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TSÉHOOTSOOÍDI BAA HANÉ: EMERGENT ORAL HISTORIES FROM A NAVAJO COMMUNITY BASED ORAL HISTORY PROJECT IN FT. DEFIANCE, ARIZONA

by

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DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
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Tséhootsooídi baa hané: Emergent oral histories from a Navajo community based oral history project in Ft. Defiance, Arizona

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation research is based on a community oral history project about *Tséhootsooí* or Fort Defiance, Arizona, a predominantly Navajo community. Colonial historical narratives of Fort Defiance selectively focus on the non-Navajo institutions that developed within the community: hospital, boarding school, and trading posts; in response, local resident's oral histories challenge settler colonial narratives and speak to the events and places that make this community significant to Navajo history. Through the theoretical lens of decolonization and critical indigenous theory, my research addresses Navajo historical representation, the production of settler colonial narratives and community residents' efforts to assert sovereignty through Navajo epistemologies of knowledge and oral histories (Denetdale 2007; Trouillot 1997).

As part of this dissertation, I examine historical representations of the Fort Defiance community and resident's responses to dominant discourse about their community (Trouillot 1997). I am concerned with Navajo conceptions of place and community as well as the intersections of power and narrative that have created dominant historical narratives about Fort Defiance and Navajo peoples and responses to those narratives (Donham 1990; Trouillot 1997).

My dissertation juxtaposes critiques of colonial constructions of Navajo history and community with oral narratives of Navajo residents that utilize emergent uses of narrative to affirm Navajo conceptions of community and history. Through an examination of Navajo historiography, the connections between landscape, memory and oral histories and the contributions of Diné women to the wage labor economy of Fort Defiance, my work addresses the paucity of Navajo perspectives and oral histories within written Navajo history about Fort Defiance.

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Chapter one: Introduction

Figure 1: *Tséhootsooí* or Fort Defiance, 2006

A Story

On a stifling hot, summer afternoon, as part of my participation in a community based oral history project on the Navajo Nation, I visit Annie May Yazzie[1], a retired U.S. postal worker, Navajo[2] grandmother and longtime resident of Fort Defiance, Arizona (photographed above). Located seven miles northwest of Window Rock, the capitol of the Navajo Nation, Fort Defiance or *Tséhootsooí*[3] is a predominantly Navajo community,

[1] I use pseudonyms for participants unless specifically requested to use correct names.
[2] *Naabeeho Diné'é* refers to the southern Athapaskan speaking peoples commonly referred to as Navajo, a term that originated with the arrival of Spanish peoples to the southwest. Most Navajo peoples identify themselves first by their clan associations and secondly as Navajo or Diné. I use Navajo in this dissertation as in my experience doing fieldwork; people commonly identified themselves in English as Navajo and occasionally as Diné.
[3] *Tséhootsooí* translates to English as "meadow between the rocks." I use Fort Defiance to describe the community as it is frequently referred to by the non-Navajo term in conversation.

covering a swath of land of historical significance to Navajo history and the personal histories of local residents. Annie's comfortable house, located in a Navajo Housing Authority (NHA) enclave of stucco homes, is pleasant and inviting. Outside the churned red earth bears a million tire tracks; inside, the gentle hum of the swamp cooler offers respite from the summer temperatures. We sit at her dining room table, a large, sturdy, wooden piece that is barely able to seat all of her relatives and guests on weekend nights and for family celebrations. Pictures of nieces, nephews, grandchildren and children decorate the walls around us. Annie's daughter, intrigued with my research on oral histories pours ice tea and sits next to her mom. We talk for a few minutes about the Vermont maple syrup I brought for Annie in appreciation of her time for this interview. Annie enjoys baking and tells me she plans to make pancakes for the syrup. We exchange recipe ideas for pancake batter. After a few minutes, our conversation turns to the topic of Annie's family history in Fort Defiance. "My dad and my other aunts told me about my grandfather," Annie begins,

> "She was like thirteen or fourteen years old when she came back [from] The Long Walk [1864-1868[4]] and they ended up here in Fort Defiance…Navajo women, just before they birth their children, they went out to the woods apart from the community and they gave birth out there in the woods. Well, [my grandmother went out to the woods and] came back without the baby and her sister who was about ten years older her asked her where she went, "Where's the baby?" and [my grandmother] says, "I don't want that baby." She said, " It's a Mexican baby." A soldier raped her [on the way back from Ft. Sumner]. In Navajo tradition, when you don't want something that's bad you just put it in the ash pile to say that it no longer exists. Well, I guess she did that. She threw [the baby] in the dump, over where the elementary school is [now] in Fort Defiance. She didn't want him. She said, "It's not mine." When I first heard [this story] I was really feeling bad, thinking 'how could she do this?' But then

[4] The Long Walk (1864-1868) was a genocidal campaign to force Navajo and Apache peoples off their land in an effort to provide "safe passage" to settlers on their way to California. Under the command of Kit Carson, Navajo peoples were forced to walk hundreds of miles in the winter to Fort Sumner, NM where they were interned.

> if I [was] just thirteen years old and raped by somebody I would probably feel the same way. It didn't dawn on me till later, but when you first hear this about your own [family], well you feel kind of shocked. But then you really think about how badly they [Navajo people] were treated [during and after The Long Walk]. So my aunt went down [to the dump] and picked [the baby] out. That baby was my grandfather" (Interview: Annie Mae Yazzie, 2004).

Our conversation continued that afternoon as Annie went on to talk more about her family, her father's job as an ambulance driver at the Fort Defiance hospital, and her memories of community gardens where she and her sister enjoyed spending time and picking produce. Much later in the day after I left Annie's house, I reflected on the stories she had shared and the connections her narratives established to specific places within Fort Defiance: the old hospital, an arroyo near the current middle school, and a stretch of land that now is developed with several small homes. As my interviews and meetings progressed with Fort Defiance residents and community members who were interested in developing an oral history project about this community, questions began to emerge that helped shape my dissertation research: What does history mean for Navajo residents of the Fort Defiance community? How are the oral histories about Fort Defiance connected to this landscape? and How have Navajo and non-Navajo historical narratives contributed to the representation of this community? (Flores 2002).

Annie's narrative references the brutality and trauma Navajo people faced during the Long Walk (1863-1868), a period of vicious cruelty wherein Navajo people were forced to walk thousands of miles to incarceration at Fort Sumner[5]. American military encroachment on Navajo land began shortly after the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848) and the subsequent military construction of Fort Defiance in 1851, following a

military reconnaissance into Navajo land led by Lt. Col. Sumner (Bailey and Bailey 1986; Denetdale 2007b; Frink 1968; Iverson 2002). The fort was debilitated in 1860, after Navajo Chief Manuelito successfully led an attack against the military intrusion; several Navajo were killed during the battle, and only one cavalry soldier died (Bailey and Bailey 1986; Frink 1968). Incidentally, this soldier, named Sylvester Johnson, is buried in Fort Defiance (his grave is marked with a headstone) in a small, field accessible only by walking behind several tribal warehouses. By 1861, the fort was abandoned, as cavalry soldiers were needed to serve in the American Civil War (1861-1865) (Bailey and Bailey 1986; Frink 1968).

Purported raiding carried out by Navajo people, combined with the justification of colonial expansionist desire to see American settlers trespass Indian land on their way to California fueled the next period of colonial brutality against Navajo peoples (Bailey and Bailey 1986). In 1863, Major General James Carleton dispatched Colonel Christopher "Kit" Carson to implement a "slash and burn" attack on Navajo people; Carson and his army moved swiftly, torching the homes and crops of Navajo people living in Canyon de Chelly and slaughtering their livestock (Bailey and Bailey 1986, Denetdale 2007b, Iverson 2002). Starving and suffering from lack of shelter against cold winter weather, Navajo people faced no other option than to surrender to U.S. cavalry who rounded them up at Fort Wingate and Fort Defiance (re-built and renamed Fort Canby) and forced them to march thousands of miles to Fort Sumner where they were incarcerated with Mescalero Apache peoples who had been forced into captivity as well (Bailey and Bailey 1986; Denetdale 2007b; Iverson 2002).

[5] Although referred to as a single event, the Long Walk included several forced marches to Bosque Redondo, involving different routes (Denetdale 2008; Iverson 2002:52).

Navajo oral histories about the Long Walk, such the rape of Annie's grandmother are frequently contested or re-imagined in non-Native historical narratives that attempt to de-legitimize the violence of settler-colonization (Denetdale 2007b; Smith 2005; Angela Wilson 2005). Non-Navajo histories about the Long Walk have contributed to misleading representations of Navajo peoples as dissident Indians intent upon raiding settlers and wreaking havoc; further, this perspective is often highlighted as part of New Mexico's historical trajectory from a wild territory to a civilized state[6] (Bailey 1998; Bsumek 2004; Denetdale 2007b). Navajo people are repeatedly referred to as "the problem" in historical documents prior to, and during the Long Walk, despite the trespassing on their lands and inflicted violence on them by U.S. military (Bailey and Bailey 1986; Mangiante 1951; New York Times 1888). In 2001, The Navajo Times published an article by Bill Donovan featuring an interview with anthropologist Martin Link in which Link asserted that Navajo people exaggerated the experiences of captivity at Fort Sumner; although the article elicited outrage from many Navajo subscribers and readers and an eloquent response from Diné historian Jennifer Denetdale, Link's viewpoint contributes to a misconception of Navajo oral histories as "myths" and the unlawful incarceration of Navajo people at Fort Sumner as merely an unfortunate past event [7] (Denetdale 2007b; Link 2001).

Non-Navajo histories that include mention or discussion of the Long Walk conspicuously do not use the word "genocide" to describe the actions and intentions of the U.S. Government to keep captive over 11,000 Navajo people in impoverished and

[6] Control of New Mexico territory was wrested from Mexico after defeat in the Mexican-American War of 1848. New Mexico subsequently gained statehood in 1912 (Bailey and Bailey 1986).

inhumane conditions (Denetdale 2007 a,b; Iverson). Clyde Kluckhorn and Dorothea Leighton describe captivity at Fort Sumner as a "great shock" for Navajo people; Roberta and Garrick Bailey contextualize the Bosque Redondo experience as a "disaster" realized four years too late by the U.S. Government in need of a quick solution to an expensive mistake (Kluckhorn and Leighton 1962:41; Bailey and Bailey 1996: 25). Yet, as Annie's family story of her great-grandmother's rape makes so painfully aware, the violent acts of settler-colonialism are more than merely unfortunate events in the distant past (Denetdale 2007a,b. Navajo oral histories retain the vividness of these violent atrocities committed against ancestors, the legacies of which continue to impact daily life and attempts to assert sovereignty as an autonomous nation.[8]

Annie's narrative ignited my determination to better understand Navajo conceptions of history, the Fort Defiance community and the possible connections between historical sites, places and oral histories in a contemporary context. The oral histories present in my research reflect contemporary responses to non-Navajo recitations of Diné history and Fort Defiance community history. I began interviewing local residents including Annie in 2001. As I talked with Fort Defiance residents, stories emerged about specific buildings, sites, and community events considered part of the collective community memory that were not part of the written histories I had read about Fort Defiance or in history books on Navajo history, authored by non-Navajo scholars (Bailey and Bailey 1996; Frink 1968; Kluckhorn and Leighton 1962; Iverson 2002). While the history of Fort Defiance in non-Navajo written histories primarily awards brief

[7] See also Anthony Webster's discussion of Martin Link's article and the topic of *Hwéeldi* in Navajo poetry and literature (Webster 2010: 156).

attention to the original fort and activities of the Office of Indian Affairs (later Bureau of Indian Affairs) in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Fort Defiance residents' stories hinge on experiences in boarding school, growing up in the community, the working roles of Navajo women in the local economy, and aspects of contemporary life (Bailey and Bailey 1986; Frink 1968; Iverson 2002).

My dissertation involves ethnography about a community history as told by residents, a collection of oral histories that speak to local efforts to decolonize non-Navajo historical representation of Fort Defiance. Non-Navajo representations of the Fort Defiance community have been continuously circulated through published reading materials, archival documents, photographs, and state historic preservation efforts to memorialize historical events defined by non-Navajo people as key to understanding Western, Frontier, and Indian histories (Denetdale 2001, 2004, 2007b; Dilworth 1996; Faris 1996; Strong 2013). These materials have also contributed to the production of historical narratives that downplay the brutality of settler colonialism and choose to direct attention to an imagined, peaceful, and cheerful future that neutralizes the incorporation of Navajo histories into an encompassing history of the great American southwest; as the motto of the Bosque Redondo Memorial states, "Remembering their past….celebrating their future" (Denetdale 2007b; Dilworth 1996; Strong 2013; http://www.bosqueredondo memorial.com/nde.htm). This dissertation contextualizes Fort Defiance community history that positions at the forefront, the perspectives of Navajo residents and cultural experts. As Linda Tuhiwai Smith points out, "indigenous groups have argued that history

[8] Examples of contemporary assaults to Navajo Nation sovereignty include: Coal, Gas, mining leases; Urban Outfitter's inappropriate use of "Navajo" to describe underwear, etc.)

is important for understanding the present and that reclaiming history is a critical and essential part of decolonization" (Smith 1999:30).

Part of my analysis and research also includes examining the production of settler colonial historical narratives and the impact of those narratives on the Fort Defiance community. As I argue in this dissertation, the impact of narratives produced through settler colonial mechanisms has contributed to a 'silence' of Navajo oral histories on the history of the community, experiences regarding the Long Walk, the establishment of federal programs and private, religious institutions (Trouillot 1997). More recently, a proposal by the National Park Service to create a tourist themed historical trail following non-Navajo designated important sites related to the Long Walk (National Park Services newsletter 2004).

Theoretical Considerations

This dissertation is about emergent[9], contemporary Navajo oral histories in which the tradition of telling stories about the past reinforces traditional Navajo epistemologies of knowledge, conceptions of history and the importance of place (Denetdale2007a; Farella 1984; Kelley and Harris 1994). I use the term emergent here to denote the use of a traditional form of oration (telling stories) within Navajo culture in a contemporary context. By using this term, I also suggest that the oral histories of Fort Defiance residents, as part of a community project, index new frameworks for conceptualizing historical representation in Fort Defiance and work to sustain traditional understandings of knowledge and oral history (Denetdale 2007a; Farella 1984). Navajo creation stories,

[9] I use the term emergent here to denote the use of a traditional form of oration (telling stories) within Navajo culture within a contemporary context. While traditional narratives perform specific roles within Navajo culture, these narratives include oral histories, life narratives, and reflections of the past (Peterson 2006).

songs and prayers have always emphasized close connections between Navajo people, communities and the landscape; these connections continue to be threatened, disregarded or disrespected by settler colonial initiatives (Kelley and Harris 2003; Brugge 2006). For examples, an estimated 1,100 mining waste sites, leftover from forty years of Uranium mining, exist on the Navajo Nation, most of which have not been remediated (hsc.unm.edu/pharmacy/healthyvoices/NBCS/NBCS_Abstract.html). In 2010, Hydro Resources Inc. was granted a license to mine Uranium near Crownpoint and Church rock, New Mexico, conducting extraction operations that jeopardize the supply of clean drinking water for community residents (New York Times, May 12, 2011). Navajo community members continue to advocate for the health and autonomy of their communities, through grassroots organizations such as Eastern Navajo Diné Against Uranium Mining and through the conscientious activities of individuals and communities. Despite the building of a military fort in 1851, the construction of many subsequent federal and private funded buildings, and the demolition of many of the same buildings, residents' oral narratives about their community attest to the connections between memory, place and sites and affirm efforts to establish autonomy over the historical representation of their community.

My dissertation is in part an ethnography of decolonization: how Navajo members of Fort Defiance conceive of their community's past and the representation of that history through a community based oral history project. In many ways, this work is also an ethnohistory, an understanding of past events as shared by members of a specific culture, rather than "the history" of an ethnic group (Krech 2002; Sturtevant 1964). As such, it is important to situate Fort Defiance oral histories as part of a communal effort to articulate

sovereignty as part of a multi-vocal, multi-sited collection of histories (Colwell-Chanthaphonh and Ferguson 2006). A collection of oral histories about the fort Defiance community, privileging Navajo voices and perspectives contests non-Navajo historical narratives about the community and emphasizes traditional Navajo practices of communicating and sharing oral histories and knowledge; practices that are rooted in Navajo philosophies, creation stories, songs, clan and family oral histories (Denetdale 2007a; Farella 1984).

Throughout this dissertation I utilize an understanding of decolonization as a methodology useful for critiquing settler colonial productions of power and historical narratives that attempt to dismantle the continuance of Navajo traditions and philosophies. Decolonization calls for "a long-term process involving the bureaucratic, cultural, linguistic and psychological divesting of colonial power" rather than simply "the formal process of handing over the instruments of government" (Smith 1999:97). The collective voices and stories of participants I worked with on this oral history project contribute to a community effort to contest colonial narratives and initiatives that attempt to define community and Navajo history. Fort Defiance resident's oral histories assert Navajo sovereignty over the representation of the history of this community by indexing traditional epistemologies of knowledge and history. In doing so, these oral histories also contribute to an ethnographic and cultural understanding of what constitutes Navajo history and community. Before military intrusions on Navajo land, *Tséhootsooí* was revered and known as a safe resting place for travelers, a source of fresh water, and a place where Navajo, Pueblo and Mexican horse riders gathered to test their skills at riding horses (Correll 1979; Davis 2006). Historically, Navajo communities were kinship

based, organized around clan and extended family networks consisting of a few families living in proximity, herding livestock and farming together (Kelley 1986).

Archaeological evidence suggests there was sparse population in the black creek area surrounding *Tséhootsooí* (Kelley 1986:17). Through the U.S. militarization of the area and subsequent intrusion of settler colonial institutions and policies, Western colonial notions of community developed Fort Defiance from a military outpost into a grid network of stone and wooden buildings and paved streets (Leibowitz 2008). Colonial ideologies of modernity and development are visibly expressed in the history of the Fort Defiance community through the construction of settler colonial institutions that sought to disrupt, assimilate and "civilize" Navajo people; settler colonial ideologies have also affected the written and historical representation of the community (Denetdale 2007a, Mignolo 2003, Smith 1999).

Towards the end of the twentieth century, buildings in Fort Defiance dating to the late 1800s and early 1900s, such as the Bureau of Indian Affairs structures for pre-school and kindergarten classes, were demolished or vacated; planned housing communities were never realized, and businesses that flourished in the past, closed their doors (Bosch 1961; Bailey and Bailey 1986; Frink 1968; Iverson 2002). The policies behind these changes have affected local perceptions of Fort Defiance and the collective view of the community as a locus for activity and Navajo history. Trading posts that once served large numbers of Navajo clientele were replaced by grocery stores or completely shut down and buildings that once served as dormitories and classrooms for the boarding school have been dismantled or stand vacant. I argue that Fort Defiance oral histories

provide insight to Navajo conceptions of history and place and reify the importance of Navajo residents' representation of their community.

Oral histories, Navajo epistemologies and community

Walter Mignolo, in his analysis of postcolonial theory, effectively begins by de-centering the grasp of Western based epistemologies on all aspects of the non-Western world (Mignolo 2003). European and Euro-American epistemologies have repeatedly devalued and dismissed the historical record keeping practices of Native American peoples, discounting the manner in which the past is remembered (such as through dances, oral histories, ceremonies) and disparaging Native American history in general as inconsequential or only worth mentioning in relation to early American frontier activities (Denetdale 2007;Smith 1999; Ortiz 1988; Wilson 2005).

Navajo oral histories are living narratives that provide guiding life lessons, and reflections on connections between past and present (Denetdale 2007a). These stories about the past are also utilized, much like Navajo creation stories, to reflect upon connections between daily life and the past in meaningful ways that give voice to contemporary Navajo experiences. Further, these narratives present a collection of multi-voiced, Navajo centered historical narratives that challenge the authoritative efforts of non-Navajo written histories of the Fort Defiance community and Western based notions of Navajo history (Denetdale 2007). The contemporary use of oral histories as part of a community based project offers Navajo perspectives about the representation of Fort Defiance history and ethnographic insights into Navajo conceptions of contemporary local Fort Defiance history.

The central argument of Sturtevant's essay, the need to consider peoples' conceptions of the past and the role of history making and telling in contemporary life is germane to this dissertation, Native American historiography and Navajo oral histories. Critique of the written accounts of European explorers, settlers, colonizers and anthropologists concerning Native American peoples must consider the processes of colonialism, response to dominant historical narratives and the complexities of different perspectives (Axtell 1985; Evers and Toelken 2001; Fogelson 1989; Greenblatt 1991; Krech 2002; Merrell 1989; Ortiz 1988; Sioui 1992; Whiteley 1998).

Alfonso Ortiz explicitly identifies the need for a 'new' Native American history that takes into consideration the importance of place, non-linear time, and oral traditions; in other words, aspects of the past as they are understood and communicated by diverse communities of Native Americans (Ortiz 1988). Likewise, Georges Sioui a First Nations scholar advocates for Native "autohistory," to show how modern American history could benefit from "demythologizing their socio-political discourse and become aware of "centricity" to see beyond a mass of lands and peoples to be removed, displaced and rearranged" (Sioui 1992:xxii).

I contend that community residents' oral histories contribute to contemporary, emergent representations of Navajo histories[10], answering to post-colonial agendas as well as to everyday lived aspects of life that illuminate key aspects of Navajo peoples' understandings of their history and culture. The oral histories presented in this dissertation are part of traditional Navajo expressions of history and telling stories. The chronology and specific dates of historical events in Navajo culture is less important than

the act of remembering the past. As David Samuels so aptly describes Apache perceptions of history, "thinking about the past isn't strictly a matter of thinking about things that no longer exist. This sense of recoverability of the past pervades expression and the response to expression in the community. *This is what it was like back then.*" (Samuels 2004: 39). Oral histories narrated by Fort Defiance residents offer up a glimpse of 'what it was like back then' in a predominantly Navajo community once described as "the birth place of the Navajo Nation" (Bosch 1961:31).

The history of Fort Defiance, as a locus of military aggression and activity on the Navajo Nation during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, has been characterized in dichotomous fashion as the center of Navajo and Anglo European negotiations. Non-Navajo, written histories of Fort Defiance primarily focus on the community as the first site for U.S. Government military installations on Navajo land as well as boarding schools, missions and hospitals at the turn of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century (Aberle 1969; Bailey and Bailey 1999; Frink 1968; Iverson 2002; Jorgenson 1971). These institutions and the buildings they inhabited feature prominently in the oral histories of Fort Defiance residents. Many residents of Fort Defiance remember attending the Fort Defiance Boarding School or making weekly visits to the trading posts with their families. These experiences form part of the collective past of the community as well as multi-voiced responses to the non-Navajo institutions and programs based in Fort Defiance through the Indian Health Services, Bureau of Indian Affairs and various Christian missions.

[10] I use histories here versus 'history' to denote a distinction between the concept of one legitimate historical narrative versus a multi-voiced collection of historical narratives that contribute to a multifaceted representation of past events.

In part, the reasons for changing perspectives within this community about the physical surroundings is a result of the effects and inner workings of institutional processes (such as colonialism) and the untidy outcomes of power and history on representation and historical narratives (Donham 1990).

As an center of colonial activity on Navajo land, the history of Fort Defiance is one that is in many ways defined by the interactions and interconnections between Navajo and non-Navajo peoples; this dynamic is similar to Pratt's concept of the "contact zone" space in which peoples of different cultures collide and wrestle for domination (Pratt 1992). While the "contact zone" may provide a good example of the tensions between Navajo community residents and leaders and non-Navajo business entrepreneurs and bureaucrats in the early twentieth century, I refrain from using this concept to analyze Fort Defiance history in order to avoid convenient simplistic categories such as "the colonized" versus "the colonizer" (Stoler 1992, 2006). Fort Defiance residents' oral narratives involved multiple negotiations between Navajo and non-Navajo peoples through the many federal institutions set up in Fort Defiance such as the once functioning boarding school, BIA offices, BIA hospital and sanatorium. These are merely physical reminders of an imposed colonial structure and forced assimilation that once identified Fort Defiance as well as the 'collision' of Navajo and non-Navajo representations of the past (Anderson 2001; Flores 2002).

A significant theme to the narratives and interviews with Fort Defiance residents emerging from my research focuses on experiences with the many U.S. Government institutions operating in Fort Defiance for most of the twentieth century. The boarding school, hospital, dispensary, orphanage, trading posts, and tuberculosis sanitarium

defined daily life in Fort Defiance for a large number of Fort Defiance residents and Navajo peoples living nearby[11]. Many Navajo residents were born in the hospital, educated at the boarding school, wage earners at the hospital, school, and orphanage and customers of the numerous trading posts. The effects of programs and initiatives sponsored by the U.S. Government's Office of Indian Affairs on daily Navajo life thematically weave throughout Navajo residents' narratives concerning Fort Defiance history.

Many reservation communities across North America were subject to similar experiences to those of Fort Defiance residents: the establishment of boarding schools, Indian Health Services, government infrastructure including paved (or graded) roads, utilities, natural resource extraction and tribal government bureaucracies. Most Native American peoples consider the boarding school experience an inflicted horror upon Native American children and families (Smith 2005). The experience of being taken away and forced to follow a Western based education plan has become a shared part of twentieth century history for many Native American peoples, across North America. The experiences tied to colonialism have been a horrific unifying experience for Native American peoples and the representation of their histories. The emotional toll and historical trauma inflicted on Native peoples has frequently been ignored within Anthropology; as Harkin writes, "It is the Indigenous responses to colonial encounter that remain to be explored in all their emotional and historical specificity" (Harkin 2003: 278). In the wake of colonial policies and military brutality faced by Navajo peoples and many of my consultants in Fort Defiance, it is my intention to address in this dissertation

[11] "Fort Defiance proper," known as the area around BIA agency

the ways in which traumatic history is treated through oral histories, community and social consciousness.

I present a nuanced, multi-voiced community narrative that aims to "ring true to Native perspectives" (Fogelson 1985:85). The history of Fort Defiance involves the daily interactions of diverse people of diverse cultural backgrounds and their daily negotiations with each other. Residents, travelers, military personnel, visitors and federal employees in Fort Defiance throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries include groups of Zuni, Hopi, Euro-American, African-American, Jewish, Spanish and Mexican peoples (Bailey and Bailey 1986; Iverson 2002)**.** Despite this diversity, the focus on interactions between Navajo and non-Navajo peoples has largely been depicted as a struggle between Navajo and Anglo peoples (Bailey and Bailey 1986).

Figure 2: View of Black Rock, looking towards Fort Defiance, 2013.

Navajo culture and oral history

Navajo culture is rooted in oral histories regarding the origins of Navajo peoples and clan histories; these historical (and traditional) narratives are often reserved for

specific times of the year and particular ceremonies (Kluckhorn 1962; Waters 1950; Witherspoon 1977). The practice of telling stories serve a multitude of purposes in different formal and informal contexts (Warburton and Begay 2005). While oral narratives, songs and prayers might be implemented in a ten-day healing ceremony involving medicine men and extensive clan networks, in more informal situations storytelling and joking are culturally appreciated past-times. Whether telling a family story to grandchildren, recounting an event for friends while at the local chapter house[12], or catching up on news with acquaintances at the Wal-Mart in Gallup[13] storytelling is an important facet of Navajo daily life.

Rose, an elder resident of Fort Defiance recalls that during the 1950s when she was a young girl, "we used to hang out around the trading post and listen to the news-you know, talk to people, gossip. All the elders hung out there [at the trading post]" (Rose Williams, 2004). With the disappearance of trading posts in Fort Defiance, the locus of daily conversation amongst elders and community members has moved to the chapter houses and senior centers where people gather for local meetings, lunch and special events.

The origins of Navajo clans and people are an integral aspect of Navajo oral histories that inform younger generations about *K'e* or kinship and clan relationships (Kluckhorn 1962; Lamphere 1977; Witherspoon 1977). *K'e* most immediately refers to maintaining proper relationships and is a guide to properly defining relations with blood and clan relatives, neighbors and friends (Lamphere 1977; Witherspoon 1975). *K'e*

[12] The chapter house system was officially recognized in 1955. There are 110 chapter houses across the Navajo Nation that function as local government, disseminating information, assessing the needs of the community and implementing projects to improve services in the community (Wilkins 1999).

imparts Navajo philosophies about reciprocity, stewardship and community (Lamphere 1977; M'Closkey 2002; Witherspoon 1977). Narratives about *k'e* and clan histories reaffirm clan relationships and the individual's place within the Navajo universe and the extended clan or *k'e* system. Because of the system of inter-related clans, many Navajo people believe 'you are never alone or without relatives.' This phrase underscores the importance of reciprocity, community and kinship in Navajo culture (Lamphere 1977). Having a system of clan relatives establishes contributes connections between individuals, families and communities, contributing to a person's knowledge about who they are and where they are from, aspects of identity that are significant in Navajo culture.

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in the southwest Navajo, Pueblo, Spanish and Apache peoples frequently adopted captives (usually young children) from each other's communities into their own households, eventually creating extended kin networks between pueblos, Spanish settlements and Navajo communities (Brooks 2002). Specific Navajo clans also distinguish the intermarriage between groups such as *Naakaí* Diné'é (Mexican Clan), *Náasht'ézhí Diné'é* (Zuni Clan), *Chishi* (Chiricahua Apache Clan), and *Nóoda'í Diné'é* (Ute Clan).

Oral narratives within the context of ceremonies serve to provide guidance and knowledge, to inform and direct people in their daily lives. As Diné scholar Jennifer Denetdale points out, "As a person listens to the stories being relayed, she or he adopts the memories of the person who tells the narratives" (Denetdale 40:2007). In this respect, there is a strong connection between the past and its relevance to the present. Oral histories recited by a medicine man for ceremonial purposes might be considered a

formal or "traditional" circumstance in which important narratives, songs and metaphorical lessons are recounted for the benefit of everyone in attendance.

Orality has healing properties as well as the ability to unify everyone in a ceremony for the purposes of healing (Denetdale 2007a; Iverson 2002; Kluckhorn 1962; Warburton and Begay 2005). With each re-telling of an oral narrative within a ceremonial or formal context oral histories pass on cultural, historical and intellectual information (Bailey and Bailey 1986; Denetdale 2007a; Iverson 2002; Kelley and Francis 2003; Warbuton and Begay 2005).

An example of the power embedded in oral histories in ceremonial contexts is the *kinaaldá,* or girls' puberty ceremony. When a young Navajo girl first menstruates, her family might have a *kinaaldá* ceremony to honor the young girl and seek blessings for her from Changing Woman, a revered deity (Bailey and Bailey 1986; Denetdale 2001; Iverson 2002; Kelley and Francis 1994; Reichard 1950). An important part of the ceremony includes singing and listening to the stories of Changing Woman and her transformation to womanhood; the words of these narratives and songs help mold the young girl in the same fashion, in the hopes that she too will carry herself with dignity and strength like Changing Woman (Iverson 2002; Kluckhorn 1950; Reichard 1950).

Another context for story telling considered culturally appropriate within Navajo culture involves travel. Pre-historic Navajo peoples were part of inter-connected trade routes, and relations with Indigenous peoples all over the southwest for hundreds of years before Spanish settlers arrived (Amsden 1974; Bailey and Bailey 1986; Iverson 2002). Communication and trade between Navajo peoples and other nearby tribes historically involved travel between different parties, either by foot, wagon or horse. Klara Kelley

and Harris Francis posit that certain traditional oral narratives and songs actually provide visual maps of the landscape, including words and sentences about traveling routes and recognizable landmarks (Kelley and Francis 2003). It is possible that these stories were told in route traveling and that the words provided a visual and audible path (Kelley and Francis 2003).

The performance and artfulness of being a good orator, of speaking well, is a respected and valued trait in Navajo culture (Denetdale 2004, 2007a). In the past, clan relatives and community members chose leaders, Navajo headmen,[14] based upon their leadership qualities including the ability to speak well (Denetdale 2004, 2007a). Chief Manuelito (1816-1894), a Navajo headman during and after the tumultuous years of internment at Bosque Redondo, is considered a great speaker by many Navajo people based on historical and oral accounts of his speech making to Navajo peoples, during political negotiations with the U.S. Government surrounding Navajo peoples' release from Ft. Sumner, and during his visit in 1878 to Washington, D.C. on behalf of Navajo people (Denetdale 2004, 2007a,b; Iverson 2002). Formal occasions such as chapter house meetings, political events, museum opening exhibits, and even large family reunions often call for speech making by respected leaders, family members and community members.

Cars (and buses) may have replaced horse and wagons, but there are still long distances to be traveled for visiting relatives and friends across the Navajo reservation. Telling stories while traveling via car or bus remain a popular past time as I realized during my own fieldwork research. Historically, many Navajo peoples lived more than a

[14] Navajo headmen were chosen leaders amongst their local communities and clan affiliations (Denetdale 2007).

few miles from other friends, family and clan members; ceremonies provided opportunities to share news and to renew kinship ties. After the colonial intrusion of cavalry and settlers, trading posts, served as places of convergence, meeting places where one might visit with or run into a friend or relative, exchange stories and news (Bailey and Bailey 1986). Although cell phones and computers certainly make communication more available for people nowadays living long distances apart, meeting places that regularly serve large numbers of Navajo peoples exist all over in the forms of local laundry facilities, chapter houses and senior centers, and the nearest Wal-Mart and Home Depot stores in Gallup, NM. Within the past fifty years, places of convergence have changed, from trading posts to local grocery stores for instance, but the practice of exchanging stories and news has not.

