

RECLAMATION AND SURVIVANCE: DINÉ RHETORICS AND THE PRACTICE
OF RHETORICAL SOVEREIGNTY

by

Aretha Matt

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As members of the Dissertation Committee, we certify that we have read the dissertation prepared by Aretha Matt

entitled Reclamation and Survivance: Diné Rhetorics and the Practice of Rhetorical Sovereignty and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirement for the

Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Adela C. Licona Date: July 21, 2011

Thomas Miller Date: July 21, 2011

Lawrence Evers Date: July 21, 2011

Final approval and acceptance of this dissertation is contingent upon the candidate’s submission of the final copies of the dissertation to the Graduate College.

I hereby certify that I have read this dissertation prepared under my direction and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirement.

Dissertation Director: Adela C. Licona Date: July 21, 2011

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ABSTRACT

RECLAMATION AND SURVIVANCE: DINE RHETORICS AND THE PRACTICE
OF RHETORICAL SOVEREIGNTY

By Aretha Matt

This dissertation includes a contextual analysis of two female Diné poets who use storytelling and writing and includes a chapter on the pedagogical implications of Native American student storytelling and writing. I first examine poetry written by two Diné women, Luci Tapahonso and Laura Tohe to understand the ways these poets, particularly the poetry, reclaim and revive Diné literacies and rhetorics. My analyses are informed by the historical and cultural contexts that shaped Diné philosophy, particularly, the philosophy that informs and is shaped by the practice of Diné literacies and rhetorics. I draw from mythical, historical, and contemporary Diné, Native American, and other minoritized scholars for lenses of analysis to show how these poets define and reclaim the female Diné voice and identity. Colonial and neocolonial changes in Diné lifeways and traditions and the encounters between Diné and other groups and the imposition of the English language (written literacy) are pertinent to these contextual analyses and pedagogical implications.

CHAPTER 1: LIVING IN TWO WORLDS REFERS TO NON-INDIAN AND INDIAN SPACES

“Living in two worlds” is a notion many Native Americans understand and share. This notion is applied to both physical and abstract spaces, some of these spaces are well-defined and contested, while others are blurred and over-lapping. Living in two worlds refers to non-Indian and Indian spaces, to English and indigenous languages, to secular and spiritual spaces, and to dominant and subordinate spaces. Shawn Wilson (Cree), community psychologist and researcher, defines dominant, “as an adjective to describe the culture of European-descended and Eurocentric, Christian, heterosexist, male-dominated Canada or Australia”(Wilson 35). Dominant spaces in this case will include people, governance, cities, ideas, and institutions that exist in mainstream United States. Subordinate spaces, then, could include reservations or urban Indian communities. Or, more abstractly, academic discourses are more linear and structured dominant spaces compared to most Native American discourses. Of course, though, one’s level of acculturation to the dominant group determines how much s/he exists in and accepts the various worldviews or cultures. Members of Native American tribes have found that they have to (re)define and (re)create identities that allow them to survive assimilation processes. This means that they had to adopt and/or resist aspects from the dominant culture and maintain and/or eliminate elements from their culture(s), thus allowing them to function in various discourse communities or live in two worlds. Like most Native Americans, I know what it means to live in two worlds. I am a subject of colonialism and can speak the varied languages and recognize that I am partaking in diverse discourse communities. My communities are made up several. I first and foremost understand that I

am a member of the Navajo Nation, a distinct community with a collective history, traditions, and language. I identify as a *Diné Asdzáán* or a Navajo woman. In this community I would immediately identify as such and would make it known that my perspectives may be skewed by this identification. *Yá'át'ééh, shí éí* Aretha Matt *yinishyé. Na'neeshteezhi Tachine nishłí. Kiiyaa'áanii báshíschíín. Honágháahnii dashicheii. Maiideeshgeezhnii ei dashinali. Na'ni ahdi ayisi dashighan. Shima dóó shizhee'e ei* Rose *doo* Johnny Matt Sr. *yoolyé. Akweet'a Diné Asdzáán nishłí.* Here is my English translation: Greetings, I am called Aretha Matt. I am Charcoal Streaked People (Division of the Red Running Into Water Clan). I am born for Towering House People. My maternal grandfather is the One Who Walks Around and my paternal grandfather is Coyote Pass People. I am originally from Querino Canyon, AZ¹. My mother and father are Rose and Johnny Matt Sr. This is how I am a Navajo Woman. This traditional Navajo greeting is important to me because it reminds me and others that I can identify as a Navajo or Diné because my parents and ancestors are Diné. The clan system reminds me that I am connected to a larger unit and have many relatives. When I am removed from my community, I introduce myself in this manner to non-Navajos as well because it allows me to identify my entire being to my audience(s). It allows me to draw from and teach the rhetorics of my ancestors. Moreover, it allows my audiences to recognize immediately that I have a distinct and valuable perspective. I use Navajo and Diné in this dissertation to refer to the Navajo people of the four corners region. Navajo is an imposed title, but has been widely used by non-Navajo scholars and is therefore the most

¹ (translation of *Na'ni ahdi*: The place where there is a bridge)

recognizable term in mainstream institutions to refer to this group of people. The term Navajo, according to Irvy W. Goosen, linguist, “derives from the Tewa word naabahu: cultivated fields, they took our fields” (2). The word Diné when translated into English, means the people. The Navajos commonly refer to themselves this way. According to Jennifer Denetdale, Navajo historian, “We also name ourselves Náhookah Diné (Earth Surface People) and Bilá ashdlá’ (Five-Fingered Ones)”(10). Throughout the dissertation, I will use the terms Navajo and Diné synonymously and interchangeably because I think both titles play a part in shaping the Navajo or Diné and Diné rhetorics. I privilege the term Diné over Navajo because my dissertation attempts to reassert traditional Diné knowledge and language. Moreover, Diné is not a term that was imposed by others and does not have a negative connotation.

My interest in developing the study of Diné rhetorics stems from my experience as a Diné Asdzáán (Navajo woman), academic, rhetorician, poet and citizen of the United States and the Navajo Nation. I draw from my own experience as a Diné woman, from the mythological female voices of Changing Woman and Spider Woman, historical Diné women voices, and contemporary Diné women voices, including educators, politicians, poets, health care providers, and historians who all serve as agents of traditional indigenous knowledge. The focus of this study is to identify Diné Asdzáán rhetorics, therefore the female voice will be privileged. However, the Navajo male perspective is equally important to understanding Diné rhetorics. My life as an educated Diné woman is useful and appropriate to this project because I am able to re/claim and re/connect experiences that parallel Diné women experiences. My direct connection to the Diné

society and my values and agenda to decolonize and revive traditional knowledge allow me to take greater care in developing my inquiry about Diné knowledge and rhetorics. Moreover, as a Diné woman, I use a female Diné perspective to create a more complete and less distorted analysis that produces quality discussion about Diné rhetorics. I also use Western theories, particularly post-colonial, third-space, and critical theories that allow me to discuss the interworkings of various systems of power. I use an emergent theory to contextualize contemporary Diné rhetorics in Diné knowledge. Weaving Western theoretical sources with sources that reveal traditional Diné knowledge allows an indigenous theory or a kind of mixed theory to re-emerge. This Diné theory is used to appropriately analyze, identify, and interpret contemporary Diné women rhetorics, particularly in interstitial spaces of competing powers. Historical and cultural texts that help to define traditional Diné literacies are useful in developing a cultural context.

In my experience as a writer and writing instructor, it is necessary to draw intellectual conclusions based on further inquiry and examination of the interstitial spaces of the colonizer/colonized binary because this binary can oversimplify the human experience. Even more, promulgating misrepresentations and misnomers about indigenous people of North America continue to be the identifiers and/or signifiers of Indian identity and culture, which silence critical spaces and conflicts. Discussion surrounding the intricate details of a group's literacies and communicative practices can provide insight to all North American writing specialists engaged with indigenous students and will help to undermine simplistic and demeaning descriptors. To begin, I provide the history of the Indian identity. I include only those histories here that identify

how misnomers occur because of the imposition of Indian identifiers by non-Indian people. According to Anishanaabe rhetorician Scott R. Lyons, “Non-Indians have had little problem lumping the hundreds of different tribes, languages, and cultures on the American continent under a single rubric, ‘the Indian,’ ever since Columbus arrived on these shores and announced ‘Indios!’ and then later designated the group a ‘race’ (Berkhofer 5-7, 57) (148). Since early contact with non-Indians, distinct Indigenous groups have been essentialized and then eventually racialized as the Indians or more recently, the politically correct terms, American Indians and/or Native Americans. The term Indians, however, is a legal term and refers to the indigenous people of North America. According to the Handbook of Federal Indian Law, a person is identified as an Indian by “two qualifications: (1) Some of his ancestors lived in America before it was discovered by the white race (a biological Indian), and (2) The community in which he lives regards him as an Indian” (Haas 18). Indian is an ongoing identifier of Indigenous groups in North and South America. In this dissertation I will use Indian when citing sources and when referring to the group as a legally recognized and/or racialized group. I will also use American Indian to refer to this racial category because this group is also a political group in North America. I will also use Native American in this dissertation to refer to the totality of indigenous groups in America because their values are based on being native to their land. Finally, I will use Indigenous to refer to the political and global groups of people who identify as first peoples to traditional territory. “As Indigenous people become more active politically and in the field of academia, the term Indigenous, as an adjective, has come to mean ‘relating to Indigenous people and peoples.’ The word

Indigenous carries political implications. The first peoples of the world have greater understanding of the similarities that we share”(Shawn Wilson 15). When I discuss Indigenous groups in this dissertation, I will also use American Indians, Native Americans, Indigenous and Indians interchangeably to identify this racial group because I quote from various scholars who use the various terms. I will also use tribal identifiers where appropriate to name tribal affiliation.

There are over 500 Indigenous groups that exist in North America today. Each of them is distinct in language and culture. According to Berkhofer,

the idea of the *Indian* or Indian *in general* is a White image or stereotype because it does not square with present-day conceptions of how those peoples called Indians lived and saw themselves. The first residents of the Americas were by modern estimates divided into at least two thousand cultures and more societies, practiced a multiplicity of customs and lifestyles, held an enormous variety of values and beliefs, spoke numerous languages mutually unintelligible to the many speakers, and did not conceive of themselves as a single people—if they knew about each other at all (Berkhofer 3).

By simplifying the Indigenous group of the Americas, Whites created the opportunity for stereotypes to emerge. These persistent and perpetuating stereotypes began with the Indian as the savage. The imagery of the savage was perpetuated over and over again in new media since contact with Whites. These images of savagery were recorded in journals, published in newspapers, developed into pictures and video and in Thomas Jefferson’s reflections in his *Notes on Virginia*. The images of the savage include the Noble Savage, the redskin, the uneducated, the heathen, and the wild and animalistic. More recently, these images have reemerged as mascots for various sports teams in America. The stereotypes resulting from the image of the savage have denigrated and

erased distinct group identifiers in mainstream American society. Today, many of these images of the Indian are still identifiers of Indigenous peoples. Most Americans are exposed to these negative images, while having little education and/or knowledge about the distinctness of tribal groups and individuals. Tribal groups have been silenced by these ongoing misrepresentations and misnomers, resulting in ongoing conflict between Indian and non-Indian groups.

Other forms of silencing include the value of written forms of communication that derived from Western civilizations, which diminished the value and practice of non-alphabetic literacies and rhetorics. The valued system resulted in the onslaught of written literacy practices during and after contact between Western civilizations and the civilizations indigenous to the Americas. With little to no regard for how these changes could devastate the worldviews and traditional practices of a people, Western powers created educational institutions that mandated assimilation, including educational practices that forced students to speak and write the English language and that punished students for communicating in indigenous languages and practices, thus attempting to eradicate indigenous literacy practices. When colonists eradicate the subordinate's language, they also take away the connotations embedded in the indigenous word or language. The annihilation of a language and culture is the act of silencing. The silencing includes the oppressed group's inability to name the self, to speak their own language, to voice concern, and to practice traditional ceremonies. After many years of living in these oppressed conditions, many of these people perpetuate the silencing among themselves. They oppress and/or silence their traditional literacies and rhetorics. The oppression and

silencing, no matter who does it, flatten out distinct cultural identifiers and valorize mainstream identifiers, which often depict indigenous people in a negative light.

Negative identifiers of indigenous people have contributed to the negative consequences that occurred between White and Indian relations. According to Hopi scholar Matthew Sakiestewa Gilbert, “Government officials, along with the public opinion of the day, viewed Indians as uneducated ‘savages’ who desperately needed to be saved from their ‘uncivilized’ and ‘devil-like’ ways”(78). This perspective from US government officials is what led to boarding schools that were designed to annihilate Indian identities by replacing them with White identities. Even though the perspectives of Indian people may have progressed since contact, the institutions can still be spaces of dominance and silencing. According to Teresa Córdova, our current formal education systems enable the colonizer to define himself superior to others because of their values for objectivism, the Western experience and the standards used to measure excellence, which are based on a Eurocentric perspective (Córdova 22).

For decades, the rhetorics of marginalized groups were overlooked in academia due to the prolonged ethnocentric tradition. Anglo American academics took on the task of defining these marginalized groups through a universalistic approach or through what they called objective research. Malea Powell, who identifies as a “mixed-blood,” argues that “objective scholarship has a way of marginalizing the indigenous voice. Powell states, “When scholars convince themselves that they cannot study Indians (i.e., ‘others’) from the basis of Indian experiences and existence, they must make their efforts

‘scientific’ and thus distance their work from Indian ‘reality’”(5). Powell argues that it is difficult for non-Natives to understand the Native experience, and when attempting to, have made the Native American people merely an object for study. Powell points out that many Native American scholars have attempted to take part in these studies as a means to overcome objectification. Many of these scholars, however, are accused of writing and studying from their lived experience and charged with subjective or biased work. Powell further argues that in actuality most white males study their ancestors without similar accusations. Powell believes that minority scholars offer a new and necessary voice to academia.

As a new and necessary voice to Rhetoric and Composition, I use my perspective(s) as a Diné Asdzáán to analyze and assert new and necessary claims about Indigenous rhetorics. This dissertation is an attempt to reveal how the Diné, an historically non-alphabetic culture, interacts, changes, and (re)emerges in colonial and neocolonial situations. Non-alphabetic literacies includes the reading of symbols, recognizing geography as symbols for mnemonic devices, creating physical structures that serve as symbols for mnemonic devices, comprehending the changes in the weather and environment (including the land, animals, plants and lakes), and analyzing and interpreting stories that were told by parents and elders in the community. For the Diné, these literacies are based on (*k'e*) kinship and respect among all life forms and (*Hozhó*²) a

² Some words, like *Hozhó* in Navajo can barely be defined sufficiently in the English language. Some rough translations of *Hozhó* are beauty, harmony and balance. “*Hozhó*” encapsulates a bit more than just beauty, harmony and balance and those who

balanced and harmonious full life. After the integration of Western written literacy practices of boarding schools, the Diné began to revise traditional philosophies and outlook based on those that were imposed by colonizers. Today, the revised reading of the world includes writing practices. The Navajo language, even, was inscribed by early linguists and is used today to (re)teach the language. The English language is now widely employed among Diné

With this project, I contribute to Gregory Cajete's call for the resurgence of indigenous education that is grounded in traditional tribal science and theory. According to Elizabeth Archuleta, Yaqui/Chicana Scholar, "Theorizing involves analyzing facts and their relationship to one another. Therefore, Indigenous women's work that produces knowledge based on one's lived experience is a form of theorizing. One tool indigenous women use to theorize is writing, which provides a space for women to make sense of the world and their place in it" (Archuleta 2). I use methodologies that favor traditional indigenous knowledge and that promote self-determination, mobilization, healing, and decolonization (Smith 117). My project uses decolonizing methodologies, an alternative approach to inquiry that serves the purpose of reclaiming, representing, revitalizing, re/connecting and reframing indigenous knowledge, with the intention of challenging traditional academic research practices that have historically re-colonized and/or silenced indigenous knowledge. Decolonizing methodologies allow me to raise issues that were overlooked and/or misrepresented by literary critiques and historical androcentric perspectives. Traditional Diné philosophies inform my method of analysis. Moreover,

are not able to see, feel, or understand it are at a loss when it comes to the unspoken connotations.

they illustrate the legitimacy of traditional Diné knowledge as tools for analysis. According to Donald L. Fixico, “Narrative and oral tradition are essential tools for building a bridge between these two interpretations of history” (23). Historical and cultural research about the Diné, with a focus on English literacy learning, is used to contextually analyze contentious spaces that produce contemporary Diné rhetorics. The analysis of contemporary Diné women poetry using Diné history and Diné traditional practices as the backdrop confirms that a tradition of Diné rhetorics has survived.

Nitsáhákees, Nahatá, Iiná, and Siih Hasin- A Diné Practice and Methodology

Diné still remember and recognize the concept of *Nitsáhákees* by Mount Blanca (*Tsisnaajini'*) and white shell. *Nitsáhákees* encapsulates all the notions of the new or beginning, including spring, birth, dawn, and the inception of ideas and thoughts. It is one of four parts that are derived from a larger concept called *Sa'ah Naaghii Bi'keh Hoozhoon* (SNBH). SNBH recognizes the interconnectedness and/or interrelatedness of all things. According to the emergent stories, two spiritual beings emerged by the Holy People's thoughts, prayers, and songs. The first being was *Sa'ah Naaghii* (a male being) who is identified with thought and *Bik'eh Hoozhoon* (a female being) who is identified with speech. This concept merges reflection and action. Together, as *Sa'ah Naaghii Bik'eh Hoozhoon*, the two beings create the central philosophy for Diné people. SNBH is the idea that one will walk (or exist) in beauty and harmony as they grow old (or continue through all phases of life). Living to an old age further suggests that the aged person was not overcome by bad wind, (or evilness). To exist in beauty and harmony is to live

without ills or faults—including those caused by the self and others. The “others” include all other life forms on Mother Earth, including the flora, fauna, spiritual deities, and five-fingered Earth surface people. This way of thinking promotes the value of living a long life and supports the idea that old age brings with it experiential knowledge, a sacred knowledge. *Nitsáhákees*, then, can be considered the first step in this circular process of SNBH. *Nitsáhákees* takes its place in the East direction because East represents the beginning for the Navajo people. For instance, the sun rises from the East and the dawn greets the Navajo people each day. The dawn announces a new day, therefore a new beginning. Similarly, ideas emerge in the mind like a new day. When the idea unfolds into a clear concept, it can be developed. This development or planning stage is marked by the South direction, Mount Taylor (*Tsoodzil*) and blue bead or turquoise. This stage represents Nahatá or Planning. After the idea has been properly planned, it can be put into action or implemented. The West direction, the San Francisco Peaks (*Doko'oosliid*) and abalone shell mark the stage of implementation. After implementation, the idea can be seen, touched or heard. It can be assessed. The North direction, Mount Hesperus (*Dibé Nitsaa*) or Big Sheep Mountain and obsidian mark the stage of assurance or *Siih Hasin*. These concepts are directly connected to one another at the center. *Nitsáhákees* is connected to *liná* at the center and *Nahatá* is connected to *Siih Hasin*, therefore interconnecting all four concepts. This important connection shows that Navajos view the world through a circular lens that values the interconnectedness of all things. I write this introduction and dissertation with this concept in mind. When I developed my plan, the proposal, for this project, I forecasted my ideas and many of those ideas have found their

place in the introduction. I recognize my introduction as *Nitsáhákees*. After much thought, I began writing the history chapter about Navajo people. I wanted my analysis to emerge from what I discovered through historical findings. I recognize my history chapter as *Nahatá*. Then, I began to analyze texts written by two Navajo authors, Luci Tapahonso and Laura Tohe. I began to realize and make connections between the history of Navajo people and these authors. I recognize my analysis chapters as *liná*. After analysis, I wanted this knowledge to inform our lived experiences or to develop into experiential knowledge that scholars in rhetoric and composition could use. My fifth chapter represents assurance because it asserts the importance of the study of Navajo (and indigenous) rhetorics. I continued to use this process when I was bombarded with revisions for this project. I recognize that this model is parallel to the writing process. *Nitsáhákees* is my brainstorming and outlining stage, *Nahatá* is my pre-writing stage, *liná* is my writing and revising stage, and *Siih Hasin* is my revising and completing stages. Many times, however, I return to *Nitsáhákees* to re-evaluate or re-think my ideas. This model also informed the way that I thought about my connection to audience, purpose, and context. *Nitsáhákees* represented the author or storyteller of this dissertation. *Nahatá* represented my audiences, including my chair, committee members, and reviewers. *liná* represented my purposes and *Siih Hasin* represented context. This model was significant in helping me to understand the texts that I analyze in this dissertation. Moreover, it was essential for me when I began to make connections between each chapter.

Navajo History: How Contact Changed the Living Dynamics

In chapter two of the dissertation I provide the history and culture of Navajo people. I privilege the term Navajo over Diné in this chapter because most of the historical sources that I quote from use the term Navajo. I provide a history and culture chapter in the project to show how contact impacted and changed the living dynamics and, therefore, the literacies and rhetorics of the people. I also include in this chapter a discussion about traditional literacies. This discussion entails oral traditional stories, a description of the Diné philosophy and origin, the introduction of boarding schools, the Navajo political system, specific ways that Navajo women and men were shaped by contact with Whites, and the emergence of the tribal college.

Luci Tapahonso and Laura Tohe: Diné Asdzáán Storytellers

In chapter three of the dissertation, I argue that Luci Tapahonso (a Diné poet and academic at the University of Arizona) uses interconnection (a trope that I identify as a Diné trope) to show how Navajo storytelling has survived. I include the various ways that interconnection is employed in her poetry to show its significance to the Diné worldview and existence. Moreover, I argue that the Diné worldview and its value for storytelling have survived. It survives and is found in Diné Asdzáán rhetorics (or contemporary poetry/stories written by Diné women, including Tapahonso).

In chapter four of the dissertation, I argue that Laura Tohe (a Diné poet and academic at Arizona State University) uses the literary field (namely poetry and stories) to give voice and visibility to historical and contemporary Diné people. These Diné

Rhetorics include the contradictions and ambiguities that exist in colonial spaces and emerge as neoculturation or as “new cultural phenomena.” This new cultural phenomena allows Tohe to re-tell history, to provide lessons on the Navajo language, to empower mixed-identities, and to explore the psychological effects of colonial spaces.

Many Native American poets and scholars have become prominent voices for the American Indian communities, including Luci Tapahonso and Laura Tohe. Their poetry and short stories speak the truth about the provocative life of American Indians surviving in the twentieth century. According to Donald L. Fixico, “ ‘Story’ among American Indians consists of at least five parts: time, place, character(s), event, and purpose. Together, they are the sum of an ‘experience.’ Each part connects the other parts for the storyteller to weave his or her story in the art of storytelling that is poetry and fine entertainment and knowledge sharing in Indian communities” (25). The stories shared by Tapahonso and Tohe provide knowledge and entertain the audience about how a group survives colonization. Survival for the Indian community means survival in two worlds; the Indian communities and spaces in America that are dominated by non-Indians. This survival means learning two languages and two distinct cultures. It means taking part in mainstream America, but finding a connection with traditional beliefs and cultural practices of one’s tribe. These two Navajo women complicate the notion about living in two worlds by incorporating other relative themes; including survival, assimilation, identity, poverty, stereotypes, Navajo philosophy, Navajo language, and popular American culture. These authors also show that the two-world concept is, in fact, a very complex idea because of all the intricate communities that individuals take part in.

Carolynn Dunn (Muskogee Creek, Seminole, Cherokee), describes indigenous writers as: “The writer, or storyteller, then becomes the mystic who can see into both worlds and report on the activities in the boundaries, record them, shape them, and point to a meaning, a significance that transcends the petty mundanities of secular preoccupations. The tribal community understands that spirit is part of the community, understands that spirit is part of the world, in both its spiritual and physical dimensions”(193). The concept of seeing, identifying, understanding, and sharing through two worlds include the blurred boundaries of the spiritual and the physical realms for indigenous writers.

For the Diné, sharing stories is essential to the survival of this oral traditional group. The group also recognizes that certain stories are only to be shared at a specific time, are shared only with specific people, and are considered taboo and are not to be shared at all because of their inherent power. According to Laura Tohe, “One must carefully use thoughts and words, for they have great potential. I came to learn that this might have caused the people to withhold stories of the Long Walk; the pain and suffering the ancestors endured was so nearly unbearable that they named Fort Sumner, where they were starved, raped, exploited and killed, *Hweeldi*: the place of extreme hardship where the Diné nearly took their last breath” (79). Stories about the Long Walk are rare because of the horrific details of the genocide. However, stories that do get shared about the Long Walk remind the Navajo people about the survival and strength of the Navajo people. Words and stories are powerful to the Navajo people. According to Archuleta, “Our journeys through writing represent a form of activism because our collective narratives demonstrate that traditions are being renewed, revitalized, or

questioned. Writing provides directions to help the lost find their way home” (Archuleta 7). Words and stories have actively sustained the Diné since the beginning. Tapahonso and Tohe recognize the power of words and storytelling and guide many of their readers home.

The poetry of Tapahonso and Tohe are significant and individual; but these women reveal a sense of responsibility as storytellers by giving voice to their Diné communities. These poets weave English and Diné languages and their storytelling abilities to salvage the oral traditional stories and to bring value to the contemporary Diné identity by recognizing and empowering the contradictions and ambiguities that result from colonization. Dunn states, “Indian women’s power comes from and through home and earth, our place in the natural world—its ritual center; its continuance of existence, rebirth, and survival—not in reaction to any presumed powerlessness. In returning to the storytelling traditions, we affirm our ancient place with our words and provide in them our continued existence, simply by telling the traditional stories.” (195). The English language is the vehicle used by each of these Navajo storytellers in part because of its dominance in the US. The prevailing language in the US allows these poets to inform non-Diné about ancient and contemporary indigenous knowledges. These Diné women challenge the boundaries of Western literature and history to provide a new telling of the Diné past, present, and future. They draw valuable connections between traditional Diné literacies and rhetorics and those imposed by Western poetics and rhetorics.

The Navajo women bring to life the Coyote trickster and other spiritual deities of the Diné in written form. Like cunning tricksters, these women use the English language as a mode of re-presenting their traditional way of life. Dunn describes Native women writers as the coyotesse because of their ability to use the colonizer language and Western poetic form to indigenize the Western reader's way of thinking. Dunn states, "Coyotesse is a feminist whether she accepts that label or not: by writing about women's experiences she takes on the cause. Her reworking of language makes her the trickster. She steals the fire, the fire being language, and makes it her—the tribe's—own. Because she walks tenuously between the spirit world and the ordinary world, she transcends both sacred and secular, becoming both sacred and secular" (Dunn 201). Western thinking is definitive, meaning that boundaries are created to distinguish between what is spiritual and what is rational. Tapahonso and Tohe can be identified as coyoteses because they cleverly use a variety of literacies and rhetorics to invite the sacred or aspects of the spiritual into their storytelling. Even more, as Diné women, they provide their audience with stories that assert and/or re-assert their identities as Diné women storytellers. According to Dunn, this is the true power of a coyotesse.

These women also write about Navajo specific issues, utilize the Navajo language, and discuss *Dinetah* or their ancestral Navajo homeland. Renya Ramirez defines this act of identifying a nation as transnationalism. Ramirez asserts, "I must first define the term transnational, since it's most common usage is the experience of crossing the border of the nation-state. Native people consider themselves to be a collectivity whether we are physically displaced from our Indian lands or discursively marginalized

from the nation-state. Thus, I define transnational to include the experience of Indian people who cross the border of their tribal nations and maintain a sense of a collective identity” (110). Tapahonso and Tohe each identify as a Diné woman who belongs to the Diné or Navajo Nation. Despite their geographical disconnectedness to *Dinetah*, they continue to identify as being part of the Navajo Nation. Their poetry reveals that the Navajo and English languages and their indigenous ways of thinking are part of the Navajo identity.

The identity and worldview of the Diné includes the central concepts *Sa’ah Naaghaii* and *Bik’eh Hozhoon* who are beings called upon in most traditional songs and prayers for the purpose of healing ill health or imbalance and restoring harmony. The spoken songs and prayers allow the singer or healer to call upon the sacred winds from the four cardinal directions to ask for guidance during the sing. The interconnectedness between spirituality and physical health is a distinct difference in Diné philosophy from Western Christian philosophy. The traditional Navajo worldview reveals how the interconnectedness among all life on earth, including the human life, the animal life, the elements, and the universe creates value for the natural interworkings of an orderly system. To traditional Diné the value of human life is equivalent to the animals and the elements because they are all beings that belong to the Earth—who is Mother of all life. The Diné, for instance, recognize the animals and elements as people. There is the Fire People, the Water People, the Earth People, and even the Wind People.

