

DENE LAWS & STORIES

Mek'éeé Dene ts'elı̄ & Megõndıı



NAHE NÁHODHE - OUR WAY OF LIFE



PROJECT OF DEHCHO FIRST NATIONS

welcome

máhsı edı megháhahnda

This project is dedicated to our ancestors. They show us the way through the stories they have told, the knowledge they have shared, and the children they have raised.

Edı tł'a nahecho gılé gonats'ëndıh t'áh mek'eh eghálats'ındá á ąt'e. Gogąndıé gháádé goghánahonehtę, t'ahsıı goghágonétą kegedıhshą nahets'ę kagedı, gots'ęh dáąndıh t'áh deząą genehsseh.

To promote Dene Zhatie in the Dehcho region, Dehcho First Nations, in collaboration with partners and local communities, undertook this video and book project to share Dehcho Dene language, culture and knowledge of the land.

Dehcho zhıeh gozhatıé k'éndah met'áh ats'et'ı gha, Dehcho First Nations, Dene ndaa gohéh eghálagenda, gots'ęh kúé zhágóla ndaa gots'ágęndı t'áh Dehcho Dene zhatıé, gonáhodhe, gots'ęh dáąndıh ndéh ts'ęh keots'edıhshą t'áh edı edıht'éh náedah gots'ęh edıht'éh mek'ezhats'ehtı k'eh eghálats'ıdá.





From October 1 to October 7th 2019, twenty-four participants including elders, fluent language speakers, youth and staff members gathered at the Kat'odeeche Dene Wellness Center. Videographers documented the knowledge shared during the week and produced six short videos. The videos were then developed into six booklets in Dene Zhatie entitled Moose Hide, Spruce Tree, Dene Laws, Dene Laws and Stories, Camp Setup, and Plant Wisdom.

Its'éndaa Zaa íé gots'eh íáhdj, 2019 gots'é ekúh Dene ɔki honɔ ɔó-dj íéthede, ɔndah, Dene amii Dene zhatie t'áh nezuh ɔndeh, dezɔa ohndah gots'eh gohéh eghálagedéh Kát'odeeche Dene Najéh K'é íégehdeh. Dene dáɔndíh t'ahsii kegogedjshɔ gots'é kagedi t'áh Dene goedht'éhíhchuh dek'ehnízhénidhah gots'eh mets'eh edjht'éh náedah ehts'étaí aek'áhe ts'ehtsj. Edí edjht'éh náedah ts'ets'j ts'eh edjht'éh mek'ezhats'ehhtí aetséíia ts'ehts'j.

We hope that this project inspires our youth. Enjoy.

**Edí mets'eh keots'edúɔáh ts'enidhɔ t'áh mek'eh eghálats'índá.
Nezuh megháhahnda. .**



1. Share what you have - Ełeghaets'edendih

Help your other relatives with what you have. Give them some of what you have.
Ahsí t'áh néhlot'ı̄ę gots'ánendi. Azhíı̄ nets'ęh éhsíı̄ ndaa goghaedındih.

When a person went to visit their net,
Dene ı̄ęę mı̄h ts'át'éh énidé,

there was a food-sharing area by the shore where spruce boughs were laid down.
tambáa elu téthela k'eh łue níı̄ı̄dhah gots'ęh ełeghaegedęndih.

When a person comes back with a big fish, they put a thick layer of black poplar branches with leaves on top of the fire.

Dene ı̄ęę mı̄h ts'ęh nínot'éh gots'ęh łue nechá ılı́h énidé t'eyeh t'ó ło deto kó k'eh níı̄ı̄dhah.

They split the head and the body of the fish and cooked them on the branches.

łuetthí chu łue tandı̄ łats'eghtheh gots'ęh k'á k'eh geht'éh.

When it's cooked, and the head is cooked, people are at home listening, when they see the smoke rising from the shore they knew what was happening.

Káa thet'e, metthí thet'e énidé, dene gokúé zhágedéhtth'í egedéhtth'ó, zhutthéé tambáa le égotat'í énidé dágot'í zheghogedjshq.

When it was done, they would yell: The ribs have been cut!

Káa thet'e énidé gezeh: echq k'et'aa!

People at home would take their plates and forks and rush down to the site.

Dene dekúé gots'eh azhq tth'á gots'eh móogoh t'áh ekq ejihodethi.