Decolonizing Fort Defiance narratives

Oral narratives provide the foundation for this research as an essential part of Navajo culture, and history; further, this work treats oral history as a means of analyzing social and historical processes that shape local histories and consciousness of the past (Cruikshank 1998; Fixico 1997; Flores 2002; Mignolo 2000; Strong 2013). Oral histories are a tradition within Navajo culture; however, as David Samuels asserts, "traditions are not simply handed along from one generation to the next. Part of their enduring power comes from the possibility for their strategic reinvention in order to speak strongly in new social and political contexts" (Samuels 5: 2007).

The narratives of Fort Defiance residents within the context of a community based oral history project aim to reposition Navajo experiences of the past at the forefront of the community's recognized history. Indeed, it is possible to see the historical narratives and

the community oral history project as part of a much larger process of utilizing decolonization strategies by engaging Navajo residents of the local community in a dialogue with a past steeped in imperialism and settler colonialism. In accordance with my consultants, my work here considers Navajo history as a means of understanding and relating past events to the present. In this respect, the use of contemporary oral histories from Fort Defiance residents lends insight to Navajo perspectives of a local, community based history.

For the purposes of a community based oral history project in Fort Defiance, residents' narratives serve as a collection of memories, experiences and responses about the history of their community with the ultimate purpose of sharing knowledge to benefit the entire community and incite interest about local history in younger generations of Fort Defiance residents. Community residents' oral histories provide an illuminating picture of the dynamics of a diverse and continuously changing Navajo community in the twentieth century; in addition, these narratives speak to dominant narratives of postcolonial policies and ideologies that have affected the representation of the Fort Defiance community.

How have residents of Fort Defiance responded to having the history of their community affected by colonial strategies of domination and representation? In her oral history work with Yukon Indigenous peoples, Julie Cruikshank asks the question, "What can oral histories tell us about colonial encounters?" My own query is similar and attempts to answer this question concerning transformations of the Fort Defiance community throughout the twentieth century and local understandings of these changes. Indian policy shifted in the twentieth century from treaties and reservation boundary

establishments to colonial agendas intent to provide Western based practices in medicine and education, introduced under the guise of modernity. In turn, Navajo peoples reacted to these changes, participated in some of them and sustained cultural views and practices of their own. I argue that the words and personal histories of Fort Defiance residents offer insight to issues of historical representation, post-colonialism and the realities of Twenty-First Century Native American communities. Although colonialism has manifested in a multitude of ways throughout the world, as a practice it has typically functioned to uniformly subject peoples to one dominant system, though, as Cruikshank argues, "the aftermaths of colonialism are always local" (Cruikshank 9: 2005) and the outcomes are rarely uniform.

Creating new representations of the Fort Defiance community places local Navajo knowledge at the forefront of this project. Following Nicholas Dirk's challenge to view colonialism as anything but "monolithic and unchanging," settler colonialism can be characterized as an ever-changing, multi-tasking, bureaucratic force sometimes brutal and apparent, other times subtle and misguided (Dirk 1992). For instance, until several years ago, a street sign existed in Fort Defiance that read "Kit Carson Road," named for the U.S. army general responsible for forcibly removing Navajo families from their land to Fort Sumner, New Mexico. On a survey map of the Fort Defiance area, the canyon running behind what might be considered "Fort Defiance proper" (where BIA and tribal offices stand or use to operate) is labeled *Canon Bonito*, so named by Spanish explorers to Navajo land the 1500s (Bailey and Bailey 1986). The Navajo name *Tséhootsooí* or "meadow between rocks" is printed nearby on the survey map, referring in general to the entire area. These references to the colonial practices of naming places and the habit of

colonists to name and re-name the sites where they settle and travel through lends a visible aspect of the affects of colonial installations on a local, Navajo landscape. Despite survey maps and signposts, residents in the community frequently use their own terms and names for specific areas, referring to distinctive features along surrounding dirt roads, rather than proper street names.

Fort Defiance resident's oral histories establish an important connection between history and landscape; this connection also underscores the significance of Navajo sovereignty extended to the development, maintenance and preservation of land. Settler colonialism continually threatens and assaults Navajo sovereignty over land; economic development funneled through federal and tribal initiatives has included destructive environmental practices such as mining for coal, natural gas and oil which has destroyed parts of the Navajo Nation leaving polluted springs, large tracts of barren land and exposed uranium tailings (Brugge 2006). The extraction of highly sought after natural resources on the Navajo Nation has jeopardized many Navajo people's health and livelihood and continues to be a topic of concern especially surrounding the threat of another power plant in the four corners area (Brugge 2006). The 1872 Mining Act designated all rights to land below the surface to the federal government, which leased these rights to companies extracting oil, gas, coal and uranium. The Wind River reservation in Wyoming and the Navajo Nation were heavily tapped for uranium extraction during the cold war, resulting in thousands of men, women and children who later suffered severe health problems and early deaths as a result of exposure to radiation (Brugge 2006).

The connection between oral histories and landscape affirmed by Fort Defiance resident's oral histories also asserts a deeply sovereign claim to the history and sustenance provided Navajo people through land. Many Navajo families have stories about family members who worked in the uranium or coal mines and suffered health problems. Many Navajo families also have stories about relatives who were forcibly separated from the family and sent to boarding school, or through the Indian Student Placement Services program, placed with a Mormon family in Utah.[15] Understandably these are oral narratives and histories fraught with emotion (Harkin 2003). And yet, until recently, these narratives and viewpoints about history, landscape and culture were missing from published historical texts about Navajo peoples and Navajo history. As Smith rightly points out "[t]he negation of Indigenous views of history was a critical part of asserting colonial ideology, partly because such views were regarded as clearly 'primitive' and 'incorrect' and mostly because they challenged and resisted the mission of colonization" (Smith 1999: 29). The landscape of Fort Defiance has been markedly altered by since the installation of the military fort in 1851, and the introduction of settler colonial policies that allowed for the construction of federal and private entrepreneurial institutions. Navajo residents have had little say in the development and use of their community lands, legally designated as a sovereign part of the Navajo Nation.

While non-Navajo historiography of the Fort Defiance community focuses explicitly on the progress of BIA agency control over Navajo economic and social

[15] The Indian Student Placement program began in the 1950s peaked in the 1970s. Navajo children were placed with a Mormon family, typically in Salt Lake City with all expenses paid by the Mormon family. One Navajo friend who was placed in this program for a few years fondly recalled her Mormon "mom" as being talented at making pies and her home-stay family allowing the kids to go swimming all day on the weekends.

development for the benefit of the tribe, oral histories from community members speak to resisting definitions of community within a progressive, development framework. Portrayals of colonial impositions on Navajo ways of life as beneficial to "development" and "progress" also undermines the complexity of the relationship between colonized and colonizer and simplifies the interactions between peoples as merely dichotomous (Stoler 2006). It further implies that colonialism is a part of the past, and that the sovereign Navajo Nation is no longer subjected to the effects of federal policy or control.

A dichotomous interpretation of colonialism and colonized peoples dehumanizes the very real atrocities inflicted under colonial regimes. By distancing the people involved and characterizing the relationship as a series of events between groups of people, the details of lived experiences are lost. Terror, brutality and horror, as Taussig reminds us, are lasting impacts of colonialism and not to be discounted (Taussig 1992). Similarly, the emotions resulting from these inflictions are part of oral histories about colonial agendas. Relating painful memories and stories about the past are important aspects of oral histories; and addressing the emotional repercussions of the past rarely receives sensitive treatment in non-Navajo written historical texts (Harkin 2003).

The vicinity known as Fort Defiance is variously described by residents as a past locus of activity and commerce related to U.S. Government and tribal enterprises, characterized as the "birth place of the Navajo Nation" and in recent years, deemed an important community because of its past. "You know, now, looking at Fort Defiance it's like [shrug]" one consultant said, while another confirmed that when the boarding school closed down "[Fort Defiance] started to become smaller as far as usage was concerned. The only thing that was there was the hospital and the agency-Fort Defiance agency-that

was all that was left" (Nettie Yazzie 2001, Roger 2005). These quotes from longtime residents of Fort Defiance speak volumes to local perceptions of the community and its history. Despite business and entrepreneurial ventures in Fort Defiance such as numerous trading posts and a handful of private businesses, the landscape today remains largely defined by empty government buildings such as the old building of the Indian Health Services hospital, and a few operating federal and tribal offices, warehouses and storage facilities.

Representation and Historiography

As the selected site for the first military installation on Navajo land, Fort Defiance has historically been represented as a community through the lens of settler colonialism. As the agency headquarters for the BIA, boarding school, hospital, sanatorium and numerous trading posts, the history of the community has been chronicled through the perspectives of non-Navajo people including historians, schoolteachers, and U.S. Soldiers (Bailey and Bailey 1986; Frink 1968; Golden 1954; Kelley 1986; Mathews 1994). Navajo history, being rooted in oral traditions, has steadfastly remained part of family, clan and daily community life, with stories passed on to neighbors, clan and family relations. Oral histories about Navajo lived experiences, and historical consciousness has also garnered less academic attention (Basso 1997).

Part of the mentality of settler colonialism intrusions into Navajo culture includes dismissing the sacredness of creation stories, ceremonial songs and prayers, many of which were published by anthropologists and military invaders as "myths" and "legends," distinguished as an exotic glimpse into Navajo culture (Mathews 1994[1897]; Reichard 1950). Settler colonial representations of Navajo people and culture follow a trajectory of

racial categories that most benefit the aims and goals of settler colonialism schemes. The nineteenth century depiction of Navajo as a "problem" people who raided and stole from other settlers provided "justification" for Carleton and Sumner to implement genocidal policies towards Navajo people and communities; likewise, late early twentieth century tropes of Navajo people "vanishing" and later, as adaptable, courtesy of the writings and observations of Stewart Culin led to proposals that Navajo people might make good workers and assimilate peacefully into American society (Bailey and Bailey 1986; Bsumek 2004; Iverson 2002; Kelley 1986).

Fort Defiance has also been well documented by non-Navajo photographers including Milton Snow, Timothy O'Sullivan and Ben Wittick (Faris 1996). Wittick, working at the end of the nineteenth century, set up a studio at Fort Wingate, New Mexico and proceeded to photograph as much of Native life as possible, with or without permission-and usually without it (Faris 1996). O'Sullivan arrived in the southwest during the 1860s as part of the Geological Exploration of the Fortieth Parallel (Faris 1996). His photographs of Fort Defiance focus on groups of people rather than the landscape views Wittick preferred. Milton Snow worked for the BIA documenting development projects, buildings, and the occasional landscape, and based in the Window Rock and Fort Defiance area (Faris 1960; Wilson 2002). O'Sullivan, and Wittick in particular provide examples of visual representations of Navajo people that reveal non-Navajo expectations and assumptions about what Indians and Navajos should look like: posed portraits of Navajo men carrying bows and arrows, wrapped in chief blankets (Faris 1996). Navajo people as subjects for these photographs also appear resolute, determined and strong (Roessel 1996).

In contrast, Snow was more concerned with federal work projects and buildings than people; his subjects are usually captured in the midst of daily tasks that chronicle functional development projects such as pumping water, crews paving roads, and Navajo women folding laundry at the boarding school.

One medium of self-representation, pursued by the Navajo Nation as well as other Indigenous communities, is through museum institutions. In 1998, the present day Navajo Nation Museum was built, offering a larger space devoted to a local library, museum galleries, conference rooms, kitchen/dining-area and gift shop. The Navajo Nation Museum serves to present aspects of Navajo culture and history both to Navajo and non-Navajo audiences. The museum operates under Navajo professionals and staff, fulfilling an important role presenting and representing aspects of Navajo culture and history.

In 2010, the museum opened an exhibit titled, "*Hastiin Ch'ilhajíní dóó Diné bi naat'áanii Bahane'*: Chief Manuelito & Navajo Leaders," guest curated by Diné historian Jennifer Denetdale. Other past exhibits include an installation on stories of the Long Walk, "*Hwéeldi baa hane'*" (2012) and "Men who Weave: A Revival in *Diné Bikeyah*" (2004-2005). These exhibits, among many others, present salient subject matter to Diné audiences (as well as non-Navajo visitors) and are curated and researched by Navajo museum professionals. Representation of indigenous peoples by indigenous people," writes Smith, "is about countering the dominant society's image of indigenous peoples, their lifestyles and belief systems. It is also about proposing solutions to real-life dilemmas that indigenous communities confront and trying to capture the complexities of being indigenous" (Smith 1999: 151).

Photographs, historical documents, academic assertions, and public expectations of Navajo peoples, encompassed by various mechanisms of settler colonialism, has contributed to well recognized, powerful non-Navajo representations and conceptions of Navajo history (Deloria 2004; Denetdale 2007a; Donham 1999; Trouillot 1995). Navajo representations of non-Navajo cultures are not paid attention by non-Navajo scholars. So, how does power allow for particular narratives to gain recognition over others? and How is this power exercised? (Foucault 1995[1977]; Trouillot 1995). This is pertinent to the local history of Fort Defiance, one that consists of multiple voices and personalities from residents. "Indigenous communities have struggled since colonization," Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith points out, "to be able to exercise what is viewed as a fundamental right, that is to represent ourselves" (Smith 1999: 150).

The intersections of narratives and power are significant to the production of historical narratives, as the collected essays of Schmidt and Patterson demonstrate; in their introduction, the authors note that the erasure of local histories worldwide is a result of colonialism and its manifestations which continue to reshape, in complex ways, the treatment of history (Schmidt and Patterson 1995). Handsman and Richmond's contribution to this volume provides an important example of the legacy of colonial schemes and the suppression of local, indigenous history of the Mahican peoples, for whom written history has been dominated by missionary accounts (Handsman and Richmond 1995). Such sources, diaries, photographs, missionary accounts, etc., must be critiqued as historical documents and considered as susceptible to interpretation, bias and construction rather than as definitive, historical "truths."(Berkhofer Jr. 1978; Faris 1996; Stoler 2010; Strong 1999).

Ideologies of Modernity

Ideologies constructed around the concept of modernity are a salient point of postcolonial policy in Fort Defiance during the twentieth century; my purpose for addressing the subject in this dissertation is to examine how postcolonial ideologies centered on bringing modernity to the Navajo Nation and the Fort Defiance community assisted in the creation of a non-Navajo, authoritative narrative of Navajo history. As Donham and Marx make apparent, ideology can be both a neutralizing force to power differences and a tool to deconstruct social inequalities (Donham 1990). Ideology, in this sense, takes into account the complexities of human interaction, of local reactions against and in conjunction with, political and economic processes formed by the federal government, private enterprises, and tribal members (Crehan 2002).

Modernity in the form of new products, access to economies and technologies arrived in New Mexico with the railroad during the late 1880s (Peterson 2006; Weigle 1996). The arrival of the railroad marked a period of transition in which supplies such as tin canned goods and synthetic dyes were more readily accessible to New Mexico Territory (Weigle 1988). Synthetic dyes infiltrated trading posts on the Navajo Nation and were duly passed along to Navajo and Hispanic weavers as a short cut to the labor-intensive plant dying process (Hedlund 1994; M'Closkey 2002; O'Neill 1997; Powers 2002).

The layout of Fort Defiance, by the turn of the Nineteenth Century, featured tree lined, paved streets with large stone buildings and wooden houses; in keeping with Western and colonial ideas of spatial layout and community development, the community was designed around a grid form divided into neighborhood blocks (Smith 2000). The

careful construction of federal Indian agency administrative quarters in Window Rock, during the 1930s was designed to reinforce the surveillance of and distance between non-Navajo official and lower ranked Navajo employees (Liebowitz 2008). This philosophy also extends to the organization of Fort Defiance with the contrasting presence of the hospital, boarding schools, employee club and doctor housing to the areas relegated for Navajo inhabitants, places nicknamed "rat row" because of the unsanitary conditions.

As part of this visual colonization, Western and Euro-American notions of spatial organization impacted the Fort Defiance community beginning with the military fort established in the mid-1800s and continuing with the establishment of government buildings and paved neighborhood streets in the early 1900s. This process, Terry Smith argues in his examination of aboriginal Australian places colonized by Europeans involves three main components: calibration or the acts of mapping and naming features of the landscape (creeks, meadows and canyons); obliterating the "physical existence of indigenous peoples," disrupting indigenous use of land and constructions, and finally, re-inscribing landscape so that the presence of indigenous peoples becomes a symbolic part of the past, a rationalization for western expansion into the space of the 'exotic Other' (Smith 2002: 483).

The postcolonial ideology of modernity contributed to BIA policy focused on "improvement" in very distinct ways: maintaining a western based idea of control through spatial organization of the community; imposing physical landmarks with symbolic register such as the hospital, boarding schools, and *hogan* shaped jail structures; and centralizing government assistance programs in Fort Defiance.

Ideology as it concerns this dissertation and my research, can be viewed as a catalyst for colonial and postcolonial processes that in turn affect individuals and communities. When the boarding school dormitories were torn down, many Navajo residents and former students lost a physical point of reference to the place where they had grown up, learned to read and write, missed their parents and families and formed lasting friendships (Interview Lorraine 2002, Interview Roger Smith 2003).

As Flores contends in his work on the place making process of the Alamo, from a forlorn perch for wandering soldiers to a symbolic fixture of Texas history and major tourist attraction, "modernity constitutes a process of transformation by which previous social and cultural formations are reorganized through a distinctively new organizational rubric" (Flores 155: 2002). For the Fort Defiance community, buildings and public sites that were part of Navajo peoples experiences and histories represented not only dominant discourses about ways of life, but also their own experiences and resistances to BIA imposed policy; once raised and demolished, these buildings and sites were effectively stripped of their collective resonance for Navajo residents and peoples.

Social processes and their effects on historical narratives provide an opportunity to consider the possible intersections of power and ideology and the tangible results of such interactions in local communities (Donham 1990). My interest in colonial impositions on the local Fort Defiance community is similar to Julie Cruikshank's query "what happens during colonial encounters when matters of locality confront unfamiliar practices of exploration?" (Cruikshank 2005). The U.S. Government agencies that intruded onto Navajo land in the late nineteenth century followed on the heels of a tragic event in Navajo history and one well remembered today by Navajo peoples, the Long

Walk (1863-1868). This event is frequently connected to the history of Fort Defiance, as the community was a departure point for Navajo people forced to march to internment at Bosque Redondo, New Mexico or *Hwéeldi*. In 1868, Fort Defiance was a place of re-settlement for many Navajos returning from enforced incarceration at Ft. Sumner (Bailey and Bailey 1986; Denetdale 2007; Iverson 2002).

Brutal efforts to round up Navajo peoples and force them into imprisonment at Bosque Redondo included burning crops and fruit trees and killing livestock (Bailey and Bailey 1986; Iverson 2002). Thus, when Navajo people were allowed to return to their homelands, they were completely reliant on the U.S. Government for rations, livestock and basic materials (Bailey and Bailey 1986; Iverson 2002). These items were distributed at Fort Defiance and for this reason, many families resettled in the area after The Long Walk (Bailey and Bailey: 1986). The Long Walk and the period of re-settlement after 1868 are important historical periods related to Fort Defiance and feature in the oral histories of local residents.

In the process of constructing this dissertation, I am influenced by literature from the fields of ethno-history, historical anthropology and post-colonialism. I endeavor throughout this dissertation to exercise aspects of these theoretical orientations to support my research and the words of my consultants regarding local conceptions of place, history and representation. My research has primarily developed around questions of what defines historically important places, how historical narratives develop within the framework of colonial impositions on local communities, and how social and bureaucratic processes affect representation of historical narratives. I am interested in the confluence of power and ideology perpetuating a historical narrative that has long

promoted a non-Navajo perspective and silenced Navajo historical narratives about the Fort Defiance community.

Overview

The following chapters that compose my dissertation are organized around central topics that directed my research and developed during the course of doing fieldwork: Navajo conceptions of community representation and the role of sovereignty in oral histories; the production of historical narratives, and the intersections of power and history; and the connections between landscape, memory and knowledge.

My second chapter introduces the physical location of Fort Defiance and situates the community in proximity to the communities of Window Rock and St. Michaels. I provide a more thorough description of the community and the different areas, as specified by local residents that make up Fort Defiance. Chapter two examines my long-standing relationship with the Fort Defiance, St. Michaels and Window Rock communities and my role in collecting oral histories. I also discuss the ethical responsibilities of being a researcher and the methods used for my dissertation research.

In my third chapter, "Re-Thinking Navajo Historiography" I present key themes that emerge from Navajo residents' narratives and present local history from Navajo perspectives; these narratives also respond to settler colonial representations of Fort Defiance history. I include narratives from residents that speak to the disparity, racism, and colonial tropes prevalent in federal programs in the twentieth century that aimed to 'modernize' reservation communities.

The second part of this chapter focuses on the production of settler colonial narratives and the ways in which these narratives have impacted the representation of

Fort Defiance. I include archival photographs from the Milton Snow collection that detail sites, places and individuals in the Fort Defiance community during the 1940s-1950s. This chapter also concerns colonial ideologies about progress and modernization that significantly impact the representation of Fort Defiance history as well as the lived experiences of residents.

Building on the importance of oral histories in connection with specific places and sites, my fourth chapter, "Place, Memory and Oral Narratives: Mapping Fort Defiance" presents oral histories of Fort Defiance residents by connecting places and sites with narratives. The landscape that makes up Fort Defiance is layered with stories from residents and nearby residents of other communities that contribute to an understanding of the connections between oral histories, sovereignty, and place. Contrary to the idea that Navajo history and culture are threatened by change, the contemporary oral histories about Fort Defiance presented in this chapter support the argument that Navajo culture incorporates change in complex and nuanced ways that support Diné philosophies and ways of life (Farella 1984). While federal agencies and private religious institutions have developed much of the landscape of Fort Defiance, the oral histories of Fort Defiance residents articulate Navajo understandings of site, place and embedding memory on landscape (Basso 1996; Basso and Watt 2004; Cruikshank 1990; Kelley and Harris 1994).

"The Roots of a Community: Wage labor and the roles of Diné women in Fort Defiance" concerns an important and absent aspect of Navajo historiography: the presence and contributions of Navajo women. In response, this chapter discusses the prominent role of Navajo women in the wage labor economy of Fort Defiance during the

early and mid-twentieth century. Based on the narratives of interviews with Fort Defiance female residents, I argue that Navajo women have always been sustaining members of their families and communities and during the twentieth century, faced discrimination and poor pay to support their families. Framed within postcolonial critique and utilizing archival photographs to augment Navajo women's narratives, I argue that Navajo women contributed significantly to the local economy and wage labor force in Fort Defiance and surrounding communities during the twentieth century. Breaking away from Navajo traditional notions of women's work, many of these women accomplished careers in the blue-collar labor force while maintaining important aspects of Navajo culture such as supporting family, earning income and providing for oneself and family.

In conclusion, I summarize and discuss the key themes and assertions of my dissertation research, the goals of the oral history project in Fort Defiance and possibilities for future research.

Chapter two:
Fieldwork and Methods

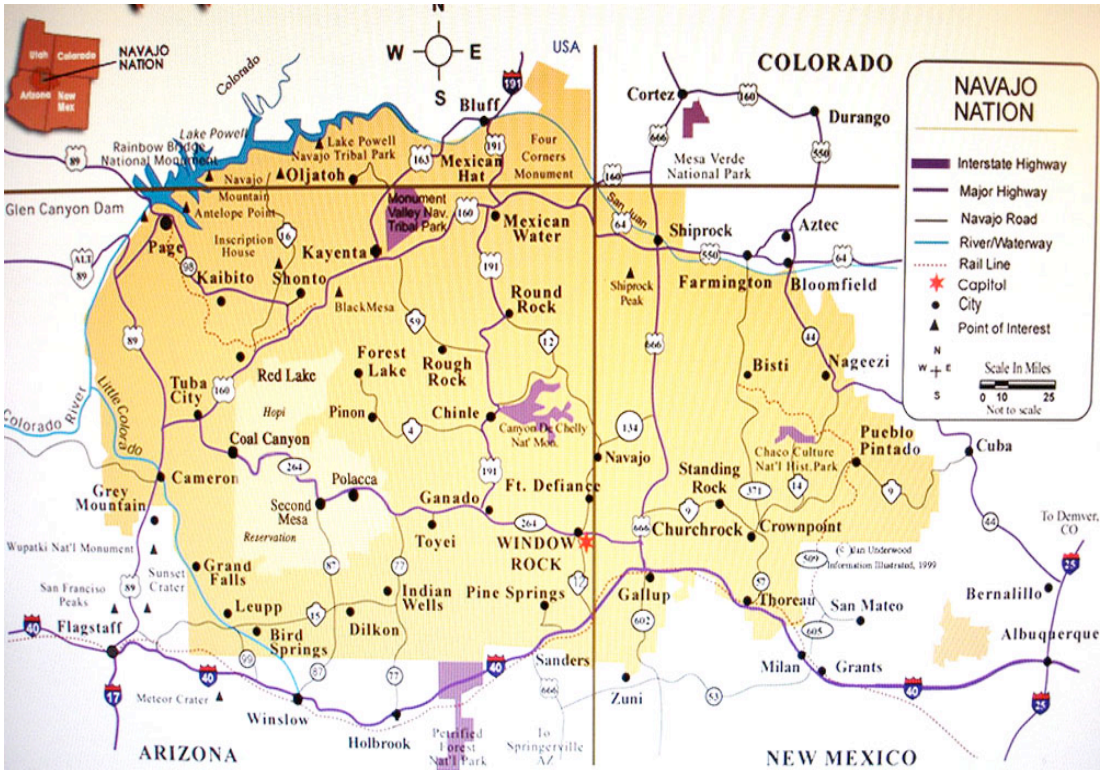

Figure 3: Map of the Navajo and Hopi Nations, courtesy of the Navajo Nation

Introduction

Twelve years ago, when I began the work that eventually evolved into this dissertation I was a teaching assistant for a field school sponsored by Northwestern University[16]. The eight week long field school program placed undergraduate and graduate students in communities across the Navajo Nation in various internships that corresponded with students' research interests. Research protocol for the field school included obtaining permits from the Navajo Nation Historic Preservation Department as

[16] Northwestern University's Ethnographic Field School was developed by Dr. Oswald Werner, a linguistic anthropologist and professor at Northwestern University

well as attendance at host community meetings. At one such Chapter House[17] meeting in Fort Defiance, local residents suggested the idea for a project to create a collection of oral histories about the Fort Defiance community, in particular, recorded stories from elders living in the area. I volunteered to be a part of the project and conduct some interviews with Fort Defiance residents to determine the scope and goals of this potential project. The opportunity to marry two of my interests, history and oral narratives, in an anthropological fieldwork context was attractive to me especially as I had experience living in Fort Defiance.

Two years prior (1999), as a student of the same field school, I lived in Ft Defiance for the summer, working as an intern for the Navajo Nation Museum. That summer I had the pleasure of assisting with the installation of an exhibit on the history of Navajo railroad workers, *Béésh ńt'i'Bina'nish Ba'hané*, consisting of photographs and oral histories collected by Jerry Curley. I spent most of my days that summer in the air conditioned museum painting walls, hanging photographs, interviewing staff when they had a spare moment, helping to build Plexiglas display cases and enjoying lunch with the other interns and staff at the affectionately called "mutton stands" across the street: individual stands serving squash and mutton stew, blue corn mush, hot tortillas and ice cold diet coke. Through this experience I became familiar with the Fort Defiance community and nearby communities of St. Michaels, Ganado, Cross Canyon, Sawmill and Window Rock. I met with and talked to people living in these communities, and made acquaintances and friendships that continue to enrich my life today.

[17] Chapter houses exist in each community on the Navajo Nation; developed in the late 1920s and 30s as a way of encouraging community political organization, chapter houses hold monthly meetings to delegate tasks and vote on the use of monies towards community improvement projects and social community activities (Wilkins 1999).

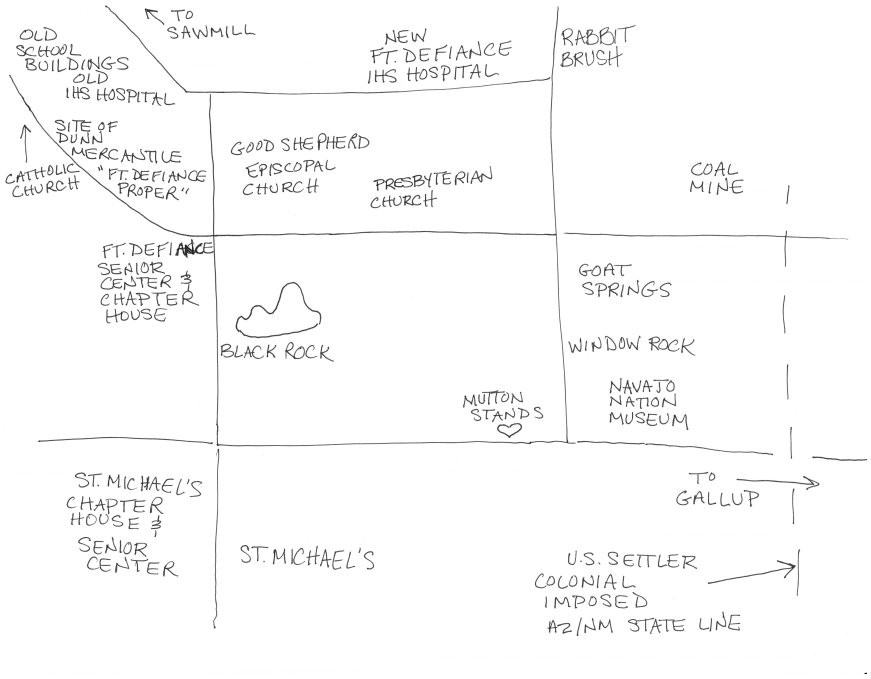

Figure 4: Map of Window Rock, St. Michaels and Ft. Defiance communities

I began work on a community based oral history project of Fort Defiance during the summer of 2001 and although the field school ended operations two years later, this project became the focus of my graduate work and the subject for this dissertation. The preliminary stages of this project included several formal and informal meetings with Chapter house officials.[18] In addition, I surveyed the opinions of community members and friends about the possibilities of creating a collection of oral histories about Fort Defiance. From these initial interviews I gained an idea of the expectations for the project, suggestions of who to talk with, places to visit and potential future uses for the proposed collection of local oral narratives. Perhaps the most important of these intended uses will be providing the local Window Rock school district with a resource of oral

[18] Chapter house officials are community residents who fill official positions as president, vice-president and secretary, overseeing the community's political and social activities (Wilkins 1999).

histories and archival material with which to engage students in school and community projects. Inciting interest in young Navajo people about Navajo local history is a primary goal for this project. Although the majority of people who participated and were interviewed for this project were between ages forty through sixty, I did have several informal conversations with younger adults (in their twenties and thirties) about the Fort Defiance community and their experiences growing up in Fort Defiance. Typically these conversations arose after interviewing an elder relative, which sparked interest in stories about the past. Through informal conversations and interviews it became apparent that many Navajo young people are interested in their families' stories and the histories of their communities; on occasion, my interviews were able to facilitate this interest by encouraging inter-generational conversations between relatives.

I spent many afternoons at the local senior centers in St. Michaels and Fort Defiance where residents of the two communities congregate in the late morning and early afternoon for coffee, lunch, local news and conversation. Interview appointments were set up at the senior center, through recommendations and house visits, or at social events such as family reunions, birthday parties, and ceremonies where I was introduced to people. Through these local social networks I accepted invitations to visit people at home or occasionally I simply stopped by unannounced and over cups of warm brewed coffee, made arrangements for an interview time. In most cases, Navajo social etiquette involves making two or three home visits before doing an interview which I appreciated as it gave both parties opportunity to get to know one another before turning on the tape recorder. The long history of anthropologists and researchers working on the Navajo Nation and the plethora of anthropologists at any given time visiting the Navajo Nation

quite rightly makes many Navajo people wary of simply giving away knowledge to outsiders who might misuse or not value what they have learned. I appreciate this concern and the relationship that develops over time with continuous visits, working towards an interview.

Figure 5: In the back of a friend's pick-up truck with hay, watermelon and a sack of bluebird flour, Window Rock 2002, photo courtesy of Leighton Peterson.

On my visits to people's homes, I brought socially acceptable and culturally preferred gifts such as flour, watermelons, coffee, soda pops and favorite snacks including sunflower seeds and popcorn balls. Popcorn balls, soda pop and watermelons are appreciated commodities during the summer when there are frequently ceremonies that require bringing gifts for use or re-distribution amongst family and clan members who help during the arduous preparations. I also occasionally brought gifts from New York (my parents live in the Hudson Valley), regional and novelty items such as maple syrup, green tea and brightly colored parasols from Chinatown in New York City.