Therefore, traditional Diné, like many other Native people, recognize that they have a worldview that differs from the dominant worldview. They describe their situation and varied perceptions as living in two worlds. This concept took fruition after contact and more precisely after forced assimilation where cultures and languages were lost and new names, identities, languages and cultures were learned. According to Jessica Enoch in “Resisting the Script of Indian Education: Zikala Sa and the Carlisle Indian School,” Zikala Sa uses writing as an act of survivance to resist assimilationist policy in the late 1800s and to represent the Indian experience. Enoch uses Gerald Vizenor’s *survivance* to identify her response. Survivance according to Vizenor is an act that undermines and surmounts, with imagination and the performance of new stories, the manifest manners (misnomers read as authentic) of scriptural simulations and authentic representations of the tribes in the literature of dominance. Similarly, Adela C. Licona describes this practice of writing back as third space, “Third space can be understood as a location and/or practice. As a practice it reveals a differential consciousness capable of engaging creative and coalitional forms of opposition to the limits of dichotomous (mis)representations” (105). According to Licona, as a location, the third space is a space of understanding and meaning-making where third space subjects can transcend dualities through their “perspectives, lived experiences, and rhetorical performances” to produce representational rhetorics or (b)orderlands’ rhetorics because of their movement beyond binaries where ambiguity and contradiction are part of their understanding and meaning-making (105). I claim in chapter four that poetry written by Tohe are third spaces where Diné literacies meet American English literacies. The same can easily said about poetry

written by Tapahonso. The poetry written by Tapahonso and Tohe also mirror Licona's (b)orderlands' rhetorics because they create representational rhetorics that allow these women to represent themselves, while also reclaiming traditional indigenous ideologies and reviving indigenous languages and literacies. The negotiation occurs when the writer chooses to use the English language, the Navajo language, Western forms of poetry, and/or indigenous forms, values, and worldviews.

Education, Literacy, and Writing in Native American Communities

The fifth chapter of this dissertation argues that Native American students deserve specialized writing courses because they have a complex colonial history. Moreover, neocolonialism continues to perpetuate the silencing and oppressing of Native peoples. Native people want to be self-determined individuals and community members; therefore, I argue that specialized classes that help students to recognize and motivate them to be self-determined are necessary. I offer some suggestions for tribal colleges and universities. In this discussion I argue that traditional literacies and rhetorics are necessary and relevant pedagogical practices in writing classrooms for Native American students. I develop my inquiry through the use of a literature review and personal narrative to further complicate my teaching practices as a Diné woman in the field of rhetoric, composition, and the teaching of English. I use comparative and contrastive methods to develop a better understanding of traditional literacies practiced in Native American societies and US literacy practices in schools and mainstream communities.

As a Diné woman and educator, I have access to two or more worldviews and draw from this strength as I produce this chapter. According to Norman K. Denzin, ethnographer and social theorist, and Yvonna S. Lincoln, professor of higher education administration, “Critical indigenous inquiry begins with the concerns of indigenous people. It is assessed in terms of the benefits it creates for them. The work must represent indigenous persons honestly, without distortion or stereotype, and the research should honor indigenous knowledge, customs, and rituals. It should not be judged in terms of neocolonial paradigms. Finally, researchers should be accountable to indigenous persons. They, not Western scholars, should have first access to research findings and control over the distribution of knowledge” (Denzin and Lincoln 2). My concern for indigenous people stems from our lived experiences in colonial situations, which often is the reason many indigenous people reject and resist Western educational practices, including writing.

“Colonial legacies of writing” claims David Dzaka, Ghana professor of English, is what creates resistance to writing. Dzaka states,

By writing resistance I mean an aversion to writing as a thoughtful process. It is manifested by the extreme disinclination to write anything beyond the routine recording of prescribed information. It is commonly demonstrated in avoidance behavior patterns, such as putting off a writing task as long as possible and trying to complete a draft without taking a second look at it once it is done. For the resisting writer, there is nothing intrinsically exciting or motivating about writing, whether personal or academic (158).

Like Dzaka and many indigenous students who identify as post/neo/colonial subjects, I resisted and resist academic writing. I use to love writing and would write poetry and

short stories almost daily before entering the rhetoric, composition, and the teaching of English program at the University of Arizona. I have not written these forms for many years. Nowadays, I mostly resist writing, particularly academic writing.

Rhetorics of Resistance: I Wanted to Write Like Me, a Diné Asdzáán Scholar

Constructing written work is almost as daunting as constantly (re)constructing my ever changing and contentious identities. My writing skills are shaped by the public school that I attended that was and is lacking in adequate resources, teachers, and preparation for the collegiate level. My writing abilities are shaped by the fact that I am a first-generation college student, that my mother and father only have an eighth grade education, and that Navajo is both my second and first language. The Navajo language is often secondary in my life because it does not inform my success in America like the English language does. However, I am certain that the Navajo language was the first language that I heard, perhaps the first words I heard were of my mother saying *shí awee'* (my child) to me. She sang a lot. Perhaps it was the Navajo lyrics that I heard her sing while still in her womb. It is the language that was spoken in my home by my mother, father and older siblings. Even though I am not a fluent speaker of the Navajo language, I claim it as my first language. It is the language of my ancestors, my grandparents, and my parents. It is the language of my birthright and will someday belong to my children. The language connects me to my past and to my future. Even though I am not fluent in the Navajo language, I understand it well and make every effort to (re)learn it.

On the other hand, English is the language I use daily. It is the language I remember the most and the language that I often write with. As I learned the dominant English language, I found myself drifting farther away from the Navajo language. In graduate school, however, I did not feel like I was getting closer to or better at using the English language. Comments on my writing from graduate student peers and professors often reminded me of my inabilities as a writer. The most damaging comments were those provided by well-meaning professors who imposed their voice, their words and their concepts to academise my writing. During those times I often wondered if they ever thought about how they silenced me, an already marginalized and silenced perspective in the academy. I suppose that they did not realize that I could never write like them and did not even desire to. They did not realize that I was already ill-prepared in many ways for collegiate study, that I was constantly bombarded with issues that stemmed from oppression, that I did not connect in many ways to their mainstream topics and nuances, that I had to speak a slow-paced, broken English *and* Navajo to my parents, and that I did not even have a single family member whom I could “theorize” with because none of them understood the term theory. In fact, I recognize that when I am with my family I spend most of my time trying to use simple English words and try not to discuss colonialism because I realize that it is often too difficult on various levels for them to comprehend and to accept. What many non-Navajo scholars do not realize is that many colonial subjects/students have access to wonderful, new and important knowledges, but need assistance from professors who can take the time to truly understand these students.

Even though many of these students resist and/or reject writing, I believe that they can be inspired to become writers because of what writing can do for them.

I remember that I wanted to be a writer because I wanted to write about oppression, internalized oppression, and historical trauma. I wanted to inspire and educate students to use their voice to speak/write back. I wanted to write too, but I wanted to write like me, a Diné Asdzáán scholar who is also very clearly a subject of neo/colonialism. Dzaka asserts that colonial history has impacted many students and their abilities to write in academic discourse. The colonial history of Native Americans includes the annihilation of their first (indigenous) languages and poor educational practices that were intended to assimilate, not educate. Colonialism not only provided the challenges that speak to student writing, but how students identify as people and as writers. Colonialism created essentialist perspectives that informed the outlook that teachers had of Native students. According to Sandy Grande, educator, “[e]ssentialist theories of identity theory have undoubtedly impacted educational practice, shaping the way teachers view students and, perhaps more important, the way students view themselves. American Indian students have indeed internalized the invisible but powerful borders demarcating ‘authentic’ Indian-ness” (104). Native students decide to meet or not meet the expectations of their instructors and professors when they negotiate their Indian identities as students. They, even today, have to negotiate how much of Western cultures and education they will accept and how much they will resist. If these students are not allowed the opportunity to subvert the borders and colonial spaces that shape who they are, they will continue to find Western knowledge and writing practices as places of

contention. I argue that specialized writing practices are necessary to allow students to complicate their lived experiences and identities as Native American student writers; this often means that they (re)visit and (re)claim their histories. In reference to postcolonial writers, Dzaka states, “when they fare badly, it is partly because of their history of miseducation, of misguided pedagogy, of domination and submission” (169). The colonial histories that impacted Native Americans can easily be identified as a perpetrator of why many of these students do not fare well in schools, including writing. Many Native American students continue to resist and reject Western education and Western writing practices. It is with this in mind that I develop this dissertation that explores how Native Americans, particularly the Diné, construct themselves and are constructed by rhetorics and writing. An examination of the Diné history and literature and its connection to writing and composition will provide us with an opportunity to better understand the inception of Diné rhetorics.

CHAPTER 2: THE SURVIVAL OF A MATRILINEAL TRADITION

Contact with the United States of America

Since contact with Whites, the Navajo people have survived conditions of colonialism including subjugation, extermination, removal, and forced assimilation. Today, the Navajos exist in post- and ongoing-colonial conditions, while also retaining their own pre-western traditions and customs. This contact with Western societies resulted in the development of a “new” or changed culture. A significant event that impacted the Navajo people was forced displacement. In the early 1860s, the Navajo people were rounded up by the US government and forced to leave their homes. According to Bill P. Acrey, historian, during the eighteenth century the Navajos lived north of Mt. Taylor between Canyon de Chelly, the New Mexico-Colorado border, the continental divide and the headwaters of Chaco Canyon (86). The Navajos were removed from this traditional territory to live in concentration camps in Bosque Redondo in New Mexico. The four years in concentration camps became expensive for the US government and the taxpaying Americans. Those that were removed had to remain on this reservation for four years. It was not until 1868, when the Navajos signed the Treaty of 1868, that they were allowed to return home.

Once the Navajos returned home, they were only allowed to return to a part of the land they once knew as home. When the Navajos were originally forced to move, many of their homes and crops were destroyed in the removal process by the soldiers. Therefore, many Navajo people could not return to their original homelands and instead sought refuge elsewhere on the land now considered home, which was “only one-tenth of

the country which the Navajos had previously claimed”(Locke 384). The new Navajo reservation boundaries limited the Navajos to 3.5 million acres (Locke 384). Despite the displacement, the Navajo people were able to return to a place within the four sacred mountains, including *Tsisnaasjini'* (White Shell Mountain) or Mount Blanca, *Tsoodzil* (Blue Turquoise Mountain) or Mount Taylor, *Doko'oosliid* (Abalone Shell Mountain) or San Francisco Peaks, and *Dibé Nitsaa* (Big Mountain Sheep) or Mount Hesperes. These four mountains, according to the Navajos, are markers that surround their homeland. The Navajo Nation today covers over 27,000 square miles within Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah. Currently, more than 250,000 Navajos reside within and outside the borders of the Navajo reservation. The Navajos, a matrifocal and matrilineal society, are the largest recognized Indigenous group in the United States. The policies that governed their displacement were followed by assimilation policies that sought to change or Americanize the Navajos under the guise of education. The treaty required that Navajo children attend schools and many attempts were made to take Navajo students to boarding schools. Moreover, Navajos recognized that Whites still had interest in their land. The Navajos began to create a political system that would allow them to interact with the Whites. This political system was based on White values rather than on the traditional matri-focal value system that Navajos were accustomed to because their system of government was influenced by White values. Over the years, the relationship between Navajos and Whites began to change the Navajo people, including the ways they thought about education. In response to the changing environment, Navajos created new systems of education that met the distinct needs of their Navajo students.

Over the years, Navajo students have each had their own set of challenges. All, however, have challenges that are directly informed by the colonial situation. The boarding schools, for instance, created new ways of thinking for many Navajos and in many ways coercive educational practices contributed to the declining use of the Navajo language and cultural practices. Despite these losses, Navajos today maintain their original land base, have fluent Navajo language speakers, and practice traditional ceremonies. Navajos have also created a college that acknowledges and celebrates their uniqueness. After many years of rejecting compulsory educational attempts by the United States government, the Navajos embraced education, both Western and Navajo systems of knowledge. These introductions to the Navajos changed the practices of the Navajo people. Yet, the worldview, language, and customs remained resilient.

The history provided in this chapter begins with contact between Navajos and Whites that colonized and changed the Navajo people. I begin this way to provide a linear overview and to focus on how the US has changed and continues to impact the Navajo people. I also provide the histories of the Navajo people from the perspective of the Navajo to show a distinct worldview that both conflicts and merges with Western worldviews. Histories as I understand them are stories that are written and/or told to capture events of the past for the purpose of remembering and/or recording them. What I include in this historical telling of Navajo history includes information that helps to contextualize Diné (Navajo) Rhetorics and their relation to Indian Education.

The Removal Process

Contact between the Navajos and the United States began in the mid 1800s when the federal government worked to remove indigenous peoples from their tribal lands under a removal policy that would make land readily available for westward moving Anglo settlers. For a century, warfare was common between tribes and other neighboring groups, including Spain and Mexico. By the 19th Century, New Mexicans began to participate in the wars. Navajos were constantly at war with various groups because of the profitable business of slave trade. Comanches and Utes would steal Navajo women and children to sell in Mexico and New Mexico. According to Acrey, Navajo females were valued because they had weaving skills, which meant that they could produce valuable work. In response to these raids the Navajos also raided. They took livestock and captives as well. (3). During this chaotic time, alliances formed and broke. At the start of the 19th century, the United States of America was an aggressive force that began to over-take and control territories. Before the Treaty of 1868, several treaties were signed between the Navajos and the Americans. They included the Treaty of Ojo del Oso, The Newby Treaty, The Washington Treaty of 1849, The Treaty of Leguna Negra, The Bonneville Treaty of 1858, and The Canby Treaty of 1861. Most of these treaties were a response to the on-going problems caused by slave raids.

In 1863, under the command of General James Henry Carleton, Colonel Christopher “Kit” Carson led a large group of soldiers to round up thousands of Navajo people. General Carleton was the agent who made the colonization of Navajo people a reality. General Carleton believed that gold and silver could be found on the land that the

Navajos occupied and pushed his agenda to remove the Navajos from their homeland. It was Colonel Kit Carson who carried out the campaigns against the Navajos. Colonel Carson used the Ute Indian Tribe as “guides and trackers” against the Navajo people (Acrey 39). The Utes were familiar with Navajo hiding places in canyons because Utes were identified as one of the Navajos’ traditional enemies. The Utes easily accepted the invitation to campaign against the Navajos because of their histories as enemies. Gus Bighorse, a Navajo man who lived through the Long Walk, told his sons and daughter about his survival. His story coincides with Acrey’s. Tiana Bighorse serves as the voice for Bighorse (her father), who was also known as *Asdzaa Lii’ Yiishchiih Biyaazh* or Son-of-the-Woman-Who-Is-Expert-with-Horses. Tiana retells the story from the perspective of her father. Bighorse says, “[t]here are many enemies of the Navajo: Utes, Apache, Mexican, Paiute, and Comanche. Sometimes these guys even fight on the side of the soldiers”(19). The enemy tribes to the Navajos were likely given false promises or were coerced by the US government for their assistance; they were also removed from their homelands onto reservations.

Navajos were told to submit to the removal process voluntarily. The soldiers announced that Navajos were to report to either Fort Canby or Wingate by July 20, 1863. From Fort Canby and Wingate, the Navajos were herded to the new Bosque Redondo Reservation at Fort Sumner. The Navajo men who did not comply were killed by the soldiers and the women and children were held captive. The Navajo’s crops and homes were destroyed to further compel their removal. “In order to force other Navajos into surrendering, Carson continued his ‘scorched earth’ policy by sending Captain Asa Carey

and seventy five men back into the Canyon with instructions to march through Canyon de Chelly, draw maps and destroy the Navajo hogans and peach orchards”(Acrey 43).

Bighorse describes the atrocious acts of Carson’s army. Bighorse recalls, “[t]he enemy is some soldiers from Washington. They want to get our land. That’s why they’re killing all these Navajos. [Other survivors] tell me the soldiers chopped all the corn and peaches down and burned them. They tell me that my father’s relatives got killed trying to stop them—protecting the corn and peaches” (13). Carson believed that by destroying their lifeways, the Navajo would not be determined to return to their homelands. Moreover, Carson and other assimilationists wanted Navajos to learn to farm when they moved them to the new reservation. Farming would allow the Navajos to make use of small plots of land on their newly designated reservation that would allow them to sustain themselves. This also meant that there was more open land made available to westward moving Americans. Many Navajos submitted to the removal process for fear of losing their lives. According to Lawrence W. Cheek, the military records indicated that approximately 11,468 Navajos had been moved (18).

Most, not all, of the Navajos were herded to the Bosque Redondo Reservation or to Round Forest in New Mexico. “The Bosque Reservation was located 180 miles southwest of Santa Fe, New Mexico, and five miles south of the present day city of Fort Sumner. The reservation containing approximately forty square miles with Fort Sumner in the middle, was officially established by President Abraham Lincoln on January 15, 1864” (Acrey 55). Fort Sumner was built to house the soldiers who kept the Navajos in concentration camp-like conditions. The Navajos refer to this place as *Hweeldi* or the

land of suffering. According to Laura Tohe, Navajo poet, “the pain and suffering the [Navajo] ancestors endured was so nearly unbearable that they named Fort Sumner, where they were starved, raped, exploited and killed, *Hweeldi*: the place of extreme hardship where the Diné nearly took their last breath”(79). Thousands of Navajos lived in extreme conditions for nearly four years. Their numbers faltered every year because of high mortality. Bighorse describes the treachery of the removal process:

When I am sixteen years old, we live near Mount Taylor. One day I go to the mountain to hunt for food—rabbits, berries, wild potatoes, and there are wild onions too. My parents are busy at home. In the afternoon I return with the food. I find my parents laying there. It looks like they’ve been murdered by someone that came along. I see horse tracks around and some blood on the horse track. It looks like they tried to shoot back with bows and arrows. I think they wounded or killed two. It looks like those guys took the wounded back on the horse (10-11).

After burying his parents, Bighorse retreated to the mountains where he is greeted by other surviving Navajo men and women who tell him similar stories. According to Bighorse,

I got nobody to tell what happened to my parents. The relatives of my father don’t know about my parents’ death. They, too, got killed. I got no relatives to go to. It is really heartache. How I loved that place, and how the crops grew. I had always been willing to help plant. Somebody don’t have any love to destroy the crops and to burn the Mother Earth (13).

Bighorse and others who escaped captivity and death hid and lived in the Chuska mountains and hid in crevices of Canyon De Chelly during the four years of removal. Most of the Navajos who were not removed were men or warriors. They felt ardently that the removal process was wrong and resisted. Many of these men, including Chief

Manuelito, were important resisters who helped to establish the peace treaties that were sought during the fourth year of the Navajo people's incarceration at Bosque Redondo.

Those who were captured and moved by the US military made their living at Bosque Rodondo for nearly five years. L. R. Bailey describes their living condition: "on forty square miles the once 'Lords of New Mexico' grubbed out a meager subsistence from alkali impregnated soil, or died of dysentery from saline water, and syphilis contracted from the garrison" (1). Often described as powerful and prideful people by historians, the Navajos began to dwindle under the harsh conditions of suffering and misery. The stories that are told about Bosque Redondo are tales about suffering and survival. It was not until the spring of 1868 that peace treaties were sought; the financial toll of incarcerating thousands of Diné led to the negotiations of the peace treaty between the United States and the Navajo Tribe of Indians, which became known as the Navajo Treaty of 1868.

The Navajo Treaty of 1868

The Treaty proceedings began on May 28, 1868 and lasted three days with two Indian Peace Commissioners, Lieutenant General W.T. Sherman and Samuel F. Tappan, and seven Navajo Chiefs and two interpreters. The proceedings occurred at Bosque Redondo, the reserved land for Navajo people, at Fort Sumner in the Territory of New Mexico. The seven Chiefs present during the first day of the proceedings included Delgadito, Barboncito, Manuelito, Largo, Herrero, Armijo, and Torivinio. During the meeting, W.T Sherman reminded the Chiefs that they were at war with one another. He

told them that they would like to seek peace and he wanted to know what the Navajos thought of their current living conditions and what could be changed to create peace. Barboncito responded by reminding W.T. Sherman of his connection to the land they once thrived upon. He taught Sherman about the way the Navajo people came to exist on and use the land. He also reminded him that this new reservation, Bosque Redondo, did not allow them to live in the same way because it was arid land. Barboncito insisted that W.T. Sherman take him and his people back to his place of birth and allow him the dignity to provide for himself, rather than living on commissary foods. The Navajos' lifestyle was informed by their traditional foods, including corn, which also supplied corn pollen (a necessary element in ceremony). Navajos gathered pinons, yucca bananas and wild potatoes. The Navajo men hunted small and large game. Navajos understand the importance of land (and its production of food) and they perceive land as a life form, the life form of Mother Earth. Barboncito agreed that as long as they, the Navajos, were allowed to return to their homelands, they would abide by the rules set forth by the United States Government.

The Treaty was signed on June 1, 1868 by W.T. Sherman, Lieutenant General, Indian Peace Commissioner, and S.F. Tappan Indian Peace Commissioner. Twelve Navajo Chiefs and seventeen Navajo Head Men consented and signed the treaty with the mark of an x because they were unable to write their Navajo and/or imposed Spanish names. According to Scott Lyons, Anishanaabe rhetorician, "An x-mark is a sign of consent in a context of coercion; it is the agreement one makes when there seems to be little choice in the matter. To the extent that little choice isn't the quite same thing as no

choice, it signifies Indian agency”(1). Many Indians, under coercion signed their treaties with an x-mark, including the Navajos. The Navajo Chiefs who signed their x-mark included Barboncito, who was unanimously elected Principal Chief by the Chiefs, Armijo, Delgado, Manuelito, Largo, Herrero, Chiqueto, Muerto de Hombre, Hombro, Narbono, Narbono Segundo, and Ganado Mucho. The Navajo Head Man included Riquo, Juan Martin, Serginto, Grande, Inoetenito, Muchachos Mucho, Chiqueto Segundo, Cabello Amarillo, Francisco, Torivio, Desdendado, Juan, Guero, Gugadore, Cabason, Barbon Segundo, and Cabares Colorados. Eight individual attestors were also present. They included Geo. W.G. Getty, Colonel Thirty-Seventh Infantry, Brevet Major - General US Army, B.S. Roberts, Brevet Brigadier - General US Army, Lieutenant - Colonel Third Cavalry, J. Cooper McKee, Brevet Lieutenant - Colonel, Surgeon US Army, Theo. H. Dodd, United States Indian Agent for Navajos, Chas. McClure, Brevet Major and Commissary of Subsistence, US Army, James F. Weeds, Brevet Major and Assistant Surgeon, US Army, J.C. Sutherland, Interpreter, and William Vaux, Chaplain US Army. The treaty was ratified on July 25, 1868 by the US Senate (24-25). The peace treaty established the boundaries of the Navajo reservation. The Treaty states,

The United States agrees that the following district of country, to wit: bounded on the north by the 37th degree of north latitude, south by an east and west passing through the site of old Fort Defiance, in Canon Bonito, east by the parallel of longitude which, if prolonged south, would pass through old Fort Lyon, or the Ojo-de-oso, Bear Spring, and west by a parallel of longitude about 109° 30' west of Greenwich, provided it embraces the outlet of the Canon-de-Chilly, which canon is to be all included in this reservation, shall be, and the same is hereby, set apart for the use and occupation of the Navajo tribe of Indians...(Treaty 1868).

The original Treaty land extended from what is now known as Shiprock, NM to Chinle, AZ. Boundaries were not clearly marked by the federal government and the concept of

degrees was a foreign idea to the Navajo people. Complications ensued as Navajos returned to their original homelands that extended outside the boundaries set forth by the federal government. From 1878 to 1917, eleven executive orders resulted in the expansion of the Navajo reservation borders. The traditional lifeways of hunting and wandering changed as the Navajos took on the life of a farmer and/or rancher.

The Treaty biased a farmer lifestyle and an individualist worldview by granting land to individual Navajos. The Treaty states “a tract of land...not exceeding one hundred and sixty acres in extent” to individual Navajos who were 18 years of age or older who desired an agricultural life style. The Navajos began to raise sheep, goats, horses, and cattle and used artisan skills in weaving and silversmithing to supplement their new lifestyle. As livestock grew, so did weaving and trading. Christian groups that settled on Navajo land set up trading posts that were developed on paternalist ideals that allowed Navajos to trade with White communities. According to Peter Iverson, “As early as 1883, traders bought more than 1.3 million pounds of Navajo wool, perhaps three hundred thousand sheep pelts, and one hundred thousand goat hides” (79). This influx of trade allowed women weavers to take interest in livestock and land distribution, thus re-enforcing the matri-focal society. Livestock production, particularly sheep raising, became a value for the Navajo people. All family members, including children, participated in the raising of livestock. When early educators, the Presbyterian clergy, attempted to educate the Navajo children, they found resistance from the Navajo people because the children and adolescents were active participants in sustaining their families and societies.

Boarding Schools

The Treaty of 1868 required that Navajo children between the ages of six and sixteen attend schools in English education. The Treaty states:

In order to insure the civilization of the Indians entering into this treaty, the necessity of education is admitted, especially of such of them as may be settled on said agricultural parts of this reservation, and they therefore pledge themselves to compel their children, male and female, between the ages of six and sixteen years, to attend school; and it is hereby made the duty of the agent for said Indians to see that this stipulation is strictly complied with (21).

The treaty required the Navajo children to attend a compulsory education for the purpose of assimilation. Moreover, the General Allotment and Compulsory Education Acts of 1887 were two forceful steps by the federal government to assimilate Indian people. According to Teresa L. McCarty, “the effect of the Allotment Act was to dispossess tribes of millions of additional acres of their lands, parceling out allotments to individual tribal members and thereby opening so-called ‘surplus’ lands to Anglo-American settlement. At the same time, compulsory education sought to recast Indigenous identities” (40). The value of the land took precedence over the well-being of the Indigenous peoples. Civilization diplomacy, or more appropriately, assimilation tactics, was used to change the cultural practices of the Navajo people.

Various attempts were made by clergy and federal agents to entice parents to allow their children to attend low enrollment schools. Among these enticements were “industrial schools” (Iverson 82). Later, a statement made by Manuelito would be used to entice generations of Navajo students to attend off reservation boarding schools.

Manuelito is supposed to have told Chee Dodge: ‘The whites have many things which we Navajos need. But we cannot get them. It is as though the whites were in a grassy canyon and there they have wagons, plows, and plenty of food. We Navajos are up on a dry mesa. We can hear them talking but we cannot get to them. My grandchildren, education is the ladder. Tell our people to take it’ (quoted by Iverson 83).

Manuelito sent three of his sons to Carlisle Boarding school in Pennsylvania, where two died of health complications.

Other similar schools emerged in the late 1800s, including one in Mt. Pleasant in Michigan, one in Morris in Minnesota, and one in Grand Junction in Colorado. A handful of Navajos attended these schools. Those most likely to attend and stay at boarding schools were orphans. Those institutions that attracted the most students developed a good reputation by word of mouth by older siblings who attended the boarding schools (Iverson 86). Runaways, diseases, abuse and death were the norm at these off-reservation Indian boarding schools. In 1882, a boarding school was opened in Fort Defiance, on the Navajo reservation. Despite its proximity to Navajo communities, resistance to English education and boarding schools ensued because the high rate of mortality and reports of abuse. According to McCarty, the abuse resulted in violence at Round Rock in 1893. The community members of Round Rock retaliated against the Indian agent Dana Shipley who attempted to kidnap Navajo children. Shipley’s intentions were to take Navajo students away from their community at Round Rock to a school in Fort Defiance. *Bilítizhinii* or Black Horse, a Navajo elder and regional leader responded by plotting to kill Shipley. These attempts to force Navajo students to attend schools resulted in hostile relations between Navajos and Whites (42). *Bilítizhinii* became a well known resistor to

compulsory education. Although some Navajos resisted compulsory education, some Navajos also supported it because they wanted to learn the English language and the skills of the Whites that would allow them to communicate and to sustain themselves in a changing world.

McCarty provides the interviews of several boarding school survivors who reveal the treacherous journey to and from the schools and the military system of education.

David Begay attended the Fort Apache Boarding School in 1924. He described his experience as,

They took us to Keams Canyon [on the south side of Black Mesa, within the Hopi reservation] on horseback. We stayed there for about a week. Then they took us to Fort Apache in a Model T Ford. We stayed there at school all summer. Our relatives would come in wagons or on horseback to visit us. Then at the end of the spring, they would come to take us home. It used to take us 7 days to get home. Fort Apache was an army post turned into a school. It just seemed like we had military style at Fort Apache. Every Sunday we had to parade for our superintendent. They had a band, and then we were in the band and marching like the army. Even the little kids had uniforms. During the school year they wouldn't let us speak Navajo.

Begay's experience in the 1920s reflects the thousands of Navajo students who had to make similar journeys to boarding schools that were designed after a military system.

Even though this school was closer to the Navajo reservation, it was still an extensive and isolating trip. The uniformity of a military school articulated an environment that valued Anglo standards. To attempt to eradicate the Navajo language, the students were not allowed to speak it.