They all fed each other back then. If it was a big fish a lot of people were able to eat from it.

AzHQ ełeghaegedendih jlé. Azhq łue łq káa dene łq zhets'eh shézhéh á qt'e.

And after they have eaten fish, they would sit around and talk with each other.

AzHQ łue shégeazheh t'áa énidé, zhágedéhtth'í gots'eh ełézháogindeh.



2. Help each other - Elets'áts'endi

Wherever you're living, if there are elders among you, you respect and help them.
Godj náts'edéh, qhndah gotah nágedéh énidé gots'edihchá gots'eh gots'áts'endi.

You chopped wood for them or if they have difficulty hauling heavy things, you helped them.

Tse gogha táts'edehkáh íle énidé t'ahsiu gogha nekéh t'áh gots'áts'endi.

If there is someone sick living among you who is unable to help themselves, you help them. You care for them; you cook for them and brought it to them.

**Godj náts'edéh gotah dene ezahelj t'áh dúwé edets'ádi énidé chu mets'áts'endi.
Megha saáh k'eots'əəh: megha mékáets'eht'éh gots'eh mets'é nats'ededheh.**

That's how it is. When a relative passes, it's felt very deeply. Other people came to visit to be with them.

Kagondih. Goot'je húle énidé, húl'íe méts'ededih. Gonáa dene gots'é kótahnaogedehtse gots'eh gogáh aget'j.





They helped with cooking. So that's how people helped them.
T'ahsiu ts'eh't'éh t'áh chu gots'ágendi. Séé gots'áts'endi.

When a woman loses a husband, it is something that they felt very deeply.
Ts'elj kaqndih medené húle énidé, huti'íé zhégededih.

You respect them, and help them, and you are with them often and keep them company until they're over their hardship.
Ezhi chu séé gots'edj'hchá, gots'eh gots'áts'endi, gots'eh láadi gogáh ats'et'j, séé goteh gogedehthi gots'é gogáh ats'et'j.

I remember long ago, when we were still at Jean Marie, one of our uncles passed away. At that time, it was very quiet in the community throughout the whole winter.
Thaat'oh kenahndih, Tthets'éhk'edélj athit'j, Setáa híe mehúle. Ekúh t'a xaye gháádé tsine agúht'e.

When we had to play outside, we were told not to be too loud or be shouting as we played. We went about being as quiet as possible.
Kaadi nágúzheh gha énidé chu, huti'íé t'áh íle énidé zháhahzeh t'áh nágoahzeh íle nahógedi. Tsine godlj á aít'é.

So, that is how we respected, cared for and helped each other.
Kaqndih t'áh etets'edj'hchá, etek'éts'éndih gots'eh etets'áts'endi.



3. Love each other as much as possible - Ełegh̄nets'et̄q

Ama used to say they're all like your little brothers and your little sisters.
Amá kadı ehh̄h, nechea gots'eh nedéa łáondih á agıt'e.

We all have to love one another as we live together.
Azh̄q eteh̄h náts'edéh t'áh ełegh̄nits'et̄q gha góʔq.

That's something Ama had said, and I follow that example by loving all those that I meet.

Amá kadı ılé, gots'eh ezhi k'éé amıi gháehnda énidé azh̄q gogh̄niet̄q.

4. Be respectful of elders & everything around you - Qhndah gots'edjchhá & godhọą ashíi azhọchu

You have to respect the elders and all that's around you.

Qhndah gots'ẹh t'ahsii azhọ godhah mets'edjchhá gha zọ góąọ.

When the elders are eating you stay quiet, and when you are around the elders you go about things quietly.

Qhndah shégezheh énidé tsine ats'it'e, gots'ẹh qhndah godhah ats'et'j énidé tsine t'áh ats'et'j.

Whatever on the land was given to us by the creator, and it is the elders who taught us about these things.

Ndéh k'eh t'ahsii azhọ Nóhtsj nahegházhéniąọ, gots'ẹh qhndah gondi naheghágeniąọ qt'e.



5. Pass on the teachings - T'ahsíi ots'edjshq gogháts'ıǵáh

The knowledge you are given is not yours. It is to be passed on.
Edı gındı moots'edjshq t'á gots'eh q't'e íle. Gogháts'ıǵáh gha á q't'e.

It makes you feel good. My parents used to say: "This knowledge that you possess..."

