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Badly Licked Bear Steps Up to Drive a Van of Supplies to Navajo Nation During Covid-19

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During Covid-19**
Primary Source Excerpt

Historical Context: News outlets reported that COVID-19 reached Navajo Nation after a revival at Chilchinbeto Church on March 7, 2020. Confirmed cases of COVID-19 rose rapidly from 26 on March 17 to 49 on March 21. Navajo Nation quickly became a hotbed for COVID-19 infection. Indigenous communities were made particularly vulnerable due to the failure of the United States government in living up to its treaty obligations, including providing well-equipped and staffed health services. Theresa Hatathlie-Delmar of the Navajo and Hopi Families COVID-19 Relief Funds collaborated with Kristina Wong of the Auntie Sewing Squad to obtain mask-making supplies for Navajo Nation. Badly Licked Bear, a curator and an educator, steps up to drive a van of sewing supplies and personal protective equipment (PPE) from the Los Angeles to the reservation in Arizona.

Listen to Audio: (18:13- 20:43)

Interview with Badly Licked Bear: I wanted to get involved as soon as this started happening if only because I feel like I have a total obligation to do something. I feel both as a Jew and a Native American, again, I primarily identify with two relationship-based cultures. That is, your relationships with other people and your community are the most important things. And so, I don't really care what people do. I'm never impressed, oh you climbed Mt. Everest? Did you do it *for* somebody? Because that's impressive to me. I've always done community-oriented work as curator and stuff like that. I just think in terms of community building all the time. And I want to be a part of that workload to end it (COVID-19). That was right when Kristina needed someone to drive to Navajo Nation, and I can't remember what I've told you, or if you've read my essay, but basically Kristina was like, "We might drive to Navajo Nation. Does anyone (want to) carry stuff?" and I was like, "Well, I have a cargo van. It's kind of big, like too big, and expensive to drive because of gas, but if you need it." And then she's like, "It's probably too big." Two days later she said they needed it. I put myself out there because I've personally spent some time in Navajo Nation as a traveler. Until now, I didn't have personal friendships there or roots. I know that it's a very, very rural area with few services and we weren't sure as to where we would be driving. I was kind of concerned that there might be an enthusiastic driver who doesn't know how to have a flat tire in Navajo Nation. I am comfortable having a flat tire on the res and I know my way around a little bit. I felt like I would be a good person to do that. It's basically one trip every month. There is a person from Eastern Navajo nation who comes to me with a truck and picks up from me and that's Brenda. People will get confused about that and start giving me snacks like I'm going on a big trip. I'm not going anywhere. I'm just putting stuff in boxes. I wanted to be an Auntie. I have an obligation.

Discussion Questions: Why did Badly Licked Bear want to become an Auntie? What made Badly Licked Bear a good candidate for driving to Navajo Nation? What does this tell us about mutual aid organizing during COVID-19?

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