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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

Ancestor's Rez Metal

(Re)Mapping an Indigenous Sonic Resistance

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in Anthropology

by

Viki Rey Eagle

2025

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2025

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Ancestor's Rez Metal
(Re)Mapping an Indigenous Sonic Resistance
by

Viki Rey Eagle

Doctor of Philosophy in Anthropology

University of California, Los Angeles, 2025

Professor Shannon E. Speed, Co-Chair

Professor Jason Patrick De Leon, Co-Chair

This doctoral dissertation investigates how Rez Metal artists have challenged and reclaimed dominant historical narratives that promote the erasure of Indigenous Peoples and reinscribe stereotypes of poverty, isolation, desolation, and colonial drawn boundaries of the reservation. This research aims to show how Rez Metal resists settler colonial boundaries of map making through the production of distinctive and visual images that help to (re)map longstanding settler colonial understandings of the Indian reservations and Native people's connection to land. Visual images are a part of how we experience, imagine, learn, and produce knowledge. (Pink, 2021: 2.). Sound too plays a distinctive role shaping our experience of the world through its various manifestations in language, music, land, and sensory experiences. Native Americans uniquely experience absolute invisibility in many domains of American life. Their voices are also often silenced or ignored. When Native Americans are seen and heard, however, it is often

through an imaginary rendering of "Indians" as relics of some unfortunate past and disappeared is intrinsic to American settler colonialism. (Leavitt, P.A., Covarrubias, R., Perez, Y.A. and Fryberg, S.A. (2015).

By tracing the origins of stereotypes about Indian people and by producing new photographic images and sonic representations of contemporary Rez Metal artists, fans, and promoters, this research utilizes digital photography and the analysis of musical performance/appreciation as critical (re)mapping practices (Goeman 2008 & Iralu 2021) to "unsettle" and push against settler created borders and "expectations" (Deloria, 2004) of how Native people should be. This dissertation project will thus explore how the sights, images, and sounds of Rez Metal reconfigure place-making and (re)map Indigenous experiences. Drawing from theories and methods that are rooted in Indigenous forms of knowledge and Native feminist spatial practices (Goeman, 2008), the project seeks paths to address the colonial boundaries of such ridged borders such as urban and Rez, which often also are configured according to unexamined gendered assumptions. This dissertation research is based off 18 months of ethnographic fieldwork within New Mexico, Arizona and included a Native American Artist in Residency at the Denver Art Museum curated exhibit show titled (Re)Mapping a Rez Metal rezistance.

The dissertation of Viki Rey Eagle is approved.

Erin Katherine Debenport

Mishuana R. Goeman

Christopher J. Throop

Shannon E. Speed, Committee, Co-Chair

Jason Patrick De Leon, Committee, Co-Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2025

DEDICATION PAGE

I dedication this dissertation to the Rez Metal Community for their creativity and
creating a space for youth and families to come together.

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PREFACE: REZ METAL DISSERTATION ORIGIN

Amanda Williams sits on a stool with her left leg crossed over her right knee, wearing her Diné moccasins made of leather hide which wraps her legs like a cast. She has long, rich black hair, dark tan skin, and a slim figure. Both sleeves are ripped from the shoulder seams of her black t-shirt, which shows the Iron Maiden logo, as she stares into my camera lens. Her mother's t-shirt, which she originally bought at a show in the 1980's, is now labeled as a vintage.



Figure P.1. Real Life Indian Series Amanda Williams, Denver, CO. *Photo by author.*

Before I photographed Amanda in my studio, I told her to wear clothing that expressed how she wanted to be represented as a modern Native woman. I looked at her t-shirt, and she looked back at me and said, "I am wearing my Diné moccasins and this Iron Maiden shirt." Then she paused and looked at me while shrugging her shoulders slightly and said, "You know, cause we're Metal, too." We both laugh, sharing that moment together.

When looking at this photograph, it made me question why Navajos seem to connect with Metal more than other tribal communities I have seen. For context, Navajo Nation is the largest reservation in what is now called the United States and is roughly the size of West Virginia. I have never seen a community music scene that expanded across such a large space within the reservation. On the Navajo Nation, I documented hundreds of bands suggesting that this music culture seemingly ran deep with the youth in the Southwest. Aesthetically it is very common to see young people dressed in all-black t-shirts, band shirts, hoodies, and skinny jeans—a clear aesthetic tied to the genre. Rez Metal as a genre reflects all styles of metal but also embraces extreme forms of Metal genre like Black, Death and Thrash.

Amanda told me there are local shows on the Rez where Native youth and families would gather. I wondered how many non-Native people knew that Native people absolutely love metal. Through Amanda's paired clothing of culture and metal together, I found that the Rez Metal aesthetics became the inspiration to disrupt the common tropes of photographed Native people. I sat on this project with my ideas about Native Metal heads for years but did nothing after this photograph.

The idea to conduct research on Rez Metal was not merely a thought or an idea that happened overnight. Rather it emerged through a series of conversations, events, and collective efforts from both the urban Denver Native American community and allies who wanted to uplift

the voices and music from the Rez Metal scene. Collective community collaboration is central to this work and in uplifting this scene.

Perceptions vs Reality: Unpacking the Rise of Native American Media Representation

From the early stages of envisioning this dissertation project in 2018, to starting the PhD program at UCLA in 2019, to my filing of this dissertation in 2025, Native American Media has witnessed number of milestones. I write in a time when the representation of Native films is rising. Native actors, directors, producers, and writers are producing a body of work that pushes the boundaries of newly imagined cinematic spaces and places. When I first started this dissertation, representation was my core focus, as imagery of "the rez" experience was becoming more prominent in mainstream media. Initially, I wanted to center discussions of how Native people were portrayed in films and photography. I drew inspiration from the famous Native American movie, *Smoke Signals* where Thomas Builds the Fire ironically states: "What is more pathetic than watching Indians on TV is Indians watching Indians on TV." Joanna Hearne in reference to this quote (2012) asks us to reflect upon the issues of how Native Americans are portrayed in media, audiences, exhibitions, and receptions.¹

Nearing the middle of my dissertation journey, the term Reservation had been familiarized compared to when I first started writing this dissertation. The production of "Reservations Dogs" and "Rutherford Falls" showcased contemporary Indigenous culture, struggles, history, and the humor written and produced by Native American creatives. Streaming television opened a window to contemporary United States reservation life to a national audience. I would have never imagined seeing a TV show that brought *Deer Woman* onto the

¹ Hearne, Joanna. 2012. *Smoke Signals : Native Cinema Rising* / Joanna Hearne. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

screen, nor the exposure of Indian boarding school atrocities. These shows increased public awareness and consciousness towards the existence of tribal communities and their histories.

What felt like a mass movement in media and progress while writing this dissertation in Los Angeles, it was not until I moved to San Diego during my final dissertation year, I realized that the term “the reservations” held a very different meaning and association in this area. Instead of the usual poverty stricken and desolate narrative that typically described reservation life, reservations here are seen as a location for wealthy casinos, where tribal members receive endless monthly per cap checks. It was not uncommon for people to ask me if I received “Native benefits” and inquired if the “monthly check was good for me.” These questions occurred multiple times in my work at Miramar College by students, staff and faculty, where I held the position as the Director of the Native American Student Success Program. My students were also subject to this misconception and peers assumed they received tribal money benefits, and free college wherever they went. This false assumption affects our line of work, as we find ourselves needing to justify the importance of advocating the grant funds for the Native American students and community.

However, the complete disconnect and erasure of Native people in San Diego does not surprise me. Unshockingly, the realities of wealthy Native communities and their public perceptions to the city is not met without racism, hostilities or full erasure. In my time writing in San Diego, I realized there are many factors that lead to both the perceptions of the reservation are held as an oppressive narrative that continues to delegitimize and disparage Native peoples’ culture and land.

As I reflected on my time living and writing in San Diego, I felt that even if tribes were financially successful and chose to continue using their revenue towards tribal nation building

and for sustaining their people, culture, sovereignty and futures. These actions from the tribes would only make government officials like former governor Arnold Schwarzenegger who grew more suspicious and further accused these tribal nations of “not paying their fair share” or “ripping us off”.² When widespread media of false accusations of tribal nations receiving benefits and biased narratives of tribal communities coming from higher politicians continued to create more misunderstanding of tribal communities.

These realities are not new to Native American communities in fact, according to the Nation Congress of American Indians reported that education is one of the most powerful tools in shaping opinion systems in America. The 2016-2018 *Reclaiming Native Truth* (RNT) project research correlates that K-12 education is responsible for the invisibility and false narratives about Native peoples. “The RNT research found that eighty seven percent of state history standards do not mention Native American history after the 1900s; and twenty-seven states make no mention of a single Native American in their K-12 curriculum.”³ The value of writing *Rez Metal* as an introduction to contemporary Native Americans is important to public perception and representation of Native American peoples.

These experiences highlighted to me that while Native producers’ working amidst Hollywood film culture have achieved monumental milestones on TV, with rising youth actors, creatives and writers bringing Native peoples to the forefront of media. However, through my lived experience as a Native American woman there is still so much more work to be done

² Shasta Gaughen, *Against the Odds: Indian Gaming, Political Economy, and Identity on the Pala Indian Reservation* (PhD diss., University of New Mexico, 2011), https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/anth_etds/26, citing Amber D. W., “Schwarzenegger Rails at Native Americans,” *Dawn*, July 5, 2008, <https://www.dawn.com/news/397205/schwarzenegger-rails-at-native-americans>.

³ National Congress of American Indians (2019). *Becoming Visible: A Landscape Analysis of State Efforts to Provide Native American Education for All*. Washington, DC. September 2019.

within the academy to educate and help change perceptions of Native American communities for public audiences.

Instead, this dissertation aims to write about the reservation life not from a romanticized perspective but from a sincere and honest reality of the reservation. The effects of poverty and systemic injustice that Native American peoples face in surrounding reservation and Bordertown life are undeniable. I write from a position that, despite these barriers, a sustaining music community continues to exist. As I write this dissertation, I want to make it clear to readers that the people I interviewed are musicians with complex realities. There is no one single way to define the Rez Metal music scene is, nor is there one singular lived reality of the reservation. Indeed, while there are nuanced aspects to the reservation, I discuss how the Rez Metal music scene adapts to the challenges and in doing so, fosters a community of care

.

VITA

- 2025 PhD. Candidate in Anthropology, University of California Los Angeles
- 2015 Master of Arts in Higher Education, University of Denver
- 2012 Bachelor of Arts International Studies Major, University of Denver

PUBLICATIONS

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MUSEUM WORK, EXHIBITIONS & PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

2022-2024 Graduate Student Researcher for the Archiving of the Age of Mass Incarceration (AAMI) American Indian Studies Center, UCLA. Faculty: Shannon Speed

Denver Art Museum Native Artist in Residence. Curated show “(Re)mapping a Rez Metal rezistance” exhibit March-June 2023.

Curated Show: “(Re)Mapping NATIVE Denver” Museum of Anthropology at the University of Denver September 2021.

SELECTED GRANTS, FELLOWSHIPS, AND AWARDS

- 2023 Native American Art’s Artist in Residency Fellow at the Denver Art Museum (Re)Mapping Rez Metal Resistance. (Denver, Colorado)
- 2022 Wenner Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research Dissertation Fieldwork
- Artist Disruptor Award from the Center for Cultural Power
- 2021 UCLA Graduate Council Diversity Year Fellowship
- 2020 UCLA Graduate Summer Research Mentorship Program Fellow,
- Cobell Graduate Fellowship
- Institute of American Cultures (IAC) Research Grant
- 2019 American Indian Graduate Center Scalleon Award Caitlin Gulley Memorial
- Scholarship, Fernandeno Tataviam Band of Mission Indians

INTRODUCTION

Opening Band

“We are the M.I.S. The Merciless Indian Savages,” Corey Ashely screams into the microphone. They were a new band I had never seen before, and their name immediately caught my attention. In November 2021, M.I.S. debuted on the Rez Metal scene at the Wowies Event Center. M.I.S. is loud and crunchy, with distorted sounds emanating from the amps at a high volume that you can feel in your body. Joe, their incredibly talented drummer, stands out instantly from his distinctive sitting posture, style, and technique, which stems from his background in drumline.

The stage darkens as the venue lights dim, marking the end of their first song. As the lights turn on, all eyes instantly go to Jacob Stepetin's guitar fretboard, which features sticker lettering that spells out the word "DECOLONIZE." As he shreds his metal solos, I notice that Jacob's guitar riffs are detailed, passionate, and fast, creating a powerful and intense melody. Not only does M.I.S. bring a new sound to the Rez Metal scene inspired by black metal, but their intense riffs and unique time signatures along with their political message speak back to U.S. colonialism set them apart. Jacob's guitar fret that displays “decolonization” on his fret board has been a key inspiration in this dissertation because it helps us theorize how I imagine a resistance cartography that maps the long legacy of Indigenous resistance to settler colonialism through the sounds of their music.



Figure I.1: Jacob Stepetin's guitar that spells out DECOLONIZE at the Navajo Nation Metal Fest. Gallup, NM. 2021. *Photo by the author.*

MIS was playing this show in Gallup, a well-known historic border town known to treat Native American peoples with discrimination. In this moment Jacob's guitar is a key focus and inspiration for this dissertation. As the words, DECOLONIZE are spelled out across the guitar fret that combine the messaging with the sounds coming from that guitar the song plays the lyrics. Corey sings with loud, death-metal vocals and screams into the microphone, repeating the lyrics "Save the Indian...Save the Indian...Save the Indian." The song's meaning reflected the call to save our culture, language, and knowledge, all of which were lost due to forced boarding school policies. The audience reaction was excited; a mosh pit started at the center of the stage and cheering for their set when they played their song. I looked around at other audiences and overheard their conversations about the band. They described it as a cool band, with comments like "Who are they?" and "They must be new," along with mentions of the sound being different.

I walk up to their merchandise booth to purchase a CD and stickers. A small table, that fits a sample t-shirt, CDs and stickers. The t-shirt I buy has the image of the Declaration of

Independence with magnified text stating, “The Merciless Indian Savages.” The shirt also spells out “Kill The Man” on the top, and the bottom spells “Save the Indian.” This song resists colonial logic, referencing the boarding school era's propaganda that aimed to civilize the Indians. The shirt represents the remapping of the colonial logics that center "Kill the Man," as an expression of killing the patriarchy, which resists the colonial gendered logic of "man".

I eventually learned through interview that song aimed to challenge gender norms associated with patriarchy and instead offers a new perspective of saving Indian cultures. This song explores the gendered meaning within Navajo traditions that are culturally a matrilineal society. As Navajo scholar Lloyd Lee has written extensively about Diné masculinity makes aware how “Diné manhood has been influenced by American and Western ideology, values, and thoughts, yet Diné thoughts and ways continue.”⁴ This song reminds us in returning to matriarchal societies that Navajo nations held before colonization.

This show was an official Navajo Nation Metal Fest, which took place at the venue in Gallup, not on the reservation. It presented an opportunity for further exploration to see how the Rez Metal finds and creates new spaces for their community of Metal fans. It was an interesting observation to see this show reclaim the space through sound and centering Indigenous voices, including the headliner “Alien Weaponry,” a Māori Heavy metal band from New Zealand. This band is renowned for incorporating the Māori language into their songs, and they often performed a traditional Haka before their shows. For one night, this stage centered on Rez Metal bands and global Indigenous music for their community. These moments presented an opportunity to explore frameworks for building new Indigenous futures and spaces through a music scene.

⁴ Lee, Lloyd L. 2020. *Diné Identity in a Twenty-First-Century World*. 1st ed. Tucson: University of Arizona Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv11sn6g4>. 12.

Why Represent Rez Metal Music?

In 2018 when I was the Director of Native American Community Partnership and Programs at the University of Denver. I recall sitting in my office reading a Facebook post about two Native American male teenagers who made the headlines. A white woman called for campus security because she believed their behavior was "off" during a Colorado State University (CSU) campus tour. They were described as young Hispanic men with long hair from Mexico. They dressed in all black, and to her perception, they refused to answer questions from the tour guides when asked a question. The white woman felt so unsettled that when she described the two teenagers to campus security, she said, "They made me feel sick. They clearly don't belong." Shortly after her call, the two Native teenagers were pulled out of the tour and patted down by CSU Campus Security. The guards asked for their reservation confirmation for the campus tour which the teenagers provided on their phones.

As the news began to unfold, we learned that the two Native American brothers — 19-year-old Thomas Kanewakeron Gray and 17-year-old Lloyd Skanahwati Gray had driven from Santa Fe, NM, where they attended high school at the Santa Fe Indian School, a historically Indian boarding school. They also had a confirmed reservation for a tour just like the others in the group. However, the teens eventually left campus after they lost their tour group and were unable to find and rejoin the tour. Neither campus security nor the other staff members assisted in helping the teens reconnect with the group.

Visual documentation later provided further context to the incident in the news article *"Police Take Native American Metalheads Off College Tour, Cattle Decapitation and Archspire Respond,"* which included the video of the teenagers wearing black Metal Band T-shirts receiving a pat-down by campus security. The two teens toured CSU with ambitions to study

music and join the Denver music scene with their own metal band called "Snob Goblin." The two teens were wearing death metal band shirts from Cattle Decapitation and Archspire at the time of the tour. Cattle Decapitation responded to the incident by offering them "lifetime guest passes" to their shows in the wake of the event. As the general Metal community responded, Archspire the band stated that, "The teens are not only deserving of to be there but also entitled to both apology."⁵ The band had also asked for the mother who called campus police, to attend their next show in Colorado "to observe firsthand just how positive, accepting and overall uplifting the 'threatening' lifestyle that these innocent brothers freely and publicly represent, actually is."⁶

This situation highlighted that there was something about the Native American teens' appearance and demeanor that unsettled this white woman. What is it about Indigenous bodies in spaces that unsettle settler society? Why would metal dress and hair render these young men unrecognizable as Native Americans? What is it about Indigenous bodies in spaces that unsettle settler society? What is unsettling about their reported behavior - they were shy and quiet on the tour - that provoked such fear that someone was compelled to call campus police?

I wanted to continue to investigate how Natives in alternative scenes like heavy metal challenge the assumptions of how Native American peoples are supposed to behave. As I saw community members post about how Native kids can be shy and do not always speak loudly in public spaces, I also wondered why there were not any discussions surrounding Native youth with Metal aesthetics as college-going individuals. Subgenres like Metal also have their own negative stereotypes and associations with disgruntled youth and other forms of violence.

⁵ Tom Breihan, "Police Take Native American Metalheads Off College Tour; Cattle Decapitation Respond," *Stereogum*, May 7, 2018, <https://www.stereogum.com/1995042/police-take-native-american-metalheads-off-college-tour-cattle-decapitation-respond/news/>.

⁶ Breihan, "Police Take Native American Metalheads."

As a Native American higher education staff member, it was concerning to see that Native students were treated by attending a tour. Given the statistic from the Postsecondary National Policy Institute that stated that as of Fall 2021 Native American students represent 0.7% of all postsecondary enrollment. Among American Indian or Alaskan Native residents aged 25 or older only 16.8% had a bachelor's degree or higher. This rate is up from 13.4% in 2010 but falls short of the national rate of 35.7%.⁷ This story is a mere glimpse into why I am invested in this project, to raise social awareness about Native youth who enjoy Metal music, but who also aspire for higher education. This was story that motivated me to act. I started asking all my Diné friends as to where I could find a Rez Metal show.

Ultimately in my work, I have identified the music industry as an area where Native representation is critically needed. I explore the diversity of Native American lived experiences of the reservation, particularly focusing on the music, sound and visuals of the Rez Metal scene. This journey began with two questions surrounding Native American heavy metal music: What is Rez Metal, and where can I find it? These questions sparked a road trip that led me to a vibrant music scene in the Southwest. Fast forward nearly six years later, what started as curiosity has now become a PhD journey resulting in a dissertation, numerous presentations on Rez Metal at national academic conferences, a public exhibit at the Denver Art Museum, and ultimately, hosting Rez Metal Pop Up shows at UCLA, ASU, and the Levitt Pavilion. This project has led to finding new ways to introduce this music scene to new spaces and audiences at different levels, such as pop-up shows at universities and venue spaces like the Levitt Pavilion in Denver,

⁷ Postsecondary National Policy Institute, *Native American Fact Sheet*, November 2023, <https://pnpi.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/NativeAmericanFactSheet-Nov-2023.pdf> (accessed May 25, 2025).

Colorado. New venues and audiences will be discussed throughout the dissertation and within chapter five.

Throughout this dissertation I challenge the ways in which media writes and depicts the reservation but beyond that how Rez Metal is about world building for better futures. It would be easy to write about all the bad or negative realities of the reservation but that is often the consistent narrative that continues to be circulated throughout dominant media. I find that as Native people our humanity and struggles are still present and active every day. However, I also argue that Native American forms of joy and coming together as a community is still at the core of this music scene. Therefore, I choose to start my dissertation that explores how a small music community can remap our understanding of Native American people's relationship to land and place while encourage Native youth to keep living their creative dreams. I use this dissertation as a framework world making practices of what can be possible for better futures by building a Rez Metal community, and what can be learned through the stories of band members shared.

Framing Rez Metal Research

My central question about Rez Metal is about understanding the relationship between land and place, as reflected in the title of the musical genre. While other Native music genres write songs that reference lyrics about place, history, culture, and lived experiences, I find Rez Metal unique because it is the only genre that geographically points to its origins. Therefore, I ask how the lived experiences of the "Rez" can help us understand the relationship to land, place, and sound further? What messages emerge from this particular lived experience, which accounts for only 2.3% of the reservation territory under US governance? ⁸

⁸ Klaus Frantz, *Indian Reservations in the United States* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999). 39.

In other genres or titles of contemporary Native American music, "Rez" has never been referenced as a distinct genre as no other ethnic group in the United States experienced the reservation system other than Native Americans peoples who were forced and many who were removed from their original homelands to live on reservations. Other forms of Native American music are commonly inspired using "Native" or "Indigenous" marking the cultural origins . For example, genres are Native Pop, Alter(NATIVE), Indigenous Electronic, First Nations music, Navajo Country, and Native Hip Hop.

The term "Rez" in Rez Metal has been the central component that makes this genre so compelling to me. Rez" is an acronym referring to "Indian reservations" in North America. It is a slang term that refers to both a physical location and to the cultural meaning of what it means "to be Rez" or to experience someone or a situation as being "so Rez." At times there are a multiplicity of layers with the term Rez. With the conversation I have had with many musicians and friends, being Rezzy can describe a place of belonging and a symbol of pride as sheds light on where a person comes from and how they were raised. Depending on how it is used, it may be layered with humor and self-deprecation, but most importantly to designate something as Rez is to refer to a lived experience. Often, if something is designated as Rez it evokes a DIY aesthetic with using what is around and available to you.

Problem Statement: Mapping the Deficit Landscape of Reservation Life

As I began this journey I started to engage with the scholarship of "Rez Metal" written by Ashkan Stone (2020) to expand on the music scene and delve deeper into how these lyrics are produced. Multiple scholars in Anthropology, History, American Indian studies, and Sound studies have approached Native American Contemporary Music such as Navajo country, jazz,

Indigenous pop and Native hip-hop studies.⁹ Rez Metal is often written from an angle that sees this music scene as the "solution" to teen suicide and a coping mechanism. Stone explains that music scene provides the equipment to address the historical, cultural, and economic trauma that the Navajo people have shared. The accompanying documentary also titled "Rez Metal"¹⁰ presents consistent themes tied to the statistics about youth suicide in every chapter throughout the film. The synopsis of the film describes the bands from "poverty-stricken reservations to fairy tale dreams" but not about how the reservation was constructed nor highlighted how Native culture, gender, kinship, or Indigenous joy were presented. Instead, Rez Metal's narrative is often written as coming from the trauma of teen suicide, poverty, and escapism from these complex realities.¹¹ Rather than seeing Navajo peoples who are stereotyped as helpless victims or with no history, I draw on how stories can be sources of survivance of "Native" presence, responsibility, and resistance.¹² Additionally, visual media outlets, such as Revolver Magazine and Rez Metal documentary¹³, often fail to provide an in-depth understanding of the lyrics of "Rez Metal" and the messages these bands convey.

Expanding these consistent themes, I draw from Navajo historian Jennifer Denetdale's work, that critiques literary writers who often depict reservation life in terms of poverty, chronic

⁹ Kristina M. Jacobsen, *The Sound of Navajo Country: Music, Language, and Diné Belonging* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Jeff Berglund, Jan Johnson, and Kimberli Lee, *Indigenous Pop: Native American Music from Jazz to Hip Hop* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2016). Liz Przybylski, *Sonic Sovereignty: Hip Hop, Indigeneity, and Shifting Popular Music Mainstreams* (New York: New York University Press, 2023).

¹⁰ *Rez Metal*, directed by Ashkan Soltani Stone (2021; USA/DK: AKS Media), documentary film, 1 h 15 min.

¹¹ Ashkan Soltani Stone and Natale A. Zappia, *Rez Metal: Inside the Navajo Nation Heavy Metal Scene* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2020).¹³

¹² Klara B. Kelley and Harris Francis, *A Diné History of Navajoland* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2019). 8.

¹³ *Rez Metal*, directed by Ashkan, Soltani Stone. (Leomark Studios, 2022.), streaming video, Tubi, https://tubitv.com/movies/646889/rez-metal?start=true&tracking=google-feed&utm_source=google-feed

unemployment, high suicide rates, and violence in a backdrop of seemingly barren lands.¹⁴ While the visual descriptions following "Rez life" can be characterized as some harsh truths, I sympathize with both Denetdale and Scott Lyons.¹⁵ They address the complexities of the nature of "the Rez" descriptions, which can limit communities to be taken seriously or be seen as modern tribal nations advancing their projects of hope, happiness, and transformation. These types of deficits rez narratives may overlook the values of tradition and culture that can contribute to reimagining a better life for Indigenous peoples. While the harsh context of these realities and experiences is not inherently untrue, the reservation poverty trope continues to cycle the same narrative that is consistently portrayed visually but does not address what created the systemic issues of poverty and conditions of reservation life.

I find the research on historical and geographical concepts related to the creation of Indian Reservations helpful in clarifying the origin of the term "Rez" and the emergence of "Rez Metal." What processes and technologies were used to draw the boundary lines that constitute the mapping of the Indian reservations? How does Rez Metal (re)map these ideas of the Indian Reservations? Within my work on Rez Metal, it is crucial to provide a brief overview of the geographic and historical context of how Western technologies of mapping created and enforced Reservation boundaries, which ultimately map the dispossession of Indigenous peoples of their land. Jennifer Denetdale notes that at the core of the "conflict and struggle between Indians and whites, it has always been about ties and claims to land."¹⁶ This relationship to the land is critical to how settler colonial structures removed Indian people from the lands they saw as valuable.

¹⁴ Denetdale, Jennifer Nez. 2007. *Reclaiming Diné History: The Legacies of Navajo Chief Manuelito and Juanita*. 1st ed. Tucson: University of Arizona Press (12)

¹⁵ See authors Denetdale, 2007. 12 for critique on literary writers and Lyons, Scott Richard. 2010. *X-Marks : Native Signatures of Assent*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. Lyons (2010, 21) for complexity of "rezzy"

¹⁶ Denetdale, Jennifer Nez. *Reclaiming Diné History*, 162.

The reservation as a part of the US government Indian removal policies the reservation system is part of the colonial project. Patrick Wolfe reminds us that "Settler colonialism is not an event but a structure."¹⁷ Tuck and Yang describe settler colonialism as always seeing "Native peoples as in the way," and thereby, the structure seeks to erase Native American people because the land is what is sought after.¹⁸

"For the settlers, Indigenous peoples are in the way and, in the destruction of Indigenous peoples, Indigenous communities, and over time and through law and policy, Indigenous peoples' claims to land under settler regimes, the land is recast as property and as a resource. Indigenous peoples must be erased, must be made into ghosts."¹⁹

Part of the erasure of Indigenous peoples is part of Patrick Wolfe "logic of elimination" continues into the present for Indigenous people.²⁰ Settler colonialism has sought to have power and control over Native peoples' lands and bodies, which, in turn, has affected Native politics and identities. Settler structures can be found within blood quantum politics, policies of removal, forced assimilation, and how kinship and gender within the family structure affect Native communities.²¹

Thus, contemporary music is a powerful tool for understanding US Indigenous experiences of colonialism. As Samuels discusses that music and language allow people on the reservation to layer social histories, personal biographies, language and rework the possible

¹⁷ Wolfe, Patrick. 2006. "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native." *Journal of Genocide Research* 8 (4): 388. doi:10.1080/14623520601056240.

¹⁸ Tuck and Yang, 2012. "Decolonization is not a metaphor" *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* Vol. 1, No.1. 6

¹⁹ Tuck and Yang, "Decolonization is not a metaphor," 6

²⁰ Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," 393.

²¹ Kim TallBear, "Badass (Indigenous) Women Caretake Relations: #NoDAPL, #IdleNoMore, #BlackLivesMatter," *Cultural Anthropology*, Fieldsights, September 13, 2016, <https://culanth.org/fieldsights/badass-indigenous-women-caretakerelations-no-dapl-idle-no-more-black-lives-matter>; Beth Brant, *Writing As Witness: Essay and Talk* (Toronto: Women's Press, 1994); Mishuana Goeman, *Mark My Words: Native Women Mapping Our Nations* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013); Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014).

locations and relationships between culture, history and identity.²² Phil Deloria argues that Native American Music has been overlooked, regarded as simplistic or lacking complex rhythm patterns. He then asks us to investigate the unexpectedness of how Native peoples are imagined or represented as being in the past.²³ Rez Metal can provide us with a vehicle to initiate discussion in these areas.²⁴

Guiding Theories and Conceptual Frameworks

This dissertation explores how Rez Metal, as both a geographic location and an imagined space, is not bounded to one place, people, or a single region of the Navajo Nation. This research therefore utilizes anthropological and Indigenous geographical frameworks to analyze how Rez Metal is experienced and expressed within specific spatial and cultural landscapes. These fields together explore the interplay of between both the lived experience but through an Indigenous perspective in relationship to land and place, while offering alternative mapping of these spaces.

Therefore, I think through how decolonial mapping can focus on the reclamation of Indigenous ontologies of place that long predate the colonial cartographic inflaming of

²² David Samuels, *Putting a Song on Top of It: Expression and Identity on the San Carlos Apache Reservation* (Tucson, AZ: The University of Arizona Press, 2004). 22.

²³ Deloria, Philip J. 2004. *Indians in Unexpected Places*. 1st ed. La Vergne: University Press of Kansas., 181, 184 Deloria critiques the “so called indian drumbeat: or “tom-tom” fashion. (181) he describes the pastness with discussion signifying expectation of primitivism and social evolution, Indian disappearance.

²⁴ Drawing on scholars who study the intersection of race and politics Joanne Barker, ed., *Critically Sovereign: Indigenous Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv11smggj>; Mark Rifkin, *Beyond Settler Time: Temporal Sovereignty and Indigenous Self-Determination* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017); Tiffany Lethabo King, Jenell Navarro, and Andrea Smith, *Otherwise Worlds: Against Settler Colonialism and Anti-Blackness* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv11sn1vd>. can further reveal patterns of settler colonialism.

Indigenous lands. In this respect, decolonizing the map is an affirmative practice that decenters the colonial geographical imagination by revalorizing Indigenous world-making practices, whether in forms of conventional cartographic products or performance-based mapping.²⁵

Beyond just mapping, while I insist that this scene remaps the colonial boundaries of the reservation and its checkerboards, demonstrating how Rez Metal music is produced in creative methods. I demonstrate how this music is articulated through Indigenous mapping, grounded in relationality to land and place, rather than through the colonial logics of reservation boundaries or the labeled zones of tribal and non-tribal lands.

A. Decolonizing the Map — Indigenous Mapping

Indigenous Geographers such as Rosewood et al. claim that for over the past two decades there have been increasing calls to decolonize the discipline of geography. Decolonizing maps is essential for my work, as it opens up the concept of Indigenous mapping within "Rez Metal." How do you decolonize maps? Throughout this dissertation, I argue that the "Rez" within the term Rez Metal serves as a reclaimed space that re-centers stories of Native people, pushing back against colonial narratives and geographic boundaries of the reservation, and in turn, centers Indigenous life and knowledge in relation to land and place. Rez Metal, as an Indigenous mapping practice, comes from the theories and inspiration of Indigenous geographers who have challenged colonial mapping to center Native stories and voices.

I aim to investigate how the Rez Metal scene is a form of mapping practice that charts the cartography of resistance to the structures and logic of settler colonialism through my fieldwork connected to sounds and place. Therefore, to confront the issues of representation and counter-

²⁵ Rose-Redwood et al, *Decolonizing the Map*, 153.

narratives, I employed photoethnography as a tool to visually (re)map my understanding of how Rez Metal is often portrayed in photography and film and through the ethnographic fieldwork the analyze how photographs reveal alternative visual maps of the Rez Metal worlds. The photographs also serve as inspiration for building new world possibilities for Native American communities and youth. I propose that Rez Metal offers a new lens for interrogating the geographic colonial boundaries that created Indian reservations. Within this work I also provide a brief overview of the geographic and historical context of how Western technologies of mapping created and enforced Reservation boundaries, which ultimately map the dispossession of Indigenous peoples of their land.

Reservation life is often filled with deficit perspectives but does not highlight the positive or the cultural meanings of what it means to be Rez. The Rez is not just about growing up or coming from the reservation. For many the Rez has a deep cultural meaning and significance of what it means to be Rez. In this work I trace historically how Indian Reservations were created from settler-colonial mapping. I then aim to contextualizing the lived experiences from how Native people understand the "the Rez" that presently hold layers of cultural and spatial meanings through this music scene.

Pulling from Michele Raheja works on the "virtual rez" that I further discuss in the later parts of Chapter 3, I (re)imagine how the Rez can be a place of an "Rezistance cartography" that encompasses the mapping of Indigenous spatialized experience that draws from socio-historical accounts of the creation of the reservations but also remaps understandings of Indigenous relationship to land and place through the reservation music scene.

Drawing on interdisciplinary literature from American Indian studies, geography, history, and anthropology, I aim to provide an overview of the concepts of Indigenous mapping and how

they can articulate and recenter Indigenous knowledge. In many cases, map-making continues to be "weaponized" against Indigenous people in the twenty-first century; however, Rosewood et al. stated that through decolonial mapping, there is potential to challenge neocolonial cartographies by reclaiming or reimagining worlds beyond the colonial frame of reference.²⁶ These scholars offer critically engaging concepts to rethink how Indigenous mapping and decolonial cartographies offer pathways for moving beyond the tunnel visions of Eurocentric colonialist geographies.²⁷ However, it is essential to note that even progressive counter-mapping projects have had the unintended effects of reinforcing colonial narratives that erase Indigenous histories, geographies, and lives. An example of this situation is Elspeth Irale's work, which challenges the "Map Your Indigenous Community Month" project. This project was sponsored by Google Maps and the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) to mark the United Nations International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples.²⁸ The project outlines the goals to "empower tribes and tribal citizens to actively participate in how tribal lands and communities are represented on Google Maps." Google Maps recognized that Indigenous communities were underrepresented in digital maps and issued a call to action to update locations on reservations with more accurate data.²⁹

While the intentions of this mapping may seem progressive, it aims to provide further direction and represent specific restaurants, hospitals, or essential landmarks. While I can understand the intention with the project to put names and get better directions for travelers and

²⁶ Rose-Redwood, R., Blu Barnd, N., Lucchesi, A. H. e., Dias, S., & Patrick, W. (2020). Decolonizing the Map: Recentring Indigenous Mappings. *Cartographica: The International Journal for Geographic Information and Geovisualization*, 55(3), 151-162.

²⁷ Rose-Redwood et al, *Decolonizing the Map*, 52.

²⁸ Elsbeth Iralu, "Putting Indian Country on the Map: Indigenous Practices of Spatial Justice," *Antipode* 53, no. 5 (2021): 1485.

²⁹ Iralu, *Putting Indian Country on the Map*, 1487.

locals. However, in agreeing with Elsbeth Iraru the glaring issue is that "mapping your Indigenous community" also ignores Native people's ties to land before colonial boundaries. As Iraru argues, it is far from preserving the integrity of the maps; the re-drawing of Indigenous national boundaries implies not only that the colonial project is completed and uncontested, but also that those boundaries confine Indigenous peoples.³⁰ Google Maps' practice of leaving Indigenous territory empty and representing it as a space yet to be populated with landmarks reinforces the settler-colonial frontier imaginary. I also agree and argue that this continues the blatant erasure of genocide, dispossession, and the removal of land.³¹

B. Theoretical Approaches: Indigenous Mapping

Long before European colonizers began mapping the world, Indigenous peoples had their mapping practices and ways of understanding place. As historian Collin Calloway explains, "Indians had their own cartographic conceptions and maps that convey accumulated knowledge of place. These maps were stored in memories of individuals who could communicate the information by speech, gesture, and depiction in response to specific needs and requests."³² Calloway describes Indian maps as "pictures of experience" that could reflect dimensions of mapping that Europeans could neither understand nor chart, as he describes that some maps reflected dimensions that Europeans could not grasp nor chart as some maps were dreams or visions.³³ In this way, Calloway notes that not all Indian maps were intended to be permanent documents, but instead were meant to have spiritual significance.³⁴ This is important in how oral

³⁰ Iraru, *Putting Indian Country on the Map*, 1489.

³¹ Iraru, *Putting Indian Country on the Map*, 1489.

³² Calloway, Colin G. (Colin Gordon). 2003. *One Vast Winter Count: The Native American West before Lewis and Clark*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press. 13.

³³ Calloway, *One Vast Winter Count*, 13.

³⁴ Calloway, *One Vast Winter Count*, 13.

stories and traditions can recenter Indigenous knowledge of place and the relationship to those significant sites.

Central to Indigenous mappings is that Indian people knew their homeland intimately. and their lives are inseparable.³⁵ For instance, traditional Diné maps were used as a form of wayfinding. Diné verbal maps utilized place names, which can guide people to specific locations, ceremonies, and even traditional resources. Not only can story-work be used as a map, but in the past, Diné used story maps, referencing the actual trails that have shifting locations. The maps are made with cultural knowledge accumulated over time.³⁶

Drawing on the work of Indigenous mapping scholar Annita Lucchesi, there are different types of Indigenous mapping, which include ancestral, anticolonial, and decolonial mapping. ³⁷ It is worth noting that these mapping categories are not fixed or defined with rigid boundaries, as they can overlap and become fluid during the creation of these maps. To add, Lucchesi discusses that "not everything has to be about colonialism. It may be one of the realities Indigenous peoples navigate; however, it does not define the type of stories we tell or how we draw them."³⁸ In addition, speaking with other Indigenous mapping scholars, Rose-Redwood et al. stated that decolonial mapping refers to the spatial practices and cartographic techniques that center Indigenous relationships and responsibilities to land.³⁹ This is not to say western cartographic mapping does not have its benefits as other forms of mapping that the author discusses, such as anti-colonial, are employed in contemporary mapping. For example, mapping out the Navajo

³⁵ Calloway, *One Vast Winter Count*, 9.

³⁶ Kelley & Francis, *A Diné History*, 79-80

³⁷ Annita Hetoevêhotohke'e Lucchesi, "'Indians Don't Make Maps': Indigenous Cartographic Traditions and Innovations," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 42, no. 3 (2018):22 <https://doi.org/10.17953/AICRJ.42.3.LUCCHESI>.

³⁸ Lucchesi, *Indians Don't Make Maps*, 22.

³⁹ Rose-Redwood et al., *Decolonizing the Map*, 153.

Nation's boundaries are still used in contemporary practice such as the Navajo Nation's tribal council who utilizes these maps to uphold the tribal sovereignty of their land and resources, benefiting their people.

Instead, this dissertation explores how Rez Metal as a form of decolonized mapping, offering further support to socio political movements that raise awareness for human rights, such as MMIW, Indigenous languages, and the rights of our non-human relatives, including water, plants, and the earth. Lucchesi's decolonial mapping⁴⁰ ideas align with Rez Metal remapping as a way to reclaim space and cartographic interventions. As Lucchesi's work attempts to open new possibilities of decolonial mapping as liberatory she discusses that while colonials may be a reality that we as Indigenous people have to navigate. Colonialism does not define the type of stories that we tell or how to draw on them, thus, honoring Indigenous mapping praxis for Indigenous peoples to reclaim their relationality and responsibility to land and place.⁴¹

I draw inspiration from the values reflected in ancestral maps within Rez Metal, where contemporary songs also remind us of our responsibility to the land and culture. On the other hand, ancestral mapping focuses on how ancestors used maps that were not explicitly influenced by colonialism in their cartography during the precontact era.⁴² These generative discussions of ancestral cartographic mapping, conveyed through songs, dances, and ceremonies, serve as a reminder of our contractual responsibility to the land.⁴³

C. Creating Rez Metal Cartography: Mapping Memories and Stories

I center this work from Seneca scholar, Mishuana Goeman's work, *Mark My Words: Native Women Mapping Native Nations*, to examine remapping practices through Indigenous

⁴⁰ Lucchesi, "Indians Don't Make Maps," 23.