How did I really fit in?

Although I grew up in a large metropolitan city, I found it easy to adapt to the lifestyle of living in a small community where people recognize each other's cars and offer rides to hitchhikers who are likely to be neighbors and co-workers. Thanks to a long history of anthropologists and researchers spending time on the Navajo Nation, my presence was mostly tolerated as a young, friendly woman eager to ask questions and laugh at jokes. The Navajo Nation receives thousands of non-Navajo visitors every year, many of them tourists, passers-by and visiting missionaries. Once, while filling my car's fuel tank in Window Rock, a Navajo man approached me and asked in quick succession, "Are you a tourist? A teacher? A missionary? Do you work at the hospital?" Puzzled that I shook my head at each suggestion he offered, I answered him, "I'm an anthropologist." We laughed as I pointed out, "That's the one thing you didn't guess!" A long-standing joke about the prevalence of anthropologists on the Navajo Nation states that in every *Hogan* there is a Navajo family, their extended family, dog and an anthropologist. During the years in which I completed the bulk of my research, I often had the company of another anthropologist friend and knew of at least two other anthropologists working in nearby communities. Over the years, it has been a pleasure to collaborate, exchange ideas and work with several of these colleagues.

I grew up in an artistic, Anglo, middle class family in Austin, Texas. My father taught fine art at the University of Texas and when he wasn't teaching, he was painting in our converted garage studio. I grew up surrounded by modern art and sculpture, listening to conversations about the "art world," entertaining graduate students with my violin and Barbie dolls, and spending time with my parents in art museums. I fled Texas for a small

liberal arts college in New York in the late 1990s, anxious to experience east coast fall foliage, snow storms and take classes in Victorian stone buildings. During my sophomore year of college, I discovered a flyer advertising Northwestern University's Ethnographic Field School in the southwest. Eager to understand anthropological field research methods and to put into practice all I had learned in an introductory anthropology class, I made up my mind to attend the field school.

Over the years, through my friendships in the Fort Defiance and St. Michaels communities, I lived in a camping trailer, spent two summers sharing a rented house and slept on the living room floor in the house of close friends. I spent the decade of my twenties learning how to make fry bread, polite ways to help out at social gatherings, doing my best to explain why I was *still* in school and where the husband and more importantly, children were hiding. For most hard working people, the idea of a researcher hanging out and doing daily chores "for fun" with no steady job in sight is odd. Young, white women generally fill government jobs in the Indian Health Services or local public schools. In contrast, I visited friends during the lunch hour for an interview, helped herd sheep, bake bread and learnt to always carry my recorder with me in case of an interview. Non-Navajo people frequently can be pushy to attend ceremonies and special gatherings, hoping to be part of something sacred, eager to boast of their close ties to Navajo families and friends. Early on, I made a conscious effort not to be aggressive or invite myself to ceremonies but to instead be politely inquisitive, helpful and listen to the conversations around me. It is a mistake, in my opinion, to focus entirely on the ceremonial aspects of Navajo culture while disregarding the importance of daily activities, language and relationships. Indeed, these everyday activities are every bit a part of Navajo culture and

frequently give insight to Navajo philosophies. I participated in daily community life completing many of the same activities as my neighbors and friends: driving to Gallup, NM for groceries, washing my clothes at the local Laundromat, making giant amounts of potato salad for Fourth of July family reunions, and hanging out at the local flea market in search of a good mutton sandwich.

Engagement with decolonization strategies and methods is a central theme throughout this dissertation and my fieldwork. My understanding of and work with this concept has developed over several years as an undergraduate student and graduate student, beginning with my first experiences on the Navajo Nation in 1999. My thinking has been influenced by friends, Native scholars, and participants in my fieldwork research who have encouraged me to question the dominant, middle-class culture I grew up in and to better understand and appreciate the varied perspectives of Navajo people on issues that impact their families and communities. My interest and focus on decolonization and sovereignty has been deeply influenced by my early experiences on the Navajo Nation as an intern at the Navajo Nation Museum, the writings of Native American scholars and the opportunities to take courses with Native American scholars at the University of New Mexico and learn alongside Native American students. As a non-Native person involved in academia, I want my work to contribute in critical and meaningful ways to the communities with whom I work. As an Anglo anthropologist conducting fieldwork on the Navajo Nation, I am part of an extensive history of non-Navajo anthropologists studying Navajo culture, history and language; I distinguish my work from nineteenth and early twentieth century anthropologists ("classic ethnology") by situating my analysis within theoretical frameworks developed by Native and Navajo

scholarship and most importantly, by privileging the voices and philosophies of Navajo people with whom I worked to complete this project.

Life on the Navajo Nation is a rural but social experience. Communities may be spread out but most people accept that travel is a daily part of life and cover long distances on a weekly basis. Edith, a friend and mother of four who lives near Wheatfields Lake regularly commuted to her job at Peabody Coal Mine a commute that took approximately three hours every day round trip, to complete. Many people also choose to do weekly grocery shopping in Gallup, or visit the flea markets in Gallup or Ya-ta-hey (just outside of Gallup). Shopping in Gallup offers an opportunity to meet up with friends, even those who live far away from Gallup. One Friday afternoon, I accompanied my friend Celia to the Wal-Mart to do some grocery shopping with her young daughter. As we walked down the store aisles, Celia stopped every few minutes to say hello to a relative or friend. "I think my whole clan is in here shopping today," she laughed, "we're just reminding people early to be around for Shauna's *kinaaldá*!" Since so many people do their shopping in Gallup, running into relatives and friends at various stories around town allows people to catch up on news, share invitations to family events and ceremonies, admire new babies and share stories.

I often ran into friends or neighbors while getting gas, grocery shopping, or riding my bike. I acquired a taste for country Western music and the local radio station, KTNN, leftover mutton ribs, and frying potatoes in a cast iron skillet. I accepted invitations to haul water, chop wood and help cook over an open fire. I learned how to roast turkeys in earthen covered ovens, start a fire with cedar bark and help prepare a gallon of blue corn mush. I enjoyed opportunities to stand around makeshift outdoor kitchens, helping to

make tortillas with other women and laughing at the many jokes exchanged. An aspect of daily interaction on the Navajo Nation involves humor, something I appreciated immensely. I laughed easily at being the butt of many jokes learned a few jokes in Navajo, and laughed heartily with others about life, animals, and the bureaucracy of government that affects all of us in one way or another. I find that humor has led to many insightful conversations over the years and I am grateful for moments of insightful conversation and light-hearted teasing.

Nowadays, when I make visits to friends in Fort Defiance or St. Michaels, I am thankful for the sense of returning to a pleasantly familiar place. I have become comfortable with the way of life in these communities: the unexpected sight of an old acquaintance at the grocery store, getting up early Saturday morning to get burritos from the flea market and having good coffee on hand at all times. As a researcher and anthropologist, I have an ongoing commitment and ethical responsibility to share my findings with community members and to continue dialogue with participants to ensure that my research upholds to the needs and expectations of community members.

Figure 6: View of Fort Defiance from Sawmill Road, 2012

Introducing *Tsehootsooi* Fort Defiance

Fort Defiance is a spread out community, in close proximity to two other communities, Window Rock (*Tséghahoodzání*) and St. Michaels (*Ch'hootso'*). In addition to finding employment at local gas stations, fast food restaurants, and the Bashas' grocery store in Window Rock, many residents work within the various divisions of the Navajo Nation and Bureau of Indian Affairs, institutions headquartered in Window Rock and Fort Defiance respectively. Although 'rural' is a description often attributed to Fort Defiance, it is important to know that this community is by no means isolated; aspects of this community's history involve connections to the economies of the southwest region and United States as well as a global capitalist market (M'Closkey 2002; O'Neill 2005; Wolf 1992). Throughout the twentieth century, Navajo families and individuals living in the Fort Defiance area have been connected to complex economic systems in the southwest region, the United States and abroad; In addition to the economy of trading posts, many Navajo people were established entrepreneurial projects involving coal mining, weaving, wool production and jewelry making (M'Closkey 2002; O'Neill 2005).

The population of Fort Defiance is approximately 3,624[19]; however, the number of residents within the community fluctuates on a weekly basis as people employed during the workweek in Fort Defiance or Window Rock may stay with relatives or friends and return home on the weekends to other communities.

At the western edge of the community, a creek bed traverses through a large meadow bordered by steep canyon walls rising upwards to form part of the Fort Defiance plateau. At an elevation well over 6,000 feet the landscape of the community largely

consists of low-lying cedar trees, Ponderosa Pines along the crest of the canyon and picturesque rock formations that jut out of the flat areas to the east of the community making unmistakable landmarks on the terrain. One of these formations is a volcanic eruption locally known as Black Rock (*Tsézhini*). A creek meanders past Black Rock and although there is rarely any visible water, an underground spring provides enough sustenance for Cottonwood trees that line the road leading northwards to Fort Defiance. The creek winds through older sections of Fort Defiance, carving a steep embankment known locally as Blue Canyon (or Canyon Bonito as Spanish visitors named it). Nestled within the shadows of the canyon wall are old stone buildings and wooden houses dating from the late 1800s and early 1900s (Frink 1968). Most of these buildings are no longer in use such as the Indian Health Services hospital, which was replaced in 2002 by a new facility a few miles east of the old location. A grid like layout of paved, tree lined streets provide access to some apartment buildings, tribal and Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) offices, and a small collection of tribal corrugated metal warehouses. No remnants of the U.S. military fort erected at Fort Defiance remain, though tucked away behind one of the tribal storage warehouses is a small cemetery where three headstones stand, one of which is for a soldier, Sylvester Johnson, who was killed during an attack on the fort in 1860 (Frink 1968). Though there is no memorial or physical marker to designate the original site of the fort, one of the main roads in Fort Defiance is officially named Kit Carson road, an eerie reminder of the colonial past of this community.

Fort Defiance encompasses several locally recognized and distinct areas known as Black Rock (*Tsezhini*), Goat Springs (*Tl'izibito*), Coal Mine, Rabbit Brush and Blue Canyon. Each of these specified areas represent clusters of residential homes and sheep

[19] U.S. Census data, https://www.census.gov/2010census/

corrals and are aptly named for defining characteristics of the terrain. Rabbit Brush[20], a low-lying plant with yellow blooms dominates the flat valley area along the northern border of Fort Defiance, while Coal Mine is near the entrance to the Peabody Coal Mine and the area once supported small-scale coal mining endeavors by entrepreneurial Navajo families in the mid-1800s through the turn of the century (O'Neill 1997, 2005).

The main road through Fort Defiance passes a gas station, fast food restaurant, post office and more than one Church. In addition to the Navajo Bible Church, there are Episcopal, Presbyterian and Catholic churches in the community. There are also several developed neighborhoods built in the 1970s, 1980s and early 2000s and referred to locally as the 'Rio Puerco housings' 'doctor housings' (near the new hospital) and 'teacher housings' (between the hospital and school). There is visible disparity in the Fort Defiance area; while the housing areas near the hospital and school are newer construction with paved, lighted pathways, not far away stand older, graffiti painted houses built by the BIA and separated by deteriorating roads.

The nicer buildings and houses in Fort Defiance have historically been owned and occupied by non-Navajo people, usually Indian Health Services doctors, nurses and Bureau of Indian Affairs teachers and administrators. Attempts to cheaply remedy the need for housing for Navajo people working in the community throughout the twentieth Century resulted in shoddy constructions such as those that make up the Rio Puerco housing area. Ernie, a local resident who grew up in Fort Defiance in the 1950s told me about living with his parents and siblings in a Quonset hut, abandoned by the federal government, once used for storage and later rented out to Navajo families inexpensively.

[20] Rabbit Brush is also used as a natural plant dye for wool. It produces a yellow color in the wool and is sometimes used in Navajo weavings.

"It was a cheap solution to housing in Fort Defiance at that time. Oh man, was it hot in there," Ernie expressed, "especially in the summertime. We lived outside then to avoid the heat" (Interview 2004).

The specifics about my research

I conducted preliminary research in 2001-2002 and completed the majority of my research between 2003 and 2006 spending the months from May to August on the Navajo Nation and the fall and spring in Albuquerque completing my graduate coursework. In 2007 and 2008, I completed follow up interviews and made regular visits throughout the year to attend special events and augment my ethnographic observations. I recorded interviews with thirty individuals: twenty-one residents of the Fort Defiance community and nine people who lived in different communities and were cultural experts on the history of Fort Defiance or had once lived in the community. During 2007 and 2008 I was able to conduct follow-up interviews with six residents of Fort Defiance, gathering more stories about specific places in the community and receiving feedback that helped me to solidify some of the emerging themes from my research. I have developed a long-standing relationship with residents in the community over a span of thirteen years, including numerous casual and formal conversations that contribute to this dissertation.

Figure 7: View of a main street in Ft. Defiance
with old BIA school building and stone *hogan* to the left, 2004

What began as a personal interest in listening to stories by residents about the history of the Fort Defiance community has developed, in a sense, into a life history of the Fort Defiance Community. I have learned that personal histories and anecdotes about life in Fort Defiance are multifaceted, emotional, and reflective; the narratives of residents and cultural experts articulate the dynamic processes of colonial and postcolonial agendas, making insightful connections between current conditions and the past. While the location of Fort Defiance plays an important role in the history of the Long Walk, there are a multitude of stories or *baa hane'* about local experiences and events that also pertain to Navajo history.

As with any community local politics come into play but I dealt with this issue by remaining open to different social, religious, and neighborhood groups and points of view. I also remained open to interviewing and working with anyone willing to

participate in my study. The people who I interviewed can generally be organized into three age groups: community elders (over the age of sixty-five), adults (between the ages of forty through sixty-five) and young adults (in their twenties and thirties). Initially, I began interviewing elder people whom I met while at the local senior centers in St. Michaels and Fort Defiance. Later on, I interviewed community residents in their late forties and fifties as well as several informal conversations and interviews with younger adults in the community. The majority of my interview subjects are female due to more women visiting the senior centers and a higher local population of women. I was often able to meet and interview people through female friends who introduced me to female relatives. I initiated formal interviews and conversations with Navajo men and conducted the majority of these discussions at their workplaces and on occasion, interviews at their homes.

While participating in ceremonial or celebratory gatherings and events, I enjoyed helping to prepare food an activity performed mostly by Navajo women. Conversations that occurred while helping to make food, coffee or tend the fire often led to discussion about my research, informal interviews, and networking with community residents and their extended family members. I participated in community events and daily life: visits to the senior center, trips to the grocery store, chopping wood, cooking, doing errands in Gallup, visits to the Navajo Nation Museum or having lunch with friends eating squash stew and homemade tortillas.

Figure 8: Cooking frybread for family members and guests at a *kinaaldá* ceremony, 2003. Photograph by Leighton Peterson

The most productive methods for bringing forth oral histories about Fort Defiance were ones I developed in consultation with the people who I interviewed who included: elder community members, medicine women, pastors, students, politicians, administrators, parents, community leaders, postal workers and entrepreneurs. The second research method that I used frequently involved two stages: researching archival photographs of Fort Defiance and St. Michaels at local and regional archival collections;[21] and presenting photographs to people at the senior center or during individual interviews to initiate conversations about personal and local histories. Old pictures from the community sparked memories for many people about "the way things used to be," usually memories people were willing to share with me. Although on two occasions I utilized a video camera for an interview with Fort Defiance residents (with

[21] I visited collections at the Navajo Nation Museum, St. Michael's Mission, Frey Angelico Archives in Santa Fe, Museum of Southwest History Tucson, AZ, and UNM Center for Southwest Research.

their permission), my fieldwork research is based on tape-recorded interviews, fieldnotes and archival photographs and ephemera.

"Let's go for a ride in my *Chidi"*

Chidi is the Navajo word for car and a "rez car" is a term used to fondly describe a car that has been driven on the dirt and gravel roads of the Navajo Nation and has the visible marks to prove it. My 1999 Toyota Corolla has made it up and down mountainous dirt roads in the Chuska Mountains (much to my own surprise and that of my friends) earning the right to be referred to as a "rez car." I first heard this term for my car when I briefly returned to New York to visit family and made a day trip to Sarah Lawrence College where the daughter of Navajo friends was beginning her first semester at college. After touring the campus, her dorm and meeting her roommates, we walked to my car and my young friend said, "Oh! You have a rez car! I love old cars. Everyone here drives fancy, new cars. It makes me miss my old beat up truck. My brother drives it now" (personal communication 2006). As I learned throughout my fieldwork research, people were comfortable with the familiarity of driving and riding in a well-loved and well-used car.

Car rides are much appreciated in rural areas without reliable public transportation and the Navajo Nation is no exception. During the course of fieldwork, I found myself frequently driving around the Fort Defiance community and giving rides to friends and acquaintances to run errands. These car rides often initiated memories of events and stories about family, community and personal experiences. Passing by local landmarks such as the veteran's cemetery, a nearby arroyo, or an old stone house brought forth stories about the past, relatives who used to live in certain places, family land, and

even stories about Navajo creation and sacred places. Daily commutes to and from work and home for many Navajo people consists of long drives covering many miles. A trip from Fort Defiance to Gallup is approximately forty-one miles one way and many Navajo people travel to Gallup for work, entertainment or errands such as grocery shopping, laundering clothes, clothes shopping and buying animal feed. Homes in Fort Defiance and Window Rock often serve several family members, clan relatives and friends as weekday residences for those working in the area but whose homes are in other communities. A good friend who worked for the coal company commuted from her home north of Wheatfields Lake to Black Mesa on a weekly basis, a total of eight hours driving time round trip between work and home. For me, the large amount of time spent traveling with people proved to be an excellent opportunity to have informal conversations and interviews. In fact, during the most fruitful phases of my fieldwork, I used car rides as a means of social mapping or accessing local knowledge of important historical places and accompanying oral narratives.

Informal conversations and recorded interviews in my car proved an excellent place to learn more about the Fort Defiance community and collect oral histories about different sites and places. Two events sparked my interest in car travel. The first occurred one mid-summer afternoon when a Navajo friend and I decided to go to an annual music festival hosted that year at the Navajo Community College in Tsaile, Arizona. As the landscape around us became more forested with dramatic rock eruptions on either side of the road, my friend began to point out to me the places where her family members lived, places she visited as a child, memories of family reunions and visiting clan relatives. We drove through a small community north of Window Rock, and my friend pointed out the

window at two large round shaped rocks with flattened tops. “Those are called the Mr. and Mrs. Frog rocks,” she said, “they leveled off their tops to make the road over there” (personal communication 2006). This was followed by my friend’s revelation that the elders in the community warned that bad things would come of leveling off the two rocks to make a graveled road. My friend continued to reflect that the community has since suffered from lack of business after a lumber mill operated by the tribe closed in the 1950s and that currently the community is forced to deal with frequent gang activity. Later, as we drove past the area where my friend’s paternal grandparents lived, I learned that as a child she enjoyed watching her grandmother weave. “Look! Over there is where my grandma lived,” my friend commented. “I used to sit beside her and watch her weave rugs, when I was just a girl. But I never learned how to weave” (personal communication 2006).

Relatives’ homes, sheep camps, summer *hogans*, cabins and horse corrals are important markers on the social landscape for many Navajo peoples wherever they travel on the Navajo Nation. Driving or riding along in a car over terrain brings to mind memories of destinations where family and clan relatives live. Traversing the homeland also brings to mind stories integral to Navajo culture, such as my friend’s recollection of the frog rocks and their local importance to a sense of Navajo propriety, balance, and harmony (*Hózho)*. Though travel by car and pick-up truck is the norm, prior to the Twenty-first century, travel by wagon, horse or on foot was a part of daily life for Navajo people living on Dinetah and the surrounding area (Kelley and Francis 2003).

An example of the historically rich connections between story-telling and landscape within Navajo culture is presented by researchers Kelley and Francis who write that

many Navajo ceremonial songs contain references to specific landmarks and may have been sung on long journeys as a narrative of directions from one place to another (Kelley and Francis 2003). As Cruickshank and Basso have pointed out, for Yukon and Apache communities respectively, the connection between place names, particular aspects of the landscape and local histories articulates specific understandings of history and the makings of social geographies full of stories (Cruickshank 1990). These articulations are also applicable for Navajo peoples relationships to the landscape and their personal and local histories.

During my first summer on the Navajo Nation in 1999 as an intern at the Navajo Nation Museum I helped prepare a traveling exhibit of children's artwork destined for the Durango Discovery Museum in Colorado. Two museum employees (Frank and Lenny) and myself loaded the crates of pictures in a pick-up truck and spent the day on the road, delivering the crates to the museum. Along the way, we passed through a picturesque green valley. The road passed through pine trees, ascending in elevation and followed a small creek. We passed a noticeably large, round boulder, the sight of which could not be easily ignored. As we passed, Lenny, who was driving, pulled over and we got out of the truck. The two men explained that this rock and valley is important because it is the site where the deity Changing Woman stopped to rest, pregnant with her twin boys Monster Slayer and Child of Water. I was touched that these two men stopped at this sacred site to remember its significance. I also appreciated their concern that I learn about Navajo history and culture from their perspective. Later, I wondered, would this have happened if we had taken a different route? The memory of this experience encouraged me to utilize car trips as much as possible (Fieldnotes 1999).

The importance of incorporating car rides into my fieldwork by touring the area with local residents afforded me the opportunity to develop an idea of the ways in which local residents view their community and to assemble information about multiple sites. I was able to learn about Navajo understandings of place and the relationships between oral histories and landscapes in this context.

Photographs and archives

Using photographs is hardly a new concept in fieldwork (Bernard 2002; Collier and Collier 1986; Faris 1996). I utilized photographs during my fieldwork from multiple sources. I used pictures I took of places and buildings in the community and I used archival photographs taken in the 1930s through the 1960s from archives in Tuscon, St. Michael's and Window Rock. These photos proved instrumental in engaging people in the idea of sharing oral histories about Fort Defiance and encouraging discussion of stories, memories and commentary about the community. Frequently, the photographs I showed to people at senior centers in St. Michaels and Fort Defiance depicted buildings that no longer exist in the community and are now only memories. On many occasions a small group formed wherever I sat at the senior center, looking at the copied photographs I displayed on the table. Many of the women and men I talked with at senior centers and at private residences did not know of these archives and were unaware their pictures were in a local archive.

Historically, Navajo peoples were inexhaustibly photographed throughout the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Faris 1996). Early Euro-American photographers working with the military and federal government documented Navajo peoples, their ceremonies, *hogans*, livestock, children and daily activities. Later, the development of

tourism in the early twentieth Century encouraged visitors to take photographs as part of the travel experience, especially in scenic areas such as Monument Valley (Dilworth 1992). Indeed the colonial aspect of many archival photographic collections mirrors tropes of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries toward Native Americans, as exotic 'others' with their 'strange' and 'pagan' practices on display for the tourists' gaze (Pratt 1992). Many early photographs of Navajo people consist of nameless portraits of women, men and children who appear with obvious discomfort as the subjects in the photograph. Their pictures were taken anyways (Faris 1996). In comparison with photographic documentation of other Native American peoples during this time period, a noticeably large amount is devoted to Navajo peoples perhaps because they covered the largest terrain and therefore attracted potential opportunity for Euro-American entrepreneurs, missionaries and settlers. Additionally, the proximity of the Navajo Nation to Route 66 and the Burlington Northern Santa Fe railroad also contributed to a steady stream of visitors documenting their travels through Navajo land between 1900 and 1930 (Dilworth 1992).

Oral and Life Histories

Throughout this dissertation I present different contexts in which oral histories produce community understanding of Navajo life, culture and places. I consider such verbal histories as a method of analysis. Oral histories are useful constructions that accumulate great amounts of cultural, historical and personal information. Oral and life histories are versatile and give new meaning to methods for anthropologists and historians. As I have already mentioned car rides and looking at old photographs proved a good segue to recording meaningful narratives about the Fort Defiance community.

Because oral traditions are highly respected forms of oratory in Navajo culture, collecting oral and life histories from Fort Defiance residents and cultural specialists proved to be a culturally appropriate means of discussion (Cruikshank 1990; Denetdale 2007; Smith 2004; Wilson 2004). The Navajo language is a very verbal and descriptive language rich with meanings. Thanks to three years of formal training in Navajo language at the University of New Mexico with Roseann Willink and practicing during my fieldwork research, I am able to conduct simple conversations in Navajo as well as follow proper protocol for making introductions in Navajo. Frequently, I was able to initiate conversations and oral histories in Navajo and to learn important Navajo cultural concepts in Navajo.

Analyzing the data

I transcribed my interviews and developed a matrix for my fieldnotes of key terms and topics based on my formal and informal conversations. The result was a formulation of overarching themes throughout my field research (Bohannon 1998; Briggs 1986). The length of my interviews varied between thirty and one hundred and twenty minutes; the interviews were conducted at peoples home residences, in my car, at the local chapter house or on occasion over a lunch break from work. I coded my interviews for key words and themes identified in my initial transcriptions and fieldnotes, verifying information with follow-up interviews (Werner and Schoeple 1987). I initiated open-ended questions and followed up with specific questions that arose from my initial interviews (Bohannan 1998; Briggs 1986; Werner &Schoeplfe 1987). I consider my research a valid and ethical collection of oral histories, intellectual thought and archival material that provides a contemporary ethnohistory of the Fort Defiance community.

A word about responsibility

For the purposes of my project and work on the Navajo Nation, being responsible has meant following University of New Mexico IRB protocol and obtaining ethnographic research permits from the Navajo Nation Historic Preservation Department. It has also meant a long and consistent relationship between people and community over the past thirteen years. The audio recordings and transcriptions for this project will be returned to the community and will be housed in the archives of the Navajo Nation Museum, as property of the Navajo Nation. It is my hope that in time, much of this material will be integrated into the curriculum of the local school district.

Increasingly, good research method involves the act of bringing collected data back to the community or group of peoples involved. In the twenty-first century, this is not only appropriate, but a long overdue measure. The Navajo Nation has the distinction of hosting more anthropologists and academics completing research than any other Native American group. What becomes of all this research? The majority appears in academic journals and texts, as examples in the classroom and rarely returns to the community from which it originated. Conferences and books only reach a certain audience and often community members feel slighted by researchers, offering them knowledge that in turn does not make a noticeable difference in their lives (Denetdale 2007; Mihesuah 2004; Wilson 2004). With outsiders concerned about all aspects of Navajo language and culture, some being ignorant of the hardships of daily life for many people, such as living without electricity or running water, its easy to understand the reluctance of some Navajo people to participate in academic projects that lack a component to benefit their community.

Limitations of Research

There are limitations to all research and my dissertation research is certainly no exception. I do not speak Navajo fluently and although this did not hinder my interviews, a collection of oral histories and interviews in Navajo might elicit more information from elder community members. I was able, on more than one occasion, to initiate interviews in Navajo with bilingual residents; however they kindly re-told their stories in English and I was then able to ask follow-up questions.

I was initially introduced to a handful of community members associated with, and holding official positions at the Fort Defiance Chapter House; they were able to then suggest community members for me to meet and interview. My sampling of community members reflects the recommendations of the community members who introduced me to this project as well as my own efforts to meet people through social networks at the Navajo Nation Museum, Fort Defiance and St. Michael's Chapter Houses and Senior Centers, and contacts made through my association with Northwestern University's Ethnographic Field School. In some instances, I talked with individuals living in other communities who have personal histories related to Fort Defiance or are considered cultural experts. However, the majority of my interviews and discussions occurred with Fort Defiance residents and members of nearby neighboring communities, such as St. Michaels and Window Rock.

Chapter three:
Dine'kehjigo baa hane'/Re-examining Navajo Historiography

"More recently, many historians are guilty of focusing solely on the resiliency of Indigenous people while refusing to offer an honest and critical indictment of state and federal governments, leaders and all the citizens of America who have been complicit in our bodily extermination, cultural eradication and assaults on our lands and resources"
-Waziyatawin (Angela Wilson 2004:79)

"We are long-memoried peoples, and we remember what happened the last time the world was flat" *-Jodi Byrd (2011)*

Introduction

One of the benefits of living within easy driving distance of Fort Defiance is enjoying visits from friends who on occasion have errands to do in Albuquerque or come to annual events such as Gathering of Nations Powwow. One Saturday, after enjoying some green tea and lunch with my friend Marshale, we decided to take a walk around the old town plaza in downtown Albuquerque. Amongst the souvenir shops and restaurants that front the plaza, there is a café with a painted mural running along the exterior white wall in a thick, vibrantly colored stripe. The panels depict historical scenes complete with conquistadors on horseback, Hispanic settlers and priests traveling with wagons, livestock and children. The names of the families of Hispanic settlers are inscribed above the mural. As we passed the restaurant, Marshale stopped to admire the mural scenes; "Gwendy," he said turning to me, "where are the Indians in this painting? We were here too." A couple of tourists eating enchiladas paused mid-conversation, to listen in on our exchange. "You're right, I guess that's the part of the story where they decided to put windows," I quipped. We laughed, the tourists returned to their meal and we continued on our walk. This memory has stuck in my mind ever since as an example of the tensions

surrounding historical narratives about the southwest, particularly ones that begin with the "discovery" of the southwest region by Euro-Americans and ignore or effectively dismiss the presence and histories of indigenous peoples. Such narratives imply that Hispanic and Native American peoples had little to do with each other, or conversely that all contact between Hispanic and Native American peoples can be characterized as violent (Brooks 2002; Denetdale 2007). In contrast, dominant historical narratives about U.S. colonization into the southwest and Navajo land emphasize the "protective" and "judicial" qualities of U.S. cavalry forced to deal with "Indian troubles" by building forts to keep the peace between Indian tribes, and settlers and Indians (Frink 1968; Mangiante 1950).

Colonial regimes and bureaucracies are by no means monolithic beasts and the colonial intrusions suffered on Indigenous lands and communities in the southwest each bear their own characteristics (Dirk 1992). Yet, why are histories of the southwest constructed so often to begin with colonial intrusions? Over four hundred years ago, the first Europeans trespassed the southwest, encountering Indigenous peoples, introducing their livestock to desert lands and contentiously claiming the earth they walked upon in the names of their sovereign Kings and Queens (Bailey and Bailey 1999; Carpio 2011; Jaramillo 1983). In the wake of settler colonialism and violence, history as experienced and interpreted by Native American peoples of the southwest is subsumed under a non-Native focused, linear narrative that typically abruptly ends triumphantly for everyone except Native Americans, in the twenty-first century (Denetdale 2004, 2007; Sando 1992**)**. The underpinnings of such narratives suggest that genocide, colonialism, loss of land and resources was an inevitable outcome for Navajo, Apache and Pueblo peoples,

and that ultimately, the results of colonialism provided a foreseeable, positive outcome, defined by economic development through tourism and casinos (Cattelino 2004, 2010; Dilworth 1996; Frink 1962). Such implications also suggest a perceived benefit to being incorporated into the nation-state of the United States, legally as a "domestic dependent nation" and informally as a tourist destination and resource for scientific study (Biolsi and Zimmerman 1997; Cattelino 2010).

Just as my friend Marshale asserted his own place in the history of the southwest, conspicuously missing from the restaurant mural in old town, residents of Fort Defiance are contesting an assumed acceptance of non-Navajo historical narratives that ignore or downplay the brutality of settler colonialism in their community. Their responses, through oral histories, challenge Western conceptions of Navajo history and ideologies of progress and modernity that have dominated settler colonial representations of the Fort Defiance community for Navajo people as a "symbol of new hope as well as old sorrows" and "a cradle of their progress" (Frink 1968:2).

Inspired by Michel-Rolph Trouillot's challenge to examine the production of narratives and the nuanced relationships between narratives and historical sites, it is my aim in this chapter to bring together some of the salient themes from Fort Defiance residents' oral histories that respond to and challenge settler colonial historical narratives of Fort Defiance and Navajo history (Trouillot 1995:22). How do local narratives contest non-Navajo representations of Navajo history and illuminate Navajo conceptions of history? How have Western based historical narratives of Fort Defiance during the twentieth century been created and maintained by settler colonial processes?

In this chapter, I examine the interplay of power and history that has influenced the historical representation of Fort Defiance and Navajo oral histories. I include a dissection of Navajo historiography and an attempt to understand the social and political processes that bend, influence and create historical narratives about Navajo peoples. Most importantly, this chapter presents oral histories of Fort Defiance residents that re-claim and assert sovereignty through narratives and place-making; oral histories of Fort Defiance residents challenge monolithic, linear, non-Navajo iterations of the past that have dominated representations of Navajo people, culture and history. It is crucial to situate the unpacking of non-Navajo historical representation within a decolonization framework that not only critiques colonial schemes but also delivers Navajo perspectives and philosophies that build towards what Lloyd Lee effectively calls an "indigenous paradigm" where "central concepts are reflected in the meanings of Indigenousness, sovereignty, colonization, and decolonization" (Lee 2010:35). In addition, I utilize postcolonial and decolonization literature in this chapter as a way of examining the larger picture, or "the processes that make and transform particular worlds-processes that reciprocally shape subjects and contexts, that allow certain things to be said and done" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992:31).