Emerging Navajo Political System

In order to further negotiate with the Navajos, the US government persuaded several Navajos that a leader and spokesperson with skills in written English was necessary to their relationship. Henry Chee Dodge or *Hastiin Adiits'a'ti* (Man Who Understands) (Iverson 88), a Navajo man who had never served as a War or Peace Chief in the traditional Navajo kinship system was chosen as the first official Chairman because of his English language skills. He served from 1923 to 1928 and for a second term from 1942 to 1946. According to Iverson, “By the 1890s, one man among the Diné had demonstrated through his own success that a working knowledge of the English language and a better understanding of the workings of American culture could translate into significant wealth and influence” (88). Dodge was born in the 1860s and traveled with the Navajo during the Long Walk. When his mother died he was exposed to English education as an orphan at a school in Fort Defiance and became an official translator for the United States. Later in his life, Dodge would serve as the first elected official Tribal Chairman of the Navajo Nation by a council of 12 men in 1923. During his first tenure, the council of 12 and the Chairman helped to pass the Indian Oil Act of 1927, which determined how royalties from oil found on Indian land could be spent. Before the imposition of the American political organization, Navajos organized according to a kinship system that was set up in resident units or bands that were led by *naat'aanii* or headmen and headwomen. To negotiate with the US federal government, the Navajos organized as a self-governing tribal entity that presided over their own people through a systemic and sovereign government that was developed with both tribal and federal

influences. This hybridized government system was created in 1923 to fulfill the federal government's interest in the non-renewable resources found on Indian land. According to Laurence D. Linford, "Prior to this century, these units [or pre-western governing systems] were organized loosely into bands with a local headman (called *naat'aanii*). These headman annually would gather in a *naa'chid* ceremony, giving a kind of tribal organization, but the headmen could speak for no one outside their own band" (14). *Naa'chid*, which literally means to gesture with the hands, was made up of twelve war chiefs and twelve peace chiefs who met "ceremonial...to ensure an abundance of water and soil fertility. It also served at times as a war council or a peace council"(Wilkins 71). The chiefs were elected by both men and women. According to David E. Wilkins, "A Peace Naataanii...was chosen or elected if the person had lent moral character, great oratorical abilities, and charisma" (69). Knowledge of the sacred, including ceremony and "day-to-day aspects of Navajo life and culture" was also important in electing the right *naat'aanii*.

The Navajo political organization reformed over time to fit the demands of the negotiation with the United States government and began to reflect a paternalistic system. Shepardson states, "Women were not allowed to vote in the newly established Navajo Tribal Council elections from 1923 to 1925 when their sisters in the larger society had attained the franchise" (Shepardson 175). The new system grew into what is now known as the largest tribal government system. The system is made up of a three branch government, including an executive, legislative and judicial branch. The Executive Branch is made up of the President and Vice-President, five Executive Offices and nine

Divisions. The Legislative Branch is made up of 88 Council Delegates, three legislative committees, and 12 Legislative Offices. Under the Executive and Legislative body are 110 Navajo Nation Chapters. The Judicial Branch is made up of the Office of the Chief Justice, two associate justices, seven district courts and eight family courts (Wilkins 103). This new system of government was developed with a structure that borrowed from the US government for the purpose of communication and business with the US government and land and resource seeking Whites. Despite the new system, Navajos attempted to retain important elements that were culturally relevant to their community, including recognition of clans, stories and traditional gender roles.

Navajo Origin: A Matri-focal Society

Before the creation of one of the largest tribal government systems, the Navajo lifestyle was organized and operated by an intricate clan system that derived from their origin stories. The kinship or clanship organization was governed by a matrilineal system. Both men and woman identified themselves by their mother's clan first. They identified their father's clan second. Then, they identified their maternal and paternal grandfather's clan. According to *Navajo History*, a written version of the origin of the people, the Navajo people emerged from the underworlds and lived in a place called *Dzil Na'oodilii* (Banded Rock Mountain). First Man saw the mountain *Ch'ool'i'i* (Governador Knob) capped with fog. First Man came upon the mountain and discovered a new born baby girl, who he named White Shell Woman. She grew to an adult in just four days, and a puberty ceremony was given by the Talking God. Navajo deities, known as the Holy

People, were in attendance. After the puberty ceremony, White Shell Woman became known as Changing Woman for her ability to change from a child to an adult in just four days. One day, Changing Woman was visited by the Sun while she slept during the day. She awoke and took a bath under a waterfall. She would later find that she was impregnated with twin boys, who were called Monster Slayer and Born For Water, because they were sons of the Sun and Water. Changing Woman left her home to live with Sun, but she became lonely. Changing Woman thought that more people were necessary to cure loneliness. She created the first people and established the first four clans. She rubbed the skin from her breast and formed the people who became the *Kiiyaa'áanii* (Towering House People) clan. She rubbed the skin from her back and formed the *Honágháahnii* (One Walks Who Walks Around You People) clan. She rubbed the skin from under both arms and formed the *Tó Dích'í'ni* (Bitter Water People) clan and *Hashtl'ishnii* (Mud People) clan.

Changing Woman is the central deity to the Navajos. She is thought to be the spiritual, inner form to the Earth, which is the outer physical form. Changing Woman is the mother of all life on Earth. According to Gary Witherspoon, “Changing woman or Earth woman is called mother. Agricultural fields are called mother. Livestock are called mother. Changing Woman is in charge of female rain and all vegetation” (60). This worldview shapes a matrilineal society that values the female role as grandmother, the mother, the daughter, and the livestock and agricultural producer. According to Witherspoon:

Maleness is associated with the static dimension of reality, while femaleness is associated with the active dimension of reality. In the

Navajo view, it is the female who is active, productive, and reproductive. The capacity to create or reproduce life and propagate the species is inherent in the female, and the capacity to sustain life and produce food is associated with female. The earth and its life-giving, life-sustaining, and life-producing qualities are associated with and derived from Changing Woman (141).

Witherspoon further claims that these Navajo views are associated with the dominance of Navajo women in social and economic affairs. He asserts that Navajo women have a strong voice in their domestic groups, that clans are matrilineal, and that land and livestock are controlled and/or owned by the females in the home. Furthermore, like Changing Woman, Navajo women produce children that guarantee the continuity of a clan group. Shepardson states, "In Navajo life, clan affiliation is a basic index for women's high status. The Navajo receive their clan affiliation at birth. They are 'born into' their mother's clan, which then becomes their clan, and 'born for' their father's clan. Mother's clan is of primary importance, and father's clan is of secondary importance" (160). Furthermore, the female role is not less important than the male role. According to Ruth Roessel, "Navajo women always have been the basis of and the most important teachers in Navajo society; and, as this role continues, their influence certainly will not diminish. It is the teaching of the children (both male and female) by the women that places women in such a key position"(134). Ruth Roessel, a Navajo woman, acknowledges the authorities that Navajo women have as the teachers of their communities. As teachers, Navajo women decide the roles and responsibilities for male and female children.

Navajo female and male traditional gender roles complement one another. The value of the female creates a society that values the family unit, not an individual person. According to Robert A. Roessel, Jr., “Women were expected to keep house for men, clean the camp and hogans, care for children, make clothing, prepare and cook the food, assist men in the fields, carry water, gather fuel (wood) for the fire, weave, and make pottery and baskets. Men were expected to clear the fields, plant the corn, hunt both small and large animals, and protect the family”(84). Education in this worldview was not a separate task for this group of people. The edification of Navajo children occurred along with their socialization, as active group participants. During an interview between Teresa L. McCarty and Mae Hatathlie, a Navajo female elder, Hatathlie reveals that Navajo girls are taught to “walk the right path and to live a good life”(32). In detail, Hatathlie describes the expected roles of the communities’ members to educate and socialize the families. She replies:

[Parents and elders] always told you how to care for sheep. This is what you were told as a girl.... If someone should go after the sheep, then you were told to prepare some food.... There were also carding wool, spinning, and weaving.... You followed instructions. Though you didn’t know how to weave,...you learned by helping to finish a rug.... You could also try to do one yourself if you wanted to. You set up a loom and weave. It might come out lopsided at first, but eventually you got better.... This how we were taught (32).

The Navajo girls were taught to understand their worth to the family unit and were encouraged to be active participants in the group. Because their livelihood surrounded the sheep and rug-making, their insights were necessary when the group or family had to make major decisions concerning the political and financial situation. According to Ruth Roessel, “[t]he earliest account of women in Navajo history reveal a very important

leadership position for them. Among the first stories following the Navajo concept of duality is the chronicle of First Man and First Woman. The role of First Man certainly would be incomplete without the comparison role of First Woman. First Woman was active in roles of leadership and decision-making in the that early period of Navajo history”(132). Jennifer Denetdale confirms the role of Navajo women and men. She writes, “In traditional societies, gender roles were often egalitarian, meaning that both males and females were crucial to the survival and perpetuation of culture and society. Although it is difficult to find many examples where women were chiefs or leaders, women were consulted about important decisions that affected all of their people on matters that extended to the economic and the political” (Denetdale 10). Despite the changes that occurred with contact with the dominant American society, Navajo women endured as providers and caretakers of their children. Many of the women provided for their families as rug weavers, a skill given to the Navajos by the Spider Woman.

Monty Roessel tells the story of how Spider Woman taught Navajo women to weave. In Navajo oral tradition, the sons of Changing Woman, Monster Slayer and Born for Water, were greeted by Spider Woman while they were out one night secretly planning a trip. Spider Woman welcomed them into her home, which had beautiful rugs that hung on each wall. When they returned home, they told their mother, Changing Woman, about what they had seen. Changing Woman was intrigued and visited the Spider Woman. She was amazed by the beauty of the rugs, so she asked Spider Woman to teach her to create the rugs. Spider Woman agreed to teach her on the condition that

Changing Woman would teach other Navajo women to weave (22-23). Roessel provides the words of Spider Woman,

From the east I get white, from the south I get blue, from the west I get yellow, and from the north I get black. These colors come from white shell, turquoise, abalone, and jet. But these same colors, and more, can also be made from plants. The designs come from the earth. Clouds, lightening, sunbeams, and mountains. The bottom of the loom represents the earth and the top is the sky. The strings that fasten the loom to the frame represent lightening. The warp represents the falling rain. This is why you must never weave during rain and lightening. You also must never stretch your rug before you start. The weaving must come from your heart and mind (23).

Spider Woman also instructs Changing Woman to leave an opening or a break in each rug to allow the weaver's thoughts to escape. According to Roessel, if one does not leave an opening, the weaver will "close in [their] life and thoughts. [They] will be unable to learn any more"(23). For many years Navajos remembered this story and continued the tradition of weaving by passing it on to their own daughters and granddaughters. Contact with neighboring tribes, Spanish, Mexicans, and Americans impacted the production of weaving from the design schemes to the type of wool used.

Navajo Rug Weavers: Continuity of a Matrilineal Society

As rug weavers, women's lives were dependent upon a pastoral lifestyle with sheep being central to the Navajo way of life. The churro sheep came from Spain by means of trade and raids. According to Marian E. Rodee, "sheep brought by the Spanish to the New World...were almost certainly churros, not merinos, although the churros probably had a great deal of merino blood. Churros were perfectly suited to the

Southwest, which had a climate similar to Spain. Their relatively fine, long-stapled wool was also well suited to the Navajo handspindle” (24). In the Navajo matrilineal society, sheep are owned by the females in the family. According to Downs, “The sheep and goat herd usually is composed of animals owned by the individuals of a matrilineal group—that is, a woman, her daughters and sons, and perhaps even her brothers who live elsewhere with their wives”(86). Sheep and goats informed the lifestyle of Navajo people, particularly the women. Women and children care for the sheep and goats like members of their family. Some Navajos say, “*dibé iina*,” which translates as sheep is life. Navajos valued the sheep since contact and have recognized sheep as a valuable species to their survival. The Navajo women used the meat from the sheep to create meals for their families. They used the wool to create blankets and rug dresses. These blankets or rugs had intricate designs that reflected the history and livelihood of the weaver. These blankets were symbolic story books and were the first forms of creative expression for Navajo women. Navajo women traded their rugs with other tribes and Whites. Trading, weaving, and herding sheep helped Navajo women to provide for their families.

During the Long Walk era, the sheep were taken from the Navajos. In 1869, fourteen thousand sheep and one thousand goats were sold to the Navajos by the federal government to allow the Navajos to rebuild their herds (Rodee 25). The fourteen thousand sheep and one thousand goats grew to 1.3 million sheep and goats by 1930, according to a detailed report written by William Zeh, a BIA forester (Wilkins 85). In 1933, John Collier, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, ordered that livestock on Navajo land be reduced by more than half because he claimed that the land was being

overworked. However, many Navajos believe that this reduction was another attempt to eradicate the Navajo people. It was an attempt to destroy their growing economic stability. According to Wilkins, “Navajo herds were dramatically reduced from 1,053,498 sheep units in 1933 to 449,000 in 1946 when active reduction was stopped (85). Charlie Yellow, a Navajo medicine man from Kayenta, describes the reduction process. He states, “We were herding some distance from here when Collier’s men caught up with us. Right there all the goats were killed, about a hundred of them. The sheep that survived grew and grew for several years. Then along came Collier again” (Evers 173). The stock reduction was a major factor that led to the dramatic change in lifestyle for many Navajos. After the reduction, Navajos were limited in the amount of sheep they could own. Without the large herds, some Navajo men began to search for American jobs in neighboring urban areas. Women continued to weave with the smaller herds and met the demands of the changing consumers and the demands set by White traders. Contact with the US government and White traders continued to change the lifestyles of Navajo people. Many women today, for instance, do not weave because of the mass stock reduction. However, sheep are still prized, valued, and cared for by Navajo people. Mutton still continues to be a traditional staple on Navajoland. Many Navajo women have had to turn to Western education and have moved to urban areas surrounding the Navajo reservation for employment. Similarly, since contact with Whites, Navajo men have had to change their traditional lifestyle as hunters and warriors.

Navajo Code Talkers: Bilingualism and Survival

Many Navajo men continued their education after boarding school, moved to urban areas, and/or enlisted in the US armed forces. After the bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941, for instance, many Navajo men enlisted in the armed forces to defend their traditional homelands. According to Iverson, “Within the first year after the beginning of the war, 1,400 Navajos had joined the armed forces, including 350 as volunteers”(182-183). A group of twenty-five men who joined the forces created the Code Talkers, a unit that successfully transmitted indecipherable codes using the Navajo language. Iverson reveals that,

[The Code Talkers] employed Dine words for military terms, foreign countries, and other subjects. A bomber plane now was *jeeshóó'* (buzzard), a submarine *beeshlóó'* (iron fish), and a battleship *lóótsoh* (whale). Britain became *Tóta'* (between the waters), India *Eé'* (white clothes), and Germany *Bééshbich'aahí* (iron hat). Each letter of the alphabet underwent a similar transformation. In the code *wólachíí'* (ant) stood for “a,” *shash* (bear) for “b,” and *mosí* (cat) for “c” (Iverson 184-185).

Despite the attempts to eradicate the Navajo language in boarding schools, the US government system and assimilation policy was unsuccessful. These twenty-five code talkers, Navajo men fluent in both Navajo and English, created a code that was used in World War II to transmit hundreds of messages. It was clear to these men that their Navajo language and English were essential to their survival. As the men and women returned after the war, progressive change and economic expansion resulted in the creation of new highway systems and new schools and health facilities (Iverson 188). Navajos began to adapt to the encroaching dominant lifestyle, including an American

education. Navajos began to acculturate to their changing world. Many Navajos began to understand the importance of an American education for their children and began to support a movement of education that would allow their children to successfully participate in the Navajo and American communities.

Navajo Education: Supporting Public Education

The progressive Navajo tribal council traveled to Washington to request monetary support for education, health care, political and legal authority and economic development in 1946 (Iverson 189-191). Among this group was tribal leader Chee Dodge who argued that, “Education should be compulsory...and facilities had to be improved. At Shiprock and in other locations, children attended ‘worn out’ schools in buildings ‘ready to fall apart’” (191). Dodge also requested that on-reservation schools be built, including “at Fort Wingate, Crownpoint, Toadlena, Tohatchi, Fort Defiance, Chinle, Kayenta, Tuba City, Leupp, Indian Wells, Greasewood, Tanner Springs, and Oak Springs”(191). The intention of building more schools, according to Dodge, was to give Navajo students the opportunity “to compete with the white people”(191). Dodge wanted to build many schools on the Navajo reservation that were modeled after White schools to allow Navajo students to acculturate to White ways. This would allow Navajos to learn White ways in the comfort of their own homelands.

The US government responded to Dodge’s request by developing instead a “Special Navajo Program”(193). Iverson reports, “From 1946 through 1959, slightly more than 50,000 Navajo students enrolled in a version of the Special Navajo Program at

eleven off-reservation boarding schools. Of this number, over 20,000 attended Intermountain, a new institution created out of a remodeled hospital in Brigham City, Utah. Nearly 10,000 Navajo enrolled at Sherman Institute in Riverside, California”(193) Several thousand more students were enrolled at schools in Oregon, Oklahoma, and Kansas to remove Navajo students completely from their familial and cultural ties. This removal of students from their culture was an assimilation strategy that was designed to destroy the Navajo way of life. By the 1960s, after the passing of “Public Law 815 and Public Law 874 in 1953,” more on reservation schools finally began to emerge and students opted to attend these schools instead. Law 815 and 874 helped to secure a Navajo Public School system. During this era, both non-Navajo and Navajo educators valued and pushed for English only in school systems to prepare students for future jobs in the American society. By the late 1950s, college and post high school training was made possible for some Navajo students. Navajo tribal leaders recognized that very few of their Navajo students went to college. Moreover, those who did attend often did not complete. Navajos leaders wanted to see more of their students attend colleges and universities to allow them to gain skills and knowledge that would benefit Navajo communities. These leaders began to develop plans for a college specifically for Navajo students.

Creation of a Navajo Community College: Diné College

During the 1960s, the tribal leaders and educators noticed that the dropout rates for Navajo students in neighboring colleges and universities were high. According to Wilson Aronilth, “Our leaders realized that the dropout rate was a reflection of the negative attitude that many of our young people have about themselves, as a result of the loss of their native language and traditional cultural values” (10). These leaders worked to develop the Navajo Community College, now known as Diné College, to meet the specific needs of the students. The college was officially established in April 1971 in Tsaile, AZ. Navajo Community College was created because Navajo leaders realized that Navajo students were not successful in schools because their identity as Navajos was not well-defined due to historical assimilative efforts to erase cultural distinctness. According to Wilson Aronilth Jr., “[Navajo leaders] realized the need to foster a climate to assist in the development of: 1. self-identity in clan, values and beliefs, 2. self esteem through self discovery and self evaluation, 3. self awareness in self determination, 4. self acceptance as a Diné and self pride” (9). Dine College developed a curriculum based on the central philosophy, *Sa’ah Naaghaii Bik’eh Hozhoon*. This central principle is the idea that one will walk in beauty and harmony as they grow old. Living a long life is valued in this way of thinking and old age brings with it sacred knowledge that is highly valued. According to the Diné College website, “The mission of Diné College is to apply the Sá’ah Naaghái Bik’eh Hózhóón principles to advance quality student learning through Nitsáhákees (Thinking), Nahatá (Planning), Iiná (Living) and Siih Hasin (Assuring)” (Diné College). On top of the college that exists in Tsaile, Diné College also has

campuses in Crownpoint, Window Rock, Chinle, Ganado, Kayenta, and Tuba City.

Currently, Diné College enrolls 2,000 students (Diné College). Many Navajo students also attend colleges and universities off the reservation.

Conclusion

Since contact with Americans, Navajo students have experienced the transformation resulting from an ongoing colonialism. Each new generation of Navajo students survives different challenges and barriers. Some Navajo people embrace the changes; while others resist. All Navajo people are impacted by colonialism.

Assimilation and acculturation are processes that are part of the lived experiences of all Navajo people. Navajo women, including Luci Tapahonso and Laura Tohe, can no longer live as their mothers and grandmothers did as weavers and shepherds because of compulsory education, stock reductions, and/or a lack of jobs on reservations. These women, like many other Navajos, are amendable to the dominant culture, but they grasp and maintain their connection to a surviving and thriving Navajo tradition. These women, as Diné Saanii (Navajo Women), listen intently, observe patiently, use memory, and share stories about their lived experiences and about the lived experiences of the Navajo people. They share the histories of the Navajo people to entertain, inspire, remind and strengthen their audiences as they speak to historical, political, moral, social, and emotional circumstances that have impacted their lives. They remember and celebrate the survival of the Navajo people. They speak to their lived experiences, including those experiences that depict a hybridized or new phenomenal world. It was through education,

the learning of various languages, which changed and continues to change the Navajo people. Education, as Navajos know it, has been both friend and foe. Education, the forming of intellect and character, is the process that may or may not allow stories to emerge.

CHAPTER 3: THE SURVIVAL OF DINÉ ASDZÁÁN RHETORICS: HANE' AS IDENTITY

Luci Tapahonso: Diné Adzáán *Bi Hane'*

In this chapter, I define Diné Asdzáán literacy practices and rhetorics using poetry and short stories from Luci Tapahonso (Diné). My analysis honors the Diné oral tradition, which I define as the ancestral and contemporary stories that connect the younger generations of Navajo people with their predecessors to retain their worldview, language and a way of life. Kiowa writer N. Scott Momaday explains: “[t]he oral tradition is that process by which the myths, legends, tales, and lore of a people are formulated, communicated, and preserved in language by word of mouth, as opposed to writing. Or, it is a *collection* of such things” (167). The Navajo oral tradition recognizes all stories, including what could be identified by non-Navajos as “myths, legends, tales and lore” to be equivalent. The Navajo oral tradition is the telling and retelling of stories to a present audience. It also includes the oral storytelling that occurs in memorized chants and songs during ceremonies, the recounting of creation narratives, seasonal storytelling about the various animals and landscapes that teach, entertain and inspire a participating and listening audience, including those that elicit humor, and the spontaneous stories that are invoked by memory. Most of the storytelling that occurs on the Navajo reservation is told in the Navajo language, have a live audience that actively listens and remembers, and changes depending upon the storyteller, the time, the place, and the present context. The Navajo value orality or the oral communication practices (i.e. listening, memory, mnemonics, etc.) over the written practices when transferring

knowledge from one generation to the next because spoken words honor community connections.

Tapahonso operates in an oral tradition that values the art of storytelling. According to anthropologist Anthony K. Webster, “Navajo written poetry is often spoken of by Navajos as *hane’* ‘story, narrative’” (241). *Hane’* or stories in the Diné worldview includes true and imagined tales, accounts of events and people, songs and poetry. Tapahonso’s written and spoken poetry or *hane’* depicts the survival of a rich Diné oral tradition. Tapahonso uses *hane’* to resist traditional Western modes of discourse and advance cultural survivance. Anishinaabe writer Gerald Vizenor defines *survivance* as the active survival stories that subvert misnomers and misrepresentations about Indigenous people (Vizenor 4-6). Tapahonso uses her poetry to reveal the intricate details of Navajo life. The details about Navajo life show the survival of a Navajo people, culture, and language. Moreover, these details about Navajo life subvert common stereotypes about Native Americans. Tapahonso also negotiates the languages and forms to develop *hane’*. She chooses among the rudimentary and/or Standard English, the Navajo written language, poetic forms, Diné storytelling strategies and figures of speech, and Diné worldviews for her own (and/or her communities) purposes.

As a Diné Asdzáán storyteller, Tapahonso writes with *Hózhó* as a lens to reclaim histories, stories and identities of the Navajo people, a surviving and flourishing North American Indigenous culture. With *Sa’ah Naaghái Bi’keh Hózhóón* as the central guiding principle, Tapahonso uses the languages and lenses available to her to develop

stories that reveal *Hózhó*. *Sa'ah Naaghái Bi'keh Hózhón* is central to the Navajo way of life. It roughly means one will aspire to live in harmony with all things through all phases of life. Tapahonso defines *Hózhó*, then, as, “a state of balance with all things around me, living and non-breathing. *Hózhó* means that all things should be right and proper. It means maintaining good health, avoiding excess in all things, being thankful and prayerful, adhering to the old stories and songs, believing in oneself, and recognizing one’s responsibility towards all aspects of the world we live in” (40). Using the power of memory, Tapahonso begins to destabilize an “Indian identity” that was created by Western colonial narratives. By means of rhetorical strategies, she brings to life, a Diné Asdzáán identity or a contemporary Navajo woman identity. As a Diné Asdzáán storyteller she employs the tools provided in the various literacies and rhetorics that she has access to. To be an effective storyteller in the Navajo community, one must use language effectively to develop stories that depict how a state of *Hooxcho* or imbalance is transformed to a state of *Hózhó* or harmony with all things. *Hooxcho* is disharmony that is usually inflicted because of disconnection. A state of disharmony includes physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual illnesses that prevent a person from aging in a healthy manner. A society that recognizes the importance of harmony with all things will also identify the significance of the relationships and connections to all things, including those things, ideas and practices that have been imposed through colonization.

As a Diné Asdzáán storyteller, Tapahonso interweaves traditional Diné literacies and rhetorics with Western poetics and rhetorics. Tapahonso uses the English and Diné languages and her storytelling strategies to acknowledge the oral tradition by recognizing

and encouraging the contradictions that result from her colonial situation. Her poetry captures those contradictory spaces that many American Indians find themselves in when they attempt to identify themselves. Many contemporary American Indians ask themselves and each other who is an American Indian? Moreover, what does it mean to be a Cherokee, Zuni, Hopi, or Diné? Tapahonso guides her readers through her stories to reveal an active and surviving Diné Asdzáán identity. The English language is the vehicle used by Tapahonso, in part, because of its dominance in the US. The prevailing language in the U.S. allows Tapahonso to challenge and inform non-Diné perspectives about ancient and contemporary indigenous knowledges. She draws from Diné creation stories that have been passed down from many generations before, from historical documentation about Navajos, from ancestral and familial stories, and from her own lived experiences as a contemporary Diné. Her poetry intertwines these narratives to produce new rhetorics or new stories that depict a changing, but surviving Navajo people. Furthermore, the poetic structure is a valuable vehicle for interweaving Diné, American, and Western knowledges into a Western form that can be tailored to a range of non-Diné audiences.

Luci Tapahonso: The Life and History of a Diné Asdzáán

Luci Tapahonso identifies as *Todik'ozhi* (Salt Water Clan). She is born for the *Todich'iin'ii* (Bitter Water Clan). She is born to Lucille Descheenne Tapahonso and Eugene Tapahonso (Cullum 283). Her mother worked part time in Indian Boarding schools, while her father was foreman at a uranium mine in Shiprock, New Mexico

(Dunaway and Spurgeon 199-201). Tapahonso is originally from Shiprock, where she grew up sixth in a family of eleven children (Cullum 283). She married a Pueblo artist, Earl Ortiz, with whom she had two daughters, Misty Dawn and Lori Tazbah. She divorced Ortiz in 1987 (Cullum 283). Tapahonso is married to Dr. Robert Martin (Cherokee Nation), President of the Institute of American Indian Arts. Many of her poems are inspired by memories of her family and the Navajo community, culture, and spirituality.

Tapahonso's first language was Navajo, and she learned English at home as well. During an interview with Dunaway and Spurgeon, she reports, "when we were growing up, [my parents] made sure that when we started school we knew our ABCs, our census numbers, our parents' census numbers, our address, all sorts of information memorized before we went so that their experience wouldn't be repeated" (210). Her mother and father were "severely punished" for their inability to speak English in boarding schools. To ensure that their children would not experience the same treatment, they took aims to educate them what they could about American culture. At the same time, they also made sure that their children learned the Navajo culture and language to guarantee that they could identify with the foundation of the Navajo worldview and practical lifestyle. Rather than resisting the various languages afforded to her, Tapahonso embraced them. In an interview with Joseph Bruchac III, she notes that she always had an appreciation of words. Tapahonso states, "I remember being fascinated with words and stories, books at an early age. I remember taking phrases that I liked, memorizing them, repeating them to myself" (Bruchac III 85-86). It was not until she was about "22 or 23" that she took her

first step to become a poet (Bruchac 86). She attended school at the Navajo Methodist Mission, a boarding school located thirty miles from her family in the town of Farmington, New Mexico. She then went on to graduate from Shiprock High School.

In 1980, Tapahonso graduated with a Bachelor's degree in English (Cullum 283). Then in 1983, she graduated with a Master's Degree in English and Creative Writing. She earned both degrees at the University of New Mexico. While studying at the University of New Mexico, Tapahonso met and studied with Laguna Pueblo poet and novelist Leslie Marmon Silko, who encouraged her to publish her developing poetry (Callum 283). Tapahonso published two books of poetry, including *Seasonal Women* and *One More Shiprock Night* in 1981, before completing her Master's degree in English. Since her first publications, Tapahonso has published a total of six collections of poetry and short stories. Her publications include *One More Shiprock Night: Poems* (1981), *Seasonal Woman* (1981), *A Breeze Swept Through* (1987), *Saanii Dahataal: The Women Are Singing* (1993), *Blue Horses Rush In* (1997), and *A Radiant Curve: Poems and Stories* (2008). She has also produced books for juvenile readers: *Bah's Baby Brother Is Born* (1994), *Navajo ABC* (1995), and *Songs of Shiprock Fair* (1999).

Tapahonso began teaching at the University of New Mexico as a lecturer immediately after graduating with a Masters degree. In 1987 she was appointed Assistant Professor in English, Women's Studies and American Indian Studies (Crawford and Eysturoy 195). She then became an Associate Professor of English at the University of Kansas and is currently a Professor of English and American Indian Studies at the

University of Arizona in Tucson. She teaches American Indian literature courses that incorporate a creative writing component. Tapahonso teaches American Indian literature (including historical and contemporary) and Diné philosophy and history courses. Various scholars have analyzed Tapahonso's work to reveal important aspects that emerge from Diné poetry and/or storytelling which I will discuss next.