⁴¹ Lucchesi, "Indians Don't Make Maps," 25.

⁴² Lucchesi, "Indians Don't Make Maps," 13.

⁴³ Lucchesi, "Indians Don't Make Maps," 13.

stories and knowledge as mapmaking practices that create new possibilities for present and Indigenous futures.⁴⁴ Goeman describes land as the foundational core to Native people's cultural practices and sites. Land is also seen as meaning-making rather than a claimed object.⁴⁵ A consequence of settler colonialism is that land is often translated into property. I find Goeman's understanding of land as a "meaning-making place" to be very productive, as it highlights that land is at the heart of indigenous identity, longing, and belonging.⁴⁶ Indigenous people create a sense of place by relating both personal and communal experiences and histories to specific locations and landscapes. Maintaining these special relationships is one of the most crucial components of politics and our sense of identity.

Building off the relationships between land and stories, memory and nostalgia as themes within emerging Rez Metal Cartographies. I draw from Juan Herrera's work, who introduces cartographic memory as a methodological framework. This framework focuses on the memories of places created by intricate mappings of an organization and by new community spaces that activists' work helped to construct.⁴⁷ "Cartographic memory is not just an act of remembering." It is a political reconfiguration of urban geography and, therefore, a selective mapping that emphasizes the contributions of certain groups. Through the use of cartographic memories, we expose the political nature of place-making and the centrality of space in power negotiations. As Herrera stated, "cartographic memory is also a methodological tool for thinking and writing

⁴⁴Mishuana Goeman, *Mark My Words: Native Women Mapping Our Nations* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 208.

⁴⁵Mishuana Goeman, "Land as Life: Unsettling the Logics of Containment," in *Native Studies Keywords*, ed. Stephanie Nohelani Teves, Andrea Smith, and Michelle H. Raheja (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2015), <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt183gxzb.9>. 73

⁴⁶ Goeman, "Land as Life," 73.

⁴⁷ Juan Herrera, *Cartographic Memory: Social Movement Activism and the Production of Space* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2022). 14.

about place.⁴⁸ In this research it is relevant historically for the negotiation of power for Indigenous peoples' claims to land has been contingent on the US government and its treaties.

Drawing from the importance of memory, the linguistic anthropologist David Samuels, describes a moment when an interviewee had a reaction to a song playing on the radio. In this moment Samuels described this reaction from this this memory of music revealed how life, both the expression and how people experience them. He stated that moments like this expressively reveal a great deal about the reservation's social life of cultural expressions. These moments are the artistic expressions that provide them are densely ambiguous because they are layered with numerous cultural, historical, and symbolic associations that collect and adhere to them over time and across space.⁴⁹

Emerging cartographies can be informed by scholar Gina Starblanket, who introduces the concept of resurgence. Starblanket's term is beneficial in defining "resurgence" as an active process that looks to the past to inform a better future through daily change, which they say takes place from the ground up.⁵⁰ The term "resurgence" implies a process of renewal or awakening from a period of dormancy. In the Indigenous context, "resurgence" carries a distinct cultural and political connotation, referring to a form of mobilization and action grounded in the revitalization of traditional ways of life. The practice of resurgence emerges as a worldview that acknowledges a living relationship between past, present, and future, making possible the imagination of strategies for cultural renewal based on the interplay of pre-colonial pasts and decolonial futures.

⁴⁸ Juan Herrera, *Cartographic Memory: Social Movement Activism and the Production of Space* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2022).15.

⁴⁹Samuels, *Putting a Song on Top of It*, 79.

⁵⁰ Gina Starblanket, "Being Indigenous Feminists Resurgences Against Contemporary Patriarchy" in *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism*, 2nd Edition, ed. Green, Joyce. (Canada: Fernwood Publishing. 2017), 65.

The process of regenerating or revitalizing past ways of being and relating begins with the act of remembering.⁵¹

Our traditional relationships with places, stories, values, principles, and teaching represent a form of cultural memory that is distinguishable from other forms of knowledge of the past as they are integral to our individual or collective identities.⁵² These ideas raise questions about the interviews I did with people in the Rez Metal scene. How should Rez Metal be remembered, and what role can it play in envisioning better futures through looking into the past? What can the history of Rez Metal teach us about how to build and make a better community.

D. Sensory Ethnography and Music Geographies

While this work is grounded in the goals of Indigenous geography this dissertation also aims to explore how people experience and make meaning of these geographies of place. Shifting from the broader history of Heavy Metal music to the specific context of Rez Metal music, this work draws on sound studies and sensory ethnography that shape genre and place-making. Sound studies encompasses how music, speech, noise, and silence come to constitute a particular genre⁵³. Sarah Pink offers frameworks through sensory ethnography that are helpful in thinking of place-making.⁵⁴ Sensory ethnography encourages us to consider how hearing, taste, and kinesthetic sensations influence various forms of placemaking.

⁵¹ Starblanket, “*Being Indigenous Feminists*,” 46.

⁵² Starblanket, “*Being Indigenous Feminists*,” 47.

⁵³ Trevor Pinch and Karin Bijsterveld, “New Keys to the World of Sound,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Sound Studies*, ed. Trevor Pinch and Karin Bijsterveld (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195388947.013.0010>. 7.

⁵⁴ Sarah Pink, *Doing Sensory Ethnography*, 2nd ed. (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2015), 33.

Pink notes geographers have continued to develop core theoretical themes of space, place and landscapes with attention to senses.⁵⁵ Those theories of space, place and the experiences of the environment are central concerns to human geographers.⁵⁶ To connect the relationship between sonic forms and placemaking, Sarah Pink highlights how social anthropologists have studied concepts of place by focusing attention on the senses within ethnography; her scholarship provides pathways to analyzing different place-making practices. Additionally, the concept of place is significant in other disciplines where the senses are relevant to research design, theory, and practice.

Helpful to this discussion is studies of music geographer from Séverin Guillard, Ola Johansson, and Joseph Palis who have discussed how music is becoming an interest of studies among geographers. Early music geographer investigates the place of music in local, national and global context the relationships between soundscapes and specific places. Which also includes the distribution of music styles and the graphical imagery in lyrics.⁵⁷ They also reference Leyshon et al. about how music geography is about how spatiality—a socially constructed geography—plays a role in the formation and creation of music, and how it reflects “mutually generative relations of music and place”⁵⁸

Finally I bring to discussion from Paul Roadway work on *Sensuous Geographies* which seeks to describe features of graph of the senses and to offer the role of sense in everyday

⁵⁵ Pink, *Doing Sensory Ethnography*, 15.

⁵⁶ Pink, *Doing Sensory Ethnography*, 13.

⁵⁷ Séverin Guillard, Ola Johansson, and Joseph Palis, “Introduction to the Spatiality of Popular Music: Music Geographies, Urban Tourism, Heritage Policies, and Place-making,” in *New Geographies of Music 2: Music in Urban Tourism, Heritage Politics, and Place-Making*, ed. Séverin Guillard (London: Routledge, 2024), 2

⁵⁸ Leyshon et al., quoted in Séverin Guillard, Ola Johansson, and Joseph Palis, “Introduction to the Spatiality of Popular Music: Music Geographies, Urban Tourism, Heritage Policies, and Place-making,” in *New Geographies of Music 2: Music in Urban Tourism, Heritage Politics, and Place-Making*, ed. Séverin Guillard (London: Routledge, 2024), 3.

experience of space and place. His work is aimed to investigate the sense of touch, smell, hearing and sight in geographic experiences⁵⁹⁶⁰. (1) ⁱRoadway offers an integrated approached of the role of sense in geographic understanding that “the sense both as a relationship to a to a world the senses as in themselves a kind of structuring of space and defining of place.

Ethnographic Context: Rez Metal in “America's Most Patriotic Small Town.”

When people ask where to find the Rez Metal scene and shows, I point to venues such as the El Moro, Juggernaut, the Gallup Flea Market, and Wowies Event Center, which have been central to my Rez Metal fieldwork site within Gallup. Beyond these venue spaces, I consider what it means for Rez Metal musicians to play their music in border towns that are historical sites of violence and exclusionary to Native American communities. To provide context for a border town, we must first visit Gallup, which is described as “America's Most Patriotic Small Town.”⁶¹ This sign is proudly displayed off the I-40 exit as you enter Gallup, NM. I searched to understand why Gallup is considered the most patriotic town and why it holds a strong presence as a defining aspect of the town's identity.

Gallup is considered a border town, also known as the “Indian Capital of the World.”⁶² – situated spatially next to the Navajo and Zuni Nation – with old historic brick buildings and small shops. Tourists often describe the buildings as having character. The historic town features small Indian crafts, restaurants, a coffee shop, a haunted hotel called El Rancho, a theater called El Moro, and several small restaurants. Most Native American artisan shops are run by white or

⁵⁹ Paul Rodaway, *Sensuous Geographies: Body, Sense, and Place* (London: Routledge, 1994). 1-2.

⁶⁰ Rodaway, *Sensuous Geographies*, 4.

⁶¹ “America's Most Patriotic Small Town”, Visit Gallup. Accessed online May 23rd, 2025.

<https://www.visitgallup.com/about-gallup/americas-most-patriotic-small-town/>

⁶² Jennifer Denetdale, ““No Explanation, No Resolution, and No Answers”: Border Town Violence and Navajo Resistance to Settler Colonialism,” *Wicazo Sa Review* 31, no. 1 (2016): 119. Accessed March 16, 2021. doi:10.5749/wicazosareview.31.1.0111.

foreign business owners, with Indian shops selling authentic Navajo turquoise jewelry, moccasins, pottery, and other souvenir crafts made by Navajo or Pueblo locals. On the outskirts of the town, neighboring small towns and reservations come for groceries, car repairs, shopping, and other essential supplies.

However, as the town offers conveniences for local shoppers, it also has another reputation. Gallup is notoriously known as the "Drunk Town," with some of the highest rates of alcoholism among Native American peoples.⁶³ Gallup also has the highest concentration of predatory lending stores and pawn shops that target Navajo people on and off the reservation. According to Indian Country today Gallup as a border town draws in five reservations – Navajo, Zuni, Ramah, Hopi and Acoma – feeding into it. They bring in an estimate of over \$200 million a year. Gallup gets close to 60 percent of the money generated on the Navajo Reservation as the majority of its citizenships shop in Gallup for groceries, supplies and other basic needs.⁶⁴

Bordertown's described in "*Red Nation Rising*" are sustained through the four Bs: the bullet, the bottle, the bank, and the Bible.⁶⁵ The sounds of Western expansion are heard through the trains traveling west or east along Interstate 40 through Gallup. When I visit Gallup, I always comment on how inconvenient and loud the trains are, as during many of my interviews, which I record or film, I often catch the echoes of the trains moving. I would sit patiently during my film interviews, waiting for the train to pass before recording again, in front of my Rez Metal interviews with band members and friends. This town takes pride in its history, as well as the

⁶³ Nick Estes, Melanie K. Yazzie, Jennifer Nez Denetdale, and David Correia, *Red Nation Rising: From Bordertown Violence to Native Liberation* (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2021), 43.

⁶⁴ Chavers, Dean, "The Culture of Gallup" *ICT* December 7th, 2007. <https://ictnews.org/archive/the-culture-of-gallup/>

⁶⁵ Radmilla Cody and Brandon Benallie, "Foreword," in *Red Nation Rising: From Bordertown Violence to Native Liberation*, ed. Nick Estes, Melanie Yazzie, Jennifer Denetdale, and David Correia (Oakland: PM Press, 2021), x.

imagery of trains, marketplaces, and the Cowboy culture of the western frontier. However, Gallup also borders several checkerboard reservations owned by the Navajo Nation and extends further out to the Zuni Pueblo. I became more curious to understand how this small-town hosts Rez Metal shows. I was interested in how the Rez Metal scene understands its place in making by existing in these spaces, despite the long legacy of Gallup and its negative treatment of neighboring tribes.

These on and off reservation nuances makes conducting ethnography on Navajo Nation unique. When I first inquired about a Navajo Nation IRB, I realized that this work did not require a full IRB review by the Tribal Council—instead, it needed an “ethnographic C permit” from the Navajo Nation THPO office. I called only to get the person working on the phone, to laugh at my research topic. Over the phone, he told me, “You do not need a permit to interview these Metal bands.” He made it seem unserious and downplayed that this work is academic and grounded in ethnography. The reality is if you are conducting research on the reservation you are required to obtain a Navajo Nation Ethnographic C permit ⁶⁶and a media permit if you are filming. The permit is not needed to for research or interviews non-tribal lands such as border towns or communities. This was also an ethics discussion I had with a member of the Navajo Nation Tribal office, who mentioned that researchers will trap their people in border town like Gallup or Farmington, or cities to conduct the interview and skip the permitting process.

This concept of on and off the reservation is one of the most consistent themes throughout this work. As a concept of Rez Metal as a geographic location traversing the border town, city, or tribal lands outside of Navajo Nation included the Pueblo nations. The location of

⁶⁶ Navajo Nation Heritage & Historic Preservation Department, “WELCOME TO THE CULTURAL RESOURCES COMPLIANCE SECTION,” Cultural Resources Compliance Section, accessed August 7, 2025, <https://hpd.navajo-nsn.gov/Laws-Regulations-and-Policies>.

Rez Metal as a music scene, affects where and how research is conducted. One day, you can be at a music show on the reservation then, on other days, I found myself off-reservation land, which could be as simple as crossing the highway on I-40, where you can film and interview bands freely in areas like Coolidge or Thoreau. Even as a researcher, this work can be confusing about which rules to follow when, but overall, I interviewed wherever I found bands making music, which was wherever they lived or practiced.

Positionality and Reflexivity

A. Urban or Rez?

My research intends to carry Indigenous relationality, protocols, methodologies, and respect for the Rez Metal scene. My study on Rez metal music employs Indigenous Research Methodologies, grounding itself in our values of reflexivity, respect, reciprocity, and responsibility.⁶⁷ I utilize oral histories and story work from Indigenous scholars who understand that our stories are valid forms of theory for understanding how Indigenous peoples perceive themselves and their lives.⁶⁸ Indigenous methodologies are embedded in cultural ways that exist within each step of the research process.

⁶⁷ Marie Ann Battiste, *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision*, ed. Marie Battiste (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2000); Jennifer Nez Denetdale, *Reclaiming Diné History: The Legacies of Navajo Chief Manuelito and Juanita*, 1st ed. (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2007); Margaret E. Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010); Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London and New York: Zed Books Ltd., 1999); Shawn Wilson, *Research Is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods* (Black Point: Fernwood Publishing, 2009).

⁶⁸ Janice Archibald and Quannah Xiiem, “Indigenous Storytelling,” in *Memory*, ed. P. Tortell, M. Turin, and M. Young (Peter Wall Institute for Advanced Studies, 2018), 233–42, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvtzpfm.30>; Jennifer Nez Denetdale, *Reclaiming Diné History: The Legacies of Navajo Chief Manuelito and Juanita*, 1st ed. (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2007), 12; Shannon Speed, *Incarcerated Stories: Indigenous Women Migrants and Violence in the Settler-Capitalist State* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019); Renya K. Ramirez, *Native Hubs: Culture, Community, and Belonging in Silicon Valley and Beyond* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).

As an enrolled citizen of the Sicangu Lakota Nation, I hold both insider and outsider roles in my research; therefore, reflecting on my goals and intentions is critical to this work, as part of the process of self-reflexivity. I often asked myself if it was right for me to write about Rez Metal. However, I found myself drawn back to the Rez Metal scene time and again, unable to leave and compelled to return and understand it better. I am genuinely grateful for the friendships created and the encouragement I received from many of the Rez Metal musicians whom I have had the pleasure of getting to know. Throughout this dissertation, I make it clear that there is a tension: being urban and rez within the native community is still a topic that frequently arises as a reality.⁶⁹ I acknowledge that I did not grow up on the Reservation, nor do I pretend to fully understand the hardships of rural life. Not everyone on the reservation had the same experiences as others. I note that in my upbringing, I did not have to haul my water, think about consistent electricity, or chop wood. I am fully aware of the privileges that city life provided, in that I did not have to think about basic necessities. There are times when I recognize our similarities in lived experiences, but I am also made aware of the differences of our lived realities that exist between us.

As a biracial Lakota and Japanese woman, I am writing and working with tribal communities that are not my own. As a Lakota, I have had generative discussions on centering “wotakuye” in this work, which means being in good relations with the community, people, and our nonhuman relatives. As Lakota people, our connections are essential, and the way we carry ourselves follows us wherever we go. Our Lakota values teach us to live in good relations; however, without over-theorizing what it means to be in wotakuye, I realize this meaning differs

⁶⁹ During my work, it is not uncommon to hear “you did not grow up here, like us.”. Alternatively, “You’re a little different.” Most of the time, I was met with positive feedback, especially when I attended their show. Alternatively, thanks for coming to support.

for each scholar. Thus, “wotakuye” is an opportunity to be I use to be open and truthful about how I show up in the community and in my dissertation. As a Lakota our values are to maintain good relations with all people, which I further discuss in Chapter 5, “Indigenous Joy,” where I discuss my collaboration with the Rez Metal community. It is important to discuss positionality, including my identity and limitations as a researcher, to encourage reflection and vulnerability.

I also had an opportunity to also reflect on my positionality as a Japanese American woman on Navajo Nation. When I would speak about my identities, I was also open about my mother coming from Japan. It wasn’t until one of my closest Navajo friend who name is Asia, mentioned in our discussions about languages and that the histories of our people were on opposition in World War II. I had never thought about my Japanese identity in this context with the history of Navajo Code Talkers who were an integral part in World War II against the Japanese military. While our histories together hold conflicts in today’s era, we only feel gratitude that we live in a time where we can share friendship with our languages and culture with each other in a safe way. There was never discrimination or adversity that I was a Japanese American on Navajo lands or a reminder about that history.

My dissertation works to undo the colonial mapping, which also means pushing the boundary labels of simple being urban and rez. However, I also recognize that as a larger Indian community, we are still working through the conversations and positionalities of what this means to us as Native communities, both individually and collectively. These are layered discussions surrounding urban or rez identities, which can also reference how a person grew up connected or removed from a cultural community. I even learned there were levels of Rez that measured how “deep-rez”⁷⁰ carried meaning, which could signal that you grew up more central within the

⁷⁰ Jacobsen, “*Navajo Country*”, 21.

reservation and further from the border town or cities. I have also had conversations that would label bands as Rez Metal, but if they grew up near the border towns like Gallup and Albuquerque, there was a different layer to their band. In many senses, bands in Albuquerque may have easier access to instruments, music equipment, or even music lessons, whereas in the deep rez, a musician may need to drive two hours to the nearest music store.

I aim to ensure that these realities are not lost or overlooked as simply “colonial labels,” but are viewed with complexity and the constructed realities that affect and frame how our communities understand and describe their experiences of the world. Tribal communities across Indian Country are not homogeneous or share the same opinions but are held together by a multitude of experiential truths. While my dissertation seeks to make sense of these colonial labels that can be seen as divisive, I draw attention to the shifts in our focus that these cities and border towns all have in common that they are situated on unceded territories of tribal nations, such as the Navajo, Pueblo, Apache, and O’odham.

As I continue to reflect on my positionality, I tell everyone I am from a different tribal nation, and that I grew up as an “Urban Native” from Denver. I would like to emphasize that, within Rez Metal, I do not base my work on the understanding of Diné, Pueblo, or Apache ways of knowing or worldview, nor do I participate in any ceremonial knowledge to inform my questions. I find it essential to share these frameworks and expertise with scholars from these tribal nations, rather than misappropriating the values and teachings that have been passed down through kinship and community. I identify as a Native woman researcher, working in a scene that predominantly consists of Native men as participants. At times, the dynamics with my participants reflected a level of respect for me as a woman, and at other times, I faced challenges because I was not part of the behind-the-scenes conversations among the guys. Overall, the

Native men I spoke with were very kind and helpful to my project. They would recommend another band or a friend of theirs for me to interview.

I also disclosed to my bands that my ideas might come out differently, as I am not from the Southwest tribes. Being a Native woman in the scene would also provide opportunities to reflect and think about the strong Native women they knew in the scene. Many people encouraged me to continue with my work. My intentions were noticed by many, and I truly appreciated the help and responses on social media that contributed to the success of my project in all its components. For the most part, my gender as a woman would come into play from male band members who apologized for using curse words in front of me or who would be slightly more reserved or quiet around me, but overall, our community protocol to help a Native woman is hardly ever questioned. There were times when I was nervous that they would perceive me as an “unfit” researcher or question my authenticity in the project for personal gain.

It was also encouraging in several instances when band members would share, along the lines of, “I don’t know why, but I feel like you are doing something big and important.” I often felt that intuition and trust had to be earned, not given. This meant that I had to put in a consistent effort to be present at the shows and in my interactions with the audience. I often think back to my first show challenges, when I had to break the ice with some of the band members who were shy or unsure why a young woman was attending these shows with a giant camera and with so many questions. I went from attending shows alone to where no one talked to me to eventually becoming a familiar face in the scene, where I was known by my first name. They would say, “Oh, that is Viki, she is working on a documentary or something.” As I engaged with the community, I found that, as a scholar, trust and reciprocity were earned, which was reflected in my interviews as they became more meaningful. I encountered very little resistance and did

not need to tread lightly around certain individuals. Even in taking photos, I would hesitate to come on stage to photograph bands, but many invited me on stage to take footage and photographs as needed.

B. Listening Through Distortion: Rez Metal fan and the Photoethnographic Eye⁷¹

I approach this topic from a different perspective than an ethnomusicologist. I am not a trained musician with a background in music theory, nor do I possess a thorough knowledge of metal history comparable to that of the most dedicated, heavy metal fandom. While I know a lot of Heavy Metal bands, I found my knowledge of music history to be remedial compared to the band members who could name drop every guitarist and member of each band, the type of instrument they play, and how they play it. They could also name all the bands' musicians created or where they went on tour. Repeatedly during interviews, band members would mention their guitar heroes or drummers who inspired them, and I would write them down. Later, I would search for YouTube clips of those musicians to learn more about them. I also do not know the mechanics and physics of sound pedal boards, amps, equipment, or the language to fully understand a backline or the production of shows. Through the interview, I became familiar with the genre and learned about new bands and musicians, as well as their techniques, by speaking with my interviewees.

Instead, I approach this from a position of learning and listening, as a listener, community advocate, photographer, and a fan who buys merchandise and watches the set. As an untrained musician I did not know what a backline meant to the bands and whenever I was asked what the

⁷¹ I draw Photoethnographic Eye from Jason, DeLeon. 2018. *The Photoethnographic Eye: Visualizing the Honduran Migrant Experience in Mexico*. In *out of Bounds: Photography and Migration*, edited by T. Sheehan, Routledge Press.

“backline” of the show was I would freeze. Whenever the bands ask me during the shows, I put on what the backline I would freeze. Eventually, I had to learn some basic knowledge about a back line for the bands such as what instruments, amps, drum kits or other musical equipment was available for the bands to use so they didn’t have to bring their entire garage or home set up with them in the cars. Having a prepared backline is beneficial for bands to travel on tour with minimal equipment.

As a Rez Metal fan and photographer with limited knowledge of Heavy Metal and music theory, I want future scholars to know that they can still engage in this work, regardless of their background and training. I explain why this scene was so influential to my younger teenage self and why I feel a connection to the Rez Metal scene. I grew up feeling like an urban Native outcast who thrived within the early 2000s music scene communities of emo, metalcore, and alternative rock. The ideals of Metal spoke to me about not fitting into cliques, conforming to school spirit and pride, and being the student who constantly challenged the racially oppressive structures of high school public education.

Therefore, I found my community within music, focusing on resistance and seeking to be in spaces that shared the same values for social change during the ongoing political turmoil of the Bush Era’s “War on Terror.” Bands like Rise Against, Green Day, Anti-Flag, and Rage Against the Machine spoke to me. Even my favorite local Denver band, “The Flobots,” was instrumental in my upbringing, showing me how music can bring about social change. Both members of Flobots, Jamie Laurie and Stephen Brackett, have a background as educators. They were a band that frequently attended all community events, performing, protest gatherings, and supporting youth in finding their creative expression through music. They even helped with starting the connection for Rez Metal to come to Denver Levitt Pavillion venue. I must take a

moment to emphasize that without Stephen Brackett in the Flobots, a lot of this movement for Rez Metal would never have happened in the Denver area. While Stephen does not like to take credit, I emphasize that he would call me quarterly while I was a PhD student, reading my assignments for class and asking me when Rez Metal was coming to Denver. He would encourage me to believe in my project of bringing Rez Metal to Denver, even when I felt unsure.

I grew up on East Colfax, a street lined with cafés, restaurants, dive bars, and concert venues, including The Ogden, The Bluebird, and the Fillmore. I took any opportunity I could to see a band with the little money I had, particularly “all-ages” shows, which were my entry into a space where I could just be. However, I often found myself, as one of the few non-white audience members into alternative rock, metal, and emo. Being an urban Native, it was rare to see other Native peoples in these urban spaces, and even in the bands. Even the bands in the early 2000s that spoke to me are all predominantly white, which continued to show the lack of diversity in the rock and metal genres. This is why Rez Metal is so influential for me, as it showcases how our people create music about the Native community, while addressing the issues I passionately care about.

Methodological Framework

A. Photoethnography as a (Re)Mapping Practice.

This work on Rez Metal will expand on the research approaches from this specific music scene, while applying community engaged methodologies such as bringing shows to new venues. In additions, this work utilizes Indigenous methods such as oral storytelling of the Rez Metal

scene with a focus on sound cartography. This work is unique that engages community in building the music scene in new spaces and venues for the Rez Metal community.⁷²

This dissertation will employ photoethnography as a remapping practice, taking a different intervention that moves away from conventional maps of the Navajo Nation. Instead, this work will create a visual Rez Metal map, which will be developed and charted through graphic art and photo-ethnography. Advocating for photography as a methodological tool, even for an anthropologist, is a challenging task given the complex historical relationships between photography and map-making practices. Nevertheless, this dissertation aims to challenge and reframe historical narratives through the use of photographs and visual representations of Native lands.

Visual images are a part of how we experience, imagine, learn, and produce knowledge.⁷³ While the representation and stereotypes of Native American people are critical to discuss, I expand on the concepts of settler ideologies to shed light on how these images continue to be perpetuated to justify the removal of Native American peoples from their land and erase their histories from settler accountability. I take from the understanding that the settler imaginary freezes Native American people to their past as this dying and vanishing race narrative keeps their history from continuing. This is important for my work, as I investigate how these narratives continue to circulate within the reservations.

Early visual anthropologists, such as John Collier Jr. and Malcolm Collier, wrote about methods in visual anthropology, utilizing photography and how cameras are still employed as a

⁷² Rez Metal has been written by Indigenous scholar Kristy Martinez in a MA thesis that writes about Rez Metal and Punk music through the lens of musicology and DIY aesthetics. Kristy Martinez, *Not All Killed by John Wayne: The Long History of Indigenous Rock, Metal, and Punk 1940s to the Present*. (M.A. Thesis, UCLA, 2019.) *Rez Metal* book written by Ashkan Stone through media studies and mainly presented in a documentary film.

⁷³ Pink, Sarah. 2021. *Doing Visual Ethnography*: Pbk. 4th ed. SAGE Publications. 2.

tool for mapping, including landscapes and aerial photography.⁷⁴ The book provides different photographic method approaches to apply visual methods in Anthropology. For example, they reference how geologists use aerial photographs to assist in analyzing the land, which is then directly transferred to a map.⁷⁵ Collier's methods also mention that anthropologists use photographs to survey socioeconomic conditions, such as urban areas with poverty, as well as cultural architecture, including buildings or churches, or to document the population of a place.⁷⁶ The authors explain how "photographic mapping as a way to relate the ethnographic considerations to the larger ecology."⁷⁷ Their work employs a straightforward approach to photography that vaguely mentions ethical considerations, positionality, community input, and collaboration with the researcher.

As technology advances, photographs become the tool to make boundaries in the map-making process. The camera and the photography have become integral to the map making process. Since the invention of photography in the late 1830s, the camera has been able to record and document its surroundings, making it a natural tool for mapmakers to create accurate maps. The first aerial photograph was taken in 1858 by French photographer Gaspar Felix Tournachon known as Nadra , who is credited with taking the first successful aerial photograph of Paris from the view from a hot air balloon.⁷⁸ However, it was Cecil Shadbolt who made the first photograph of the UK from a hot air balloon over London in 1882.⁷⁹ These methods were eventually

⁷⁴John Collier Jr. and Malcolm Collier, *Visual Anthropology: Photography as a Research Method*, rev. ed. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1986)

⁷⁵ Collier and Collier, *Visual Anthropology*, 30.

⁷⁶ Collier and Collier, *Visual Anthropology*, 35.

⁷⁷ Collier and Collier, *Visual Anthropology*, 35.

⁷⁸Olivia B. Waxman, "Aerial Photography Has Changed the World. Drones Are Just the Latest Example," *TIME*, May 31, 2018, <https://time.com/5289117/aerial-photography-drones-history/>.

⁷⁹ The Evolution of GIS: Aerial Photography and the Mapping Revolution – Part 1, *Swift Geospatial*, January 23, 2025, accessed September 5, 2025, <https://swiftgeospatial.solutions/2025/01/23/the-evolution-of-gis-aerial-photography-and-the-mapping-revolution-1/>.

transformed for military purposes in World War I to gather information about enemy trenches, troops, and artillery. As technology advances, photographs become the tool to make boundaries in the map-making process.⁸⁰

To frame the colonial gaze, I draw on the work of visual scholars such as Neva Kilpatrick, Morgan Bell, and Jolene Rickard, who demonstrate how these Native racial stereotypes were developed during the anthropological era.⁸¹ Kilpatrick focuses on the genesis of stereotypes from "seeing red" to the act of erasing Native peoples in the first films ever made. Morgan Bell discusses how photographs and films were simultaneously developed in the same era as the creation of the field of Anthropology, which led to this salvage disappearing narrative⁸²

B. Engaging Methodology: Indigenous Visual Mapping

As films and photography became more popular methods of anthropological inquiry to understand Native American people and their culture. As the field of anthropology developed, so did its visual practices and methods. The technology of the image and the discipline of anthropology were developed in tandem.⁸³ These were not just photographs, but also films, made to narrate the story of Native people and to influence the general public. Kilpatrick notes that these images were aimed to push towards Western nationalism, as presented in modern mass

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Jacquelyn Kilpatrick, *Celluloid Indians: Native Americans and Film* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999); Morgan Bell, "Some Thoughts on 'Taking' Pictures: Imaging 'Indians' and the Counter-Narratives of Visual Sovereignty," *Great Plains Quarterly* 31, no. 2 (2011): 85–104; Jolene Rickard, "Diversifying Sovereignty and the Reception of Indigenous Art," *Art Journal* 76, no. 2 (2017): 81–84, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00043249.2017.136719>.

⁸² Bell, "Some Thoughts on 'Taking' Pictures," 87.

⁸³ Bell, "Some Thoughts on 'Taking' Pictures," 87.

media cinema played a major role in the production of national symbols and ideologies.⁸⁴ Such ideologies include the concept of untamed lands, the frontier, and Western expansion as a form of Manifest Destiny. During Western expansion, the removal of Native American peoples from their land was seen by the majority of Euro-Americans as the painful but proper course of action. They were certain of the rightness of expansion and the progress that the American Indians could only hinder.⁸⁵

Public perception and exhibits often framed Native people to be seen as historically curated objects in exhibit halls. The messaging surrounding Native histories is intentionally made palpable to white audiences. I would often see Native people in exhibits and photographs, visually bound to wearing regalia, beadwork, feathers, and maybe even a backdrop of buffalo roaming in the back, in order to be connected to the lands. These images would visually curate empty backdrops of vast open lands.

When I first picked up my DSLR Nikon camera, I never considered myself a photographer or artist—I simply saw myself using photography as an outlet and tool to share stories and raise visual awareness of my cultural backgrounds. As social media came to rise from contemporary Native American photography, I remember observing many photographs of Native people in regalia against a modern urban backdrop of concrete and city buildings such as Anishinaabe photographer Nadya Kwandibens “*Concrete Indians*” and Tulalip photographer Matika Wilbur of “*Project 562*”. As social media and Instagram began to take off I would view themes of consistent portraits of Native Americans that would mimic Edward C. Curtis’⁸⁶ styles

⁸⁴ Kilpatrick, *Celluloid Indians*, 5.

⁸⁵ Kilpatrick, *Celluloid Indians*, 7.

⁸⁶ Edward C. Curtis' legacy was to take photos of the “vanishing Indians” and preserve their image.

in modern wet plate photos taken by Native peoples rather than through an explicit settler gaze like Will Wilson's work.

I respect the work of Native photographers and creatives, and I believe every Native artist can experiment with photography in anyways. However, when I would see photographs of Native people in regalia, I always thought to myself that we as Native people are not wearing regalia or our traditional clothing every day. I was an urban Native wearing Vans, skinny jeans and listening to alternative rock, emo, grunge and metal. Frustrated by these realities I wanted to also see modern exhibits of photography with Native people in everyday moments and particularly, Native people in subcultures.

I use Colin Calloway's descriptions of Indigenous maps as "pictures of experiences" as a departure point to articulate a photo-ethnography as a cartography that maps Native American spatialized experiences to land and place.⁸⁷ The use of photography is an integral part of my work to decolonize maps, offering new possibilities for Indigenous mapping within Rez Metal. Drawing from interdisciplinary literature in American Indian studies, geography, history, and anthropology, I employ a photo-ethnography as an Indigenous mapping practice by presenting photographs throughout the entire dissertation. The purpose is to center the photographs to counter mainstream narration and stereotypes of Native American peoples and communities as "broken" and instead (re)map Indigenous experiences of the reservation life.

As an Indigenous scholar, I challenge the medium of photography, Not only were photographs used to frame and narrate the noble story of Native Americans' removal from their land, but they were also used to draw the boundaries and delineate the lines of land. I aim to explore how photographs can challenge, and counter dominant narratives inscribed on Native

⁸⁷ Colin G. Calloway, *One Vast Winter Count: The Native American West before Lewis and Clark*, 1st ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003) 13.

peoples. I also explore how experiences of the reservation boundaries and map-making, can create new meanings and possibilities for better futures within the sound of music and visual images. The literature I discussed on Indigenous mapping will provide a background that I will draw on to inform my research methodologies, as well as provide a picture of the maps. Rez Metal travels beyond the confines of the Navajo Nation into new territories.

Historically and in contemporary academic disciplines such as anthropology and geography, scholars often use reservation maps to illustrate the spatial distribution of tribal nations in the introduction to their books or publications. The map of the tribal territories drawn by colonial projects distinguishes and uses defined boundary lines to separate what is federal land from tribally owned land. These maps are used in practice to provide the historical context of tribal histories and the locations where communities reside. However, these maps were not drawn by Native peoples but by a government agency. Calloway distinguishes between European maps, which use measurements such as scales, direction, latitude, and longitude, and Native American maps, which did not rely on fixed points within a bounded space but instead used a pattern of intersecting lines.⁸⁸

Scope of Fieldwork: Driving the “War Pony” Ethnography

Through my ethnographic fieldwork, Rez Metal traces powerfully back to the Navajo Nation as the center point of where this term originated. I interviewed over fifty band members from various tribal nations, including Navajo, Ute, Pueblo, Apache, and O’odham, that span New Mexico, Arizona, and Southwestern Colorado. Through each interview, I asked them about their earliest memory of hearing the term “Rez Metal” and when they first encountered the term. Most

⁸⁸ Calloway, *One Vast Winter Count*, 12.

of my interviews describe the earliest memory as originating from the early to mid-2000s, often referred to as an inside joke among Heavy Metal bands from reservation communities.

For Native Americans living in reservation communities and cities throughout what is now the United States, Heavy Metal music remains a popular art form, with scenes like this unfolding at powwows, in basements, and at small clubs. Youth and young adults attend shows, purchase band recordings and t-shirts, learn to play famous metal songs on guitar, and engage in a variety of other activities that contribute to the formation of a subculture. However, "Rez Metal" (as it is widely known) is not just a community of fans and musicians, but rather a form of community-based resistance that presents forms of anti-colonial resistance. Within the lyrics of songs and through the use of material culture — including guitars, photographs, CDs, and T-shirts — participants draw on socio historical experiences of resilience while also deconstructing racist stereotypes, performing and consuming what is typically regarded as a White musical genre.

Prior to my in-person fieldwork, during the COVID-19 pandemic shutdowns, I conducted approximately thirty Zoom interviews with current and retired members of Rez Metal bands. These zoom interviews participants around the Rez Metal scene consisted of former fans who grew up in the scene, show promoters, and other community members who remembered building the scene. While COVID-19 was a global phenomenon, the Navajo Nation was disproportionately impacted by the disease, with the highest rates of infection in the community. On top of all the challenges that reservation life brings, many lives were lost in the community. The impact of COVID-19 was felt nationwide, with the primary concern being the protection of the elderly, who are the cultural knowledge keepers and language carriers. To emphasize that this time felt uncertain, with no vaccine in sight, when I conducted these interviews.

On the other hand, while the pandemic's outcomes were uncertain, this made interviewing during this time advantageous, as scheduling interviews on Zoom was convenient and flexible. Through the interviews, musicians often missed discussing their music, and at this time, living without live shows and facing uncertainty, made the values of a Rez Metal scene more meaningful. Connecting during this time became truly reflective, which also made it a good opportunity to share stories and express hopes for the scene to return, and not to take gathering for granted again. It was also more accessible than if I had done it in person, which would have required driving hours to make visits, which I was able to do.

To describe the pandemic era, the emotions during my interviews were almost unreal, as it was hard to imagine when in-person shows would return. These feelings also brought out more emotion and determination that the scene would come together again. It was also a time of introspection for many, and their music was also changing direction. I found myself in awe that they were still finding ways to make music and practice together, even if it meant wearing a facemask outside and staying six feet apart during the later part of the pandemic, when businesses could slowly start lifting regulations.

During my official year of in-person fieldwork, I organized my research into three phases. In the first phase, I spent three months living in Albuquerque, New Mexico, focusing on the scene from the Pueblo and New Mexico side of the Navajo Nation. These trips were mainly driving to Gallup, Farmington, and Albuquerque. There are always Rez Metal shows going on in the Fall; it just requires driving long distances. Meaning, there could be a show in Albuquerque, a show in Gallup, then a show in Farmington, or shows on the same date in different cities. The Rez Metal scene is not where fans drive to each show following a band and the entire scene. These shows are put on for local fans who can attend.

As it was just me driving to every single show for fieldwork, I describe this time as road-tripping to a show every weekend. Alternatively, in the Indian way, we have a slang term, "taking the war pony" (which is my 2010 grey Toyota Corolla) across Indian country. A "War-Pony" ethnography⁸⁹ also engages in driving through areas of both tribal reservation and non-tribal lands to get to a show or conduct an interview. As mentioned previously, there were moments when my ethnographic C permit was required, depending on where I was filming or conducting interviews. Driving throughout the Navajo Nation and finding Rez metal all over the southwest showed me that Rez Metal is not just limited to reservations or confined to one area.

It was very common to drive over hundreds of miles to attend Rez Metal shows. I traveled frequently between Albuquerque to Gallup, NM, for a show at the Juggernaut venue which frequents Rez Metal shows. I would drive from Gallup, then to Farmington as my base for Shiprock. I made this round trip twice. For one of my trips I drove from Albuquerque to Shiprock, then to Window Rock, and finally to Gallup, covering a distance of approximately 433 miles, before returning to Albuquerque. I also took weekend trips to two shows in Phoenix at the Blooze Bar, a popular spot for Metal bands touring California. After my time in Phoenix I drove back 281 miles back to Gallup, for a special Halloween event. I would stay overnight in Gallup and then drive back to Albuquerque to my apartment in the morning. These long drive highlighted how far each Rez Metal show was to be a fan and the expense it takes to see all of them on tour. I learned through traveling the types of expenses bands would have to accrue just

⁸⁹ War Pony is a reference used on the Rez referring to your car as your modern day warhorse. As our early ancestors rode horses and did not drive cars to get around. I also have to credit Kyle May's Indigenous Methodologies class when we discussed ethnography and he described a "drive-by ethnography" as an idea during pandemic times which then inspired this term I use as the "War Pony Ethnography."

to do a show. Through participant observation I noticed it was common for bands to drive late nights after their show back to the reservations to avoid lodging fees.