My examinations of Western narrative building related to Fort Defiance history are also inspired by the words of Jodi Byrd, whose work on the political formations of "Indianness" as created by U.S. settler colonialism, guide my own speculations on the creation and maintenance of historical narratives that devalue, silence and attempt to usurp Navajo experiences and representations of the past (Byrd 2011). Colonial endeavors always include copious amounts of documentation through journals, articles,

personal correspondence, non-fiction and fiction. For Navajo peoples, the circulation of these kinds of documentation materials has sought to define Navajo histories and culture in terms benefiting Western imperialism (Denetdale 2007; Stoler 2010). In order to further elucidate this point, I continue with the story of Bettina and her visit to Bosque Redondo.

Bettina's Story

It was the summer of 2003 and I had returned from a trip to Gallup for breakfast at Plaza Café. Instead of returning immediately home, I drove over to Bettina's house for a visit. I met Bettina while spending time at the Fort Defiance Senior Center and unbeknownst to me, I had driven by her home on numerous occasions and wondered who lived in the house: a cream-colored stucco home decorated with lace curtains and pots of geraniums on the doorstep. Bettina is a great-grandmother and a vocal local historian. She moved to Fort Defiance after marrying her husband and the couple raised four children who now live in different communities in Arizona and New Mexico. In addition to her interests in history, Bettina is an excellent cook and artisan, turning much of her living room space into a project area for sewing and beadwork. She is also passionate about the importance of traditional foods in Navajo culture and in collaboration with her daughter, continues to advocate for the benefits of eating foods that have healthfully sustained Navajo (and other Indigenous peoples in the southwest) for centuries: corn, squash, beans, chiles and mutton. Bettina frequently attends the senior center to share a midday meal with friends. My frequent visits have allowed me to become familiar with Bettina and some of the other ladies (all grandmothers) who enjoy the air-conditioned senior center and lunch served with good company. Bettina's commanding voice and

welcoming presence caught my attention; conversely, my stated interest in collecting oral histories about the importance of the Fort Defiance community arrested her attention. On most weekday afternoons, I sit with Bettina and her friends around a folding table covered with bowls of stew, napkins for our dusty fingers and a salt-shaker (there are many utterances of "*Áshiih"* during the meal, meaning 'pass the salt').

The afternoon I visited Bettina, she greeted me at the door looking perfectly cool and lovely even in the sweltering summer heat. Her husband, wearing a cowboy hat and boots, had stopped by as well to talk with her. I mentioned to Bettina that I had brought some photocopies of old pictures of Fort Defiance that I wanted to show her. For the next hour and a half, Bettina, her husband and I discussed the treatment of the history of Fort Defiance and the implications for Navajo History, a subject Bettina is very passionate about. "My daughter and I," Bettina began,

> "We wanted to know where our relatives went when they left here [Fort Defiance] for Fort Sumner. We needed to know where they were resting. We drove all the way down there, Shelley and I drove the whole way there [close to 6 hours of driving time]. And when we got there, we looked and didn't see anything, *anything* about where our people were buried or where they had been. Nothing. We asked the park ranger, the man wearing a green vest. And he didn't know. No one could tell us where the Navajo people were buried who died there, at Fort Sumner. Imagine-our history, our peoples, our ancestors and they had no idea. Where will our young people go to find themselves? How will they know their history? We left rocks on a little shrine that day, a pile in honor of Navajo people that visitors have made. That's all they could tell us-here is a small pile of rocks Navajo visitors have made." (Bettina Benalley 2003).

In 1968 Fort Sumner became the responsibility of the New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs and was declared a state monument[22]. Before the recent construction of a

[22] New Mexico State Monuments http://www.nmmonuments.org

museum on the site in 2005 there was little recognition of the hundreds of Navajo and Apache peoples who suffered and passed away at the fort. A pile of stones with a nearby marker in honor of Navajo peoples who died at Ft. Sumner was the only indication of a memorial for many years.

Bettina's appropriate outrage that the history of her ancestors imprisoned at the fort went unacknowledged by the park service at the time of her visit illustrates the disregard for Navajo peoples and Navajo sovereignty, the marginalization of Navajo histories and the un-questioned production of historical narratives that marginalize Navajo and Apache histories. The experiences of forced captivity of Apache and Navajo peoples at Fort Sumner remained conspicuously unacknowledged by the park service and mainstream literature for decades, subsumed under a dominant narrative about the success of U.S. cavalry soldiers maintaining military outposts in the "wild west." For decades stories of the atrocities endured by Navajo and Apache peoples have been an example of what Haitian scholar Trouillot terms a 'silent narrative,' a history officially dismissed and ignored (Trouillot 1997).

Bettina's words resonated with me two years later when, on a dry and clear June afternoon in 2005, I attended the opening of a new museum at Fort Sumner, dedicated to the experiences of Navajo and Apache peoples imprisoned at the fort during the Civil War. In the midst of a long line-up of speeches by state and tribal officials, a Navajo woman dressed in a broomstick skirt, velveteen blouse, turquoise and silver jewelry suddenly interrupted the speaker of the moment, wailing and wringing her hands. She walked through the crowd, making her way amongst the dignitaries until she reached the podium. Weeping, the woman performed a monologue in first person tense, about the

experience of her people, walking through snow and cold wind to Bosque Redondo[23], watching her relatives starve and die, longing to return to their familiar home land. The dramatic interruption performed by this woman captivated the audience. It was a moving and emotional monologue breaking through the automated cadence of the speaker before her (Denetdale 2008).

The re-enacted narrative was also a powerful example of performed oral history and a demonstration of re-claiming Indigenous knowledge and history (Bauman 1986). As stunned public speakers looked on, the woman's monologue recounted the Long Walk based upon the words and oral traditions of her relatives. Perhaps more effectively than the official speeches about past injustices at Ft. Sumner, the performance from this woman reminded the audience about the strength with which Navajo and Apache peoples faced unthinkable atrocities and obstacles. It also served to make connections between present day life and the past; in that endeavor the performance and the struggle described recalled the efforts for years since the Long Walk to bring recognition of the suffering of Apache and Navajo peoples that occurred at the hands of American military men (Denetdale 2007: 299, 300). It was also an example of the contentious nature of history and a response to dominant narratives about military forts, raiding Native American peoples and pioneering settlers.

Bettina's visit to Bosque Redondo and the interruption during the opening of the new Bosque Redondo Memorial exemplify how the subject and method of Native American and Navajo historiography is a prominent issue. It has, for the most part, been the self-appointed task of colonizing Euro-American forces to write the history of Native

[23] Bosque Redondo is the specific area where Navajo and Apache people were forcibly interned at Ft. Sumner

Americans, frequently ignoring Native perspectives and dismissing the violence and trauma Native peoples endured (Denetdale 2004, 2007; Smith 1999; Wilson 2004).

Figure 9: Bosque Redondo Memorial[24]

Salient themes from local residents' oral histories

When the topic of conversation concerns history and Fort Defiance, almost inevitably Navajo people with whom I interviewed and talked with mention the Long Walk and internment at Bosque Redondo or *Hwéeldi* (1863-1868). Memories are recounted of Grandparents' and Great-grandparents' stories of the traumatic event that uprooted thousands of people, forcing Navajo women, men and children to leave homes and livestock and march hundreds of miles to internment at Fort Sumner, New Mexico (Bailey and Bailey 1999; Iverson 2002). These stories are not told easily; they are painful reminders of the suffering of ancestors, the loss of land and the beginning of a fraught, treaty-based relationship between the U.S. Government and the Navajo Nation.

[24] New Mexico Monuments www.museumofnewmexico.org

Navajo oral histories about captivity at Fort Sumner are immensely powerful stories about perseverance, survival, strength and ultimately healing. Despite attempts by the federal government to conduct genocide on Navajo people, using techniques such as the "slash and burn" raiding implemented by Kit Carson and his soldiers, oral histories about *Hwéeldi* and returning to *Diné Bikéyah* underscore the reality that Navajo communities, families and individuals continue to thrive. These oral histories remind those who tell the stories and those who are listening of past hardships endured by relatives and reminders of the strength to defeat opposition in the most defiant way possible: survival.

In 1868, *naat'anii* (Navajo leaders) including Manuelito and Ganado Mucho signed the Treaty of 1868 with the U.S. Government allowing Navajo people to finally return to their homeland, *Dinétah* (Bailey and Bailey 1999; Denetdale 2004; Iverson 2002**)**. Stories about *Hwéeldi*, the tragedy of so many lives lost, the violence and hardship inflicted on Navajo people resonate as a dominant narrative within Navajo history. During my fieldwork, stories and references to *Hwéeldi* surface amongst contemporary narratives about the Fort Defiance community in the twentieth century. Fort Defiance served as one of the main departure points for Navajo people forced by U.S. cavalry to march to Fort Sumner (Bailey and Bailey 1999; Frink 1968; Iverson 2002). For many of the local residents with whom I interviewed, this historical fact provided a metaphor for their experiences with and family histories about federal development projects in the Fort Defiance community, especially boarding school.

Davis, a local pastor in Fort Defiance is an expert local historian who grew up in Chinle and moved to Fort Defiance to take charge of the local parish. I introduced myself

one afternoon during a fundraising event for the parish. Some children were selling snow cones outside, offering a myriad of colored syrups over melting ice while inside the church building, Navajo ladies were preparing food for a Navajo taco sale. Sitting in parish office, what began as a simple, introductory conversation turned into a long and interesting interview. While discussing the beginning of the local school system in Fort Defiance, the Bureau of Indian Affairs boarding school and the early Good Shepherd Mission day school, Davis added,

> "When they [U.S. Government] first started the school system it was mandatory for all the young people to go to school. In fact, they were rounded up very similar to the Long Walk. They were rounded up and they were brought to school. They were brought here where there was a dormitory, a boarding school. They [the children] were signed up by either the Catholics of the Protestants: you could be Presbyterian or Catholic or Episcopal because they had a church and they'd been there [in Ft. Defiance] for a long time" (Davis 2002)

For Davis, the forced displacement, removal and incarceration experienced during the Long Walk also indexed the emotional trauma of being forced to attend boarding school. The Bureau of Indian Affairs operated a boarding school in Fort Defiance beginning in the 1880s and the school closed in1959 (Frink 1968:91). The federal government also contracted with religious groups to provide schooling; St. Michaels Mission (Catholic) and the Ganado Mission (Presbyterian) in Fort Defiance established boarding schools on their properties in 1898 and 1901 respectively (Bailey and Bailey 1986; Frink 1968:95). As part of federal law[25], Navajo children were required to attend school (Bailey and Bailey 1986; Frink 1968). For many families during the late 1800s

[25] The Treaty of 1869 insisted Navajo parents see that their children attend school; the Dawes Act of 1887 made attending school compulsory for Indian children.

and early 1900s this was another traumatic event. Children typically helped to herd sheep, care for siblings and contribute to daily household tasks. Understandably, many Navajo parents did not want their children taken away from home, forced to speak only in English and exposed to illnesses. According to Garrick and Roberta Bailey, the boarding school in Fort Defiance was so unsuccessful with students running away "iron shutters were placed over the windows" (Bailey and Bailey 1986: 65). Harry, a lifetime resident of Fort Defiance who attended St. Michael's Mission school reminisced,

> "I was young-real young when they took me away to the St. Michael's mission. I was homesick too. I missed my mom and my family. One afternoon while the nuns weren't looking, I managed to escape during lunch. I ran as fast as I could, all the way home. I surprised my mom. She couldn't believe I had run all the way home. She scolded me and then she hugged me and asked 'son, are you hungry?' and she made me a big stack of bread. Then they took me back to school" (Harry Jones 2003).

For those Navajo children sent further away from home, to schools in Oklahoma and even Pennsylvania, forced separation from community and family was especially traumatic. "I cried and I cried and I cried when I was sent to Oklahoma, all by myself," a grandmother and elder named Clara shared with me, during an informal interview at the senior center. Clara was quick to point out as well that the decision to go so far away to school had been forced upon her parents by missionaries in Tsé Bonito. "Later," she explained, "I thought about our ancestors, forced to walk so many miles in the cold, with their babies to Fort Sumner." Narratives from residents such as Davis, Harry and Clara challenge settler colonial histories that frame institutions and related experiences, such as boarding school, as part of progressive and modern strategies to "improve" Navajo

people and culture. In his cheery overview of the history of Fort Defiance, Maurice Frink writes, "A day school being out of the question, a boarding school, where pupils would live, and not have to go to school and back each day was then planned by the Bureau of Indian Affairs and in 1879 its construction was begun" (Frink 1968:88). Why a day school was so out of the question, however, is not addressed in Frink's work. Enforced displacement due to settler colonialism, being taken away from home and family are traumatic themes throughout Navajo history and the oral narratives Fort Defiance residents shared with me.

The oral narratives of Fort Defiance residents also respond to and challenge colonial ideologies of modernization and development throughout the twentieth century history of Fort Defiance. Ernie's example from chapter two in which he describes his family living in a Quonset hut converted into cheap housing is one example of settler colonial strategies to marginalize and denigrate Navajo people. A number of residents of Fort Defiance remembered the Quonset huts and knew families who lived in them; "of course," one elder resident I interviewed pointed out, "the doctors and teachers had their own housings." Many of the older stone houses (built in the early twentieth century), still standing along the main streets of Fort Defiance and now empty, were designated for white hospital staff and doctors.

In "Rat row," a moniker given to the area designated for Navajo families living in Fort Defiance near the old Bureau of Indian Affairs officer quarters, the only running water available came from a communal tap; a public toilet for residents of "rat row" existed in a wooden shack construction. "It was so cold in the winter," Meryl related to me during an interview, "when we had to get water and sometimes the pump would get

frozen. It was just awful." Rita, a community health nurse for many years blamed the unsanitary conditions of neighborhoods like "rat row" for widespread problems in the community with illnesses such as measles, glaucoma and flu.

Figure 10: "House 73 and all 'Rat Row' water supply. Hospital Blue Girl passing." Milton Snow. Photo courtesy of the Navajo Nation Museum, NE13-15

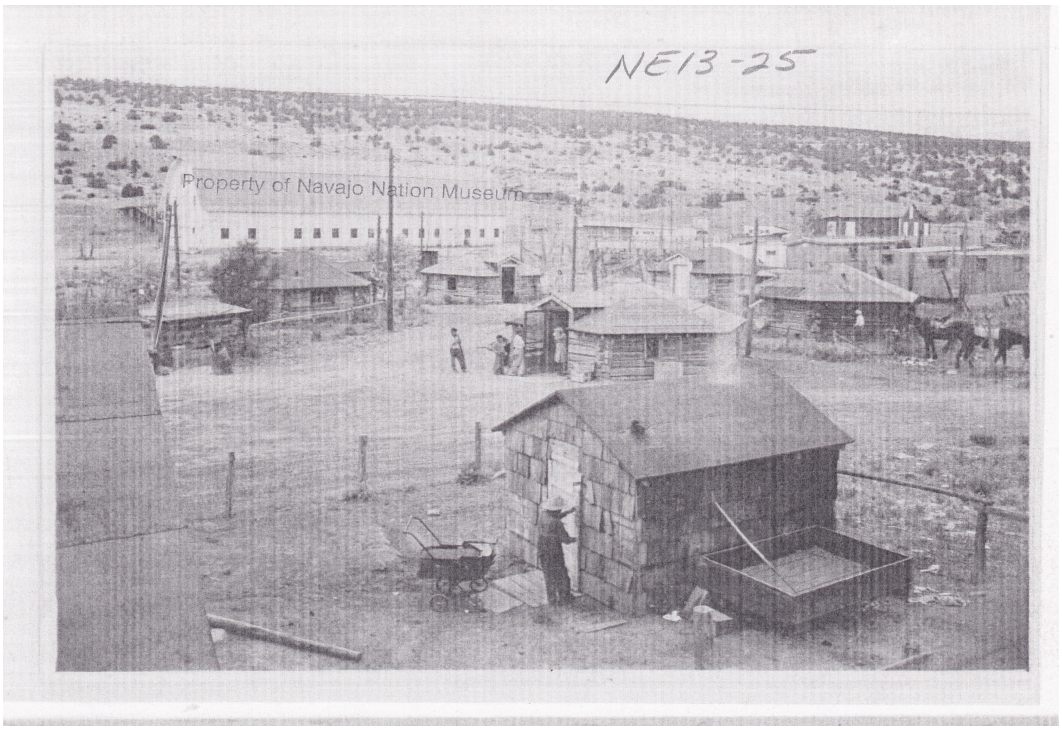

Figure 11: "Slum quarters near roads equipment [storage shed]"Milton Snow. Photo courtesy of the Navajo Nation Museum, NE 13-25

By 1945, the year the above picture was taken by Milton Snow, the *hogans* in this picture, like the Quonset huts, had also been converted into cheap available housing for Navajo people. Incidentally, Milton Snow titles the photograph above "Slum quarters near roads equipment." Before this grouping of *hogans* was made available to Navajo families, they functioned as a crude jail, encircled by barbed wire fencing. Davis reminisced while describing this area and its proximity to the jail, "there are still some little shacks back there that prisoners used to sit in…[near where the storage for the roads department stands]." The presence of this "prisoner's stockade" turned available housing for Navajo families is suspiciously absent from Navajo history books that focus on details about sheep herds, raids between Navajo and Euro-Americans, and early settler colonial infrastructure on the Navajo Nation.

Figure 12: “Prisoner’s Stockade” Ft. Defiance, AZ. Photograph by Norman B. Conway. Courtesy of the Navajo Nation Museum, #90430

As my interviews progressed with Navajo residents of Fort Defiance, another major theme surfaced: the connection between stories and specific places and buildings: the boarding school, tuberculosis sanatorium, the old jail, the Episcopal Good Shepherd Mission, amongst other buildings sites. Throughout my fieldwork research it became apparent that many of these sites held importance for local residents memories and personal histories. Many of these institutions became familiar parts of peoples’ lives and experiences in the community. As various federal programs were terminated or relocated elsewhere in the mid and late twentieth century, places such as the boarding school, Bureau of Indian Affairs kindergarten program, sanatorium, and hospital remain focal points for stories and histories that defined community for local residents.

Pastor John Davis recounted, “we asked the Bureau of Indian Affairs to fence off the area [near the old jail] so that the area could be preserved because all of the other buildings were being torn down.” Nevertheless, many of the old buildings have been destroyed or are in unstable conditions. Mae, an elder grandmother commented, “One of

the last buildings that was raised was where my Aunt used to live and that used to be the Officer's Quarters…that's the only structure that was left and [it was] raised." Despite the absence of these buildings, the sites where they once stood continue to fuel oral narratives from local residents about their experiences in the Fort Defiance community.

Figure 13: "Old Army Building, Front. Fort Defiance, formerly a school building. 1945" Milton Snow. Photo courtesy of the Navajo Nation Museum, NE13-28

For residents of Fort Defiance, Navajo history cannot be reduced to a series of chronological events, specific memorial sites or one all-encompassing narrative. As the residents with whom I worked with reiterated through their oral narratives, Navajo impressions of the past involve myriad perspectives and personal experiences centered around family, land and interactions with non-Navajo people and bureaucracy through such entities as the BIA boarding school, hospital, trading posts, various missions and churches. The old boarding school, which included a cluster of buildings used as dormitories and school rooms, no longer stands; however, on car tours of Fort Defiance with friends and residents, and during interviews, stories about relatives who attended

boarding school were frequently shared. Meryl, a grandmother who lives in Fort Defiance and frequents the senior center for lunch and the opportunity to see friends, related the following story about her father:

> "My dad, that's where he was put in school [the boarding school in Fort Defiance]. He said he ran away from there like five different times and every time he ran away, he says he got further away you know; but he got caught and they'd bring him back. So the last time he made it home the truant officers were waiting, waiting for him there [at home], you know. He told me a story that when was just a little kid, he said he was herding sheep and he said the grass was so high he could just barely see over it. And his family said, "don't go over there [near the boarding school] because of all those *bilagáanas*-white people." So one day he took the sheep over by the hills, [where the white people] lived. And he just couldn't get over all the bushy faces- the beards and everything!...He just didn't like that [boarding school].You know, they cut his hair and made him do lots of crazy things, that's what he said"
> (Meryl Yazzie 2006).

A few weeks later, I received an invitation from Meryl to help out with one of her granddaughter's *kinaaldá* ceremony. The preparations were in full swing and Meryl's daughter (and mother of the *kinaaldá* recipient) had taken time off her job in Phoenix to help plan, cook and buy supplies for the ceremony. Though Meryl's granddaughter lived with her mom in Phoenix, the girl returned every summer to spend time with Meryl, her cousins and aunties. Curious, I asked Meryl if she had shared the story of her dad at boarding school with her granddaughter. Meryl thought about the question for a few seconds and then replied thoughtfully, "You know it's important-these stories-for her to know about. Her family, our ways of life; she hears us telling old stories about living here and I hope she remembers them" (Fieldnotes, Meryl Yazzie 2006). For Meryl, the story of her father running away from boarding school connects her to the landscape and her family's connections to the community; Meryl's father went on to vocational school in Phoenix, worked in an automobile shop, with the railroad and eventually returned to the

Fort Defiance area. And, as Meryl often liked to tell me, "My dad-he was beaten for speaking our language [Navajo] at boarding school, but he never stopped speaking it. He spoke good Navajo his entire life" (Meryl Yazzie 2006).

Stories such as Meryl's emphasize recurrent themes from other residents' stories that focus on connections between stories and landscape, kin and resilience. Further, Meryl's story and other residents' narratives contribute to local efforts to re-assert sovereign Navajo history. At a local level, these narratives directly respond to settler colonialism while reinforcing Navajo philosophies and ways of life, such as understanding connections to community through family, land and kin as opposed to linear institutional history-making.

During the very first meetings with community members about an oral history project of Fort Defiance, several elders mentioned that it was important for people, especially youth in the area "to know what this place is really about" and to see more than just empty parking lots, deteriorating buildings and rocks with graffiti on them making up the boundaries of the community (Fieldnotes 2002). Natural sites (canyons, fields, rocky areas) were just as important to community member's sense of place and memory as the sites where BIA buildings once stood and where the now empty and boarded up hospital once operated. In the wake of settler colonial intrusions that attempted to define Fort Defiance as a headquarters for the Indian Agency in Navajo land, and a central location for BIA schooling, religious entities and trading posts, the oral histories of Fort Defiance community members re-inscribe the landscape with memory and experiences distinct to Navajo history. I discuss this process and include more stories from community members in chapter four; for now, I turn to the influences

and processes that have created settler colonial narratives about Navajo history and culture.

Theorizing the Past: the intrusion of settler colonial narratives on Navajo sovereignty and historiography

What are the roots of historical narratives found in textbooks, historical sites and even academic literature that continue to represent Navajo history as a story about 'reckless' and 'war-faring' indigenous people who lived in impoverishment after the Long Walk until federal agencies brought 'progress' and 'modernity'? How have narratives of settler-colonialism contributed to devaluing Navajo oral histories and the historical representations of Navajo culture, peoples and communities? In his work, *The Third Space of Sovereignty* (2007), Kevin Bruyneel builds on Aimé Césaire's observation that "a colonized people that seeks to move forward as the colonizer seeks to hold them back" characterizes the relationship between the U.S. and Native American tribes, especially during the nineteenth century (Bruyneel 2007:1). Colonialism, Bruyneel instructively points out, inhibits the growth and progress of Native American nations and is responsible for politically and spatially restricting tribes (Bruyneel 2007:1). Settler colonial schemes and processes create a dynamic wherein American settler-colonialism equates civilization, and progress, and, by necessity, confines Native cultures to be treated as static and monolithic, awaiting either the assistance of the settler colonial state or tourist consumption.

By controlling the expansion of reservation perimeters, creating land disputes between Navajo and Hopi peoples[26], controlling access, ownership and extraction of

[26] See David Brugge's *The Hopi-Navajo Land Dispute: An American Tragedy* (1994) for historical information on policies intended to disrupt Native relations and living arrangements.

resources on Navajo land, federal policies have systematically attempted to confine Navajo peoples to specific areas, both spatially and politically (Bruyneel 2007). The impact of this forced relationship impacts Navajo history as well, as historical narratives that downplay or simply dismiss the social and political roles of Navajo women, Navajo philosophies, and the fluidity and history of Navajo communities have been promulgated at historical sites, in textbooks and literature, and through federal policy-making.

The oral histories of local residents of Fort Defiance both contest settler colonial narratives of Navajo history and assert Navajo sovereignty by continuing to establish Navajo history within Navajo traditions of story-telling, philosophy and sharing knowledge. Bruyneel distinguishes this "border area" of Native resistance to settler colonialism as the 'third space' of sovereignty (Bruyneel 2007: xvii). His framework for examining the spatial and political tensions between tribes and the federal government provides a useful tool for considering the processes at work that establish and maintain non-Navajo historical narratives and inspire emergent, Navajo oral histories in Fort Defiance.

The influences of settler colonialism on twentieth century Navajo historiography run deep; they are attributable to early anthropological studies and explorations in the southwest (including museum collection practices), tourism, and federal institutions and programs initiated on Navajo lands (Bsumek 2004; Dilworth 1996). I argue that each of these initiatives, in dynamic ways, has impacted how history is contextualized for and about Navajo people. Navajo oral histories, traditions and knowledge have been devalued and marginalized by Western categorizations of the past: "Western history" as a separate entity from "Indian history," and precedence placed on Western notions of history as

explicitly facts, dates and historical documents. These expectations of what Native or Navajo histories should be are challenged by stories and histories to the contrary; "[n]ative actions have all too often been interpreted through the lens of Euro-American expectation, formed, in many cases, in ways that furthered the colonial project" (Deloria 2004:7). Non-Navajo "expectations" of Navajo history, apparent at historical sites, in textbooks and popular literature, include narratives about marauding Navajo warriors, Navajo women weaving against dramatic scenery such as Monument Valley, and silent "acceptance" of atrocious events such as the Long Walk (Deloria 2004; Denetdale 2004, 2007). The implications of settler colonial historical narratives of on Navajo historiography are grim; as Jennifer Denetdale points out they often serve to justify the brutal history of military and settler intrusions on Navajo land (Denetdale 2007:19). Furthermore, they perpetuate the devaluation of Navajo traditions, histories, communities and cultural sovereignty.

Anthropology

Nineteenth and early twentieth century anthropological literature and museum-sponsored excursions to the southwest have perpetuated Euro-American entitlement of Navajo history and representation. As Jim Faris's work on *Navajo and Photography* makes clear, no public or private realm of Navajo culture was left un-photographed for visual consumption (Faris: 2003); in the documentary *The Return of Navajo Boy* (2000), we learn of the pictures of one Navajo family living in Monument Valley that have graced thousands of postcards and tourist literature during the 1940s and 1950s without a cent of profit being returned to the family members themselves.

Erika Bsumek's research on the origins of what she identifies as the "Navajo as cultural borrowers" theory demonstrates that Brooklyn Museum curator of ethnology Stewart Culin and a score of scholars after him, worked diligently to prove that Navajo people, unlike other indigenous groups in the southwest, "borrowed" nearly all of their ideas and material culture from those around them (Bsumek 2004). Underlying this theory was the notion that because Navajo people could be characterized as "borrowers" they would make excellent subjects for quick assimilation into U.S. culture (Bsumek 2004).

The notion of Navajo culture as un-original and Navajo people as borrowers is deeply entrenched in literature on all aspects of Navajo history and culture. A report on BIA government buildings on the Navajo Nation published in 1981 similarly attributes "The Refugee Period [beginning after the Pueblo Revolt of 1680]" as having "a lasting impact on Navajo culture because Pueblo ceremonies and the skills of loom-weaving and pottery-making were absorbed" (Threinen 1981: 21). Citing the work of archaeologist Gwin Vivian the report continues, "[t]here was a similar effect on architecture in that the concept of masonry construction was combined with the Navajo's traditional dome-shaped Hogan" (Threinen 1981:21 [Vivian 1960:231]). A planning and development report on Fort Defiance completed in 1961 reports that Navajo housing design was influenced by Pueblo peoples and implemented during the Pueblo Revolt when many Pueblos peoples lived with and amongst Navajo people (Bosch 1961: 36).

The implications of "Navajo as borrowers" continues to resonate through Navajo historiography, labeling Navajo people as "newcomers" to the southwest, devaluing traditional aspects of daily Navajo life including sheep herding, weaving and silver-

smithing, and justifying the history of settler colonial intrusions on Navajo land; "The Navajos," writes school teacher and author Gertrude Golden in 1954, "were such a warlike tribe that the government found it necessary to remove them from their natural habitat and place them on another reservation. After a time, at their earnest solicitation and promise to refrain from molesting the Mexicans and surrounding tribes of Indians, they were permitted to return to their beloved highland country. But in order to help them remember their promise, Fort Wingate and Fort Defiance were built in their midst and manned by troops" (Golden 1954:148).

Anthropological writing and ethnography have contributed to a steady stream of romanticism of Navajo culture and peoples, mining the spiritual and aesthetic aspects of Navajo life to be displayed for general consumption while choosing to ignore the issues that most concern community members, including education, economic opportunities, family health and wellbeing, land and civil rights.

Navajo historiography has also been immeasurably shaped by a steadfast reliance on historical documents written by Anthropologists and Euro-Americans **(**Denetdale 2004, 2007; Fixico 1998; Ortiz 1988; Wilson 1998**)**. Attempts to reverse this trend by including Navajo peoples in the process of writing histories provides new narratives and perspectives about the southwest, bringing to the forefront of discussion new ideas the connections between history and place, the effects of colonialism on representations of the past, and Navajo conceptions of history, locality and daily life (Cruikshank 1998; 2005, Deloria 2002; Denetdale 2007; Fixico 1998; Mihesuah 1998; Wilson 1998**).**

Tourism

A trajectory of Euro-American settler colonialism in the southwest at the turn of the twentieth century involves the onslaught of tourism that helped to establish a portrayal of Navajo peoples (as well as Pueblo and Apache people) as 'living in the past' and 'remnants of ancient cultures' (Dilworth 1996; Denetdale 2007). This imaginative rhetoric was specifically formulated to boost tourism in the southwest and marks the beginning of large-scale commercial exploitation of Native artisans, Indigenous culture and histories (Dilworth 1996; Bsumek 2004; M'Closkey 2002). As Dilworth notes, tourism in the southwest between the late 1800s and early 1900s marks the beginning of a national trope regarding Indigenous peoples as "living relics of the past, and as performers of spiritually authentic rituals" (Dilworth 1996:3). Tourism in the southwest also contributed to myriad forms of literature on Indigenous peoples of the southwest being represented and described by a plethora of non-Indigenous peoples, including artists, ethnographers, entrepreneurs and of course, tourists (Dilworth 1996). Tourist literature relied heavily on the creation of narratives highlighting the 'ancient' Indian cultures of the southwest and reassuring visitors that the once 'savage' Indian was now a peaceful part of the scenery of the southwest, producing a plethora of pleasing art objects (blankets, pots, jewelry) for tourist consumption (Dilworth 1996).

Historic and contemporary tourism literature and ephemera situates Native peoples in the southwest region within neatly defined boundaries that support the notion of Native groups as objects to be viewed, visited and kept separate from other communities. The irony, as my friend Bill (of Choctaw heritage) once pointed out, is that tourists are rarely aware of traveling through sovereign Indian nations as akin to traveling

across the U.S.-Canada or U.S.-Mexico borders (Fieldnotes 2007). This is the relationship procured by settler colonialism, in which American imperialism permits and encourages the fluid movement of Anglo citizens and discourages the expectation that Native Americans travel or live in different parts of the country or that the land their ancestors relied upon for sustenance is held in trust by the federal government.

Tourism in conjunction with archaeology excavations and ethnology research projects in the southwest (such as the Smithsonian sponsored Bureau of Ethnology fieldwork trips) contributed to copious amounts of written history about Indigenous peoples (Bsumek 2004; Dilworth 1996; Denetdale 2007; Sando 1992). Further, tourist literature continues to contribute to narratives about Native people and cultures as unchanging, replicas of an ancient past, isolated from the rest of the world and most importantly, to be focused on primarily for their arts and crafts production (Dilworth 1996).

Building Empire

"No American ever would allow all of his history books to be written by residents of Germany, the Soviet Union or any other foreign country. And yet, for more than a hundred years, that is exactly what happened with regard to the Navajos" (Roessel 1973: xiii). A significant part of settler colonialism and empire building includes writing or re-writing other people's histories. Before Spanish settlers and cavalry officers inserted themselves into the landscape of Fort Defiance, the area was known as offering respite from long travel, with plentiful access to water, fields, and the protection of rocky canyon walls (Frink 1968). Once New Mexico and Arizona territories became part of the U.S. expansionist project, Fort Defiance and other military installations (Fort Wingate, etc.)

were constructed to uphold Western conceptions of the "Other" as violent, disobedient and thieving so as to justify intrusion, devastating land loss and genocide (Said 1979).