Met'áh nezı edéts'ededih. Secho kagedı:

If you are not passing on the story in your life, and you are silent, you are creating an illness for yourself"

"Edı gındı met'áh gıhgınde íle, gots'eh tsineh anet'e énidé met'áh lah dıtsı gha" gedi ılé.

It is heavy and I wish people would know about it. Our teachings are very powerful.
Nekéh gots'eh ezhi á séé azhı moots'edjshq énidé enehthę. Dı nahegındı t'á séé náts'e á q't'e.





We should be sharing this, we should be gathering our children and teaching them,
Met'áh ełéhots'ede, dezq̄ kaḡndíh téats'eleh gots'əh goghágot's'enehtę,

and if you were to keep yourself very well, it will become something that is believed.

gots'əh séé nezuh edek'éts'edíh, káondíh énidé séé gogha ehth'ı ats'edi.

This is very important to me.

Ezhj séé segha met'áhodéǵá.

Our elders from the past were very powerful people.

Zhuníeh gots'əh nahecho nágetse ılé.

They strictly lived by the Dene cultural ways as they passed through this earth.

Séé kaḡndíh Dene náhodhe t'áh zq̄ gogındíh t'áh zq̄ dındéh k'e gudíh.

They didn't mix anything else with these ways.

Kı zhetah chu t'ahsıı gúlıı agehḡı ıle.

Today, I've become an elder and these words are not mine, they're something I have to pass on to you.

Dúh dzęh, sı káa q̄ndah aht'e gots'əh dı gḡndı t'á kı sets'əh q̄t'e ıle, naheghánehǵáh gha á q̄t'e.

It's with that, that I'm speaking with you today. You use the teachings to guide you daily from the time when you rise in the morning.

Ezhi t'áh á dúh dzenę nahets'ę gohseh. Nits'itla énidé met'áh nezuh k'eots'eᶱah gha goghánahonétq.

By using it, you prepare yourself daily. We are taught to see and observe things;
Dzenę taonét'e edegha seots'ededleh. T'ahsü chu megháts'ęnda gots'ęh mek'ats'enehta:

this is why when I get up in the morning I go outside and observe things that are flying

kaᶱdih t'áh eht'qh niéhtle kádehtla gots'ęh t'ahsü gok'eadededéh

and hear things if there is a wind, I listen. I prepare myself before I start the day.
gots'ęh nihts'ı chu déhth'e, séé edéhtth'e. Edegha seodehdleh t'áh kéonihthi.

If you did that daily, you will respect your children and all your relatives.

Dzenę taonét'e kats'et'ı énidé gozhaa gots'ęh góot'ıę chu gogha gonezų godahchá gha.





And that is very important. If one day in the future, you have children, you will teach them the Dene ways.

Ezhi á séé met'áhodéǵá. ǵíé dzę nahezhaa gúǵǵ énídé séé Dene k'éé éhsáǵǵ megháo-nahtę gha.

This is why when elders are speaking, you visit them, sit with them, and you listen to them carefully.

Ǫhndah kaǵndíh zháogíndeh énídé gots'ę kǵtah aht'ǵ gots'ęh gogáh dahth'ǵ gots'ęh séé nezuh gódahtth'ǵ.

This message is not only for the present; if in the future you encounter difficulties, you can take this message and use it.

Ezhi t'á dúh dzenę gogha zǵ ǵt'e íle; zhundaa nahegha godezhí énídé edǵ gǵndǵ nǵdáhchu gots'ęh met'áh aht'ǵ.

This is how I was taught by mom and dad.

Kaǵndíh á setá, semǵ chú segháogenéhtǵ.

Today, I am 76 years old and when I have difficulties, I go back and use these messages from the past. This is what they have taught us.

Dúh dzenę ǵáhdǵǵ ǵǵǵ ehts'ętai seghaé, segha godezhí énídé zhundéé menahndíh t'áh mékǵhtie gots'ęh met'áh aht'ǵ. Ezhi kaǵndíh gha goghánahogenéhtǵ.

6. Be happy at all times - Łáulı t'áh gogha gonezu

This message of being happy at all times. As they say about this, the one who has created us gave us this land.

Łáulı nahenié gha góꞗꞗ. Edı dágedı t'a, nahóhtsı edı ndéh naheghánıꞗꞗ á ɔt'e.

It has to be well looked after. It provides you with the food to live and provides healthy living.