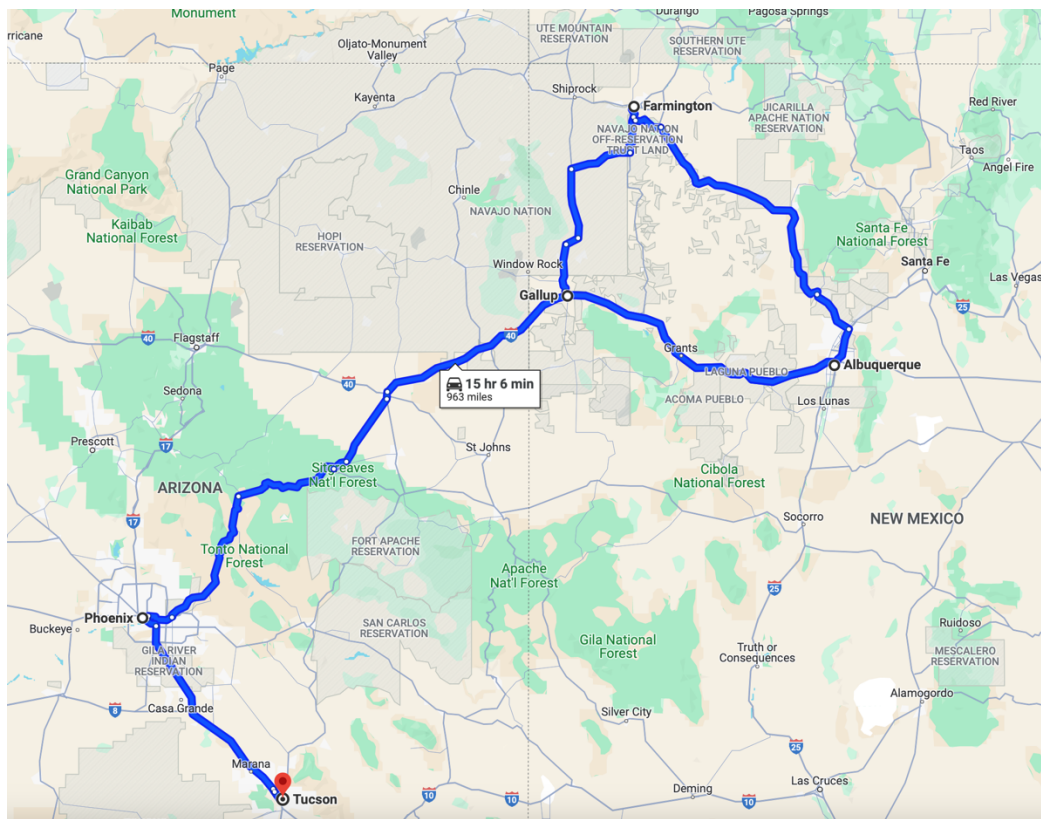


Figure I.1. *Driving the War Pony Ethnography.* Screenshot from Google Maps. Source: Google Maps, <https://www.google.com/maps>.

To say I know the I-40 West well is an understatement. My relationship with the road is engraved into my memories. I know when the land and formations change from the red rocks of the Navajo Nation to the flat lands, and from the gravel and off-road areas of Holbrook to the hills and green forests of Payson, Arizona. As you keep going toward Phoenix, the mountains become a part of your drive going uphill that overlooks the forest and then riding downhill into cactus land outside of Salt River. The road from Phoenix to Gallup through Payson is my favorite drive in the west. The Rez Metal tour is not cheap, through my personal experience of following the scene. I calculated the expenses you incur by combining the costs of gas, tickets, meals, and merchandise purchases. I calculated the expenses as one individual, which ranged

from staying with a friend to paying rent for my Airbnb or purchasing a hotel for each night's stay.

I traveled alone for most of the time, and once with my filmmaker, Martin Martinez, who accompanied me on my journey to film the scene for almost a week. Martin played a vital role in documenting the Rez Metal scene while I was out conducting interviews. With decades of filmmaking experience, he was able to bring high-end video equipment with him to produce a short documentary. Martin came from Los Angeles to Albuquerque just to attend two Rez Metal shows in Gallup and Farmington, New Mexico. I appreciated his help in elevating this scene, as I did not have a whole film crew or a production budget. I thank Martin for doing this as a passion project. As part of our filming, we also spent an entire day with Buck Concho in Laguna Pueblo, learning about his life as a former Rock musician in the 1980s. His memories date back further than the term "Rez Metal" ever existed.

The second phase of my fieldwork, I spent nearly a month in Phoenix, Arizona, becoming what I describe as an “accidental promoter” in planning my research. Driving was also a part of this journey again. I drove from Los Angeles back to Phoenix, Arizona, which is about 383 miles one way. I would also make the drive from Phoenix to Tucson, AZ, which is about 113 miles south. I even drove 141 miles north to Sedona to meet a band practicing in a cabin in the woods. As an accidental promoter, I put on the first-ever ASU and UCLA Rez Metal Pop-Up Show in the center of campus, which I will discuss further in Chapter 5.

Finally, I spent the final phase of my fieldwork in Denver, Colorado, at the Denver Art Museum's Spring term, Native Arts Artists in Residency Program, where I curated Rez Metal as a gallery exhibition. I also had an important community collaborator where I received funds and brought the first Rez Metal show to the Denver Levitt Pavilion venue. This research phase

focuses on introducing Rez Metal to a new audience and exploring how Rez Metal bands challenge traditional notions of reservations and urban spaces. As I detail in my third chapter, I will rely on methods in visual anthropology and photo ethnography in creating the Rez Metal exhibit.

Dissertation Overview

Understanding Rez Metal as a (re)mapping practice requires an understanding of its place within a web of relations. This dissertation, (Re)Mapping a Rez Metal Resistance, critically engages with settler colonial construction of mapping place, visual aesthetic, sound, and gender. This dissertation aims to reimagine cartography of Rez Metal as a place, shaped by the active imaginations of Native young adults who are creating a community of new hope rooted in relationality.

My following dissertation is organized into five chapters, each demonstrating a (re)mapping practice. Therefore, my central research questions are creating Rez Metal maps that are highlighted in each chapter and organized around the following questions.

The Rez Metal Maps

1. **PLACE MAP:** What is Rez Metal as a place? Deriving from the reservation, how does the Rez reclaim indigenous place-making within story mapping practices?
2. **SOUND MAP:** What is a Rez Metal Resistance? Whether it be a continuation of cultural practices, contemporary expression, protest, or how Rez Metal music can push against settler logics of reservation boundaries through the sound waves.
3. **VISUAL MAP:** How can the Rez Metal scene (re)map our understanding of Indigenous spatialized experiences to land and place, in this case to the reservation, through sound and visual photographic methods?
4. **WOMEN (RE)MAP:** How does Rez Metal (re)map colonial gender norms and expectations through Indigenous women in the Rez Metal scene?
5. **FUTURE MAP:** How does Rez Metal present as a remapping practice create new possibilities for the present and Indigenous futures?

Chapter One Focuses on understanding (re)mapping of place through lived experiences of the Rez Metal scene. This chapter investigates Rez Metal place-making through stories and memories. Place is not only defined as a physical location but also a metaphoric location of “place”. I expand on how Indigenous people make place by relating personal and communal experiences and history to specific locations and landscapes. I discuss how Rez Metal, as a place, is created from the history of the reservation and how Rez can be a reclaimed, spatialized experience through storytelling.

Chapter Two examines how to articulate a Rezistance Cartography through the sounds of Heavy Metal music. I investigate how a Rez Metal resistance speaks back to colonialism and violence, exploring the construction of the reservation by attending to the specific sounds of Rez Metal. This includes the various manifestations in the context of live performances and recordings. I trace how the appreciation, production, and circulation of Rez Metal music contribute to a remapping of reservation life that actively resists the logic of settler colonialism. Drawing from David Samuels, North American Indigenous experiences of colonialism can be understood through contemporary Native music.

Chapter Three, titled "Visual Rez Metal Cartography," examines new meanings through visual and material culture. Using anthropology to trace the origins of stereotypes about Indian people and why producing new photographic images and sonic representations of contemporary Rez Metal artists, fans, and promoters are integral to new Indigenous futures. My work explores how the sights, photos, and sounds of Rez Metal reconfigure place-making and (re)map Indigenous experiences through an exhibit housed at the Denver Art Museum.

Chapter Four, “Rise of the Matriarch,” will focus on gender and Indigenous women (re)mapping land and place through music. Over the past decade, social and historical accounts have demonstrated how Indigenous women, and their voices have become increasingly political. Throughout the conclusion I reiterate a (rez)urgence cartography of an “Indigenous Sonic Rezistance” as an everyday practice of remapping stories, visuals, and sounds about reservation life. My conclusion, "Mapping a New Hope," summarizes the community efforts in building better Indigenous futures.

CHAPTER ONE: (REZ)URGANCE CARTOGRAPHY: REZ METAL AS A PLACE

1.1 Opening History. Place-Making in the Code Talker Guitar.

In 2019, scrolling through Facebook, an image of a guitar lying on the ground appeared Valley with visible signatures signed with a Sharpie marker. In the post, I read about that several Navajo Code Talkers signed the guitar. I immediately reached out to Richard Anderson on Facebook to request a meeting time when I came to visit Gallup. We met at the Gallup Coffee Shop, where locals come for the coffee and the pastries. Richard took out his "Code Talker" guitar case and laid it on the table. We began to identify the names one by one, and I also asked him which signatures he remembered when I had trouble spelling them out. As I went through the guitar, we identified sixteen signatures from the Navajo Code Talkers on an original 1971 USA Fender Butterscotch Telecaster Guitar.



Figure 1.1 *Code Talker Guitar* Photo by Richard Anderson Jr., 202. Digital photograph. Used with permission.

One by one, we began spelling out the letters and matching the names, even referencing the list of the 300 Navajo Code Talkers to identify them. Most of the signatures were from

veterans of the 5th Division of the United States Marine Corps, who served at the Battle of Iwo Jima. Unfortunately, only 13 signatures could be identified on the guitar, and the other three names were lost to wear and tear as Richard played the guitar during performances with his band over the years. The names we were able to identify were Don Akee, Samuel H. Begay, Roy Hawthorne, Samuel T. Holiday, Keith M. Little, George Alfred Moss, Alfred James Peaches, Richard Plummer and several signatures from Korean War Code Talkers; Albert Smith, Samuel Tso, Samuel Sr. Tsosie, Joe Sr. Vandever and Robert Walley.

As Richard sat across from me, I ask why he had chosen this Fender guitar and why he had asked the Code Talkers to sign it. What are the lessons or stories behind this guitar? I approached this guitar like an art piece to understand the message behind it and how an artist like Richard makes sense of this guitar. Richard started to list all the famous musicians who played the Telecaster, like Muddy Waters, Eric Clapton, Jeff Beck, Keith Richards, and Jimmy Page. Richard toured with the Code Talker guitar and taught Navajo youth how to play rock 'n' roll.⁹⁰ Richard felt the connection to music history and explained further.

The Code Talkers protected the freedom for every artist and band in this country to express their music the way they want to sing it, with no limits. every band and every artist owe that "thank you" to the Code Talkers for that very freedom and for protecting our music. No one thinks of music history in this way. That is why the Code Talker guitar is such a sentimental and heavy piece, especially with very few code talkers left.⁹¹

Richard began to describe the process of obtaining the signatures of the Code Talkers on the telecaster guitar, aiming to bridge the understanding of music history and the freedom of expression, while incorporating Navajo history. Richard said he does not want the guitar to leave the Navajo Nation, as it belongs to the Four Sacred Mountains and their land and people.

⁹⁰ He relayed that five years after World War II, the first Fender Telecaster Guitar was made.

⁹¹ Ritchie Anderson Jr, in-person interview, Gallup, New Mexico, December 2019.

Obtaining signatures from a Navajo Code Talker was a challenging endeavor. Richard told me they initially said no. As Richard attended more Code Talker events and movie premieres in Gallup, many eventually signed the guitar, under the condition that Richard would never sell it for money. Richard emphasizes in our conversations that if I share this photograph that I have to mention he was offered \$50,000 in cash for the guitar and refused the offer. His long-term goal for the guitar is that it will be shown in a museum so that the public audience can engage with it.

This single image on Facebook prompted me to ask more questions about the interconnection of sound and place in Navajo Storytelling and the understanding of history. In Richard's childhood, Navajo Code talkers were not mentioned in US History textbooks, much less acknowledged by the general public. It was not until the late 1960s that the Navajo Code Talkers were declassified, and they gained public recognition for their efforts during World War II. As I conducted this interview in 2019. It is also important to note that, as of October 2024, only two Code Talkers remain alive, with John Kinsel Sr. being the latest to pass away.⁹²

The guitar is one of many examples of how music history among the Navajo people can begin from storytelling. The Navajo Code Talker guitar is a poignant example of how place-making and history are inextricably linked to land and memory. Richard's guitar is central to place-making practices as it embodies intimate connections between kinship, history, and stories of place. I chose to begin the narrative with the story of the Code Talker guitar to illustrate how rock and roll began to enter the reservation. This story stands as one of many origin stories of Rez Metal and Rock 'n 'Roll, the first to enter the music scene, which underscores how place is constructed and shaped through stories.

⁹²Associated Press, "Navajo Code Talkers Helped Win WWII – Now Only 3 Are Still Alive," *AP News*, November 11, 2023, <https://apnews.com/article/navajo-code-talkers-world-war-ii-5f527f43eebaede11eb86f7bdad27a39>.

To remind the readers, as a Lakota scholar, it is not my place or authority to theorize Navajo land in relation to language, creation, and culture. Navajo scholars, such as Jennifer Denetdale and Renae Watchman, discuss the ethics of writing by omitting information considered sacred, including stories and ceremonial practices, from their research. They are respected Navajo scholars who have written extensively on Diné land, creation stories, culture, language, gender, Diné history, and sovereignty with in-depth analysis within the community.⁹³ Their research tells the creation stories and traditional knowledge that have already been published; however, they opt for a form of refusal to publish sensitive community work.⁹⁴

Instead, I start this chapter with a focus on how the United States emerged and how the Navajo reservation came to be. Therefore, I discuss a general overview of Navajo Nation history to provide context for the formation of the reservation and explain how the Rez Metal genre name originated. It is essential to note that the historical events leading up to the establishment of the Navajo Reservation system. While many of the songs draw from Navajo history, they also reflect shared histories and resistance to US colonialism that resonate within Native American communities, inspiring Rez Metal songs through their lyrics and band names. As Native American peoples were forced by US law to move on to the reservations in US History,⁹⁵ I argue that to understand Rez Metal as a place and as a genre of music, you must understand

⁹³Jennifer Nez Denetdale, *Reclaiming Diné History: The Legacies of Navajo Chief Manuelito and Juanita*, 1st ed. (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2007); Robert Alexander Innes and Kim Anderson, eds., *Indigenous Men and Masculinities: Legacies, Identities, Regeneration* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2015); Lloyd L. Lee, *Diné Masculinities: Conceptualizations and Reflections* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2013); Renee Watchman, *Restoring Relations Through Stories: From Dinétah to Denendeh*, 1st ed. (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2024).

⁹⁴ Denetdale, Jennifer Nez. 2007. *Reclaiming Diné History: The Legacies of Navajo Chief Manuelito and Juanita*. 1st ed. Tucson: University of Arizona Press , and Renae Watchman, *Restoring Relations Through Stories*, 11.

⁹⁵ See U.S. Congress. Indian Removal Act. 1830. United States Statutes at Large, vol. 4, pp. 411-13. U.S. Congress, Indian Appropriations Act. 1851. United States Statutes at Large, vol. 9, p. 574

reservation history. The historical context is crucial for understanding the overarching themes that shaped life on the reservation.

This chapter will examine the emergence of the Rez Metal scene and its relationship to place-making through Indigenous storytelling. Kovach reminds us that, from an Indigenous perspective, relationality extends into the natural world, the human world, kinship, community, place, and land.⁹⁶ Following the key themes of Keith Basso, who wrote *Wisdom sits in Place*, about Western Apache place-making, he describes place-making as a “retrospective world-building” that enables people and communities to create and become place-makers by seeing the complexities and stories within place names. As he notes, “wisdom sits in place,” and presents how “place making is a universal tool of historical imaginations.”⁹⁷

1.2 Colonial Mapping: The creation of "Indian Reservations" and "Indian Space"

Indigenous peoples of the United States once possessed access to all the lands.⁹⁸ As white settlers continued to encroach westward on Native peoples' land, it transformed their land and territory. Indigenous peoples are left with approximately 2.3% of the land in the present era.⁹⁹ Before colonial mapping, the Navajo people referred to themselves as Diné, meaning "The People." Diné speak about their origins in their traditional creation stories, which describe their emergence from the four sacred mountains.¹⁰⁰ As Navajo scholar Jennifer Denetdale explains,

⁹⁶ Margaret E. Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010). 74.

⁹⁷ Keith H. Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language among the Western Apache* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996). 5.

⁹⁸ Klaus Frantz, *Indian Reservations in the United States* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999). 39.

⁹⁹ Frantz, *Indian Reservations in the United States*, 41.

¹⁰⁰ Jennifer Nez Denetdale, *Reclaiming Diné History: The Legacies of Navajo Chief Manuelito and Juanita* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2007); Klara B. Kelley and Harris Francis, *A Diné History of Navajoland* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2020).

Navajo people trace their origins from Dinétah through a journey from their First World into the present one.¹⁰¹ The Holy People created the world as they came to know it and received their knowledge, rituals, and ceremonies for what it means to live a proper life.

As the term “Rez” is derived from the history of US reservations. I question how the concept of “Rez” originated in the first place. I reference scholar Klaus Frantz's work, *Indian Reservations in the United States*, as a primary source that comprehensively outlines the history and cultural-geographic study of American Indian Reservations. Kelley and Francis' work, *A Diné History of Navajo land*” is a foundational source of Diné history and perspective that gives a thorough historical analysis of the reservation history, the railroad frontier, and an overview of Diné creation and traditional Diné maps.¹⁰² The B.I.A. (Bureau of Indian Affairs) was created in 1824 to both "civilize" and assimilate the Indigenous population by enforcing federal Indian policy, starting with massive land clearances carried out in the early nineteenth century.¹⁰³ President Andrew Jackson's Indian Removal Act of 1830 set the stage for the removal of all indigenous people who stood in the way of white settlement.¹⁰⁴

Following the removal of the Navajo in 1863 then resulted in the Americans instigating a war against the Navajo people, under the order of Commander James Carleton, led by Cornel Kit Carson on a scorched-earth campaign across the Navajo lands. This is known as the time Navajo people were exiled to Fort Sumner, New Mexico, where they were imprisoned. This period, known as the Long Walk of 1864-1886, is present in historical accounts and the collective

¹⁰¹ Denetdale, Jennifer Nez. *Reclaiming Diné History*, 10

¹⁰² Klara B. Kelley and Harris Francis, *A Diné History of Navajoland* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2019).139,12, 66

¹⁰³Mark Palmer and Robert Rundstrom, “GIS, Internal Colonialism, and the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 103, no. 5 (2013). 1144.

¹⁰⁴Jennifer Nez Denetdale, *Reclaiming Diné History: The Legacies of Navajo Chief Manuelito and Juanita* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2007), Kindle edition, loc. 244.

memory of the community, especially within the context of the Battle of Canyon De Chelly in 1864. Many people died during the four-year imprisonment.¹⁰⁵ In 1868, the Navajo signed a treaty with the Americans, and life was reestablished on a reservation. The Long Walk had a profound impact on the Navajo people's consciousness and, indeed, was a dark period for the Diné people.

Drawing from Laura Tohe, who describes researching and learning more from the Long Walk. She states that she “came to learn that this might have caused the People to withhold stories of the Long Walk; the pain and suffering the ancestors endured was so nearly unbearable that they named Fort Sumner, where they were starved, raped, exploited, and killed, Hweeldi: the place of extreme hardship where the Diné nearly took their last breath.”¹⁰⁶ As Denetdale stated, the Long Walk and the imprisonment at Hweeldi of their people, their stories are framed in the larger events of dispossession, injustice, and violence that Diné have suffered under colonialism.¹⁰⁷ The stories of how their ancestors survived starvation, death, and brutality were truly horrifying.

In 1868, following the negotiations, a treaty was signed with the U.S., allowing the remaining Navajo to return to designated lands currently occupying the Four Corners area. While returning to their homes, more than 2,500 people died of smallpox, illness, depression, weather conditions, and starvation. The survivors returned to Diné tah in June 1886.¹⁰⁸ Returning home was not easy, as this became known as the Second Long Walk. The Navajo sang a song and cried tears of joy upon recognizing the Four Sacred Mountains. This marked the end of the Long Walk

¹⁰⁵ Watchman, *Restoring Relations Through Stories*, 12.

¹⁰⁶ Tohe, Laura, “Hweeldi Bééháníih: Remembering the Long Walk.” *Wicazo Sa Review* 22, no. 1 (2007): <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30131304>. 79.

¹⁰⁷ Watchman, *Restoring Relations Through Stories*, 12.

¹⁰⁸ Watchman, *Restoring Relations Through Stories*, 12.

era and ushered in a “New Navajo Beginning.”¹⁰⁹ These new beginnings were not easy, as Navajo people were trying to make sense of the reservation era. Navajo people still had to defend their right to land and sovereignty.

As the General Allotment Act of 1887 was implemented, American Indian tribes lost nearly 60% of their territory.¹¹⁰ For the Diné, in 1886, while people were in captivity, the US government had already claimed their land and Congress gave away a portion of it for the transcontinental railroad.¹¹¹ The railroad acquired large territories of land as every other section was allotted to them, similar to a checkerboard with broad strips on both sides of the line. These generous policies of land distribution led some Indian tribes to lose as much as half their territory shortly before or even while the reservations were being established.¹¹² Following the history and creation of the United States, the mapping of reservations enforced the creation of straight and restricted boundary lines, which were imposed to demarcate the lands of individual states, and the boundaries of the U.S., Mexico, and Canada. These boundary lines ignored existing tribal territory, and therefore, the consequential land loss to areas considered outside the U.S. could no longer be reclaimed. Core tribal land areas were subjected to drastic reductions in size when the white settlers had an economic interest in them.¹¹³ As Frantz points out, these lines were not drawn to think about the natural flow of landscapes. In the 1830s, when the Indian Removal Act was drafted, the new territories were allocated to fifty tribes. Five years after the Indian Removal Act, President Andrew Jackson stated that the eastern half of the United States between Lake Michigan and Florida would be cleared of Indians with a few exceptions. However, as the

¹⁰⁹ Watchman, *Restoring Relations Through Stories*, 13.

¹¹⁰ Frantz, *Indian Reservations in the United States*, 25

¹¹¹ Kelley & Francis, *A Diné History*, 134.

¹¹² Frantz, *Indian Reservations in the United States*, 57.

¹¹³ Frantz, *Indian Reservations in the United States*, 62-63.

frontier continued to expand further west, Indigenous peoples of the U.S., with their traditional ways of life, were obstacles to this settler-driven expansion.¹¹⁴

As these boundary lines ignored existing tribal territory the tribal core land areas were subjected to drastic reductions in size when the white settlers had an economic interest in them. (Frantz, 1999: p.62-63.) As Frantz points out, these lines were not drawn to consider the natural flow of landscapes, but rather to acknowledge the uniqueness of how the Navajo Nation reservation boundaries were established over time through a combination of different legal procedures. The Navajo Nation reservation boundaries were established through an original treaty, executive orders from eight different Presidents, and four acts of Congress, creating the present-day boundaries.¹¹⁵ Reservations were established on ancestral lands beginning in 1851. These reservations were put under the supervision and protection of the Bureau of Indian Affairs.¹¹⁶ To protect white settlers, the B.I.A. increased militarization to enforce and police Indian peoples in conditions that were like prison camps. For instance, American Indians could only leave with the authorization of the B.I.A. agents. The militarization enforced and forbade Native peoples from leaving the reservation and caused the communities to become dependent on food rations that were distributed. This era also included the forced mandate to send children to boarding schools.¹¹⁷

Historically, the B.I.A. has simultaneously attempted to assimilate American Indians while controlling their land and natural resources into bureaucratic inventories and maps.¹¹⁸ Initially, the B.I.A. was housed under the War Department and then transferred to the newly

¹¹⁴ Frantz, *Indian Reservations in the United States*, 15.

¹¹⁵ Frantz, *Indian Reservations in the United States*, 49.

¹¹⁶ Frantz, *Indian Reservations in the United States*, 15.

¹¹⁷ Frantz, *Indian Reservations in the United States*, 17.

¹¹⁸ Palmer and Rundstrom, "GIS, Internal Colonialism," 1144.

created Department of the Interior (DOI) in 1849.¹¹⁹ The author's central argument is that the technologies of the Geographic Information System also known as G.I.S. developed at the B.I.A. was not a linear process in technological change.¹²⁰ G.I.S.'s development at the B.I.A. proved consequential in upholding and managing resource management. The main findings of their study showed that across four decades of effort, the B.I.A.'s pursuit of using G.I.S. is better understood as an effort to perpetuate its internal colonial agenda and its bureaucratic existence during an era of rapid technological advancement rather than using G.I.S. technologies to better manage resources for the greater purpose for Native American communities.¹²¹ Palmer and Rundstowm concluded that "G.I.S. development is often merely a part of a broader historical consistent pattern of policy making and behavior."¹²² As mentioned previously, the themes of settler-colonial tools and technologies continued to uphold and manage Indian resources. I attempted to address how the creation of rigid boundary lines, the mapping practices of land, and G.I.S. systems that could map out Indian resources for extraction, are tools of settler colonial technologies.

In present-day, the Navajo Nation is the largest Indian reservation in the United States, encompassing approximately 17 million acres, which is roughly the size of West Virginia.¹²³ The current socioeconomic conditions of the Navajo Nation are not ideal. The Navajo Nation shares concerns with other Indigenous nations about the loss of language and tribal tradition. Navajo Nation, like many other reservations in Native North America, experiences some of the highest

¹¹⁹ Palmer and Rundstrom, "GIS, Internal Colonialism," 1144.

¹²⁰ Palmer and Rundstrom, "GIS, Internal Colonialism," 1142.

¹²¹ Palmer and Rundstrom, "GIS, Internal Colonialism," 1142.

¹²² Palmer and Rundstrom, "GIS, Internal Colonialism," 1142.

¹²³ Indian Health Service, "Navajo Nation," *Indian Health Service*, accessed May 25, 2025, <https://www.ihs.gov/navajo/navajonation/>.

rates of unemployment, violence towards women and children, alcoholism, and poverty.¹²⁴

Jennifer Denetdale emphasizes the importance to also take into discussion that Navajos exhibit resilience and determination demonstrated by retaining their traditional beliefs and values. In many sectors of the Navajo Nation, parents, teachers, scholars, counselors, and employees are dedicated to passing on these teachings to the next generation. This type of resistance to colonial forces is something I will discuss further in a later section in the Rez Metal scene.¹²⁵ I summarized the history of the Navajo Nation reservation to provide context for the historical timeline of how the reservation was created. Reservation history is often glossed over in U.S. history courses and is seen as a place where Indians were told to go live after surrender. However, the harsh realities of assimilation, genocide, and the removal of culture and language are also at the root of what the reservation system attempted to do. I also share the history to raise awareness about the realities of how people live on reservations today and to understand how Diné people relate to their history of defending their right to live in their homelands. Native people in the present day understand how their histories affect their realities today.

1.3. Origin Stories of a Rez Metal band

Historically, Native peoples did not make the reservations nor ask to live in these US imposed government systems. Yet, the community of Diné came together to find a way to survive and create new meaning within these places, while remaining connected to their culture, language, and history. Therefore, I center this chapter to explore further: What is the power of story mapping, Rez Metal? What can this genre tell us about relationships to land and place? Rez Metal's lyrics and other forms of music expression reveal the politics of sound and how Native

¹²⁴ Denetdale, Jennifer Nez. *Reclaiming Diné History*, 14.

¹²⁵ Denetdale, Jennifer Nez. *Reclaiming Diné History*, 14.

communities respond to the structures and dynamics that shape their everyday lives. How do the politics of sound inform listeners about Indigenous communities?

Therefore, the term Rez Metal carries a different meaning depending on who experienced it and when that person experienced the scene. For example, in some of my interviews, some respondents remembered Rez Metal from the late 90s; they had seen it on a flyer or on an old online forum, similar to MySpace, which shared information about all the Rez Metal bands and shows. While the younger bands and generation remember Rez Metal from documentaries like "Metal from Dirt" or "Rez Metal," which highlighted bands such as Mutilated Tyrant and I Don't Konform. The "Rez Metal" documentary follows the band I Don't Konform's journey to Europe, where they produced their album at the same studio as Metallica.

However, I am less concerned with the historical naming of the first Rez Metal band ever. Instead, I redirect our attention to the collective web relationships and memories that tell one of many potential Rez Metal origin stories. Through these interviews, I examine it as a remapping practice that combines storytelling and memories to create a cultural landscape that has positively shaped Native youth and communities. These stories are memories that serve as a political act of reclaiming space, both on and off the reservation. I use the foundations of "place-making" through stories and "cartographic memory" as a tool for collective memories to tell the story of Rez Metal as a place. I employ these ideas of cartographic memories that expose the political nature of place-making, especially in discussions with the US reservation system, which highlights the centrality of space in the negotiation of power.

There is one person who is particularly important to highlight in the story of Rez Metal, which predates the name Rez Metal. I met with Buck Cancho from Laguna Pueblo initially at a show at the Launch Pad, where his daughter, Channy Cancho, played the drums for her Metal

band, Suspended. He invited myself and my cameraman Martin Martinez to Laguna Pueblo, which is about an hour's drive west on I-40 outside of Albuquerque. I called Buck and let him know that I am bringing a filmmaker, and that I wanted to visit and conduct interviews with him.

Buck told us to meet him outside the famous, original Laguna Burger, where you can get the best green chili cheeseburger. Laguna Burger is a Pueblo-owned restaurant located adjacent to the local gas station. The building walls are checkerboarded with alternating red and white stripes. The tables and chairs are set like picnic tables with an open patio seating area and a walk-up order window. Green chili is a staple in the Southwest. Every meal you order, the servers ask if you want green or red chili.

As I parked in the front space, we saw Buck roll up in his car. As we waved to each other, I pointed to my war pony car with the California plates to signal him that I would follow him. As we drove up the dirt roads, the dirt from the tires flew up behind Buck's car. I describe the land here as varying shades of brown, tan, and beige across the palette. As we drove past the adobe structures, we saw Buck take a left over the train tracks, and to the left, we saw greener grass and crops growing.

When we arrived at his house, we could see the view of I-40 from his home. I came to learn that Buck plants every spring in May, and by the fall, he has fresh vegetables. He discussed how during the pandemic, the reservation regulations were strict, even for locals; they did not want anyone outside at all, not even for planning and harvesting. However, during this time, he continued to grow crops so they would have fresh vegetables for the Fall.

The trains are always a part of my fieldwork; they were present even in Gallup and now extend further west to Laguna Pueblo. The train tracks we drove over have active trains coming through right behind his house. This train will be met multiple times during my fieldwork, from

Laguna to Gallup, New Mexico. Any filmmaker would know that the train sounds will end up in your videos and interviews. Buck Concho showed us the original home where he grew up, which has since been torn down. His traditional home is made of rock and rubble. Buck tells me he is proud of where he grew up in Laguna with no running water or electricity, and that he grew up in harsher environments where they knew how to work and survive off the land. Buck pointed to a smaller house structure next to his main house, where he grew up. I enjoyed spending time with Buck, learning about his life and what it was like to grow up on the reservation. During our interviews, Buck showed us around the Pueblo and took us around the neighborhoods, reliving each memory he had at those places.

He invited us to come into the house after showing us around the area. Right before you enter his front door, he showed us his stage, where he held Buck Fest every year to host Rez Metal bands. Buck's house is like a Metal Music history museum of collectibles. He owns hundreds of 8-tracks, CDs, vinyl records, and cassette tapes. He has them organized by name so you can find the artists. I came across the Van Halen cassette collection, but he wanted to show me his working 8-track player. Jokingly, he said that when his daughter Channy was a little girl, she asked him to play the movie while holding up a Van Halen 8-track. The 8-track player resembles a cabinet that opens to store items. When you open the lid of the vintage console, you will see a record player and an 8-track player. He showed me how to use it; he could tell I had not grown up with an 8-track player. So, he explained how it works. Put the 8-track into the player, and the sound of Van Halen sounds clean and crisp, with a slight grain in the texture. I remember how proud and excited I was when Channy told me that all her father's vintage collection and 8-track all worked. All I could think about was how his house would make a great museum one day; the collections he has are truly impressive.

However, more prominently showcased were the photo albums of every single concert ticket he saved from the 1980s, where you could see guitar legends for less than \$10.00. I marveled at the idea of seeing Metallica, Eddie Van Halen, and Black Sabbath for prices I wish I could experience. You could flip through each page and see the collection grow. He got to see a lot of these artists more than once. In addition to the tickets, he saved a newspaper article that caught my attention.

This article spoke of Buck's Metal band from back in the day.

The article describes "Still Rock" as a four-member basic rock and roll band, but these musicians are from Laguna-Acoma, which is what you might call a "skin band." They have something to offer because they recently took first place (pen mark edit to 2nd) place in the Albuquerque area "Battle of the Bands." They're a band who possesses a lot of potential as far as Indian bands go. Kids will relate to them.

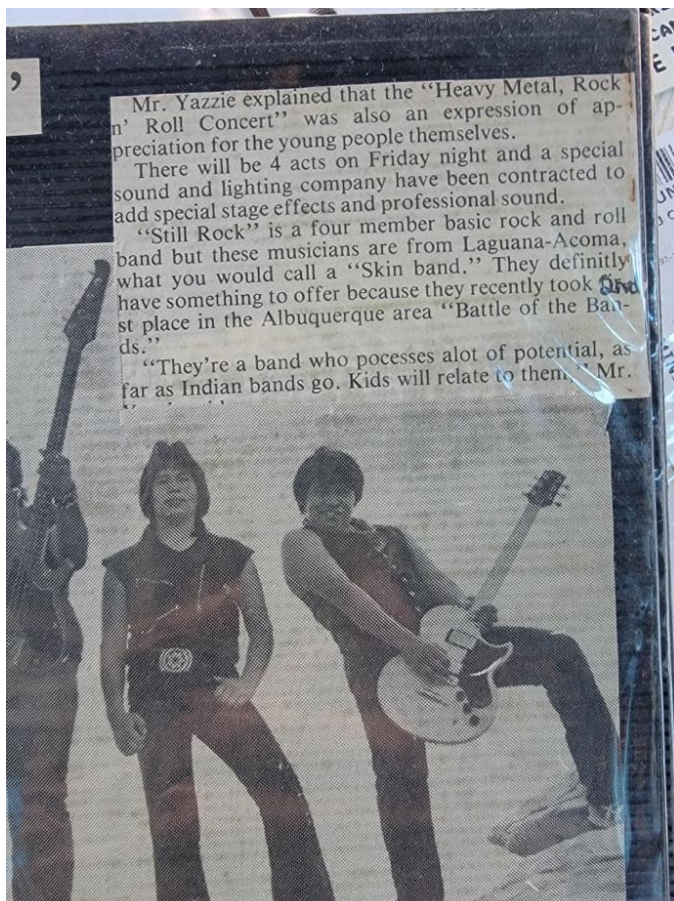


Figure.1.2. Photo of newspaper clip of the band Still Rock, 2022. Digital photograph. Used with permission.

I paused to reflect. I had never heard the term “skin band”. Before Rez Metal emerged in the early 1980s, it appeared that there was another name associated with Native American rock bands, such as “skin bands”.¹²⁶ Not surprising, I also noticed that descriptions of Rez Metal were also described with the same undertones, often associated with Rez Metal bands. Phrases like “possess a lot of potential as far as Indian bands go,” subtly implies racialized framing surrounding Native bands and prompted deeper questions I had. I was unsure about the author’s intent for writing the piece that way, but it did lead me to understand possibilities as to why certain Rez Metal bands did not want any racial associations as a Native American heavy metal band or even be labeled as a Rez Metal band. Writings like this make evident the assumptions that Native people often face as musicians; assumptions that impact the way they are labeled as a band contributing (or not) to a particular genre.

As for Uncle Buck Concho's band, "Still Rock," it had to be one of the first-ever Native Metal bands. Before "Rez" was ever used to describe a band, this article was documented in his photobook from the early 1980s. In my work, I continue to grapple with this trope that describes Rez Metal. I noticed that Rez Metal is either described as a genre that requires audiences wanting to see markers of “Indian-ness” or “tribalism” needing to be seen as stereotyped Native American beads and feathers or be labeled with hints of undermining compliments such as "pretty good for a Rez Band”, but never on par with mainstream metal bands. What is it about these labels of Native identities that defines their categories different from dominant social groups?

¹²⁶ Found the term “skin band” from John Troutman’s Dissertation on *‘Indian Blues’: American Indians and the Politics of Music, 1890-1935*. (PhD Diss., The University of Texas Austin, 2004), 145. References how white marching bands would call Native American Marching bands a “skin band” because they were Native Americans. In the writing it hinted that white bands called them “skin band” as a way to describe their marching as different.

1.4. The Making of Place: Origins of the Rez Metal Scene

I approach Rez Metal as a cartographic memory that serves as a political remaking of reservation geography, expanding beyond reservation boundaries to reclaim border town spaces and create new areas on the reservation where this music can be performed. I argue that the Rez Metal bands inspired and made a local Metal culture that influenced both the reservation and the surrounding territories. As geographer Juan Herrera's book, *Cartographic Memory*, which he describes that it is not just an act of remembering but exposes the political nature and negotiation of power of place-making.¹²⁷ As he eloquently explains, cartographic memory is not just an act of remembering but a political remaking of urban geography and, therefore, a selective mapping to emphasize the contribution of certain groups.

Cartographic memory is presented directly by participants who recall the places and spaces where the Rez Metal scene originated. In my interviews, I asked questions such as, "Where do you remember the first time you saw a Rez Metal show? What are the earliest bands you remember that contributed to making this scene into place?" While memories are not always accurate, even with Rez Metal, there is always the main question: "Who was the first Rez Metal band?" I've noticed that even the first band aligns differently depending on where you are from on the reservation.

The most common question I get asked is where to find these Rez Metal show and where someone can go see a show. During my interviews, I asked musicians, fans, and promoters who remembered the scene's inception and how their memories or collective memories may align with the origins of the music scene. Rez Metal memory starts with what I describe as the first wave of Rez Metal bands. Ethnic De Generation as a collective memory was predominantly

¹²⁷ Herrera, *Cartographic Memory*, 14-15.

people's first memory of a band that played in the parking lot in the Navajo Nation. Band members such as lead singer Billy Crawley of Ethnic De Generation should be credited for inspiring an entire generation of bands.

The first wave of bands also points to Donovan Pete, who was in Sacred Blood, where he described the first bands as the "Cheii" in Navajo, meaning the Grandpa bands of the late 1990s and early 2000s. The Cheii bands include Dying Tribe, Tribus, Ethnic De Generation, Blood Line, Drazil, Systematic Shock, Skin to Scrap, Glonnie, Sacred Blood, Horney Toads, and Left to Rot. The second wave of bands that started in the early to mid-2005 to 2010s, were Signal 99, Creepy Puppets before they became Born of Winter, Shadow Remain, I Don't Konform, Incide, Paranormal Slaughter, and Suspended. In between the second and third wave are bands like Testify, and Heart Museum also came forward. The third wave of Rez Metal can be described as bands emerging after 2010, including Grave of Monuments, Under Exile, Mutilated Tyrant, WxAXR, Fatal Corruption, and Alliance. I would describe the newest wave of bands emerging as those that started during or right before the 2020 pandemic era, such as Merciless Indian Savages (M.I.S.), Hell Throne, Narbona, Secret Earth, Wreckless Heroes, and Scarlett Night.

Politically, the "Rez" holds many layers of meaning and experiences that are not always mutually agreed upon or shared within the community. Musicians' experiences in the Rez Metal scene vary and differ depending on which part or aspect of the Rez Metal scene they are involved in. During my interviews, I asked questions, and through the interlocutors, I have witnessed that not everyone agrees on a singular "Rez" experience. I asked, what is genuine and authentic, Rez? What is considered and not considered Rez? Can a band with Native and Non-Native members be Rez? Can a Native American metal band claim the title of 'Rez Metal'? Even

during the fieldwork for the interviews, I observed underlying similarities and differences in life experiences.