Western historical narrative making of Navajo people has worked to serve the varied purposes of settler colonialism throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Characterizations of Navajo peoples as miscreant, bloodthirsty warriors led to the fortification and surveillance of Navajo land (Foucault 1995 [1977]). Retaliation for Navajo people resisting American colonialism, land loss, violence, and abuse fueled the decision to enact genocidal policy against Navajo and Apache people, imprisoning them under inhumane conditions at Fort Sumner. As mentioned earlier, the influence of Culin's discourse on Navajo people as adaptive (and ready to be assimilated) worked well to establish museum-sponsored exploitations of Navajo material culture (Bsumek 2004).

Many of the residents with whom I worked with in Fort Defiance received some of their education at a boarding school. For some, this meant attending the federally operated Fort Defiance boarding school or one of the private, religious schools in the area, such as the Catholic boarding school St. Michaels, located just outside of Window Rock; for others, school meant being sent off to Oklahoma, Santa Fe or the east coast as young teenagers or adults. Boarding schools in the early twentieth century intended to conform and assimilate Native children to American culture, to instill in them the "virtues" of being heteronormative, Christians, and to separate them from their connections to place, family, language and history. "Some colonists," writes Andrea Smith, "supported boarding schools because they thought cultural genocide was more cost-effective than physical genocide" (Smith 2005:37).

Another aspect of building empire within the realm of boarding schools and assimilative history is the reliance on archival "voices" from Euro-Americans in Euro-American histories about Native Americans (Stoler 2010). Diné scholar Jennifer Denetdale aptly points out that the bulk of texts written about Navajo peoples and their histories are still written and published by non-Navajo people (Denetdale 2007). The result, Denetdale argues, is a "dichotomy [that] remains between Navajo and non-Navajo perspectives" and permeates Navajo historiography (Denetdale 2007:6).

"The span between the old and the new can be measured at Fort Defiance, where a hundred years ago red men and white opposed each other with bows and arrows and muzzle-loading muskets;" Much of Navajo history and Fort Defiance history has been written with a concentration on Navajo and Anglo-European relations (Frink 1968: 3). This genre of historical narrative in Fort Defiance historiography is also illustrative of a genre of Native American historiography that specifically frames Native American history solely around interactions between Native American peoples and Euro-Americans. As Said points out in his critical work *Orientalism*, the control of documenting and writing historical events and narratives is an extension of the work of colonizing forces (Said 1979). Rendering contact between Euro-American settlers and Native Americans explicitly in terms of trade or violence contributes to a simplification of history that almost always works in favor of settler colonial empire building.

The interpretation of Native American history from a dichotomous approach that focuses entirely on interactions between Euro-Americans and Native Americans reduces historical narratives to a series of combative events: Indian versus white experiences, frontier (civilization) versus wilderness (savagery) and perpetuates systems of power

inherent in the writing and representation of history; it also creates an expectation of what roles Native Americans fulfill in society, historically and currently (Deloria 1998, 2006; Ortiz 1988:8).

The intention of scholarship to bring 'new' approaches to old frameworks of Colonial American history and 'frontier history' attempts to portray Native Americans as key participants in the events of Colonial America and the Euro-American settlement of the West (Axtell 1988; Limerick 1987; White 1983). "Indian" versus "white" relations are defined within a "safe" context ignoring power dynamics and the bureaucratic role of the federal government in determining the fate of tribes either as unofficially recognized groups or sovereign nations. The question that should continue to be asked, is as James Axtell poses, "Have we done any more or any better to understand American natives and especially to integrate them into the main course of American history, not as an exotic if melancholy footnote but as one of its principal *determinants*?" (Axtell1988: 47).

Theoretically and methodologically, this questioning is a significant departure from chronological accounts of Native American history that relies on primary and secondary Euro-American sources leaving "the Indian point of view...either omitted entirely or distorted beyond recognition" (Fogelson 1985:76). As significant as the critical consideration of Euro-American texts proves, it falls short of escaping the one-sidedness of Native American historiography, ultimately attempting to portray Native American peoples via the narratives of Euro-Americans. Such histories illustrate an awareness of the absence of Native American first hand sources and simultaneously endeavor to reflect on the dominating role of colonial power in the production and dissemination of historical narratives. As Edward Said points out, "history is made by

men and women, just as it can also be unmade and rewritten, always with various silences and elisions, always with shapes imposed and disfigurements tolerated" (Said 1979: xvii).

Until recently Native American history has been built upon a framework of Western imposed understandings of history, usually focused on linear constructions of warfare between U.S. military and Indigenous peoples (Darnell 2006; Deloria 1969; Denetdale 2007; Smith 1999). The contribution of Native scholars to Native American history is significant primarily because of the focus on decolonization in terms of re addressing the format, methodology and perspective of Native American historiography, as Smith contends, "indigenous peoples...*re*writing and *re*righting [their] position in history," pursuing the desire "to tell [their] own stories, write [their] own versions, in [their] own ways, for [their] own purposes" (Smith 1999:28).

One of the earliest and most vocal critiques of Native American historiography is Vine Deloria's 1969 scathing evaluation of the representation of Native Americans by Anthropologists. Deloria contends that the misrepresentation of Native Americans is a direct result of not working *with* Native Americans; in turn, the salient issues for Native American communities, such as employment, education, utilities and transportation are neglected.

At the height of the Native American Movement, in the late 1960's and early 1970s, when Deloria published his infamous work *Custer Died For Your Sins*, issues such as impoverishment and poor infrastructure for medical and educational services were noticeably not addressed by the disciplines of anthropology and history (Deloria 1969). Aptly summarizing the relationship between Native Americans and academics

Deloria's words resonate today, that "many people writing on Indians today seem only to take; rarely do they seem to share with us" (Deloria 1970:x).

Since the publication of *Custer Died For Your Sins*, scholars of Native American historiography and history have wrestled with various responses, some of the best being the perceptive critique of Native scholars, who have instigated new directions for thinking about Native American historiography and conceptions of history that differ from Western notions of what constitutes accurate history (Denetdale 2007; Mihuseuah 1998; Wilson 2004). As Maori scholar Linda Smith suggests, "new ways of theorizing by indigenous scholars are grounded in a real sense of, and sensitivity towards, what it means to be an indigenous person" (Smith 1999:38). The topics of authorship and the treatment (or representation) of history continue to resonate now more than ever in local communities such as Fort Defiance.

Emerging from scholarship of the 1960s and 70s, the political activism of the American Indian Movement (AIM) and the dearth of Native American voices in American history, many historians concentrated on a revisionist theoretical orientation of the past (Axtell 1988; Fixico 1985; White 1991a, 1991b). This included attempts to re-assess and examine the marginalized presence of Native Americans in United States history by specifically addressing the nuances and complexities of Native and Euro-American relations prior to the twentieth century (Axtell 1988; Fixico 1985; White 1991a, 1991b).

Native scholars rightly point out that the focus on Native Americans within the scope of revisionist history, specifically of Indian/white relations, Colonial United States and frontier history has made scant effort to realize the perspectives of Native Americans

(Denetdale 2007; Mihesuah 1998, 2003; Wilson 2004). Further, historical texts on Colonial United States history and frontier history bear little relevance to historical events Native Americans consider significant to Native people. "From the perspective of Western civilization," Ortiz accurately points out, "the history of Indian/white relations in the United States is the story of white people's attempts to assimilate the Indian past into the terms of their own history, their own internal dialogue. In this view, we shouldn't worry about what actual Indian peoples' own wishes and experiences might be" (Ortiz 1988:3).

Fort Defiance Representation

In 2002, Congress authorized a feasibility study through the National Park Service to assess whether the Long Walk should be added to the National Trails System (National Park Service Study News Summer 2003; Autumn 2004). A series of meetings were held in Arizona and New Mexico communities to hear what people, namely Navajo and apache people, thought about the proposed idea for a historic trail to mark the route of the Long Walk. In the ensuing conversations and meetings, it was suggested that Fort Defiance could be a historic site and destination for travelers eager to learn more about Navajo history. One of the proposed ideas presented to the Fort Defiance Chapter House was the creation of a "military park" in Fort Defiance dedicated to the history of militarization in the community with the original fort and to Navajo veterans (Personal Communication 2004). In 2006, the proposal to establish the route of the Long Walk as part of a National Trails System was put before the Navajo Tribal Council where it failed to receive enough votes for support to be implemented.

Within many Navajo families and communities, histories of ancestors who survived the Long Walk are passed down and repeated with reverence, as reminders of suffering and the strength of those who survived. The Long Walk can be seen as one event of many in the course of nineteenth century Navajo history and efforts to become a sovereign nation. It has been written about extensively from a non-Navajo perspective while within families and communities, oral histories of the Long Walk are shared. The result is the circulation of two different collections of perspectives on the Long Walk that illustrate the dynamics of representation of Navajo history, providing an example of intersection between power and historical narratives, as well as the complexities in production and representation of historical narratives. Navajo peoples have always been acutely aware of the atrocities their ancestors endured during the Long Walk.

Until recently, narratives that privilege Navajo perspectives about the Long Walk and imprisonment at Fort Sumner were largely "invisible" and unavailable to the public audience who visited Fort Sumner, now managed by the National Park Service. Instead, these narratives have mostly been shared amongst Navajo peoples, families and clan relatives. Typically Euro-American constructions of history as written, documented, linear series of events marginalize non-Euro-American forms of historical knowledge. This often "plays out" in the processes of historical narrative production. Before 2005, the lack of visual and textual display acknowledging Navajo and Apache peoples' presence at Fort Sumner, testifies to the discrepancy in representation of historical narratives and Navajo history.

The representation of the history of the Long Walk as part of a National Trails System and the Fort Defiance community as part of this proposed route disturbed many

Navajo people and residents of Fort Defiance. Residents with whom I talked with wondered, why the deeply tragic events of their ancestors should be made into tourist attractions and who would have the authority and responsibility of presenting Navajo history about the Long Walk. Over lunch at the senior center, Fort Defiance elders voiced their concern that such a project would fail to present the many voices that make up Navajo histories about Fort Defiance and the Long Walk (Fieldnotes 2005).

As the Long Walk Trail project illuminated, Non-Navajo historical representation of Fort Defiance continues to approach the community's history as one primarily focused on relations between Navajos and Euro-Americans. This narrative ignores a long and entrenched history of diversity in the community including African-American slaves brought to the fort by white post commanders as early as 1858 (Bailey and Bailey 1986). Despite the presence of Spanish, Hispanic and Native Americans of other tribes living in and around Fort Defiance, such dichotomous histories of the relations between Navajo peoples and Euro-Americans ignore the presence and histories of other people as well as events, sites and narratives deemed significant within Navajo history.

The physical effects of economic and political projects throughout the twentieth century in Fort Defiance are visible in the community today and have influenced, to some extent the physical historical representation (or lack thereof) of the community. As Euro-American establishments such as trading posts, boarding schools and hospitals gradually disappeared from Fort Defiance in the middle and late 1900s, the locus of business and activity for which the community was once known, has shifted. Wal-Mart, the symbol of American capitalist consumerism gone global summons a huge amount of traffic from Native communities in and around Gallup. With the exception of the gas station, there is

no place to buy produce or groceries in Fort Defiance. Tribal and federal programs occupy a majority of the real estate in Fort Defiance, with buildings such as the old hospital standing empty and unused.

Community members of Fort Defiance who attended boarding school and worked at the hospital or trading posts understand and conceptualize their community's history in their own terms, separate from authoritative narratives produced by federal and Tribal Governments, non-Navajo residents and academics who might prefer to concentrate on past connections to a more prosperous and colonized past. As a result, the majority of Fort Defiance history has been defined by a discourse that focuses explicitly on the colonial driven institutions that flocked to the community and pays little attention to the perceptions, stories and events that Navajo community members consider important. As Cruikshank effectively argues, the "aftermaths of colonialism are always local" and it is these local responses that have been neglected in Fort Defiance historiography (Cruikshank 2005:9).

The Production of Settler Colonial Historical Narratives and Responses from Critical Indigenous Theory

The production of settler colonial narratives about Navajo peoples and their collective history began with exploratory intrusions into Navajo land by Euro-Americans and eventually U.S. soldiers. Settler colonial narratives have been supported and maintained by the circulation of archival and Euro-American documentation: travelogues, ethnography, military records, letters and early print media. Underlying these documents however, is a larger process at work, akin to what Jodi Byrd terms "Indianness," or the underpinning structures of settler colonialism articulated through power and violence

(Byrd 2011). These articulations have been filtered through myriad installations of settler colonialism, through periods of militarization and brutal coercion, through exercises in treaty making and reservation formation, through the processes of assimilation and relocation, through ideologies of progress and modernity, and through attempts to marginalize and extinguish indigeneity. It is through the manifestations of power and manipulation that a Tribal councilman can characterize Fort Defiance in 1961 as the "birthplace of the Navajo Nation," and forty-three years later, an elder resident of the community shrugs her shoulders when asked what the history of the community means to her (Bosch 1961: 31; Fieldnotes 2004). It is within this context that local residents of Fort Defiance and other Navajo residents of the Navajo Nation share personal narratives and oral histories that support and assert embedded local knowledge.

"Since its inception," Dakota historian Angela Wilson argues, "the area of Native American history has been dominated by non-Indian historians who use non-Indian sources to create non-Indian interpretations about Native Americans and their pasts" (Wilson 1997:101).

Postmodern and postcolonial examinations of Native American history disintegrated the notion of compartmentalized Indian and white culture, as Deloria noted, "one can see this disintegration in a social sense, for example, as cross-racial marriage and mixed-blood identity have become important issues in both history and sociology" (Deloria 2002:18). Scholars of Native American history also became more focused on the roles and contributions of Native women (Jaimes 1992; Mohanty 1991; Perdue 1988; Riley 1988) and the importance and complexity of narrative (Sarris 1994; Vizenor 1989). The methods employed to execute these historical analyses concentrate on Native

American oral histories and reflexive approaches and interpretations of historical documents and oral narratives in order to provide a sense of agency and voice to Native Americans.

Writing about Cache Creek Pomo Mabel McKay, the interpretation of her oral narratives, and the process of transferring oral narratives into texts, Greg Sarris asks "How do people read across cultures? What are the aims and consequences of their readings? How are the readings located in a certain history, say that of Native American and Euro-American interrelations?" (Sarris 1994:3). Sarris argues for the validity of oral histories as texts that effectively must be situated within appropriate context and history in order to be fully understood. For Sarris, deconstructing the oral narrative and examining its context and translation to an audience were key factors in a larger effort to demonstrate the historicity and complexity of Native American oral histories as well as the underlying distinct philosophies and worldviews of Native American cultures.

Critical theoretical orientations on Native American history have also directed attention to gendered history and the 'silence' of women, especially Native American women in Native American historiography. As Theda Purdue explains, "[t]he complicating factor in writing the ethnohistory of native women is that European men, not women, wrote the vast majority of documents," and "[m]any of the encounters that produced documents, in particular trade relations and military alliances, involved native men far more than women" (Perdue 1997:73-73). In an effort to ameliorate this situation, scholars turn to the few document sources available written by Native and Euro-American women, mostly reports from missionaries, teachers, matrons and even captivity narratives (Perdue 1997:74). In addition, more attention was allotted to interviews with

Native Americans with interest in oral histories and narratives that could supplement historical texts. Studies on the effects of colonization on the roles of Native American women contribute to a postcolonial effort to examine not only marginalized peoples, but the processes of becoming marginalized through history. "The reduction of status held by women within indigenous nations was a first priority for European colonizers eager to weaken and destabilize target societies," asserts Jaimes, in her critical essay on the dominant roles Native American women fulfilled before colonization and their efforts after the onslaught of Europeans to resist subordination (Jaimes 1992:319).

Native scholars make substantial contributions to postcolonial and postmodern debates over Native American history. Postmodern and postcolonial theoretical approaches allow for expansion of concepts and ideas in history that are of relevance and familiarity to Native American communities and scholars themselves: oral narratives, the importance of the spoken word, and the traditionally honored roles women fulfilled in Native societies. Significantly, Native scholars argue for Native American historiographies based on Native understandings of history that focus on the important issues of Native American communities.

Stemming from postcolonial and postmodern discourses in Native American history, many Native scholars concentrate on decolonization as a theoretical orientation that shifts Indigenous knowledge and voice to the forefront while directly addressing the experiences of colonialism within an Indigenous perspective and framework (Smith 1999). This includes not only attempting to privilege Indigenous perspectives, but also to focus on-or connect the past to-current issues of utmost importance and relevance to Native peoples. Hawaiian scholar, Haunani-Kay Trask defines decolonization as

resistance to colonial efforts with the ultimate goal of self-determination (Trask 1999: 251). For Trask, this means contesting colonial discourses in academia as well as protesting the theft and degradation of Native lands and the racist and colonial infrastructures in place in Hawai'i that have contributed to unjust treatment of Indigenous Hawaiian culture (Trask 1999). Trask writes,

> "I teach a course in Hawaiian studies called 'Myths of Hawaiian History.' I devised the course after concluding that so much of what passed for Hawaiian history was nothing more than a series of political myths-such as infanticide as a common practice in pre-*haole* Hawaiian culture-were invented by missionaries" (Trask 1999: 129).

Indeed, decolonization theory can be viewed as a unique combination of theoretical stance and action with the specific intent of addressing issues of the local community. For Dakota historian Waziyatawin (Angela Wilson), as well as other Native scholars working within a decolonization framework, giving back to the community is imperative; "one of the most beneficial and powerful ways a scholar can give back to a community is through the language," writes Wilson, in her work *Remember This! a narrative history from Dakota elder Eli Taylor*, presented in the text in both Dakota and English (Wilson 2005:39). Respect for and knowledge of Indigenous languages is a major aspect of decolonization theory. Most historians have been reluctant or uninterested in learning Native American languages, a notion that Wilson critiques, querying, "Would an English scholar doing German history be required to learn German?" (Wilson 2005:25). As she and other Native scholars suggest, one of the most obvious means of gaining an understanding of cultural conceptions of oral traditions,

histories and philosophies can be learned through language (Sarris 1994; Smith 1999; Wilson 2005).

Native scholars such as Wilson, Trask and Smith assert that this is one of the incentives for re-writing Indigenous history from Indigenous perspectives, in order to bring these discussions to Native communities. Wilson also argues that within Dakota language, there are concepts that are tantamount to decolonization efforts and, in fact, the very basis for such conversation is easily initiated (Wilson 2005 60-61).

Conclusion

I have attempted to illustrate in this chapter how stories from Navajo residents of Fort Defiance contribute to actively decolonizing historical narratives by asserting Navajo conceptions of history, storytelling and place making that challenge non-Navajo, historical narratives concerning the American West, Fort Defiance and "Indian history." Navajo residents' oral histories are also not simply acts of defiance or rebellion; they are affirmations of Navajo sovereignty, of deeply held philosophies pertaining to Navajo identity and culture.

For Navajo residents, the connections between physical sites and stories provide tangible connections to resilience and survival related to events in the past and continuing struggles to sustain family, kinship, land, and health. This includes stories about the trauma and indignities of boarding school, of procedures and policies implemented by the BIA to "modernize" Navajo people and communities, and memories of family members who worked, lived and nourished families despite colonial and racist policies, procedures and intrusions. Re-telling and sharing oral narratives about Fort Defiance reinforces the importance of examining and understanding Navajo history through the lens of local,

sovereign, communities that make up a large, sovereign nation. I have employed local narratives in this chapter to counter an entrenched non-Navajo historical narrative that obscures Navajo conceptions of history and community, conflating all Navajo peoples under one rubric for understanding Navajo history in homogenous, patriarchal, linear terms. This chapter then, is an effort to challenge representations of Navajo history with a twofold approach: presenting Navajo conceptions of place and history through oral narratives and a critical assessment of Navajo historiography. My next chapter focuses on the connection between landscape and memory, examining the oral histories of residents and the sites and places connected with stories. Chapter five then further disrupts non-Navajo, monolithic, colonial historical narratives by focusing on the contributions of Navajo women in the wage labor economy of twentieth century Fort Defiance.

Chapter Four:
Place, Memory, and Oral Narratives: Mapping Fort Defiance

Figure 14: Entrance to Blue Canyon, Fort Defiance, AZ

Introduction

This chapter is centered on the oral histories of residents and accompanying Milton Snow photographs that provide a visual accompaniment to the narratives. In this chapter I present some of the places and sites Fort Defiance residents recognize as important to their personal histories and the history of the community. Included in this chapter is a discussion of the importance of place and memory for Navajo residents of Fort Defiance, as well as an exploration of how the oral histories of this community contribute to a local efforts to re-define place and history within the scope of Navajo culture. Drawing on the rich oral history work of Julie Cruikshank and Keith Basso's memorable "Wisdom Sits in Places," as well as the work of Klara Kelley and Harris Francis, this chapter engages the intersections between memory, landscape and oral narratives.

Amongst the many people with whom I talked and interviewed for my dissertation research, some residents were not interested in participating in an oral history project, or they felt that it was not important to record stories and oral histories about sites and places in Fort Defiance that contribute to a collective, community history. Communities are diverse in opinions and perspectives and Fort Defiance is no exception; to expect every Navajo person to be willing to talk about or to have a personal connection to landscape would be unrealistic. Sometimes, residents felt that they did not have any stories to tell and insisted I talk to older relatives or friends instead. Occasionally, after hearing me talk with older residents, they contributed stories and perspectives about living in Fort Defiance as well. "I don't know much about the history of this community," was followed later on by, "We used to ride bikes over there, go to the trading post and buy pop," or "my grandma lives in Fort and we visit her sometimes-she used to work at the hospital there" (Fieldnotes 2006).

Residents often talked about the changes incurred over time in the community, including the trading post, Dunn Mercantile, that once stood near the old hospital, the daily sight of people using wagons to travel, and the public day-school buildings that were once used for teaching kids. "This community used to be *somethin,'"* my friend Lenore exclaimed over lunch one day at the Fort Defiance Senior Center. "We had a school, there were gardens with fresh vegetables and fruit. We could go to the store-the Mercantile [Dunn Mercantile] and get things. And now what? We travel all that distance to go to Gallup, to Wal-Mart" Lenore lamented. Interestingly, her words sparked the conversation of the other ladies sitting at the lunch table and several women began reminiscing about changes in the community they had noticed. "We used to ride in

wagons all the time. I used to ride with my sister and mother to the trading post here, from Cross Canyon," another elder woman added. "And the [old BIA headquarters and day school] buildings-they're just standing empty, why?" asked another woman.

Figure 15: Blue Canyon, 2012

In his work with Apache place names and oral histories, Basso discusses Apache narrators' use of present tense when recounting memories about place as the narrator re-imagines and "brings to life" the actions, thoughts and events of the past (Basso 1997:32). In the examples Basso provides in his work, the stories connected to the places and even the names of the places themselves evoke collective knowledge, memory, and references to Apache philosophies (Basso 1997). Fort Defiance residents' narratives occasionally made use of the present tense to illustrate a story as well, though the narratives were in English. More often oral histories served as a preface to the narrator's observations of changes in the community, or emphasizing key elements of Navajo culture such as knowing the network of clan and family relatives in your community.

Sites and Places: Oral histories about specific sites and places in the landscape of Fort Defiance

We have been walking for several minutes, but I feel like hours have passed. I am walking behind Ruth, in silence, on a ridge above Blue Canyon. We pass Juniper trees, cacti, and sagebrush. It rained recently and the sagebrush is a very pale green, releasing a pungent sweet smell every time my legs brush against the stalks. We pass a small flower with brilliant blossoms, "Oh, what a beautiful flower," I say, breaking the silence. "What is this flower called?" Ruth stops and turns around, "that flower is called *dahyiitįhídąą.* The hummingbirds like that plant. In English, it's called Indian plant, I think." "*dah-yii-tihídaa"* I repeat, slowly, hoping my brain will remember how these syllables sound. "Is it Indian paintbrush?" Ruth shrugs and continues walking and I follow suit, repeating "*dah-yii-tihidaa'* under my breath. We arrive at a clearing, old Juniper logs scattered on the ground and an unimportant looking mound of crumbling yellow and off-white rocks near where are feet stand, casting shadows on the ground. Ruth gestures to this area, moving her chin in a circular fashion, "This is where I had my *kinaalda*," she says. We pause in the heat and I look hard at this place in the woods she has taken me, where many years ago, an elder family member (her Aunt as I later learn) combed and tied her hair, and guided her during a four day ceremony, at the end of which Ruth was declared a young woman. This is one of several places Ruth and I visit that afternoon, places that directly relate to Ruth's past and her family (Fieldnotes 2005).

Memory and landscape are intricately bound to each other, part of the process of re-affirming spatial knowledge about the surrounding environment, "mental worlds are refined out of sensory and kinesthetic experiences" (Tuan 1977: 74). Traveling *through* places in the Fort Defiance community elicited stories and histories, much like my day

spent with Ruth, walking along the paths she traversed as a young woman and stopping to view and walk around the places important to her. For Ruth, it mattered little that the school house she attended in Fort Defiance still stands (empty and in disrepair) while the place where she attended her *kinaalda* ceremony is marked only by the effects of weather on wood, stones and dirt. Both places index important moments in Ruth's past and parts of her identity as a Navajo woman who was born near Fort Defiance, met her husband and raised her family.

Natural features of the landscape in and around the Fort Defiance community that elicited stories or specific memories important to the community include places that one might expect, such as the dark columns of 'Black Rock' that mark the horizon between Fort Defiance, St. Michaels and Window Rock. However, places that were less dramatic were also recognized as being associated with oral histories as well. Blue Canyon, which extends behind Fort Defiance, is noticeable for steep, rocky cliffs one side of the road and expansive fields on the other. Winding our way along the road through Blue Canyon one afternoon, Ruth pointed to an area where the canyon walls begin to descend into the ground and more pine trees appear, "*Tseyi"* she said, "Canyon. This spot, right here this is where we used to bring the sheep. They say, long ago that the Spanish came through here too-someone found a sword a few years back, in the ground. When we were done with school [Fort Defiance day school] we came over here where no one could find us and we felt good." This area was also recognized by three other people with whom I talked, who reminisced that the area was also near a picnic site where the boarding school and day school teachers occasionally took the students. Pieces of the concrete poured to

make the picnic site are still visible though the tables are gone and the area is overgrown with trees and tall grasses.

Oral histories related to natural features of the landscape were also frequently connected with humorous stories. A rocky embankment that rises above the creek bed located directly across from the building where nurses were trained for the hospital evoked the following memory from Jim:

> "This building is where they taught the nurses-the Blue Girls-to be nurses. All these white ladies learning how to be nurses, and you know, when they weren't there, they sometimes went nude sunbathing on the rocks over there! My buddies and I used to spy on them and laugh, and laugh and laugh! And that's where there used to be some old parts of the fort too and here they were just sunbathing" (Interview: Jim Yellowhair, 2005).

One early afternoon spent walking along the Summit (the top crest of the Fort Defiance plateau), Rita, in the midst of telling her story about eating prairie dogs, recalled,

> "We had a camp here, for herding the sheep and when I was growing up I ate prairie dogs just like everyone else! My father said that my paternal grandmother, she was a white man's wife, she brought some goats back from the Long Walk and she had goats to eat. Besides that they had prairie dog…my dad used to kill some and he used to bake them. And he used to say 'this is for Nellie.' This is for Nellie' he'd say to me, 'put it in your pocket, let it cool off. Take it over there.' One time, they used to have an area where the water came in and be there like a little lake. And so he used to put prairie dog in a bucket and hang it out there [on a branch] so nothing would eat it. I stole one and ate it in the chicken house one time! He spanked my hand, he said 'don't you ever steal again! Ask for it!' I didn't know I was that hungry, I mean it's good, those prairie dogs are good" (Rita Benally, 2003).

Rita's flock of sheep is still grazed in this area on the summit and she and her husband and family members continue to have family reunions on the summit during the summer months.

Figure 16: Black Rock, 2002

I initially met Nellie, who lives near Black Rock, at a family reunion on the Summit. Amongst the Fourth of July events, including the Window Rock Fair, numerous rodeos and the selection of a new candidate for the office of Miss Navajo Nation, many families celebrate with long weekend trips and family reunions. One of the families I lived with attended an annual family reunion on the Summit and I was invited to join them. Expecting a group of maybe twenty other people, I was surprised to see the site chosen for the reunion was a large meadow that provided space for several camper trailers, a network of tarps, several large grills and enough space for two volleyball games to be enjoyed simultaneously. After assisting with preparations for the noonday meal, my friend and the matriarch of the family I was staying with introduced me to her clan relative, her aunt, who happened to be Nellie.

Shortly thereafter, I visited Nellie whose house sits under a cove of gorgeous, tall Cottonwood trees. As we walked around her property (she had come outside to see whose car was turning into her driveway) I asked about Black Rock, standing a few hundred feet

away from Nellie's house. "They blasted off those rocks," Nellie informed me, "to pave the road to Window Rock. Took off the ends of the rock." We stood for a moment looking at the towering rocks, before Nellie continued, "when they did that," she continued softly, "they blew up a lot of bones-people were buried there. It wasn't right."

Kelley and Harris report that Navajo people they interviewed for their study, "Navajo Sacred Places" warned them, "the disturbance of these landscapes will speed the loss of Navajo stories and culture which many feel is imminent under the weight of 'economic development'" (Kelley and Harris: 188). Fort Defiance, in many respects, has suffered the consequences of settler colonial and capitalist economic development having been host community to federal institutions and private businesses such as trading posts since 1851 (Bailey and Bailey 1986; Frink 1968). For Navajo residents, places within the Fort Defiance community continue to evoke memories, and stories despite periods of success and failure due to economic development initiatives, gang violence and unstable economies.

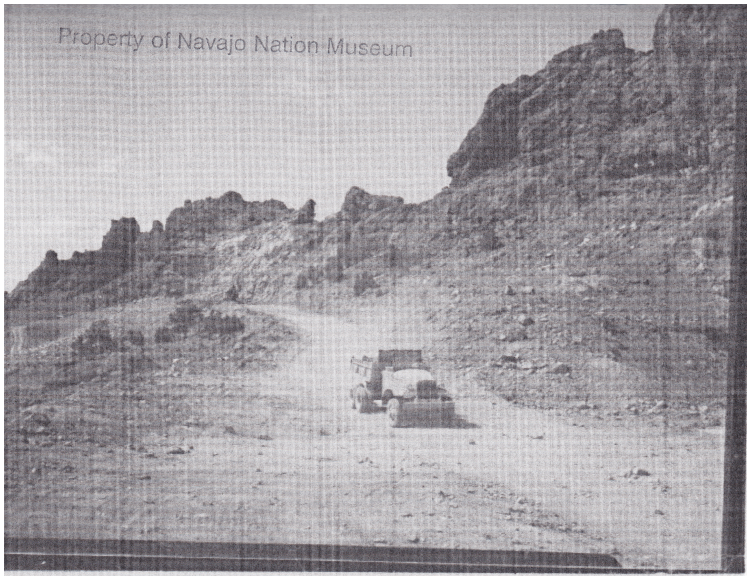

Figure 17: "Black Rock Quarry, July 1937, Milton Snow. Photo courtesy of the Navajo Nation Museum, NG8-147

Figure 18: Fort Defiance (old) IHS hospital, 2002

Figure 19: Fort Defiance hospital 2012

The hospital in the picture above was built in 1938 and closed in 2002 with the opening of a brand new, larger facility a few miles away (Frink 1968; Iverson 2002). As the main employer in Fort Defiance for several decades the hospital was frequently discussed by community residents or used as a reference point to talk about another place, "you know where the hospital is? Well, down the road…" Although many Navajo

were employed at the hospital, they filled lower paying jobs working as orderlies, in the laundry room, and occasionally as assistant aides and community outreach nurses. Annie shared the following narrative about her parents who worked at the hospital:

> "My mom met my dad and they got married in Toadlena. And then the got jobs up here at Fort Defiance Hospital. My dad was an orderly and my mother was what we used to call a 'Blue Girl' at the hospital, like nursing assistants. See, Fort Defiance was the only hospital on the Reservation. My mother was a seamstress, she made sheets, pillowcases, and mended them and stuff. My father was an ambulance driver [at the Fort Defiance hospital] and he would go out into the boonies. There were other men that worked there too and he wasn't always on call. They stayed all night at the hospital, and if anything should happen, they drove in the mud and rain, on the wagon roads and everything to bring people back to the hospital. They'd call, at the trading post and he would go out there in the ambulance and because he was the only ambulance driver he delivered a lot of babies. And, in fact, he delivered his little, niece. She was premature birth and what I thought was amazing is how he did that [helped her be delivered]. He said, "Well, she survived it" and what he did was he, when the baby was born, way up there on Narbona Pass, he, he heated the rocks in the sweathouse, in the fire and then he put it in a box and then he put all this wool in there and he made his own little incubator for the baby and brought his sister too to the hospital" (Annie Mae Yazzie, 2004).

Annie also recalled when the newer hospital was built (picture above); the old hospital building then became a sanatorium.

> "There used to be a hospital building there. And then, …that's where I was born…and after, I don't know, I can't give you a dates and times, but I just know that after I was born, they were building that new hospital. That big stone, three story building my parents were still working there. And um, my sister, Holly, who's two years younger than I am, she was born in that brand new hospital. And it was like, just opened and she was born in 1939…and uh, they thought it was you know, really fantastic hospital. And, they turned that hospital, the old hospital, turned it into the sanatorium, you know, the old hospital became the sanatorium. And, they must of, I guess they had about the same amount. And, and that old one that was way up on the hill, they made that into a nurses home for, for employee housing. Nurses and nurses aides, for people" (Annie Mae Yazzie: 2004).