The Survival of Diné Storytelling

David L. Moore, lecturer of American Indian Studies and English at the University of Montana, in "Rough Knowledge and Radical Understanding" analyzes how rhetorical and literary silence is used by American Indian authors, including Tapahonso, to keep the sacred material they discuss from becoming "cultural property." Moore states, "One of the ways by which Tapahonso in fact celebrates this play between language and the sacred is precisely by focusing on physical details in a sacred moment. Yet they are not secret details. The effect of her intensely heightened narrative gaze within the sacred context is to imbue mundane details with such significance that they vibrate with something akin to sacred power" (641). Moore suggests that Tapahonso effectively recreates a sacred space for her audience without compromising sacred knowledge about the Diné by describing aspects of the culture that do not necessarily include details of the sacred knowledge. He analyzes the poem "The Motions of Songs Rising" where she describes "Yeibichei rituals." According to Moore, "Tapahonso both gives and withholds ceremonial details in generic phrases like 'ancient steps,' 'varying colors,' or even 'They dance precise steps,' a phrase that in fact does not detail those steps" (640). Moore

argues, and I agree, that Tapahonso reveals and conceals cultural information, particularly the sacred, to avoid the colonization and denigration of sacred knowledge. As a Diné storyteller, Tapahonso recognizes the importance of protecting sacred knowledge. Her goal, as the storyteller, may have been to reveal elements of her cultural practices to her audience. Rather than providing specific features of a ceremony, Tapahonso opts to generalize about the ceremony while still capturing glimpses of the ceremony. Being a successful storyteller includes knowing what information to include and exclude in one's stories. Sacred knowledge oftentimes is not shared with the general public, but with community members during an allotted time and space. Sharing stories about ceremonies allows non-Navajo and Navajos to understand and appreciate the significance of ceremonies. Moreover it reveals the survival of a colonized people.

Browdy de Hernandez, lecturer at the University at Albany, SUNY in Interdisciplinary Studies, in the article "Writing (for) Survival," argues that Tapahonso's book of poems, *Sáanii Dahataat: The Women Are Singing*, is an autobiography that "accept[s], in the interests of survival, the hybridization of [her] ancient cultures with the Euramerican dominant culture"(40). She argues that the "I" in the poems represents the writer. She uses the short story, "What I Am" to develop her analysis. De Hernandez argues that the stories told by Tapahonso reveal more about her, the storyteller, because of how she recreates them and the choices she makes as a writer. De Hernandez further asserts that even though oppression is evident in the stories, the hybrid identity created by Tapahonso and other Native American women writers is a strength. Even when writing about oppression, Tapahonso is able to identify and report the positives in the everyday

life of oppression. De Hernandez identifies that these writers use memory to undermine negative stereotypes about Native American people. Survival stories are important to many American Indians, including Navajos, because they create hope and offer a voice to those who were historically silenced.

Janice Gould (Koyangk'auwi Maidu,), writer and scholar, in "American Indian Women's Poetry: Strategies of Rage and Hope," builds her argument by identifying as an American Indian poet who analyzes the poetry of American Indian Women. She claims that American Indian women writers have a cultural memory, and therefore, access to the lifeways of their ancestors, including those who experienced the terror and sorrow of colonialism. She draws from Tapahonso's poem "In 1864" to discuss how this author uses memory to recreate several different times in history that caused the Navajo people pain and hardship. Gould convincingly argues that American Indian poets should reclaim orality, which she defines as both speaking and hearing, as opposed to just speaking. Gould states, "I think we should reclaim an idea of orality that would allow us to embrace that writing that is "spoken" from the borders, the speech/writing of the marginal- ized, the ignored, and the censored. The audience for this writing may be small and remote from the sites of power and the topics it deals with shunned, derided, or belittled. Redefined thus, American Indian women's writing (and the writing of other women and "minorities") might be said to be an example of orality" (806). Gould also reveals that the work produced by American Indian women poets reports the histories of their tribes and the stories of the victims. Tapahonso, like other American Indian writers, also writes about a colonizing past to create the opportunity to (re)teach and resist Westernized

historical positions about American and Indigenous histories. “In 1864” is a poem that captures how stories travel from one generation to the next. The poem allows the audience to listen to the conversations between different generations of Navajos. Each of their tales is about survival. Tapahonso shows us that stories are packed with historical facts and cultural knowledge.

Robin Riley Fast, Associate Professor of Writing, Literature & Publishing at the University of Minnesota, in the article “The Land is Full of Stories” focuses her analysis on two poems, “In 1864” and “This Is How They Were Placed For Us” to discuss how Tapahonso teaches Navajo history. Fast’s analysis reveals that Tapahonso creates poetry that speaks directly about the recollections of her homeland, which hold many stories. According to Fast, the poem, “This Is How They Were Placed For Us” and “In 1864” reveal the concepts, *Hózhó* and continuance, but in different ways. The first discusses the history and ideology of origin stories, while the second poem discusses the history of colonization. The stories, when working together, “have the power to enliven the spirit for resistance and healing” (209). By embracing two histories, the history of the Navajo as told in the origin stories and the story of colonization, Tapahonso reclaims Navajo history. Tapahonso empowers the Diné Asdzáán qualities in her poetry to capture the richness of the Diné culture, including their ability to survive.

Amy Hamilton, Assistant Professor of English at Northern Michigan University in “Remembering Migration and Removal in American Indian Women’s Poetry” argues that Tapahonso, and her two counterparts, Wendy Rose and Linda Hogan, “engage

physical movement to articulate cultural and personal identity, historical trauma, and communal resistance and survival” (55). Hamilton analyzes the movement, particularly walking, across land in the poem “In 1864” to show that Tapahonso’s stories of the Long Walk reveal the storyteller’s and the peoples “agency and determination”(58), even when separated from their traditional homelands. Tapahonso makes use of the poetic form to capture the determination, agency and survival of Navajo people. She does this by including stories that were passed down from one generation to the next to reveal the power of oral storytelling. Moreover, she includes aspects from the Diné tradition in her poetry to further reveal a surviving culture. She includes repetition, cyclical patterns, and linguistic features that are informed by Navajo epistemology.

Anthony K. Webster compares the linguistic devices used by ancient and contemporary Navajo poets to discover if contemporary poets draw from or differ from the ancient literary devices. He identifies the “fourfold repetition” as a part of Navajo speech (247). He shows how Tapahonso uses the fourfold repetition in the poem, “This Is How They Were Placed For Us.” He states, “She has not chosen the order of these mountains willy-nilly; rather, the order she employs reflects an ideology of proper speech, and also aids in perpetuating a form of proper speech by being an exemplar of it” (248). Rather than deviating from the traditional order of discussing the four sacred mountains, Tapahonso adheres to the order that is seen in songs and stories. Tapahonso uses her poetry to further inscribe the oral practices of Navajo people. She does this to salvage the knowledge and to (re)teach Navajo and non-Navajo readers about the

philosophy of Navajo people. As a Diné Asdzáán storyteller, Tapahonso expresses an interconnected identity.

Interconnection: A Diné Trope

A Diné storyteller recognizes that interconnectedness is the foundational structure of all Diné rhetorics: the link between family members (kinship or clanship practices), connection to community, relation to place and space, affinity for Mother Earth, approach to and usage of words and language, conjunction with the changing seasons, communication with deities, partnership with land, animals and elements, and affiliation with enemies. The interconnectedness of all things, including spirituality and ceremony, the physical landscape and the human body, the mental capacity and its working order and the emotional conditions and actions are acknowledged, practiced, and valued in Diné ontology. All things are interconnected in this mindset; disconnection, then, is indication of disorder or disharmony. Before speaking to a large community, a traditional Diné will immediately connect to their audience(s), space(s), and purpose(s) through an intricate clan system to establish relation and build rapport. The clan system is made up of twenty one groups and eighty clans. Some clans are adopted under the larger clan groups. According to the Navajo, Changing Woman created the first four clan groups: Towering House People, One-Who-Walks Around People, Bitter Water People, and the Mud People. Born into a clan allows one to identify as a Diné.

Tapahonso challenges simplistic and denigrating descriptions of Indigenous people by inscribing a Diné Adzáán identity in her poem “Notes for the Children.” In

four parts, the poem illustrates how Navajos live according to the concept of interconnectedness. The poem is written in four parts and in short story form. The first section affirms that the blessing of a new home derived from the “Holy Ones,”(35) Diné dieties. The second part addresses the relationship the speaker has with her father, the value of traditional attire, the meaning of words, and the significance of a Navajo woman within the family unit. The third section connotes the use of relationship words when acknowledging a relative. Finally, part four discusses how Navajo people retain their connection to traditional Navajo foods when they have moved away from the reservation. These sections reveal how the Navajos recognize, acknowledge and employ interconnectedness in their daily lives. In part one, the speaker describes how the Holy Ones blessed the first “*hooghan*” for First Man and First Woman. Navajos today recognize the Holy Ones, First Man, and First Woman when they bless their new homes with prayer and ceremony. According to Gary Witherspoon (an historian, ethnographer, and linguist):

At the core of Navajo ritual is the relationship between the *Diyin Dine'é* ‘Holy People’ and the *nihokáá dine'é* ‘earth surface people.’ ‘Diyin may be translated as ‘immune’ for the Holy People are immune to danger, destruction, and death as a reflection of their inherent knowledge. Earth Surface people may incorporate this power and immunity by knowing how to control and compel the Holy People who possess it. The symbolic action of ritual is the process by which the Holy People are controlled and compelled. (35)

By employing the blessing ritual of a new home, the Navajos oblige the Holy Ones as the inner forms of the elements that create change in the Navajo universe. By mimicking the

ritual symbols through songs, prayers, or sandpaintings, the mimicker or *hatathli* (singer) identifies with the Holy Ones.

The second part of “Notes for the Children” is told in the voice of a woman who is preparing to speak at a public event. The speaker’s father subtly suggests that she wear a skirt to the public speaking event. He states, “‘Asdzani’ – ‘woman’ – means the same thing as a skirt. This is why Dine women have always worn skirts. It’s something to think about” (35). After this remark, the speaker remembers a time when her mother would use her skirt in practical ways to care for her loved ones. She would spread her calico styled skirt for children to eat and rest upon or use it as a napkin or cloth when tending to her children. The speaker returns to her room to change into a skirt before departing for her speaking engagement. According to the father, a concept of a Navajo woman already exists. He suggests to his daughter that she recognize that Navajos have developed their own identities as a people, which is evident in the language, *Asdzani*. The father further suggests that *Asdzani*, in the Navajo language, is a polyseme or a word with multiple, but related meanings. The daughter’s memory of her mother’s skirt shows the culture that values a practical lifestyle. The Navajo woman dresses not just for herself, but for her children and her family.

The speaker reveals the interconnection between a woman, clothing (skirt), *hooghan* or home, song, and beliefs. The speaker explains that “[Navajos] say that the round roof of a female *hooghan* is like a woman’s flared skirt because the woman is the center of the Dine home. This is why an old blessing song says, ‘The beauty of my home

extends from the woman. Beauty extends from the woman''(36). The Navajo *hooghan* is a six or eight sided circular structure made of juniper logs and sand. The top of the female *hooghan* looks like a mound of sand. Rather than interpreting the father's request as male dominance, the speaker shows how his request reminds her of her importance and beauty as a Navajo woman. When asked by Helmbrecht Breinig, Professor of Literature, what she thought about women's liberation. Tapahonso replies,

Navajos are a matrarchal society. In Navajo they say your mother is your home. You never leave your mother; you always treat your mother really good because without your mother you would not even be here. When a Navajo man gets married, he moves in with his wife's family and leaves his own family. He then becomes responsible for his wife's family as well as his own mother. And I think, many times men are under much more pressure than the women are. It's a much more egalitarian society than American society is. And so all the concepts of women's liberation, I think, are things that were already dealt with in our creation stories (*American Indian Contradictions: Interviews with Nine American Writers* 121).

The speaker returns to her room to change into a calico skirt to remind herself that she is a Navajo woman who is important and necessary to her community. The structure of the *hooghan*, like the skirt, is another mnemonic device for the Navajos to remind them of how and why the woman is important and necessary to the community. The home, a central body, for a Navajo family is built to represent the woman. The home, like a Navajo woman, protects and provides for her inhabitants or children. Similarly, like Changing Woman, a central Navajo deity, the women are central to the Navajo existence. The practical nature of a calico skirt and a *hooghan* have symbolic meaning to the Navajos that are shaped by the philosophy of interconnectedness.

The third part of the poem, “Notes For The Children,” provides a discussion about kinship names. The speaker recalls a time before contact, when Navajos privileged kinship names as opposed to American names. She states, “it is important to address others by acknowledging their relationship each time we speak to them. By saying ‘my younger sister’ or ‘older brother,’ they are reminded that you love and respect them” (Tapahonso 36). She goes on to say that this practice is particularly important when addressing the older generation. This shows the older generation a sign of respect. She finishes this third part of her notes with a discussion about how this can still be employed today, even in educational institutions. She insists that a student should address the professor by their relationship term, rather than their first name, to show them respect. Her advice derives from the concept of *k’é*. Witherspoon states, “The Navajo term ‘k’e’ means ‘compassion,’ ‘cooperation,’ ‘friendliness,’ ‘unselfishness,’ ‘peacefulness,’ and all those positive virtues which constitute intense, diffuse, and enduring solidarity. The term ‘k’ei’ means ‘a special or particular kind of k’e.’ It is this term (k’ei) which is used to signify the system of descent relationships and categories found in Navajo culture”(37). *K’e* informs the intricate clan system and the relationship terms used by the Navajos. In the Navajo language, “my younger sister” is *shideezhí* and “my older brother” is *shinaaí*. In contrast, my older sister is *shádi* and my younger brother is *shitsilí*. In Navajo, there is no word for sister. There is only a word for older or younger sister. Moreover, the root *shi-* is equivalent to the English words me and my. The end root *-deezhí* means younger sister. However, one cannot use *-deezhí* on its own. A speaker must identify who’s younger sister is being referred to. One might say my younger sister or *shideezhí*. Or one

might say his younger sister or *bideezhí*. The language is built with interconnection at its core. Identifying how one is related to another is more important than the name of an individual. The Navajos will also use these relationship terms to refer to their first cousins as brothers and sisters to privilege the Navajo clan system, which is a complex kinship system built around the concept of interconnection. Interconnection allows the Navajos to merge and adapt to new cultures and conflicts.

The fourth part of the poem discusses the everyday conflicts for Navajos who have left the reservation. According to the speaker, the staple for Navajos is mutton and Bluebird or Red Rose flour (36). Mutton and Bluebird flour are rare in most cities, yet still craved by urban Navajos. Tapahonso writes, “When we hear of someone going back to the rez, we offer them money and ask humbly that they bring flour or mutton back for us”(Tapahonso 36). The mutton and flour, according to Tapahonso, evokes memories of Navajoland, including family, the land, and the culture. Traditional foods are important part of one’s identity and well-being. Even when Navajos leave the reservation, their homeland, they make connections with other Navajos in the city to build community. Moreover, they make the effort to stay connected with a traditional way of life.

Food is a re-emerging theme in Tapahonso’s poetry. She describes how and why she makes *náneeskaadí* or Navajo tortillas in the poem “*Náneeskaadí*.” The speaker in this poem begins by recalling an earlier time in her life when she lived on the reservation. She describes how she and other women in her family made *náneeskaadí* for the family, sometimes outside over a grill or inside on a griddle. Her present situation results in her

returning home late at night to a home where she is greeted by cats. As she takes out the ingredients to make the bread, she is reminded of her home economics teacher who taught a proper preparation of making food. The bread ingredients include flour, “preferably Blue Bird or Navajo Pride, salt, baking powder, lard and hot water (69-70). The speaker provides the details of how to make the dough and how to shape the dough into a circular and flat form. The speaker relies on her memory to develop the *náneeskaadí*. The memories that surround the bread-making process come from several different places. The readers are reminded of people and events when they make, smell, or taste the comfort of the traditional staple. The speaker shows how food inspires memories that connect people and revive teachings.

The speaker provides the embedded connotations of the word *náneeskaadí* by contextualizing the word. She greets her husband, who returned home just as the bread is done, with the bread and “melting butter” (70). As she gives the bread to her husband, she says “Na”, which she translates as “Here” (70). The speaker gives the derivation of the word, *náneeskaadí*, to provide the connotations embedded in the word. She writes, “ ‘Na.’ Here.’ As in ‘Na’k’ad yiłwoł. Here, now go run along.’/ ‘Ná. For you.’/ ‘Díí na’iishłaa. I made this for you.’/ ‘Na’díí ná iishłaa. Here, I made this for you.’/ ‘Ná ‘ahéesh kad. I slapped this dough into shape for you.’/ ‘Díí nánínsííł kaad. This warm circle of dough is spread out for you’”(Tapahonso 70). The derivations suggest that the making of dough and bread is for someone else. The word *náneeskaadí* is a description of the corporal act in making the bread for someone else. Leon Wall & William Morgan, creators of the Navajo-English Dictionary, define *naneeskaadí* as “slapped bread (owes

its name to the manner in which the dough is passed from one hand to the other, then tossed on the griddle to bake)” (119). The word *naneeskaadi* includes the verb stem –kaad, which means (in this context) to slap. The word also includes the subject prefix –nees that derives from –neesh, which identifies that the subject is singular and in the past tense. Wall and Morgan also define “*na*” as “here (in handing something to a person)” and “*ná*” as “for you” (110). The connotations in the word imply that one should make bread, not for the self, but for others. In the Navajo language, there is no equivalent for the English words, bread or tortilla. One cannot simply say Navajo tortilla in the Navajo language. The speaker must imply that the bread will be made for someone other than the self, thus suggesting the importance of family and community. The speaker discusses how the Navajo language reveals a value system of interconnectedness, or more particularly, the value of kinship and community.

The speaker is comfortable in her setting, despite the fact that she is obviously away from her homeland or where she considers home. Yet, she carries the teachings and biases of the Diné to this new setting. Her existence is made up of a fusion of cultures, which she embraces. Flour, a grain introduced to the Navajos by Europeans, has been adopted as a staple. Products, like Blue Bird Flour and Navajo Pride, bring a sense of comfort to the Diné because they connect them to what they consider home and to other people who value the same brands. The blue bird inscribed on the Blue Bird product has become a significant marker for Diné. It represents home and culture to those who are displaced. Flour, particularly the Blue Bird, is a cultural symbol for food that many Diné women have embraced. According to Ruth Roessel (Diné), educator:

It is important to understand that plants, water, food, and religion all came from the Holy People and were direct gifts from these Holy People to the Navajos. Consequently, today these four items remain extremely important and also very sacred. Without the four elements there could be no life. (71)

Tapahonso shows the importance she places on food through description and storytelling. Furthermore, Tapahonso shows that food that derived through colonization, which ultimately changed the Navajo diet are still regarded as sacred and important gifts provided by the Diné. The poem depicts how the speaker embraces the contradictions and ambiguities in her life effortlessly. She shows how the spoken Navajo language or the written English language inform and connect her to the world around her.

Tapahonso shows the significance of memory and non-alphabetic mnemonic devices to an oral culture, particularly how memory mnemonics reinforce interconnection between the story teller, the listeners, the land, the people in the story, and the present. In her poem “In 1864,” Tapahonso discusses the removal process where her ancestors were forced from their homelands to trek hundreds of miles to *Hweeldi* or Fort Sumner, which is located in Bosque Redondo, a desolate land base located in what is now considered southeastern New Mexico, where they were held captive by United States soldiers for four years in concentration camps. This removal process is known as the Long Walk. The storyteller’s memory is activated by the barren landscape during a drive through New Mexico. The land in this poem, like the stories of the oral tradition, speak to the listeners as non-alphabetic mnemonic devices. The three stories that are told in the poem are informed by the place. The place has stories. In the oral tradition, the mountains have stories. They are large protruding non-alphabetic devices that remind the people of

stories. For example, Gobernador Knob or *Ch'ól'í'í*, is located in New Mexico and is the birthplace of Changing Woman. The mountain projects just enough to be seen for miles as a monolithic mnemonic device. The mnemonic device allows all those informed by the Changing Woman to remember and to tell and retell the stories that surround Gobernador Knob and Changing Woman. The mountain, like the barren landscapes in Tapahonso's poetry, is embedded with stories. The storyteller's memory summons the stories that surround place. The storyteller connects the listeners to the place and to the people in the story by giving the land and people identity and voice.

Tapahonso uses memory and stories in the poem "In 1864" to recreate the memories and stories of her ancestors. The value for interconnection is revealed in each of the stories that are told by the different narrators in the poem, including the main speaker. The story begins when the speaker recalls a time when she, the speaker's aunt, and the speaker's daughter were sharing stories during a drive on a highway in New Mexico. The speaker begins the storytelling with a memory she has about an electrician and his crew that worked in New Mexico during the winter near where the concentration camps were located. He heard the cries of sadness from those who didn't survive and he felt a longing for his family. He abandoned his job to return home. The speaker then provides the story that her aunt tells about what happened many years ago in *Hweeldi*. The story told by the aunt is filled with stark and heartbreaking details about how Kit Carson and his men murdered many people and attempted to destroy the Navajo way of life. The speaker's daughter cried when she heard the sad account of her ancestors. The speaker responds to her daughter's sadness with reminders of the good things that

emerged from the Long Walk, including calico skirts worn by Navajo women, frybread, and coffee (7-10). The poem “In 1864” gives voice to three Navajo women. Using her memory, the speaker shares with us four important stories that all interconnected. There is the story of the drive and the storytelling. Second, there is the story of the electrician. The third story is told by the aunt about the historical events. The fourth story is the story of survivance, or the story of survival and resistance of a people. Each of these stories are created and recreated through memory to connect one generation to the next. Re-telling stories connects different generations of people. Knowledge and identity are created by the telling of stories. One becomes part of a community through the telling of stories. Reid Gomez states, “Community is made from interconnection of people through these shared experiences, beginning most importantly with origin stories and the ascending migrations through worlds”(160). Stories are a way to establish a connection with ancient ideas and knowledge that is rooted in a specific place.

Interconnectedness, including interdependency and continuity, is revealed by the aunt in the poem, “In 1864”, when she tells the story of the Long Walk. In the darkest hours, the Navajo people spoke positive words that led to their survival. The aunt recalls a story she heard from her grandmother,

There were many who died on the way to Hweeldi. All the way we told each other, “We will be strong as long as we are together.” I think that is what kept us alive. We believed in ourselves and the old stories that the holy people had given us.

The spoken words of the survivors, “We will be strong as long as we are together,” reveals the power of positive thinking during a dreadful time. Wilson Aronilth Jr (Diné), Navajo historian, explains how and why one should pursue an optimistic mindset in *Diné Bi Bee Óhoo’ah Bá Silá: An Introduction to Navajo Philosophy*,” a required book for an introductory Navajo culture class at Dine College, Tsaile, Arizona. He states, “We can develop a positive attitude by recognizing that there will be both good and bad in our lives, and by emphasizing the good over the bad. When we do this, we will see the good increase. If we concentrate on the bad, we will see unhappiness and failure increase” (59). He also claims that a positive outlook will allow one to overcome obstacles. Moreover, one should let go of the obstacles that one does not have power over. This teaching is informed by the power of thought and speech that Witherspoon discusses. The traditional Navajo believe that both thinking and speaking have power because they precede the implantation of change. According to Witherspoon, “Navajo philosophy assumes that mental and physical phenomena are inseparable, and that thought and speech can have a powerful impact on the world of matter and energy”(9). With this worldview, any person can speak and/or think harmony or disharmony into existence. Witherspoon provides the following example of how Navajos perceive of the power of thoughts:

Navajos emphasize that if one thinks of good things and good fortune, good things will happen. If one thinks of bad things, bad fortune will be one’s lot. In my first few years among the Navajo, I was constantly scolded for thinking about unhappy possibilities. As a product of another cultural world, I had learned to consider and plan for all possibilities and to ‘save something for a rainy day.’ Among the Navajo I was told that planning for that ‘rainy day’ would bring about ‘rainy days,’ and that I had

better forget about planning for ‘rainy days’ unless I wanted it to ‘rain.’
(28)

Today, many Navajo elders and parents still tell their children to be careful what they think and speak because they believe that it could happen. Tapahonso hints that the people survived because of this worldview that values the power of thoughts and the recognition of one’s connection and dependence on others in the group, the holy people, and the stories.

In the Navajo worldview, there are Fire People, Water People, and Wind People who have both physical outer forms and spiritual inner forms. The physical Earth, for example is the outer form for *Asdzaa Nadleehe* or Changing Woman, who is the inner spiritual form. Each being, like the Earth, has an inner and outer form that are closely connected and inseparable. The wind or *nilch’i* as an outer physical form and an inner spiritual form is connected to all life on Earth. Barre Toelken, anthropologist, states, “[the Navajo] concept of the spirit or soul, *nilch’i*, literally [means] wind, air, [or] breeze. This is the living entity residing within us which relates us to the larger wind outside. It is shaped and mediated by our mouths when we speak (which is one of the reasons speaking is thought to have a direct effect on outer reality); but more to the point, it animates us in ways that are not under our conscious control” (204). Tapahonso shows how positive thoughts shape speech, which ultimately is released as voice, breath, air, wind and spirit. The wind, *nilch’i*, preceded by positive thoughts is available to others to be inhaled, consumed and absorbed. Because of this worldview, traditional Diné believe that balance can be restored through speech and language. Correspondingly, the spoken

words during song and prayer allow the singer or healer to call upon the sacred winds from the four cardinal directions to ask for guidance during the sing.

Likewise, during an interview with Breinig and Losch, Tapahonso reveals how and why she, as a Navajo woman, values speech and words. She states,

In Navajo, they say that when a baby is born, the first breath that they take the wind comes inside you, and then you go [inhales]. And each of these fingertips, each of them has different color winds. And it starts here with black wind, blue, yellow, white, and pinto wind—that's kind of a mix, a mixed kind of colors. The place on top of your head where your hair starts to grow, another wind comes in. These all enter into you when you're born, when you're a baby. And when the wind comes in at that time, then the dawn determines how long the wind's going to remain inside you, meaning how long you are going to be living here. So after that, each breath that a person takes—each time you breathe and each time you say something—it's just not yourself, but it's all those forces of the world. It's all the forces that create, too, that create thunder, tornadoes, light rain, real heavy rain; it has all those elements that come inside you. So each time you speak then, those things are there. And it's just not like—you know how people say 'They're just talking,' meaning 'Don't pay attention to them'—it's not that view. So for me, when I'm telling a story—and this is not just me but this is the way Navajo people are raised—when I tell a story or tell somebody about something, then it's important to think about each of the words you use (117-118).

Tapahonso acknowledges the interconnection between spirituality, a human or Earth surface being, the physical features of the earth including weather patterns, particularly the wind, and the stories and words.

In the poem "In 1864," the narrator's daughter begins to cry when she is told about the violence and injustice inflicted upon her ancestors. The narrator comforts her daughter by acknowledging the survival and resistance of the Diné. The narrator states, I tell her that it was at Bosque Redondo the people learned to use flour and now fry bread is considered to be the "traditional Navajo bread. It was there that we acquired a deep appreciation for strong coffee. The women began to make long, tiered calico skirts and fine velvet shirts for the men. They decorated their dark velvet blouses with silver dimes, nickels, and quarters" (10)

The narrator takes pride in the survival of the people by showing appreciation for the creation of a hybrid culture. The storyteller reveals how the Navajo's adopted tools, materials, and language and adapted to the changing environment and lifestyle to survive and continue as a people.

In other words, when the Navajo people chose to submit to the dominant or White ideology and practices, they had to experience culture and/or language loss. However, Tapahonso shows that the Diné did not necessarily adopt all of the dominant culture, instead they resisted by developing new “cultural phenomena” that they reclaim and claim as their own. The worldview that values interconnection among all life, including the connection between the colonized and the colonizer in the spaces of contact, is able to sustain itself and celebrate continuity.

Tapahonso uses her writing abilities to embrace and revive the traditions of the Navajo people. She describes the significance of the land, particularly the mountains, to the Navajos. The poem “This Is How They Were Places for Us” is broken into four parts, which are separated by the Roman numerals, I, II, III, and IV. The speaker of the poem separates the poem into four parts, one for each of the sacred mountains that surround the Navajo people, they include *Sisnaajini* (Blanca Peak), *Tsoo dził* (Mount Taylor), *Dook'o'oos lííd* (San Francisco Peaks), and *Dibé Nitsaa* (Hesperus Peak). The final or fourth part of the poem includes two other significant mountains to the Navajo, the Huerfano Mountains and Gobernador Knob. The first part describes *Sisnaajini* as being female who in the early dawn watches over the people. She emerges with the first light. *Sisnaajini* is given a voice. Tapahonso writes, “Nidoohjeeh shá'áłchíní, nii łee./Get up,

my children, she says” (39). *Sisnaajini*, in the voice of a mother, gives guidance to her children. She awakens them in the morning with the white light of the bright sun, which is represented by *Yoolgai* or White Shell.. She is also described as “brightness of spring”...and “Changing Woman returned” (39). Like Changing Woman and the spring, she represents the beginning or a new life. She represents the young and the new.