My interviews with Felix Arthur, who has been in the scene since 1999, highlighted the turning point when political and economic negotiations within Rez Metal occurred, involving promoters and venue spaces. Before this happened, Felix talked a lot about what shows were like before needing to go through promoters. He would discuss the DIY scene, which stands for Do-It-Yourself." This is a significant theme in many underground music scenes, particularly in the Rez Metal scene. As the Reservation is not an abundant place with sound equipment or musical venues, the community has to put on these events themselves. Do it yourself, and make it happen as Felix would describe. When I asked Felix what makes it Rez Metal?

The way I know Rez Metal is the way we did our shows, it was all rezzed out. The way we did it, in the middle of nowhere, with generators going, completely dark, and the cars that showed up were our lights. You could jam out and mosh in the middle of nowhere. That is what I think is Rez Metal. But another way to look at it is its metal music on the Rez. All the metal music written and performed by Native Americans is Rez Metal and you can take it anywhere out. But its originally from the Rez, the music, the bands and the people that wrote the music that is Native Metal I think. It can describe the whole scene, too.¹²⁸

During our Zoom interview, Felix was sitting in his car at night, his camera phone positioned to face him. He told me all kinds of Rez Metal stories. I was captivated by his memories of growing up and what made the scenes so meaningful. He talked about how they started by putting on shows in places like schools, cafeterias, parking lots, and someone's house. He even mentioned the flyers had a map to that person's house so people could find it. He would say proudly how the cops shut down some of these shows.

The cops weren't cool about some of these shows. But it was cool to get booted out by the cops and have a metal show shut down by the cops. It was also like, yes, we conquered! We

¹²⁸ Felix Arthur, Zoom Interview by author, (October 3rd, 2020)

did it! As a joke, the show was shut down by cops, which meant you were having too much fun.¹²⁹

As a community, I seek to understand how Rez Metal, as a space, is reflected in both virtual and physical spaces. I found Reya Ramirez's work on *Native Hubs*, Which includes virtual hubs and virtual activities.¹³⁰ This is useful in my case study, as I looked at online articles, music videos, streaming platforms and conducted the majority of my interviews during a global pandemic via zoom. Hubs, as a geographic concept, allow us to represent actual places. Ramirez's concept of the hub helps us understand how Native hubs are a cultural, social, and political concept that ultimately has the potential to strengthen Native identity and political power, providing a sense of belonging for Native peoples.¹³¹ Ramirez discusses how Native hubs are also mobile and often revolve around temporary gathering sites, such as gyms and conference rooms.¹³² As Felix discussed, that scene needed a space to play music and make community.¹³³

Therefore, to imagine Rez Metal as a hub, these shows are found in a rotation of dive bars, parking lots, gyms, community centers, or chapter houses. At the same time, Ramirez highlights the fact that urban Natives are living in exile, away from their ancestral land base. The hub suggests how landless Native Americans maintain a sense of connection to their tribal homelands.¹³⁴ Indeed, finding Rez Metal "hubs" or spaces is also not always welcomed into Reservation spaces because of the social stigma and stereotypes of Rez Metal as a place for angry teenagers who listen to devil-worshipping music and drink alcohol all night. Alternatively, in Felix's interview, noise ordinances led the police to shut down their show. While the Diné

¹²⁹ Felix Arthur, Zoom Interview by author, (October 3rd, 2020)

¹³⁰ Renya K. Ramirez, *Native Hubs: Culture, Community, and Belonging in Silicon Valley and Beyond* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).3.

¹³¹ Ramirez, *Native Hubs*, 2

¹³² Ramirez, *Native Hubs*, 3

¹³³ Felix Arthur, Zoom Interview by author, (October 3rd, 2020)

¹³⁴ Ramirez, *Native Hubs*, 2

community is not landless, youth were restricted in having a place to gather. Therefore, I find Rez Metal to embody hub-making practices as a third space, as it incorporates activities both on and off the reservation, even having a venue where they can host these shows independently without the support of the tribe or larger community.

1.5. Making Space for Rez Metal: Navigating Economic Terrain

Helpful to this discussion of space, Ojibwe and Dakota scholar, Scott Lyon places the conversation surrounding "Indian Space" and the concept of "Indian Country" in the context of an invented term.¹³⁵ However, Rez Metal does not just exist in physical places to drive to. Even the production of Rez metal is now virtual and produced in online spaces. It is not uncommon for a band of four members to all live geographically hours away from each other. For example, a singer in Albuquerque will send their media file sample via email to their guitarist in Gallup, who then may send their MP3 sample to their drummer in Shiprock. It is rare to have all the bands together for practice when they live so far from each other. Small Rez Metal shows serve as practice sessions.

However, despite venue challenges, Rez Metal was founded by bands that came together and found a sense of belonging in spaces where they could share music. Whether that was on a flatbed trailer on the reservation, the parking lot of a school, chapter houses, middle of nowhere dirt shows, abandoned buildings, or within the small dive bars of Gallup or Albuquerque. These were all creations of place-making. This made me rethink place-making and where Rez Metal can exist for Native youth to freely express their creativity in music and art.

¹³⁵ Scott Richard Lyons, *X-Marks: Native Signatures of Assent* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 21. 16-17.

As we talked about economics and promoters, the older shows were similar to how Buck Concho ran Buck Fest outside his house. Buck would tell me that we had bands come set up; they could take their time and play as long as they wanted. Then, when you're done with your set, the next band goes on live. His shows would last all night. Felix seems more nostalgic for these shows that had fewer restraints and were less structured. As he described, it was all about playing music.

When the promoters started to show up in the scene, they had the tent, stage, sound board, security, we had to follow the rules and set times and you have 15 mins to set up and break down..... Like they have tickets for us and then they would give it to the bands to sell. And the show time went down in order who sold the most. And I didn't sell all my tickets, so they had us play first. And the fans who wanted to see us couldn't because the time was too early. We were the opening band.¹³⁶

We had an understanding that Rez Metal's economics needed to cover the costs of staff, electricity, payouts, venue fees, equipment rentals, and other expenses. However, when it was a Rez Metal experience, the less strict and less production-oriented nature of the scene also made it special, as there was no need to worry about taking too much time or encroaching on other bands' sets. During the time when Rez Metal held more “DIY” shows the rules to engage in the shows were very different for bands and their set time at these shows were not regulated to a timed schedule. Allowing bands to play for as long as they wanted was also mentioned during my interview with Buck Concho. He also believed that bands could set up and take down as long as they needed too. These shows did run past 12am and super late and picked up again for the next day of the weekend.

I shared some of my observations of how other bands promote and run their shows with Felix. I wanted to compare my notes from what I learned from band methods of selling the most

¹³⁶ Felix Arthur, Zoom Interview by author, (October 3rd, 2020)

tickets to be put on the bill. While Felix despises ticket sales to secure the ideal time slot of the show. I learned from other bands negotiating these tensions with wanting the ideal time by using their own money to buy out the ticket sales. There are some privileges surrounding bands with personal money, while others, including band members, may not have access to any funds at all. Some bands told me that buying out the tickets for a better slot was a long-term investment for their music business as a means of generating new fans.

However, I also sympathized with new bands that are just starting who don't sell as many tickets compared to another band that is more seasoned and has a larger following. There is also a shift in how audiences want to engage with the Rez Metal shows and only come for their friend's band set and then immediately leave. In the way that Felix remembers the Rez Metal music scene is that the crowds would stay for every single band and support the entire show.

This shift has made it for popular Rez Metal bands to thrive but significantly alters the former Rez Metal show etiquette of showing up for each band from opening bands to the end headlining act. Even with bands who had the most ticket sales and popularity does not only guarantee a good set time but can even mean playing on the bigger stage that is elevated with lights. For example, at the Navajo Nation Metal Fest features three stages, two stages that are made with flat blue tarps and then the main stage is elevated with lights and productions for the headliner and the Rez Metal bands who sell the most tickets. The two blue- tarp stages are set up across from each other but are played back-to-back in timed sets. This makes it so the schedule runs on time as one band sets up on one side the other tarp stage is playing. Once that band finishes on the Stage 1 tarp, the stage tarp on the other side starts right after. It also makes it difficult for audience members with no breaks in between sets. This event takes place from 12:00

p.m. to 12:00 a.m. One positive side of the tarp stages going back-to-back is that every single band who applied can play at the Navajo Nation Metal Fest.

My discussions with Felix Authur led to productive conversations about the pros and cons of the various methods of hosting a show on the Rez. It also informed how I imagined helping and promoting the scene. I started to understand the negotiations and culture shift where ticket sales become a central part of the band experience. When Rez Metal shows were community centered and created they could resist capitalistic pressures of needing to make money to put on a show and possibly instead of ticket sales the bands could focus on building a more welcoming and inclusive space. When I asked Felix about the ideal Rez Metal shows that felt like home had a food menu that included meat with vegetable stew, fry bread, beans, soda pop, and bottled water, which was provided to attendees and bands backstage. I saw the importance of free venue spaces and splitting the costs for the show. For example, some shows needed a small generator for the bands that needed electricity to play their amps. Given the economic considerations and other barriers to hosting Rez Metal shows, the scene continues to navigate these realities and create music spaces for the community to thrive.

In these interviews, Rez Metal spaces were constructed from the contributions of musicians and the greater community. These undertones within the media surrounding the reservation continued to perpetuate poverty tropes and “third-world conditions.” Instead Rez Metal is a place-making practice that involves how Native people came together to create a music community. Through the stories and interviews this scene makes aware of the positive influence that shaped the lives of many Navajos through the music scene.

1.6 A Rez Metal Environments

To understand how Rez Metal is an environment that shapes the music, I visited the garage practice space for the bands Testify and Born of Winter, located off I-40 near Thoreau, New Mexico. I met with Irv Wauneka at a nearby gas station with my filmmaker Martin, and followed him in my car to where Testify and Born of Winter practice their music nearby. As my cameraman, Martin, set up his film equipment with microphones, camera gear, and tripods. I went to retrieve my camera bag from my car to get more batteries for my recorder, and I looked outside to see a herd of sheep moving in a curious manner, as a black cat looked at me when I shut my car door. It was the first time I saw sheep right outside where the band practiced, and this is one sign you are on the Navajo Nation.

Irv Wauneka is both Diné and Zuni; he played in multiple Rez Metal bands such as Born of Winter and Creepy Puppets. Irv has also been featured in the documentary, "Metal from Dirt," on Rez Metal. Irv is one of those people I've run into many times. When I first met him, he had long, brown hair that he would headbang on stage with, his hair flying around. This time, his hair was shorter, but he was still enthusiastic about discussing Rez Metal. I am grateful that, despite the numerous interviews Irv has conducted surrounding Rez Metal, he always has something new to share. During our short documentary interview, Irv framed the key aspect of Rez Metal that interested me, which inspired my ideas to understand Rez Metal as an element influenced by the land. I asked Irv, 'How would you describe Rez Metal? '

It goes deeper than the music. It's not just the music, it's the way people were brought up in their environment...You know how Native Americans always have a chip on their shoulder, especially towards the government. I mean, I guess that transfers over to music. And that's the outlet people go to, letting shit out. That's how they express themselves. Especially on the Rez. Especially in the boonies. With no place to play, no venue, no sound guy, no equipment, and driving so many hundred miles just to get a pair of strings

or something. It's the mentality, it's the state of mind. It's not just music. I think it goes way deeper. I think that's what Rez Metal is. Especially if you are on the Rez.¹³⁷

Irv's interview reminded me of the importance of this music having a deeper meaning, rooted in the Rez as its environment, which gave rise to this music. Simon Trujillo's framework of Native story power demonstrates that storytelling is a critical component in making land meaningful, thereby creating placemaking as a vital aspect of Native sovereignties. For Native and Indigenous knowledge, stories possess the power to connect land to place in acts of political and cultural, visual, and intellectual sovereignty rooted in motion, movement, relevance, and reciprocity with webs of surrounding life. As scholar Shawn Wilson, who helps frame this idea as an Indigenous epistemology of systems of knowledge built upon more than just a way of knowing, as it encompasses the systems of knowledge, culture, worldviews, language, histories, and spiritualities within the cosmos.¹³⁸

Indeed, Irv makes a note about what it means to live on the reservation, especially as it pertains to everyday life, driving, and the mentality of being from the Rez. As Wilson importantly highlights, Indigenous epistemologies are action-oriented. They are about living life every day according to certain values.¹³⁹ In this situation, Irv makes an important point that it is about expressing oneself through one's own experiences living on the reservation.

The environment influences Rez Metal and can also serve as an indigenous epistemology of place-making through relationships. Margaret Kovach is an Indigenous scholar who writes extensively about Indigenous methodologies and ontologies, guiding scholars in their consideration of an Indigenous epistemology.¹⁴⁰ Her work helps us imagine an Indigenous

¹³⁷ Irv Wauneka, in-person interview, Coolidge, New Mexico, October 2023.

¹³⁸ Shawn Wilson, *Research Is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods* (Black Point, Nova Scotia: Fernwood Publishing, 2008). 74.

¹³⁹ Wilson, *Research Is Ceremony*, 62.

¹⁴⁰ Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies*, 37.

paradigm that comes from the foundational belief that knowledge is relational. It is not just interpersonal relationships with the research subjects, but also the relationship with all of creation. We understand each other because we share a worldview that holds common, enduring beliefs about the world. Indigenous people often contextualize their tribal affiliation because our knowledge is bound to place.¹⁴¹ In my work, I find that Rez Metal carries themes of nostalgic discourse and longing for the past community experiences. The scene also carried the meaning of playing music with family, and reconnecting to the homelands by learning about culture and tradition.

More importantly, as scholar Renae Watchman who articulates the beauty of Diné storytelling through culture and language also notes that Diné storytelling makes certain that “land and stories are inseparable”. Diné land and place-based stories reflect resiliency, contain teachings and knowledge, outline traditional law and governance, and mark the Diné future.¹⁴² As Margaret Kovach explains, Indigenous epistemologies expand to a web of relationships, and that we find attachment to the places of our lives, whether in the cosmos, with nature, or among community and kin. Our connection as Indigenous people with land and place distinguishes people from one another. Our places and connection to the land give us identity. Stories connected to place and land are about a collective Indigenous orientation and are situated within our personal knowledge and conceptual framework of the world.

1.7. A Rez Metal Epistemology: Forging history, memory and silverwork

In the last section, I highlighted the different challenges of creating a space for the Rez Metal community to continue existing and adapting to the changing economy, as well as with other

¹⁴¹ Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies*, 37.

¹⁴² Watchman, *Restoring Relations Through Stories*, 17.

venue politics that limited the scene's expansion. The stories in this section serve as a foundation for the next section, which explores how music, stories and history are combined in placemaking practices that reflect the mapping of place through artistic expressions, such as Navajo silver work. This section also serves to explore how the music scene influences people's everyday life and artistic practices.

Helpful in gaining a deeper understanding of meaning-making through experiences of living on the reservation, I share the story of Tyler Johnson, who resides in Phoenix, Arizona. I contacted him through his Instagram account, inspired by his silverwork jewelry page, @thjnavajojewelry. I immediately followed this page when I saw a reel featuring metal band Amon Amarth's song "The Pursuit of Vikings" opening with a classic chug rhythmic pattern, which is like modern metal rhythm against a medieval cadence of the guitars. The video is exciting as its power chords open, and we see Tyler Johnson making a Navajo Bow guard, which archers wore to protect their forearms from the snap of the bow. The video shows him starting the process of melting silver with a blow torch at high flame heat. Followed by hammering the silver to form a rectangular metal piece with his metal hammer on top of a leather hide. From the video alone, I thought he was a Navajo Metal music fan who loved the genre, which then led to the creation of the "Rock Star Bracelet." Tyler describes the silverwork process as melting silver from silver coins in the Tufa casting process. With his blow torch, he melts the silver coins from the colonial currency until they become liquid. When they melt, he reshapes the liquid into a ring, bracelet, studs, or whatever he plans to mold.

I was enthusiastic as Tyler was willing to do an interview with me, and extended an invitation to his home. More than just a Navajo silversmith, Tyler Johnson is a father with a loving family and his kids. Tyler went through his life living on the reservation. Showing me

photographs from a photo album from his teenage years, when he was in a Rez Metal band with his friends, whom he called his brothers. The photographs invoked his memories of the scene and how it shaped his life. He shared both amazing stories of the scene, playing with his friends, and how the scene shaped him into the artist and husband he is now. He also shared stories about the hardships of being a Native man on the reservation. A common experience for many is losing friends to suicide and only having the memories, photos, and stories of that person. The photographs now serve as a lasting memory of that time, showcasing evidence of the small pop-up shows held in community centers, schools, or private homes.

As he described his upbringing in the Rez Metal scene, creating Navajo silverwork "Rock Star" jewelry. He would mention the silver spikes were intentionally melted together to the base of the silverwork. He said that "Turquoise is for protection. I wanted jewelry to look like me and reflect who I am." In reflecting on who he was he shared his story of how he grew up.

I grew up in a Hogan on a dirt floor with no running water and electricity for the 1st couple years of my life. I grew up playing with the lambs and the sheep corral, Riding horses with my dad, and living the Navajo Ranch Lifestyle. Attending ceremonies. Once my little brother was born, we moved to Kayenta. Between there and my grandma's ranch and visiting my father's family in Cameron, AZ. In Red Lake, my mom's maternal parents didn't have running water and electricity. Last few years, 3-4 years we lived without running water and electricity. We lived in a small hogan probably the size of this kitchen/dining area. So I lived a modern lifestyle and an old traditional lifestyle.¹⁴³

In between him talking about how he grew up he shared with me some of the photos that depicted friends that he knew in high school. All of his memories were his time as a teenager. As we went through his album he talked about each person in the photo and the memory associated with the photograph. Even if it was band practice, or playing a show inside to their peers.

¹⁴³ Tyler Johnson, filmed in-person interview, Phoenix, Arizona, January 18th, 2023.



Figure.1.3 Photo of Rez Metal album from Tyler Johnson. Digital photographs. Used with permission.

It's awesome to come from a place that has very little, you grow up in 3rd world poverty situations but that's not the case we have been rich in culture and rich in family. We had all these different experiences. It's a once-in-a-lifetime experience that will never experience again. Not even my own kids, and learn from all that to show the world this is my jewelry, this is who I am, this what I know and where I come from. And show my children. ¹⁴⁴

When I spoke with Tyler he referenced growing up on the Rez, with dirt floors and old ways. His story helped me theorize about the meaning-making of place in connection within his experiences of the Rez Metal scene and how he was raised. Instead of seeing it as a place of third-world poverty which is often the narrative of reservation life, he instead described his experiences as a once-in-a-lifetime experience to grow up on the reservation. No one else gets to

¹⁴⁴ Tyler Johnson, filmed in-person interview, Phoenix, Arizona, January 18th, 2023

have that experience in that way, which contrasts how the media depicts the reservation. I present how Tyler (re)maps the reservation as a time and place that he describes as once-in-a-lifetime. An experience that he admits his kids may not have. Rez Metal is a phenomenon that emerged over time, shaped by the impacts of colonization, the history of the reservation, and the colonial boundaries that defined it. Additionally, the post-World War II era saw the emergence of Rock' n' Roll. I asked him how he understood Rez Metal and how it influenced his jewelry.

I see it as a rebellion culture that tried to destroy us. The larger colonization that tried to take away who we are and our grandparents. Which is why this t-shirt speaks to me. Our existence is anarchy. Our existence is rebellion who tried to kill us and destroy us. Our existence is rebellion against genocide. To be able to do this (point to silverwork) and this is another form of rebellion that I see, and that comes natural. Not only just like listening to Metal. Rebellion against the larger colonization that has brutalized us. Rebelling against all that. This is another form of it. This is the one thing they tried to take away from that, and we are still holding on to it. To be able to continue to carry on our tradition, language, and ceremony. That is the ultimate form of anarchy I can think of.¹⁴⁵



Figure 1.4. THJ Navajo Jewelry Rockstar Bracelets. Tyler Johnson, 2025. Digital photograph. From thjnavajojewelry.com. Used with permission.

¹⁴⁵ Tyler Johnson,, filmed in-person interview, Phoenix, Arizona, January 18th, 2023

I examined the relationships between silverwork (metal) and Tyler's analogy, which combines modern tradition and Rez Metal. Tyler's lived experiences in Rez Metal influence his rock star jewelry. Through Indigenous place-making, I demonstrated how Tyler employed methods that his ancestors used in silverwork. Historically, they used the colonial currency, which consisted of a silver coin, and melted it. The artist then reshapes the silver into a new jewelry piece, which becomes a traditional piece, featuring turquoise. I present through this epistemology that Rez Metal, as a music genre, does what silverwork does, which is taking a music genre and melting the art forms into a new piece of art, called Rock Star Jewelry or Rez Metal. In. Tyler's word:

Rez Metal as a whole. We are all about our culture. We love our metal music. And we love our culture. And that is a part of the lyrics we put into it. We put our strength, our ideas, our hurts, pain, and the things that we went through. And all the things that we are learning. We learned about how Navajo people were treated and how Native American people were treated. They didn't teach that in mainstream stream schoolbooks, or mainstream schooling; we had to learn that on our own. That was how I was able to rebel and learn. Was to do that all that and learn that through Heavy Metal. To learn that there are different ways of expressing ourselves.¹⁴⁶

These interviews demonstrated a multi-level Indigenous epistemology of Rez Metal knowledge that intersects with the truth of storytelling and lived experiences. As geographer Natchee Barnd, who centers their work on Native space-making practices that frame how indigenous geographies persist and confront U.S. settler-colonial nations. Indigenous scholars and communities seek to re-narrate places or reclaim Indigenous geographies by using space-centering epistemologies as the foundation of Indigenous relationships to land.

Tyler describes the core of his art as a reflection in his memories of his upbringing, which shape his art. Tyler's traditional art practice is a example to resisting the historical narratives of

¹⁴⁶ Tyler Johnson,, filmed in-person interview, Phoenix, Arizona, January 18th, 2023.

colonialism and forced assimilation, by the very act of creating silverwork, which serves as a powerful form of resilience. Rez Metal epistemology is a way of understanding the connection between growing up on the Reservation and knowing your kinship, culture, and ceremony, as related to place-making practices. As Tyler describes, Rez Metal is a form of expression that rebels against capitalism and colonization. The creative practices of transforming these Rez experiences into creating unique and individual art pieces that reflected his personal upbringing growing up on the reservation with traditional culture knowledge. His Rockstar Jewelry, I argue, is cartographic to the extent that it interweaves memories, culture, and history into the relationship between land and place, which enables Tyler to create an original form of Rez Metal art. I present that his artwork is an expression of the experiences that shape who he is as a Diné father and as a Diné person.

1.8 Conclusion

During my time in Arizona, I met up with Tyler again because he had told me he wanted to give me a gift. I was shocked as I felt very unprepared for this gift without having one to give in response. Tyler is the kindest person and an amazing father, as well as a devoted husband to his wife. He told me about how his son wants to learn the guitar and likes the same Metal music he does. When I met him in front of the parking lot outside a coffee shop, he gifted me one of his “RockStar” rings. This piece of jewelry was beautiful, featuring a turquoise circle on the front, and two spikes emerging from the ring, resembling metal horns. Tyler told me he made this piece as a thank you, and also mentioned that he knows I travel alone a lot in my Rez Metal journey. Tyler said that this piece is also for protection. He tells me, “Hopefully, you won’t need it, but it can be a form of self-protection.”

I am always left speechless by how kind the scene has been to me. His kindness in giving me this piece of jewelry was truly sentimental, moving me to view the artwork as a representation of deep relationality and community care. It was more than I felt I deserved. I saw this piece as a reminder to continue doing this work in a good way, by remembering that the scene holds significant meaning for this community. It is a piece I wear in honor of the relationality to the history of the Diné people's survival and to honor their traditions of the past.

Metal music is often not associated with traditional cultural practices; however, I demonstrated that Rez Metal is much more than music. It is also tied to various practices such as a form of cultural practice rooted in place-making through Tyler's silverwork and Ritchie's Code Talker guitar. In particular, the Code Talker guitar serves as a cultural artifact that ties history, language, and music through the connections to US militarism. Tyler's Rock Star bracelets forge the history and cultural practice of the Navajo people, charting a map-making process of place-making through memories and storytelling, informed by his experiences growing up on the reservation. The idea of rebelling against colonialism was not only reflected in Rez Metal music but also in carrying Tyler's Diné traditional art practice that also reclaims Diné traditional cultural practices and worn through OXDX t-shirt. Thus, silver work, and clothing play an important role in constituting the scene but are not entirely determined by it.

When I met with Tyler during his interview, an important part of his life was being able to provide for his family as a father. In between our interviews, this role was also evident when his daughter woke up from her nap, confused, and came to him for comfort. As he held her on his lap to calm her down, he assured her with kind words. These relationships of kinship, family, and culture are deeply rooted in his being. I see Tyler as an excellent example for Native families to imagine better futures. In this future, he showed me that he came from a place where he healed

his past and looked to the future, telling stories to his children about how he was raised growing up on the Navajo Nation. His artwork combines traditional practices of silverwork with Rez metal, created through his relationship to land, place, and memory-making.

I presented that the Rez can be a reclaimed space that fosters and builds on the imaginations of Native people and can provide a better future. The title of this chapter emphasizes the “cartography,” which is the practice of using and making maps. Referencing again Starblanket’s term of “resurgence” as an active process that looks to the past to inform a better future through daily change that takes place every day from the ground up.¹⁴⁷ Rezistance cartography is an emerging map of Indigenous thought and culture that looks to the past to create better futures from a Rez perspective. Throughout this chapter, I aimed to describe how Rez Metal music and lifestyle convey the profound message and souls of Native communities. Rez Metal’s place-making was able to exist despite the obstacles and barriers of socio political and economic access. These creative forms of DIY culture and Indigenous creativity, which adapt to the environment, are rooted in Indigenous relationality, knowledge, and epistemologies.

In this chapter, I explored the creation of Reservation maps and the brief history of the Navajo Nation reservation to articulate further how the reservation was established, which is essential to understanding how the term “Rez” originated, and to the experiences that affect Navajo people today. I also summarized the history of the reservation to contextualize how U.S. policy has continuously kept Native people hidden and impoverished.

I also supplement the storytelling of Rez Metal as a meaning-making of place through the interviews I conducted, finding the origins of Rez Metal and how shows were put on and off the

¹⁴⁷Gina Starblanket, “Being Indigenous Feminists Resurgences Against Contemporary Patriarchy” in *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism*, 2nd Edition, ed. Green, Joyce. (Canada: Fernwood Publishing. 2017. 65

reservations. I expand on ethnography by exploring how Rez Metal and Rez are reclaimed through Indigenous storytelling. I demonstrated this concept of Rez Metal maps a place and lived experiences through storytelling that influenced Tyler Johnson's creation of Navajo silverwork Rock Star Bracelets. Through art and storytelling, I articulate how these processes exemplify place-making through storytelling practices. I present further in the chapter how Tyler's creations are examples of Rez Metal place-making that would not exist without the lived experiences of land and place through his memories, which map story and place together.

CHAPTER TWO: REZISTANCE CARTOGRAPHY: REZ METAL SOUND

“Metal was not born; it evolved from other existing sounds, ideas, and technologies. It can therefore never die..... Metal music is for the ages, and it continues, metal bands will continue to break boundaries and defy barriers. Each subgenre offers its own set of codes and conduct, and its fans absorb these mannerisms.

-Rob Halford Judas Priest (p.685)

“We are still here, we will never disappear. We are far from gone. Our words will live on. It is written. It is engraved...What we do to earth. We do to ourselves.”

- Graves of the Monuments

2.1. Introduction: Heavy Metal Genre and History

“Isn’t heavy metal music a white genre?” is a question I get asked often about what makes Rez Metal different. The concept of genre from linguistic anthropology originally used “genre” to distinguish types of language, including text and writings, to name the differences between poems, folklore, legends, myths, novels, or short stories. How do bands perform the genre of Heavy Metal? What type of performance is occurring? What are the social aspects associated with Heavy Metal? Genre from Rez Metal layers the complexities of Native identities, drawing back to the conversation from Bakhtin and Bauman, who highlight the key themes that are central to my work to understand how the tensions and negotiations of identity and power within the study of genre and performance.¹⁴⁸ The tensions of colonial norms influence how the negotiations of Indian identity and the relationship to land within these concert spaces are a key aspect of this work.

Robert Walser is an anthropologist who made an in-depth attempt to explore the historical, musical, and social aspects of the genre of heavy metal from music theory enhancing

¹⁴⁸M. M. Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, trans. Vern McGee, ed. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986) 67-68; Richard Bauman, *A World of Others’ Words: Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Intertextuality* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 132.

the topic with academic depth. His book *"Running with the Devil"* is known to be one of the most influential and foundational books written within Heavy Metal studies. By tracing the history of Metal music and how it was created. Walser points out that a heavy metal genealogy ought to trace the music back to African American blues, but it is rarely done. Just as histories of North America begin with European invasion, the histories of musical genres such as rock and heavy metal also begin with white dominance. Rock historians indeed start the history of heavy metal with the white (usually British) musicians who were copying urban blues styles.¹⁴⁹ Often, Metal and Rock do not give credit to Black culture; this type of music is frequently associated with a White genre of music. However, as Walser points out, the history of heavy metal music owes a debt to African-American music. Unfortunately, a lot of white rock guitarists like Eric Clapton or Jimmy Page forget to mention the black musicians they were trying to copy and mimic. Legends like Jimi Hendrix in the 1960s defied and changed music history. Indeed, the distorted guitar sounds from Hendrix's "Purple Haze"(1967) can be viewed as one of the first Metal hits.¹⁵⁰

The erasure of Black culture, from Rock music is further discussed by anthropologist Maureen Mahon's book *Right to Rock*, which discusses the expectation and tensions surrounding "black rock" bands that although historically black musicians were the architects of rock n roll music dealt with political biases that rock music as a genre is not meant for black people.¹⁵¹ Mahon makes an important discussion that music genres become a symbol of outsider status or a

¹⁴⁹ Robert Walser, *Running with the Devil: Power, Gender, and Madness in Heavy Metal Music* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1993) 8.

¹⁵⁰ Walser, *Running with the Devil*, 9.

¹⁵¹ Maureen Mahon, *Right to Rock: The Black Rock Coalition and the Cultural Politics of Race* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004). 7-8.

tool of policing racial categories such as black culture needing to be boxed into a category and where black rock music was not seen as “authentic” or “not black enough”.¹⁵²

Metal scholars within the past decade have described the characteristics of Metal music as a response to globalization in ways that reject the conformities of the global capitalist order. Other Heavy Metal scholars such as Walser, Wallach, Gaines & Weinstein¹⁵³ have been studying the Heavy Metal scene both on a local level in the United States within small dive bars and the underground music scene, eventually expanding to the global world of Heavy Metal fandom.¹⁵⁴ Walser addresses how Heavy Metal is a term that is constantly debated and contested, primarily among fans but also in dialogue with musicians, commercial marketing strategies, outside critics, and censors.¹⁵⁵ Debates over which bands, songs, sounds, and sights get to count as heavy metal become occasions for contesting musical and social prestige.

In *Metal Rules the World*, Wallach et al (2011) describe how "heavy metal fandom serves as a viable cultural and affective alternative for disempowered youths that often shows the tendency to be with crass consumerism, class divisiveness and uneven development as it is of the authority of transition norms of behavior."¹⁵⁶ Over the past decade, metal scholars have described the characteristics of Metal music as a response to globalization in ways that reject the conformities of the global capitalist order. Wallach et al. highlight that while historically Metal

¹⁵² Mahon, *Right to Rock*, 10.

¹⁵³ Deena Weinstein, *Heavy Metal: The Music and Its Culture*, rev. ed. (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2009)

¹⁵⁴ Robert Walser, *Running with the Devil: Power, Gender, and Madness in Heavy Metal Music* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1993); Jeremy Wallach, Harris M. Berger, and Paul D. Greene, *Metal Rules the Globe: Heavy Metal Music around the World* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

¹⁵⁵ Walser, *Running with the Devil*, 4.

¹⁵⁶ Jeremy Wallach, Harris M. Berger, and Paul D. Greene, *Metal Rules the Globe: Heavy Metal Music around the World* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 3.

has been seen as primarily a white genre of music, its global reach suggests that it is listened to by a diverse set of audiences, within different cultural and social contexts.¹⁵⁷

Discussions of what is and isn't Metal are always debated by fans. There are also disputes about the authentic forms of metal music. For people outside the scene, Heavy Metal is not just a music genre alone, but is also associated with socially stigmatized perceptions of social disruption. Heavy Metal is thus at times seen as taboo within media and associated with school shootings, church burnings, and violence¹⁵⁸. Walser stated that "Heavy Metal" is not simply a musical genre that was invented, but that its meaning is "indebted to the historical circulation of images, qualities, and metaphors, and it was applied to particular musical practices because it made social sense to do so."¹⁵⁹ This is important because it presents the genre of Heavy Metal as shaped and created by external conditions and social influences. That means that

Heavy Metal denotes a variety of musical discourses, social practices, and cultural meanings, all of which revolve around concepts, images, and experience of power. The loudness and intensity of heavy metal music visible empower fans, who are shouting and headbanging, testify to the circulation of energy at concerts. Metal energizes the body and transforms space and social relations. Metal energizes the body, transforming space and social relations. (Walser, 1993:2)

Detailing Heavy Metal history from Wallach et al., the genre emerged in the early 1970s.¹⁶⁰ Many scholars point to early 1970s Black Sabbath as the first heavy metal band. And yet, the obscure American group Sir Lord Baltimore was first labeled a heavy metal band in a Creem Magazine review published in 1971. Overall, however, Black Sabbath was the first major metal band to break out and gain worldwide recognition, with bands like Judas Priest not far

¹⁵⁷Wallach, Berger, and Greene, *Metal Rules the Globe*, 7.

¹⁵⁸ Karl Spracklen, "Gorgoroth's Gaahl's Gay! Power, Gender and the Communicative Discourse of the Black Metal Scene," in *Heavy Fundamentalisms*, ed. Rosemary Hill and Karl Spracklen, 1st ed. (Boston: BRILL, 2020), 90.

¹⁵⁹Walser, *Running with the Devil*, 1.

¹⁶⁰Wallach, Berger, and Greene, *Metal Rules the Globe*, 37.

behind.¹⁶¹ Today, Heavy Metal denotes a cluster of rock music styles that emphasize loud, distorted guitars, prominent and aggressive drums, emotionally extreme singing techniques, musical complexity, and esotericism (unlike punk).

Heavy metal music came as a response to global capitalism and London's economic hardships. Wallach et al. has observed that Metal in the West has predominantly, though not exclusively, been consumed by a working-class audience, the fandom first emerged in those parts of the United States and the United Kingdom that suffered from deindustrialization.¹⁶² When the industrial infrastructure of a region is dismantled by business interests in their search for cheap labor and unfettered control of workers and production, poverty prevails. Systemically, this caused an increase in unemployment, underemployment, economic insecurity, and a crumbling civil infrastructure. Various studies of the Metal music genre have linked the social frustrations that metalheads identify with to these broad economic and social trends. Thus, heavy metal subculture became a refuge for those dislocated in urban migration, caught between stereotypical racial politics and often fluid urban spaces.¹⁶³

2.2 On “Needing to get out”

Heavy Metal began to impact American popular culture during the early 1980s. By the beginning of the 1980s, the more aggressive and faster style of Metal called "speed metal" and then "thrash metal" was taken up by bands in the United States and Western Europe, including bands like Anthrax, Metallica, and Slayer.¹⁶⁴ The diffusion of Metal around the world has two

¹⁶¹Jon Wiederhorn and Katherine Turman, *Louder than Hell: The Definitive Oral History of Metal* New York: It Books, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers, 2013, 41.

¹⁶²Wallach, Berger, and Greene, *Metal Rules the Globe*, 16.

¹⁶³Wallach, Berger, and Greene, *Metal Rules the Globe*, 16.

¹⁶⁴Walser, *Running with the Devil*, 3.

distinctive phases. In the first, ending in the late 1980s, Metal gradually spread outward from its original sites in Britain and the United States by the middle of the 1970s; it was found throughout Western Europe, Australia, Canada, and by the end of the decade, in Japan. The 1980s were the decade of Heavy Metal as the popular musical style, and by 1989, Heavy Metal accounted for as much as 40% of all sound recordings sold in the US. The Heavy Metal audience became increasingly gender-balanced and middle-class, and its age expanded from preteens and adult fans.¹⁶⁵

To understand the fandom of Metal culture, during the pandemic, I read biographies of famous metal musicians and how Metal came to be. Ozzy Osbourne's biography is one that stuck out. His experiences highlight themes on the declining economic opportunities for factory workers and the realities of the poor working class struggling in London. Ozzy grew up poor and worked interesting jobs like a slaughterhouse, fixing car horn tuners in factories. His expectations with the group of five co-workers were to tune 900 car horns daily. He met coworkers who had been there for over 20 years at the same job. As Ozzy describes it,

In those days, the working person's mentality went like this: you got what little education you could, you found an apprenticeship, they gave you a shit job and then you took pride in it. even though it was a shit job. And then you did that same shit job for the rest of your life... A lot of people in Birmingham never even made it to retirement. They just dropped down dead on the factory floor. I needed to get out.¹⁶⁶

I bring up Ozzy's experience because, at times, being in community and hearing my interlocutors' reflections on their lives, the reservation can feel similar to Ozzy's life experience. In a lot of my interviews, musicians have expressed that Rez Metal was an outlet for the everyday life of working hard labor jobs, hourly part-time work, and other forms of low-wage jobs. In that regard, within reservation life, there are shared sentiments of feeling like there is no

¹⁶⁵ Walser, *Running with the Devil*, 3.

¹⁶⁶ Ozzy Osbourne with Chris Ayres, *I Am Ozzy* (New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2009, 27.

economic mobility. These economic challenges also affected the types of instruments and guitar equipment a band could realistically afford and how far they could travel. These are not realities for every band member, but during my fieldwork, this was a recurring conversation about economic challenges. In their book *Rez Metal inside the Navajo Nation Heavy Metal scene*, Stone and Zappia state that Rez Metal "provides listeners and performers alike, the "equipment" to deal with Navajos' historical, cultural, and economic trauma.¹⁶⁷ Rez Metal, described by Stone and Zappia, is thus an outlet used for marginalized Native Youth on the reservation.¹⁶⁸ The authors suggest that Rez Metal reclaims Metal as an Indigenous art form through an analysis of Indigenous themes found within lyrics.¹⁶⁹

Rez Metal is not only an art form that voices Indigenous perspective but also a concrete community that provides its members with innovative and enduring networks of kinship that transcend generations, gender, and class. For example, Heavy Metal fans range from Gen Z, Millennials, to Gen X and Baby Boomers. There is also a diverse audience in terms of gender, with bands also having both male and female members. Stone and Zappia further observe that Rez Metal fans come from diverse economic backgrounds, from tribal politicians to grade school students.¹⁷⁰ The authors also argue that Native people can create contemporary music and work against the dichotomy of traditional versus modern.¹⁷¹ I want to emphasize that getting out does not mean leaving the reservation for good either. That feeling can be described in multiple ways. Instead, "getting out" can also be just a feeling of needing a change or shift or being in a new mental "place" or different "place" in life.

¹⁶⁷ Ashkan Soltani Stone and Natale A. Zappia, *Rez Metal: Inside the Navajo Nation Heavy Metal Scene* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2020).13

¹⁶⁸ Stone and Zappia, *Rez Metal*, 14.

¹⁶⁹ Stone and Zappia, *Rez Metal*, 14.

¹⁷⁰ Stone and Zappia, *Rez Metal*, 14.

¹⁷¹ Stone and Zappia, *Rez Metal*, 9.

Similarly, the word "rez"-- whether being used to describe actual places or as an adjective--often carries undertones of hardships or even negative connotations that are also associated with something of low quality or even remedial, (e.g., "rez car" or "rez house"), and yet people use the term in ways to index a sense of home and community. Similar to the usage of Rez, heavy metal subculture entails a complex social life with individuals participating in the scene deploying multiple, and at times conflicting, interpretations of the genre.