Łáulı nezu mek'éts'éndıh gha. Mets'ıhꞗꞗ nezu shéts'ezheh gots'eh met'áh nezu ts'enda gha gok'éndıh á ɔt'e.

The elders used to say: Do not be overanxious about things and do not be mentally worried.

Qhndah kagedındı: t'ahsıı t'áh goꞗꞗꞗ ɔꞗahtı ıle gots'eh t'ahsıı ghonánahthę ıle.

If there is work that needs to be complete – work at it.

Eghálaeda nahegha góꞗꞗ éndé k'éndah meghálahnda.

They (elders) say not to talk about people for no reason.

Edenié dene ghoh zhágáhndeh ıle gedı.





My husband’s mother refers to this as “outside talk”.
Sedené memq á kadi ezhi t’a “kaadi gots’endeh”.

You didn’t speak that way so when you met people you only spoke about positive things.

Kaḡndíh t’áh dene gháts’enda énidé azhii meghq̄h nez̄u ghq̄h z̄q̄ t’áh káots’endeh.

They probably said this to encourage people to love one another that will make people happy.

Kaḡndíh énidé eḡehq̄nits’eht̄q̄ ts’ehḡóq̄ éhsáq̄ aḡedi, met’áh goiníe gha á aḡedi.

To me, when they say “be happy at all times”:

S̄j segha énidé, “íáulí naheníé” gedi énidé:

when you are speaking to elders and working with them, they are always saying be thankful for all things.

qhndah gohéh gots’ende gots’eh gohéh t’ahsii k’eh eghálats’enda énidé t’ahsí azhq̄ gha máhsí enahthē gedi.

7. Sleep at night & work during the day - Tedhe ts'ete & dzenę eghálats'ęnda

You sleep at night
Tedhe ts'ete

and during the day you worked at self-sustaining work.
gots'ęh dzenę ęnidę t'ahsıı t'áh xálats'ededa.

People not being able to sleep can cause sickness.
Dene netę ęle ęnidę zhet'áh ezhaheıı andeh.

Therefore, night time is not a noisy time.
Ezhi t'áh, tedheh t'a hıt'ıı náodedeh ęle.





If it's noisy, there is something call (gok'ae (from above)) – called gok'ae
Hútl'í náodedeh énidé, zhudah gots'eh t'ahsú gok'ae éhts'edi

that is disturbed.
ts'jdhi.

In the old teachings, when you rise early and you listen to all the animals
Thaat'qh goghágogenehtę, eht'q niats'itle gots'eh golqą ts'edíth'e

and things like the birds, there is a good possibility that
gots'eh chųą éhdah adádi, met'áh

you can pick up “łk'oo” for yourself (medicine power).
łk'oo ats'edíleh chu núndı á qt'e.



8. Be polite and don't argue with anyone - Dene ts'ë nahzų gots'ëh thá t'áh dene áhdahndı íle

There is one thing that they teach you in Dene.
Dene k'ëé t'ahsıı ílé t'áh xágogenehtę.

Be good to people and behave well towards people.
Dene ts'ë nahzų gots'ëh gots'ë nezų k'egoahǰah.

Do not be argumentative towards people.
Thá t'áh Dene ahdahndı íle.

The message that they share with you is:
Ezhı gındı goghágıǰáh t'a

“Be of positive thoughts towards a person while
“Gots'ë nezų káets'enıǰá t'áh

you are working with them”.
nezų mehéh eghálats'enda”.

If you are verbally abusive to them, they don't feel good about themselves
Gots'è thá t'áh gots'èndeh énidé zhet'áh nezuh edégededih íle énidé

they will not learn their full potential.

dáodenésú Dene elj gha éhsii nezuh zhek'eh keogedírá íle.

As my late father would say: You don't know the type of person a person is,
Set'á éwi adi gháádé: Dene dáqndih q't'e moots'edjshq íle,

you are therefore mindful of what you say.

it'áh séé godhá xqhts'èhndih.

You are especially mindful of what you say among strangers.

Xáhtq t'ah ats'et'j énidé chu godhá xqhts'èhndih.

You are observant of your surrounding and have a clear understanding of the situation before you speak.

Séé azhq godhah dágot'j éhsii kehots'èhndih gots'èh keots'edjshq gháádé á dene ts'éots'èndeh.