According to Navajo educator Ruth Roessel,

Changing Woman, as her name implies, goes through various changes/stages in her life each and every year. First, she is young, radiant and beautiful (spring). Next, she is fertile, natural, fully developed and a mother (summer). Her third phase is one of added maturity, her children are grown up and she is becoming older (fall). The last stage is one of old age; she becomes feeble and tired (winter). Then Changing Woman is reborn again in the spring into a young and beautiful girl. (101)

Roessel summarizes the four stages that Changing Woman has given to the Navajos as they go through all phases in life. Changing Woman always begins anew. Roessel’s account of story is connected to the four phases in life and the four seasons. Tapahonso goes even further to include the daily and yearly outlooks and the four sacred mountains. According to Tapahonso, “By *Sisnaajini*, we set our standards for living. *Bik’ehgo da’iiná*”(39). When people are young, they go through the process of learning how to live as people from their parents and elders. Similarly, when a person rises early to greet the dawn, this is a time for thinking and meditation. *Sisnaajini* or *Tsisnaajini*’ is located east of the Navajoland and has come to represent *Nitsáhákees* or Thinking. Each of the mountains mentioned by Tapahonso reflect the changing seasons, the growth and teachings of human life, and the process of a daily routine. Each mountain works as a

mnemonic device to remind the Navajo people how to live their life. The mountains each have significant stories that set boundaries and life teachings for the Navajo people.

The four mountains are set in each of the cardinal directions around Navajoland. The second mountain, going in a clockwise direction, is *Tsoodzil*. She, like *Sisnaajini*, speaks in the voice of a mother to remind her children to eat. She represents the midday, the summer, adolescence, and *Nahat'á* or planning (40). Like the blue sparkling lakes that surround Mount Taylor, *Tsoodzil* is represented by the color blue and *Dootliizhi* or Turquoise. The third mountain, still going in the clockwise direction, is *Dook'o'oos lííd* or San Francisco Peaks. In the tone of a mother she teaches her children to “value...many relatives”(41). She represents the evening, the autumn, adulthood, and *Iná* or Implementation. She is remembered by abalone shell and the color yellow. The fourth mountain is *Dibé Nitsaa* or Hesperus Peak, who in the voice of a mother, reminds her children to sleep or rest. She represents the nightfall, winter, old age, and *Siih Hasin* or Assurance. Throughout the poem, Tapahonso repeats, “This is how they were placed for us,” to confirm that these mountains were placed for the Navajo people by a greater being with teachings and guidance. The lands, in this case the mountains, have significant meanings that guide the lives of the Navajo people. The land, like a book of scriptures, can be read by the Navajo people. In the Diné mindset, the Earth as the mother sustains all peoples who reside within her womb. Through the mountains, she gives her children guidance. The philosophy guiding this poem is the value for living a long and complete life. In order to live a long life, one must not be overcome by certain ills that shorten a life or cause great harm to the self or to others. One strives to exist in *Hózhó* by accepting

the natural cycle and progression of life on Earth. To exist in *Hózhó* or in beauty and harmony is to live without ills or faults—including those caused by the self and others. The “others” include all other life forms on Mother Earth. This way of thinking promotes the value for interconnectedness among all things, both animate and inanimate.

In “The American Flag,” Tapahonso provides a story where she was out shopping with her friend at Mervyn’s. She shows her friend a bag with the American flag on it and remarks that it is “cute” (41). Her friend responds by saying, ““I wouldn’t buy anything with the flag on it”” (41). The narrator responds to this remark with silence. But later, when she returns home, she wants to call her friend to explain to her the significance of the American flag to Navajo people. She wanted to begin by telling the story of how the American flag first represented “fear and untold turmoil” for the Navajo people, particularly during the Long Walk. Rather than seeing the men who carried these flags as monsters for their atrocious acts, the Navajos recognized them as human who lived within Mother Earth. She writes, “we watched for signs of compassion,/ as these soldiers had been born of a mother somewhere./Their mothers had been delighted to hear their first words, just as some of these men must have talked to their firstborn soothingly” (41). Tapahonso tells how the Navajos recognized that the men, like themselves, had an allegiance to their own people and were working under orders. Seeing the men as part of the Earth and not a separate or alien entity, allowed the Navajos to have hope for their future.

She continues to tell the readers how the Navajo men and women were resilient because they were able to connect to the soldiers. The men sang and prayed and the women continued to weave blankets for warmth and trade. By taking apart the “blue military jackets and red undergarments” the Navajo women used the thread to create rugs with stripes, stars, and crosses “with red, blue, black and white” (43-44). The colors that came from the jackets and undergarments had significant meaning to the Navajo people and were signs of good fortune and hope. The white reminded the women of white bright light of the morning sky and the mountain to the east. The red represented “the dirt at home, the sandstone cliffs” and the “sumac that turns brilliant red each fall” (43). Even the stars in the flag reminded the Navajos of their own stories about the stars and their guiding lights. The American flag, as a symbol for freedom for the American people had other meanings for the Navajo people. By connecting to the symbols in the American flag, the Navajo men and women connected to their captors. The flag, today, reminds the Navajo people of the strength and survival of the men and women who encountered the soldiers who attempted to destroy them, but failed. The colors and the stars on the flag gave the Navajo people hope because they were symbols of survival and a safe return home. Even more, the soldiers, like the Navajo people valued these same symbols with similar regard. Rather than seeing themselves as being different or disconnected from the new people they encountered, the Navajos looked for connection to them. Tapahonso shows how the significance of the Navajo worldview, particularly how one’s reality is created and changed by words or symbols.

Conclusion: Hane' as Dine Asdzáán Rhetorics

Tapahonso uses written and spoken words to show that interconnection is the foundational structure of Diné rhetorics. Tapahonso, as the storyteller, reveals the significance of interconnecting relationships among all things. She interweaves poetics with Indigenous knowledge to challenge denigrating stereotypes about Native Americans, particularly the Diné. Tapahonso discusses and teaches about the Navajo *hooghan* and a woman's skirt to indicate the connection between the home and women. Moreover, she does this to highlight the importance of Navajo women to the survival and continuity of the community. Tapahonso also shows how kinship names and clans are significant to the survival of the people because they teach a Navajo person to value their relationships to others. In addition, Tapahonso writes about traditional foods. This reveals the intricate details of a Navajo woman's lived experience. She uses this opportunity to point out how the Navajo language connects people to objects. As a survivor of colonialism, Tapahonso also discusses her and her ancestors' survival, their memory, their spirituality, the historical trauma, the traditional stories, and the sacred. Tapahonso reveals to her audience that her survival is dependent upon a survivor's ability to adapt to change. Finally, Tapahonso addresses Americanism and capitalism in her poetry to discuss how she and other Navajos have learned to accept and interpret change. Tapahonso uses language, both Navajo and English, to recreate the history of Navajo people. She gracefully reclaims a Diné Asdzáán identity; an identity that is embedded with contradictions and ambiguities. She embraces the contradictions and ambiguities of a contemporary Navajo woman. She teaches us that one does not have to forego indigenous

worldviews or the oral tradition in a society that values the written word. She shows us how indigenous worldviews, currently still silenced and invisible, challenge the way academia defines literacy. A skirt and *hooghan*, for instance, are built or inscribed with symbolic meaning for the Navajo people to read and interpret. These literacy practices help to teach and maintain the philosophy of Navajo people. Tapahonso challenges the binaries of the oral tradition versus a literate tradition, particularly the assumptions that the oral tradition is a historical pre-literate phenomenon. Tapahonso's poetry reactivates the oral tradition and teaches us to value stories and connections to all things. Tapahonso revives and reclaims a Diné Adzáán identity by identifying with and connecting to all the communities on Mother Earth. Her poetry reveals her predisposition for the Navajo worldview, yet she is comfortable navigating through the murkiness of interstitial spaces of power. She demonstrates survivance by weaving words and languages into new cultural phenomena, which most American readers would identify as poetry, most Navajo speaking people would describe it as *hane'* or stories, and I recognize as Diné Asdzáán rhetorics.

CHAPTER 4: DINÉ ASDZÁÁN RHETORICS: VOICE AND VISIBILITY THROUGH STORIES OF SURVIVAL

Introduction

Beginning in the late 1800s, a formalized American education was used as the vehicle to assimilate the Indigenous people of North America. On and off reservation boarding schools were created by American political leaders as a means to civilize the people. According to Clifford Trafzer et al, “Richard Henry Pratt, the architect of the off-reservation boarding school movement, designed his school for utmost efficiency in order to transform Indian children from their perceived savagery into useful citizens— ‘civilized’ Indians who would champion European-American values such as progress, materialism, and Christianity”(124). The Navajos or Diné were identified as subordinates by early European settlers and expected to integrate and adapt to the dominant European cultures. Cultural assimilation was the goal sought by federal government leaders who wrote and supported treaties that included compulsory education. These policies were implemented as American education by teachers and Christian groups. According to Teresa McCarty, a cultural ethnographer:

In one of the first (unsuccessful) attempts to live up to the 1868 Navajo Treaty provisions for education, the Indian Bureau in 1882 opened a boarding school run by missionaries at Fort Defiance, the place where Navajo people had been incarcerated prior to the Long Walk.... Disciplinary methods at Fort Defiance resembled those at other Federal Indian schools, and included solitary confinement and chaining student to their beds (40).

The educational institutions were directly informed by Christian ideology to eradicate Indigenous worldviews and spirituality. The curriculum under these policies privileged

Western concepts and doctrines and rejected and disparaged Indigenous knowledge through reprimand, which included physical and emotional abuse. The central purpose of Indian education was to replace the Indigenous identity with values, customs and philosophies that were Western and/or informed by Christian doctrines. Furthermore, these educational policies were based on divide and conquer war strategies that separated children from their home communities. According to Trafzer et al, “[Captain Richard Henry] Pratt convinced the federal government to fund the first school at the old army barracks at Carlisle, Pennsylvania. Drawing on the beliefs of past reformers, including Eaton, Pratt developed his own theory about Indian education while he directed the lives of American Indian prisoners of war at Fort Marion, Florida” (13). Prisoners were held at Fort Marion for three years. Pratt reports that the Indian prisoners were given “army clothing” to wear, were taught to care for the clothing, were employed by local “curio dealers” to clean seashells, had visitations by curious Americans for whom the prisoners entertained with dancing and singing, were subject to daily drills, and were taught the English language (Pratt 118-121). Esther Baker Steele, educator in the late 1800s, reports in *The National Teachers' Monthly* in August 1877 that the prisoners at Fort Marion were successfully assimilated as Christian converts:

It may not be generally know that at Fort Marion, St. Augustine, Florida, are about sixty-five representatives of the Cheyenne, Kiowa, Comanche and Arapahoe tribes, who, having been selected as among the worst specimens of the wild, cruel Indians of the far west, have, through the influence of judicious discipline and Christian kindness, become industrious, and tractable, creditably advanced in military training, able to read and to write, and, in some instances, unmistakable Christian converts (Pratt 181).

Like the prisoners at Fort Marion, many American Indian children were forcibly taken from their families to attend boarding schools that were purposefully designed after Fort Marion because of its success in assimilating Indian prisoners. The children were forced to speak English, to practice Christian ideologies, and to learn trades that would allow them to be Americanized. McCarty states, “Children who could not or would not speak only English, or who ‘reverted’ to Navajo with their peers, faced penalties that left emotional as well as physical scars” (45). Laura Tohe’s *No Parole Today* (1999) speaks to the boarding school era as experienced by different generations of Navajo people. She reveals how compulsory education at boarding schools shaped the Navajo people. In the second half of the book, Tohe includes poetry about the on-going oppression in the Navajo community. She uses this opportunity to bring visibility and to give voice to those who were at some point nameless, invisible, and silenced by the dominant perspective.

Tohe develops most of her poetry around the concept of assimilation, particularly the imposed educational practices that occurred throughout the boarding school era. Tohe’s lens is developed by her connection to her own educational experiences and to her Navajo community. She explores her identity as a Diné Asdzáán or a Navajo woman through the use of the English language, which allows Tohe to tell important survival stories and stories about those who did not survive to meet a large audience of both Navajo and non-Navajo readers and listeners. Tohe uses the perspective and voice of a Navajo woman knowledgeable in Western and Navajo philosophies and languages to (re)present the histories of Navajo people. Navajo histories, traditions, and practices have long been misrepresented by non-Navajo historians and ethnographers. According to

critical and cultural theorist, Adela C. Licona, “[m]is/representations are sources of objectification that, when re/visioned, can allow subjects to engage in new ways of interpreting and representing lived experiences and new knowledges. Borderlands rhetorics are those rhetorics that have the potential to reconstruct stories, identities, places, histories, and experiences in such a way to expose new perspectives and even new knowledges” (20).

In several places in my chapter, I draw from Licona’s borderlands rhetorics to show how Tohe exposes a new perspective and knowledge about the survival of Navajo people, culture, tradition, and language, or what I identify as contemporary Diné rhetorics, through her constructed narratives and poetics. Tohe’s narrative and poetry clearly argues that the assimilation practices, which were intended to erase qualities of the Navajo culture, were unsuccessful. Tohe writes, “I voice this letter to you now because I speak for me, no longer invisible, and no longer relegated to the quiet margins of American culture, my tongue silenced. The land, the Diné, the Diné culture is how I define myself and my writing”(xii). By sharing the stories of the Navajo survivors, Tohe creates the opportunity for non-Navajo and non-boarding school students to visualize and understand the trauma of coerced assimilation as well as the strategies for survival. She provides intimate details, descriptions, and conversations to give visibility and voice to Navajo students who were silenced by oppressive teachers and Western educational practices. Tohe also reveals how the Navajo language was extracted from younger generations of Navajos because of the prominence of the English language in the classroom. She does this to show how the English language has been used by the teachers

to erase the Navajo identity. Tohe (re)inscribes stories about the boarding school experience by giving credence to the Navajo boarding school survivors. She (re)creates characters who reveal how the students wrestle with the new English language and with the loss of the Navajo culture and language. Correspondingly, Tohe illustrates her comprehension of the importance of an American education today and how it offers greater economic opportunities. She does this, however, to confirm that Western learning institutions apply monetary value to knowledge. The exploitation of education, according to Tohe, continues in new ways because it is informed by the same values that led the assimilation policies. Tohe also takes the time to include stories about Navajos who did not survive. She gives these non-survivors names, identities, families, faces, places, voices, and perceptions to give them the visibility they never got to have while they were living. Tohe's poetry shows her abilities to use language and her own educational experiences and skills to write historical narratives and critical analysis of the authority and management of education. As a Diné Asdzáán, Tohe uses the English language to (re)inscribe stories that reveal a Navajo perspective and that assert Indigenous knowledge.

A Lived History of a Diné Asdzáán

Laura Tohe was born in Fort Defiance, Arizona and grew up near the Chuska Mountains on the the Navajo Reservation. Tohe identifies as *Tsenabahitnii* (Sleepy Water People clan) and was born of the *Tódích'íinii* (Bitter Water clan). Tohe spoke both Navajo and English at home. She attended both boarding schools and public schools in Albuquerque.

She received a B.A. in Psychology from the University of New Mexico, an M.A. and Ph.D in Creative Writing and Literature from the University of Nebraska. Tohe is currently an Assistant Professor of English at Arizona State University. She has three books of short stories and poetry. They include *Tseyi': Deep In The Rock, Reflections on Canyon De Chelly* (2005), *No Parole Today* (1999) and a chapbook, *Making Friends With The Water* (1986). She co-edited *Sister Nations: Native American Women Writers on Community* (2002), an anthology of poetry, short stories and essays by 49 women, with Heid E. Erdrich. She also co-wrote a libretto called *Enemy Slayer: A Navajo Oratorio* with composer Mark Grey for Phoenix Symphony's 60th Anniversary in 2008. Tohe is also known for the article "There Is No Word For Feminism In My Language."

In the article, Tohe claims that Navajo women in a matrilineal culture have persisted in maintaining the practices of matrilineal customs despite the dominance of the American patrilineal society. She develops her claims through a biographical lens that examines the ideology of the Navajo people, including an analysis of Changing Woman, a central Navajo deity, and the history and culture of Navajo women. Tohe also examines the Navajo language and the Navajo puberty ceremony to develop her argument that there is no word for the concept of feminism in the Navajo worldview because the female identity/gender has been historically and culturally held to a high regard. In the article, Tohe writes, "roles were determined by age, sex, and kinship. A girl plays the role of daughter to her mother and is introduced in that way. She carries out her responsibilities as daughter until she passes into a different phase of her life. As she matures, she is

groomed by the female members of her family in preparation for a greater role, as a leader for her family and community. She is groomed for motherhood, which carries a different connotation in Diné culture than in Western culture” (105). According to Tohe, the Diné connotation implies that the female is groomed for motherhood, which is the responsibility of being “a leader for her family and community” (105). Tohe recognizes that women in Western society are not empowered like Diné women to be leaders in their communities. Tohe’s article also reminds the readers that Navajo women, including her mother, were introduced to drastic changes to their culture and lifeways. Despite this fact, Navajo women have remained resilient in maintaining their roles as central figures of their families and communities as caregivers and leaders.

Colonized Spaces and Complex Identities: Lived Contradictions, Ambiguities, and Neoculturation

Tohe begins her book *No Parole Today* with a letter addressed to the historical leader Richard Henry Pratt, a “Brigadier General of the United States Army” in the 1880s (ix). In the letter, Tohe acknowledges Pratt’s attempts to eradicate the cultural practices and languages of Indigenous people. Tohe asserts that Pratt’s army did change the Navajo people, but did not obliterate their existence. She writes, “I am a survivor, as my parents’ and grandparents’ generations were, of the legacy you established”(ix). She provides some of the experiences that survivors and non-survivors endured at boarding schools. In her narration, Tohe also identifies as a survivor, a person who has persevered through the

legacy of assimilation or “Kill the Indian, Save the Man.” The narratives that she shares in the book are imbedded with stories of survival.

As a Navajo woman living in contemporary American society, Tohe is deeply immersed in the complexities of colonizer and colonized relations. For instance, as a member of the U.S., she has rights and privileges of a US citizen. However, she is a member of the Navajo tribe, a recognized American Indian group in the US. The Navajo people are a federally recognized Indigenous group by the US government to have privileges of sovereign governance. Yet, the group is still largely dependent upon the federal government. Moreover, when Tohe identifies by her clan relation *Tsenabahitnii* and born of the *Tódích'íinii*, she is recognizing the political and social systems of the Navajo people. These systems of identity are provided to her as a birth right. Each of these memberships grants her rights that she empowers as a Diné Asdzáán. This complex identity is revealed throughout the narratives and often reflects the contradiction and ambiguity of colonized spaces. The ideas and/or practices of the colonizer and the colonized merge to create changed and/or new ideas and practices. These changes are often contradictory and ambiguous to the pre-existing cultures because their changes serve two culturally distinct audiences. Cuban scholar Fernando Ortiz defines this phenomenon as neoculturation.

Transculturation expresses the different phases of the process of transition from one culture to another because this does not consist merely in acquiring another culture, which is what the English word *acculturation* really implies, but the process also necessarily involves the loss or uprooting of a previous culture, which could be defined as deculturation.

In addition, it carries the idea of the consequent creation of new cultural phenomena, which should be called neoculturation” (103).

The stories that Tohe shares with her audience reveals the process of assimilation and the deculturation of pre-colonial Navajo culture. The stories also reveal the failure of a complete deculturation. A “new cultural phenomena,” instead, emerges from this contact. While the Navajo students in Tohe’s poetry have little control or power over this process of deculturation, they do exercise the power to resist. This resistance creates the new cultural phenomena that the students claim as their own. Tohe’s focus on the phenomena creates the opportunity for a re-examination of history. Her examination is based on storytelling. According to Navajo historian Jennifer Nez Denetdale the oral tradition, particularly storytelling and/or narratives, are “valid forms of historical production”(81). Denetdale further explains, “Recently, oral traditions have been examined to illuminate Indigenous peoples’ perspectives on the past. If we view oral traditions and history as cultural constructions embedded in social processes, we discover that the meaning of the past differs across cultures and raises questions about the authority we continue to give to documentary evidence”(81). Denetdale uses the example of Navajo women who were ignored in Westernized history because the documenters were patriarchal. They found more interest in documenting Navajo men, thus the substantial narratives about Navajo wars and Manuelito, a Navajo chief. Moreover, Denetdale argues that Navajo history is skewed by the initial Westernized history. Thence, both Denetdale and Tohe rewrite Navajo history, particularly to include the stories told by women survivors. In the introduction, for instance, Tohe writes, “During my grandmother’s generation, she tasted food alien to her palate. On her way to boarding school, she tasted cheese for the first

time. After biting into a cheese sandwich, she preferred to go hungry” (ix). In this example, Tohe draws from an intimate experience told by her grandmother, a survivor of the boarding school. While Denetdale uses the genres of historians, Tohe uses the power of storytelling to remember and bring validity to the voices of Navajo people.

Survival Narratives about Boarding School Borders

In her introduction, Tohe writes a letter that is addressed to General Pratt. In the letter, Tohe begins by retelling/revisiting the history of American Indian education, particularly the history of boarding schools. She writes these narratives from the first person perspective and the persona of a war veteran. Tohe states, “Living in boarding schools was similar to serving a sentence. We are veterans of these institutions”(ix). She uses the perspective of the prisoner of war to disclose the trauma of forced assimilation. She reminds her readers that these schools replicated military systems:

At the Indian school, my life was measured and accounted for on a daily basis: roll call, nine-week work details, lights out at ten p.m., lights on at five a.m. Fences surrounded my life. Cement covered the earth beneath my feet. In first through third grade, I marched to my classroom with a John Philip Sousa march playing over the intercom, which was, of course apropos because [Pratt] modeled Indian schools after the rigid military life in which [Pratt] made a career”(ix).

The description reveals living quarters that replicate those of soldiers as well as prisoners. Tohe illustrates this point through vivid descriptions such as “Fences surrounded my life” which imply the experience of a prisoner of war, rather than just a soldier. The fences were physical structures that worked as both physical and psychological borders that were designed to hold students captive and to keep others out. According to Licon,

“Borders are arbitrary lines that construct and are constructed. They are meaningful and meaningless, material and metaphoric, visible and invisible. They divide and unite. They are powerful and powerless, peaceful and violent and scar the (psychic) landscape for those...divided as a result of...imposition”(17). The borders function as a colonizing mechanism to create colonizing spaces or spaces of imposition over another. These coerced constructions are perceived by the colonizer and colonized as ambiguous spaces. The borders (or fences) that many boarding school survivors experienced were physical and purposeful constructions that divided Navajo children from their parents, homes, languages, and lifeways. These spaces began to inform Tohe and other survivors of the boarding schools. Tohe also reveals that the Navajo students were removed from their home communities by military and educational officials and condemned in schools that were new and foreign.

The organization of the military was used to design the early system of Indian education. The new system differed, however, from the military systems because it also operated like a prison. Like most prison systems, the students were detained behind high fences and suffered severe corporal punishment for insubordination. Even though this school was designed to imitate the US military systems, it included prisonlike aspects. To make sure the students did not run away, fences were used to enclose the students. The story provided by Tohe coincides with historians, Clifford Trafzer et al,

Students sometimes had to adjust to prisonlike environments run in a strict, military manner. Most of the schools had high fences, sometimes surrounded by barbed wire, and each school had strict rules regarding the children’s personal freedom. Students had to adjust to daily schedules set

by bells that signaled the day's events: waking up, toilet breaks, lining up for meals, classroom attendance, work periods, and bedtime"(19).

Tohe, like Trafzer, reminds the readers of the atrocious living conditions of the children. Tohe's version of the boarding school history is told from a first person perspective to testify to her survival and to the survival of the Navajo people. According to Maori educator, Linda Tuhiwai Smith, "Indigenous people want to tell our own stories, write our own versions, in our own ways, for our own purposes. It is not simply about giving an oral account or a genealogical naming of the land and the events which raged over it, but a very powerful need to give testimony to and restore a spirit, to bring back into existence a world fragmented and dying"(28). Tohe recreates the spaces of colonialism to confirm the contradictions that surface as two cultures contact and to construct a new Navajo history that is told from the perspective of a contemporary Navajo woman.

In the letter to Pratt, Tohe argues that the coerced assimilation is responsible for the cultural and linguistic damage and related misfortune that befalls the Navajo people. Tohe states, "The most crippling legacy of boarding schools is the devastation of our native languages and culture"(x). The Navajos recognize the devastation of their culture and language as *hochxo'*, which Gary Witherspoon, historian and ethnographer defines as "the ugly, unhappy, and disharmonious environment" (25). *Hochxo'* is an opposition to *hózhó*, which is defined as beauty or harmony. Navajos strive to create healthy environments that exist harmoniously with all things on Earth, including the animate and inanimate forms. The boarding school would be considered an executor of *hochxo'* because it was the entity that brought disharmony to students through ethnocide. The

boarding schools were responsible for the abduction of children that ultimately disrupted the relations of Navajo children with their families, cultural practices, languages, and identities. Witherspoon explains *hochxo*, “For the Navajos, evil (*hochxo*) is not negative in a moral or ethical sense but negative in a pragmatic or realistic sense. Evil is misfortune, illness, premature death, drought, famine, or some other such tragedy, all of which may be caused by things and beings out of control” (186). Tohe names the boarding school as the cause for great misfortune, illness, and premature death. Moreover, she identifies how forced assimilation contributed to the loss of the Navajo language and the changes to the culture and identity of the Navajo people. As the Navajo students assimilated to meet the demands of their new environment, they became culturally and linguistically disconnected from their families and communities. This disconnect would result in depression and hopelessness, which would eventually lead to alcoholism and suicide—two evils or social disorders that continue to hinder the Navajo communities today. A purpose of storytelling to the Diné, then, is to confirm that harmony or *hozh* can be restored in times of chaos. For instance, the story about the slaying of *Yé’iitsoh*, a giant monster, reveals a time of chaos that was restored to harmony. According to this story, *Yé’iitsoh* terrorized the Navajo people by stealing their children for his personal consumption. Twins, Monster Slayer and Born For Water, were the children of Changing Woman and the sons of the Sun, *Johonaa’éei*. The twins traveled an arduous journey to meet their father who supplied them with weaponry that helped them to exterminate *Yé’iitsoh*. The Sun was first reluctant to help the twins because he had also fathered *Yé’iitsoh*. When Monster Slayer executes *Yé’iitsoh* with a

lightening arrow, harmony is restored to the Navajo communities. Similarly, Tohe's stories identify the boarding school as a monstrous entity. Like the warrior twins, Tohe utilizes tools provided by the colonizer to challenge Western versions of American history. Her stories also show the survival of a group of people. However, her version is new and changed and shows a group of people who not only harmed but are perplexed by colonialism.

Tohe follows the introductory letter with a poem called "Our Tongues Slapped into Silence." She continues with the theme of assimilation. The speaker of the poem uses memory to capture the experiences of first graders. She recalls that students were taught English using *Dick and Jane* books, basal readers created by Zerna A. Sharp and written by William S. Gray between the 1930s and 1970s. She writes, "In the first grade we received the first of our Dick and Jane books that introduced us to the white man's world through Father, Mother, Dick, Jane, Puff and Spot. These and other characters said and did what we thought all white people did: drive cars to the farm, drain maple juice from trees, and say oh, oh, oh, a lot"(3). Tohe suggests that these basal readers were used to teach the Navajo children the values and practices of Anglo Americans. In response to the books, Tohe creates a parody about the characters, Dick and Jane. She uses italics to set it apart from the historical context she provides in the poem. She titles the parody, "Dick and Jane Subdue the Diné" (2). To reveal the values and practices of the Anglo Americans during this time period from a Diné Asdzáán perspective, she writes "See Eugene speak Diné./ See Juanita answer him./ oh, oh, oh/ See teacher frown./ uh oh, uh oh/ See Eugene cry./ oh, oh, oh/ see Juanita stand in corner, see tears fall down face"(3).

Tohe uses the format from the Dick and Jane readers to develop the story of Eugene, Juanita and the teacher. This story reveals how Eugene and Juanita, two Navajo speaking students are punished by the teacher for speaking their language. Like the Dick and Jane readers, this version reflects the culture of Anglo Americans of that time period. However, her story also captures the Navajo children and the punishment that many of them were given when they simply spoke their Navajo language. As a tactic of neoculturation introduced above, Tohe models this survival story after the Dick and Jane readers. The stories in the Dick and Jane readers, a tool of assimilation, inform Tohe's narration. Rather than just writing about the Dick and Jane readers, Tohe employs them in her poem. This strategy of survival and resistance allows her to reveal and reject the irony of these books. To re-present the script of Indian and non-Indian relations during that time period, Tohe employs survivance or the act that "undermine[s] and surmounts, with imagination and the performance of new stories, the manifest manners of scriptural simulations and 'authentic' representations of the tribes in the literature of dominance" (Vizenor 17). The Dick and Jane reader, which were meant to teach Navajo children about Anglo culture, were not accurate representations of Anglo culture. Tohe's version provides the reader with a more accurate script of the assimilation practices and objectives of the majority of the Anglo American community during that time period. For many years, this factual version was not shared among the American people. The experiences of many American Indian people were silenced because their versions of history were not available to the American public. Tohe uncovers stories using the rhetorical tools given to her by the Anglo Americans. According to, critical and cultural

theorist, Chela Sandavol, “[t]his process of taking and using whatever is necessary and available in order to negotiate, confront, or speak to power—and then moving on to new forms, expressions, and ethos when necessary—is a method for survival” (29). Rather than reject Western writing tools and story forms, Tohe embraces and easily embeds them into her narratives. These rhetorical tools become the survival and resistance tools that Tohe uses to both embrace and reject histories, knowledges, stories, and perspectives.