An important article that highlights the themes of resistance and identity within subcultures is written by Donna Deyhle, who specifically examines how Navajo Heavy Metal youth experience discrimination in high school. The Navajo heavy metalers she interviewed spoke of anger, distrust, and defiance, but the common thread was their resistance to the dominant, mainstream white culture.¹⁷² At the same time, while Heavy Metal is seen as a white genre of music, the study found that Navajo and Ute youth did not reject their families or relationships but instead used the music, clothing, and symbols of heavy metal to express identity in opposition to the majority of their white peers. This article makes aware that the message from Heavy Metal Native youth is grounded in racial politics and resistance to assimilation into the majority culture that surrounded their school experience.¹⁷³

On the hand, in the article “A whole new type of isolation” Resilience and Hope in the Navajo Nation Metal scene during the COVID-19 Pandemic in 2020-2021” Anthony Thibodeau and Diné musician Sage Bond wrote about the isolation, economic challenges and the creative writing process that the musicians faced on the Navajo Nation. However, the article makes light that “community is what gives individuals the strength to survive in difficult conditions and it is

¹⁷² Donna Deyhle, "From Break Dancing to Heavy Metal," *Youth & Society* 30, no. 1 (1998). 20

¹⁷³ Deyhle, "From Break Dancing to Heavy Metal," 23.

what gives people the hope that the time will come again to play a live show, again.”¹⁷⁴ This scene embodies multiple meaning and lived experiences, capturing both the vibrant energy and on needing to get out and perform.

2.3 Recording Place: Acoustemology and Experiential Truth

To illustrate the concepts of “feeling place” and “making of place” through Rez Metal music, I reference my fieldwork when I visited with Alliance, a Rez Metal band from the San Carlos Apache reservation. Scottie Noline is the lead vocalist for the band and a founding member, along with Issiah Patterson. They invited me to come and observe their second day of recording in the studio. They were working on professionally recording their songs, “Perception of Madness, Misery, Reassemble,” and “Chains”. Their producer, Jacob, is local to the Phoenix area and runs a recording studio in a room in his house. Scottie said that through networking, Jacob contacted them to offer a recording session for their songs.

It was my first time in a recording studio to witness how songs are recorded and produced. Compared to the standard Rez Metal recordings, which are often described as recording the song track in one take or other creative DIY methods. In my past conversations, Rez Metal recording is usually one take where they play the entire song to a recording device, and that is the song on the album. It would have a different sound texture when recording, depending on what equipment was available or how the microphone or audio was able to pick up the sounds.

¹⁷⁴Anthony J. Thibodeau and Sage Bond, “A Whole New Type of Isolation: Resilience and Hope in the Navajo Nation Metal Scene during the COVID-19 Pandemic in 2020–2021,” in *Defiant Sounds: Heavy Metal Music in the Global South*, ed. Esther Clinton, Nelson Varas-Díaz, Jeremy Wallach, and Daniel Nevárez Araújo (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2023), 131–135, accessed September 6, 2025, ProQuest Ebook Central.

Jacob is considered a professional. He is extremely detailed in the editing process, and the software used gives him the ability to intricately weave multiple sound clips into one cohesive track. The band members in Alliance had to play each section and segment of the song. I observed Aaron, who is the rhythm guitarist for the band. He would play the song's riff for about five to ten seconds, then repeat that riff three or four more times into the microphone. He then repeated each section of the song until each section was played perfectly alongside a metronome. In between, Aaron would have to replay the riff multiple times because he may have made a mistake on the first take, or he was not in sync with the metronome. Then Jacob's job would be to capture each segment of the guitar riff and import it into his music recording software. Afterwards, Jacob and Aaron would manage to get three to four clean samples recorded. Jacob then plays each of these clips back to the band through his computer speaker, and then the band selects their favorite clip from the sample options.

This process would take hours to go through each section of their song from the beginning to the end. Once the rhythm guitarist was done, the same method was used for the bass and the lead guitar. In between this process, the other band members just wait patiently to pick the clips or wait for the next instrument. At the same time, we were waiting for parts of the lead guitar recording to finish up. Scottie Noline and I could have conversations where I could learn more about the songs and the band. He explained that the song "Chains" was written for a close family member who had a substance addiction, and how he can not do anything about it. Scottie showed me the lyrics he wrote on his phone so I could understand them more deeply. When the guitars were done recording, it was Scottie's turn to lay the vocal track.

Scottie had to stand in front of the microphone and sing each section of the lyric until he got the vocal he wanted. When Scottie was recording this song, he was belting intense Metal

vocals repeatedly, and it was straining on the body. Getting the vocal sound correctly takes a lot of work. He mentioned to Jacob that he has to get himself into his feelings to convey the message. Scottie said, "When I sing, I have to put myself back into the 'place' when I wrote these lyrics, and then to sing it into the recording, emphasizing that the feeling had to be there.

There were many times I could see Scottie run his hands through his hair while pacing back and forth. There was a moment when he would go outside to take a big breath and stare at the sky. It seemed to be how he put himself in the “place” as when he wrote those lyrics. The goal of the recording is to capture that exact feeling. Once he put himself in that emotional place, he would sing in that microphone following that routine.

Through weaving both life experiences and sounds together, Steven Feld’s concept of acousetemology, reminds us to connect both sound and felt balance as a means of exploring sound.¹⁷⁵ To explore the “feeling of place” and process of place-making Steven Feld asks “What of place as heard and felt? Place as sounding or resounding?”¹⁷⁶ The concept of “felt” and “heard” through sound guides a sensory ethnography that further how musicians interpret the notion of “feeling place: as expressed through music. As Feld importantly highlights that places are reflective of one’s embodied experiences and memories,¹⁷⁷ Acoustemology shifts the frame of reference from sight to sound as a means to explore how sonic sensibilities are central to making sense, to knowing, and to experiential truth.

Not only music and speech but also the sounds of our surrounding world, the wind, the sea, the animals, and birds all play a critical role in generating a distinctive sense of place. The interplay of sound, movement, and felt balance each contribute to the sensuality of emplacement and of making place.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁵ Steven Feld, “Waterfalls of Song: An Acoustemology of Place Resounding in Bosavi, Papua New Guinea,” in *Senses of Place*, ed. Steven Feld and Keith H. Basso (Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press, 1996), 97.

¹⁷⁶ Feld, “Waterfalls of Song,” 94.

¹⁷⁷ Feld “Waterfalls of Song,” 97.

¹⁷⁸ Feld “Waterfalls of Song,” 97.

Therefore, in this situation, Scottie highlighted how the relation between the music of his reservation life and sonic production is an embodied form of experiential truth. These observations raised further discussion on what it means to understand reservation life and the realities of Indigenous communities today. The environments, cultural knowledge, and histories of the reservation inspire Rez Metal music. Scottie connected his life experiences from the reservation when he wrote the song “Chains.”

Observing Scottie is to understand that "place" is both a mental and physical state. Scottie helped me finally understand the concept of Rez Metal as “raw,” which is the word often used in the scene. The context of “raw” carries a deeper understanding of song and lyrics that were written, but also experienced from a particular “place.” However, place is not just a means of a physical place but also a phenomenological understanding of place. As Merleau-Ponty reminds us, “the body is our general medium for experiencing the world.”¹⁷⁹ Edward Casey explains that bodies experience place through lived experiences.¹⁸⁰ He asks to think about what it means to go back to a place you know, and find it full of memories and describes that “lived bodies belong to places.”¹⁸¹ Casey makes clear that the lived body is a material condition of possibilities for place-world while being a member of that place.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁹ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (New York: Humanities Press, 1962), 146.

¹⁸⁰ Edward S. Casey, “How to Get from Space to Place in a Fairly Short Stretch of Time: Phenomenological Prolegomena,” in *Senses of Place*, ed. Steven Feld and Keith H. Basso (Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press, 1996), 24.

¹⁸¹ Casey, “How to Get from Space to Place,” 24.

¹⁸² Casey, “How to Get from Space to Place,” 24.

2.4 Feeling History and Place

When you listen to Scottie's vocals separately from the instrumental recordings it offered a unique listening experience without the distraction of the guitars or drums. By focusing solely on the vocals exemplified the sound and detailed textures of the vocals. For example, I would hear the genuine emotion when Scottie's voice cracked in a way when they were nervous, or when someone is about to cry. I notice that Scottie work reworked his vocals until he could stabilize it. He would take a big breath in and belt out the vocals again. He would repeat this process until he got the vocals exactly how he wanted them to sound. Occasionally, when his voice would crack or his vocals reacted in a different pitch or sound, he would have to redo the vocal recording again to get it just right.

In this situation, the unique aspect of recording vocals is that only Scottie can hear the music playing while he wears the headphones. This is done so that Scottie can sing with the vocals and the music in the background. His experience with the sound of the instrument is just for him to sing in the timing he wants. The other band members and I sat in the recording studio, and we all experienced Scottie singing his vocals into the recording microphone.

To understanding listening from an Indigenous music scholar, Dylan Robinson, provides a perspective about listening that for Indigenous people's music, is premised on a holistic approach of "feeling the history."¹⁸³ In this Rez Metal cartography, I ask questions about the history of the reservation as a place. By listening to Rez Metal music in this framework of "feeling place" and "keeping history," the experience of listening to music recenters Native voices and experiences, understanding those places and the people from those places. In this

¹⁸³ Dylan Robinson, *Hungry Listening: Resonant Theory for Indigenous Sound Studies* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2020). 51.

case, his song Chains is about his family, which is part of his relationship to family and community in that song.

I appreciate Robinson's conversations with scholar Jo-Ann Archibald, who emphasizes what it means for us as Native people to listen to other stories and music.¹⁸⁴ As Archibald uses a story from the Native Elders who tell them the importance of listening is with “three ears: two on the side of our head and the one in our hearts.”¹⁸⁵ Therefore, my listening became more than just attuning to the sounds of music and connecting the songs to a place or meaning; it also involved hearing the lyrics to make connections to the emotions that inspired the song.

To further demonstrate how listening became a different experience with the heart, Scottie puts himself into the emotions of his words and sings them from deep within. I observed Scottie as he sang the lyrics that he wrote:

Do you ever think of us? Or is your life just blinded by drugs. I wish you'd stop these toxic habits. Please end this shame and your families sadness. I'm still in pain, I'm still in pain.¹⁸⁶

I observed how the body responded when reliving certain emotions in these moments. For Scottie, the emotion in this song is raw. The feeling is present inside his body as he works to express the feeling through his vocals. As his emotions began to settle, he would sing the lyrics several more times into the microphone until he achieved the sound he wanted. After he was done going through this part of the song, he had to continue with the rest of the songs. It felt like witnessing someone experience the same emotion repeatedly and convey it into the microphone over and over again.

¹⁸⁴ Robinson, *Hungry Listening*. 51.

¹⁸⁵ Robinson, *Hungry Listening*. 51.

¹⁸⁶ Alliance, “Chains” Chapter 1: Let Go. EP 2023, Spotify.

Once Scottie was done recording the lyrics to the entire song, it was Aaron's turn to sing the backup vocals to the song. I would describe Aaron's contribution as providing clean vocals, where you can understand each word, he is singing. This differs from how the band describes Scottie's vocals, which are growls, screams, and harsh tones. Instead, Aaron's vocals remind me of the pop-punk or emo genre, which emphasized flat-toned vocals with soft nasal tones and an emphasis on expressive emotions. Aaron's part of the song is similar to the emotive sounds, but also like a smooth conversation you have with someone. Even though lyrically his vocals are gentle, singing the lines:

Breaking me down again. Please just come back home. You see me weaken. Broken by the truth that inside me.¹⁸⁷

Aaron had to vocally sing these lines differently for parts of the songs to emphasize the lyrics and vocals in unique time signatures. He repeated these lines in the microphone while emphasizing the expressive higher notes on the lyrics "again" and "see." His vocals, inspired by the genres of pop punk and emo, provide a new layer and a unique aspect of feelings that evoke longing and bleeding hope.

2.5. Voicing the Map: Sound, Story, and Indigenous Expression

All the vocals were done by the end of 10 hours of recording. Jacob combined all the guitar riffs, vocals, and drums together to add more texture to the songs. I would watch Scottie close his eyes during the playback, somber and reflective in the moment. He knew what he wanted his songs to sound like. Jacob would alter the tones of the sounds throughout the song, which could fade softly or have special textured sounds like a piano outro as the song ended. He

¹⁸⁷ Alliance, "Chains" Chapter 1: Let Go. EP 2023, Spotify.

would add effects like dramatic vocal echoes, almost like a whisper or a change in the sound wave that would distort the intro. A minor edit here and there changed the sound and ambiance of the room. I was taken aback by how small edits could make the song so dramatic and change the entire feel of the song.

As the producer Jacob used mixing software and started to add soft piano keys and echoes of Aaron's soft vocals as he sang "*Please come back home.*" This song features transitions, effects, and layers of echoes from another dimension of the song. The sounds were mixed with distortion and then changed into lower-toned sounds. When I started to hear the full mixed effects added towards the end of the song, I suddenly had chills running through my back, spine, and arms. I looked over to see that Scottie's eyes were closed when he heard the small ringing effects, when the different sounds and textures were added. It looked like Scottie was in a reflective and meditative moment when he smiled, knowing it was the sound he was looking for.

Spending the entire day with the band members watching their recording process all the way to the end was rewarding, especially hearing the final song. The songs capture the "feeling of places," and the message in the song is truly inspiring. The textured sounds of the echoing vocals remind us of times our own past haunts us, or when someone we know in our lives has a substance addiction. This song was made to convey that "feeling of place" for those who have relatives, friends, and a community struggling to break the "chains."

It's not too late to try again and win the fight. These chains can break. Your will is your fate. I love you! I love you so much!¹⁸⁸

When the song ended, the room was quiet, and the band had nothing more to say. Jacob hinted that it was a good place to stop recording for the night. We all packed our belongings,

¹⁸⁸ Alliance, "Chains" Chapter 1: Let Go. EP 2023, Spotify.

shook hands, and thanked Jacob for the recording session. As I drove back to stay with my friend in Phoenix, I thought about the lyrics of this song and their relationship to sound and place. The lyric, "*Please come back home*," added theoretical layers, as Native people's relationship to land and concepts of home, including our family ties, were altered by colonialist policies such as Indian Boarding schools and Indian Removal for many tribal nations away from their original homelands.¹⁸⁹

Indeed, Indian removal forced Native children from their homes and forced them to attend Indian boarding schools. As Indian families were separated, our cultures and language after boarding school required the community to teach and learn again. As an urban Native American, learning also means coming back to the homelands to relearn our histories through time with family and relatives. These themes of mapping home and "feeling place" are informative of how I approach Rez Metal Cartography.

2.6. Mapping Rez Metal Place Names

During the 2020 pandemic, the Navajo Nation faced devastating COVID-19 positive cases and experienced rapid spread. This time affected the community and how the tribal government had to operate to support its people. As the world shifted to an online format for interviews, I was initially nervous about the number of interviews. I felt unsure how the Rez Metal community would feel sitting in a Zoom format. During the early stages of the pandemic before vaccines were available, and amidst the uncertainty about how long we would be in isolation, I conducted interviews with the bands. I was worried that the devastation and turmoil of COVID

¹⁸⁹ Example: Cheyenne, Arapaho nations from the Colorado area removed to Montana and Oklahoma. Other tribal nations such as Cherokee Nation removed from States like North Carolina, Tennessee and part of Alabama and Georgia were removed to present day Oklahoma.

would render it an insensitive time to interview folks about a music scene. I posted a flyer looking to interview people about the Rez Metal scene. The worries and anxiety quickly changed over time on social media when I had over 30 people sign up for interviews in a matter of two weeks. The participants ranged from former bands, current bands, promoters, fans, and community members who grew up in the Rez Metal scene. I scheduled nearly three interviews every other day with more bands wanting to participate.

Among the many people I spoke with, one of the most engaging interviews I conducted was with Carlos Weiss, the lead singer of Graves of the Monuments. Carlos is a member of the Navajo Nation; he lives in Page, Arizona. His music is deeply connected to his community and the land. I describe Carlos as a slender man with a short haircut and tan-brown skin. His style—marked by black skinny jeans, band T-shirts, turquoise jewelry, and custom ear gauges—embodies a distinct Rez Metal aesthetic that blends Indigenous identity with Metal subculture. In this interview, he was excited to share about the recent music video “Herbalist.” When I asked Carlos what makes Rez Metal unique, he said:

You know, there is a lot of dirt. It's dark outside with a DIY kit. And it's nice because you can get fry bread or a Mutton sandwich.¹⁹⁰

The pandemic created feelings of isolation while everyone was instructed to stay inside and practice social distancing. However, while it was a stressful time, it also created a reflective environment, which led to a lot of introspection from the bands about the value of the scene. Many of the band members mentioned that they never sat through an interview going over a sequential timeline from the formation of their band to the present day. For some bands, they had never been interviewed about their music in depth in this manner.

¹⁹⁰ Carlos Weiss, Zoom Interview by author, October, 2020.

Most importantly, the interviews from the bands talked about remembering the joy they had in the scene and speaking from a nostalgic standpoint for the past scene. Some bands either had music ready to debut and were cut off by the timing of the pandemic, while many bands took the social distancing and isolation as a new opportunity to make more music. A central theme was the hope that once the pandemic shutdown was lifted, the bands would go play a show again. They were ready to perform and play for the community again.

Carlos told me how his band name reflected the place they are from, surrounded by the monuments in Page, Arizona. Looking at Google Maps you can see the northern direction, the Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument, to the east, the Rainbow Bridge National Monument and the famous Monument Valley, and to the west, the Vermilion Cliffs National Monument. Southwest, is the Grand Canyon National Monument, and finally to the south is the Wupatki National Monument. I did not realize how many monuments surrounded the area. I thought about the monuments nearby, and using “Graves” just added to the metal aesthetics of darkness and haunting.

The Graves of the Monuments music video is filmed on their family land, but you also see the band members playing inside a traditional Navajo hogan. A hogan is a traditional Navajo home, made of cedar pine logs that hold the hogan's structure, plastered with mud that holds the logs together. Carlos told me that his band practices in the family hogan—a place known to house the traditional way of life and how the Navajo people lived ancestrally. His life is a wholesome life. Carlos told me about his daily activities, such as playing video games, hanging out with friends, making music in the hogan, and then helping his grandmother herd sheep with his band, followed by dinner. I could sense how home and place were central to the band's origin and where their music was made. His band is full of imagery that locates their roots, such as their

band shirt. He is from the surrounding monuments in Paige, Arizona. Their music video performance unveils the band's deep connections to its history and identity, their pride in who they are and where they come from.

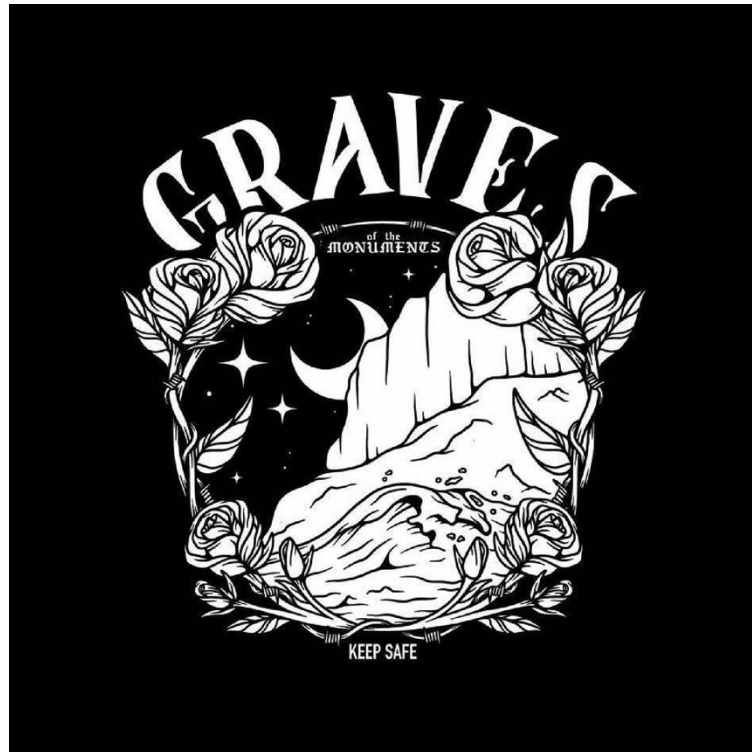


Figure 2.1. *Graves of the Monuments Merch T-shirt in small lettering “Keep Safe”*. Digital illustration. Used with permission.

I was so engaged in the interview about Carlos's home life, being surrounded by Navajo culture, and how he could explain his artistry and vision for his band. I analyzed the place-name of the Graves of the Monuments and their band merch t-shirt with the image of the roses and the canyon monuments. At the bottom of their shirt, in small print, labeled “Keep Safe,” refers to their song about keeping water safe. I argue that Graves of the Monuments locates their band using place names such as “monuments,” which is an example of an Indigenous geography that connects to the land around them, and holds significant cultural meaning and practices, and honors the earth and water.

A central goal of this dissertation is to decolonize maps by reclaiming "place names." As Calloway describes, Native place-names are a term to describe the location, natural features, and local animal life.¹⁹¹ These place names were recorded on maps to find plants, medicinal herbs, and other natural resources. Other names might be gathered for food, ceremonial, or other materials. However, Indian place names scattered throughout the West are common, yet most of the general population fails to recognize these names as Indigenous names.¹⁹² Native place names at National Parks or sacred sites, such as Canyon De Chelly National Monument on the Navajo Nation, Sleeping Bear Dunes in Michigan, acknowledge Ojibwe peoples, or Badlands National Park in the Lakota Nation, reference tribal histories in those places. Compared to other place-names named after white settlers like Mount McKinley in Alaska, Kit Carson National Park in New Mexico, and Custer State Park in South Dakota, which reference historical figures that Indigenous peoples do not always welcome.

However, discussions of place names and how native people understand places, I draw from Keith Basso's work on the Western Apache people, which reveals that place names hold cultural traditions and conversations among the Apache.¹⁹³ "Nothing is more basic to telling a Western Apache story than identifying a geographic location at which events in the story unfold. From the outset, neither landscape nor language can be ignored."¹⁹⁴ As Basso explains, placeless events in stories are impossible, as every event happens somewhere, so placeless stories are not told. Apache narratives are verbally anchored to points upon the land with precise depictions of

¹⁹¹ Calloway, Colin G. (Colin Gordon). 2003. *One Vast Winter Count : The Native American West before Lewis and Clark*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press. 9.

¹⁹² Calloway, *One Vast Winter Count*, 9.

¹⁹³ Keith H. Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language among the Western Apache* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996), 86.

¹⁹⁴ Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places*, 87.

specific locations.”¹⁹⁵ Basso notes that the Apache values connection to landscapes. He also says that understanding the meaning behind place-names. As his book title suggests, *Wisdom sits in Place*, points to the cultural lessons, and ancestral stories within place-names and local geographies. I find Basso’s work relevant in framing Indigenous ways of understanding place-names and meanings that are deeply reciprocal to the relationships rooted in culture and place, and those not tied to territories in a colonial context. The concept of place-names is only one aspect of decolonizing geographies.

2.7. Towards Sonic ReZistance Cartography

During my fieldwork interviews, I examined how Rez Metal bands use their music and sound to raise awareness and resist colonial forces. Beyond resistance. I also analyzed how sound and performance centers Indigenous knowledge and relationality. I present that a deep relationality is when Rez Metal raises awareness about Native American injustices, but also advocates for our relations to nonhuman relations, such as medicinal plants and protecting water. In this section, I attempt discuss the ethnographic data that opens the conversations of how certain songs and performances make Rez Metal a distinct genre.

Heavy Metal music is no stranger to environmental and political activism. Bands like Gojira, Napalm Death, or Massive Attack are known for their music as environmental activism and using their music to speak out against climate change, deforestation of the rainforest, and political activism.¹⁹⁶ Other metal bands like Cattle Decapitation or To the Grave, address animal

¹⁹⁵ Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places*, 87.

¹⁹⁶ Laura Snapes, “‘Nature Is Hurting’: Gojira, the Metal Band Confronting the Climate Crisis,” *The Guardian*, April 30, 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2021/apr/30/nature-is-hurting-gojira-the-metal-band-confronting-the-climate-crisis>; Nicola Davis, “Massive Attack’s Plan to Cut Music Industry’s Carbon Footprint,” *Nature*, May 15, 2024, <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-024-02835-2>; Maria

rights and exploitation. However, I want to argue that Rez Metal is a distinct genre that centers Native American relationships to place that ties cultures, language, and kinships to these songs. I position Rez Metal as a unique genre that advocates for the relationship to the land through creation stories, specific cultural knowledge, ceremonies, and way of life. Finally, I emphasize that Rez Metal originates as a sonic form of truth-telling about reservation life that is a distinctive experience in Native North American histories.

It is important to also note that not every Rez Metal band centers its music on advocating for Native American issues or cultural reclamation. Rez Metal's identity is very nuanced and complex. Some bands resist the association with the term or have expressed discomfort in being labeled a Native American band. In the interviews and even during my fieldwork conversations, some bands simply expressed that they just wanted to be recognized as a Heavy Metal band that happens to be Native American, rather than relying on their identity in ways that are not applied to other white artists. Some bands say it is a label and feel like they are just making music. I acknowledge and respect these perspectives, and it is important to understand the layers within the Rez Metal scene.

However, specific songs and performances that do engage in decolonizing geographies and practices contribute to what I refer to as the Rez Metal Cartography. This phenomenon of Rez Metal performance as a decolonial act is central to my analysis. I draw from Dylan Robinson, who expresses the importance of sovereignty, not as “thing” or “object” but as an action. With this perspective in mind, I investigated the actions through which certain Rez Metal bands engage in relational practices that honor cultural sovereignty and maintain the relationships for the collective futures of Native communities. I examine how Rez Metal sounds

Muller, Maria “Napalm Death: A 4-Decade Journey of Music and Activism,” *Rock & Art*, July 19, 2023, <https://www.rockandart.org/napalm-death-4-decade-journey-of-music-activism/>.

reclaim spaces within border towns like Gallup or Farmington and how sound is used to confront historical injustice and Indigenous refusal.

Indigenous music scholars emphasize that "listening" should be related to the land and through kinship.¹⁹⁷ Therefore, central to Indigenous mapping is maintaining relationality to land and kinship. I call upon Diné ethnomusicologist, Renatta Yazzie's work, who is a trained classical pianist and grew up in the Navajo Nation. Her work, while still in the form of her Master's Thesis and soon to be dissertation, is integral to further theorizing Diné relational listening grounded in Diné kinships. Yazzie is a Diné scholar, and her upbringing and ontological understanding originate from her lived experiences of being a Diné raised by her grandparents, who are fluent speakers. Yazzie draws from Navajo scholar Lloyd Lee's Diné Identity markers as the model for Diné-specific listening practice in action, which are as follows: knowing history, sounding land, hearing language, feeling kinship, and understanding of the self. Renata Yazzie's contributions in framing relational listening through a Diné perspective of listening modes.¹⁹⁸ Her modes of Diné listening further emphasize the Rez Metal Mapping as a relational practice.

To unpack the lyrics within Rez Metal music that centers on defending Native land and preserving culture, I draw on the concept of "Sonic Sovereignty," coined by Hopi Law scholar and ethnomusicologist, Trevor Reed. Sonic sovereignty examines how the relationships to

¹⁹⁷Trevor G. Reed, "Sonic Sovereignty: Performing Hopi Authority in Öngtupqa," *Journal of the Society for American Music* 13, no. 4 (2019): 508–30, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1752196319000397>; Dylan Robinson, *Hungry Listening: Resonant Theory for Indigenous Sound Studies* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2020), 53.; Jessica Bissett Perea, *Sound Relations: Native Ways of Doing Music History in Alaska*, 1st ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021).

¹⁹⁸ Renata Yazzie, *Listening is Kinship and Kinship is Listening: Diné Modes of Listening in the 21st Century*. (Masters Thesis, Columbia University 2025).

Indigenous sovereignty and sounds can act as “actual material of governance and a source of Indigenous authority.”¹⁹⁹

As Trevor Reed notes, other Indigenous scholars express that sovereignty exists with continuous and generative relations rather than being prescribed by a single, monolithic text or authority. Indeed, Western nodes of sovereignty do not apply to an indigenous worldview that implicates inherent authority or supreme domain. I appreciate Reed's discussion with multiple Indigenous scholars who theorize that sovereignty is not just about governance but also includes Indigenous protocol, cultural rights, and draws on the “norms and values” Indigenous peoples use to structure their collective futures and maintain relations to one another.²⁰⁰ Sound territory is not a boundary or settlement nor exclusive through treaty processes.

By framing a Rez Metal as a sound map, I revisit my interviews I conducted with Carlos, focusing on how his music is grounded in relationships to place, relatives, and even non-human relatives. This is demonstrated when I asked Carlos in an interview which song was the most meaningful song that he had written. He immediately said:

Right now, that would be Herbalist it is our newest song and 3rd music video. That one is about who in the future will our medicine people be and who will be there to heal us traditional in the next generation. We all have our grandparents trying to teach us Navajo, our sacred ways and if we forget them what will happen them.²⁰¹

Carlos started singing the lyrics over the Zoom room: “Who will make the remedy. I am searching for a cure to save me.” As he was humming, he stopped.

That right there is going towards what I was talking about. It's meaningful to me because my great-grandmother was a Herbalist and she gathered medicines to heal us. And when the time comes, if we can't be healed traditionally, then who will? By singing the lyrics, Sage for protection and Cedar for protection. Our next album is going to be inspired by

¹⁹⁹ Trevor G. Reed, “Sonic Sovereignty: Performing Hopi Authority in Öngtupqa,” *Journal of the Society for American Music* 13, no. 4 (2019): 508–30, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1752196319000397>. 515.

²⁰⁰ Trevor Reed, “Sonic Sovereignty, Hopi” 513.

²⁰¹ Carlos Weiss, Zoom Interview by author, October 2020.

Native culture. There is going to be about culture and knowledge that we will share with people who don't know about us to spread awareness.²⁰²

Before the interview, I watched the music video they filmed in their hogan. The video starts with a focus on the fire pit, with the night lighting Carlos' face. He starts singing,

We are still here, we will never disappear”.... I accept whatever comes my way, cause my heart is strong. Plant it in the ground and I'll fight these demons. Who will make the remedy? I'm searching for a cure to save me, and I will walk the desert sun. Show your colors in the light, Peyote for my visions, Sage for protection.²⁰³

The common theme that I saw in “Herbalist” informed the relationship Native people have to the land, to plants, and to the medicinal knowledge passed through generations. I argue that this song embodies sonic sovereignty as an action that goes beyond plants as a resource to extract from, but by recognizing them as relatives who must be protected for future generations. This song raises awareness and advocacy to inspire others to engage with traditional ecological knowledge and uphold the responsibilities as Native people to preserve this knowledge and medicines. Carlos explains that the album *Storyteller* is committed to advocating for our non-human relatives, like the plants and water in this album, framing this music as a movement for cultural and environmental stewardship.

2.8 ReZisting Dying Language

Another compelling example from *Graves of the Monuments* is their song “Dying Language,” which echoes the theme of intergenerational learning and a call to action for language learning and revitalization. The central theme of the “Dying Language” music video, are the realities of language loss of Indigenous peoples. At the beginning of the music video, text

²⁰² Carlos Weiss, Zoom Interview by author, October 2020.

²⁰³ Graves of the Monuments, “Herbalist” on Storyteller, YouTube Video, 4:18, posted by GOTMOFFICIAL, June 20th, 2019, <https://youtu.be/b1mCliraHmI?si=pZaSqmXjpNXv4vOu>

appears stating, “Indigenous people of Northern Arizona are facing a complex issue. The Navajo language is disappearing.”

Tribal language loss is a critical issue for Indigenous populations. The threat of language loss does not burden Heavy Metal bands that perform in English, as English remains the dominant and global hegemonic language. Opposite to the title of the song "Dying Language" is instead a call to action to save the language. The imagery in the music video starts with landscape shots meant to invoke the idea of pre-colonial contact. Yet, they are performing contemporary expressions of Heavy metal music and singing in English, which call for a plan of action for the future.

“Dying Language” and other nostalgic discourses within Rez Metal reflect various studies that address language revitalization movements and nostalgia that references the pastness as a better time. This longing for pastness is a recurring theme in many Indigenous studies within language revitalization. At the beginning of the music video, the text lays out facts and percentages of the realities of language loss of Indigenous languages over the years. They reference the Diné language and created a song or call to action to essentially “save our languages from dying out”.

Show the way. Save the words we spoke yesterday.....We will find a way.
For history to play a role in the lives of the young. We shouldn't waste another day.
We would be risking it all.²⁰⁴

This song is a sound remapping that reflects today's decisions that can change and alter the history of Indigenous languages. The music video is a call to action reflected in the lyrics that uses nostalgia to inform better futures for young people.

²⁰⁴ Graves of the Monuments, “Dying Language” on Storyteller, YouTube Video, 6:04, posted by GOTMOFFICIAL, February 19th, 2021, <https://youtu.be/hZ1q3MpXiCI?si=HAOnuoNWg1D2Upl8>

I draw on Svetlana Boym to distinguish two types of nostalgia I find helpful to my work: restorative and reflective nostalgia.²⁰⁵ Restorative nostalgia stresses the concept of home and attempts a transhistorical reconstruction of the lost home.²⁰⁶ Whereas reflective nostalgia thrives on the nostalgia as the longing itself. Boym also makes us aware that nostalgia can be dangerous.²⁰⁷ Some discontents are helpful in making aware of over idolizing the past as better times. Nostalgia also has elements that are seen as both a longing and a yearning, but certain types of nostalgia can be destructive and can lead to violence or historically destructive times.²⁰⁸ I would also add that overindulging in nostalgic ideas can also lead to a romanticized past that may not have ever existed, or rather, imagined as historically inaccurate.

Nostalgia can be used to imagine a better future for Indigenous communities. I draw from linguistic anthropologist Erin Debenport, who analyzed how “hopeful nostalgia” helps language revitalization movements in the San Ramon Pueblo community where her work is situated.²⁰⁹ An example of hopeful nostalgia is how the language program can envision and imagine that they can speak their Indigenous language as before.²¹⁰ In this case, I argue that the song from Graves of the Monuments is a hopeful message that can motivate the next generation to learn the language.

Who will learn our words? Don't let go our words will hold the fate. Of the world that can be saved. Stay with me, we will find a way.²¹¹

²⁰⁵ Svetlana Boym, “Nostalgia and Its Discontents,” in *The Uses of the Past, The Hedgehog Review: Critical Reflections on Contemporary Culture* 9, no. 2 (2007):13.

²⁰⁶ Boym, “Nostalgia and Its Discontents,”13.

²⁰⁷ Boym, “Nostalgia and Its Discontents,” 9.

²⁰⁸ Boym, “Nostalgia and Its Discontents,”12.

²⁰⁹ Erin intentionally respects tribal nations not wanting to be named in their secrecy of language revitalization. Instead, it uses San Ramon as the name of the community to protect the language revitalization efforts.

²¹⁰ Erin Debenport, *Fixing the Books: Secrecy, Literacy, and Perfectibility in Indigenous New Mexico* (Santa Fe, NM: SAR Press, 2015), 111.

²¹¹ Graves of the Monuments, “Dying Language” on Storyteller, YouTube Video, 6:04, posted by GOTMOFFICIAL, February19th, 2021, <https://youtu.be/hZ1q3MpXiCI?si=HAOnuoNWg1D2Upl8>

Drawing from the hopeful nostalgia within the lyrics, the concept of language revitalization within this song also shares the same sentiments that healing from cultural loss is vital to healing the community. The Graves of the Monuments album called “Storyteller,” which I presented in this section, is an example of a (re)mapping practice through Native stories' relationship to land, place, and culture through the sounds of Heavy Metal music. Both songs also employ remapping practices that lead to better Indigenous futures, giving motivation and voice back to communities.

To conclude, Debenport explains that language revitalization can be seen as both a symptom and a cure to diagnose the amount of cultural loss and a way to reinstate what has gone missing, what has been taken, and what is seen to be vital to the healing of the community.²¹² Drawing from hopeful nostalgia and restorative nostalgia, we can see how Indigenous communities see the value of healing from cultural loss from the past. However, restoring this loss is vital to heal the community for the future. Nostalgia, time, and place inform how Indigenous social life and temporal experiences draw hope and action for a better future.

I argue that Graves of the Monuments remaps the songs of "Dying Language" to indicate the opposite of the literal term dying, and instead express hopeful nostalgia that believes that language can be revitalized. Rather than accepting the colonial narrative of language loss, this song speaks back to this framework and shifts the focus towards empowerment and the role of youth in reclaiming language.

I am often asked why Rez Metal is not sung in their tribal language. When I ask the bands about this question I get a mixed response of not everyone speak their tribal language,

²¹²Erin Debenport, *Fixing the Books: Secrecy, Literacy, and Perfectibility in Indigenous New Mexico* (Santa Fe, NM: SAR Press, 2015).111.

other bands said they attempted to try it but found it really difficult to sing the words in a Metal vocal genre and some mentioned not having interest in performing their language outside of culture of ceremonial purposes. Or not wanting to fit into a box of having to perform or present as a Native American band.

Whatever the reasons maybe there is important message that this music video responds to the realities of how colonization affected language loss through policies. This music video makes us aware that language is deeper and carries culture, and identity. The music video is filmed in the Diné homelands, supporting the connection between language and culture. This is further demonstrated in the scene where the grandmother teaches her grandchild the cultural arts of rug weaving and tying her hair in a traditional Navajo bun.

Through attentive listening to the specific sounds of Rez Metal, I examine how the appreciation, production, and circulation of Rez Metal music contribute to remapping reservation life. I theorized how Rez Metal music acts as a form of “refusal” against logics of elimination and speaks back to the deficit narratives of reservation life by actively resisting the logics of settler colonialism through the lyrics of the music. This phenomenon is described as a rezistance cartography that recenters Indigenous knowledge of language, kinship and relationality.

2.9. ‘On Listening’ M.I.S Merciless Indian Savages: Counter Mapping Histographies

Rez Metal is a community of people who come together, to watch these performances that can be hosted both live and in person shows, as well as virtually within internet spaces, which the public can come and engage. While it is important to note that Rez Metal wants new audiences to engage with their music beyond just the reservation shows and local towns does raise questions about the messages that non-Native listeners should take away from the Rez

Metal scene. What is the power of listening to Rez Metal music? How should non-Native listeners also attune to the sounds of decolonization? What are the differences between audiences who are not Native American, and how does this music resonate with other audiences?

I frame the discussions around how non-Native audiences should listen to Rez Metal by emphasizing the importance of listening in a way that Native voices and performances. What other ways can non-Native audiences be allies and advocate for this scene within their own music spaces? There is a need for non-Native people and allies who can elevate this music scene, such as opportunities for music exposure, eliminating the financial barriers for Rez Metal bands, cost-effective venue spaces, and people who can help improve experiences in the recording studio.

Sara England discusses a form of (re)mapping sound in Indigenous sound art practices that offer non-normative geographies. She emphasizes the power of sensing the body in the production of space.²¹³ Sound is a compelling channel for spatial decolonization when contextualizing the history of map-making. England's goal is to attend to sound because it expresses and produces better social, cultural, political, and economic relationships between Indigenous and settler populations and more-than-human populations.²¹⁴ However, improving non-Native relations with the Indigenous population is not the central focus in how I want to envision the goals of the Rez Metal scene. Ethnomusicologist Liz Przybylski, who studies Native Hip Hop, emphasizes that non-Native listeners are encouraged to listen to the sounds of varying aspects of decolonization.²¹⁵

²¹³ Sara Nicole England, "Lines, Waves, Contours: (Re)Mapping and Recording Space in Indigenous Sound Art," *Public Art Dialogue* 9, no. 1 (2019) 10.

²¹⁴ England, "Lines, Waves, Contours," 10-11.

²¹⁵ Liz Przybylski, *Sonic Sovereignty: Hip Hop, Indigeneity, and Shifting Popular Music Mainstreams* (New York: New York University Press, 2023), 71.

To elaborate on decolonization and performances, I draw from Hawaiian scholar Stephanie Teves' work titled *Defiant Indigeneity*, which elaborates how Indigenous performance challenges settler colonialism and refuses the elimination of the Native. Teves refers to Hawaiian performance as both staged performances and the enactment of everyday life.²¹⁶ As Teves notes, *Defiant Indigenous* is a performance of Indigeneity that constantly deconstructs, resists, and at times rectifies itself against state logic. She centers these ideas on an Indigenous ontological and epistemological way of knowing.²¹⁷ The performance intends to help your people survive, sometimes asserting Indigenous presence. Other times it prioritizes kinship and being in community, including those that the government does not count as your family. It can encompass all these things.²¹⁸

To demonstrate resistance through song and performance, I reference the time when I first saw M.I.S. (Merciless Indian Savages) play in Gallup, New Mexico. I met Corey Ashley and Jacob Stepetin at the 2021 Navajo Nation Fest, where the Maori Band, Alien Weaponry performed. I remember sitting in the audience with some local bands in the Rez Metal scene. I looked at one of my friends in the audience, and he said, "This band is really good!" I visited them at their merch booth to talk to them more about their music and the scene. However, with 10 minutes of changes and loud music in the room, it was almost impossible for us to visit each other. I bought a CD and a T-shirt and was excited to learn more about this band. I wondered why I had not heard of this band at the time. M.I.S. became a band I wanted to follow in my research because they were aligned with my interests in Rez Metal music.

