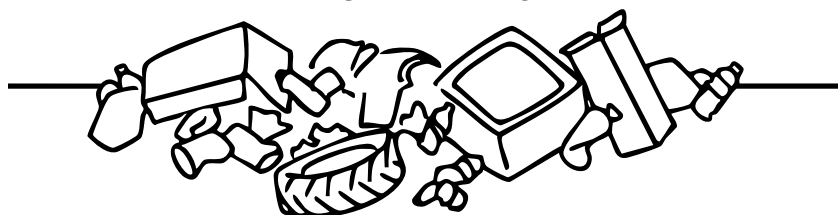


HISTORICAL NAVAJO WASTE



Biodegradable waste such as broken pottery, animal bones, jewelry, shells, plants, and ash

MODERN TRASH



Waste such as plastic bottles, beverage cans, cardboard boxes, newspapers, clothes, shoes, etc.

The History of Ts'iilzei: Trash and Its Changing Impact on the Navajo Nation

It's no secret that since first contact with Europeans, the lives of the Diné have been greatly impacted, and that includes the ts'iilzei or "trash" we create. Unlike our ancestors, we now use plastics every day, buy more of our food instead of growing it, and order clothes online instead of making them. Some of us also drive a car every day.

In the past, ts'iilzei was not an environmental threat like it is today. In fact, many items discarded in the past often played a beneficial role in nature, seamlessly returning to the Earth and contributing to the circle of life. Those items were readily biodegradable, such as broken pottery, animal bones, jewelry, shells, plants, ash, and so on. Today, however, modern trash poses a much greater challenge to the land, water, air, and the Navajo Nation.

What are open dumps or illegal dumping?

The Navajo Nation Solid Waste Act defines an open dump as “any facility or site where solid waste is disposed of and which does not comply with the requirements established for solid waste landfill facilities.”

OPEN DUMPS ARE A DANGER AND POSE THE FOLLOWING HEALTH, SAFETY AND ENVIRONMENTAL THREATS:



Fire and explosion



Inhalation of toxic gases



Injury to children playing on or around the dump site



Diseases carried by mosquitoes, flies and rodents



Contamination of streams, rivers and lakes



Contamination of soil and groundwater



Contamination of drinking water



Damage to plant and wildlife habitats



Decrease in the quality of life to residents and community



Creation of a toxic environment for all life

Causes of Illegal or Open Dumping

There are several reasons people across the country illegally dump their trash. These are some of those reasons.

- Convenience
- Cost
- Lack of information
- Past practices
- Lack of a solid waste management plan or facility
- Little to no enforcement of codes
- Access due to distance or transportation

Health Risks of Open Burning Trash

Backyard burning produces smoke with dangerous quantities of dioxins. Dioxins are toxicants and can alter cell growth and development with detrimental effects on reproduction and development, suppression of the immune system, disruption of hormonal systems, and cancer. Nearly all household waste contains trace amounts of chlorine, and chlorinated materials support dioxin formation when burned.



Solutions: What To Do and How To Do It

Contact the Navajo Nation Environmental Protection Agency (NNEPA) to report open dumping:

NNEPA Resource Conservation and Recovery Program

Address: 100 Mustang Road, Window Rock, AZ 86515

Website: tsiilzei.navajo-nsn.gov

Know the law: Open dumping is illegal. It's important to know that open dumping is against the law and can result in penalties.

Take waste to a transfer station: Properly dispose of waste by taking it to designated transfer stations.

Consider composting. Reduce the amount of trash and enrich the soil by composting organic waste.

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