Tohe further identifies the contradictions that these colonial spaces create. Tohe tells her readers that students were taught by “Miss Rolands, a black woman from Texas” and were punished with a ruler by slaps to the hand when they spoke the Navajo language (2-3). She names and identifies Miss Rolands as a helper in assimilation. Miss Rolands is described by Tohe as an “alien in our world” that exerted control over the Navajos (3). Tohe further identifies the fact that Miss Rolands, despite her role as a teacher, is a person of an oppressed group. By shedding light on this fact, Tohe challenges Western narratives that report a binary of the colonizer and the colonized. Tohe’s narrative forces a reader to pause and reflect on this new complicated space. Miss Rolands, as a woman from a different racialized minority group, had little power during this time period. Yet, in a boarding school, Miss Rolands is empowered as a teacher, a disciplinarian, and an agent of assimilation. By highlighting these details about the boarding school, Tohe subverts the inconsistencies in narratives that report the conquest of a dominant group over a subordinate group. Tohe is inclusive in her narratives and reveals details about history that show the interconnectedness between the racialized and colonized groups and

their related histories in America. Tohe describes Miss Rolands as an “alien.” Concepts such as extraterrestrial, strange, unnaturalized, foreign and inconsistent come to mind when one sees the word alien. Miss Rolands is clearly an outsider to this community and her role as a teacher is seen as an executor of change or disharmony. Further, the purpose for assimilating Indigenous people in America were likely not beneficial to the African American people, an oppressed group. Yet, Miss Rolands benefits from the employment and empowerment of a disciplinarian. According to Paulo Freire, “at a certain point in their existential experience the oppressed feel an irresistible attraction towards the oppressors and their new way of life. Sharing this way of life becomes an overpowering aspiration. In their alienation, the oppressed want at any cost to resemble the oppressors, to imitate them, to follow them”(62). Tohe shows how Miss Rolands, a person of an oppressed group, can take the responsibilities of the oppressor in order to bear a resemblance to the oppressors. In this case, the oppressors are most Anglo Americans. As opposed to creating a rant, Tohe takes the time through the story-structure of her work to reveal important details to her readers about the realities of assimilation. By doing this, Tohe blurs the line between the colonizer and the colonized and between the oppressor and the oppressed.

Names, in the Worldview of a Navajo, are More Than Just Sounds Strung Together

Throughout her book, Tohe continues to explore the conflicts in the boarding school classroom. In her poem “The Names” Tohe revisits a classroom during the boarding school era. In this classroom, a non-Navajo teacher does roll call. The teacher

mispronounces the students' names, particularly those names that reflect the Navajo language and culture. In this poem, Tohe illustrates how the mispronunciation distresses the children. The mispronunciation on the part of the teacher is due to the lack of knowledge and care about the Navajo language and culture. This lack of knowledge discounts the students' identities as Navajo people. When describing the students' reactions during the roll call, Tohe uses words like "wince," "tense," and "sink" (4). These words imply that the students embodied the lack of care and respect displayed by such mispronunciations and were disempowered by the roll call. When the teacher fails to respect the essence of these Navajo students, they are disempowered. Disharmony or *hochxo* presides in an environment where respect is lacking. In this kind of environment, there is opportunity for the carelessness of words and thoughts. Navajos believe that thinking and speaking have power because the wind or *nilch'i* is directly connected to the inner spirit of a person. According to James Kale McNeley, historian and ethnographer, "*Nilch'i*, meaning Wind, Air, or Atmosphere, as conceived by the Navajo, is endowed with powers that are not acknowledged in Western thought. Suffusing all nature, Holy Wind gives life, thought, speech, and power of motion to all living things and serves as the means of communication between all elements of the living world" (1). When the teacher utters the names of students, the words are created through thought, voice, and breath. The sounds that are expelled from the mouth of the teacher are informed and shaped by the lack of respect the teacher has for the Navajo culture and language. Moreover, the teacher's inability to recognize the importance of the meaning to names creates shame, a disharmonious state, for the children. According to Tohe, the teacher

pronounces the following name incorrectly, “ ‘Leonard T-sosie.’” In the poem, Tohe follows this pronunciation with her explanation, “(His name is Tsosie.) Silent first letter as in ptomaine,/ Ptolemy./ Silent as in never asking questions./ Another hand from the back goes up. No voice” (4). The teacher’s mispronunciation is never corrected by any of the students. Instead, the students silently accept the anglicized versions and mispronunciation of their names. When the children’s Navajo names are mispronounced, their meaning is lost. Tohe uses the words “silent” and “No voice” to illustrate how these moments of contact between the teacher and the student had a silencing effect on the students.

Tohe expands on her discussion on the surname Tsosie later in the poem. According to Tohe, Tsosie derived from the Navajo word *Ts’osí*, which means slender. Other students that Tohe identifies in the class with Navajo last names include Yazzie and her name, Tohe. Both of these names are descriptions of a particular person. She defines the former surname as “Beloved Little One/Son” and the latter as “Towards Water”(5). By anglicizing the Navajo words, the original meanings of the Navajo word are ignored. The Navajo words, when uttered by the teacher, are no longer comprehensible. What were once Navajo words become meaningless sounds. The surnames that Tohe takes the time to identify in her poem are descriptions of places and people. Before contact with European cultures, Navajos did not need to have a family or surname because they followed a clan system. Navajos used their clan identity to identify as a member of a family. The use of surnames was a practice imposed by European cultures. European groups renamed Navajos by taking a descriptive name like *Hastiinééz*

to be a first and last name, which eventually became *Hastiin Nééz*. *Hastiinééz* roughly means tall man and is more of a descriptor than a name. Naming in the Navajo custom was given to a person or a place based on the physical attributes of a person or place. According to Alan Wilson, “Navajo place names are highly descriptive in a pictorial sense. As such, they are powerful descriptors of land formations, mesas, canyons, buttes, of colors of rocks, of bodies of water, and of places named for people and animals. They enable the Navajo to see the places as pictures” (xi). This land-based group used descriptions instead of a designated title to signify a place and/or person. Names, in the worldview of a Navajo, are more than just sounds strung together. Historically, a person was called by a descriptor title, which was given by people closest to the named person. As a person aged and/or changed, it was common practice to change the name to fit the changed person. Renaming was already a part of the Navajo tradition because names would often reveal a person’s persona and/or physical characteristics, which often changed. Navajos, like other Indigenous groups, viewed the world as dynamic and active. In a dynamic worldview, there is recognition and appreciation for the natural changes that places and people go through. In this worldview, signifiers of places and people changed as well. Some places and people were described in different ways by different people. This was an acceptable practice because the Navajos understood that they saw and interpreted objects differently. Western groups brought with them the practice of documentation, a foreign concept to the Navajos. The documentation of people meant the re-naming of places and people. Navajo people were no longer able to have dynamic descriptor titles. As a result, many Navajo people today have the surnames Yazzie and

Nez. Yazzie, which derived from *yazhí* has several meanings, including beloved one and small one. Similarly, Nez derives from *nééz*, which means tall or long. These descriptor titles were likely given to a person by a family member. Because *yazhí* means beloved or little one, many Navajo parents added this concept to their children's descriptor titles. Today, Yazzie is a common Navajo last name. Likewise, those who were tall were described as *nééz*. Today, Yazzie and Nez are both common Navajo surnames. Although many Navajos share these last names, many of them do not share blood relations. The people who share these last names are likely not related to one another because that was not the basis of its creation. These practices and beliefs allowed Navajos to resist the practice of imposed names, to reclaim the Navajo practice of naming and renaming, and to allow these practices to survive in a changing world. Today, many Navajos have also adopted American and/or European names and have moved away completely from their traditional naming process. There are some who maintain the traditional practice. Many Navajo elders tell stories about being renamed by Anglo educators in boarding schools. They also reveal that in order to avoid creating problems for their own children, these boarding schools survivors carried on the European American naming practices.

In her poetry, Tohe also reclaims the first names of students who attended the boarding school. She begins this poem by listing the names, including the nicknames, of some of the students. In the poem "The Names," Tohe lists the following: "Lou Hon, Suzie, Cherry, Doughnut, Woody, Wabbit, Jackie, Rena Mae, Zonnie, Sena, Verna, Grace, Seline, Carilene" (4). She lists first names and nicknames to show the intimacy of names and naming. The first names of the students listed above show that the Navajos

have adopted the English anglicized names. Names like “Suzie, Rena Mae, Zonnie, Verna, Grace, Seline, and Carilene” are names that have roots in the European tradition (Tohe 4). English nicknames, most likely created by the students, include “Cherry, Doughnut, Woody and Wabbit” (Tohe 4). Woody and Wabbit were likely influenced by the Warner Brothers characters Woody Woodpecker and Bugs Bunny, who is called “Wabbit” by the character Elmer Fudd. Similarly, the nicknames Cherry and Doughnut are two different foods introduced by their Anglo counterparts. The students claim these concepts as their own. However, in doing so, they retain their ability to name and rename. Woody, Wabbit, Cherry and Doughnut are likely re/named by their counterparts based on physical attributes and/or characteristics. Tohe again demonstrates how the students resist the coercive European American culture while also choosing aspects from it as well.

Tohe ends the poem by also listing the students’ surnames, including the correct Navajo spelling to privilege the Navajo pronunciation and to show her audience that these surnames have meaning. Tohe lists the following names: “Roanhorse, Fasthorse, Bluehorse, Yellowhorse, Begay, Deswood, Niilwod, Chee, ‘Átsidí, Tapahonso, Háábaah, Hastiin Nééz”(5). Tohe begins this list with the following English surnames, “Roanhorse, Fasthorse, Bluehorse, and Yellowhorse” to illustrate that these English names are indeed Navajo, with Navajo roots. The surnames were either translated into English or imposed descriptors by the European American namer. Moreover, the names reveal that the Navajos are a horse culture. Tohe also lists the surnames in Navajo to show that despite the attempts to erase the Navajo language, many Navajos have been able to retain the Navajo names of their ancestors. These surnames are descriptors of particular people.

For instance, *Átsidí* is a person who is a metal smith or more appropriately, one who hammers lightly. Tohe reveals that a combination of Western and Navajo naming practices creates a hybrid tradition of names and surnames for the Navajo people. Like Luci Tapahonso (Diné poet), Tohe shows how the Navajo people took portions from the European American culture, but kept some of their own. The merging of two or more cultures creates new cultural phenomena that the Navajo people embrace as an expression of the dynamism of their worldview and as a survival strategy.

Third-space Subjects Surviving Boarding School

Throughout her poetry, Tohe reveals how students made sense of their environment and experiences in the boarding schools. Tohe uses the Navajo Coyote trickster to help her convey a message to her readers. In the story “Sometimes Those Pueblo Men Can Sure Be Coyotes,” the narrator is in her teenage years, along with a friend, encounter a Pueblo man. The narrator and another student named Rena stayed late at school one night and required someone from the school to retrieve them and return them to the dorms. The school official that was sent to retrieve them was a Pueblo man. When the girls got in the car they recognized that he was attractive. The girls assume the man does not understand Navajo because they presume he is Pueblo and they began to use the Navajo language as code to secretly compliment him. Tohe provides her readers with their Navajo dialogue and English translation, “*Éi hastiin ayoo baa dzolni*’ this man is very handsome/ *Éi laa*’ I agree” (16). The girls continue in this manner on the way back to the school. When they arrive at their destination, the Pueblo man says to them,

“A’*hé’hee*’ *atééke*...thank you, girls” (17). The girls are startled and embarrassed when they realize that the man understood their entire conversation.

Tohe calls the man a Pueblo Coyote in the poem because of his trickster-like abilities. The Coyote in Navajo trickster tales is cunning, contradictory, ambiguous, and complex. He is a physical and spiritual being and because of his ambiguous nature can cross physical and metaphorical boundaries. In this case, the Pueblo driver understood the Navajo language and likely his own, despite the efforts of the federal government to eradicate indigenous languages. Moreover, the man worked for the boarding school, the system that was built purposefully to eradicate Indian culture and language. In this Coyote story, the girls learn several valuable lessons. They learned that assumptions about people are usually incorrect. They assumed that the driver did not understand them. Therefore, they spoke about the driver with no consideration about what they shared with one another. The girls also learned from this event that any person can acquire any language. They learned that when a person has access to more than one language, it allows him/her to cross boundaries like the Coyote trickster. From this humorous event, Tohe shares a valuable lesson about language with her readers. She uses the Navajo trickster tale to teach her readers this lesson. Tohe includes the Navajo language in this poem to deliver a précised dialogue. She, however, also includes the English translation of this dialogue. Tohe does not allow the dialogue to be silenced by only telling the story in the English language. Tohe gives voice to the narrator, Rena, and the Pueblo driver by including their dialogue in their Navajo language. She includes the English translation for non-Navajo readers, so they are included as well.

Tohe provides her readers with stories that reflect how the students respond to their new environment. Like the trickster in Coyote stories, the boarding school female students cross cultural boundaries to cope in their new environment as “third-space subjects” (Licona 106). According to Licona “[t]hird-space subjects (perpetually) slip and slide across both sides of a border to a third space, between the authentic and the inauthentic, the legitimate and the illegitimate, the pure and the impure, and the proper and the improper” (106). Boarding schools were third space sites that created third-space subjects. In the poem “Joe Babes,” Tohe provides her readers with a description of an identity claimed by the young female students. This poem identifies the physical traits that Navajo female students imitated from their Western counterparts and how and why these Navajo students chose to imitate particular traits. The poem is mostly made up of a definition and description of Joe Babes. Tohe writes, “Some teased their hair/ into bouffant hairdos and/ wore too much makeup” (8). These young women adopted the styles of American women. The bouffant style was made popular in the 1960s by American women. The teased tresses were created for the purpose of being noticed. The style was considered to be elegant and glamorous by mainstream standards. The properness of this style was dependent upon the class group in mainstream American society at that time. According to Tohe, these young women used bouffant hairdos and makeup to get noticed. Tohe shows how young Navajo women began to shift away from their proper cultural teachings about femininity and beauty and adapt to im/proper ideals about femininity and beauty.

Even though these women opted to change their appearances physically, they resisted Western authority by behaving improperly in the eyes of most White teachers. Tohe writes, “Joe Babes sat quietly/ in the back of classrooms/ even when they knew the answers,/ were described as shy, dumb, angry, or on drugs/ by the teachers” (8). Even though the women are able to connect with ideals about beauty with American women, they did not communicate in the proper American way with teachers. They, like the trickster, did not allow the teachers to know them intimately. This allowed these students to protect themselves. In order to cope with their new environment, the Joe Babes, attempted to imitate the oppressor. Their imitation, however, was limited to some of the physical traits of American women. The Joe Babes did not trust the legitimacy of the teachers. Based on Tohe’s reiteration of how the teachers described these young women, the teachers did not trust the students either. The Joe Babes and teachers lacked a fitting educational relationship. In the quote “the government said it was okay,” Tohe suggests that the authority of the teacher is given by the government. The teachers in this poem can be interpreted as the government, a ruling entity that seeks to control, not educate, the students. The teachers, according to Tohe, are not seen as educators of knowledge by the students and are not regarded with the respect of an educator by the students.

Tohe further reveals that the women participated in conversations and events at the boarding school that allowed them to present their cultural pride. She describes the Joe Babes as, “These were the ones who stood in corners/ for speaking Indian/ until the government said it was okay./ Then they sang in Indian Clubs/ and danced at pow-wows”(8). According to Tohe, the Joe Babes are assimilated Navajo females who adopt

and resist the dominant culture, but maintain their own authority over what they adopt and resist. They slip and slide between identifying for themselves what they consider authentic or inauthentic, proper or improper, and legitimate and illegitimate. The Joe Babe identity is (re)created by the Navajo females to allow them to identify in their complicated new environment or third space site that is informed by American and Navajo values.

The Joe Babes are also described as rebellious. According to Tohe, “Joe Babes/ laughed too loud/ and were easily angered/ when they got drunk” (8-9). Tohe suggests that the young women called attention to themselves by laughing “too” loudly for the standards of Navajo conduct. Even though the young women were subjected to silencing efforts through the boarding school, they resisted the conformity by acting out in similar ways that American rebels did. They also drank alcohol and likely lashed out at one another and the system they found themselves in. These young Navajo women did not easily conform into proper American woman. They dissented in ways that were made possible to them in boarding schools and the surrounding community. They lived their lives like the trickster who is often described as a roguish figure who is cunning, deceptive, humorous, and rebellious. This figure is a survivor because s/he finds ways to cope in an ever-changing world.

These young women were able to find ways to survive in a system that worked to change them. According to Tohe, they eventually grew into the women who were able to assimilate to the American culture. They were able to survive and find peace in this new

system. Tohe writes, “Joe Babes/ were the ones that left the reservations/ for the cities, for the schools, for the jobs/ We were the Joe Babes./ All of us”(9). Tohe shows her readers that these women left a traditional or pure Navajo way of life on the reservation to live in and acculturate to American life in cities where they could attain education and employment. This choice often resulted in the loss or change of Navajo ideas and practices. They no longer lived as the “traditional” or as “authentic” or “pure” Navajo women. Yet, as reservations began to transform to the colonizing cultures, the inauthentic or impure Navajo traditions became the authentic and the pure. These women understood that these changes were permanent and they could no longer go home or go back to a pre-colonial way of life. They understood that they, like their American counterparts, had to survive by attaining education and employment. They understood that they could no longer live their lives like their parents or their grandparents had. They accepted and adapted to the changes and learned to survive in new environments. The Joe Babes, according to Tohe, understood that they were some of the first Navajo women to make this transformation for future generations of Navajo people.

In addition to stories of educational assimilation, Tohe provides stories about the religious assimilation. She writes about how Christian religious groups built their churches adjacent to the boarding schools. The church groups did this as a secondary means to assimilate Navajo children and their families. In the story “Christianity Hopping,” Tohe shows the connections and disconnections the students had with the various Christian faiths. She begins the story with, “On Sunday mornings we were Presbyterian so we could drink coffee and eat Oreo cookies. Sunday evenings we were

Christian Reformed because it was the farthest away from the dorm. You could get in a lot of hand holding and hugging on the way back if you had a boyfriend or girlfriend”(11). According to Tohe, the students dutifully attended the Christian churches, but did not participate sincerely in the ceremony. Instead, the students found privileges in attending various church meetings. On Sundays they attended the Presbyterian meetings for the snacks. In the evenings, they attended the “Christian Reformed” because it allowed students to get away from the boarding school setting. The students found enjoyment in the walks to and from the Christian Reformed meetings. She highlights these small privileges as “(micro) practices of resistance” that helped the students survive their new environment (Licona 27). In the story, Tohe discusses other small privileges of participating in Mormon and Catholic gatherings. As the title of the poem suggests, the students jumped from one religious group to the next. The story further suggests that the students were not bound to one religious faith, but participated in them because of the small gifts and privileges the groups offered them. Tohe shows the reader that the students participated in the social events that they were thrust into. However, the students did not feel compelled to adopt the precepts of the churches they attended. The church events mostly gave students the opportunity to temporarily escape the environment of the boarding school. These short getaways allowed the students to cope with their new environment.

Tohe also shows that the students were in awe of the resources that these church groups had. She writes about a time when she and another student explored a church, “[we] wandered around in some church for almost an hour, looking at the quiet interior of

finely carved mahogany banisters, stained glass windows, and rows of evenly spaced pews that sat in front of the podium. We went from room to room, looking, touching and sitting on the pews, turning the lights off and on, fingering the cold white keys on the organ, opening and closing the heavy gray velvet drapes”(11). These two students experience the foreign composition of the church by “looking, touching, and sitting” (11). The church, like a museum, provided the history of a Western tradition and belief system. Even though the students connected physically with the church composition, they remained disconnected from the full spiritual experience of the church. Critical pedagogue, Paulo Freire, discusses the attraction the oppressed have of the oppressor. He states, “at a certain point in their existential experience the oppressed feel an irresistible attraction towards the oppressors and their way of life” (62). Even though these students were experiencing the hardships of the boarding school, Tohe shows her readers that the students retained a sense of curiosity and wonder about the new culture they were forcibly immersed in. These students explored their new environments with a sense of wonderment as a coping strategy for their colonial situation.

This same poem also explores how the students used humor to experience the disconnect they had with their new environment. Tohe describes a church bus ride where the students share stories, jokes, and laughter. Tohe shares some of those jokes told by students with her readers to share the words that helped them to cope with the unfamiliar culture. She writes, “Another said our grandmother sat in the back of the bus while her *tsiyéél*, hair bun, bobbed up and down. They joked that she ran alongside the bus and outraced it. We laughed imagining our old grandpa driving into a big city with grandma

running in her long skirts and moccasins”(11). The students view the contact of the two cultures as humorous. Their “new” or bicultural perception is shaped by two or more cultural worldviews. This new perception allows them to imagine the richness of their grandparents’ culture and how it clashes or connects with the dominant European American cultures. Seeing a Navajo grandmother riding a bus during this time period would have been rare. Therefore conceptualizing a Navajo grandmother on a bus is incongruous to these students. Moreover, these students recognize the irony of the elegance of a Navajo elder on a bumpy and ungraceful bus ride. Tohe shows the reader that the students recognize the contradictions of these images and find ways to make meaning and to cope through humor. These changes force the students to create coping mechanisms, including humor, to respond to the burden that coercive change brings. Laughing together as a group allows these students to maintain a collective identity that is based on shared values through laughter.

Recognizing the Victims: the Oppressed, the Nameless, and the Invisible

The poems in the second section of the book continue to give voice and visibility to the Navajo boarding school survivors. Some of the survivors of the boarding school, however, did not survive the neocolonialism, including the racism, oppression and eventually the internalized oppression. Even though many Navajos have been successful in assimilating to an American family and economic model, some Navajos have not been as fortunate. The poem “My Brother Shakes The Bottle” tells the story of bordertowns that fuel racism and alcoholism. Davis is the main character in this poem and represents a

Navajo veteran who lives on the reservation. He, along with the narrator, go to the bordertown for dinner. Bordertowns are larger towns or small cities that are adjacent to the reservation. Bordertowns have grocery markets, gas stations, laundromats, public schools, restaurants, and bars that are usually owned by non-Navajo merchants. Many Navajos who live in secluded areas on the Navajo reservation still travel many miles to bordertowns for groceries, gasoline and laundry. Many also travel to bordertowns for liquor and entertainment. According to Tohe, “[Davis] looks twenty years older than I/ though we’re only a year apart/. The faces tell us/ what we already know from the bordertowns/ about being waited on last even though/ we were in line first” (34). Davis looks physically older than someone his own age would look, suggesting that Davis lives a difficult and stressful life or like someone who is a victim of dehumanization or racism and oppression. In this story, Davis and the narrator have dinner at a restaurant. They, like other Navajos, understand racism and oppression. They understand and accept that they will be “waited on last” (Tohe 34). Tohe reveals how racism in bordertowns shape these Navajo characters. They are reticent and self-depreciating. Freire states, [s]o often do [the oppressed] hear that they are good for nothing, know nothing and are incapable of learning anything—that they are sick, lazy, and unproductive—that in the end they become convinced of their own unfitness”(63). Similarly, those who are oppressed experience discrimination so often that they often become numb to it. Bordertowns are still well-known for racism today, but they are also places where Navajo people connect and identify with for stability. These places, however, have ways that deny or discriminate against the Native people.

Davis is described by Tohe as modest and compliant. According to Tohe, “Davis orders what I do./ He tries not to make waves,/ not to make demands./ So he stutters to the adolescent waitress,/ ‘Can I have some sweet’n low?’” (34). Tohe identifies racism and oppression as the reasons for Davis’s timidness and alcoholism. She further hints, “These faces are clues/ to what drove my brother to slump on that red ant hill/ in the Arizona desert/ where only the sagebrush and rabbits/ must have felt the earth shake a little”(34). According to Freire, [t]he oppressed, having internalized the image of the oppressor and adopted his guidelines, are fearful of freedom” (47). Davis’s behavior suggest that he is someone who has internalized the images of the oppressor. His life is scripted according to what the oppressor taught him, which included ideas of dehumanization and death. Tohe names their faces as the perpetrator; the faces are different perhaps from Navajo faces. She attributes these faces to the apprehensive behavior of Navajo people in these areas.

Tohe ends the poem by writing of the time Davis was in a VA, likely a veteran’s hospital, that he “shakes the bottle/ that explodes/ all over/ himself” (34). Ending the poem in this way is ambiguous, yet suggesting still that Davis is a veteran who suffers from alcoholism. As someone who has likely gone to war for the US, Davis may suffer from post traumatic stress disorder. What is clear from the poem is that Davis is physically worn out and humble in stature and communication. According to Tohe, the bordertowns, as neocolonial spaces, assert the acculturation of Americanism and racism to the neighboring Navajo people and cause contention and stress. According to psychologists, Bonnie Duran, Eduardo Duran and Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart,

Acculturative stress refers to anxiety produced through the process of acculturation, often resulting in depression, feelings of marginality and alienation, heightened psychosomatic symptoms, and identity confusion. Acculturative stress may undermine individuals' physical, psychological, and social health. While historical trauma includes acculturation, it goes much deeper and encompasses the aftereffects of racism, oppression, and genocide (65).

Tohe writes these kinds of poems to demonstrate the full impact and aftermath of ethnocide. Descriptions about the character Davis allows Tohe to reveal how neocolonialism impacts individuals and communities on and near reservations. Tohe shows the readers that Davis, a war veteran, is timid in his own homeland. Many Navajos fought in American wars, including World War I, World War II, and Vietnam. These war veterans were and are not treated as war heroes when they return. Many of them became alcoholics and/or received limited care in veteran's hospitals. Tohe uses her poetry to expose the contradiction surrounding Navajo veterans.

Tohe also brings visibility to the nameless and the unseen Navajo victims who did not survive assimilation. In the poem "Body Identified," the narrator lost an unnamed friend. The victim in the newspaper was described as " 'Young male Indian/ in the early 20s found alongside the highway near Twin/ Lakes' " (35). The narrator, who is female, recalls knowing the victim. She recalls admitting her love to the male on a bus ride home from Durango. Tohe brings visibility to this male victim who remains nameless in the newspaper. Tohe also brings visibility to the people who loved this man by allowing the narrator's voice and perception to emerge. Tohe also brings visibility to other nameless victims. In the poem "The Shooting" Sarah T is murdered by a shot from a gun by her husband while she is doing laundry at Tohatchi, NM. According to Tohe "Sarah T's

husband waited until the ambulance had gone/ then pulled the last bullet on himself in a half-moon light/ He said he didn't want to go alone (37). This murder and suicide likely did not make national newspapers, but was likely a real event or based on a real event. Tohe shares these silenced stories about the realities of internalized oppression with her readers to bring visibility to the victims of assimilation and colonialism. Even though many Navajo students survived the coercive assimilation at the boarding schools, many of them did not survive the lasting impacts of colonialism. The young male Indian, Sarah T, and Sarah T's husband are three characters who are victims of oppression and internalized oppression. They, like many other Native Americans, were nameless and/or invisible to the larger American society because they were victims of neocolonialism and an on-going racism. Tohe uses her poetry to (re)claim the history of Navajo boarding school survivors and the non-survivors by telling us their stories.

Conclusion

As a storyteller, Tohe brings visibility and voice to victims of assimilation and colonialism. She recognizes and documents the physical, social, emotional and spiritual changes that impacted the people during her lifetime. She understands that these changes were detrimental to the health of individuals and to the Navajo communities. Even though her poetry presents the starkness of the assimilation, she teaches her readers to see the survival of a people. She understands that maintaining a connection to the Navajo way of life and a connection to the colonizer is central to the survival of the Navajo people. In various ways and through a conscious deployment of Diné rhetoric, her stories

show the importance of connection between all things and the consequences of disconnection between people and communities. She connects her readers with the survivors and non-survivors of the past by telling their stories. As a Diné Asdzáán storyteller, Tohe utilizes the various tools and languages made available to her to tell her stories. She utilizes the diverse worldviews to let the stories unfold into authentic spaces of ambiguity and contradiction. Tohe also teaches her readers to recognize how forced assimilation creates a disharmonious environment and people. Her purpose in sharing these stories is to bring visibility and voice to those historically silenced. She retells history through the experiences of boarding school survivors. Rather than resisting the tools made available to her at the boarding school, Tohe makes use of these communicative modes to reclaim and revive Diné histories and rhetorics. Like the Joe Babes, Tapahonso borrows practices from the colonizer to produce new ways of telling stories.

I use Ortiz's definition of neoculturation to identify how Tohe makes sense of Diné histories and rhetorics. The assimilation process for the Navajos meant the loss of culture, traditional practices, and language. Yet, it also meant the learning of new a culture. In Tohe's version of this history, the students at boarding schools did not only experience loss and the learning of a new culture, they also actively resisted the American culture and retained some of their Navajo culture. What emerges from this contact is what Ortiz terms the new cultural phenomena or neoculturation. This phenomena is revealed in Tohe's poetry. Moreover, Tohe reveals that this contact or site of contact comes with borders that "divide and unite" people, ideas, cultures, languages,

and worldviews (Licona 17). This complicated space is defined by a colonial situation and is identified as third space by Licona, because it results in spaces of ambiguity. I use third space to analyze the colonial situation described by Tohe to reveal the contradictions and ambiguities that result when two or more cultures merge together. The analysis reveals that even though Navajos were perplexed by colonialism, they survived by adopting and resisting the new culture. I used theoretical sources that set up a binary relationship to identify the colonial situation for my readers. What is revealed from this analysis is that the lines between the oppressor and the oppressed were blurred. Instead, new identities emerged including the coyote and Joe Babes. These characters were able to cross boundaries because they were third-space subjects. Navajo concepts like *hozho*, *hochxo* and *nitsh'i* contextualized the Navajo perspectives that were present in the poetry. These concepts help to reveal Navajo cultural nuances that could easily be invisible to the non-Navajo reader. Like Tohe, I wanted the Navajo experience and perception to be made visible in my analysis. In order to make those who were made nameless and invisible to the American society, Tohe tells the stories of Navajos who were dehumanized, made invisible or were nameless. Tohe reveals that colonization continues even after the boarding schools no longer exist. Neocolonialism, racism, oppression and even internalized oppression continue to plague the Navajo people. Telling their stories gives them a name, an identity, visibility, and voice. Telling their stories allows their lived experiences to survive.