Our collective Indigenous identities and experiences fuel the lyrical content of our music. The songs we create will have concise theme or stories that highlight aspects of the

²¹⁶ Sara Nicole England, "Lines, Waves, Contours: (Re)Mapping and Recording Space in Indigenous Sound Art," *Public Art Dialogue* 9, no. 1 (2019), 13.

²¹⁷ England, "Lines, Waves, Contours.", 13.

²¹⁸ England, "Lines, Waves, Contours.", 13.

Indigenous experience. Our vision is to use heavy metal music as a medium to spread awareness and knowledge around Indigenous issues, identity, and culture. We hope to represent issues we encounter in our daily lives as well as draw attention to the greater histories and systems that perpetuate colonization.²¹⁹

It was finally in 2022 when I officially met M.I.S. again at the Navajo Nation Metal Fest in Window Rock, Arizona, during the Navajo Nation Fair. I overheard from people in the community that Corey and Jacob were former students of Stanford University. I questioned how they ended up in the Rez Metal scene. Did they make music while they were attending Stanford, or were they all in a band together before they went to college?

They approached me at the merch booths and asked how my dissertation was going. I was surprised that they had an idea of who I was with my camera. I told them I am approaching Rez Metal as maps and looking to enhance the Rez Metal scene through photographs. Corey turned to me and said, “Did you know Jacob has a master’s degree in engineering from Stanford?”

As I got to know M.I.S. more as a band and who they were. They are humble guys who are very approachable and friendly. M.I.S. was a band that I have consistently seen over the course of my fieldwork since this show. They became a particular interest for me because their music aligned with resistance music.

One day I happened to run into Corey Ashley by chance at the Pueblo Starbucks in Albuquerque. In many ways, I felt very fortunate that this meeting happened by chance, since Corey resides in Phoenix. I sat with Corey after he finished his work and his Zoom meeting. I asked if I could treat him to dinner at Laguna Burger, right across from the Pueblo Starbucks. He agreed and asked me to interview him about his band. As I got to know the band over time, I saw

²¹⁹ I pulled inspiration from the M.I.S. biography on from their Spotify page. Spotify, “About – M.I.S.” *Spotify*, accessed May 29, 2025, <https://open.spotify.com/artist/3l71mf2QPGkU9hks57dwA9?si=NXsEPKqRSWuRCfZU3E9pUg>

them set up their merch booth. As I got to know the band more, I wondered about their t-shirts and CD designs.

I explained my project to Corey so that we could get to know each other. I learned that M.I.S. was formed starting with the friendship of Corey Ashley and Jacob Stepetin during their undergraduate studies at Stanford University. Their friendship began as they moved into the dorms and bonded over Heavy Metal music and being Native students. They eventually met with Joe “last name,” who was in the drumline at Stanford. Joe is a professionally trained drummer. This also made M.I.S. unique because of the level at which Joe could play the drums with unique time signatures.

Corey described growing up in Sanders, New Mexico, and how Stanford was a big cultural shift. He mentioned how he started out in STEM and that students who were there already knew coding, while he had to learn it for the first time. Stanford was a challenging experience, as it is an elite campus. It involved a lot of studying, focus, and determination to get through. While there was not a lot of Native representation, they could still find community. Corey mentioned that a lot of his inspiration for his music came from his time there, wanting to express what he was learning and his studies in Native history. Their experience, in many ways, was similar to many I know, including myself.

Growing up in Denver, I related deeply to the Rez Metal band M.I.S. because we shared many similar experiences. When they talked about their time in college, it reminded me of my own experience attending elite, predominantly white institutions, where I often felt unable to express myself as a Native person fully. I can only imagine how difficult it was coming from the Rez and villages to then attending Stanford.

M.I.S.'s first show as a band took place on the San Carlos reservation, where Scottie Noline from Alliance invited them to perform at their Rez show. They mentioned it was their first practice show. But as a band they felt like their first full debut to the Rez Metal scene was at the Navajo Nation Heavy Metal Fest. Corey and Jacob mentioned that this experience felt like the right presence to introduce themselves as a band to the community. In Jacob's words,

It was so different. Everyone was on the stage, it was dark, there was a crowd that was sizable in one spot. And the lights and sounds. Acoustic wasn't ideal but through the stage, and monitors and the ways it hit. I feel it when I want to feel it on stage. We don't hear what you hear in the audience. I hear just Joe and a little bit of me. When it quiet down I maybe can hear Corey sing. I heard and experienced more of the full mix.²²⁰

What makes M.I.S. a Rez Metal band is how they can articulate and express their messages of decolonization, which intentionally speaks back to colonialism. Their journey to the Rez Metal scene was a way to reconnect with community after being so far away from home. I asked Corey if I could come to a couple more shows, since I was living in Albuquerque at the time. He mentioned their next show was on Halloween at the Blooze bar in Phoenix.

As Halloween rolled by, I attended the Blooze bar two times that weekend, the first time to see Alliance play and the second to see MIS play. I remember asking Corey at the bar tables about M.I.S.'s first show. He said Scottie from Alliance invited them to play in San Carlos at their Metal fest, which they have on the Apache Reservation. I liked that Scottie was supportive and invited Rez Metal bands to their show and it demonstrated how the scene support new and upcoming bands. It showed me the varying ways bands start out in the scene.

Halloween at the Blooze allowed me to get to know M.I.S. We could wear costumes at the event, and M.I.S. participated in the festivities. Originally, Corey told me he wanted to dress up as the Founding Fathers, but since they had difficulty finding those costumes, they came

²²⁰ Jacob Stepetin, In-person interview by author, (October 2022)

dressed in catholic church attire. I saw Corey dressed as a priest, and Jacob was a nun wearing an upside down cross with a scary mask. I saw Ruben, their bass player, dressed as a friar. A local Phoenix band was playing the show on a small stage. The band member gave a shout-out and said, “This next song is dedicated to that guy in the pope hat.” I turn around and I see the M.I.S. drummer Joe, headbanging and cheering with his hand, signing the metal horns. I could not help but find this entire set ironic. As they played their set, this was a unique opportunity where Native American guys could do a metal show in catholic attire, while singing songs about decolonization and Native resistance. They played their song, “Kill the Man, Save the Indian,” a reverse play on the boarding school policy of “Kill the Indian, Save the Man.” As the show was over, they were the last band on stage, and the other bands who had played earlier greeted them to shake hands. The bartenders were ready to clean up and return for the night. I followed the band out as they loaded their gear into Jacob’s Subaru. I asked to follow up with Corey and Jacob.

The next day, I met with Jacob and Corey at hot pot in Phoenix. Prior to M.I.S. interviews, I only heard about the band from Corey. I wanted to hear Jacob's story about how he joined the scene. Jacob is an Alaskan Native, Unanga from the Akutan Islands. I learned from Jacob's life about the village life he grew up in and how his family lived off subsistence hunting and fishing. I also learned about his culture and how home is so important to him, which also changes when they tour as a band. As Jacob recounted,

Our band doesn’t tour in the summer times. I have to go home for me. For me to exist I have to go home every summer. I work in a school and I get summer off I get to go home. And its so hard to get there. It has to be when the weather is good. (referring to flights have to land in Akutan) and I have to be on my homeland and fish and do what I need to do. ²²¹

²²¹ Jacob Stepetin, In-person interview by author, (October 2022)

I will discuss three key themes of identity from the interviews with M.I.S, particularly in relation to sound and feeling place. Jacob emphasized that going home is essential for him to exist, indicating that home is central to his identity. He also mentioned that making music at Corey's house on the Navajo Nation was the right place, illuminating how music is shaped not just by place but by the relationships connected to that place, especially as he navigates the new community he lives in.²²²

I wondered how Jacob ended up in the Navajo Nation, let alone playing in a Rez Metal band. His decision to start a band with Corey came to the forefront when he graduated with his degree from Stanford. He mentioned clearly that his institution had nothing to do with his music making, but it was when he moved to the town Sanders on Navajo Nation with Corey, they started making music and recording. According to Jacob,

I felt like that is where we were supposed to be doing it. At Corey House, that was the best place for us to make music. We would go out and go for a hike, then write music and drive to Canyon de Chelly to visit.²²³

The music and its inspiration were from the history of the Navajo Nation. Canyon DeChelly has been the ancestral home of the Navajo people for generations. When Jacob mentioned Canyon de Chelly, I connected title "Scorched Earth," which refers to the Kit Carson's policy to remove the Navajo people from their land.

Hear the cavalry, Burn the land, Burn the soul. Scorch the earth, Scorch our home, We inherit the flames of this war game. Reiteration. Annihilation. Forced Assimilation. Psychological warfare. Master of despair. Set the world on fire.²²⁴

²²² Jacob Stepetin, In-person interview by author, (October 2022)

²²³ Jacob Stepetin, In-person interview by author, (October 2022)

²²⁴ M.I.S on "Scorched Earth" on *Scorched Earth* single, Spotify
<https://open.spotify.com/track/0Sgfl32QzeMvwcdMaamlfq?si=Sjd9VT9QQJqcXLpgf3lteg&context=spotify%3Aalbum%3A4SMnIdjePlrmqAUqNCrI4y>

For Navajo people, the Long Walk era was a devastating time. As Diné historian Jennifer Denetdale writes, “Kit Carson literally scorched Navajo country, forcing Navajo to surrender.”²²⁵ In 1863, they sent the Navajo on the Long Walk, forcing them to march to Fort Sumner in 1864 and remain there until 1868. Their survival was found to be poor due to food, starvation, lack of shelter, and the spread of diseases. In 1868, the US government finally allowed the Navajo to return to their home.²²⁶ The signing of the Treaty of 1868 signaled the end of the Long Walk era and commenced the “New Navajo Beginning.”²²⁷ These lyrics from M.I.S. exemplify the concept of “feeling histories” specifically linked to place-names like Canyon de Chelly. The song title “Scorched Earth” references historical policies that are connected to the landscapes, place-names, and cultural history of the Navajo people.

2.10. Cartography Rez Metal Resistance

I present how Rez Metal charts a resistance Cartography that sets its musical presence in the sounds that raise awareness of the injustices of Native American peoples. I analyze how Indigenous relationality to Navajo tribal history is presented in these spaces. In this historiography, I trace how the music charts oral history and themes of Native American history and cultural references.

Oftentimes in my fieldwork, I run into people who want to hear “tribal language” or “tribal sounds and instruments” to index the authenticity of imagined Native American sounds, rather than wanting to know what music is saying about the experiences and voices of

²²⁵ Jennifer Nez Denetdale, *Reclaiming Diné History: The Legacies of Navajo Chief Manuelito and Juanita* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2007), Kindle edition, loc. 275.

²²⁶ Renae Watchman, *Restoring Relations Through Stories: From Dinétah to Denendeh*, 1st ed. (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2024), 12-13.

²²⁷ Watchman, *Restoring Relations Through Stories*, 13.

contemporary Native American peoples and expressions. I invite listeners to be open-minded about music. It is important not to expect Rez Metal to be like other Indigenous Metal bands like Maori band Alien Weaponry or the Mongolian band The Hu, who incorporate tribal language or instruments into their songs. I argue that the use of English in these songs is meant for audiences to learn and engage in the listening of Rez Metal music and the message of history that comes this genre of music.

As I frame Rez Metal, which comes from a place of Indigenous knowledge and reciprocity, certain music can also present resistance and refusal to forms of exploitation through place-based practices. Here I invite readers to practice listening to Rez Metal music as a form of sonic sovereignty pushes back against decolonization. I invite listeners to look up these songs through Spotify, YouTube, or Apple Music. There are currently two Spotify playlists titled “REZ METAL” or Native Heavy, which have lists of Rez Metal bands and their songs.²²⁸

Audra Simpson’s concept of “ethnographic refusal”²²⁹ suggests that there is at times important political, cultural, and ethical significance in limiting and withholding information from public view. Beyond ethnographic refusal, Simpson highlights a broader theory of “refusal” as a way for Indigenous peoples to reject settler colonial goals of elimination, to go away, or to cease in being.²³⁰ I demonstrate that Rez Metal songs are forms of “refusal” that challenge ethnographic expectations, as well as challenge the western colonial logics of reservation

I present how the song embodies an Indigenous form of refusal. I look to Indigenous scholars to define the notion of refusal. In Dylan Robinson book *Hungry Listening* he discusses

²²⁸ Winston, *Native Heavy*, Spotify, accessed August, 29th, 2025.
<https://open.spotify.com/playlist/6xVJFIaixj0Fym4kgYJzGc?si=hdQ7Ps55SyORA-dYw1Paaw&pi=ADSezE5aSTaaZ>

²²⁹ Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 105.

²³⁰ Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus*, 22.

alongside Glen Coulthard and Leanne Simpson that view . The important aspect of grounded normativity is not so much about “refusal of settler colonial logics- which in fact would recenter their power- but instead serves to keep our attention on indigenous place-based practices and associated forms of knowledge.”²³¹ Therefore, refusal can shift where knowledge and power arise not from settler colonial logics but instead return the authority back to Indigenous peoples. This shift reemphasizes the importance of language in the construction of knowledge.²³² Therefore, I articulate that Rez Metal recenters Indigenous knowledge and place-based practices through the music that speaks power through refusal. These refusals are not just to the borders of the reservation but speak back to the logic of elimination that challenges the history of erasure of Native peoples.

In this framework, Rez Metal is a site of historiographic intervention. Through the forms of music lyrics and album covers, Native artists have challenged and reclaimed dominant historical narratives. Rez Metal refuses the continuous deficit model of reservation life as simple desolation or isolation. Instead, they write about building Indigenous futures for their communities and family members. These futures are grounded in the relationship to land and how their sounds create new maps that speak to rezistance inspired by their homelands.

Part of reimagining futures involves retelling creation stories and histories through contemporary music. I illustrate a sound mapping counter-history that act as a counter-historiography, showing how specific song titles and names of the bands resist colonial logics and the elimination of Native peoples. I started the sound mapping with songs about creation stories, such as “The Dark World” by Mutilated Tyrant and the song “Under the Sun,” by Sage Bond, about Changing Woman who sacrificed her flesh to make the four sacred mountains. Song

²³¹ Robinson, *Hungry Listening*. 22.

²³² Robinson, *Hungry Listening*. 22.

titles like “Relentless,” written by Heart Museum and “Unmarked Graves” by M.I.S., are specific to U.S. boarding school history. These songs, I argue, are what make Rez Metal distinct, grounding the refusal to be eliminated and to call out the injustices of Native American histories, removal, and genocide.

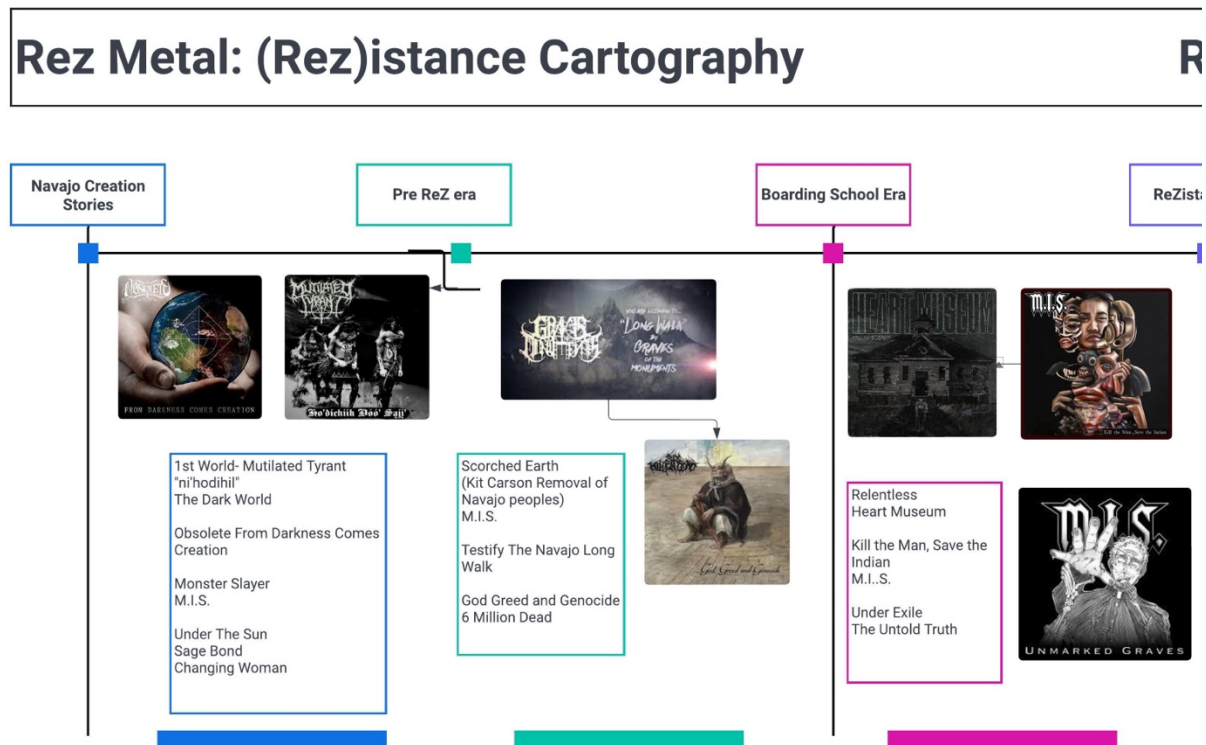


Figure 2.2. *Rez Metal (Rez)istance Cartography, Part 1*. Chart created by the author using Lucidchart based on Spotify and Band album art.

In this section I employ visual examples as a means to help illustrate a “Rezistance Cartography” that charts a counter cartography through the relationship of sound and place. There are many examples of lyrical content of sonic resistance and counter-mapping in the Rez Metal scene. I demonstrate how these performances and sounds create the map-making process through the lyrical example of some songs from the band Graves of the Monuments. Their album *Storyteller* powerfully addresses injustices faced by Native Americans. I also highlight the band

M.I.S. whose music emerges from political origins. Their songs speak directly to historical aspects of genocide and removal. Therefore, to honor all the bands that demonstrate songs of refusal I present a counter mapping of Indigenous oral history through Rez Metal Music.

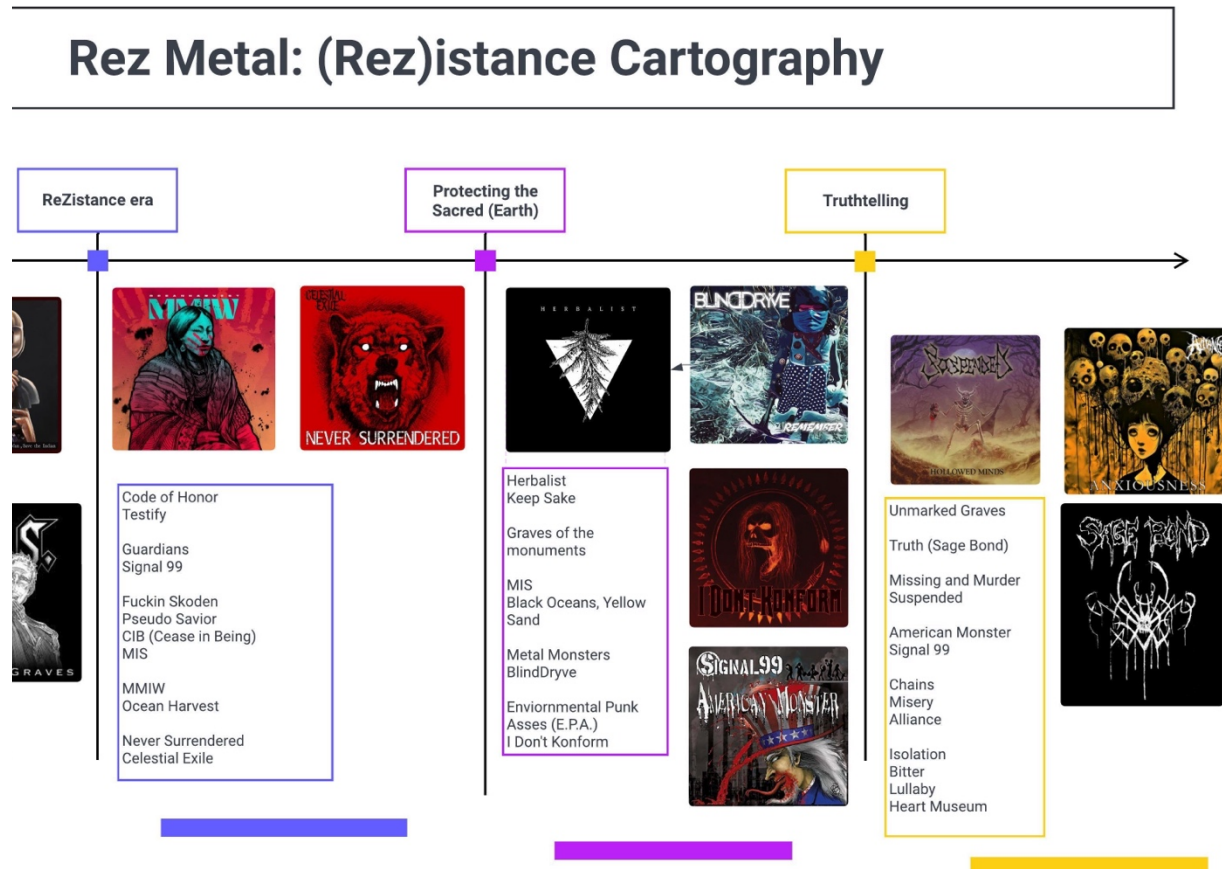


Figure 2.3. *Rez Metal (Rez)istance Cartography, Part 2*. Chart created by the author using Lucidchart based on Spotify and Band album art.

I intend for this chart and layout not to be read as linear or to be seen as a progression. It is important to note that the chart starts with creation stories and moves into a traditional format of historiographies. From creation stories to pre-colonialism, to the boarding school era, to contemporary struggles, the current layout reads in one direction from start to finish. In fact, given the space of my dissertation, the chart aims to highlight ways that the Indigenous historiography speaks back against colonial frameworks. However, I also want to make the listeners aware that the reading of this chart moves in multiple directions, with all its competent

parts interconnected, with fluid relations between them. One can begin where a listener wishes to start. The songs were created by musicians who are the grandchildren and direct descendants of this history. These songs were made at different times, years, moments, and places.

This chart is a spatial mapping project because these songs reflect a specific place where each event happened, demonstrating the remapping of the geographic areas and historical memory tied to the significant cultural landscapes. For example, the song by Testify called “The Long Walk,” is a specific history tied to the Navajo people at Canyon De Chelly, in which the M.I.S. song “Scorched Earth” references the Kit Carson policy to eliminate the Navajo people from their homelands. These song titles and covers are examples of place names or place words of events that have taken place or are about to take place.

Feld’s *Acoustemology* describes place-making as a form of “experiential truth.” Such experiential truth is reflected in the sounds of Alliance’s song “Chains” and Heart Museum song titled “Bitter,” which discusses the contemporary challenges of reservation life. From mental health, addictions, family struggles, these songs are part of the truth-telling of how colonization has affected our daily realities as Native peoples. Yet these songs are made to talk about truth to encourage survivance and give audiences hope for a brand-new day. These songs are a form of rezistance in that they refuse the elimination of the Native. These songs are meant to help our communities survive.

By listening to these songs, audiences are invited to confront the histories of the United States' settler colonization. Rez Metal songs such as “Dying Language” also discussed tribal language. This legacy of ongoing language loss is a present-day issue that many tribal communities are facing. At the same time, this music is an opportunity for non-Native listeners to hear the messages of Rez Metal music that foreground the issues Native American

communities are facing. While the Navajo language amongst the younger generation is declining, the language itself is not dying as there are ongoing efforts for language revitalization and preservation.

2.11. Conclusion

I recall the quote at the start of this chapter from *Graves of the Monuments*, “We are still here. We will never disappear.” The lyrics demonstrate the refusal of the logic of elimination, and the songs remind us that we, as Indigenous people, are still here. I also wanted to make people aware of how genres of Rez Metal music and sounds can be used to express the survival of Native people’s history and cultural expressions.

The sentiment of "coming home" is also the core of my mapping project—Scottie's song about coming home maps places and their meanings through sound. Rez Metal is a place that connects sonically, explaining the relationships of place-making. The music video "Chains" was filmed on the San Carlos Reservation, where they are from. The video opens with a sweeping view of the land, showing how beautiful the Apache homelands are. As the music video unfolds, it showcases different landscapes. It looks vast; it does not present the land as barren but alive. The visuals are paired with the soundscapes, with the ambient sounds of the piano keys as the camera moves through the various parts of the landscape of canyons, hills, desert grass, and trees. The band members are playing in an abandoned building with graffiti art and a torn infrastructure that gives it a raw, edgy aesthetic. With powerful vocals, Scottie screams into the microphone, "WAKE UP" as heavy power riffs and guitar scales are heard in the background. The scene captures the band members' headbanging, immersed in playing their instruments. The

music also crafts a sound that speaks back to the historical trauma of reservation life with a positive message, "Come back home, it is not too late."²³³

I presented how sound functions as a form of cartography as (re)mapping a ReZistance through Rez Metal music. Focusing on examples from Graves of the Monuments, I showed how their work challenges colonial deficit narratives surrounding language revitalization and affirms relationality to plant knowledge and medicines through their song "Herbalist." By centering Indigenous mapping practices, we can gain insight into the interplay of sound, space, and place from an Indigenous framework.

Mishuana Goeman reminds us that "remembering important connections to land and community is instrumental in mapping a decolonized Native presence."²³⁴ I demonstrated how Rez Metal within the Heavy Metal music scene redefines Native people's relationship to land and place, rooted in a Native (re)mapping practice. I gave an example from Graves of the Monuments that expresses what I call a Sonic rezistance. Their song "Dying Language" offers a counter-narrative and relationship of music to sound and place, which challenges the expectations of non-Native audiences who often assume that Indigenous music must be performed in a tribal language to be seen as authentic. I discussed the Rez Metal songs that talk about U.S. boarding schools, and those that directly confront the history of violent cultural erasure on tribal communities.

Finally, I theorized how place-based and sonic sound practices of the "rez metal" experiences articulate a "rezistance cartography," a mapping that refuses settler colonial logics and asserts Indigenous presence through sound. I argue that the Rez Metal genre does more than

²³³ Alliance, "Chains" Chapter 1: Let Go. EP 2023, Spotify.

²³⁴ Mishuana Goeman, *Mark My Words: Native Women Mapping Our Nations*, 1st ed. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013). 29.

decolonize spaces; it is an act of everyday refusal and survival for Indigenous peoples. These songs embody survival and assert Indigenous sovereignty, cultural continuity, and relationality through culture, traditions, land, and place. Rez Metal, therefore, is not just a sound but a sonic movement that creates Indigenous world-making practices for better Indigenous futures. While decolonizing is important to this work, I argue that Rez Metal is a distinct genre because it actively remaps Indigenous relationships to land, place, kinship, and community.

CHAPTER 3 Visualizing Cartography “(Re)Mapping an Indigenous Sonic Resistance

“Keyah(land) encompasses landmarks, and Morris' words resonate with my experiences: I have seen these landmarks every morning of my life, whether or not I am actually at home. These mountains and formations are as real and as alive for me as are the stories that animate them. Better than anything else, they tell me who I am.

-Watchman 2024, Morris The Glittering World, 44

3.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, I centered and theorized Rez Metal music as a central map-making practice that resists the colonial logics and boundaries of reservation boundaries. I discussed how mapping Rez Metal sounds as place-making practices. Thus, in this chapter, I focus on visual map-making practices and utilize photo-ethnography as a method for the Rez Metal (Re)mapping Art Exhibit. In engaging with Collin Calloway, who described Native mapmaking as “pictures of experience,”²³⁵

I draw inspiration for a photo-ethnography, from Collin Calloway’s description of Indigenous maps as “pictures of experience.” However, “photographs as maps” is not enough to be labeled as an Indigenous mapping practice. Thus, I investigate how the reproduction of photographs and images should be further theorized as a mapping practice grounded in Indigenous values of relationality. I use this chapter to theorize the photography of the Native American experience in creating a visual map-making project that tells stories of Indigenous relationships to land and place. Throughout this chapter, I discuss the historical creation of photography and images of Native peoples and communities. I frame this work from Diné scholar, Renae Watchman considers that films and stories relies on our responsibility and

²³⁵Calloway, Colin G. 2003. *One Vast Winter Count: The Native American West before Lewis and Clark*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press. 13.

relationality to protect and defend our cultures and lands.²³⁶ Throughout this chapter, I present a few community-based ethnographic vignettes that guided the visual decision-making in curating exhibits at the Denver Art Museum.

3.2. Relationships with Photos: “Everything gets better”

One evening, while driving up to Bernalillo, about 45 minutes from my apartment in Albuquerque, I noticed that the nighttime landscape was unlike the morning, when the Sandias were illuminated behind the backdrop of the giant blue sky, with the tan-colored dirt scattered across the landscape as you entered the city. However, when night falls, the stars appear, and you can sometimes glimpse the shadows of the Sandias in the distance. I found myself reflecting on the night and how the city’s creative music and art often arose during this quiet and introspective season.

When I arrived at six or seven, I visited a Pueblo band called Secret Earth during their band practice session at their home. The four members of Secret Earth are Patrick Valazquez, Dylan Eustace, Brian Pry, and Brandon Guzman. It was my first interview with band members representing the Pueblos of San Felipe and Santa Ana. Patrick is the lead vocalist of the band and the primary point of contact for the band's social media accounts, overseeing shows and managing the band's online presence. Patrick is a young Native man in his twenties, but feels like he has lived a long life for his age. He reminded me of many of my elders who carried wisdom or stories with them, and when they would speak with intention. He reminded me of those people who could make a room completely silent when they speak about life lessons and come back to them after thinking about what they said. Patrick carries wisdom in his voice, and he shares

²³⁶ Renee Watchman, *Restoring Relations Through Stories: From Dinétah to Denendeh*, 1st ed. (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2024).71, 154.

lessons with stories from his life, sharing them with intention. Like many of the musicians I have met in the scene, he also leads with strong intuition and feeling. He is one of those people who can make a room feel full one minute, and then in the next, you sit in deep silence because he is so captivating in how he tells his stories.

As I sat in Patrick living room conducting interviews during their band practice. There was an important moment in the conversation when I asked Patrick about “the Rez”. I asked him “For someone who has never been to your San Felipe Reservation, how would you describe it?” As Patrick begins to speak, he takes a deep pause to think. When he speaks, it is clear and collective. In this way, I know he is going to say something important and meaningful when he shares his response. Patrick started:

It’s a nice valley with dirt. (We started to laugh with the band when he said dirt) No really, the river is the center of everything that is so important to us. Water. We write about it. I can’t imagine myself living anywhere; that is where I want to be buried. It’s so pretty. It’s a valley, its green, and the river is the prettiest place. Cause when you drive into the village, the whole green area is filled with trees. That is everything to me.²³⁷

As he spoke about home, it was a feeling that was vibrant, bright, and beautiful, which is important to highlight in the imagery of Rez Metal. I draw inspiration and connections from Mishuana Goeman’s discussions of land as a meaning-making place, which visually articulate my interviews. Goeman stated that the “land is at the heart of indigenous identity, longing, and belonging. Indigenous peoples make place by relating both personal and communal experiences and histories to certain locations and landscapes—maintaining these spatial relationships is one of the most important components of politics and our identity.”²³⁸

²³⁷ Patrick Valasquez, In-person interview, Bernallio, New Mexico, November 2022.

²³⁸ Mishuana Goeman, “Land as Life: Unsettling the Logics of Containment,” in *Native Studies Keywords*, ed. Stephanie Nohelani Teves, Andrea Smith, and Michelle H. Raheja (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2015), <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt183gxzb.9>. 73.

The Rez can be a tough place, but I have also learned that it is a beautiful sight. Patrick described how their music was made and inspired by their lived experiences.

I kind of feel like the rez will come back for you when you do need it. Even when you are away, we pray when we put on our traditional ashes and gain reassurance. It reminds us we need to come home, but that we also have a job to do out here too.²³⁹

These conversations articulated the connection between Indigenous peoples' land, sound, and place-making as a visual methodological practice. It also highlights an important theme to consider when discussing “the Rez” or visually representing “the rez.” Images of home were an important theme I identified in the interviews, as Patrick mentioned that looking at a picture of his home evoked good memories and improved his mood. However, not only the picture, but also the connection he has to the rez as a meaning-making place.

I share the interviews I conducted when I met Sacred Earth to explore further how Rez Metal bands navigate their identity as young Native men growing up on the reservation and their relationship to home. Their interview highlighted how the Rez should be approached authentically and reciprocally, which also made space for the multiple layers of complex feelings, including reservations, life, and struggles. Yet, at the end of the interview, the band members found home to be a place of strength, kinship, and the center of who they identify with. These lived experiences revealed how the band transformed their experiences into artistic forms of Rez Metal music, centered on the theme of home.

In speaking with photography scholar, Dave MacDougall suggests that there is still value to photographic images.²⁴⁰ They are inherently reflective in the process. He mentions that the meaning of the photographs is produced by our whole bodies, not just by conscious thought.

²³⁹ Patrick Valasquez, In-person interview, Bernallio, New Mexico, November 2022.

²⁴⁰ Dave MacDougall, “Introduction,” in *The Corporeal Image: Film, Ethnography, and the Senses* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006). 3.

Images can refer back to the photographer at the moment of their creation, as well as the moment of an encounter. Making images is a form of seeing, and seeing images created by others.

I think that our secret weapon is home. Our family, our language and traditions. It's all extremely important to us. It's the core of Secret Earth is protecting that. Our message that goes with the self-advocating for yourself, stand up for yourself, stand up for the village. And stick together. We are in this together. We may be a different tribe you know like when we talk about San Carlos they are literally our cousins and we need to quit thinking we are so divided ya know. Home is so important; it's beautiful, and it drives us. If I get stuck or need a push, I will go home and walk around. Or I will look at pictures and for me everything gets better.²⁴¹

When Patrick mentions his relationships to photographs as “everything gets better,” that signaled to me that there was a relationship between images and how important home and the Reservation are portrayed. From these interviews with Patrick, I identified the themes of the Rez and home as a guiding framework for creating the Rez Metal exhibit at the Denver Art Museum. Central to this framework is the hopeful sentiment Patrick expressed about home—that “everything gets better.”

As I spoke with the band, I learned about the origins of their band name. The band told me how they changed their name from Lilac to Secret Earth. I asked how the name "Secret Earth" came to be, and they began to describe the name, referring to the stereotypical image of the Native American. As Patrick further elaborated, he said,

As Native people, we are being pigeon-holed as being sacred or traditional beings. With Secret Earth, you think you will hear sounds that will be calm music, but you will get the opposite of that as a Metal band influenced by hip hop and electronic sounds²⁴²

In these moments of conversation, Patrick makes visible that Rez Metal bands often must contend with their “band name” and the image they want to project as contemporary musicians. Learning about the band's name uncovered the ironic and humorous way in which mainstream

²⁴¹ Patrick Valasquez, In-person interview, Bernallio, New Mexico, November 2022.

²⁴² Patrick Valasquez, In-person interview, Bernallio, New Mexico, November 2022.

society confronts the expectation of Native peoples as the “Noble Indian” stereotype that referenced how Native people have been seen and imagined. Often, these visual images of the traditional or sacred Indian are set against the backdrop of nature, wearing traditional clothing and playing Native American flute music.

Instead, they play this loud sound of metal influenced by another genre. I argue that Secret Earth, along with other Rez Metal bands, redefines expectations of what audiences believe Native performers should do. By performing Rez Metal, I argue that Secret Earth and other Rez Metal bands visually (re)map the expectations of what people imagine Native performers do through their graphic art, which is featured on merchandise and images. These visual elements provide a counter-narrative to the expectations people have of Native performers.

3.3 Seeing Red: Historical and Anthropological Gaze

In one of the most well-known Native American films, *Smoke Signals* (1998), Thomas Builds the Fire looks at Victor Joseph and says, "When Indians leave, they never come back."²⁴³ Thomas cites examples as a comical but ironic reality for Native American representation in novels and films. He references "The Last of the Mohicans" and "The Last of the Winnebago" before being cut off by Victor Joseph. Analyzing the messaging in this scene reveals the multiple layers of Indian themes in films and visual representation, such as the concept of "never coming back" I argue was more than just about his relationship to his father when the movie titles are also part of the last race and vanishing Indian discourse.

Historical uses of photographs of Native American people that have been portrayed as vanishing, which is part of the settler logic of elimination that erases the Native peoples from

²⁴³ *Smoke Signals*, directed by Chris Eyre (Los Angeles: Miramax Films, 1998), 00:07:34.

their land. The imagination of "Indians" as relics of some unfortunate past is intrinsic to American settler colonialism. Native Americans uniquely experience absolute invisibility in many domains of American life. Since they are rarely featured as contemporary figures in the media, they are often absent from mainstream depictions. Natives learn to see themselves through negative stereotypes, or they look to the messages projected about the contemporary world and simply do not see themselves represented.²⁴⁴ Critiquing the settler image-making practices provides a framework for my analysis that signals to the ongoing erasure of Indigenous peoples and the image of Indigenous people that gets historicized. Rez Metal reclaims these images in contemporary and unexpected ways.²⁴⁵

During the salvage era, anthropological visuals and studies of Native peoples were seen as an urgent practice to collect and preserve cultural ideas, as once they were gone, they would be lost forever.²⁴⁶ In addition, the films and novels feature the theme of "vanishing which is prevalent in pop culture and has historical roots in the representation of Native peoples in film."²⁴⁷ The "last" implied that Native peoples are a dying race and species, which would not be true at all in the present day.

Drawing from Indigenous scholar Jacquelyn Kilpatrick, I point to what she frames as the "Genesis of the Stereotypes," which refers to the origins or formations of the Native Americans

²⁴⁴ Paige A. Leavitt et al., "Frozen in Time: The Impact of Native American Media Representations on Identity and Self-Understanding," *Journal of Social Issues* 71, no. 1 (2015): 39–53, <https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12095>.

²⁴⁵ Philip J. Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places*, 1st ed. (La Vergne: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 7.

²⁴⁶ Shannon Egan, "'Yet in a Primitive Condition': Edward S. Curtis's North American Indian," *American Art* 20, no. 3 (2006): 58–83, <https://doi.org/10.1086/511095>.

²⁴⁷ LeAnne Howe, Harvey Markowitz, and Denise K. Cummings, *Seeing Red: Hollywood's Pixeled Skins: American Indians and Film* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2013).

stereotype imagery.²⁴⁸ Although films have been around for only a century, the stereotypes presented in them have roots in more than five centuries of misperception.²⁴⁹ Undeniably, the first images of Native Americans are derived from written and literary depictions of the inhabitants of the “New World.” These writings by “early explorers” would recount their journeys of their encounters of Native Americans and take these stories back to Europe. “These European outsiders told stories about the wild savages, aligning with the European notion of what a “savage” would be. This marked the inception of the image of the Indian.”²⁵⁰ “Stories about the “Indian savage” were quite popular in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. For example, stories of captivity influenced the disturbing imagery of Native people from a European perspective. While Native Americans in these stories could be noble, they were rare.”²⁵¹

Starting from Lewis Henry Morgan, known as the pioneer of Anthropology and social theorist, created the idea of an evolutionary culture progressing through three stages of society: savagery, barbarism, and civilization.²⁵² Lewis Henry Morgan saw Native people as objects of investigation. The salvaging of disappearing native cultures required him to imagine them in a precontact “ethnographic present” that always seemed temporally outside of modernity.²⁵³ A key mechanism of this temporal dislocation was the notion of progressive cultural evolution, whereby human societies progressed through distinct stages—hunter-gatherer, pastoralist,

²⁴⁸ Jacquelyn Kilpatrick, *Celluloid Indians: Native Americans and Film* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999). 1.

²⁴⁹ Kilpatrick, *Celluloid Indians*, 1.

²⁵⁰ Kilpatrick, *Celluloid Indians*, 1.

²⁵¹ Kilpatrick, *Celluloid Indians*, 2.

²⁵² Lewis Henry Morgan, *Ancient Society: Researches in the Line of Human Progress from Savagery through Barbarism to Civilization*, condensed with a foreword by Miriam Allen deFord (Girard, KS: Haldeman-Julius Publications, 1944).