Figure 20: Public Health Services (PHS) Sanatorium, November 1941. Milton Snow. Courtesy of the Navajo Nation Museum, NE13-94

Several people with whom I talked pursued work and training as nurses, often traveling between Indian Health Service (IHS) hospitals in Shiprock, Chinle, and Fort Defiance. Laurie's parents worked at the hsopital as well, influencing her to go to college and earn a degree in nursing so that she could contribute to the family income.

> **"**I went to school, to college for a couple of years, in nurses training. I came back and I worked to pay back my scholarship. I worked for the hospital for a year and a half. And I remember, I thought, "uh, you guys [my parents] didn't make anything," They were both working and together, their total income wasn't even twenty-five hundred dollars [per year]" (Laurie Jumbo, 2004).

Near to the hospital are a series of stone and wood cottages that were offered to Anglo hospital staff. The houses are now abandoned with the window boarded up, but on our car tours through the community, residents often insisted we stop to look at them and several people could remember people who once lived there.

Figure 21: Stone cottage, 2012

Over the summer of 2004, Harry, one of the regular visitors to the Fort Defiance Senior Center, noticed that I had taken several of the ladies out in the afternoon to drive around Fort Defiance and he decided he wanted to be interviewed as well. Harry's family moved around quite a bit in Fort Defiance, including a brief stay in the "Navajo building":

> "Housing back then [1951] was bad back then. My family didn't have a choice, we lived for a little bit in an old, building-they called it the "Navajo Building" Oh! There were roaches all around; you had to be careful at night and where you walk. I don't even want to think about it!" (Harry Yazzie, 2004).

Later on in our tour of Fort Defiance, Harry pointed out the irony of Anglo people accusing Navajos and their lifestyle of being dirty or improper. "They tell us we live in dirty hogans and here we were trying to live in their housing and it was worse! It was worse-no plumbing, old buildings that were dangerous."

The disparity in living arrangements, between Navajo and non-Navajo living in Fort Defiance was a frequent topic of conversation as well during interviews. Annie's family was fortunate to rent a small cottage with indoor plumbing.

> "You know, there were a lot of families that worked in the Fort Defiance area. My dad and mom-they were allowed a little cottage to live in. You know, at very low rent, but we were pretty fortunate in the sense that we lived in a modern house, with indoor plumbing. But, my mom and dad had livestock. So they sold their permits, my dad gave up his livestock permit to his niece. My mother gave hers up to some of her family. My dad did have a few acres up on the mountain that was given to him by his father. And, we dry farmed: potatoes, beans, pinto beans, squash and all that. We used to plant in the early spring and in the fall we went up there to harvest the stuff, whatever the bears didn't eat!" (Annie Mae Yazzie, 2003).

Other families were forced to make due with renting Quonset huts, rent several rooms in older buildings such as the "Officer's Quarters" building that was condemned and torn down in the 1960s.

The lack of indoor plumbing in housing areas for Navajo people contributed to health problems that led to public health programming in the 1950s and 60s to help educate people about hygiene. Lenore recounted,

> "The water wasn't good, you know, people got real sick and there was a big push to educate people, talk about public health. But you know, we've been living healthy for thousands of years-it wasn't until this fort was built that we got sick. When you live in a *hogan* and you have animals, you know how to take care of them and you keep your *hogan* clean and go get water-water! So many people didn't even have good water, when they were living here then" (Lenore Black, 2004).

Lenore's narrative also involved the "Club House" building, a two story wooden structure with a nice garden around it and running water, torn down in the 1960s. "We got yelled at if we went over there and played in the yard," Lenore shared "Sometimes we snuck over there anyways. All the doctors and school principals, they got to stay there. It had a porch on the second story so they could sit up there and eat-it looked real nice."

Figure 22: BIA school building, 2012 (above) and Figure 24: stone *hogan* school building, 2012 (below)

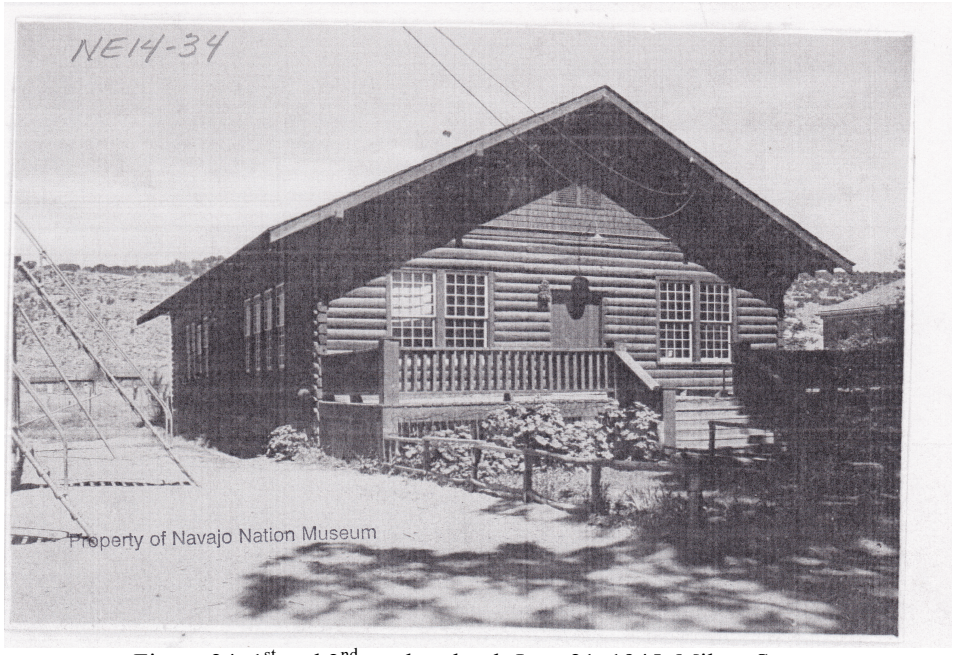

Figure 24: 1st and 2nd grade school, June 21, 1945, Milton Snow.
Photo courtesy of Navajo Nation Museum, NE14-34

Some residents recalled learning to weave and do various craft type projects in the stone hogans pictured above, "We used to have weaving classes in the afternoon, but I never became real good at it-my younger sister picked up real quick though" (Rita Benally, 2004).

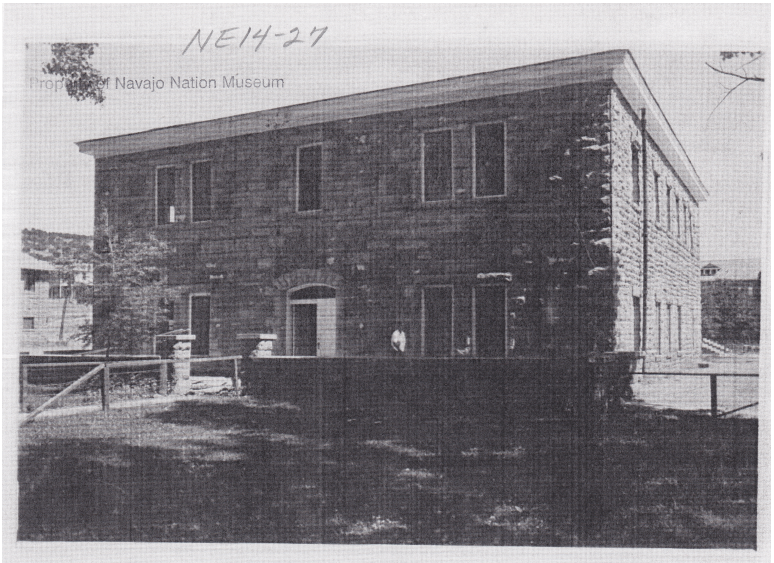

Figure 25: Small girls dormitory building 1945, Milton Snow.
Photo courtesy of the Navajo Nation Museum, NE14-27

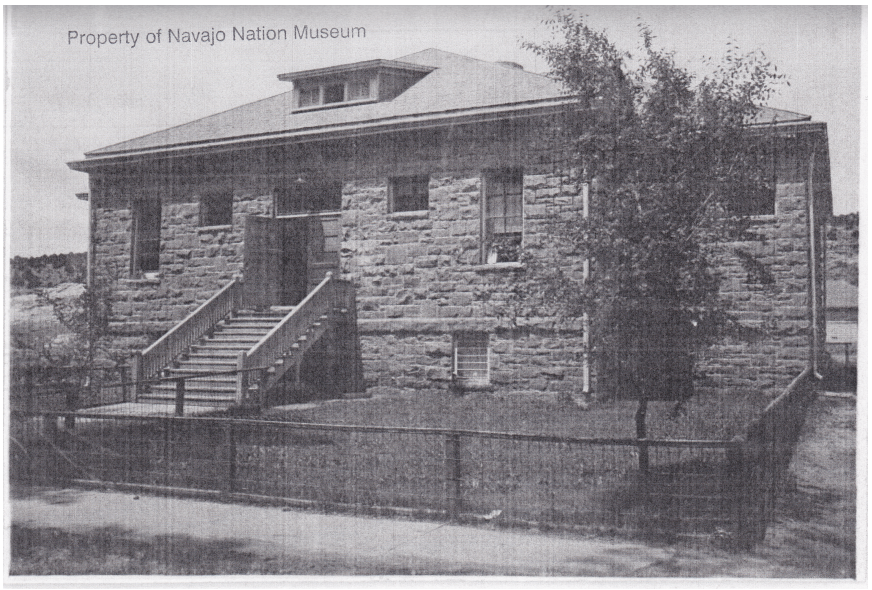

Figure 26: School house building, June, 1945, Milton Snow.
Photo courtesy of the Navajo Nation Museum, NE14-37

Figure 27: Upstairs, Dormitory-East Wing Bay, June 22, 1945 Milton Snow.
Photo courtesy of the Navajo Nation Museum NE14-7

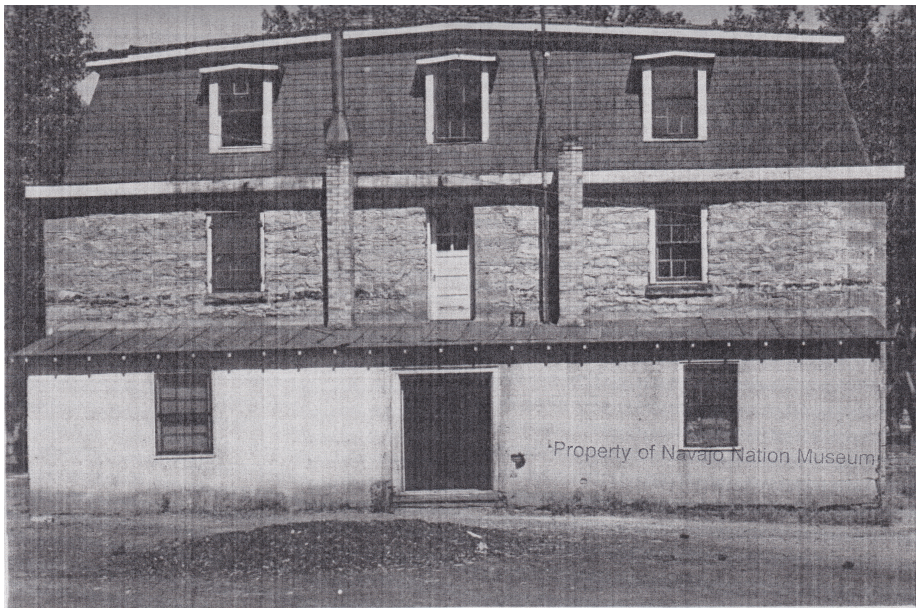

Figure 28: Rear of "old army" building, formerly school buidling. Milton Snow, June 19, 1945. Photo courtesy of the Navajo Nation Museum, NE13-27

Community residents voiced strong associations with the Fort Defiance boarding school (laer, developed into a day school in the 1960s). Many residents had memories or stories about family members who worked at the school and many residents attended the boarding school for elementary school. Several narratives from community residents made connections between the brutality of the Long Walk and mandated attendance of young children at the boarding schools. "it was traumatic for the children," one senior resident shared, "and their families, kind of like the Long Walk, our people suffered" (Interview: 2006). Another community resident that I met through one of the kitchen assistants at the Fort Defiance Senior Center shared a family history about an outbreak of influenza that took the lives of several children at the boarding school including the daughter of one of her great-aunts; "It was so sad. My grandma said when her sister heard that news they were just thinking, 'maybe it wasn't her, maybe she's okay' and then, then they got to the school and here she [the daughter] had died just an hour before they came. I don't think my auntie got over that."

The goal of Indian boarding schools was to forcefully assimilate Native children into Anglo-European American culture; this entailed an emphasis on heteronormative gender roles, restrictions on speaking Native languages, and directing Native children into vocational jobs, such as nursing, secretarial work, and machine maintenance (Cahill 2011; Rifkin 2011). All of these themes related to boarding school experiences are present in the narratives of Fort Defiance residents. Often, stories centered around the ways in which children defied boarding school regulations:

> "I went to the boarding school [at Fort Defiance]. Yeah, there used to be fields by there… There used to be a big barn where the boys would take care of the cows, milk the cows for us. And where there was a big field, they planted potatoes and corn and lot of time we had to help with the corn and the potatoes-pull them up. But when they didn't see us, we took the small ones [potatoes] and we ate [them] raw, we were naughty!" (T.R, 2004).

Though many of the children came from surrounding areas near Fort Defiance, it was not always possible to see family members on a regular basis, "when the matron turned the lights off at night," recalled one former student at the boarding school, "we would whisper in Navajo. So many times, the little ones would be crying at night, you know, because they missed home." Speaking Navajo when the matron or teachers weren't listening was also a common theme throughout the narratives, "Oh yeah, we had jokes all right, used to say them real quietly behind the teacher when she wasn't looking." Another former boarding school student remembered, "the teacher's name was Mr. Richards. He may have been Indian, he could have been Nez Perce, but I don't know. He made us learn math and he was strict. He wouldn't let us talk Navajo even though he was Indian."

Chores at school were assigned according to Anglo-European notions of proper gender roles and work: "The boys had to work in the garden and the girls had to do the laundry and ironing. There were peaches and chickens to tend too."

"The hogan, those hogans? [double stone hogans pictured above] that used to be where the girls had class [with] the homemaker teacher, learn how to cook in there."

Punishment for not obeying rules at the boarding school was harsh; one former student recalled,

> "Then when we got naughty we had to stand up, to be punished. You just have to stand there. Your feet got tired know how it is when you stand up? Maybe four hours, first they give you one hour and if you move, it goes up to six hours that you have to stand up!" (Interview, 2005).

Another memory related to the boarding school involved the focus on teaching Navajo children vocational skills so that they could transfer to vocational training programs in nursing and machine maintenance.

> "Ft. Defiance boarding school, used to be a BIA school...and, I went to school there for eight years. That was as far as they went, eighth grade. It was almost the end of the war you know, when I went to school. And, I think at that time I think it was just slavery. I don't think the teachers weren't even qualified to be teachers. The principal was, you know, just a homemaker and she came to teach us because during the war-they didn't, they couldn't hire anybody. And so, so in the fifth grade I learned how to crotchet! That was all we were doing in the fifth grade. In the fourth grade we learned math, you know, multiplications, and stuff like that. I never learned any of that the right way. In the third grade, she [the teacher] was mostly interested in singin' and we were singin' all day" (D.W.,2005).

Delphine later attended one of the Christian schools near Ft. Defiance, in Tsé Bonito,

> "W-I-M Western Indian Ministry. At that time it was Navajo Bible Church. So I went there two years and uh, it was all right I guess. After that, you know, they closed it, the county closed it because we just had a small group, ninth grade through the eleventh grade and they didn't like it. But the teacher was at least a qualified teacher. The room was too small and we were buildin' fires too! But anyway, I went there two years and then after two years, I thought that was it for

> my education and my older sister, Agnes came and said, 'Hey! Delphine you're going to school again in Oklahoma!' Oh whoa! And so I got ready and went to school in Oklahoma. And here I never even been to the post office alone [laughter] I didn't even know where our post office was, I didn't even know where our trading post was, the only trading post we knew was where my aunt lives. That's as far as I'd been. We used to herd sheep over there. The government, they rented the big greyhound buses, you know, all these kids, they came to Ft. Defiance, where the BIA school used to be and these kids, you know some of them went to Oregon, and Riverside, California? And Lupton, Oklahoma and Green, Oklahoma. I had a cousin that went to school there [in Lupton] and she graduated from there. So I went to school in Lupton for nursing. Two years, I came back and worked at Ft. Defiance for forty-two years. I got nothing to show for it [laughter] I live out there-in the same field herding sheep. I was retired about ten years ago and when I was just home, it just, just seemed like a waste of time, just sitting there looking at my husband!" (D.R., 2005).

A few Fort Defiance residents whom I talked with had also had experiences attenting St. Michael's Catholic school[27], a private mission school completed in 1898, approximately seven miles from Fort Defiance.

> "My parents worked for public health and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. We [siblings] couldn't go to the boarding school. They told us we lived right there [in Fort Defiance] and that we weren't allowed to go because both of our parents worked. So that's why my parents put us in St. Michael's, St. Michael's boarding school. Everybody else was going to boarding school except all the children of the people that worked in the BIA or the public health service, forestry, and government. So our parents had to pay for us to go to St. Michael's and to them, you know, a hundred dollars a year for us that was a whole lot [of money]. That was lot then" (Helen Tuttle, 2006).

Another resident, Tom, whom I met while visiting at the St. Michael's Senior Center, remembered vividly that he was always hungry and homesick at St. Michael's. He managed to slip away from the school one day, "Once I was so hungry I ran all the way about two miles from the mission [St. Michaels boarding school] to my mom and

[27] St. Michael's Mission was established in 1896 by Katherine Drexel who donated land she purchased from the railroad for the construction of a mission church and school. Father Berard Haile served at the mission between 1901-1961. A skilled linguist, fluent in German, Spanish and English, he learned a considerable amount of Navajo as well and is credited with being the first non-Navajo to attempt to write the language and translate the Bible into Navajo (Bodo 1998).

she said, ‘son are you hungry?’ and she made me a big pile of fry bread. Then she said, ‘you have to go back there son, we’ll both be in trouble’ and I ran all the way back and they didn’t catch me.” Tom also recalled that the nuns were very strict,

> “The sisters had sticks that hung down their skirts on the side and they used them to hit your hands with if you misbehaved. Every morning you had to strip your bed. One time I got beaten so bad my mom went over to the school and said, ‘don’t hit my boy like that’” (Tom Morgan, 2006).

St. Michael’s school continues to provide education and I have known several Navajo people my age or younger who attended the school. One of my dearest friends who graduated shortly after I began fieldwork in the area, described the school as “good, you know, I mean, the teachers are pretty good. I think it’s better than going to Window Rock high school.”

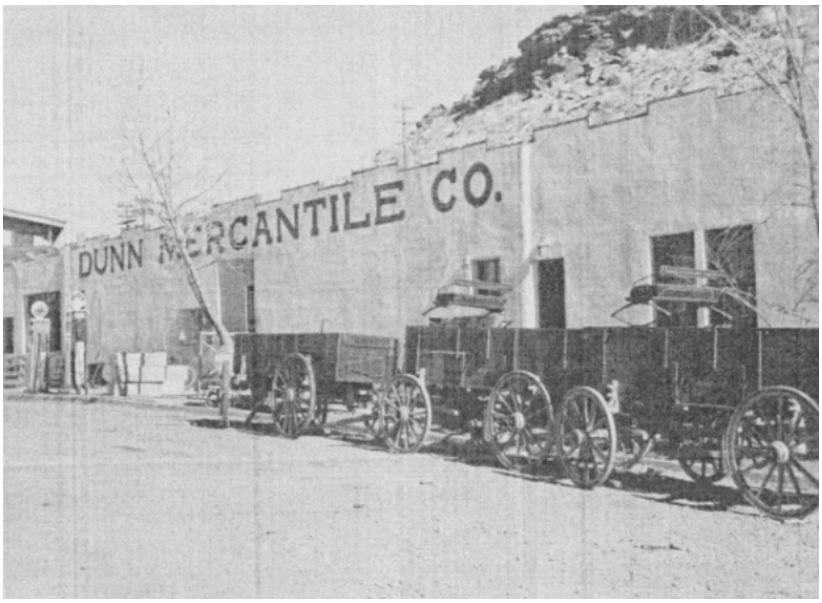

Figure 29: Dunn Mercantile Co., November 1945, Milton Snow.
Photo courtesy of the Navajo Nation Museum, NE18-119

The first license for a trading post was issued in Fort Defiance in 1868 to Lehman Spiegelberg, a Jewish merchant and immigrant to the southwest (Tobias 1990: 71). The Damon-Black family operated another trading post established in the late nineteenth

century in Fort Defiance; Nellie Black, the daughter of Anson Damon, a soldier who worked for the military fort and married a Navajo woman, operated a trading post for many decades in the area with her Anglo husband (W. Seal, 2003). Of course, extensive trade networks on Navajo land were well maintained before U.S. military intrusions in 1851; Navajo people traded food, blankets and animals with Hopi and Pueblo people long before the establishment of Fort Defiance (Kelley 1986).

Community residents often mentioned trading posts in interviews, on car tours, and in casual conversations about changes throughout the past fifty years in Fort Defiance. Many people remembered riding in wagons with siblings to visit trading posts in Tsé Bonito and Fort Defiance; Trading posts were also mentioned as places to catch up on news, share stories and hopefully, convince your parents to buy you a sweet treat for the long ride home. During an interview with Nellie, she recalled that there had been two trading posts during her childhood growing up in Fort Defiance,

> "We had the two trading posts. Fort Defiance Trading Post and there was another one called "Walkers." They had the dry goods and it was just like a regular trading post but I remember going out there during the War [World War II], and my mother would lecture me, "make sure that you get so much for all our ration coupons for sugar and coffee" because you only could get so much. She really beat it in my head to make sure that they [trading post owners] gave us our ration's worth" (Nellie Yellowhair, 2005).

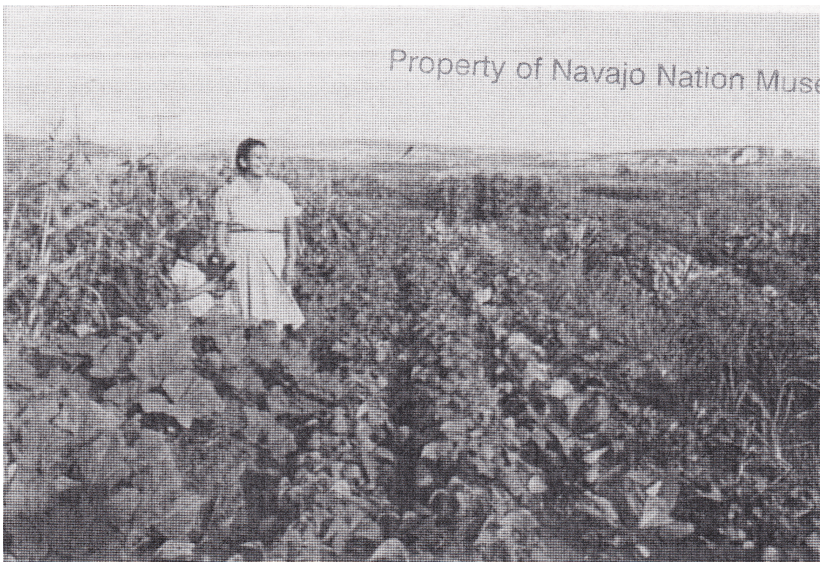

Figure 30: Extension Fort Defiance Garden. Mrs. Dee Teller and daughter.
Photo courtesy of Navajo Nation Museum NA5-46

One of the more surprising memories to me that surfaced in interviews with community residents was the existence of huge, communal vegetable gardens that once extended just beyond where the main buildings (hospital, trading post, school) of Fort Defiance were located. The gardens were located in a particularly well suited area for growing plants with plenty of drainage from the nearby creek; the gardens offered people fresh food that otherwise was not available near the community or at the trading posts. During an interview with Annie, she recalled that,

> "All these people that worked at the hospital-each family, they had a certain plot-I can't remember how big they were, but each family, they had a certain plot. And then you could raise your own vegetables and everything. Well, I remember that my mother and dad used to get up so early in the morning four thirty, five and go irrigate the land and my mother would pick all the stuff [vegetables] and we would wash them. And by the time she'd come home, I'd get up and I'd get my little red wagon, pull it along and she'd bunch up [the vegetables] and we'd sell them to the doctors and their wives. Because you know, there was no place really for fresh vegetables. And we had this trading post but they didn't sell fresh vegetables and so when the doctors and their wives came out here they were lost. My mother would be selling those vegetables and stuff to them, like little bunches of spinach for ten cents" (Annie Mae Yazzie, 2004)

Unfortunately, the land that supplied the gardens was eventually developed for more housing. Many people with whom I interviewed talked fondly about the gardens and felt that they should never have been destroyed as many Navajo families living in the area enjoyed them.

The stories connected to specific sites and places mentioned in this chapter illustrate a deep attachment to the community, despite efforts from the U.S. government first to establish a settler colonial community (in 1851) and secondly to systematically demolish the buildings and places that encapsulate Navajo residents' experiences within the community, throughout the twentieth century. During my discussions with elder community residents at the Senior Center, local acquaintances and friends, people emphasized the changes that have impacted the community as well as the continued importance of Fort Defiance as being a Navajo community. "This is home," explained Annie, "This is where my parents lived and raised us, my Uncle worked at the trading post. Those places are gone now, but it doesn't matter, you know, it's still here." During the same discussion with Annie, I asked her what she thought the purpose of these oral histories should be, the stories from her and other local residents I had returned to hear, year and after year. "You know, it's about, it's about remembering for me. And, and I think being able to share these stories with our young people. They need to know what happened here-there's a lot more to this place than just what they see: the empty buildings, the crime we have. We have a history and in the books at the school over here? [Window Rock school district], they don't even know anything about this place."

Although the people I primarily interviewed in Fort Defiance were between ages 50-75, I was also fortunate to have conversations with friends and acquaintances who

were in their late teens, early twenties and thirties. I met a handful of younger residents of Fort Defiance through my internship at the Navajo Nation Museum in 2001 and by living with or near families over the past twelve years in St. Michaels and Fort Defiance that included young adults. Young adult residents are aware of the institutions and some of the historic buildings and sites that make up Fort Defiance history, having heard stories from older family members.

For young adults, places such as the Conoco gas station, the local burger restaurant, and the middle school track and field, were mentioned frequently as places that involved their own stories, and recognized as social hangout areas, though they could also be dangerous.[28] In general, younger residents divided up the area according to the neighborhoods where they and their friends lived; one particular housing development that suffered from a bad road (potholes) and empty houses tagged with graffiti was consistently referred to as "the ghetto" which instigated friendly teasing if someone lived in that neighborhood. Friends who lived in nearby communities such as Navajo, St. Michaels, Window Rock or Tsé Bonito were jokingly referred to as living in "the boonies," a joke made even better by the fact that their friends were technically only five or eight miles away.

In general, younger residents were more inclined to talk about events and memories in their own lives connected with visits and spend time in Window Rock or Gallup notably places that offer jobs, entertainment, and larger social networks. In the

[28] I heard three stories from young people about robberies and car hijacking incidents at the local gas station; one incident involved a young woman who witnessed a robbery and with whom I worked at the Navajo Nation Museum. Gang activity is occasionally talked about in casual conversation and friends of mine had their property vandalized; However, these incidents are a reality in areas of poverty all over the country and I have never encountered any dangerous situations while spending time in Fort Defiance.

future, I hope that efforts to collect oral histories in Fort Defiance and other Navajo communities will include young people as well.

Landscape, memory and sovereignty

Settler colonial theft and violation of Native American land ownership is an on-going injustice and reality for Native American tribes throughout the United States. In February 2013, the white owner of the land where the Battle of Wounded Knee took place put the property on the market for $4.9 million dollars (Estes 2013). Irreparable psychological, environmental and physical harm has occurred from uranium mining in the southwest, particularly on the Navajo Nation and yet proposals to mine uranium near Mount Taylor and Crownpoint, New Mexico are in the process of being considered and implemented (Brugge 2006; Navajo Nation Times May 16, 2013). Underlying these physical encroachments on Native American land (or in the case of Mount Taylor, federal land revered by tribes) is a dismissive lack of recognition for the historically significant places and histories of Native American peoples (Estes 2013). In this respect, the active continuation of expressing, performing and sharing knowledge and history through Navajo philosophies grounded in oral traditions opposes the gross infringements of settler colonial policies and narratives on Navajo people.

How do community members use oral histories to challenge settler colonial narratives? On one level, local residents involved in sharing their oral histories are part of efforts to create a multi-voiced representation of their community's history with the goal of creating a collection of histories for future use as a teaching tool or to engage young people. The oral narratives themselves also frequently reference overt instances of racism experienced or observed in Fort Defiance. Delphine, Annie, Rita, Ruth and Lenore all

question the purpose of their school experiences in Fort Defiance during a period when settler colonial attitudes towards educating Native Americans relied completely on vocational training. Students in the Fort Defiance day school were offered limited options of programs to pursue, ranging from mechanic and electrician work to nursing. The prevailing racist attitude was that by training Navajo people to fulfill vocational jobs, they would assimilate into American society filling the lowest paying jobs but also in great demand, mostly by settler colonial institutions-hospitals, schools, and BIA agencies on or near the Navajo Nation. Navajo families earned the lowest wages.

Community member's narratives also challenge the notion that Navajo and non-Navajo people lived in equal conditions in towns such as Fort Defiance where there were long established agency headquarters. As the stories of Annie, Ruth, and Harry illustrate, many Navajo families had few options for safe or appropriate housing. While non-Navajo doctors and BIA personnel enjoyed indoor plumbing and access to the exclusive employees' club, most Navajo families made due with shared plumbing, small and poorly constructed shelter or, in the story of Jim, metal Quonset huts that were not insulated. And, while Navajo women made up a majority of the workforce in Fort Defiance during the 1940s-1960s, their contributions are never mentioned or recognized in settler colonial narratives that downplay the leadership roles of Navajo women within their families and communities (Bailey and Bailey 1986; Frink 1968).

The demolition or abandonment of historic buildings in Fort Defiance exemplifies efforts to erase history and acknowledgement of the community (Trouillot 1997). Yet, local residents' stories attest to the experiences and histories of these specific places and institutions within Fort Defiance. Further, the existence of historic buildings is not a

necessity for recalling oral histories about the community; although many residents would like to see some of the remaining buildings put to good use within the community, it is the landscape that prompts engagement with the history of the community and the recitation of oral histories.

For most local residents of Fort Defiance, landscape is connected to family, the concept of *ké*, and in many instances, telling stories. Landforms all across the Navajo Nation are attached to oral histories and creation stories that embed moral, practical and cultural information; "the stories told within an oral culture are often, as we have seen, deeply bound to the earthly landscape inhabited by that culture" (Abrams 1997:182). Oral histories serve to connect people to the environment around them and to reinforce connections between family, clan, and community.

During the course of my fieldwork, traveling by car elicited many, many stories connected to the landscape we passed through. Passengers were likely to be reminded of places where relatives live or used to live, reunions, herding livestock, and important events such as where a *kinaaldá* was hosted. Furthermore, I noticed this trend to reminisce and share stories about the past while traveling continues in more urban landscapes as well. During visits or trips with friends to Gallup or in Albuquerque and Phoenix, stories were also forthcoming. These stories usually index events related to living in an urban area for the first time: a first apartment, workplaces, favorite hangout spots or restaurants. The difference between these stories told in an urban context and oral histories shared while traveling around Fort Defiance rests not only in the obvious change in landscape but also the interconnections between family, *ké* and community and the assertion of sovereign Navajo history.

For too long Navajo history has been conceived of as a series of events, dates and misfortunes or, conversely as a compilation of sacred stories about creation that makes Navajo people unique. Navajo history is also about community, the relationship between people and landscape, and the very act of narration, of telling stories that continue to affirm inter-generationally, connections between people and the land. In this sense, oral histories are part of Navajo sovereignty, of making decisions that are best for you and your community, for your wellbeing, rooted in Navajo philosophy.

Figure 31: View towards Fort Defiance and Black Rock, 2012

Conclusion

This chapter highlights oral histories about Fort Defiance that contribute to Navajo representations of place, history and community. I include stories elicited during my fieldwork that reference specific sites, historic buildings, and natural features of the surrounding landscape. Oral histories serve a multitude of purposes within Navajo culture, not least of which is to inform, guide and inscribe histories onto the landscape.