CHAPTER 5: RHETORICAL SOVEREIGNTY FOR SELF-DETERMINATION:
REMEMBERING, RECOGNIZING, REVIVING AND (RE)PRESENTING
RHETORICS OF SURVIVAL

For many people in my situation, residing away from my homeland, writing is the means for returning, rejuvenation, and for restoring our spirits to the state of 'hozho,' or beauty, which is the basis of Navajo philosophy.

---Luci Taphonso, "The Kaw River Rushes Eastward"

Writing is a way for me to claim my voice, my heritage, my stories, my culture, my people, and my history.

---Laura Tohe, "Introduction" *No Parole Today*

Richard Scott Lyons asks, "What Do American Indians Want From Writing?" I attempt to answer this question by examining the (hi)stories of Native Americans, particularly how historical trauma has shaped Native American students. I include my story as a Native American student and instructor to provide my fellow scholars in rhetoric and composition with a rare, but necessary perspective. When possible, I embrace the survival stories told by other published Native American students and scholars. I also incorporate the stories told by historians, psychologists, and theorists as they pertain to the topic of this chapter. I complete this chapter by offering suggestions for tribal college and university writing curriculum based on the examination in this chapter, the conclusions drawn from previous chapters, and from my lived experiences. I use story, rather than history or articles here, because I grew up understanding that stories impart knowledge. Moreover, stories are inviting, that is, stories allow the listener to participate. I learned very early that stories were a way of understanding the world and unlike Western theory, they are *our* reasoning method for presenting, remembering, recognizing, and reviving knowledge. Stories were told to entertain, inspire, remind,

strengthen, and teach. When I had a problem and sought out my mother or father's advice, they didn't respond quickly with instruction. They sat quietly for some time and would finally respond, not with advice, but with a story that resembled my dilemma. These stories came from their lived experiences, other peoples' lived experiences, traditional Navajo stories, and/or the Holy Bible. Storytelling instills trust and compassion among the storyteller, audience, characters, and dilemmas. Listening to stories developed my patience, my listening skills, my critical thinking abilities, my analytical skills, and my abilities to reflect. Storytelling helped me to understand my connection to my family, my community, and my history as a Diné Asdzáán or a Navajo woman. Navajo poet (or storyteller), Luci Tapahonso states, "There is such love of stories among Navajo people that it seems each time a group of more than two gather, the dialogue eventually evolves into sharing stories and memories, laughing, and teasing. To be included in this is a distinct way of showing affection and appreciation for each other. So it is true that daily conversations strengthen us, as do the old stories of our ancestors that have been told since the beginning of the Navajo time" (x). A storyteller learns and hones the ability to listen, to observe, to remember, and to share. In this chapter, it is with much affection and appreciation that I share one of my stories, a story about survival.

"Why are you always quiet?" my colleague in graduate school asked me. I was surprised by her question because I come from a large family of six sisters and two brothers who did not hesitate to tell me to "be quiet" or "settle down" when I was younger. My mother and father reminded me, even, to mind what I said. I suppose over the years, I had finally taken to my family's teachings. Over the last ten years, I heard

similar questions and/or remarks made about my quiet nature from faculty and graduate students at the University of Arizona (UA). They would also usually follow their questions with a remark about how s/he had Native American students in their classes who, like me, were also quiet. Most people would identify me as Native American or American Indian, mostly because they know very little about the Indigenous people of this continent. Most Americans know very little about Indigenous people; they know what they learned in high school or college (if they took an ethnic studies course). These Americans do not know that over 500 tribes still exist and are struggling to coexist with a dominant society. Fortunately, I've had the great privilege of excelling in school and have found my way into a doctoral program in Rhetoric, Composition, and the Teaching of English at the UA. As I embarked on my education at the UA, I found myself stuck in a contradictory and tricky place. I had to remind myself during class discussions that words are powerful. Words have the ability to create and heal, but also to harm and hurt others. Yet, I also had to remind myself that I had to earn participation points that would guarantee the superior grades I desired.

While at the UA, I've also had the wonderful opportunity to teach courses that were specifically designed to retain Native American students. The assignments in these classes were equivalent to the freshmen composition courses offered at the UA, but the texts, content, and purpose focused on Native American literatures, histories, controversies, sustainability, and empowerment. These experiences allowed me to argue that writing classes, specifically first-year English courses, need to meet the specific needs of Native American students because these students have a distinct cultural and

colonial history that directly and indirectly informs their academic participation and success. Colonial history and neocolonialism inform the complex identities of Native Americans today, including Native American students. Many minority students, including Native American students, transport their cultural ways of knowing into the classroom, including ideologies and practices of their tribal communities and/or the (internalized) oppression that is prevalent in most colonized communities. These features of a colonized tribal community show up in student writing abilities and in their class participation (or lack thereof), and have thus played a role in their success or failure in Western institutions. Colonial histories have crippling effects on the identities and lifeways of Native Americans. According to historian and *curandera* Yolanda Chávez Leyva, “historical trauma, or soul wound, is a result of colonization. It is a wound we experience in our spirits, our minds, and our bodies” (5). The trauma from colonization, including the genocide, ethnic cleansing, forced assimilation, forced removal, boarding schools, and land and language loss, has wounded the structure and well-being of Native American people. Moreover, Leyva tells us that the trauma of colonialism can be found in our classrooms. She writes, “The trauma of colonialism lives on in our classrooms. We can see it as a deep pain that manifests itself as anxieties, uncertainties, and unrest and other times in more subtle expressions” (5). Leyva illustrates the pain expressed by students when learning Chicana/o history (for the first time), a painful, but true account of a colonial past. Similarly, many Native American students have not had the privilege of learning their histories and do not have the skill or vocabulary to express the various types of traumas that have impacted them. When my Native American students did learn

about the historical trauma, they expressed pain and anger. Mostly, they expressed resentment about the fact that they were not able to learn about themselves up until that point.

This fact already gives Native American students additional challenges when pursuing higher education. All students who begin their academic career at a university will find that they will meet some challenges when they first attend at a university, including those felt when transitioning to the new academic expectations. Most new students experience culture shock and homesickness. Most students struggle to make independent decisions regarding their academics, most of it without parental consent. Many college students may experience financial hardship. In addition to these challenges, Native Americans also experience racial/tribal isolation, academic unpreparedness, ESL related issues (but no assistance), lack of confidence, inability to connect to mainstream topics and disciplines, discomfort and loneliness in large classrooms, lack of familiarity with the college structure, oppressed mindsets, alcohol and/or drug abuse, and familial and/or community responsibilities.

In this chapter, I remind us that colonial histories have defined and continue to define academic and non-academic spaces that produce the rejection and/or conflict between colonizer and colonized groups. Moreover, Native American students, a colonized group, are continually subjected to the rejection and conflict from colonial spaces that perpetuate neocolonialism. I advocate that Native American students deserve the opportunity to trust that higher educational institutions are spaces that welcome and

encourage their success. Moreover, I advise that colleges and universities accommodate this group by helping them to fulfill their individual and community goals. For colleges and universities that value and promote diversity, it should be their goal to assist in the restoration of colonized groups, to bring awareness about the destructions of (neo)colonialism and to dismantle colonial spaces that exist and are perpetuated in their institutions. I offer some suggestions directly to rhetoric and composition departments about how to indigenize their curriculum to create a learning conducive environment for Native American students. My suggestions are based on the goals of Native American communities, which are to promote nation-building and develop self-determined societies. According to David D. Wilkins, Professor of Law, “Self-determination, for both tribes and individual Indians, was conceived as the linchpin doctrine of a new federal policy aimed at strengthening the concept of tribal self-governance while reinforcing the so-called trust relationship between tribes and the federal government. The concept of self-determination was first articulated by President Nixon when he stressed in his Indian policy statement ‘self-determination without termination’” (187). All or most tribal communities seek self-determination. Tribes want the authority to rebuild, restore, and re-energize their societies, cultures and languages.

Bryan McKinley Jones Brayboy defines a tribal critical race theory (TribalCrit) for education with nine tenets, the central tenet being that colonization is endemic, rather than race. Brayboy also includes the tenet that “tribal autonomy, self-determination, self-identification, and ultimately tribal sovereignty” are desired to be obtained by tribal groups (433). Brayboy defines self-determination as “the ability to define what happens

with autonomy, how, why, and to what ends, rather than being forced to ask permission from the United States”(434). According to Andrew Garrod and Colleen Larimore, faculty at Dartmouth, “The power to decide, or self-determination, is the fine line that separates cultural adaptation from cultural assimilation. Young Native American professionals are using Western economics, politics, law, medicine, anthropology, and even education to try to regain this basic right of self-determination for their tribes”(16).

Many Native scholars recognize and accept that self-determination is the central goal for many Native Nations. Moreover, many Native Americans have their own interpretations and/or parallel concepts about what self-determination means for them. According to Kathryn Manuelito, Navajo historian, “There are many terms in the Navajo language for self-determination. These terms include *t’áá hwé’ ajít’éego* (do for yourself), *t’áá awotibee ánit’í* (persevere), *biniyé ánit’í* (persevere with a goal in mind), *ánih ádá’ ánit’í* (do it for yourself), *na’ak’ih yázhjilt’i* (plan and talk for yourself), *ádánatsáhákees* (think and plan for yourself), and *áshí ba’áhíshyáago* (I will take care of matters myself)” (79). Today, many Native scholars are beginning to recognize and examine the contradictions, pitfalls *and* potentials when Native Nations draw from Western knowledge to strive to become self-determined individuals and nations. Similarly, I infer from this space of contradiction and pull from both Western and Native knowledges to develop suggestions about writing curriculum for Native American students. Writing, then, in or outside of the classroom will benefit Native Americans if it allows them to contribute to the healing and re-building of communities. According to Paulo Freire, “It is only when the oppressed find the oppressor out and become involved

in the organized struggle for their liberation that they begin to believe in themselves. This discovery cannot be purely intellectual but must involve action; nor can it be limited to mere activism, but must include serious reflection; only then will it be a *praxis*” (65). A writing assignment that considers the goal of self-determination, for example, may allow a Native American student the opportunity to reflect about how their educational choices may or may not impact their communities. First-year writing classrooms are crucial to all students entering an institution because they teach valuable analytical and rhetorical skills that are necessary for student success. These courses are just as important for Native American students, yet these courses need to be designed to empower the holistic experience of Native Americans who seek self-determination. First, it is important to remind educators that Native American students are survivors of colonial histories and trauma. As a writing instructor at the University of Arizona, I recognized the importance to continue this discussion about colonial histories and trauma in regards to Native American student success.

Native American Students

I had the good fortune of teaching designated Native American sections of English 101 and 102 from fall 2005 to spring 2010. Most of my students were Diné, as they were the largest tribal group neighboring the University of Arizona. I also had students who identified as Tohono O’odham, White Mountain Apache, Gila River, and others from other Arizona and non-Arizona tribes. In English 101 I assigned poetry written by Native American authors, most of which were from the Southwest region of

the United States, including Luci Tapahonso and Laura Tohe. I gave the students the opportunity to discuss poetry in small and large groups. Students worked in small groups to closely read poetry. Then, as a large group, students reported their thoughts through large group discussion. In English 102 I assigned articles, essays and other non-fiction texts written by Native American authors and texts that reflected Native American issues and controversies. The University of Arizona Writing Program requires all English 102 students to write four essays, including the rhetorical analysis, the controversy analysis, the public argument, and the reflection. I use these major assignments to give students the chance to analyze Native American arguments and/or controversies. The rhetorical analysis, for instance, gives students the chance to closely examine an argument produced by a Native American author. Students will identify and critique Western and Indigenous rhetorical strategies and devices used by an author to persuade an intended audience. This allows students to hone rhetorical analysis skills while also learning about issues that pertain to Native Americans and their colonial histories and trauma.

A majority of the discussion in this class revolved around Native specific issues, including sovereignty, land rights, alcoholism, blood quantum, histories, oppression, language loss, nation-building and empowerment. I also gave students the opportunity to write an argumentative essay. Most students chose Native-specific topics when they realized that they could write about these issues from intellectual and authentic spaces of their lived experiences. Class discussion was lively and students often commented that they never knew and understood their own histories. Many also expressed a sense of pride in their heritage and for their ancestors' abilities to survive.

When I began to have conversations with my Native American students about their success as writers and communicators at the university, I realized that they, too, were always being accused of being quiet, and even sometimes described by instructors as “too quiet.” Rather than allowing myself to be displeased by these kinds of remarks, I wanted to understand these characterizations that amounted to accusations with implications for Native American student success. Particularly, were these accusations an indication of something more? Was the “quietness” a cultural response? Was it a response to colonial silencing? Why was I quiet? Was it because I was so used to identifying as the colonized or oppressed person? How and why were Native American students different than their non-Native peers? If so, how and why are they different? How has colonial history and neocolonialism influenced their educational and learning processes? How have and how might institutions meet the needs of these students, particularly in writing classrooms? These are the kinds of questions that come to my mind as I begin to think about Native American student performance and success. Moreover, what does success mean for Native Americans? What are the educational goals of Native American communities? These questions were not going to be easy to answer because of the ongoing colonial situation. Moreover, Native Americans are not a homogenous group of people. We, however, do have a shared colonial history that resulted in the shared oppressive living conditions on reservation lands for most Indigenous people in North America. According to Sandy Grande, Professor of Education,

'Indian Country' persists as both a metaphoric space and a geographic place, one that profoundly shapes the subjectivities of those who traverse it. Specifically, the relationship between American Indian communities and the surrounding (white) border towns not only shapes the ways Indians perceive and construct the whitestream greed, but also their views of themselves. Thus, while reservation borders exist as vestiges of forced removal, colonialist domination, and whitestream greed, they are also understood as marking the defensive perimeters between cultural integrity and wholesale appropriation. They are the literal dividing lines between 'us' and 'them,' demarcating the borders of this nation's only internal sovereigns (110).

Since most Native American communities have been separated from the larger American society by reservation borders, many Native Americans have limited access to the dominant culture. Today, most reservations have a high unemployment rate and lack access to education because reservation borders perpetuate an "us" and "them" mentality. According to Grande, "Indian education was never simply about the desire to 'civilize' or even deculturalize a people, but rather, from its very inception, it was a project designed to colonize Indian minds as a means of gaining access to Indian labor, land, and resources" (19). Providing free education to Native Americans, then, has never been about their acculturation for success in mainstream society. Many public schools on reservations "failed to nurture intellectual development" and do not promote access to retain Native American cultures and languages (Grande 20).

Reservation students continue to lack excitement and participation in schools because they are culturally detached from the Western modes of education. They have outdated learning resources, and are disempowered by external and internal oppression. Ethnographer Susan U. Philips, who researched the Warm Springs reservation in Oregon, concludes that due to cultural differences that exist among the Native American and

Anglo American people, the Native American students' social and cultural upbringing create challenges of communication and learning in schools. Philips' research focuses on elementary schools, but her point and research are essential in revealing the differences between Native students and non-Native students. Philips observed both Anglo and Native American communities and first and sixth graders from the Warm Springs reservation and from Madras (a school off the reservation). Her research reveals that Native Americans and Anglo Americans have differences in listening behavior, response to talk, and attention to speaker. According to Philips, "The differences between Anglo and Indian ways of conveying attention to the speaker have implications for the way in which Indian speakers determine whether they are in fact being attended to. From the Anglo point of view, Indian listeners use fewer sources of information to provide evidence of attention to the speaker. There is less back channel work in both the visual and auditory channels in the Indian interaction" (55). Warm Springs gave less visual and auditory responses to their speakers to show attention than their Anglo counterparts. Philips also notes differences in student expression. For instance, there is a lack of excitement expressed by the Indian children, as opposed to the Anglo children who clap and yell out "Yah!" when told they were going on a trip or doing something fun. Furthermore, Philips states, "teachers tolerate and even encourage a much higher level of verbal excitation in the classroom than is acceptable in the Warm Springs community (Philips 105). Teachers in the non-Native schools understand that this active participation of Anglo students is confirmation of their attention. Another important difference that Philips points out includes the competition to speak, which exists primarily among the

Anglo students, but does not exist in the Indian community. Some of this, according to Philips, is informed by the children's environment. Philips states, "the children are raised in an environment that discourages drawing attention to oneself by acting as though one is better than another" (118). These cultural differences contributed to how success was determined at the Warm Springs reservation. Although dated, this ethnography reminds me of the many Native American students who are stigmatized as non-participatory, disconnected, and "too quiet" by writing instructors and other professors at colleges and universities.

In the essay, "Teaching American Indian Students," Michelle Grijalva describes a similar experience while teaching a writing class to a group of Native American (Hopi and Navajo) Tuba City high school students at the University of Arizona during a summer enrichment program. Grijalva acknowledges and analyzes the silent behavior displayed by the Native students. She states, "The students were incredibly reticent, enveloped in a silence that seemed impenetrable. They did not want to open up and certainly did not want to talk about their cultural traditions" (44). She notes that the students began opening up to her only when she began telling her traditional stories of the *curandera*. Grijalva blames "conquest, subjugation, and colonialism" for the shame and silence. By approaching her students from her own cultural context, Grijalva was able to persuade the students to discuss their own cultural backgrounds. Because this approach worked for her Native American students, she found herself designing assignments that allowed students to write stories about their lived experiences. Grijalva reminds her readers that "American Indian literature was not being taught in the high school [during

this time], even though in 1988 ninety-seven percent of Tuba High's 1400 students from Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, and Utah were Native American, giving it the largest Native American student body for any high school in the country" (42).

Native American students do not get the opportunity to learn about themselves during their kindergarten through high school education because most attend public schools that value standard-based education that relies on an ethno-centric curriculum and that does not attend to Native American histories and practices. Today, most Native American high school students learn the histories of European Americans, are required to learn a foreign language (rather than learning their own even when their languages are on the brink of extinction), and are ill-prepared for collegiate study in all subject areas due to a lack of resources and inadequate teachers. Robert Bennett (Rosebud Sioux), a product of public schools and a student at Dartmouth College states,

When I came to Dartmouth as a young man, I realized that my life was not well balanced because I had never learned the Lakota language and culture from my grandmother. Before I came to New Hampshire, a former Boston school teacher told me that many New Englanders think that 'all Indians are dead.' In a frightening sense, so did I. At Dartmouth, I was shocked to realize two important truths: I am an Indian and I am indeed alive. When I first came to New Hampshire, I was at a loss because I could not answer the questions asked about Native American life. Hell, I could not even answer my own questions! I took a Native American studies course my sophomore year and learned more about Indians than I had in twenty years of living as one (137).

Bennett's story was published in 1997, but I can attest as a Native American scholar that his story is reflective of many Native American college students today, including my own experience. Often, if a Native American student wants to learn about the self, s/he will have to turn to Ethnic Studies programs, like American Indian Studies. Many Native

Americans end up pursuing a minor in American Indian studies. Most students take the Native American classes to understand the self, which is often a complex identity that is made up of two or more worldviews and practices. Learning about their colonial histories and their complex and dynamic identities allows them to understand the connection they have with their chosen discipline area(s) and their connection to their diverse discourse communities.

Native American Identities

I provide the claims and approaches made by Eduardo Duran and Bonnie Duran and Michael Tlanusta Garrette and Eugene F. Pichette to reveal the challenges of understanding the complexities of defining a Native American identity and/or the challenges students face in the context of both the legacy of colonialism and ongoing colonialism. According to Duran and Duran, psychologists,

Native American people have been subjected to one of the most systemic attempts at genocide in the world's history. At the beginning of the colonization process in North America there were over 10 million Native American people living on the continent. By the year 1900 there were over 250,000 people left (Thornton 1986). For over five hundred years Europeans have attempted to subjugate, exterminate, assimilate, and oppress Native American people. The effects of this subjugation and extermination have been devastating both physically and psychologically (28).

Moreover, neocolonialism or on-going colonialism that attempts to annihilate distinct Native lifeways as ways of self knowing are still prevalent in Native American societies today. Today, many tribes are in legal battles with the United States of America. Most of these battles pertain to the survival and rights of these distinct groups, including rights

and privileges to sovereignty, land, education, language, economics, and health. Native American tribes struggle to survive, but grim statistics continue to report the destruction of Native Americans. Garrette and Pichette, psychologists, report statistics that reveal that Native Americans have higher rates in suicide, alcoholism, poverty and unemployment compared to other cultural and racial groups in America. They argue that these social ills resulted from a colonial history (5). The loss of land, language, and culture resulted in perplexed communities that became fraught with sociological and psychological turmoil. The historical contact between Native Americans and early colonists included coerced assimilation, where the colonizing group forced more of their values, ideas and practices on the group being colonized.

Duran and Duran list six stages of colonization that Native Americans endured. They include First Contact, Economic Competition, Invasion War Period, Subjugation and Reservation Period, Boarding School Period, and Forced Relocation and Termination Period (32-35). During the first contact stage, the people experienced a trauma when colonists invaded and disrupted the close relationship that Native Americans had with the land. During the changes that followed, the Native Americans who originally lived off the land had to find new ways to sustain themselves, which encouraged trade and a new way of life. Wars were prevalent in these contact areas and many Native Americans were brutally attacked and forcibly removed from their homelands. Many were put on unfamiliar reservation lands that did not meet the traditional needs of the tribes. Treaties and laws were developed by colonists to subdue Native Americans. Education in European lifeways became mandatory. Finally, many Native Americans found that they

had to relocate to foreign urban areas because their group was considered terminated (34). Duran and Duran argue that these traumas continue to manifest in Native American societies. The external oppression described by Duran and Duran continues in different ways, but also results in an internalized oppression. Internalized oppression occurs when the oppressed group adopts the values and beliefs of the oppressor and acts out against their own group to perpetuate an in-house oppression. My intention is to remind readers that our Native students come from these oppressed societies and from the traumatic histories described by Duran and Duran. Accordingly, Garrette and Pichette urge that these histories and societies create distinct sociological conditions that inform the psychological well-being of an individual.

Garrette and Pichette, like Duran and Duran, suggest that colonial trauma and surviving “traditional” Native American practices need to be recognized when meeting the psychological needs of this group. Garrette and Pichette argue that understanding Native American acculturation allows psychiatrists and counselors to meet the distinct and diverse needs of Native American patients. Acculturation is distinct from assimilation in that it does not imply the erasure or subordination of one culture to another but is the process that occurs when two or more cultures contact and an exchange of ideas and practices occurs, thus changing each of the cultures in contact. Garrette and Pichette identify five “levels of acculturation” to identify Native Americans who they intend to treat for psychological damages resulting from oppressions experienced as a result of colonialism. Garrett and Pichette assert that modern-day Native Americans can be classified into one of five groups: the traditional, marginal, bicultural, assimilated, and

pantraditional. Garrett and Pichette conclude that the most acculturated Native Americans, or those they classify as the assimilated, are likely the most successful when existing in mainstream society. The five classifications:

1. Traditional: May or may not speak English, but generally speak and think in their native language, hold only traditional values and beliefs and practice only traditional tribal customs and methods of worship.
 2. Marginal: May speak both the native language and English; may not, however, fully accept the cultural heritage and practices of their tribal groups nor fully identify with mainstream cultural values and behaviors.
 3. Bicultural: Generally accepted by dominant society and tribal society/nation; simultaneously able to know, accept, and practice both mainstream values/behaviors and the traditional values and beliefs of their cultural heritage.
 4. Assimilated: Accepted by dominant society; embrace only mainstream cultural values, behaviors, and expectations.
 5. Pantraditional: Assimilated Native Americans who have made conscious choice to return to the 'old ways.' They are generally accepted by dominant society but seek to embrace previously lost traditional cultural values, beliefs, and practices of their tribal heritage
- (6)

These categories are clearly limiting because Native Americans are not a homogenous group, but are federally recognized groups of people with cultural and linguistic distinctions. These groups, however, share the experience of assimilation. These categories presented by Garrette and Pichette show how psychologists can begin to think about meeting the specific needs of Native American patients. I extend their work by applying their research to Native American students because they provide a concrete perspective of assimilation and acculturation and how these processes inform the identities of Native American students. Native American students are informed by their lived experiences and their communities. These experiences, people, and places

determine how students would identify on Garrette and Pichette's classification scale. These classifiers suggest that Native Americans, then, would tend to factionalize into different groups that are based on traditional and non-traditional values. However, who holds the authority to determine how tradition gets defined creates friction, contradiction, and strife in these communities.

New Elders and Young Traditionalists: Considering the Implications of Contested and Competing Notions of Tradition for the Writing Classroom and American Indian Writing

Scott Lyons in "Crying for Revision: Postmodern Indians and Rhetorics of Tradition" further complicates the identity of Native Americans by examining "rhetorics of tradition." To complicate the rhetorics of tradition, Lyons provides a personal narrative set on the White Earth reservation in Minnesota at an all-Indian Anishanabe language retreat. He identifies two separate and distinct groups at the retreat, the "new elders" and the "young traditionalists" (126). The new elders are "fluent speakers of the Anishanabe language, very traditional in their demeanor and presence, and well aware of traditional Anishanabe lifestyles and customs from ricing to beading" (126) The young traditionalists are "students, professionals, and high-school dropouts who advocate a return to 'tradition' on a variety of fronts: religious, aesthetic, epistemic, political, and linguistic" (127) At the retreat, the new elders ask all in attendance to sing three Christian hymnals in the Ojibway language. According to Lyons, the young traditionalists disconnect from the new elders in their rejection of Christianity. When the young

traditionalists are asked to participate in the singing of hymnals, they laugh and walk away. After the new elders are done, the young traditionalists sing two traditional honor songs and a parody of a Pepsi jingle, “You got the right one baby, uh huh huh huh” (126). It is evident to Lyons, that both of these groups are responding to historical oppression by competing to define tradition. Lyons states,

Two groups, different but connected and multiply interpolated by contradictory discourses, are united in the production of resistance to white domination and cultural annihilation yet divided in apparent conflict with each other. New elders, it would seem, pursue tradition by participating in a communal retreat that promotes their language, sense of community, and the spiritual emphasis of life and culture, and Indian-Christian form of tradition as it is lived out and felt in reservation woodlands. Young traditionalists seem to share these concerns and motivations but object to the ‘white’ Christianity of the elders in the form of a slight, which, to the elders surely was anything but ‘Indian’ in nature. This contest, then, can be said to be over the strategic deployment of ethnicity: the inscription of tradition and the practice and selection of aesthetic forms” (127).

“Tradition” is defined differently by these two distinct groups. The disparity within this tribal group makes it almost impossible to pin-point exactly what the Anishanabe tradition is. Lyons describes this rhetoric as “mixed-blood rhetoric—future oriented while invoking the past, bifocal, and communal...played out as a contest of forms and appropriations” (129) The Anishanabe community is reflective of many Native American communities that have experienced the colonizing efforts to eradicate language and culture. Moreover, these kinds of disparities result in political factions that are divided by rhetorics of tradition. What is evident from Lyon’s analysis of these two groups is that they are self-determining groups. They determined what they believed was important to their survival. Both groups determine that cultural practices, like language or drumming,

community gatherings, songs, and resistance to *and* acceptance of dominant ideologies were essential to their surviving tradition.

These rhetorics of tradition are also informed by external and internal oppression. These oppressions inform the way community members respond to one another. Moreover, these rhetorics inform the way that Native American students view themselves in relation to others. According to Joshua K. Mihesuah, Comanche administrator, “Internalized colonization (called the ‘boarding school syndrome’ among many Native activists), is the phenomenon of believing that whites and their culture are superior, accepting negative stereotypes about Natives, not questioning biased classroom lectures, and acting negatively toward other Native Americans” (194). It is internalized colonization, according to Mihesuah, that many students do not succeed in colleges and universities. It is when students are able to fully understand how colonization has changed and continues to (re)define Native American identities that they are able to come to terms with their lived identities. This understanding of the self develops self-esteem and the empowerment to succeed in academic spaces, including the writing classroom.

American Indian Writing

Juan C. Guerra, in the article “The Place of Intercultural Literacy in the Writing Classroom” argues that many minority students who come into the universities are obligated to change who they are if they want to be successful. Guerra states, “If the [students] want to become members in good standing of the academic community, many of them, are expected to change their ‘ways with words’ their cultural values, and their

social expectations” (Guerra 249). Guerra questions composition instructors on their intention in the writing classroom by suggesting that writing instructors will change the student or must modify their approach. Guerra suggests that writing instructors need to teach students about discourse communities, particularly “to explore the clash of discourses and ideas” (Guerra 260). Doing this, according to Guerra, welcomes the students’ voices and contextual background, which allow the students to embrace their individual ideas.