²⁵³ Deloria, Philip. *Playing Indian* Yale Historical Publications. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998, 105-106

agriculturalist, trader, and manufacturer. Indian people necessarily existed in a different stage and thus, modern white Americans were in a different temporal zone.²⁵⁴

As other anthropologists who continued the work of ethnology and grew the field. It was in the interest of Lewis Henry Morgan, who believed that the “vanishing Indian” had to be documented and collected as a culture before the Indigenous peoples would be gone forever. Morgan prefaces his book *Ancient Society* where he believed that as Indian tribes are declining under the influence of civilization, “their arts and languages are disappearing and their institutions are dissolving.”²⁵⁵

As the field of anthropology developed, so did the technology of image visual practices, and anthropology developed in tandem.²⁵⁶ Not just photographs but also films were made to narrate the story of Native people and to influence the general public in creating a culture of Western nationalism. Kilpatrick discusses the logic of the push for nationalism, seen as modern mass media, including cinema, played a significant role in producing national symbols and ideologies.²⁵⁷ Such ideologies include the concept of “untamed lands,” the frontier, and Western expansion as a form of Manifest Destiny. During western expansion, the removal of Native American peoples from their land was regarded by the majority of Euro-Americans as the painful but proper course of action. They were sure of the rightness of expansion and the progress that the American Indian could only hinder.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁴ Deloria, Philip. *Playing Indian*, 105.

²⁵⁵ Morgan, Lewis Henry. *Ancient Society: Or Researches in the Lines of Human Progress from Savagery Through Barbarism to Civilization*. United States: Charles H. Kerr, 1910, viii

²⁵⁶ Morgan Bell, “Some Thoughts on ‘Taking’ Pictures: Imaging ‘Indians’ and the Counter-Narratives of Visual Sovereignty,” *Great Plains Quarterly* 31, no. 2 (2011) 87.

²⁵⁷ Kilpatrick, *Celluloid Indians*, 5.

²⁵⁸ Kilpatrick, *Celluloid Indians*, 7.

Native people were not just referred to as "Red Skins" but the connection with the long colonial violence and genocide against Native American peoples. As Richard King discusses the nuanced history about colonist given incentives such as bounty money and rewards in exchange for Native American scalps.²⁵⁹ As I draw from the terminology "*Seeing Red*" from Cummings, Howe, and Markowitz, who wrote an anthology with historical accounts of Native Americans in Hollywood films.²⁶⁰ Within "*Seeing Red*," they refer to two of the most stereotyped aspects of Indianness: the tomahawk and the feather. The authors offer a critical intervention on these films because they point to the reality that millions of Americans and movie viewers worldwide have seen and continue to see films about American Indians that perpetuate stereotypes and convey racism. As they importantly note, "these are the films that we must talk about, consider and discuss."²⁶¹

3.4. Edward S. Curtis Portraits of the "Vanishing Indian"

The famous silent film made in 1925 titled "The Vanishing American," was based on Zane Grey's popular novel of the same name.²⁶² This film was made to garner sympathy for American Indians and reflected early twentieth-century anthropological views of race and human development.²⁶³ Anthropology as a field of study emerged in the early 20th century, specifically in the 1920s. Biological determinism serves as an underlying theme in this film. Indian characters fulfill predetermined destinies based on their racial background. As the title reflects,

²⁵⁹ King, C. Richard. "Origins." In *Redskins: Insult and Brand*, 11–28. University of Nebraska Press, 2016. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1d41cv5.7>.

²⁶⁰ LeAnne Howe, Harvey Markowitz, and Denise K. Cummings, *Seeing Red: Hollywood's Pixeled Skins—American Indians and Film* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2012), ix.

²⁶¹ Howe, Markowitz, and Cummings, *Seeing Red*, xvii.

²⁶² Jill Doerfler, "The Vanishing American (1925)," in *Seeing Red: Hollywood's Pixeled Skins: American Indians and Film*, ed. Doris K. Cummings et al. (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2012), 3.

²⁶³ Doerfler, "The Vanishing American", 3.

“the American Indians will be the ones vanishing, and the European Americans will assume control of the land.”²⁶⁴ This notion is reinforced visually and symbolically in the film’s final scene. Nophaie's body is then carried off, ready for the races of men to come and go. The final scene shows an empty landscape and a shadowed "end of the trail" silhouette. It promises the narrative of the title that the Indians vanish, and that the landscapes remain under the control of the US government.²⁶⁵

Films were not the only visual method to spread this narrative of the disappearing Indian. Photographers such as Edward Curtis and John Hillers employed an approach that emphasized the relationship between Native people and their natural surroundings.²⁶⁶ While the reflection of Native people's connection to their land and environments is not inherently wrong, the common motivations for this practice were usually done for the gaze of the non-native settler. By depicting Native people on the backdrop of barren lands, these images manipulated the narrative that continued to portray Native peoples as relics of the past. Instead of modern people with progress of the future. In turn, these images subjugated Native peoples as primitive cultures rather than “civilized society.”²⁶⁷

While Edward S. Curtis captured many prominent Native leaders and chiefs in his photograph collection, he also used non-native subjects and posed Euro-American traders in Navajo traditional garments. This problematic photographic practice silences the Native voice and erases Indigenous people.²⁶⁸ Curtis's work held the goal of public awareness to eliminate Native Americans as a threat to European American western expansion. Native Americans were

²⁶⁴ Doerfler, "The Vanishing American", 3.

²⁶⁵ Doerfler, "The Vanishing American", 6.

²⁶⁶ Bell, “Some Thoughts on ‘Taking’ Pictures,” 88.

²⁶⁷ Bell, “Some Thoughts on ‘Taking’ Pictures,” 88.

²⁶⁸ James C. Faris, *Navajo and Photography: A Critical History of the Representation of an American People*, 1st ed. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996), 93.

often portrayed as sentimental and nostalgic victims of Manifest Destiny, seen as warriors. This means Native Americans could not be seen as happy, prosperous, flourishing, or persistent in their survival. They had to appear vanishing. The collection of Edward Curtis's unpublished photographs, which were initially viewed as subpar, contained a picture of a smiling Navajo woman. She had no jewelry, no dark backdrop, or a contrived pose. Yet, the published photograph held her in a stoic stare, adorned with jewelry, in front of a dark backdrop to create a somber aesthetic to fit his project goals.²⁶⁹

Curtis was not the only photographer or filmmaker to present Native people as vanishing. Another prominent photographer, Alexander Gardner, who worked in Washington, D.C., produced images that significantly damaged the representation of the individuals he photographed, as Gardner failed to include their names, the tribal nations to which they belonged, and their roles within the community. The exclusion of vital documentation of Native people by Gardner perpetuated lasting harm. For example, he did not include the name or title of a Comanche woman in a single photo. Instead, Gardner would put captions such as "an unidentified Comanche Woman delegate to Washington, DC."²⁷⁰ Portraits like this were often focused on scientific racism attributes such as anatomy or other racial categories.²⁷¹ Morgan Bell offers a critical intervention that highlights the improper and racist captioning created by Alexander Gardner.²⁷²

3.5. Navigating Isolated and Desolate Terrain

One of the most frequented local Rez Metal venues is in Gallup, New Mexico located on Historic Highway 66, known as the Juggernaut. The venue is also a music store, with guitars

²⁶⁹Faris, *Navajo and Photography*, 93.

²⁷⁰ Bell, "Some Thoughts on 'Taking' Pictures," 87.

²⁷¹ Bell, "Some Thoughts on 'Taking' Pictures," 87.

²⁷² Bell, "Some Thoughts on 'Taking' Pictures," 87.

hanging on the wall, and some in glass cases. The shop features a small venue in the back, accessible as you continue through the store. The backroom, which hosts the stage, features graffiti decoration along the red brick walls. At the shop, you can often find local Native youth and young adults visiting to see the guitars and jam with friends and neighbors. At night, the shop turns into a venue in the back. In recent years, the Juggernaut has added a café option, offering coffee, tea, and hot chocolate. Through my fieldwork, I frequently visited Juggernaut to see shows by bands such as Testify, Under Exile, War Motor, Guardians, Fatal Corruption, Narbona, Born of Winter, and Alliance.

At the show, Alliance was a band I frequently came by in the scene. What makes Alliance different from other bands is the layers and diversity of metal sounds within their music. Alliance has three vocalists, including a female bass player and vocalist, Ashley. Scottie Nolie, the main vocalist, approached us at the end of their set and introduced himself and the band members. He had a giant smile, with long, straight black hair that swept over a side part, framing his face. At first glance, I thought Scottie was outgoing, funny, personable, and approachable. However, I also learned over time that Scottie has an intense side to him, where he feels his intuition deeply and places his focus in a direction he wants to live by. Scottie is forthright and forward-thinking, which is tied to his attunement to his feelings and their connection to what feels right and off. Scottie told us they drove from San Carlos to be there, and after their set, instead of staying the night, they were heading out back to Arizona. Scottie told us it was their first time playing at the Juggernaut

When I reconnected with Alliance for my fieldwork at “The Blooze” venue in Phoenix, Arizona, before they had just won the Battle of the Bands on the 98 KUPD station known as “Arizona Real Rock.” Blooze venue is a typical “dive-bar” with a pool table, a jukebox and a

small stage with high top tables and lights. The Blooze is where touring Metal bands perform on the concert route to California, so it is a frequent bar for bands to stop in. When I arrived, I immediately saw Scottie selling merch at a small table to the side. I ran up to him. I had not seen him since the COVID-19 pandemic. Scottie told me it meant a lot to see me there and feel seen in the music scene. The audience at many of these shows consists of a handful of people who attend to see local bands in a very casual setting.

There are a diverse range of experiences that a Rez Metal show can encompass. Generally speaking, Rez Metal bands play to a small crowd who may or may not stay for their whole set. Every band mentioned at some point they are playing to the other bands, the venue staff and the bartenders. On the other hand, there are larger shows that draw a bigger audience, such as the Navajo Nation Metal Fest or the Launch Pad. Even though there is not a lot of money made from performing the shows, many Rez Metal bands will travel from the Navajo Nation or San Carlos to Phoenix, which can be a two-hour or more drive. Attending a show also means that the bands will coordinate their schedule with the five band members and their work or family schedules. There is a lot of labor involved in planning logistics and hoping that every band member can attend.

It is normal to play shows expecting very few folks to be there, but bands continue to persist and perform. The goals are always different for each band, but Alliance has goals of becoming an established band that makes moves and one that achieves great success. For a band to engage new audiences they must find different venues to play to new audiences or they continue to play at the same bar venue. At times, it may seem like a good idea to play every single show a band is invited to promote their music as much as possible. However, I have heard from Rez Metal promoters and musicians that band burn out occurs when bands play too many

shows in a season. Therefore, some bands that are more experienced may eventually become more selective when and where they choose to play at shows.

There was a moment when I had my camera out when we were discussing the Revolver Magazine's documentary called "Metal from Dirt." Scottie Nolie was discussing the film project with Jacob. He began by discussing the band I Don't Conform, which was featured in the film. Scottie said, "We met the band at the Starlight Lounge, and they asked if they wanted to come out to Farmington to play the show where they were filming. So as a band, we drove up to Farmington to play the show."

Scottie's voice slightly changes as he begins to review the experience. Scottie had a giant smile on as he pointed to the other band members, describing how they are.

It was cool and all. But I felt like how goofy we are right now. I think that just set off the vibes.

And then Isiah jumps in and says,

Like they wanted Serious Natives. [All the band members started laughing and agreeing with that.]

Scottie continued,

Like the documentary was called Metal from Dirt. It was depressing, like the Rez was just this place of sorrow, and I don't know like quiet. We had friends with people at Revolver Magazine, so we were making them laugh, and they were getting good footage of us. However, they never included it in the actual documentary.

Now laughing, Scotty continued

Maybe along the line someone was like those guys Apache and this is a Navajo documentary. But that was the vibe that we got. Scottie said all this in good humor.²⁷³

²⁷³Scottie Noline, interview by author, January 2022

However, it prompted me to reexamine certain aspects of the documentary and its visual aesthetics. I appreciated the moment with Scottie to discuss the documentary, specifically the absence of Native humor and the failure to portray the layers of reservation life. The film was approximately 13 minutes long, which is a relatively short documentary. Artistically showcasing the complexities of reservation life is not easy. In the documentary film, they do not discuss in detail how settler-colonial forces created the reservation system. To be fair it is only 13 minutes documentary and colonialism was briefly mentioned.

However, for Indigenous peoples, the reservation is a complex and multifaceted concept that often carries multiple meanings, encompassing personal homelands and sites of cultural retention and renewal, which seem far removed from the intervening pressures of the dominant culture.²⁷⁴ The reservations were created under colonial conditions, representing a small fraction of traditional tribal homelands or space to which Native Americans were relocated. Reservations were also compared and called the North American version of "concentration camps." The reservation can also be a locus of limited mobility, disproportionate rates of alcoholism, drug abuse, violence, underemployment, suicide, and poverty.²⁷⁵ The reservation in the 19th-century manifestation signified the conditions of "bare life" as Native Americans were disciplined through state-sanctioned violence to assimilate with the intention of social death and attendant genocide. The reservation is often considered a place geographically isolated from the dominant culture, beyond the limits of national and popular memory. It has become a repository of repressed histories within American culture.²⁷⁶

²⁷⁴ Michelle H. Raheja, *Reservation Reelism: Redfacing, Visual Sovereignty, and Representations of Native Americans in Film* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010), 150.

²⁷⁵ Raheja, *Reservation Reelism*, 151.

²⁷⁶ Raheja, *Reservation Reelism*, 152.

Often conceived of as bounded, sovereign physical space, Native American sites also include urban and rural enclaves where more than half of the Indigenous peoples of North America live. These on- and off-reservation locations serve as places of cultural, physical, and spiritual continuity, improvisation, and survival where "traditional" practices can be protected and revised.²⁷⁷ However, as Raheja notes, beyond the potential to reframe, reappropriate, and reimagine tribal lands joyously with hope and healing, Native American media-makers on the virtual reservation have challenged and complicated the representation of Indigenous people, voicing counternarratives.²⁷⁸ These narratives have revealed the often dismal and depressing aspect of inhabiting homelands that are still colonized in an otherwise seemingly post-colonial world.

These continued deficit narratives fail to mention the value of tradition and culture that contribute to the reimagining of a better life for Indigenous peoples. Therefore, I draw upon the theories of "Virtual Reservation" from Michelle Raheja as a way to counter the settler narrative, and from Jolene Rickard who discusses how the Native Indian Inuit Photography Association (NIIPA) as a way artistically express photographic work and consciously deconstruct the colonial gaze.²⁷⁹

3.6 Unpacking the Photographic Narrative

Throughout this section, I reference two documentaries, "Metal from Dirt" from Revolver Magazine and "Rez Metal" produced by Ashkan Stone. I argue that these photographic and film tropes find their way into contemporary photography from both Native and non-Native

²⁷⁷ Raheja, *Reservation Reelism*, 150.

²⁷⁸ Raheja, *Reservation Reelism*, 155.

²⁷⁹ Raheja, *Reservation Reelism*, 155, Jolene Rickard, "Diversifying Sovereignty and the Reception of Indigenous Art," *Art Journal* 76, no. 2 (2017), 81. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00043249.2017.1367194>.

photographers, who often fall into the same cycles of producing these same photographs. This includes photoethnography and my visual methods to remap the narrative and story of Rez Metal through photographs and captioning. I also want to make the band members featured in Revolver Magazine aware that they had a positive experience with the filmmakers and crew, and were honored to be part of the film. The film was an entry and a valuable point for further discussion and improvement. I also do not want to take away from the band's experiences and recognize that this was a major piece that represented the scene. However, critique and discussion on the circulation of the images should be open to debate.

As *Rez Metal*, the book written by Stone and Zappia, focused on the Navajo Metal scene with selected transcriptions from interviews with a generalized overview of the Rez Metal scene.²⁸⁰ Rez Metal's narrative is often visually told through the lens of trauma of teen suicide, poverty, and escapism from these complex realities. In addition to the documentary *Rez Metal*, the film's synopsis presents constant tropes about the harshness of reservation life, portraying it as a transition from “poverty-stricken reservations to fairy tale dreams.”²⁸¹

In the first images taken by Clarke Tolton,²⁸² the scene presents an open and untamed landscape in a barren desert, a pattern I have observed in these photographs and the documentaries. While these are just a few examples and do not encompass every image, they provide a general theme to rethink how I approach photographs for Rez Metal as a remapping project. Bell provided a historical overview and explored the central themes of the photographic

²⁸⁰ Stone, Ashkan Soltani, and Natale A. Zappia, *Rez Metal: Inside the Navajo Nation Heavy Metal Scene* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2020). 2.

²⁸¹ Ashkan Soltani, *Rez Metal*, directed by Ashkan Soltani, sponsored by the International Documentary Association, 2018, <https://www.documentary.org/project/rez-metal>.

²⁸² See Photographs Revolver Staff, “Heavy Metal on the Navajo Reservation: See Stunning Photos of DIY Scene,” *Revolver*, November 29, 2018, photograph by Clarke Tolton, accessed September 6, 2025, <https://www.revolvermag.com/culture/heavy-metal-navajo-reservation-see-stunning-photos-diy-scene/>.

method as applied to Native peoples.²⁸³ For example, Bell highlights the photographic consistency of the "individual" Native person in the photographs. These photographs feature portraits of a Native individual against a vast, open background. Bell draws from Tuscarora scholar, artist, and educator Jolene Rickard, in interpreting colonial logics of the photographic gaze.

She highlights how western ideologies leave out the concepts of "Native communities " and instead often depict portraits of isolated individuals behind an empty backdrop intentionally. Rickard argues that this agenda messaging of individual photographic narratives makes it easier to create the image of defeating one person rather than an entire Nation.²⁸⁴ Instead social connection to a community and an individual's place within it is often integral to an Indigenous person's self-constructed identity. Therefore, individual photographs became a means of access, allowing for ways that influenced the Western colonial agenda in the 19th century.²⁸⁵ Therefore, my intervention starts with photoethnography of a large community gathering as it is shown at the Navajo Nation Metal Festival.

²⁸³ Bell, "Some Thoughts on 'Taking' Pictures," 88-89.

²⁸⁴ Jolene Rickard, "The Occupation of Indigenous Space as 'Photograph,'" in *Native Nations: Journey in American Photography*, ed. J. Alison, (London: Barbican Art Gallery, 1998) 64.

²⁸⁵ Bell, "Some Thoughts on 'Taking' Pictures," 87-88.



Figure 3.1. *Audience at the Navajo Nation Metal Fest Window Rock Sports Complex.* Photo by the author, 2022.

I draw from Clarke Telton's work in *Revolver Magazine*. The staged image 2 depicts Lawrence Tsosie with face paint holding his gourd rattle. His band, *Mutilated Tyrant*, does not use a gourd rattle. In the documentary, they show Lawrence walking in the backyard of their house, shaking the gourd as they walk across the land.²⁸⁶ While the staged shot is not necessarily the issue, the focus of the photo is characteristic of the Lawrence aesthetic and makeup, featuring a gourd in a similar pose to Edward Curtis, with vast, empty lands that only include one Native person in the picture.

However, it is not the gourd that makes the music; rather, the core of Rez Metal is the guitar and modern-day instruments. Central to Metal music are guitars that are loud, crunchy, and distorted. I argue that photographing the guitars of instruments would have been a significant

²⁸⁶ "Metal From the Dirt: Inside the Navajo Reservation's DIY Heavy-Metal Scene," *Revolver*, November 28, 2018. Accessed September 6, 2025.

contribution to further realistic stories of Native American everyday life and realities. Mutilated Tyrant does not have songs using the gourd on stage. Referencing Figure 3.2 which I took of the band Mutilated Tyrant performing at the Navajo Nation Metal Fest in Window Rock, Arizona. This photoethnography showcases the band's creative and emotional expressions, characterized by their dark aesthetics and unique guitar playing style. Additionally, I wanted to highlight their friend, Skyler Reed, in the right corner, who is cheering them on.

Examining how Native communities see themselves in images and descriptions of the reservation is important to challenge dominant settler colonial views. Building upon Sarah Pink's work which articulates the relationship between photographs, memory, and orientations to the future. As Pink makes aware that "images are a part of how we experience, imagine, learn and know. When ethnographers produce photographs or video, these images, and the experiences of producing and discussing them, become part of their ethnographic knowledge and imagination."²⁸⁷ At the same time, Indigenous forms of artistic production are centered on the creative, aesthetic, and political dimensions of Indigenous imaginations. And yet the question of visual methods in ethnography and the role that photography and film play in rendering visible the life worlds of others raises essential discussion surrounding the politics of representation.

²⁸⁷ Pink, Sarah. 2021. *Doing Visual Ethnography* : Pbk. 4th ed. SAGE Publications. 2.



Figure 3.2. *Mutilated Tyrant performing at the Navajo Nation Metal Fest.* Photo by the author, 2022.

Part of this intervention involves discussing the photographs of musical instruments that comprise Rez Metal music. Drawing from archaeologist Jason DeLeon, who introduced the concept of use-wear to analyze how material culture demonstrates a bodily imprint from the amount of use and wear of objects that migrants utilize when crossing the borders in the Sonoran Desert.²⁸⁸ I draw use-wear from DeLeon's definition that discusses the intimate connections between people, objects, and how these connections leave traces.²⁸⁹ DeLeon demonstrates that the framing of the intimate relationship between objects and humans can broaden the understanding and analysis of lived experiences.

In this case, I am interested in understanding how use-wear and the use of equipment can open new insights into Rez Metal's visual aesthetics and meaning in music practices. The use-

²⁸⁸ Jason DeLeon, "The Photoethnographic Eye: Visualizing the Honduran Migrant Experience in Mexico," in *Out of Bounds: Photography and Migration*, ed. T. Sheehan (New York: Routledge, 2018).

²⁸⁹ DeLeon, "The Photoethnographic Eye", 11.

wear reveals how much a guitar is used over time, connecting musicians to their instruments and highlighting what is available. Take for example, the following photograph of the Rez Metal band, Rei Guirren unloading their equipment in the back alley of the Juggernaut Music venue after their set. (See Figure 3.3)



Figure 3.3. *Rei Guirren Band Instruments at the Juggernaut*. Photo by the author, 2022.

Part of the wear you can see is the collection of worn graphic stickers on the black box and anime stickers on the amplifier, customizing their equipment uniquely. Upon closer inspection of the equipment, you can see scratches and dirt stains that have accumulated over time, as well as wear on the drum set. The dust on the drum pedals comes from the shoes kicking the footboard, and the drum beater is worn from the numerous times it hits the bass drum in front of the drum set. The more prominent speaker on the right is marked up with scratches from traveling. Overall, the dust from the dirt is collected as it sits outside in the alley, waiting for the car to be loaded. Musical equipment's use-wear opens the discussions of the intimate.

Additionally, there is the visual component of bands, which is conveyed through their merchandise, such as patches, t-shirts, and CDs, that helps the audience identify who they are as a band. Merch is the primary source of income that keeps the band's ability to play shows. The art that bands create is a form of creative and artistic expression.

3.7 Visual Approaches to (Re)mapping Rez Life

Rez Metal coverage from non-Native photographers and video producers has fallen into a lot of the pitfalls of historical Native American photography and media. Morgan Bell grapples with what it means to take pictures of Native Americans. Many Native and non-Native scholars have tirelessly critiqued the colonialist eye and deconstructed the persistent stereotypes such as "Indianness" and the "vanishing race."²⁹⁰ To further my point, the way we imagine the Reservation influences how our communities respond to its possibilities and futures.

Take for example, these photographs of musician Irv Wauneka. The image of Irv in the *Revolver Magazine* ²⁹¹with a somber look, the photograph does not show a Rez Metal scene. The caption states that Irv is a singer and teaches guitar lessons to youth, but the image does not accurately describe the photo above. Instead, he sits in front of his house with his hands covering his face, rather than showing him in the music scene. While the caption does accurately place Irv's name, it does portray Irv as a creative musician.

²⁹⁰ Bell, "Some Thoughts on 'Taking' Pictures," 85.

²⁹¹ See Photographs *Revolver* Staff, "Heavy Metal on the Navajo Reservation: See Stunning Photos of DIY Scene," *Revolver*, November 29, 2018, photograph by Clarke Tolton, accessed September 6, 2025, <https://www.revolvermag.com/culture/heavy-metal-navajo-reservation-see-stunning-photos-diy-scene/>.

I draw the importance of captioning from visual anthropologist Stanley Brandes, who discusses about photography with anthropology and the importance of captioning.²⁹² In an article, he critiques Graciela Iturbide's photography, which centers the stories of an Indigenous community from Mexico. Her work is a collection showcasing the everyday lives of Indigenous peoples through a series of stunning portraits that capture their culture. While Stanley he agrees that her work is visually beautiful and that she has approached her work with the innate expertise of an anthropological photographer. He argues that the importance of captioning for anthropological photographs, which helps the viewer contextualize the image in a meaningful cultural way. In one way, there is an artistic power in that photographic camera images stimulate the anthropological imagination. Yet, the value of captioning can provide the reader with a way to reflect on the pictures and convey a clear message about the work.



Figure 3.4. *Photo or Irv performing at Alienfest*. Photo by the author, July 2018.

²⁹²Stanley Brandes, "Graciela Iturbide as Anthropological Photographer," *Visual Anthropology Review* 24, no. 2 (2008), 95.

My final critique is that documentary photography rarely focuses on showcasing a band's merch table within the Rez Metal scene, especially since their merch often features their original artwork. To illuminate how band merch can bring new information about the scene in interesting ways, Mutilated Tyrant features an interesting intervention, reusing an Edward Curtis photo that I think is worth noting. The band's CD case uses an old photo of the Navajo Yeibichai dancers as a patchwork. At first, I thought to myself, you want to use an Edward Curtis photo to represent your band?

However, overtime, I saw this image in other light. Instead, I saw Mutilated Tyrant was reusing an older image with modern Norwegian Death metal and graphics, which also gave it a new visual meaning. Edward S. Curtis did not believe Native people would be alive let alone could never imagine that his photographs would be on a Native American Metal album cover.



Figure 3.5 *Mutilated Tyrant merch booth*. Photo by the author, 2022

I reference scholar, Shannon Egan critique on the Edward S. Curtis photography specially the “The Vanishing Race-Navajo” which was selected as his opening photograph from his first volume. This Curtis’s photograph illustrates this moment of the Indians’ disappearance and showcases a group of Indians on horseback riding diagonally into the hazy distance. It seemed the futures of Indian peoples were unknown. Curtis’s framework of taking photographs was to establish that Indians were vanishing and assimilating into contemporary society.²⁹³



Figure 3.6 *Mutilated Tyrant merch booth*, Photo by the author, 2022

By this band using the past by a white photographer who believed in our inevitable fate this band instead is reusing the image that can be seen as visual resistance reminding audiences that Native peoples are still here and did not disappear. Therefore, I argue that the reuse of the Curtis image on their merchandise speaks back to the historical visual narrative, serving as a

²⁹³ Egan, Shannon. “‘Yet in a Primitive Condition’: Edward S. Curtis’s North American Indian.” *American Art* 20, no. 3 (2006): 58–83. <https://doi.org/10.1086/511095>. 59.

testament to the current survival and agency of Native American peoples, who reuse these images.

3. 8. Applied Theory: Building the Virtual Rez at the Denver Art Museum

During my fieldwork, I had an excellent opportunity to imagine Rez Metal as a gallery space which was informed by the Rez Metal interviews and specific with Patrick. In the Fall of 2022, I was honored to be selected as the Native Arts Artist in Residence Spring 2023 Fellow at the Denver Art Museum. During this time, “Speaking with Light” was presented as one of the first Native American photography exhibits at the Denver Art Museum. The call for a local Native American Photographer, as the resident for the exhibit, was perfect timing. I thought about how we can make an exhibit that reflect home and reservation in the way that Patrick feels when see the images of home where “everything gets better”.

As you walk into the museum’s Native Arts exhibit on the third floor, you are immediately greeted with beautiful contemporary art from incredible Native artists. Such collections include those of Kent Monkman, Jaime Okuma, Wendy Red Star, Gregg Deal, and more. The other entrance leads to the gallery of traditional arts, which features the Cheyenne, Arapaho, and Ute nations — the original stewards of the Colorado lands. The art reflects traditional beadwork, regalia, moccasins, and cultural items. The rest of the floor showcases traditional arts from other tribes, including Navajo rugs, Pueblo pottery, buckskin textiles, quillwork, and regalia. Then, between these two areas—traditional and contemporary — sits Rez Metal.

On the third floor of the Martin Building lies the Native Art studio, a hybrid of office and art studio space. Across from the glass door studio is a small area with pegs to hold drawing

responses and questions that we can ask the audience. There is also a long table where guests can sit and draw with colored pencils on paper to respond to the wall of reflective questions. Within the three-wall area, I could host a gallery show as the resident artist. I put a lot of thought and planning into how I wanted to present Rez Metal and center the community I spent so much time with. I thought about how, as a photographer and artist, I am not the one who created the music or the scene. I never played an instrument, practiced a creative craft, or wrote music. For me, centering the artists and the exposure was critical. I had four sections of wall space for this consideration. While it was small, I knew it could be used to tell the story and highlight these bands.

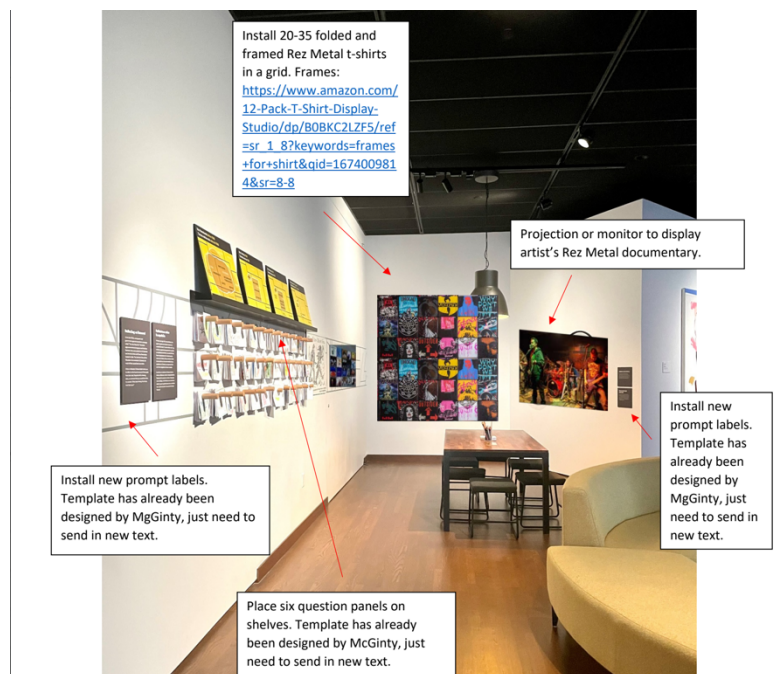


Figure 3.7. *Sketching of the exhibit and installation of the exhibit*, Photograph, 2022. Provided by the Denver Art Museum. Used with permission.

The vignettes presented in this chapter aided my thought process in creating a Rez Metal Exhibit. I thought about how to center the Rez Metal artists and their voices. I thought about what photographs I want the public to engage with. As Raheja stated, the virtual reservation “can

transcend time and space and transform Indigenous people into a new utopian geography of possibilities and renewal.²⁹⁴ The virtual reservation is a supplemental arena of possibilities including virtual elements while also maintaining relationships of mapping natural topography and imagined landscapes. It helps us perceive the material world in a different dimension and enhances our understanding of online, offline, and offscreen communities.²⁹⁵ Most importantly, she notes that beyond the potential to reframe and reimagine a world of joyous and healing. Native American media makers on the virtual reservation challenge and complicate the representation of Indigenous people by voicing dissent, offering counter narratives that also might be dismal and depressing aspects of inhabiting homelands that are still colonized.



Figure 3.8. *Final Exhibit*. Photograph, 2023. Provided by the Denver Art Museum. Used with permission.

²⁹⁴Raheja, *Reservation Reelism*, 153.

²⁹⁵Raheja, *Reservation Reelism*, 153.

I wanted to imagine how to create the “Virtual Rez Metal” that can offer us new ways of viewing geographic places and bring those new worlds of Rez Metal to life. As an alternative teenager who grew up in the era of pop punk, alternative rock, the rise of emo, and metalcore, shops like Hot Topic and Twist' n Shout were popular. I remember going to actual stores before MP3s and iPods. I listened to CDs on giant headphones when they were released in stores like Virgin Records and Best Buy. Nowadays, music can be accessed instantly and effortlessly. To combine these ideas. I designed the gallery to host a T-shirt wall, similar to the Hot Topic band wall of T-shirts. This time, imagine going into a Rez Metal Hot Topic and every single band is Native American and Indigenous. What could our Indigenous Hot Topic ²⁹⁶look like? How can we envision a music space that reflects the community?

A significant aspect of the Rez Metal exhibit was a 13-minute mini-documentary that I created with cameraman Martin Martinez. Consequently, I reflect on both the strengths and limitations of my documentary filmmaking; overall, it told the central story of the Rez Metal scene from the interviews we were able to acquire. In producing this film, I referenced Diné scholar Renae Watchman's work, as presented in her book, "Restoring Relations through Stories."²⁹⁷ Her work illustrates how Indigenous peoples maintain their connection to the land and their cultural practices through narrative, land, and filmmaking. Watchman's chapter on filmmaking emphasizes that "relationships are key to who is in front of and behind the camera".²⁹⁸ Watchman's theme is an excellent guideline for the future of our film, which is not yet completed and is in the process of rethinking what work needs to be done from here.

²⁹⁶ Hot Topic is alternative youth culture store that specialized in black, goth and alternative fashion aesthetic and sold band merch for genres like heavy metal, punk, emo and other sub-genres.

²⁹⁷ Watchman, *Restoring Relations Through Stories*, 69.

²⁹⁸ Watchman, *Restoring Relations Through Stories*, 71.

As an anthropologist entering the elite world of fine art museums, I knew that Rez Metal and pop culture are rarely represented in these spaces. In fact, at times, I have even wondered if my work is considered fine art or graphic art, and whether it would be welcomed. To my great surprise, I realized Rez Metal fit into the present moment for Native peoples and pushed the boundaries of what is considered art. As Verlo and Phillips made aware, Native arts were excluded from the art world because it was useful, and craft-like objects were not considered fine art, not fit to sit on a wall to admire.²⁹⁹ The ontological and epistemological differences between what is considered art from a Western and an Indigenous perspective will always differ. I can also see the constant tension in which Native American fine art must push to elevate itself to be recognized in these art spaces and valued for its skill, which art practitioners and curators admire.

3.9. The Rez Metal T Shirt Map

The most significant part of this exhibit was the T-shirt wall I aimed to create to highlight all the band merch. I requested frames for every Rez Metal t-shirt I purchased from each band that I encountered during my months of fieldwork. I had a growing collection of nearly 27 t-shirts over the years. I also kept all the CDs, stickers, patches, and other items that they sold to support the bands. Merch is essential for the economics and continuation of bands to pay to produce music, to pay for gas from one city to the next and other related band expenses. It is not uncommon to incur profit losses as an aspiring touring Rock Metal band.

What I did not anticipate until I visually saw the t-shirt walls of Rez Metal bands was that it was the “Rez Metal Map” I was looking for. Like the Diné maps, they were visual maps that

²⁹⁹ Janet Catherine Berlo and Ruth B. Phillips, *Native North American Art*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015). 11.

told stories or showed wayfinding. Drawing from traditional Diné maps as stories of verbal maps of Diné people learning about, bonding with, and living off the land.³⁰⁰ Diné ceremonial stories include verbal maps, as geographers today define maps, and the maps in those stories can be used for wayfinding. Diné verbal maps work by identifying routes of travel with sequences of named landmarks and cultural features. Not only can the stories serve as maps, but in the past, Diné people did use them as maps, knowing that the actual trail on the ground would wind back and forth along the guidelines in the verbal map.³⁰¹

During my interviews sometimes they would tell stories about their band specifically with their graphics. I would learn about the band members or their connections who would design graphics for their merch and even band logos. The t-shirt wall was initially inspired to be the images of creating the “Virtual Rez” as I organized them in a very specific method arranging them to the themes of graphic art designs.

In my arrangement, Row 1 consists of classic black and white band t-shirts. Each of these shirts told a story for example Secret Earth t-shirt holds imagery of pills scattered across the t-shirt that was a story shared within the band interviews about addictions and overcoming them.

In the second row 2 consists of eerie, apocalyptic, futuristic, alien-like graphics. I would like to parallel the sentiments that the reservation system itself for Native peoples can metaphorically, or at times, be seen as post-apocalyptic. Mainly the row also reflects that the Arizona Rez Metal bands from San Carlos and Tohono O’odham bands represented together. These were apart of relationships where bands toured or supported the local scene together.

³⁰⁰ Klara B. Kelley and Harris Francis, *A Diné History of Navajoland* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2019) 81.

³⁰¹ Kelley & Francis, *A Diné History*, 79.



Figure 3.9. *Rez Metal T Shirt Map* featured at the Denver Art Museum. Photograph by author. March 2023

Row 3 featured Resistance graphics, such as those from M.I.S. and OXDX, for example Grandma Anarchy and Chee in a battle vest jacket with an Anarchy symbolism on it. Finally, Row 5 featured an assortment of Navajo Nation metal bands and listed the bands that performed at the annual festival. In some ways, I would like to imagine these were the archives of Rez Metal kinships, coming together to share music on a stage and envisioning the future of what that may look like. These t-shirts visually articulate the Indigenous experience of sound and place but also display the togetherness of the community.



Figure 3.10. *OXDX T-shirts Native American Discovered Columbus & Anarchy Grandma*. From OXDX. <https://www.oxdxclothing.com> Digital illustration used with permission

The landmarks and cultural features are reflected in Row 4 as the Navajo Nation cultural map. The images Graves of Monuments also featured photos of the Monument Valley area in Arizona, where they are from. Another profound example is the shirt from the band Heart Museum titled "Relentless" featuring boarding school imagery and a wolf in the front. The song is attributed to the boarding school survivors and the history that Native people have endured. The visual imagery of the t-shirt also opens possibilities to imagine worlds connecting back to Navajo culture of rug weaving traditional art practices. Other examples of imagining new world possibilities in this t-shirt map also demonstrate the relationship to non-human kin such as the Lo-Cash Ninja t-shirt that show a young Diné woman in front of Shiprock with her sheep.

As part of Maruice Magana's mentions that a "rebel aesthetics" provides an open space for the "viewer to imagine their own utopian worlds." Central to the Rez Metal t-shirt map is also to imagining new world possibilities that includes an Indigenous resistance and reclamation of culture, heritage and traditions. The OXDX t-shirt design features an Anarchy symbol of a Native Grandmother wearing a battle jacket that incorporates the symbol of "anarchy" sign

within the weaving. This t-shirt concept draws on the political ideals of Native American culture and matriarchal traditions that existed long before the modern definition of Anarchism.

This is further illustrated by Merciless Indian Savages T-shirts, which feature the logo 'M.I.S' in bold white lettering on the front. On the back is the Declaration of Independence pointing to the quote that is often hidden on the 27th line of King George III's statement that references the “Merciless Indian Savages.” On the back of the t-shirt, their new song is also listed, instead of “Kill the Indian, Save the Man,” which is a slogan from the U.S. boarding school era. The text on the shirt reads, “Save the Indian.” This song resists colonial logics as it references the propaganda of the boarding school era aimed at civilizing the Indians. Instead M.I.S remaps political order instead to “Save the Indian and Kill the Man” references Kill the Patriarchy, which resists colonial gendered logics of “man.” The band M.I.S offers counter histories and references to place.

This work illustrates the possibilities of utilizing photographs and graphics can be used as a (re)mapping of Native American people’s relationship to land and place, narrating their own story of reservation life in a more meaningful way. In addition, Rez Metal, as an aesthetic, showed that the homelands, history, culture, and lived experiences were represented in the art of the graphic design on band t-shirts. These images serve as an Indigenous mapping practice, such as Diné mapping, which involves “way-finding” and the use of Indian maps as “pictures of experiences.” These t-shirts as part of map making is to imagine new Indigenous futures.

Referencing again Mishuana Goeman’s remapping practice that centers map that led to better Indigenous futures. I also drew inspiration from visual graphic arts from Magana’s concepts of “*rebel aesthetics*,” which explores how Indigenous youth artists collectively created large art murals throughout various public wall spaces within urban Mexico. Magana describes,

“rebel aesthetics” as art that gives form to social and political imaginations³⁰² I propose that visually, these Rez Metal t-shirts are a part of these “rebel aesthetics” that disrupt and (re) map political orders while also opening new world possibilities. A specific example of how these shirts do this from OXDX iconic t-shirt that reads; “Native Americans Discovered Columbus”, serves as a counter-history to the popular myth that Columbus discovered America. I argue that this shirt resists the narratives of the conventional narratives surrounding the spatial mapping of “discovery” and instead (re)mapping Native American relationship to the land and place centering Native American peoples.