Land has always been a precious resource that tribe continually have to defend against the encroachments of settler colonialism (Berkhofer 1979). As I suggest in this

chapter, the oral histories of this community and the efforts to compile a collection of resident's stories is part of a local assertion of Navajo history and sovereignty over land and representation. Such assertions challenge the expectations of Navajo history that have been produced by settler colonial narratives (Deloria 2004). As the oral histories in this chapter reflect, Navajo history and the history of Fort Defiance is not centered on Anglo-European notions of history, site, and community. Rather, Fort Defiance history includes a dynamic and nuanced collection of perspectives from Navajo residents about the lived experiences related to settler colonial institutions, policies and programs. As decisions continue to be made regarding the further development of the community and its historic buildings, the oral histories of local residents reaffirm the importance of the community within Navajo culture.

Chapter five:
Wage Labor and the roles of Diné women in Fort Defiance

"Navajo women today still do not consider themselves subordinate to their husbands. In many areas of Navajoland, Navajos hold matrilineal clans central to their identities. Women continue to dictate land use through matrilineal clans and to exert traditional claims to their homes and livestock" (Denetdale 2004:333)

Figure 32: Employees at work in laundry Fort Defiance, 1945 taken by Milton Snow.
Photo courtesy of the Navajo Nation Museum NE13-9

Introduction

The picture above, taken by Milton Snow, depicts Navajo women folding laundry, possibly for the boarding school dormitory at Fort Defiance in 1945. Employed by the Bureau of Indian Affairs as matrons, cooks, and laundresses for the boarding school, Navajo women earned income that helped provide for their families; in addition, for many women working in the boarding school was a welcome opportunity to see their children on a daily basis (Elsie Smith, 2004). This incentive for working with the Indian Service was introduced to me by Elsie, a frequent visitor to the Fort Defiance Senior Center whom I had gotten to know by spending most afternoons helping her set up lunch

for the seniors. During an interview one day after the lunch crowd had returned home, I shared some photocopies of Milton Snow photographs, archived at the Navajo Nation Museum. We sat together at a folding table in the air-conditioned lunchroom, surrounded by the aromatic smell of leftover squash stew and coffee. As we poured through photographs, I handed her a picture of the Episcopal Church in Fort Defiance. Elsie recalled, 'my great-grandmother worked at the Episcopal Church day school when it also functioned as an orphanage in Fort Defiance [established in 1897]' (Fieldnotes 2006). Unable to take care of and feed her sister's children, they had been placed in the church's orphanage where Elsie's great-grandmother worked alongside them and was able to be around them on a daily basis. 'She worked there so she could see the kids and be with them' (Fieldnotes 2006).

The sacrifice, hardship and resourcefulness of Elsie's great-grandmother come to mind whenever I drive by the Episcopal Church in Fort Defiance. In a stone and concrete building, with tiled floors and breezy walkways, Elsie's grandmother arrived daily to clean the rooms, stock the shelves with bandages and ointments, wash the kitchen pots and sweep the floors (Fieldnotes 2006). In the spare moments of her workday, she saw her babies (sister's children), hugged them, gave them some extra food, and walked home in the evening to cook for other family members (Fieldnotes 2006). As I continued to talk with other Navajo women who had personal experiences working in Fort Defiance or relatives who had held jobs in the community, I was surprised by their descriptions of employment opportunities in Fort Defiance, of a vibrant local economy that had existed in the not so distant past. Amidst racist policies labeled as "progress," a daunting bureaucracy, and a classist local economy that paid non-Navajo (Anglo) workers more

than Navajo workers, Navajo women in Fort Defiance fulfilled needed service jobs and provided for their families and communities (Bosch 1961, Mc'Closkey 1998). This chapter is an exploration of the wage economy in Fort Defiance in the twentieth century and more importantly, an examination of the roles of Navajo women as wage earners in this economy during the twentieth century.

Figure 33: Good Shepherd Episcopal Church, Fort Defiance 2004

As mothers, wage earners and leaders within their families and communities Navajo women historically performed sustaining roles both in ceremonial contexts and daily life (Denetdale 2007; Frisbie 2001; M'Closkey 2002; Reicherd 1997[1934];). However, non-Native scholarship on Navajo history and culture has not focused on the contributions of Navajo women's wage labor in the historical record nor provided insight into the important positions Navajo women fulfilled within their communities, especially within the early and mid-twentieth century reservation economy (Denetdale 2007;

M'Closkey 2002; O'Niell 2004). Often portrayed as inhabiting domestic spheres and specifically weaving, it has only been within the past ten years that scholarship on Navajo women has been more thoroughly examined (Denetdale 2007; 2009;Goeman 2009; M'Closkey 2002; Mc'Closkey 1998).

While images of Navajo women weaving, caring for children and herding sheep in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries abound in scholarly books and literature, this chapter presents Navajo women as active participants in the wage labor economy of the Fort Defiance community. This chapter also engages the personal histories and experiences of female residents of Fort Defiance I interviewed, women who performed seasonal or other wage labor work in the community between the 1940s and 1970s. I have included archival photographs from the Navajo Nation Museum's collection, most of them taken by Milton Snow, a non-Navajo BIA employee. The photographs, many of which document Fort Defiance during the mid-twentieth century served as memory aides to people with whom I worked. I include them here along with narratives from Fort Defiance women residents to serve a twofold purpose: to provide a visual context to Fort Defiance, to the sites of narratives and experiences Navajo women shared with me; and secondly as a reflexive tool, an opportunity for Navajo residents to narrate their own histories. Their narratives form a multi-voiced response to Snow's visual story of development in Fort Defiance, a story he crafted with little input from Navajo people.

The women's narratives presented in this chapter reflect an important part of Navajo history, as responses to non-Navajo histories that typically exclude Navajo women and as an active assertion of sovereignty, autonomy and Navajo principles. Why have Navajo women been showcased as docile, silent people as opposed to leaders,

intellectuals and activists? As weavers and caretakers but not matrons, secretaries and community nurse liaisons? I utilize these narratives to discuss the representation of Navajo women in twentieth century Navajo history and Fort Defiance. I also employ these narratives to construct a critical framework for conceptualizing and giving voice to the significant roles Navajo women performed within the wage labor economy of Fort Defiance as well as within their families, social networks and communities.

Gendered labor: Colonial, hetero-normative constructions of Navajo women's roles in the work force during the 20th century.

In a biographical note written for *The Desert Magazine* in 1942, Milton Snow, an employee of the Office of Indian Affairs (later the Bureau of Indian Affairs) recalls his first "glimpse" of a Navajo woman: "No bustle and no bosom but long hair, velvet blouse with beads and ear bobs and Chinese ladies trousers-no bustle? No bosom? My God, is it a boy or a girl?" (Wilson 1995 [Snow 1942]). "Terrified," Snow ran back to his "stalled station wagon and gave [the car] such a heave that the churning wheels caught and spun the vehicle out on solid ground" (Wilson 1995 [Snow 1942]). It was this initial meeting with a Navajo woman herding sheep that Snow credits with initiating his interest in "live Indians" (Wilson 1995 [Snow 1942]). Later, as an employee of the Office of Indian Affairs from 1937 to 1958, Snow documented daily Navajo life, federal government projects and development in the Window Rock, Arizona area and Fort Defiance (Bailey and Bailey 1986; Wilson 1995). His initial reactions upon seeing a Navajo woman in person mirror the tropes of settler colonial, hetero-normative and (Anglo) male dominated expectations of gender (Denetdale 2001; 2006; 2009;Rifkin 2010). Without a

bustle or corset[29], the Navajo woman Snow encountered was perceived as a threat due to what Snow effectively described as an androgynous appearance. "Recovering" from his preliminary terror, Snow's curiosity about Navajo people (the exotic "other") overcomes his fears and eventually leads him to fulfill a position with the Office of Indian Affairs working on the Navajo Nation (Bailey and Bailey 1986; Wilson 1995).

Snow was by no means the only non-Navajo man (or woman) to markedly misconstrue and misunderstand Navajo gender roles; as cited by Jennifer Denetdale, when the author George Wharton James first met Juanita, the wife of Chief Manuelito, he describes her as "one of the queenliest people I have ever met" (Denetdale 2004). James's comment, perhaps tinged with a note of surprise that a Navajo woman would exhibit "queenly" behavior, highlights characteristics of the ideal Anglo-European woman in James's day: "graceful, polite, calm and dignified" (Denetdale 2004). However, James's characterization of Juanita as a passive, queenly woman stands in sharp contrast to the actions and central roles Navajo women, such as Juanita, fulfilled as leaders, primary caretakers, family decision makers, and directors of ceremonial activities (Denetdale 2004, 2009; Frisbie 2001).

Milton Snow and George Wharton James's impressions of Navajo women and their roles within Navajo society underscore the intentions and policies of nineteenth and twentieth century U.S. settler colonial missions to assimilate Navajo gender roles into "proper" Anglo-European society (Rifkin 2010). This effort extended into the wage labor force, as historian Cathleen Cahill writes in her work on Native American employees of

[29] Bustles and corsets, trademark pieces of dress for "civilized" society were obligatory for Native women in boarding schools (young men were also dressed "properly" in Anglo-European attire). See Andrea Smith, Angela Waziyatawin Cavender-Wilson on the colonization of dress and enforced assimilation through Anglo-European dress.

the Indian Services (Cahill 2011). Women (Native and non-Native) were hired specifically to be role models of approved feminine virtue: nurturing, mothering, and polite (Cahill 2011). The Indian Services encouraged hiring Native women and couples specifically as teachers, matrons and role models within the boarding school structure to emulate to Native children Christian, hetero-normative gender roles (Cahill 2011). Native employees served yet another purpose: to model a work ethic and career path deemed acceptable by settler colonial society for Native and Navajo people. More succinctly summarized by Delphine, a Navajo woman who worked as a community health liaison in Fort Defiance and attended the boarding school there, "they [Bureau of Indian Affairs boarding school officials] didn't want us to learn anything except vocational training. That's all they thought we were good for-just vocational training" (Delphine Wynne, 2005).

Settler colonial agendas have sought to normalize heteronormativity and the notion of the family unit, disrupting Native kinship systems, marriage practices, and extended family living arrangements (Denetdale 2001, 2004,2006; Rifkin 2010). As Mark Rifkin suggests, the concept of heteronormativity has been continuously delivered through U.S. American Indian policy, centered on re-constructing kinship, descent and sexual identity through the lens of colonization and heterosexuality (Cahill 2011; Rifkin 2010). Navajo gender roles have been subjugated to western designations of "female" and "male" behavior and characteristics within a hetero-normative, Western context (Cahill 2011; Rifkin 2010).

Settler colonial development and assimilation policies infused with hetero-normative gender role expectations infiltrated development of wage economies on Indian

reservations and to some extent dictated the kinds of work available for Navajo men and women during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Cahill 2011). Navajo men were hired by railroad companies and mining operations in off-reservation border towns; Navajo women by necessity then stayed home to raise children, crops and sheep (Bailey and Bailey 1986). Despite this portrayal of Navajo participation in twentieth century reservation and border town wage economies, Navajo women were indeed involved in blue-collar positions (including involvement in Indian Services) within local communities such as Fort Defiance. As matrons, laundresses, community health nurses and teachers, they fulfilled valuable roles within their communities and provided financial support for their families- activities in alignment with the leadership roles traditional Navajo culture has always valued in women (Denetdale 2004, 2006, 2009; M'Closkey 2002).

Scholarship on the wage labor of Navajo men and women generally follows a gendered division of labor scheme in which Navajo men only sought work in border towns, with the railroad, mining and oil operations or ranch work; in contrast, wage labor concerning Navajo women focuses primarily on sheep herding and weaving textiles (Lamphere 2007; M'Closkey 2002; O'Neill 2004). After the extension of the railroad into the southwest in the 1880s, jobs with the railroad, farms, oil drilling and uranium mining became more available to Navajo men (Bailey and Bailey 1986; Chamberlain 2008). Navajo women's work has been portrayed as centered entirely on labor-intensive activity in the domestic realm such as weaving, sheep herding and child rearing (Bailey and Bailey 1986; Iverson 2002). While some Navajo families engaged in small, local coal mining operations throughout the mid-twentieth century, most Navajo men sought

available work with the railroad or beet farms in southern Colorado; Navajo women's work is more generally characterized as centering on the care and upkeep of sheep flocks and wove rugs to earn extra income (Bailey and Bailey 1986; Iverson 2002; O'Neill).

Though many Navajo women (and some men) wove textiles to sustain their families (and for the personal satisfaction of continuing the practice), Navajo women's textile work continues to be egregiously undervalued by settler colonial established capitalist markets, such as trading posts (O'Neill, Chamberlain 2008). Weaving is a labor intensive activity involving not only the ownership of land and sheep, money to buy wool and supplies, but also requires time for creating a weaving, and patience dealing with the limited venues for selling weavings (M'Closkey 2002). Furthermore, the amount of money earned for weaving has rarely afforded Navajo women minimum wage per hour for their work (M'Closkey 2002). In many cases, additional work sought by Navajo women in addition to weaving, was necessary to provide for family (Bosch 1961; Frisbie 2001; M'Closkey 2002; O'Neill). In addition, although weaving has been characterized as an activity reserved for Navajo women (with the exception of *Hastiin* Klah) contemporary male Navajo weavers continue to exhibit a vibrant presence in weaving markets despite virtually no mention of existence in archival, written historical records (Denetdale 2004; Stoler 2009).

Depictions of Navajo women as only weavers and sheepherders and Navajo men working for the railroad companies ignores the complexities and realities of Navajo men and women seeking paid work and professional paid positions to provide for their families during the twentieth century (Bailey and Bailey 1986; Bosch 1961; Kelley 1986). Poorly planned and implemented federal strategies to promote economic growth

on reservations, including the Navajo Nation also influenced the employment of Navajo people in local communities such as Fort Defiance (Bailey and Bailey 1986; Kelley 1986). The livestock reductions of the 1930s destroyed Navajo flocks and income earned from wool production, animal husbandry, weavings, and meat (M'Closkey 2002). As M'Closkey writes, the international wool market crashed due to military need and use of wool for blankets and clothing; the price of sheep and wool dropped dramatically forcing weavers to accept poor pay or trade in goods for their weavings (M'Closkey 2002). The wage labor economy suffered as well after World War II; fewer jobs with the railroad and on farms were available to Navajo people, leaving the federal government the main employer (Bailey and Bailey 1986).

New Representations of Navajo women working in Fort Defiance

The matrilineal and matrilocal nature of Navajo culture places strong emphasis on the importance of women to family, clan and community relationships. Typically, Navajo women own livestock, exert control over land use within their communities, participate in local politics as leaders and perform central roles in ceremonies and daily life (Denetdale 2007, 2009; Iverson 2002; McCloskey 1998). In contrast, public conceptions of Navajo women in Navajo historiography have been constructed through photographs, monographs and other historical documents created by non-Navajo people (Denetdale 2004; Faris 2003). As a result, such sources present Navajo women as subordinate objects and passive actors in their own histories, dislodging the leadership roles of Navajo women within Navajo culture (Denetdale 2004). Depiction of Navajo women, much like Indigenous women worldwide, has as Linda Tuhiwai Smith points out, been impacted by "the ways in which Indigenous women were described, objectified

and represented by Europeans in the nineteenth century" subsequently leaving "a legacy of marginalization within Indigenous societies as much as within the colonizing society." (Smith 2004:46). Unable to categorize Navajo women easily within preferred Nineteenth Century American ideas about women's gender roles, military, BIA and Anthropologist photographers depicted Navajo women as "other," nameless, exotic, and silent (Faris 2001). Photographic portraits of Navajo women taken during the Nineteenth Century by cavalry soldiers, anthropologists and Bureau of Indian Affairs agents successfully captured a large, non-Navajo audience; as Denetdale effectively argues, these photographs strategically separate the subjects from any historical or cultural context and "reflect the ways in which Navajo women have been stereotyped by mainstream American society" (Denetdale 2004: 321)**.**

Misconceptions of Navajo women have been cultivated by settler colonial policies that superimpose non-Navajo, hetero-dominant ideas about gender roles to substantiate constructions of Navajo women as subordinate, docile and domestic; ideas about Navajo women in the workforce have generally been guided by views of Navajo women as largely disengaged from the wage labor workforce, preferring to herd sheep, cook, and fulfill only domestic duties (Bailey and Bailey 1986).

The intention of settler colonial schemes, such as the Indian Service and BIA departments hiring Navajo women in wage labor positions in Fort Defiance, has been to disrupt and uproot traditional Navajo women's roles as leaders by emphasizing Navajo women as docile, domestic women in need of "civilization" and guiding Christian principles (Cahill 2011; Denetdale 2004; O'Neill 2004). However, Navajo women have frequently asserted in subtle and not so subtle ways, their commitments to family,

community and leadership. These assertions are part of Navajo oral traditions, and as such, have been disregarded by settler colonialism and non-Navajo histories (Denetdale 2007).

Amongst the hundreds and thousands of Navajo women excluded from historical records even as they fulfilled leadership roles in their communities, a very few receive recognition in non-Navajo archival records (Denetdale 2004; 2006). The diminutive and silent representation of Navajo women in non-Navajo historical narratives reflects colonial agendas of hetero-normativity that emphasize the subjugation of women and highlight notions of gender roles based on dominant, colonial society (Denetdale 2006, 2009; Rifkin 2010; Stoler 2009).

In addition to Juanita (leader, trusted confidante and beloved partner of Chief Manuelito), Fort Defiance resident and leader Annie Wauenka is one of the few women for whom historical recognition has been granted by non-Navajo based histories (Niethammer 2004). A member of the Navajo Nation Council, Wauneka is characterized as one of the few Navajo women capable of a leadership position and yet is rarely discussed in Navajo historiography beyond a passing mention as the daughter of the well-referenced Henry Chee Dodge[30].

The positions filled by Navajo women in twentieth century Fort Defiance were mostly blue-collar jobs based on non-Navajo gendered assumptions about women's work; thus Navajo women occupied positions such as dormitory matron, cook, maid, and secretary. I argue that in addition to performing many important tasks to support their families, Navajo women's roles within the workforce in BIA run towns such as Fort

[30] The exception to this is Carolyn Niethammer's biography "I'll go and do more: Annie Dodge Wauneka, Navajo Leader and Activist" (2004).

Defiance are noteworthy. Arguing against the portrayal of Third World Women or non-Western women as a "homogenous and powerless group often located as implicit victims of particular socioeconomic systems," Mohanty calls for "The distinction between Western feminist representation of women in the Third World and Western feminist self-presentation [as] a distinction of the same order as that made by some Marxists between the 'maintenance' function of the housewife and the real 'productive' role of wage labor, or the characterization of developments of the Third World as being engaged in the lesser production of 'raw materials' in contrast to the 'real' productive activity of the First World" (Mohanty 2003:23).

Mohanty's criticism is well met in this case as Navajo women's engagement in the workforce has typically been ignored and marginalized, as has the work of Navajo weavers (a topic more thoroughly explored by Kathy M'Closkey). For many Navajo women living in and around Fort Defiance, being productive meant participating in activities within the home, community and workplace. Although settler colonial economic policies certainly created a dependent relationship for Native and Navajo wage-workers in government jobs, many Native and Navajo employees used their positions and the increased financial stability to support family and community and assert traditional Native practices (Cahill 2011; Lamphere 1979).

Whether raising livestock, trading with other tribes, Hispanic and Anglo settlers or establishing entrepreneurial projects of their own, resourcefulness and persistence remain a tenant of Navajo efforts to assert sovereignty. Although this chapter privileges Navajo women's experiences, it should be noted that Indigenous feminism, as illustrated by Native scholars encompasses much more than actively resisting dominant gender

roles; rather, Indigenous feminism involves a conscious effort to retain, practice and assert Indigenous ways of life that support women, men, children and communal, Native environments (Cavender-Wilson 2004; Denetdale and Goeman 2009; Mihesuah 2003). Navajo women working in Fort Defiance in the twentieth century may not have defined themselves as feminists, but their work and efforts to support their families and communities against the dominant job market put in place by settler colonial policies is remarkable as an assertion of Navajo sovereignty and traditional Navajo women's roles within Navajo society.

Gertrude Golden, a teacher at the Fort Defiance boarding school in 1954, observed: "The social position of women is of wide independence. Most of the wealth of the tribe belongs to them and they are the managers of their own property and also the owners of the children" (Golden 1954: 146). Golden's comments about Navajo women's independence are followed by her critique of their dress, an odd but nevertheless revealing comment that in her opinion, Navajo men are "classy dressers," in comparison to Navajo women, who are "squatty, plain, businesslike and more soberly attired" (Golden 1954: 146). Golden's words sum up the perceived conflict for Non-Navajo society to recognize and validate independent women. Much like George Wharton James and Milton Snow, in order to reconcile the idea of a strong, independent woman as non-threatening Golden reverts to critique of dress and appearance. The effort is to assuage deep mistrust and discomfort with the idea of a matrilineal society in which women are encouraged to be leaders, and respected for those qualities in their communities.

Figure 34: old stone *hogans* used for teaching weaving, BIA and public school. 2007

Women at work: Navajo women's narratives about work and life in mid-twentieth century Fort Defiance

A survey of payrolls in Fort Defiance published in 1961 reveals the majority of the community was employed by the U.S. Public Health Service, Window Rock Public School and Bureau of Indian Affairs (Bosch 1961). A large percentage of Navajo women working in these government agencies, earned income and are listed as either heads of household or contributing to a family income during the late 1950s and early 1960s (Bosch 1961). A substantial percentage-16 percent- of families reporting in the survey are supported by single Navajo women, which is made note of in the survey as a "very high" number "inasmuch as it is considered aberrant in traditional Navajo culture to remain unmarried" (Bosch 1961: 25-26). Bosch also noted, "[t]here probably exists little, if any of the Anglo notion that the man is or should be the 'bread-winner,' and that, where

possible, wives should not work" (Bosch 1961:26). The jobs women filled primarily consisted of clerical work and nursing assistants, who were referred to a "blue girls" because of their pin striped blue uniforms. One such former nursing assistant in Fort Defiance is Rita Benally whose family settled in Fort Defiance after the Long Walk.

After the Long Walk and the Treaty of 1868, many families settled in and around the Fort Defiance area (Frink 1968; Iverson 2002). Impoverished, starving and traumatized from the brutality of being incarcerated at Fort Sumner, Navajo peoples returned to their lands with no crops, no livestock, and few supplies with which to sustain a living. In tune with its mission to supervise and control, the first agency was established in Fort Defiance by the U.S. Government and served as the center for dispersing basic commodities and rations, including sheep, after the Long Walk (Frink 1968; Iverson 2002). Reminiscing about what her family subsisted on upon returning from the Long Walk, Rita, now a retired community health nurse told me "they had prairie dog. You can't kill a sheep every other day. So, you eat prairie dogs." She continued to tell me that in her career as a community nurse, despite the family stories of eating prairie dogs, she educated people about the diseases (plague) carried by prairie dogs.

Rita's family settled in Fort Defiance herding sheep around the summit area or Fort Defiance Plateau. After attending school in Fort Defiance and nursing school in Oklahoma, Rita worked for 42 years as a community health nurse, combating cases of glaucoma, tuberculosis and diphtheria in Fort Defiance and surrounding communities. At that time, Rita explained, during the 1940s, there was general distrust of the hospital and the services provided. Rita claimed during her early years working as a nurse, the hospital was thought of as "just a place to die! Not a place to get well or get treated" (Rita

Benally, 2001). She spent many years working in the community, providing intravenous therapy to dehydrated patients, and educating Navajo peoples about the symptoms of glaucoma and tuberculosis.

In addition to the hospital, a boarding school, tuberculosis sanatorium, Catholic mission, Presbyterian Church, and more than one trading post operated in the Fort Defiance community by the mid-twentieth century. These establishments existed for several decades while the hospital, Presbyterian Church, and Catholic mission continue to operate today. Just as the hospital provided work for Navajo women, so did the boarding school and later, Window Rock public school system. Angie, the great-aunt of a Church leader in Fort Defiance, worked as matron of the Fort Defiance boarding school for almost 20 years. As related to me by her grandnephew, she was a "real character" who helped ease the transition to living at boarding school for many of the children (Davis Walters, 2002). As her grandnephew described it, "it was mandatory for all the young people to go to school. In fact, they were rounded up very similar to the Long Walk. They were rounded up and brought to school." Angie was instrumental in taking care of the children and making sure they had a place to stay over weekends when other students might be traveling back home to their families. Although she worked from many years as matron she eventually left the position and moved to another Navajo community where she became principal for another school.

In addition to the U.S. Government institutions housed in multi-storied buildings of wood and stone with glass windows, a number of wood framed houses and buildings designated as private residences for doctors and upper level non-Navajo employees existed in the early and mid-twentieth century. When some of these buildings became

too run down for their non-Navajo occupants, they were rented to Navajo families and individuals. After World War II, the Bureau of Indian Affairs made an effort to provide more sound structures to Navajo families; however, the need was met with Quonset huts, which proved to be uncomfortably hot in the summer and miserably cold in the winter.

Nellie, a lifetime resident of the Fort Defiance area who was born in Cross Canyon, described for me the room her parents rented in Fort Defiance when she was a young girl in the late 1930s (see Figure 7). “It was the old officer’s quarters building,” she told me. When they didn’t need it anymore, they just let it go. It was a real mess-but they rented it out to people cheap. My mother and father rented a room upstairs for all of us kids. Eventually we were forced to move out-it was too dangerous.” Nellie’s description of the apartment her family rented illustrates the disparity between many Navajo residents and Anglo or non-Navajo residents affiliated with the Bureau of Indian Affairs and other government institutions.

While non-Navajo personnel lived in wood and stone houses, many Navajo people and families were only able to afford shelter in semi-stable Quonset huts or decrepit buildings no longer in use. Navajo residents who lived on an alley way called “rat row” in the 1940s were forced to make due with small wooden sheds or shacks with no indoor plumbing or electricity. A mere few feet away were the non-Navajo, mostly Anglo doctor and upper administrative employee’s houses, complete with outhouses and in some cases indoor bathrooms.

Figure 10: "House 73 and all 'Rat Row' water supply. Hospital Blue Girl passing." Milton Snow. Photo courtesy of the Navajo Nation Museum, NE13-15

Anglo nurses training at the hospital frequently sunbathed on rocks in the canyon adjacent to the community while Navajo women performed important tasks such as tending to community gardens, commuting long distances to work by foot or wagon and filling positions in the hospital, school and Bureau of Indian Affairs. When asked why she chose nursing, Rita responded that when she was in school in Fort Defiance, "I thought, at that time it was just slavery. I don't think the teachers were qualified to be teachers. The principal was a homemaker and she came to teach us because during World War II, they couldn't hire anyone" (Rita Benally, 2001). Rita continued to talk about when she was in school she and other students were strongly encouraged to become nurses. "I enjoyed it," she said, "but sometimes our teachers just thought Navajos are only good for vocational school-they can't learn," she added, "but we were good students."

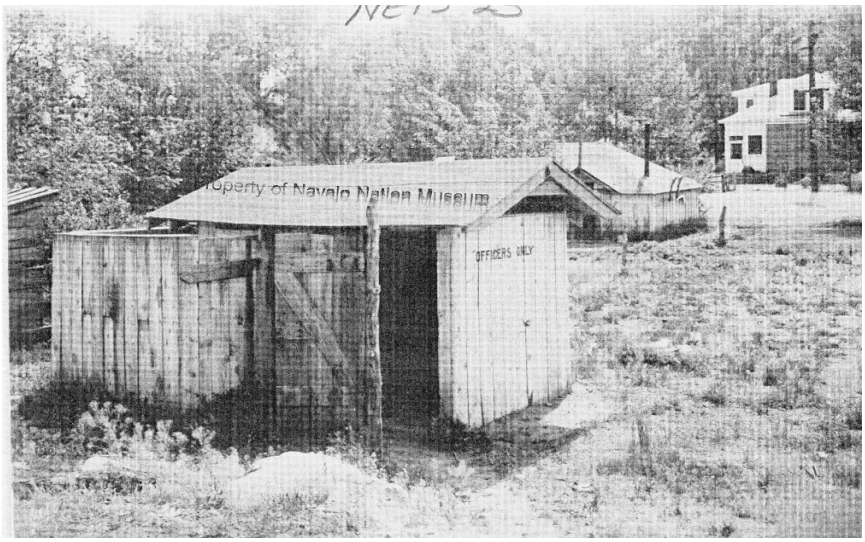

Figure 35: "Toilet for 'Rat Row' employee's quarters," Fort Defiance, 1945. Milton Snow
Photo courtesy of the Navajo Nation Museum, NE13-23

Figure 36: Old hospital, Fort Defiance. 2005

Figure 13: "Old Army Building, Front. Fort Defiance, formerly a school building. 1945" Milton Snow Photo courtesy of the Navajo Nation Museum, NE13-28

Figure 37: "Employee's club-Fort Defiance, AZ" 1945. Milton Snow collection, Photo courtesy of the Navajo Nation Museum, NE13-32

Mention of the employee's club building (see figure 8) surfaced frequently in my interviews with Navajo women who worked in Fort Defiance. One afternoon while visiting Nellie, I asked if she would show me the places in and around Fort Defiance that she mentioned in her narratives and stories about the community. Obliging my request, we spent the afternoon touring through Fort Defiance while Nellie pointed out the sites of former buildings such as the employee's club. We had paused in the shade along the street so I could take pictures, when Nellie spoke,

> "That clubhouse building, we were never allowed to go in there. No Navajos allowed! That's what they said. I used to watch people go in there-all Anglos. Fort Defiance was like that then [1946]. There were places you just didn't go. All the BIA people, the doctors, the nurses-they went in there. It was a real nice building then too" (Nellie Yellowhair, 2007).

Other residents who regularly stopped at the Senior Center for lunch shared similar remarks; Clara, a senior who lives in Sawmill (just over the hill, so to speak, from Fort Defiance) remarked, "That building was only for the white folks in town. Sometimes we played around it because they had the best yard-real green" (Fieldnotes 2007).

For the women I interviewed who worked in Fort Defiance, the decision to work in the hospital, boarding school, or for the BIA was often made out of necessity to earn a living. Laura, a resident I regularly visited over the years and continue to keep in touch with, began working as a laundress when her father passed away.

> "My father was real sick at the time-he had TB. Back then, we just, you just moved the sick person out of the house to die[31]. So my dad was lying out in a field and my cousin and I found him-he was real

[31] Historically, Navajo practices and beliefs about death and internment advise minimal contact with a deceased person; if death occurred in the home, it might be completely abandoned or a simple burial in the natural environment would be performed (Farella 1984: 18). Laura's family may have been attempting to prevent having the death occur at home so that they wouldn't have to move or abandon the home, in keeping with Navajo philosophy about death and internment.

sick, about to die. We took him to the hospital. That hospital now
is full of ghosts from all the people that died there"
(Laura Watchman 2006).

Laura began working for the boarding school as a laundress shortly after her father passed away in order to contribute to the family income. "It was tough after that [Laura's father passing]. My mom had a lot of children to take care of-my cousin and I went to work fast."