9. Young girls and boys should behave respectfully - Ts'elı́ą gots'eh denelı́ą ełegedı́hchá

Boys and girls need to respect each other.

Denelı́ą gots'eh ts'elı́ą ełegedı́hchá gha góꝛꝛ.

At school they ridicule each other.

Edı edıht'eh kúé aget'ı ełehéh dlóochegedeh.

They should be behaving well towards each other but they're not.

Goneꝛı ełets'é agı́'e gha kóó kí kagı́ndı́h íle.

So, when I talk to the young people

Deꝛꝛą gots'é gohndeh énídė,

I always talked to them about their boundaries, and keeping themselves well.
gonezų edexoahdih góhdehsi, gots'eh gonezų edek'éahdih góhdehsi.

Me, I talk to the young girls about how to respect themselves.
Sj, dáondih t'áh gonezų edek'égedih t'áh ts'elja gots'é gohndeh.

My husband and I teach them and he teaches them about the bush.
Sedené chú gots'é gúdeh gots'eh edj t'a dechjtah t'áh goghágonehte.

They're able to hunt quite well, they're able to take animals.
Káa gonezų detah aget'j, t'ahsii chu taghthi agújá.

Knowing how to respect animals as boys and girls is something that is very important to me.
Dáondih denelja gots'eh ts'elja ts'jli t'ahsii ts'edjchhá ezhi á segha hót'íi met'áhodézá.



VOCABULARY

PAGE 4

néhlot'jɛ - your relative

nets'ɛh – yours

tambáa – shoreline

t'eyeh – poplar (tree)

mǐh – fishnet

łets'egethheh – they cut it in half

PAGE 5

thet'e – cooked

gezeh – they yell

ekq - over there

łe – smoke

azhq - all

zhágedéhtth'ı – they all sit around

PAGE 6

náts'edéh – one lives

gots'áts'endi – you help them

ezhahelǵ - one is sick

gots'edǵhchá – one respects them

goteh – over

nahógedı – they tell us

PAGE 7

ts'eht'éh – one cooks

łáadı – all the time

kenahndíh – I remember

godhąh – around self

shégezheh – they are eating

tsíneh – quiet

PAGE 8

amá – mom

gqndı – story

gots'ɛh – and

ehléh – used to

ełehéh – together

gháehnda – I see

PAGE 9

zq - only

tsíneh – quiet

Nóhtsı – Creator

shégezheh – they are eating

naheghágenı̄q̄ - they have given to us

PAGE 10

Moots'edı̄hshq̄ - one knows

gogháts'ı̄q̄áh – one give it out

góhgı̄nde - one tell stories to others

gots'ęh – one's possession

nezı̄ - good

lah – sickness

PAGE 11

ełéhots'ede – tell each other stories

ehtth'ı̄ – right

zhunieh – the past (long ago)

łéats'eleh – one gathers them

met'áhodéq̄á – it is important

nágets'e – they are strong

PAGE 12

dúh – now

megháts'ęnda – one looks at it

ehtł'qh – morning

seots'ededleh – one fixes things for self

mek'ats'enehta – one observes

déhtth'e – I hear



VOCABULARY CONTINUED

PAGE 13

líé – one

megháonahtę - you teach him/
her

godezhí – difficulties

nahezhaa – our children

gogáh – beside them

segháogenéhtę - they taught me

PAGE 14

naheníé – we are happy

mek'éts'ęndíh – one keeps

goᵛóó – more than

łáulí – all the time

ts'ęnda – well being

eghálaeda – work (in progress)

PAGE 15

gots'ęndeh – one speaks

káots'ęndeh – one starts to speak

gohéh – with them

gháts'ęnda – one sees

gedı – they said

met'áh – with it

PAGE 16

tedhe – night

dzenę - day

xáats'ededa – one self-sustaining

ezhahǵıǵı - they are sick

náodedeh – noisy

niats'ítle – one gets up

(repeatedly)

PAGE 18

xágogenehtę - they teach

k'egoahᵛah – behave

zhet'áh – with it

nahzı - all be good

mets'ê – towards him/her

éḡ – late (deceased)

PAGE 20

edjht'êh – paper

elets'ê – towards each other

île - not

elehêh – together

kóó – but

gohndeh – I speak

PAGE 21

edexoahdih – take care of
yourself

detah – out on the land

segħa – for me

góhdehsı – I tell them

łagłhthı – they harvest



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