Persuasive composition and/or rhetorical writing are taught in writing classes throughout the nation. James A. Berlin argues that rhetoric, as a Western Grecian concept, continues to find its place and domination in contemporary studies of rhetoric. Berlin argues that rhetoric as it was practiced and taught in ancient Greece should not dominate in our time because it “is a product of the economic, social, and political conditions of a specific historical moment” (Berlin, 115). Berlin further asserts that the rhetoric that exists in our contemporary or current society should be examined, which would allow the voice of women and other “silenced groups” to be heard. Moreover, it will allow the introduction of alternative perspectives to the conversations about rhetoric. The inclusion of these alternative perspectives allows for more substantial discussion about rhetorics and writing as a way of knowing the self or more appropriately the Indigenous collective self. This kind of writing would allow Native American students to write from the perspective of an individual who is part of a group that is working toward collective self-determination. Despite Berlin’s claims, the traditional approaches to writing and rhetoric are often still privileged in writing classrooms.

Malea Powell, professor of English, opens up a discussion about the way different people “read and listen from a different space” (Powell 398). She accuses the “discipline of composition and rhetoric of deliberately unseeing its participation in imperialism” (398). Powell argues that compositionists need to begin listening to the differing voices. These varied voices contribute to the world in new and different ways because many of them have been historically silenced and others have been changed over time because of neocolonialism. Like Powell, compositionists Esha Niyogi De and Donna Uthus Gregory believe that the writing classroom can be a colonizing place for some students, specifically when studying persuasive discourse. Through an ethnographic study, De and Gregory are able to observe students’ writing. On one account, they describe a student’s writing as, “It is as if the conventions of logical analysis [that a student was] learning in the composition class were appearing as disruptive forces in her expressive writing” (De and Gregory 127). The authors further suggest that the academic discourse presents students with “hegemonic language” which is “at odds with their [students] customary semantic moves” (De and Gregory 127). When students write for the institution, they often have to adopt a writing persona that meets the standards of academia. This persona or voice frequently disregards the customary communication practices of minoritized groups. De and Gregory agree that the persuasive discourse (in writing classrooms) is a Western phenomenon that colonizes students.

Like Powell, De, and Gregory, Córdova accuses the university of perpetuating colonizing spaces. Córdova identifies “three canons of the University” that enables the colonizer to maintain “privileged positions” (22). According to Cordova, the first occurs

when the colonizer claims a value for objectivity and accuses and devalues marginalized perspectives as subjective. Rather than recognizing that they hone a Western perspective, they claim that their perspective is objective and therefore more accurate than other non-Western perspectives. The second canon enforces the colonizer perspective by privileging Western “literature, history, and philosophy” (22). The third canon favors standards that are developed with a cultural bias. These standards include entrance exams like SAT and GREs. Córdova shows us that the University is indeed a colonizing space because it is set up to separate and identify superior and inferior groups that are based on Eurocentrism. In addition, individualism is made of objectification that disempowers members of a tribe and others for whom families and places are means of a collective self-understanding.

To respond to these colonizing spaces in the classroom, Scott Lyons asks the question, “What Do American Indians Want From Writing?”. He responds by arguing that rhetorical sovereignty should be taught in schools (kindergarten through the graduate level), specifically, instructors should allow American Indian students to approach writing from their “rhetorical situation,” which differs from the average American student because most American Indians identify collectively by their tribal histories. Lyons defines the Indian rhetorical situation as the context from which they emerged. He argues that Indian students have the “inherent right and ability...to determine their own communicative needs and desires” (449). Like other American Indians, Lyons argues that American Indians have the right to and should be working toward collective self-determination. He extends this argument to writing by defining the Indian rhetorical

situation. Lyons defines the Indian rhetorical situation as the context from which American Indians emerged, including their “Indian voice, speaking or writing in an ongoing context of colonization and setting at least some of the terms of debate” (462). Lyons also notes that Anglo Americans and American Indians define “sovereignty” differently because of their differing situations. Lyons provides Kant’s explanation of sovereignty, which he says is defined as a nation-state that is governed by the “public,” which is made up of “individuals.” Lyons notes that, in contrast, American Indians would define sovereignty as “representing themselves as a people” (454), a people with shared values and customs. Consequently, Native Americans, as a people or tribal groups, are collectively intent on producing self-governing social and cultural systems that draw from and meet the specific tribal needs.

A specific need (for many tribal groups) is the perpetuation of cultural and sacred knowledge through stories to maintain a connection to history, place, communities and identities. According to Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Maori educator, “Indigenous peoples want to tell our own stories, write our own versions, in our own ways, for our own purposes. It is not simply about giving an oral account or genealogical naming of the land and the events which raged over it, but a very powerful need to give testimony to and restore a spirit, to bring back into existence a world fragmented and dying” (28). Moreover, most Indigenous groups have experienced the silencing that comes along when their histories have been written (by supposedly credible writers) and depict Indigenous people incorrectly. Moreover, those historically colonized by Westerners are usually lumped together in research, which inevitably flattens out and erases the individual, tribal and

community histories that could have been told by reliable Indigenous sources. According to Indigenous educator, Linda Tuhiwai Smith,

Travellers' stories were generally the experiences and observations of white men whose interactions with indigenous 'societies' or 'peoples' were constructed around their own cultural views of gender and sexuality. Observations made by indigenous women, for example, resonated with views about the role of women in European societies based on Western notions of culture, religion, race, and class" (8).

The stories that are mentioned by Smith have prevailed in the United States in regards to Native Americans. These stories override and silence the subject being written about. Jennifer Denetdale, Navajo historian, provides a specific example of the mis-construction and ramifications of historical research. Since contact with Europeans, Navajos or Diné were silenced by the images and ideas that created pan-Indian identities that flattened out distinct or specific traditional Diné identities. By memorializing "the Indian," the distinctness among tribes and nations are not perpetuated. For instance, in "Remembering Our Grandmothers: Navajo Women and the Power of Oral Tradition," Jennifer Denetdale argues that Navajo women are made invisible and silenced by stories and theories created by Western anthropologists. According to Denetdale, Navajo men, such as Chief Manuelito, received greater recognition by early ethnographers. Denetdale argues that Manuelito's wife, Asdzaa Tl'ogi, is just as crucial to the survival and continuity of the people's traditional social organizations surrounding the Navajo clan system. She compares *Asdzaa Tl'ogi* to Changing Woman, a Navajo female deity, for creating a clan group and for providing for her people. Changing Woman (also known as *Asdzaa Nadleehe*) was born for darkness and dawn on Gobernador Knob, a mountain

sacred to Diné in New Mexico. Changing Woman created the first human beings and the first Navajo clans from her body. She gave birth to Monster Slayer and Born for Water to protect the people from the monsters that plagued the Earth. Denetdale argues that these details pertaining to Navajo women and the Navajo tradition have been silenced by Western patriarchal systems of research that focus on Navajo men. Furthermore, Denetdale argues that ethnographers and historians fail to acknowledge that the Diné identified according to a matrilineal clan system and lived and valued a matri-focal lifestyle. These kinds of knowledges become extinct because they are not valued in Western institutions. Moreover, oppressed societies can begin to perpetuate the devaluing of these knowledges as well. When Native students are given the opportunity to write outside the boxes imposed by academic institutions, it provides the opportunity for them to write from these spaces of marginalization. Most Native Americans simply want the opportunity to voice their ideas and concerns about the communities that they live in. Most Native Americans want to be able to tell their stories of survival. However, most students, after becoming educated about the devastation of colonialism, want to contribute to their communities in ways that produce a healthy and thriving self-governing group of people. My contribution includes the following suggestions for tribal colleges and universities. I recognize that colleges and universities were established by tribes with the intention of recognizing and representing tribal values and cultures and are centered on moving toward collective self-governing institutions.

Suggestions for the Tribal College

There are currently 36 tribal colleges in the United States. According to the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC) website, “Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) enroll students from over 250 federally recognized tribes. Those colleges vary in enrollment (size), focus (liberal arts, technical skills, sciences), location (woodlands, desert, frozen tundra, rural reservation, urban), and student population (all or mostly American Indian, many tribes represented or only a few). However, tribal identity is the core of every Tribal College, and they all share the mission of tribal self-preservation and service to their communities” (AIHEC) Tribal colleges were developed after the “self-determination movement” in response to “compulsory Western education” that was found to be ineffective and assimilative to Native students (Heavyrunner et.al. 6). Heavyrunner et.al. report that “Tribal colleges have dual missions: to rebuild, reinforce and explore traditional tribal cultures, using unique curricula and institutional settings; and to address Western models of learning by providing courses in traditional disciplines that are transferable to four-year institutions” (7). To address the needs of Native American students, tribal colleges began to emerge across the US. Yet, many of these colleges recruit non-Native instructors who have little knowledge about tribal identity and traditional tribal cultures. Many of these courses, then, are still reflective of the courses taught at non-tribal colleges. Though it is important to develop courses that are transferable to neighboring universities, it is also essential that Native American students are offered the opportunity to a tribal specific education.

A writing classroom is an excellent forum for tribal specific education, particularly one that promotes self-determination by valuing traditional cultures and Western models that will enhance the survival of a tribal community. Most tribes, for instance, have a philosophy of interconnectedness. Diné College applies “*Sá'ah Naaghái Bik'eh Hózhóón* principles to advance quality student learning through *Nitsáhákees* (Thinking), *Nahatá* (Planning), *Iiná* (Living) and *Siih Hasin* (Assuring)” (*Diné College*). According to their website, Diné College is “located in Tsaile, Arizona, serves the residents of the 26,000 square-mile Navajo Nation which is spread over Arizona, New Mexico and Utah. The first of 30 tribal colleges, Diné College has two main campuses and six community centers serving approximately 2,000 students. Diné College is a public institution of higher education chartered by the Navajo Nation” (*Diné College*). *Sá'ah Naaghái Bik'eh Hózhóón* (SNBH) and *Hózhóón* are concepts central to Dine Philosophy. Lloyd Lee, Navajo scholar, defines them as, “*Hózhóón* means in English to ‘walk in beauty’ and live a harmonious life, while SNBH places human life in harmony and balance with the natural world and the universe” (92). SNBH allows a person to be in harmony with place, which is part of the collective experience that extends beyond the individual consciousness.

The principle of SNBH can be seen in a circular diagram, with *Nitsáhákees* (Thinking) at the top. *Nitsáhákees* represents the east direction, infancy (birth), spring, and the dawn. The diagram functions in a clock-wise direction. To the south direction, *Nahatá* (Planning) represents the adolescence, summer, and the high noon. Directly below *Nitsáhákees*, in the west direction, is *Iiná* (Living) which represents adulthood,

fall, and the dusk. Finally, to the right of *Nahatá*, is *Siih Hasin* (Assuring) which represents the north direction, old age, winter, and the night. *Siih Hasin* connects the circle with *Nitsáhákees* to continue the cyclical patterns of life. According to this philosophy, a person must first think through their ideas, *Nitsáhákees*. It is only after they have thoroughly thought out their ideas that they can begin to actively make plans for action, *Nahatá*. After planning, implementation or living out the plan may occur in *Iiná*. Finally, after one has implemented an idea or has lived out a plan, s/he may reflect or assure that the plan was a success. The cyclical learning cycle allows one to re-enter the thinking stages. The cyclical process is connected by a cross that connects one's thinking to the implementation stage. Similarly, the planning and assurance are connected as well. These interconnections allow a person/student to move between different processes of development.

To apply SNBH and *Nitsáhákees*, *Nahatá*, *Iiná*, *Siih Hasin* to the composition classroom would include teaching students to recognize the interconnections between what they are learning and writing about. This classroom would value texts that connect to the history, identity, culture and language of a Navajo student. Texts written by Navajo poets and writers, like Luci Tapahonso, Laura Tohe, Esther Belin, and Irvin Morris (to name a few) will allow Navajo students to explore and connect with Navajo identities and perspectives. Other Native American texts are useful to these students as well because of the shared colonial experience between Native American groups. Oral traditions and Native specific narratives allow Navajo students to connect with their histories and begin to be accountable for their identities. Students develop self-knowing through storytelling.

According to Donald L. Fixico, Native American historian, “ ‘Story is the basis of American Indian oral tradition. Story is the vehicle for sharing traditional knowledge and passing it from one generation to the next. Its purposes include sharing information, providing lessons in morality, confirming identity, and telling experiences of people’ ” (22). Fixico urges that this mode of sharing stories is what differentiates the worldview of a Native American from the Western or American worldview, which is more linear. The oral tradition, according to Fixico, has not been well-received by academics because of its ability to be flexible in purpose, content, audience and context. However, it is well known that historical documents, written by non-Natives, silence Native American voices and do not allow the birth-right knowledge to be passed from one generation to the next like the way that oral traditional stories do. A tribal college that (re)creates this traditional practice and space for students will allow them to perpetuate and value sacred and cultural knowledge.

Karen A. Redfield argues that Native American students tend to understand and define essay writing as storytelling because that is what they are culturally accustomed to. Redfield states, “Through a review of current research and a close reading of two Native American students’ essay, I hope to prove at least that a culturally based structure underlies my students’ work. Both pieces—which I called essays and they called stories—have a main point that is supported through thoughtful, logically organized detail”(243) Her contrastive analysis reveals that her students develop their essay around “culturally influenced rhetorical devices” that are informed by the Native American group values. Both student essays, for instance, clearly showed the value for

“connection” and the importance of community. These students wrote their essays, not about the self, but about how they were part of a community. One student’s essay “lacked several standard’ features such as paragraph structure, a thesis statement, supporting points, and a conclusion.” (247). Redfield also notes that it was unclear if this story was about the writer or about the writer’s family/community. Based on the standard, both these students would be considered deficient writers. From a non-dominant perspective, however, other rhetorical devices that the students’ employed included contrast and repetition. One essay was written so that the effect of the story was more powerful when read aloud. Redfield states, “Where you once saw no thesis statement, there may be an embedded but clear main point. Where you once saw unclear pronoun references, there may be a writer who is framing his or her sense of self within a larger sense of community. You may see supporting points where you first saw disjointed ramblings. Overall, you may see culturally influenced rhetorical devices where you once saw only a deficient college essay” (254). Often times, writing instructors fail to look beyond the standards of academia when they assess student work. Not seeing the student and their “culturally influenced rhetorical devices” privileges the cultural devices of the Western and rejects the rhetorical devices of the non-Western.

A curriculum at a tribal college for first-year writers can still mirror a non-Native writing course, but with some important changes. Narrative, analysis, persuasion, revision, and reflection are useful concepts and skills for all students and should be encouraged at a tribal college because many of these students plan to transfer to a university where these skills will be required. However, a curriculum that values Native

perspectives and controversies will be most beneficial in developing students who can enable self-determined tribes. The curriculum should highlight tribal and local politics and issues to allow Native students to be further informed about their lived experiences. Moreover, knowing their tribal and local issues will allow them to participate as members of a collective self-governing group. Persuasive narrative essays should be encouraged to allow students to explore local issues that are lacking in research or have only been researched by non-Native researchers/scholars. This allows Native students to have knowledge about and authority over decisions in their homelands. According to Linda Tuhiwai Smith, “To acquiesce is to lose ourselves entirely and implicitly agree with all that has been said about us. To resist is to retrench in the margins, retrieve what we were and remake ourselves. The past, our stories local and global, the present, our communities, cultures, languages and social practices—all may be spaces of marginalization, but they have also become spaces of resistance and hope” (4). These “spaces of resistance and hope” empowers Native students to become an authority over their tribal knowledges, communities, rights, and land bases. This allows them to explore, understand, participate, and provide to their communities.

Many Native Americans just simply need a space to begin to heal from historical trauma. As collective self-governing groups, Native Americans should have the authority to heal themselves. Because Native Americans are deeply wounded by historical trauma, every opportunity to offer healing should be offered to Native students. According to Duran, Duran, and Brave Heart,

Historical trauma and its effects are complex, multigenerational, and cumulative. A constellation of features that occur in reaction to multigenerational, collective, historical, and cumulative psychic wounding over time—over the lifespan and across generations—historical trauma is characterized as incomplete mourning and the resulting depression absorbed by children from birth onward. Unresolved trauma is intergenerationally cumulative, thus compounding the mental health problems of succeeding generations (64).

Guilt, confusion, stress, depression, anger and feelings of alienation are some of the named effects of historical trauma. The wounds inflicted over time continue to echo throughout Indian Country today. Most Native Americans do not get the opportunity to learn about colonialism and therefore do not understand how they inherited their wounds. Every Native person deserves the opportunity to heal from these deeply embedded wounds that continue to manifest as sociological problems, including alcoholism, domestic violence, child abuse, suicide, and diabetes. The healing will begin when the people get the opportunity to understand the mourning process. Writing classrooms that are welcoming to texts that reveal, discuss, and theorize about historical trauma allow Native American students the opportunity to heal by learning to understand and cope in healthy ways.

Students should also be encouraged to write essays that are inclusive to their indigenous languages to promote language revitalization. According to K. Tsianina Lomawaima and Teresa L. McCarty, professors of American Indian Studies and Language, Reading and Culture, “Constructing an Indigenous identity in the heritage language is qualitatively different from constructing and enacting that identity in English” (298). They argue that schools are important sources for language revitalization.

Louise Lockard, Professor of Education, states “Of 155 American Indian Languages, 87 percent are spoken by adults who no longer teach them to their children. Many languages will no longer be spoken within a generation. More than one third of American Indian and Alaskan Native languages have fewer than one hundred speakers”(68). Native languages all around the world are nearing extinction, with it sacred and cultural knowledge. In order to salvage the language, all tribal entities need to contribute.

Some Native American groups, like the Navajo, have been more fortunate than others in maintaining “traditional” worldviews, traditional territories, and indigenous languages. The Navajos, for the most part, have maintained the Navajo language. Though wonderful, this maintenance means that linguistic characteristics of these two languages can get fused together to create hybrid and new terms to reflect these new spaces. However, a Navajo speaker (including those who are not fluent) may find that they have writing issues similar to ESL writers. For instance, In the Navajo language, the verbs provide more information than the English verbs do. Leonard M. Faltz looks at the English sentence, “I kissed Sally” and the Navajo interpretation of that sentence, which is “Sally *nanests'*□□z.” The verb *nanests'*□□z communicates four things, (1) it tells that the sentence is about an event in which someone kissed somebody, (2) it tells that this event already happened, (3) it tells that it is told in the first person, therefore does not need a separate word to indicate “I” or “me.” And (4) the verb can also tell how the kissing was done, whether it was a lot of kisses or just one? In this case, it was just one. In the English version, one would need to add more words like, “I gave Sally a lot of kisses” in order to capture how the kisses were done. English verbs require more words for more

meaning. This comparison reveals how languages shape the worldview of the speakers. The Navajo language is mostly built around verbs. This can suggest a worldview that values fluidity and movement. The pronouns are important to the verbs and are thus tacked on to the verbs so that they are meaningless without them, which suggest a value for connectedness. These two differences in the language are opposed to the English verbs which are designed so that the speaker can differentiate and/or classify ideas and meaning. These structures reveal distinct differences in linguistics and worldview that could easily identify students as ESL learners. However, because many Native American students did not get the opportunity to learn their first language, it does not make sense to classify them as ESL learners. However, many of these students live in households and communities with true ESL speakers. These students learn the nuances that result when Indigenous languages are fused with the English languages. Rather than identifying these students with a learning disability, I suggest that the writing classroom offer assignments that allow students to incorporate rhetorical devices of their language(s) in their essays to promote revitalization.

Tribal theoretical concepts should be encouraged as lenses for analyses and interpretation. For instance, at Diné College, course goals must relate to the *Sa'ah Naagháí Bike'eh Hózhón* (SNBH). According to Charles A. Braithwaite, Assistant Professor of Arizona State, “course syllabi for all courses are required to include a statement acknowledging the centrality of this particular cultural perspective” (220). Students can be encouraged to follow the interconnection valued in SNBH and the cyclical pattern of *Nitsáhákees*, *Nahatá*, *Iiná*, and *Siih Hasin* when developing and

revising their essays. Students can be asked to think (*Nitsáhákees*) about their topic(s)/ideas first, then plan (*Nahatá*), then implement (*Iiná*), and finally reflect (*Siih Hasin*) as they write each essay. A student should also be encouraged to move easily between all four of the stages because SNBH allows and encourages interconnection, fluidity and motion. Privileging these concepts over Western concepts like brainstorming, drafting, revising, and editing allows these students to learn the process of writing from their worldview, while also reclaiming this indigenous knowledge.

Tribal college students, compared to their university counterparts, get the opportunity to prosper from the wealth of indigenous knowledges because non-Western epistemologies are deemed acceptable and credible at a tribal college. Despite, it is important to consider that many of these students may choose to transfer to a university when they complete an associate degree at a tribal college. This means that their credits and skills should prepare them for university study. A tribal college student writing guide would be beneficial to writing instructors at tribal colleges. The student writing guide would help writing instructors at tribal colleges find a balance in preparing students for academic study and reinforcing tribal specific knowledge. The student writing guide could include poetry, short stories, articles, essays, and artwork produced by Native Americans. The writing guide could introduce the medicine wheel, a well-known indigenous structure that reflects the indigenous philosophy of interconnection, balance, and harmony. According to Fixico, “‘Indian Thinking’ is ‘seeing’ things from a perspective emphasizing that circles and cycles are central to the world and that all things are related within the universe”(1). Compared to the “mainstream” society, which is

described as a “linear world”(xvi), the traditional American Indian perceives the world as circular. This circular world portrays the way an American Indian makes sense of the world, which is described as a balancing of natural and metaphysical environments. According to Fixico, the more traditional an American Indian is, the more circular his/her perception will be of the world. The student writing guide would also include definitions to Western concepts of writing and their equivalent ideas in an indigenous worldview.

Suggestions for the University

At the University of Arizona, a program called the First Year Scholars Program (FYSP), a program to increase success rates of Native Americans, was developed by Karen Francis-Begay in response to low enrollment and attrition rates of Native American students at the University of Arizona. According to the *Total Minority Student Enrollment Trends* (Fall 1983-Fall 2008) provided by the University of Arizona, there were 260 Native American in 1983 out of the total enrollment of 30,460 students. In 2008, there were 1,006 Native American students out of the 38,057 enrolled (Office of Institutional Research and Planning Support). Native American students have continued to make up the smallest percentage of enrollments at the University of Arizona. The FYS program was first implemented in 2007-2008. There are many barriers that Native American students face when they attend at a university, one specific reason is their disconnect from their non-Native community. According to Andrew Garrod and Colleen Larimore, faculty at Dartmouth College,

For Native students raised to think of themselves as parts of an interconnected whole leaving home to attend college can cause intense

feelings of loss and isolation. To separate oneself from this intricate tapestry of interconnections is to leave behind the entire fabric of one's identity. For many such students, college is the first place they have ever lived where being a member of one's particular clan or tribe, or coming from one's particular reservation or region of the country, means little or nothing to anyone else. All of these markers, once so suffused with meaning, are invisible or unintelligible to peers, professors, and deans. All signifiers are gone; so, in a very real sense, is the context of one's identity and place in the world" (4).

The FYS program, thence, is a living and learning community that allows Native American students to live together in a designated residence hall and take courses in common to promote interconnection between Native students and between Native students and their new non-Native environment and communities. Students take foundational courses together to enforce a community of learning. Two of the courses that students can take together are English 101 and 102. Both of these courses are first year writing courses that prepare students to write for the academic community. These specialized courses are designed to meet the specific needs of Native American student writers.

I taught both of these specialized courses from fall 2006 to spring 2010. I taught English 101 each fall and 102 each spring. Most of the time, these courses would have 100% Native American student enrollment. Sometimes, however, non-Native students would enroll because of low Native American student enrollments. Each course was capped at 25. In English 101, I opted to follow the guidelines provided by the English department of teaching three analysis essays and one reflection and valuing the process of revision. I also opted to use the required texts, usually a student writing guide, a writing handbook, and a literary anthology. I, however, also incorporated more Native American

readings, which I distributed online. These readings were included poetry and short stories by Native American authors, articles, essays and films about Native American controversies that explored indigenous identities and historical documents and resources that contextualized Native American poetry and stories. Many of the students were surprised by how much they did not know about their histories as Native Americans. Some were angered and saddened by the fact that it was only until they had entered college that they were able to learn about themselves. Some talked about how they knew “something was wrong,” but that they did not know how to talk about it because they lacked the vocabulary to discuss their situation. The contextual readings gave students the opportunity to learn the language of colonialism. When students wrote about their experiences, they learned to use words like assimilation, acculturation, hybridity, ambivalence, oppressed, and consciousness. I encouraged students to write a cultural analysis essay in the first person and to write it in narrative form. I wanted students to value their personal experiences and authentic voices as Native American students.

For many years Native Americans have been described and defined by non-Natives. Moreover, Native Americans have been taught to believe that they are illiterate and do not have anything important to say. Moreover, by the time that Native American students are allowed the opportunity to learn about themselves, they have grown numb to the stereotypes that surround them. According to Kimberly Roppolo, Professor of Native American Studies, “Indian people *themselves* sometimes unconsciously internalize the stereotypical images projected on them by mainstream culture—‘of course I can’t succeed, I’m Indian. I ought to either be dead or dead drunk.’ In comparison, the noble-

savage ideal promoted by those who claim to be honoring Indians by using mascots based on Native peoples seems complimentary. No wonder some Indians find no problem with racially based mascots” (195). Many Native Americans have not had the opportunity to dissect controversial issues that pertain to their identities and lived experiences. Many are ambivalent about mascots because they do not understand the power of negative stereotypes. Many of my Native American students were angered and saddened when they began to learn about oppression. Some students felt resistant and suspicious of Western knowledge. It was essential, then, that I reminded them that they had authority to rewrite, revise and revive their histories. These are key skills to achieve the outcome of self-determination. It is important to teach all students compassion for the oppressed/oppressor relationship. Moreover, it is important to empower students to recognize the personal and community agencies of change. My curriculum in my classrooms were informed by Native scholars, including Malea Powell and Scott Lyons.

Scott Lyons uses his classroom as a way to focus on the Native American experience through narrative. Narratives included student experience in universities with a particular emphasis on “being Indian” (Lyons 100). Lyons states, “By writing and reading each other’s narratives, we brought out our ‘differences’ as we experienced them at the ‘white’ university—problems, strengths, revisions—and examined these...as a group ethnically connected” (Lyons 100). According to Lyons, narrative writing gives students the opportunity to write in a safe place so that they can reveal and analyze themselves. Furthermore, it allows these students to voice their concerns, their tribulations, and their feelings about being minoritized. Many oppressed students feel

they are responsible for the oppression in their communities and are silenced by dominant voices that communicate the silencing of Native Americans. These students deserve, at some point in their lives, the opportunity to explore the complexity of colonialism in their lives. They deserve the opportunity to understand who they are in relation to the country in which they live. As they embark on their career paths, it is essential that the university values their distinct voices and needs.

First-year writing courses that insist on helping Native American students' development are important because they allow them to value their survival, their diverse lenses, their strengths, and their connection to their diverse (and sometimes divergent) communities. When students learn about themselves, they are empowered to speak and write from their authentic spaces and lived experiences, which may/may not include ambivalence and contradiction. It allows them, mostly, to be self-determined individuals who seek to (re)build self-determined communities.

Conclusion

My suggestions for colleges and universities imply that Native Americans need writing as an essential tool to (re)building their communities with a shared goal of (re)establishing a collective self-determinate group that is based on traditions, customs and language.

Writing allows tribes to capture and retain stories and voice their unique perspectives.

Spoken and recently written stories are part of the lived experiences for Navajo people.

These stories, including emergent stories, parables, legends, stories with/for advice,

humorous stories, and inspirational stories, provide the listener or reader with an

opportunity to develop ways of knowing the self through a shared experience with their tribes' historical and cultural ways of knowing. These stories are connectors between generations of people and connectors between cultural knowledge and the listener/reader.

Even though most writing instructors use terminology like “essay” and “analysis,” they are still in essence asking students to tell their stories. Native American students have a collective colonial history that has crippled their identities as Native Americans. Their stories (and perspectives) are shaped by American colonial histories. Moreover, these colonial histories continue to define academic and non-academic spaces. Presently, many Native students share the same story of rejection and resistance in academic spaces. Many of their goals are informed by their home communities and these often conflict with the goals of Western institutions. Many of these students want to return to their homelands to assist in (re)building their nations. (Re)building their nations includes meeting the sociological and psychological needs of a people who have been impacted by colonialism and continue to be impacted by neocolonialism.

In order to begin to (re)build what was destroyed, Native Americans need the opportunity to learn about themselves, including what traditions have survived the assimilation process. It is essential that they understand and accept what was lost. The education of their histories needs to begin early so that students are prepared to assist in the efforts to (re)build in areas of sovereignty, land, education, language, economics, and health. These students, as future leaders, need to be prepared to acknowledge the external and internal oppressions that continue to thrive in their communities. These oppressions

often result in factionalized groups that are based on blood quantum and/or traditionalism. These politics prevent tribes from becoming healthy communities with the goal of establishing collective self-determinate societies.

Discussion and education about history, conflicting ideologies, and identity politics are necessary to Native American students. Providing them with the opportunity to understand, analyze, reflect, and discuss these ideas about colonialism prepares them to deal with their lived experiences and allows them to connect appropriately to their disciplines of study. Moreover, this knowledge allows them to recognize that they can assert themselves in this on-going discussion and they are empowered to speak to issues that pertain to their well-being as individuals and as groups of people. It is with these students and these important conflicts in mind that I develop my analysis, suggestions and claims in this chapter.

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