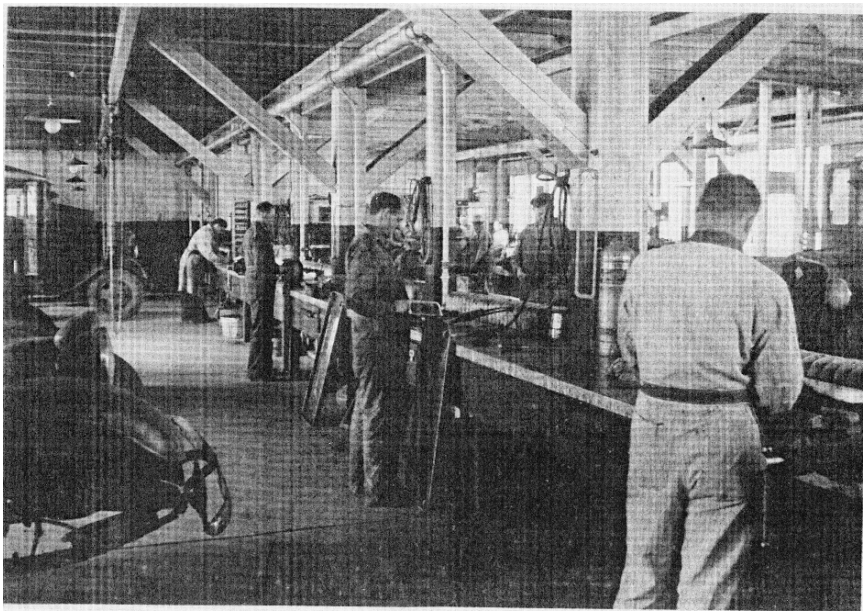

Figure 38: "Interior of Navajo service garage at Fort Defiance, AZ. Showing work benches in main part of shop" 1937, Charles Connour. Photo courtesy of the Navajo Nation Museum, NE13-254

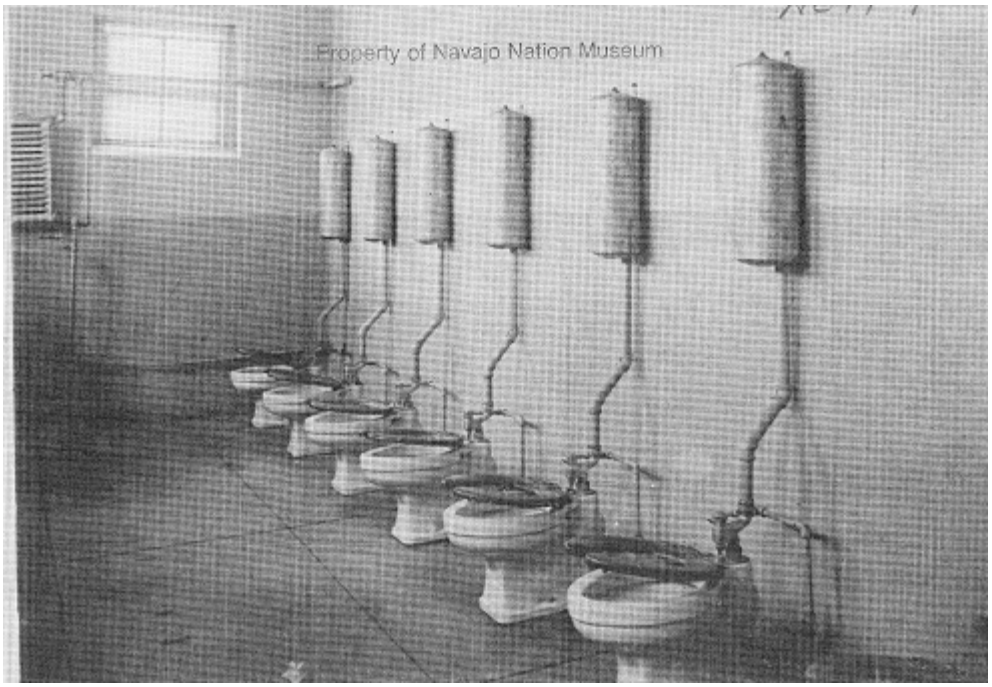

Figure 39: "Boy's toilet room in boy's building-Fort Defiance, AZ" 1945 Milton Snow
Photo courtesy of the Navajo Nation Museum, NE14-9

In Figure 11 flushing toilets lined up in the boy's building, part of the boarding school in Fort Defiance, are eerily photographed with the seats up as though they are talking or attempting to communicate. Snow left no message on the photograph as to why the picture was taken, but perhaps it was noteworthy at the time to chronicle the progress of installing flush toilets in the children's dormitories at the boarding school. Hygiene instruction was part of the regular curriculum at the Fort Defiance boarding school (and other boarding schools across the country). Nora, a grandmother who attended Fort Defiance boarding school from kindergarten through eighth grade and lives in an old stone house near Black Rock, recalled:

> "[You had to] make your bed, clean your bedroom, then …we had duties like clean the [main] bedroom [where everyone slept] or bathroom or go to the kitchen or do the work in the dining room. I learned more about cleaning everything. In those days, we had to clean, clean, clean and [listen to the matrons] telling us what to do. There used to be a big barn where the boys would take care of the cows and milk them for us. And there was a big field where they planted potatoes and corn and we had to help them with the corn and the potatoes-pull them up.

> Then when we got naughty we didn't get supper. Teach us to behave ourselves, I guess! Then today, [my son] says, "Oh mom when you get mad I know why," and [I tell him] 'When I was going to school it was worse! You had to stand in the corner, not moving.' When you got in trouble, you either had to stand up or scrub the floor" (Nora Watchman, 2007).

The tone of admonishment regarding hygiene practices in boarding school became part of BIA public health policy in the 1950s, packaged to the public Navajo audience as short, educational films on topics such as washing hands and using separate towels.

During the summer of 2001, I was introduced to Annie, whose family story about a soldier raping her great-grandmother I shared at the beginning of this dissertation. Annie's parents both worked in the Fort Defiance hospital and Annie trained as a nurse's aide and later helped pay off her college tuition bill by working at the Fort Defiance hospital for a year and a half. Annie's mother was a "Blue Girl" and performed a number of tasks such as nurse aid and seamstress; Annie's father worked as an orderly and ambulance driver. They became part of a public health initiative set up by the Navajo Nation and BIA and operated in conjunction with the hospital:

> "[In the] late fifties, my mother and dad were instrumental in helping the tribe in public health. They made movies on how to take care of, and keep your Hogan clean. They made these little short films for public health to educate [people]. I was in one of them called 'Traucoma.' [It was about] how, you should each have separate towels-not everybody using a community towel or washcloth. My parents acted as the family [and the film] showed them in a traditional Hogan and how each person should have one towel, and when you washed your hands in the basin you emptied the water-you didn't keep using the water. And I acted in that [film]. I was supposed to be the daughter that got trachoma… My parents also did [a film] on tuberculosis and how to prepare foods to be clean and how to set up a new water system"
> (Annie Mae Yazzie: 2004).

Figure 40: First birthday of triplets born at Fort Defiance Hospital, caption: "The Albert Hickson triplets, left to right: Lawrence, Lillian and Leonard. Milton Snow. Photo courtesy of the Navajo Nation Museum

Annie's parents are also known as being the parents of the first triplets to be born at the Fort Defiance hospital (see Figure 36). On the triplet's first birthday, the hospital hosted a birthday party (see Figure 42), featuring a small birthday cake for each child and numerous pictures of nurses holding the triplets and helping them to blow out candles.

> "They didn't do a lot of X-rays then and when they did, they said they had seen two babies… When we got all our corn down at the garden, all of our corn, it came out like three ears at once. And our little goats had triplets and And my dad said, 'There's something, something's telling us, something's gonna happen" And here when my mother had the triplets, boy, we were all over the place.…everybody was in a tizzy, because this was the first Navajo triplets [in Fort Defiance]..Because of that, all kinds of companies wanted to get in, you know, free this and free that. My mother said "no." The only company she took up on was a case of Carnation milk, evaporated milk…My mother being Christian and my dad being very traditional, they said this was a miracle, you know, having three children. We were told by nature and in different ways what was happening- our livestock had twins, our little goats had little triplets, and [laugh]…that's telling us" (Annie Mae Yazzie, 2004).

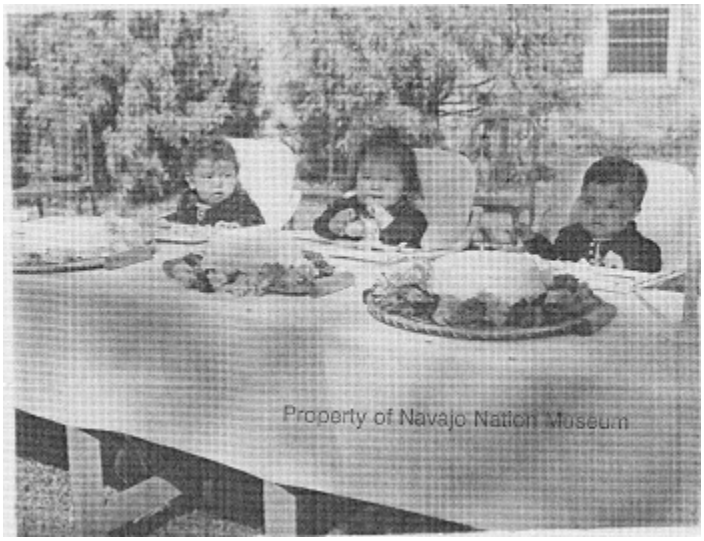

Figure 41: "The A. H. Family triplets" first birthday at Fort Defiance Hospital, left to right: Lawrence, Lillian and Leonard. Milton Snow. Photo courtesy of the Navajo Nation Museum, NK11-75

Annie's family, like the other families of women I interviewed, lived in a small, rental house in the neighborhood designated for Navajo people to live but with the luxury of indoor plumbing. Both of Annie's parents worked and supplemented the family income (they had eight children) by growing their own vegetables in a small garden near the house and taking care of livestock inherited by their families; "on the weekend, we used to high tail it to the mountain to haul hay and take care of the livestock."

Designated areas for Navajo people to live (usually in poorer kept areas) and the expectation that Navajo men and women accept lower wages than Anglo and non-Navajo workers is a prevailing motif throughout the narratives of Fort Defiance residents and Navajo women working in the community. While Navajo families often made do with sub-standard living conditions that may or may not have included indoor plumbing, well-maintained, stone buildings continued to be built in the 1950s to house "Cadet Nurses," a special cadre of Anglo nursing staff specifically for the hospital (Elvira 2001; Annie 2003; Verna 2003; Rita 2004).

Figure 42: “Cadet Nurses-November 10, 1947” Milton Snow. Photo courtesy of the Navajo Nation Museum, NK-11-94

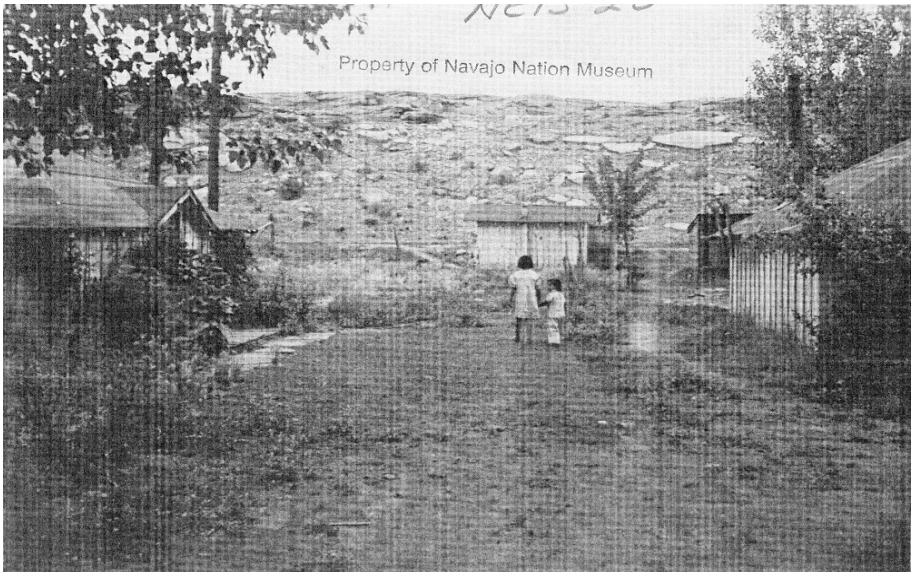

Figure 43: “Toilet facilities for ‘Rat Row’ residences Fort Defiance, AZ 1945” Milton Snow. Photo courtesy of the Navajo Nation Museum, NE13-20

Figure 44: "Fort Defiance Trading Post Nov. 1948" Milton Snow.
Photo courtesy of the Navajo Nation Museum, NE18-112

Wages, "modernity" and development 1940-1960

The development of Fort Defiance as a community during the twentieth century hinges on the colonial-minded oversight and control exercised by the federal government on the Navajo Nation and its residents (Bailey and Bailey 1986; Frink 1968; Iverson 2002). A great deal of the development projects slated to aid the Navajo economy in the twentieth century instead bolstered the earnings of private, non-Navajo corporations, the federal government or entrepreneurial non-Navajo individuals (traders). The legal rights to oil, uranium, coal and ultimately water as well were all claimed by non-Navajo authorities beginning in the early part of the twentieth century (Chamberlain 2008). Fort Defiance, originally a military intrusion on sovereign Navajo land in an attempt to protect settlers' claims for land, became headquarters for federal policies and initiatives on the

Navajo Nation (Bailey and Bailey 1986; Frink 1968; Iverson 2002). These poorly designed, inherently racist and often unethical policies and plans included leaving uranium tailings exposed and near water supplies, offering uranium miners no protection or information about exposure to toxicity, coercing the cheap purchase of rights to oil on Navajo land, and forcing Navajo children to attend boarding schools removed from their families, culture and communities (Bailey and Bailey 1976; Brugge 2007; Chamberlain 2002). In Fort Defiance, these policies also became a means of distinguishing Navajo people as vocational, seasonal, and cheap employees.

The prevailing racist attitude in twentieth century Fort Defiance towards Navajo people, underscores the contributions of Navajo women in the workforce in Fort Defiance. Yet the narratives of Rita Benally, Nellie, Angie, and other Navajo women who lived and worked in Fort Defiance during the 1940s, 50s and 60s illustrates a complex settler-colonial landscape. These women became leaders in their own right, in their families and in the community. Working as nursing assistants, secretaries, teacher aides and community outreach workers, they provided for families, and raised children. In defiance of a colonial system that didn't expect much from Navajo women, instead they became adept at negotiating the paid labor scene in Fort Defiance. Despite racism, and disparity in income, they contributed in significant and meaningful ways to the Fort Defiance economy.

TABLE 9
INDIVIDUAL WAGE INCOME FROM PUBLIC SOURCES
(BIA, PHS, TRIBE, SCHOOL)[32]

	Navajo		Anglo & Other		Total	
Income	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
$2,000-3,499	25	28.1	0	0	25	20.3
$3,500-4,999	57	64	10	22.7	57	46.4
$5,000 + over	7	7.9	34	77.3	41	33.3
Total	89	100	44	100	123	100

The table above, from the published results of a survey conducted by The Public Services Division of the Navajo Tribe in 1961, reveals the sharp disparity in income for Navajo and non-Navajo employees. Only seven Navajo employees reportedly earn $5,000 or more in income, while over 75% of non-Navajo (primarily Anglo) employees earn this level of income (see above, Table 9). Similarly, the majority of Navajo employees reported in the table above earn the lowest amount of income, between $2,000-3,499 while no non-Navajo employees fall into this level of income (see above, Table 9). The income levels reported in table 9 augment Milton Snow's pictures, the disparity between Navajo employees renting space along 'rat row' and white employees enjoying the clubhouse and the finer, sturdier stone houses in the community.

The Bosch survey captures another interesting facet of Navajo livelihood in the mid-twentieth century: the ways in which Navajo residents augmented wage labor income with other activities including raising livestock, farming, weaving,

[32] Bosch 1961:22

unemployment compensation and artisan work. The railroad, tourism and traders helped create a market for Native craftwork and weaving, albeit not a very well paying one (Bailey and Bailey 1986:151). By the 1950 and 60s the prices established by traders for weavings was so low, many Navajo weavers turned to more profitable sources of income (Bailey and Bailey 1986). In Fort Defiance, the average family would only earn an extra $281 per year from weaving rugs (Bosch 1961:27). The creative ways in which Navajo women supplemented their income, either through crafts or weaving, demonstrates as well the resourcefulness and leadership of Navajo women. “When we couldn’t make it, [on our income]” Verna explained to me, “my mother would weave a rug or we would pawn some jewelry to put food on the table” (Verna Tsosie, 2007).

According to the Bosch survey, there was also a lack of dependence on sheep and livestock and more reliance on cash based income (Bosch 1961). With wage labor jobs, fewer people had time to take care of livestock; in addition, available grazing land around Fort Defiance was restrictive, making it difficult to keep animals in the area (Bailey and Bailey 1986; Bosch 1961).

For Navajo families in Fort Defiance who qualified for welfare and government relief assistance, the average income was still roughly $1,562-well below the lowest wage level of income for employment with the BIA or the tribe (Bosch 1961).

TABLE 13 NAVAJO INCOME OTHER THAN WAGES[33]

	No. of Families	Income
Stock and Farm	22	$3, 188
Weaving	7	$2,244
Welfare	8	$12,512
Unemployment compensation, pension, retirement	7	$13,504
Other (doll-making Leather-craft, peddling, rental)	5	$1,776
Total	49	$33,164

Tables 9 and 13 from Bosch's survey reveal the necessity of Navajo men and women contributing to family income: "It is the earning power of women whose wages, though also low, when added to those of the husband, or other head of the household, might make possible the success of a modest private housing construction program in Fort Defiance" (Bosch 1961:26). Women were major participants in Fort Defiance wage economy as well as finding supplemental income activities.

[33] Bosch 1961:27

TABLE 14
WHERE FORT DEFIANCE RESIDENTS
DO MOST OF THEIR SHOPPING[34]

	Navajo	Anglo & Other	Total
Fort Defiance	63	6	69
Gallup	51	29	80
About half and half	2	3	5
Total	116	38	154

Of the income earned by Navajo and Anglo employees, recorded in the Bosch survey, most of it was spent outside of Fort Defiance, in Gallup, New Mexico approximately 30 miles away. Expenditures by Navajo are almost equally split between Fort Defiance and Gallup while Anglo expenditures are primarily made in Gallup. At the time, there were four trading posts in Fort Defiance including the trader Mr. Rudeau's "supermarket" (Bosch 1961:22). Navajo clientele were often reliant on the trading post system for selling and pawning goods for cash (at the benefit of the trader); local traders purchased "lambs, wool, blankets and piñon nuts from Navajos, and allow[ed] credit on future deliveries of the first three of these items. They also [made] cash loans on jewelry and other types of pawn," (Bosch 1961: 28).

The reliance for Navajo residents of Fort Defiance (and in other areas of the Navajo Nation) on the trading post system and pawn ultimately assists the trader, who in turn charges large amounts of interest for pawned items (Iverson 2002; M'Closkey 2002). The median income of an Anglo-American female in 1950 in the United States was $1,060; in contrast, a position with the Indian Service in 1950 for a Native woman earned $500 in annual income (U.S. Census Bureau; Cahill 2011). For Navajo women and men

in Fort Defiance, there were few opportunities to supplement income without utilizing pawn services and trading posts. In Table 14, the reliance on business and shopping in Fort Defiance reflects this dependence on local, non-Navajo owned business.

Trading posts increased in the 1950s on the Navajo Nation by 34% as a result of seasonal, off-reservation income (Bailey and Bailey 1986: 268). For many Navajo, the trading post provided income in between times of debt, or as Pastor Davis of Fort Defiance explains it, "[b]ecause, how they[Navajo people] paid their debts and redeemed their pawn was in the springtime they sold the wool off the sheep and in the fall they sold their lambs and if they had cattle they sold it too. If they had hay, they sold their hay to the trading posts. And that's how they got rid of their debts" (Davis 2005). As more permanent work became available, trading posts declined (Bailey and Bailey 1986). Davis attributes the decline of trading posts in Fort Defiance to *Diné Bee'iináa' Náhiilnah Bee Agha'diit'aahii* (DNA) or Diné Legal Services, which successfully challenged the high interest rates being charged by trading posts to Navajo people:

> "They [DNA] "got the state of New Mexico and Arizona and The Navajo Tribe to agree on stringent rules to follow regarding the pawning of articles and how long they could keep artifacts and things like that. So, since the trading posts took in a lot of pawn so that people could use that to keep themselves through the winter, the DNA thought that they were charging excessive interest on the pawn so they made it so hard to lend that the trading posts said, 'it isn't feasible for us to take on pawn and it's not feasible for us to buy in quantities and carry on the credit program with the Navajo'. It just wasn't feasible for the old trading posts to stay in business so gradually they closed up" (Davis, 2005).

Today, there are no grocery stores in Fort Defiance, with the exception of the gas station convenience store. There are also no trading posts, though the remnants of Anson Damon's trading post can be seen from the road and Griswold's operates a few miles southeast of Fort Defiance in Tsé Bonito.

[34] Bosch 1961: 28

What are the implications of development policies on the Navajo Nation and in the Fort Defiance community for Navajo women in the mid-twentieth century? Histories and representations of development initiatives imposed by the federal government on the Navajo Nation (often with the intention of assimilating Navajo people into dominant society), too frequently ignore Navajo women. Their agency, participation and contributions to reservation wage labor economy and the creative ways in which they provided for family and community, have been "silenced" in dominant historical narratives, as opposed to Navajo oral histories (Denetdale 2004, 2007; Trouillot 1995).

Conclusion

The inclusion of Navajo women's contributions in the workforce in Fort Defiance makes up a significant part of my research in the community; more importantly, this chapter and the narratives of Navajo women working in Fort Defiance during the twentieth century forms part of a conscious, on-going effort to decolonize Navajo history and assert Navajo sovereignty at a local, community-based level. Navajo culture has always traditionally valued and recognized the work and leadership of Navajo women (Denetdale 2004; 2009). Employed in government and tribal enterprises, narratives from Navajo women presented in this chapter provide insight about the work experience in Fort Defiance during a time period of characterized by class and ethnic disparities and marked by the U.S. Government's attempt to "modernize" reservation life (Bailey and Bailey 1986; Deloria Jr. 2006; Denetdale 2004; Dilworth 1997; Peterson 2006).

Reaffirming the roles of Navajo women and Navajo gender roles as well as the ways in which Navajo women and men have worked around the obstacles and impositions of settler colonialism is crucial for establishing new parameters for the

representation of Navajo culture and history. Scholarly contributions that recognize Navajo women, such as the weaver Elle who presented her work to President Taft in 1901 at the Alvarado Hotel in downtown Albuquerque or Juanita, the favored wife and advisor of Chief Manuelito, a leader in her own right, are significant additions to the historical representation of Navajo women (Denetdale 2009; Moore 2003). As research continues to consider the positions Navajo women have historically fulfilled, a more complex and engaged portrait emerges; as Jennifer Denetdale asserts, "the project to understand [Navajo women's] historical realities better is ongoing" (Denetdale 2007:107).

Chapter 6: Some concluding thoughts

Figure 45: Road from Sawmill to Fort Defiance, June 2012

One more story

It is a brisk, overcast morning and the smell of smoke from wood-burning stoves scents the air. The leaves on the Cottonwood trees (a few of which grow along the creek bed) have turned into crispy, brown, piles on the ground, littering the street curbs and doorways of buildings. It is late fall and I have come to meet with Laura and her sister Mary for a walk around the older buildings still standing in Fort Defiance. We walk around the log cabin-like building where the ladies went to Kindergarten and circle the stone *hogans* where arts and crafts were taught in the afternoons. At Mary's suggestion, we walk over the bridge that connects Fort Defiance with a rocky embankment overlooking the creek. We pause on the embankment and Mary takes out a pocket-knife and slices through a ripe cactus fruit. "Remember, we used to make jam out of these? You have to be real careful though with the thorns," she rubs the spiny fruit on the craggy rock surface and asks her sister if she has a bag. She doesn't but I happen to have

a napkin in my pocket, leftover protection for my hands from a breakfast burrito. Laura is looking back across to Fort Defiance and begins describing places she remembers in Fort Defiance. “Over there, was where they taught the nurses for the hospital,” she motions with her head. “They were always wearing these striped, like candy striper-outfits. ‘Blue Girls’ we called them.” Mary chimes in, “We used to come over here, cross the bridge and play around.” Our conversation continues until we decide to walk back to Laura’s car because the wind is picking up and Mary needs to go to Gallup. As we buckle into our seats, I ask what they think about all the changes that have occurred in the community over the years. “It’s a shame these school buildings, like the hogans aren’t being used anymore. How can the tribe just let them fall apart you know? It’s good for our kids to know about this place too-it’s just sad seeing these buildings empty” (Fieldnotes 2004).

For the Fort Defiance residents I interviewed and talked with during my fieldwork research, the building sites within the community elicit memories that engage Navajo people in a dialogue with the past that continues to grow, helping to re-frame Navajo history as a collection of multi-voiced, nuanced and emergent narratives. Despite the efforts to erase or demolish these building sites many residents hope the tribe will negotiate the continued existence of these buildings, specifically the school and stone Hogan structures, and possibly utilize them again for official or communal purposes. The hospital, due to its purpose as a place where people were sick and passed away, held less attachment to community residents. In 2011 the U.S. government began tearing down some of the outlying structures connected with the old hospital and negotiating return of ownership over the property to the tribe; however, any transfer of the building

for future use will involve more discussion and bureaucratic effort between the two entities (Navajo Times Feb. 5, 2011). As the oral histories I present in chapter five illustrate, though, regardless of whether building structures are still in existence in the community, oral histories about specific buildings or areas of the community continue to be shared. Another reason many residents wanted to preserve or make use again of the stone Hogan and log cabin school building structures was to engage young people in the history of the community and the stories of older residents. People with whom I talked felt it was very important to share and make known stories about Fort Defiance. Sharing knowledge and stories about the community, the buildings left standing, the natural features of the landscape unique to the area and the places where "things used to be" is the foundation of this dissertation and community oral history project.

Laura was one of the first people I talked with about an oral history project of Fort Defiance. From our initial conversations and the comments of the local chapter house meeting participants, this project grew into a unique opportunity for me to learn about Navajo history and to participate in a project initiated by the Fort Defiance community. When I began this project it did not become apparent to me until after a few interviews, that the stories layered upon the local landscape did not need monuments and signs to be recognized; nor did it matter if many of the buildings once standing had been demolished. The memories of those places linger for residents and are part of the collective history of the community.

Of course, to suggest that all Navajo people and all residents of Fort Defiance are eager to engage in an oral history project or emphasize the importance of the history of Fort Defiance is simplistic and erroneous. Some residents felt that there were no oral

histories worth sharing about the community, and that oral histories would contribute little if any, further understanding about Navajo history or the history of the community. Perhaps, this in part due to the fact that residents must travel to Window Rock, Tsé Bonito or Gallup to visit establishments or places known for providing a sense of community (i.e., the mutton stands in Window Rock, the flea markets in Window Rock, Yah-ta-hey and Gallup, etc.).

Salient themes of my research

Throughout the twentieth century, the Fort Defiance community underwent significant changes, shifting from a site of violent intrusion, to a locus of colonial activity and currently, a spread-out but connected Navajo community where families walk around the middle school track in the evenings, stop for a meal on their way home from work or finish laundry on a Sunday afternoon. The sites and historical places associated with settler colonial authority, such as the boarding school, hospital, school buildings and trading posts, were mostly demolished and abandoned in the 1960s and 1970s. And yet, even though so many of the physical markers and buildings associated with settler colonialism have been removed, the memories and stories associated with these places, continue to be part of everyday life for local residents and Navajos living in nearby communities. Fort Defiance remains an active community, supporting a senior center, chapter house, fast food restaurants, a laundry, gas station, numerous churches, tribal and BIA buildings.

This dissertation refutes notions and expectations of twentieth century Navajo history, namely non-Navajo histories that legitimize the inflicted violence and surveillance of settler colonialism, focus only on fractious relations between Navajo and

Euro-American people, or encourage essentialist, historical perspectives of Navajo people herding sheep, weaving rugs and living exactly as their ancestors (Denetdale 2007; Deloria 2004). I have attempted throughout these pages, to present local histories of the Fort Defiance community that capture the viewpoints and lived experiences of residents who choose to tell their own stories about the community where they live. The oral histories about Fort Defiance that are the subject of this dissertation illustrate contemporary, emergent histories that assert sovereignty over interpretations of the past and locate knowledge, culture and representation within the context of oral history.

The effort to assemble oral histories from and about the Fort Defiance community is part of a larger narrative that speaks to Navajo concepts of knowledge, locality, community and sovereignty, elements that make up part of Navajo philosophy. The foundation of Navajo philosophy or *Sa'a Naghai bik'e hozho* includes knowledge and history and encompasses the complete relationship between an individual, and the universe, past, present and future, or, "continuous, generational, animation" (Farella 1996:181). Navajo residents of Fort Defiance draw upon this key element in their storytelling, emphasizing the connections between past and present and their desire to share this knowledge with younger generations. Repeating, telling and sharing oral histories is a way of animating the past and making it relevant. It is also crucial that the local knowledge embedded within oral histories about the community be understood as an assertion of Navajo culture that sustains residents and communities, even when faced with the on-going struggles against settler colonialism (Cruikshank 1998). Bettina's story of traveling to Bosque Redondo to see where her ancestors lived and died, the story of Annie Yazzie's great grandmother giving birth to a baby conceived by rape in an

arroyo in Fort Defiance, the stories from Ruth, Rita, Davis, Laura, and the other residents I interviewed, establish a relationship between land, individual, community and people that is on-going, reinforced by clan and family relationships and by the tradition of telling stories.

Oral histories that create connection to place, history and landscape are deeply rooted in Navajo epistemologies of knowledge, *k'e*, and sovereignty. I argue that the oral histories of Fort Defiance residents are emergent, contemporary forms of storytelling rooted within traditional epistemologies of knowledge, story-telling and cultural sovereignty (Cruikshank 1998; Farella 1996). As such, the collective oral narratives about Fort Defiance from local residents assert Navajo conceptions of history and place within a community that has historically been defined and characterized by settler colonial histories and narratives.

The history of Fort Defiance, as I explain in my first chapter, is best known as one of the departure points for Navajo people forced to walk to incarceration at Fort Sumner and as a locus of government and religious institutions and activities of settler colonialism. Local oral histories challenge notions that this community is significant only as a site of Navajo and non-Navajo activity; rather, the stories from residents involving these institutions speak to nuanced cultural conceptions of place and memory and most importantly, contest non-Navajo, settler colonial representations of the past. My third chapter includes narratives that highlight the themes of local oral histories, including representations of *Hweéldi*, or the Long Walk, historic buildings and sites that once operated in Fort Defiance and local connections to landscape and memory. The salient themes from Fort Defiance residents' oral histories I examine in chapter three

include referencing the Long Walk as a metaphor for Navajo experiences with twentieth century settler colonial institutions, such as the boarding school; connection to land, family and specific sites within Fort Defiance were also highlighted in the narratives of Fort Defiance residents.

The narratives of Navajo women who worked and lived in Fort Defiance during the mid-twentieth century emerged during my research as I continued to talk with and work with many Navajo women, including those I met at the Fort Defiance senior center. Despite a hegemonic focus on Navajo history as a compilation of events, military intrusions and politics, mostly oriented towards the accomplishments and actions of men, my research supports examinations of Navajo history that incorporate the significant roles Navajo women fulfill within their communities, clans and families (Crehan 2002).

As a matrilineal society, Navajo culture values and recognizes the distinctly important roles of women and men through traditional oral histories (Denetdale 2007). The mechanisms of settler colonialism have intruded upon traditional recognition of women as leaders, cultural experts, community advocates, clan and family organizers. It is crucial to a more thorough understanding of Navajo history that women's roles and narratives be included.

One of the biggest challenges of writing a dissertation about oral histories is figuring out how best to contextualize them. Many summers ago, this quandary was partially answered for me, when on a very hot summer afternoon, Ruth suggested that we go for a drive in my air conditioned car and she would *show me* Fort Defiance. It began what I call car tours, trips in which I drive and the narrator directs. These fruitful

and engaging trips became a lively and intriguing part of my dissertation research. Klara Kelley and Harris Francis write about correspondence between archaeological sites, travel routes and the utilization of Navajo oral histories and songs as a kind of road map of landscape and terrain for travelers; similarly Keith Basso writes of stories embedded in Western Apache memory and landscape; during my fieldwork, I discovered that whether covering long or short distances by car, traveling became a means of discussion about landscape, memories and oral narratives (Basso 1996; Kelley and Harris 2003).

In chapter five, I have attempted to illustrate the layers of narratives with sites and places that make up the landscape of Fort Defiance. I have chosen to write about the sites and places most frequently mentioned by residents in regards to Fort Defiance and I have left out places that hold particular personal memories and stories for people. It should be noted that although the old hospital is memorable for many older Navajo residents who remember when it was a fully functioning facility, newer sites such as the Conoco gas station (a popular hangout for local youth), the annual summer snow cone stand in front of the local parish, or the local school track are possibly equally important for a younger generation. Navajo culture continues to embrace change and technologies precisely to hold onto and ensure the maintenance of tradition, identity and culture (Farella 1996; Peterson 2006).

Contributions of research and future endeavors

My research contributes to anthropological work on oral histories, critical analyses of power and history and suggests that there is much to learn regarding the representation and histories of Native American communities, especially during the twentieth century. Non-Navajo historiography and frameworks that undermine and

silence Navajo experiences, narratives and conceptions of history have actively sought to define Navajo history. Native American communities, as it turns out, have quite a bit to say about settler colonialism, government initiatives on education and health, economic development and private business. Local knowledge cannot be dismissed as unimportant, folklore; it is an instructive and culturally significant means of embedding history, culture and knowledge with memory and landscape (Basso 1997; Cruikshank 1998).

When this project first began, the most important goal was to contribute a collection of oral histories that could be included in the local Window Rock school district curriculum with the purpose of engaging young people in local history. As part of my ethical responsibilities to the people with whom I have worked on this project and in light of a history of anthropological research focused on taking and collecting material culture and knowledge from Native communities with impunity, it is important to acknowledge that the ownership of this oral history project belongs to the Fort Defiance community. It is my hope that this research might offer support to younger generations of Navajo people who may be interested in utilizing oral histories to work within their communities.

In addition, this research might be useful to future exhibitions at the Navajo Nation Museum, or other museums in the southwest, that bring focus to Navajo and Native American histories. Oral histories have great potential to enrich museum collections and provide historical perspectives that may otherwise be obscured. Oral history collections are also invaluable to scholarly research within museum collections.

Change is part of all landscapes and Fort Defiance is no exception; communities develop, shift focus and reconvene in myriad ways. Newer housing developments connected to the new Fort Defiance hospital and school have created new neighborhoods and plans remain uncertain as to the fate of the remaining historic buildings in Fort Defiance. I plan to continue to remain in contact with the Fort Defiance community and the many people I have met through my research and work with oral histories; it will be interesting to see in what ways the Fort Defiance community continues to grow and the ways in which residents choose to discuss the history of their community.

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