3.10. Conclusion

In this chapter, I discuss how historical photographs of Native communities were often compelled to conform to the narrative of the vanishing race, catering to the settler gaze. An example of this is also found within the collections of Edward Curtis's photographs; the unpublished photographs labeled as “bad” included a few pictures of a smiling Navajo woman. She had no jewelry, no dark backdrop, or a contrived pose. It is clear from this example that the smiling Native people were erased and instead had to fit the aesthetic of the project's goals. These themes are problematic photographic practices that silence the Native voice and erase Indigenous people.³⁰³

Through the stereotypes and tropes of Native American photography, which depicted vanishing and disappearing Indians, I called into action the creation of a visual Rez Metal map by using photographs of Rez Metal bands and their band merchandise as modern Native maps.

³⁰² Magana, *Cartographies of Youth Resistance*. 126.

³⁰³ James C. Faris, *Navajo and Photography: A Critical History of the Representation of an American People* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996).93.

Contemporary films and TV shows feature Native people in both reservation and urban settings, written and directed by Indigenous filmmakers and screenwriters. Despite the increase in Native writers, the themes of "pastness," "defeat," or "vast empty lands" of the reservation are circulated to tell the story of Native peoples. As Kilpatrick stated, the reality of our world is also made through movies and television, and these technologies affect our lives in significant social, emotional, and psychological ways.³⁰⁴ The author suggests that the film industry must accept responsibility for clearing the misinformation it has spread throughout the last century, webs that have wrapped the American Indian under an umbrella of misunderstanding, hatred, and nostalgic guilt.³⁰⁵

In this chapter I bring discussion on how to move from visual deficit narratives that fail to mention the value of tradition and culture, that contributes to the future imaginings of a better life for Indigenous peoples? How can the Rez Metal be articulated as a visual mapping project? I draw upon the theories of the "Virtual Reservation" from Michelle Raheja's work, as a way to counter the settler narrative, but as a way to understand how visuals of Native people and the Reservation life can be portrayed positively and be empowered through community-based methodologies.³⁰⁶ In this chapter, I ask what it would mean to visually create a "Rez Metal Map" as a re-imagined space and place.

I explored how museum and educational spaces can serve as a method to undo the long-standing colonial damages to image making and collections of Native American communities by utilizing their spaces for public awareness of the realities of contemporary Native American

³⁰⁴ Kilpatrick, *Celluloid Indians*, 233.

³⁰⁵ Kilpatrick, *Celluloid Indians*, 233.

³⁰⁶ Michelle H. Raheja, *Reservation Reelism: Redfacing, Visual Sovereignty, and Representations of Native Americans in Film* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010); Rickard, "Diversifying Sovereignty and the Reception of Indigenous Art," *Art Journal* 76, no. 2 (2017): 81–88, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00043249.2017.1367194>.

peoples. I presented ideas on co-collaborating with the community to create an art exhibit that imagines a visual remapping of the Rez Metal exhibit. I drew upon the ethnographic interviews to inform my approach to creating an exhibit that would be meaningful to the community.

As I referenced earlier, these newly imagined spaces within museums provide us with new frameworks and possibilities to envision a better future that reflects our own communities as contemporary people. The interviews informed what the “Rez” meant to the musicians and how they experienced life through their stories. As Patrick mentioned, photos of home “make everything better,” showing the intimate connection to land and place. These interviews provided the framework for the visual maps that remapped Native experiences to land and place through the Rez Metal exhibit.

I saw the impact that the Denver Art Museum exhibit did. I hoped that the Rez Metal Gallery would inspire other art spaces that Rez Metal belongs within museum spaces. In the following year, Rez Metal bands Alliance, Existence AD, and Dying Tribe played a show at the Heard Museum as part of their First Friday Concert program series. When I asked Scottie about the show, he told me that he had sent them the ideas we developed at the Denver Art Museum, and they ended up partnering with the museum staff to create a Rez Metal program.



Figure 3.11. *A Poster from the Heard Museum First Friday Concert Series featuring Rez Metal.* Retrieved from <https://heard.org/event/august-first-friday/> Used under fair use for educational purposes.

The Heard Museum hosted a the Rez Metal concert to take place inside the museum for a night. I could only look through Facebook Live and social media videos to witness how a Rez Metal band played live music to the museum's collections and over one hundred people who came to see the show. This chapter demonstrated how working with contemporary exhibit can take form. The Hear Museum is a great example of the expansion of the Rez Metal exhibit into a live concert venue that brought community together. I hope to push art and educational institutions to envision new spaces for the future of Native American creative art practices.

CHAPTER 4: Rise of the Matriarch : Missing Murdered Indigenous Women

*Under the Sun, she shows me. I am the one who holds the earth. -Sage Bond*³⁰⁷

4.1 Introduction: Native Women in the Rez Metal Scene.

This chapter will explore Native women in the music scene. I aim to articulate how their music serves as a sound cartography that makes them aware of Native women's experiences of land and place. Building on the foundations of an Indigenous Feminist practice, I analyze how their songs are intentionally crafted with the values of deep relationality, aiming to empower women and raise awareness about the issues that deeply affect women and girls in the MMIWG epidemic. I examine how Native women use music as a remapping practice and make visible the violence against Indigenous women. I also bring to discussion that women's stories and memories are political in a settler colonialist structure. I argue that Native women are at the forefront of these movements to raise awareness of MMIWG.

Suspended is a band from Albuquerque, New Mexico, representing the Laguna Pueblo, Hopi, Navajo Nation and mixed Indigenous backgrounds. I discuss in the chapter the formation of the band and more about their music. I use the term Matriarch in this chapter title dedicated to the Native women in the Rez Metal scene. While some cultures and communities are matrilineal or matriarchal others are patriarchal.³⁰⁸ In this band both Pueblo, Hopi and Navajo cultures are matriarchal societies.³⁰⁹ In the Rez Metal scene, the contributions of Native women are often

³⁰⁷ Sage Bond, Three Sisters Collective, "Under the Sun," SoundCloud audio, accessed June 1, 2025, <https://soundcloud.com/threesisterscollective/under-the-sun>.

³⁰⁸ Joyce Green, *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism*, 2nd ed. (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2017), 29.

³⁰⁹ See discussions of matriarchal structures in Renae Watchman, *Restoring Relations Through Stories: From Diné'tah to Denendeh*, 1st ed. (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2024), 11, 76; John A. Ware, *A Pueblo Social History: Kinship, Sodality, and Community in the Northern Southwest* (Santa Fe, NM: SAR Press, 2014); and Peter M. Whiteley, ed., *Puebloan Societies: Homology and Heterogeneity in Time and Space* (Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research Press, 2018), 25.

overlooked in the Rez Metal scene, particularly regarding the roles and gendered labor within the community. Through my fieldwork, I observed women actively participating in the scene as musicians, promoters, roadies, and audience members, running the merchandise booth or laboring to bring the community together. In my interviews with artists Sage Bond and Suspended, credit their mother's support in their music career. These musicians acknowledge their mothers for not only attending the shows but also being integral in supporting their shows through transportation to auditions, shows and financially supporting their goals.

Furthermore, the dynamic of familial labor supports women who are caregiving while their partners are touring or attending a one-night show performing. In several instances, I noticed women would also bring their kids to the show with earmuffs on so they could watch their father perform at the set of these metal fests. This role is also at the center of Rez Metal, a relationship that receives support from mothers and grandmothers who encourage their children to be involved in the music scene from a young age. Although not all parents are enthused about their children being into Metal music or the culture, I also heard how influential their support has been to the scene.

An Indigenous feminism draws core elements of Indigenous culture, particularly the universal connection to land and territory through relationships framed as a sacred responsibility predicated on reciprocity.³¹⁰ I centered this chapter on ways Native women in Rez Metal use this music for their cultural practices. Then I expanded on how those purposes align within Native feminist geographies. While I discuss the relationality and gender violence, I then transition into this chapter, which discusses that it's not just music being made, but a new cultural making practice within Rez Metal.

³¹⁰ Joyce Green, ed., *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism*, 2nd ed. (Halifax and Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing, 2017), 20.

A goal for “Indigenous feminism is to raise issues ranging from colonialism, racism, sexism, sexuality, environmental justice, community integrity, and infrastructure, to identity, violence against women and children, constitutional and institutional change, and political liberation.”³¹¹ Indigenous feminisms are a theoretically and politically powerful critique of the social, economic, and political conditions of Indigenous women’s lives.³¹² Therefore, I demonstrate how women in the Rez Metal artists scene embody these practices in their everyday life through understanding the current geopolitical climate of Missing and Murdered Indigenous women and violence in New Mexico. I asked questions during my fieldwork about how Native women in the Rez Metal scene imagine new Indigenous futurity through their writing, performance, and everyday life. Each section of this chapter demonstrates a different facet that interweaves discussion of aesthetics, MMIW, and gender analyses.

4.2 Sage Bond “Under the Sun”: Mapping Indigenous Feminism and Creation Stories

In between my fieldwork and dissertation writing year, I was invited to speak about Rez Metal at Northern Arizona University (NAU). The university is located in Flagstaff, AZ, and when looking at the map, the edge of the Navajo Nation is just northeast, with the Hopi neighboring within Navajo Nation. After speaking with the directors of the Native American programs at NAU, they shared with me that there is a significant Navajo and Native American student community that attends and participates in the Indigenous People Living-Learning Community, led by Nate Armenta. Compared to my undergraduate and graduate experience, with fewer than 100 Native students, NAU serves over 1200 Native American students. I found the visit to NAU to be a perfect opportunity to share my dissertation with Native communities.

³¹¹ Green, *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism*, 36-37.

³¹² Green, *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism*, 36-37.

Most importantly, I saw this as a practice towards accountability and transparency to receive feedback and honest reactions from a predominantly Navajo audience.

During the planning phase of the event, I learned more about Nate, who grew up close to the Navajo Nation. He shared many positive stories about his upbringing in the Rez Metal scene during his teenage years. He shared that he wanted to invite me because of his connection to the community and his upbringing; the scene shaped his identity. As we discussed ideas and planned, I mentioned that it would be amazing if Sage Bond could perform. I told him she is Diné, an undergraduate music student on the NAU campus. Her setup only requires a microphone and amp for her acoustic guitar. Much of my work is centered on community building and co-creating new spaces for Rez Metal to perform beyond just dive bars and underground spaces, which often exclude all ages and are limited to 21 years and older. I realized during my fieldwork that the scene in all ages shows had the most attendance and that youth need these creative spaces, which are available to them. We decided that after I shared my presentation on the Rez Metal scene, Sage Bond would start her performance, followed by a Q&A session.

Sage Bond comes from both the Navajo Nation and the San Carlos Apache. She has one of the most incredible black acoustic guitars I have ever seen. Her aesthetic is black on black, and she wears her black jeans with jingle dress bells attached to a chain across her hip and pocket. She is among the most talented vocal musicians in the southwest four corners. Her singing voice is beautiful, but she sings in lower octaves with smokey, operatic, and yet vocally pristine tones. Her range of vocals is phenomenal, reaching octaves and vibratos that many singers would aspire to hit. While she plays acoustic guitar, her clean vocals take space in the audio waves, which are then transitioned into death vocal growls that take over the microphone,

with her voice range. Her inspirations come from a wide range of music, but particularly from metal, including Judas Priest and Iron Maiden. Not only is she talented vocally, but her career has also taken her to perform at Carnegie Hall. Sage Bond debuted with an original composition entitled “Truth,” arranged by Zanaida Robles and performed with National Concerts’ Let My Love Be Heard series.³¹³ She sang the song “Truth” after the death of George Floyd and the COVID-19 shutdown. I wanted to learn more about the song process from Sage Bond and was so fortunate to be able to interview her.



Figure 4.1. *Sage Bond opening a Rez Metal show at Denver Levitt Pavilion.* Photo by the author. June 2023

As Sage Bond walks on the stage to the microphone, she starts to speak about the next song she will perform. She says, “I wrote this song about Navajo creation stories about the changing woman who made the four sacred mountains from her flesh. This song is to honor all the matriarchs. This song is called ‘Under the Sun.’” Sage takes a small step back from the microphone and plays her fret notes on the acoustic guitar, going into the song's introduction.

³¹³ Cynthia Gerber, “Breaking barriers with 'Truth': NAU student reflects on her impactful Carnegie Hall premiere,” *The NAU Review*, June 13, 2023, <https://news.nau.edu/nau-student-carnegie-hall/>.

This song captivated me. After hearing a Rez Metal acoustic show representing Navajo creation stories, but more importantly, the center of this chapter is to investigate how Native women's stories and Rez Metal (re)map geographies of Indigenous relationships to land and place.

White men and heteronormativity within the mainstream music industry dominate Heavy Metal as a genre. Musicians like Sage Bond highlighted the critical need to see Rez Metal through a gender analysis in ways Native women use Metal as a form of creative expressions. Through Sage Bond's song "Under the Sun" she uses death metal growls as resisting heteronormativity vocally, which is considered a masculine music genre. Indigenous women in the Rez Scene make visible new cartographies centered on Indigenous creation stories. Changing Woman is central in Navajo Creation, who made the clans and brought the Navajo people to the fourth world on earth. Sage Bond's song gives power in that women hold the earth and the power of creating life and destiny. In the interview, Sage goes through each lyric with me again. I want to share the entire transcription of Sage walking us through her song process. Each line was intentionally crafted to shape her message and relationship to land and place.

As I continued my interview follow-up, I had the pleasure of conducting an in-depth interview with Sage Bond over a Zoom session about her song, "Under the Sun." She brings out her older notebook and says, "I found the lyrics here. They are all faded, but they are in this notebook." She showed me the notebook where she writes all her lyrics down on paper. During our interview, she told me that she has not done an in-depth interview like this before, which made her reflect on her career in a timeline. I was not planning or expecting Sage to go through her lyrics line by line. She starts reading a book and says:

I wrote under the sun as an appreciation song for women and mothers, aunties and anyone who has helped raised any child in the community because it does take a village.

The first lyric goes. Under the sun, I am the one who holds the earth. Mother earth is telling me this is your earth too this is your home you have to take care of it.³¹⁴

Before her lyrical walk-through, I learned much about Sage Bond's life. She grew up in Red Lake, Arizona, on the Navajo Nation. Her first time in the Rez Metal scene was with her father, who would jam out with Ethnic De Generation and Dying Tribe. She wanted to learn to play the guitar and would often play with the instruments during the band members' smoke breaks. Sage talked about how she started singing at a young age, and she is a self-taught musician who learned guitar at 9. Sage began singing in the shower as a child or in her room, mimicking heavy metal singers; she enjoyed the cookie monster vocals.

Sage spoke so fondly of her mother and grandmother during the interview. When Sage was a teenager, she was afraid to sing in front of an audience. She even shared with me a memory from her middle school days, when she would sing to her classmates and face the wall because she was so nervous about singing in front of others. At home in the shower, she would sing Alicia Keys "Fallin'" and her mother listened to the talent and passion in her voice. Her mother would then take Sage to Karaoke nights at the café in Tuba City to help her overcome her fear of singing in front of people. Sage would practice singing at the Karaoke Café and was seen by a Navajo Country band who asked her to join their country band. Sage's mother drove her to every show so she could perform with the band. This involved late-night drives to and from the gigs that would run past midnight. Sage would come home late nights past midnight after the sets. Sage remembers being so tired that she slept on the bathroom floor of her house and did not make it to bed. But she emphasized that her mother still had work the next day, and I went to school. As we had conversations about her high school youth and how busy she was as a young

³¹⁴ Sage Bond, Zoom Interview, November 27th, 2024

musician. Sage would take a break in between these topics and she went back to her lyrics of the song.

Sage would take a break in between these topics, and she went back to her lyrics of the song.

The next lyric is “light passes time to the unknown, black clouds of rain scatters the sky.” This is where I refer to the 1st world when everything was darkness and black clouds. Then the chorus: “Legacy born to survive, night, sacrifice of her skin.”

Safe explained,

Changing women created the first 4 clans from her skin and took from different parts of her body, all different parts her breasts, the love handles, face, and arms and like, molded them like clay and created these people. Refer to motherhood and how having a child changes your body. You are sacrificing this part of you that was once, it was a lot of changes, like stretch marks they wear proudly, they love their child so much.

“Run to the east the white mountain; two souls release the fear of man.”

Elaborating, Sage noted:

Which are the monster slayers when they accidentally release the monsters at the white mountains. I took directly from these stories and flipped them into lyrics.

“Winter rebirth she is changing follow the path serpent path.”

Again, Sage recounts,

The Serpent path is the corn pollen path which is the path of life which Navajo people follow. Or aspire to for the Hozjo which is part of the kinaltah. They bless you. And hope you follow the corn pollen path.

“Fog is resting on the mountain spirit shoulders by the one with power. Phantom warrior arise mold into the shape.” [Bridge of the song]

As Sage reflects,

I incorporate the sunrise dance from my Apache side. I saw the photos of the crown dancers standing in the fog. And I thought Wow that’s so cool! So the fog is resting on the mountain spirit shoulders, and the crown dancers are the mountain spirit. They are the one who bless the girl during the sunrise dance ceremony.

“In the sunrise ceremony, the warriors also shape her and pull her body in different places during the ceremony to help her grow.”

“Chaos ridden She is forming. And break down guitar solo then.”

“Nightmare across the land: she will save us from them.” [Calm outro]

Sage concluded,

This is where changing women has to save the people from the monster and give up her flesh under the sun. It's referring that we need to go back to matriarch structure that we are supposed to follow in our culture, but we have strayed from. Cause now the Navajo nation presidents are like women shouldn't be in the office....well a particular president.³¹⁵

During our interview, like many Native women I know, we laughed together and shared similar sentiments about our political views, especially regarding tribal leadership. As Denetdale makes aware, there has not been a Navajo woman elected as president of the Navajo Nation; however, women have served as council delegates and in various offices at the Chapter House.³¹⁶ At the same time, Denetdale provides an example at the Beautiful Mountain uprising surrounding discussion of how federal Indian policies are intended to eliminate Diné by transforming the Navajo Nation into a heterosexual patriarchy.³¹⁷ Even as the “Navajo remain matrilineal, and LGBTQ people assert K’*e* as the foundation by which they belong to their people and the land.”³¹⁸ Only recently, in 2024, Richelle Montoya became the first Navajo woman to be elected to the office of 11th Vice President of the Navajo Nation. Even so, Montoya has faced a lot of public concerns surrounding women in leadership and challenges surrounding her treatment by her running mate, President of the Navajo Nation, Buu Nygren.³¹⁹

³¹⁵ Sage Bond, Zoom Interview, November 27th, 2024.

³¹⁶ Denetdale, “Chairmen, Presidents, and Princesses,” 25.

³¹⁷ Jennifer Nez Denetdale, “Return to ‘The Uprising at Beautiful Mountain in 1913’: Marriage and Sexuality in the Making of the Modern Navajo Nation,” in *Critically Sovereign: Indigenous Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies*, ed. Joanne Barker (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), 73 <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv11smggj.5>.

³¹⁸ Jennifer Nez Denetdale, “Return to ‘The Uprising at Beautiful Mountain in 1913’, 73.

³¹⁹ Krista Allen and Nicholas House, “K’*e* fails: Nygren and Montoya ‘working relationship’ broken,” *Navajo Times*, December 19, 2024, <https://navajotimes.com/reznews/ke-fails-nygren-and-montoya-working-relationship-broken/>.

There was a lot of detail in how she described her songs, where they came from, and how her experiences of feelings were translated into song notes. I felt very fortunate to have Sage share the stories through her song and how it was written. The same themes arose where I could map the stories of the land, memories, ceremonies, and connection to land with the lyrics. All these song lyrics and visuals were maps of home that we must also take care of.

The song presented how women remap stories of land and place through Rez Metal music. Her story made visible the sacrifices that her mother made for her. Her life story is not uncommon, as many families have faced similar hardships and transitions. Sage is the older sister who cared for her younger brother when her father left. She witnessed unhealthy family relationships and forms of domestic violence in her household. Her mother and grandparents raised Sage while they navigated the transitions. Sage saw music as her refuge to express her emotions about her father, and what she was experiencing as a high school student with all these challenges that would affect any adolescent's mental health. Music was the way she could express her feelings. Her mother would ask her what the songs were about when she sang them or realized that those songs about sadness and depression were about her. As Sage describes the feeling of her concerned mother, she would work with her to snap out of cycles of feelings by addressing them to her. Sage's relationship to music has always been consistent in her life.

Sage wrote the song as part of the "Three Sisters Collective" album, highlighting women for MMIW Relatives. This CD was co-produced by the organization and Clara Natonabah Music, with all proceeds benefiting the Sovereign Bodies Institute. Clara reached out to Sage, inviting her to be on the album that was going to be produced by their collective. They searched for Native musicians who identified as women and wanted to write for MMIW relatives. Sage thought the cause was meaningful and began writing this song for the album. This also meant

that the music had to be made and played by all women. Sage rose to the challenge to write the song, perform it, and record it with the help of her stepfather, and had to learn to play the drums for her recording. Even though she remembers experiencing writer's block during this time, she felt that this song gave her the inspiration to overcome it.

Sage usually plays with an acoustic guitar, but this song was produced in the studio on SoundCloud, featuring an electric guitar and sounds created by Sage Bond. The CD launch also had attendance from the local community. I mentioned to Sage that when you wrote this song, it was during the time of Ashlynn and Mike, and the reports of the MMIW cases that came out in New Mexico. Sage said yes, this album was made during this time, and she told Ashlyn's family that Mike attended the CD launch. I wanted to mention that, as it is part of this chapter, Ashlynn Mike was the Navajo girl who was tragically murdered on the Navajo Nation.

The relation between gender and music is further evident in way that the stories and voices of Indigenous women are often “political.” I turn to ethnomusicologist Kristina Jacobsen, who also discusses how sound and voice are uniquely political to Indigeneity.³²⁰ Voice can challenge our expectations of Native women and how they identify their role in the community. Building on Jacobsen's ideas that voice in music indexes identity almost instantaneously. How we hear the singing and speaking voice is informed by deeper cultural expectations and assumptions surrounding racial identity, gender, blood, and sound. Voice can challenge our expectations for how Native peoples sound and can signify their carried attachments to being Indigenous. When voices do not match our expectations or when identity and musical genre appear not to align, we are challenged to broaden our understanding of self to society and

³²⁰Kristina M. Jacobsen, *The Sound of Navajo Country: Music, Language, and Diné Belonging* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007). 28.

aesthetics to politics.³²¹ Through these creative musical practices, these women of Rez Metal offer a new way of remapping Indigenous experiences that resist colonialism while offering maps to better futures. In summary, I emphasize that Native women in the Rez Metal serve as a resistance to colonial norms and expectations surrounding race, gender, and indigeneity.

4.3 Mapping Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) in New Mexico

In 2018, one of my dear photographer friends, Pamela Peters, and I were driving to attend a Rez Metal show called “Alien Fest,” which happens annually in Jicarilla Apache Nation in Dulce, New Mexico. As we drove towards Farmington, New Mexico, leaving Gallup, I noticed how the land embodied so much. Red rocks surrounded the area, and the clouds covered the blue skies like pillows. Pamela started to give me the virtual tour. Pamela would talk about Red Valley, her family, and the Navajo Tradition of the clans. Part of “visiting” for me was to learn about the relational aspects of connecting relationships, places, and people.

This was my first trip to the Navajo Nation, and we were traveling through the desert in my car. Our conversations were about the town in Red Valley where Pamela grew up, and the metal scene as she remembered it in the 1980s. We also caught up on our personal lives, which, in Native communities, is a widespread practice of staying in touch with each other. In our relationship, we discussed our families, our tribal communities, and our memories of land and place. As a Lakota, I would discuss Pine Ridge and my time living there, teaching high school at Red Cloud Indian School, where my grandmother also attended.

As we passed the little towns and small pockets of houses, we made it closer to Ship Rock, New Mexico. On the side of Highway 491, I immediately noticed an area with numerous

³²¹ Jacobsen, *Navajo Country*, 106.

signs and the words that spelled out “Ashlynn Mike.” In that moment, I froze, remembering that day. I asked Pam, “Oh, is that the memorial site?” Pam looked at me and said, “Yes, that is the memorial site. People drop off toys, flowers, and signs for her. It was really sad what happened. I had a friend tell me it could have been prevented.” We decided to pull over to the site where the fence hung a photograph of her and the toys brought there as a memorial.

As we walked up to the fence, I felt my heart sink because I recalled reading the headline the day that Ashlynn Mike was found. Ashlynn Mike's story occurred in 2016, and her memorial was still in place as of 2018. There were a lot of feelings because the violence done to her was entirely unforgivable. Ashlynn was a child. A young girl who was only eleven years old. It was also shocking because the act of violence was done by a young Navajo male at my age, at the time 27 years old, from their same nation and community. We pulled over to see the sight, and I wanted to pay my respects. If I had known, I would have brought gifts and left an offering for the sight.

Instead, I took a moment for prayer. In those moments, I decided not to photograph the memorial. I remember telling myself I wanted to take this moment in without a camera, without photos, and just sit in the silence of the grass with the canyons far in the backdrop against the blue skies. My eyes glazed over the flowers, each Teddy Bear was tied on the fence, and other toys were left for her with a sign that read: “Love You Ashlynn” in blue and yellow paint lettering. I let the silence fill my thoughts, the moment of witnessing a community loss and grief to a young daughter, niece, friend, and classmate. A life lost, whose future we have no idea what it could have been. I let the silence of the landscape and wind take my thoughts. I let that unsettling, almost anxious gut feeling overwhelm me, and I breathed in the air as I closed my eyes.

When the tragic loss of Ashlynn Mike, other issues related specifically to Missing and Murdered Indigenous Girls revealed the shortcomings and lack of access to Amber Alerts on tribal lands, in this case, specifically to the Navajo Nation. A predator lured Ashlynn and her brother Ian into getting into the van. Hours later, passersby found Ian in the desert. It took a day for the Amber Alert to be released, and Ashlynn's remains were found the next day. The shocking news spread rapidly throughout the Navajo Nation and the entire state of New Mexico. Details were released later that it was not until 9:07 P.M. that the Navajo Nation Police Department finally requested an Amber Alert through the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), even though the kidnapping took place after school. "State police, not the FBI, typically initiate Amber Alerts. The lack of clarity about who was supposed to initiate the alert meant that, for several crucial hours, no such process was in place. The automated text message informed them that an Amber Alert had been issued for Ashlynn Mike. It was 2:30 A.M., eight hours after Gary Mike had first reported that his children were missing."³²² Tribal enforcement officers did not have an AMBER Alert plan to notify the people living in the 27,000 square mile reservation that stretches from Arizona, Utah, and New Mexico. When it came to Ashlynn Mike's case, the significant issues were the lack of preparedness and coordination in the area of response to missing and abducted children, highlighting the obstacles faced by not just the Navajo Nation but also shared by tribes across the country. The history of the Amber Alert in Indian Country also highlights the challenges of the complexity of jurisdictional issues, a lack of centralized reporting and data, and a misunderstanding of Indian child welfare law outside of tribal borders. Tribes often have a shortage of critical resources, such as staffing, technology, and case management software.

³²² Monroe, Rachel "The Delay". *The Esquire*. April 18th, 2018. <https://www.esquire.com/news-politics/a19561163/ashlynn-mike-amber-alert-navajo-reservation/>

In 2018, two years after Ashlynn's death, Congress passed the Ashlynn Mike Amber Alert in Indian Country Act. This law enhances the training and technical assistance that tribes may receive to access state Amber Alert Plans. It was created in hopes that this situation would never happen again. The law allows for integrating tribal American alert systems into the state's Amber Alert systems. Her legacy lives on for change and plans for children in Indian Country.

New Mexico has 23 sovereign nations, 19 pueblos, and four tribes, each with its land base bordering state or federal land. This state is also a mixture of different communities, including urban and border towns, and much of the state is rural. Checkerboard towns are referred to as patches of land that are non-tribally sovereign land but owned by the settler state. "Checkerboarded land across the state impacts law enforcement response. Complications surrounding the relationships with jurisdictions are strained, making collaboration and coordination difficult."³²³ This includes border towns, which are geographically located on state land where responding law enforcement agencies are typically city or county agencies. Thus, jurisdiction is non-tribal.³²⁴ There is a critical need to gather information to understand the barriers and challenges in New Mexico's border towns more fully. This is especially worrisome since the Urban Indian Health Institute (UIHI) (2018) listed two border towns in New Mexico that are of particular importance due to their designation of having the highest number of MMIWG cases nationally within Gallup and New Mexico.³²⁵

³²³ New Mexico Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Relatives Task Force, *Report to the Governor and Legislature on the Task Force Findings and Recommendations* (Santa Fe: State of New Mexico Indian Affairs Department, December 2020), 12, https://www.iad.state.nm.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/NM_MMIWR_Report_FINAL_WEB_v120920.pdf.

³²⁴ New Mexico Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Relatives Task Force report. (2020), 14

³²⁵ Urban Indian Health Institute. Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. "A snapshot of data from 71 urban cities in the United States." November 14th, 2018 retrieved from <https://www.uihi.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Missing-and-Murdered-Indigenous-Women-and-Girls-Report.pdf> (14)



Figure 4.2. *New Mexico Tribal Map*. New Mexico Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and relatives Task Force report.³²⁶

On December 9th, 2020, the State of New Mexico Indian Affairs Department’s Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Relatives Task Force released their final report and recommendations to Governor Lujan Grisham. The legislation supporting the creation of the task force report was introduced in 2017, highlighting the MMIW and Girls' crisis. New Mexico was included in this report because it has two cities listed among the “*Top Ten Cities with the Highest Number of MMIWG Cases*,” as reported by the Urban Indian Health Institutions (2018). The two cities were Albuquerque, which had 37 cases, and Gallup, which had 25 cases. As a state, New Mexico had the highest number of MMIWG out of all the states studied, with 78 cases of MMIWG.³²⁷

³²⁶ New Mexico Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Relatives Task Force, *Report to the Governor and Legislature*, 12.

³²⁷ Urban Indian Health Institute (UIHI), *Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women & Girls Report* (Seattle, WA: UIHI, 2017), 11, <https://www.uihi.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Missing-and-Murdered-Indigenous-Women-and-Girls-Report.pdf>.

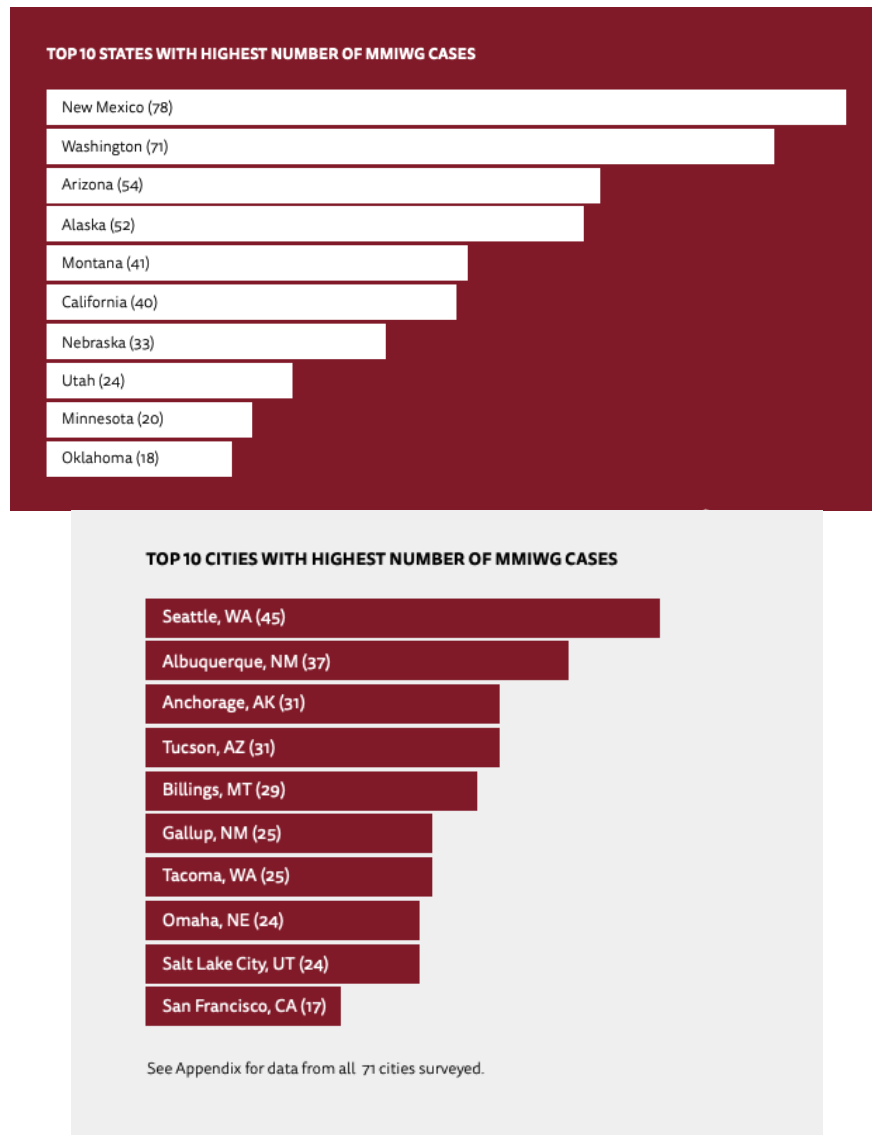


Figure 4.3. *Top 10 States and Cities with the Highest Numbers of MMIWG Cases. MMIWG report. (UIHI 2017)*³²⁸

The state of New Mexico presents an ideal case study for the broader challenges facing Native American communities nationwide. This has sparked my conversation as an Indigenous woman who identifies as Sicangu Lakota. I spent most of my time within these two sites, both Gallup and Albuquerque, which are the prime sites of Rez Metal concerts and community gatherings. Two venues in particular are The Juggernaut in Gallup and The Launch Pad, which

³²⁸ UIHI, *MMIWG Report*, 11.

are located in Albuquerque. New Mexico is highly populated with indigenous communities and diverse in tribal histories of colonialism, originating with the Spanish, and then the United States government. “Violence started with the Spanish invasion of indigenous communities and the subsequent promotion of human trafficking, slavery, and violence on indigenous bodies, all of which European Americans and settler colonialism further exacerbated.”³²⁹

Given the geopolitical climate of New Mexico and the realities of violence against Indigenous women in the Americas are subjected to violence under settler-colonial patriarchy, a vital element is to highlight the heightened vulnerability of Native women to violence. According to Amnesty International, studies from the federal government have consistently shown that American Indian and Alaska Native women experience much higher levels of sexual violence than other women in the USA. Native American and Alaskan Native women are 2.5 times more likely to be raped or sexually assaulted than women in the USA. The U.S. Department of Justice presented the data that 31.1% percent of American Indian and Alaskan Native women will be raped during their lifetime. The current comparative figure of the women across the USA shows that one in five will experience violence, while Native American women show one in three. These statistics have also stated that they are not entirely accurate in portraying the extent of sexual violence against Native American women and Alaska Native women. Suggested data has shown that this is due to the lack of reporting violence and cases, especially from rural areas and communities, compared to urban areas, where reporting is higher. Some of the data made available to the reports also shows that there is a high number of

³²⁹New Mexico Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Relatives Task Force, *Report to the Governor and Legislature on the Task Force Findings and Recommendations* (Santa Fe, NM: State of New Mexico Indian Affairs Department, December 2020), 5. https://www.iad.state.nm.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/NM_MMIWR_Report_FINAL_WEB_v120920.pdf.

perpetrators of sexual violence. While Amnesty International speaks to the nationwide statistics of MMIW, the movement for more precise data on violence against Native American women has increased reporting and data collection since 2017.³³⁰

These statistics of Native women did not happen suddenly but through the systemic structures in place. Tuck and Yang remind us that under Settler colonialism, Indigenous people are often seen as "in the way" and that land is sought after.³³¹ Andrea Smith and Luana Ross expand on how "violence against Indigenous women has been inextricably linked with the commodification and appropriation of our land base."³³² The author's reference David Stannard points to settler-colonialism to erase Indigenous peoples starts from the need to control women's reproductive ability.³³³ The destruction of women and children is essential to the destruction of a people. Indigenous feminisms have tied the violence of land with the effects of violence on women.

Pivotal scholar Mishuana Goeman's work on critical Indigenous feminisms explores how Indigenous women (re)map Native Nations through literature, discussing how Indigenous women's stories are political and how they have re-mapped their presence on Native lands.³³⁴ Indigenous women's lived reality under the settler state has included experiences of violence that can be seen through the "Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women" (MMIW) endemic occurring across the Americas. Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG),

³³⁰ Amnesty International, *Maze of Injustice: The Failure to Protect Indigenous Women from Sexual Violence in the USA* (New York: Amnesty International, 2007), 1–19.

³³¹ Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, "Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, no. 1 (2012) Andrea Smith and Luana Ross, "Introduction: Native Women and State Violence," *Social Justice* 31, no. 4 (98) (2004): 6.

³³² Smith and Ross (2004: 2.)

³³³ Smith and Ross, "Native Women and State Violence," 2.

³³⁴ Mishuana Goeman, "(Re)Mapping Indigenous Presence on the Land in Native Women's Literature," *American Quarterly* 60, no. 2 (2008): 14-15.

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW), and or Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Two-Spirit (MMIW2S) will be used interchangeably throughout the chapter depending on the context of the data and how these reports have been presented. Overall, the issues of MMIWG remain prevalent in Indian countries in the United States and Canada but are concentrated in the New Mexico region.

Therefore, when it comes to women in Rez Metal who create music that intentionally speaks to gender violence within Native American communities, it does more than simply raise awareness. Goeman writes that through critical Native feminism, we reassess spatial practices that address colonial mapping of bodies and land and remap our social and political lives according to cultural value and needs.³³⁵ To expand on the idea of voice, I transition to how an Indigenous feminist approach of Rez metal informs us of deeper political meaning in mapping Indigenous spatial experiences.

In examining this, I draw from Speed's work on Indigenous women and violence in North America, which discusses how stories of survivors and how they are remembered.³³⁶ To understand how these stories shape their life experiences and how they remember these experiences. This approach also resonates with "Felt Theory"³³⁷ by Dian Million speaks to how Indigenous women the importance of felt experiences as a community and knowledge. Million articulates how colonialism was felt by those who experienced it and how those are lived within the body and memories.³³⁸ Thus, Speed also emphasizes that women's memories are embodied experiences. Speed explains that the women's stories should focus less on chronological order

³³⁵ Goeman, "(Re)Mapping Indigenous Presence", 295.

³³⁶ Shannon Speed, *Incarcerated Stories: Indigenous Women Migrants and Violence in the Settler-Capitalist State* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019)10.

³³⁷ Million, Dian. "Felt Theory: An Indigenous Feminist Approach to Affect and History." *Wicazo Sa Review* 24, no. 2 (2009): 53–76. <https://doi.org/10.1353/wic.0.0043>.

³³⁸ Million, Felt Theory, 58.

and more on how gender, race, and class as structural ideologies shape the construction of historical memory.³³⁹

4.4. Mapping voices of Native Women in Soundscapes

A three-piece band begins to set up their instruments on the Launchpad stage in Albuquerque, New Mexico. A bar venue in New Mexico is filled with band posters covering the walls, showcasing the local heavy metal scene. This venue has hosted multiple bands from the Rez Metal scene that I have featured in pursuit of our documentary “Ancestors: Rez Metal.” Lights are on as the stage lights reflect the stage, accompanied by a couple of white beaming lights. A five-piece black drum kit is carried onto the stage to prepare for setup. Behind the drums, a young woman named Channing Concho from the Laguna Pueblo and Hopi nations sets her symbols for her reach. As the bassist puts her bass strap on, she starts plugging in her sound. From the Diné nation, Jessica Armstrong prepares to set up her mic, as she is also a vocal singer. Amanda puts her mic in the stand while holding her white flying V guitar. In 2018, this was my first-ever Rez Metal show and the first band I had ever seen. The opening bands that night had a few fans come out. But once eleven o'clock hit, their set time came. Amanda struck her first chord, the set began as a large crowd started piling towards the front of the stage.

To describe Suspended as just a “good” band is an understatement. Suspended is one of those bands that will blow you away musically and vocally. Amanda's Death Metal vocals break through the distorted guitars, and the sound of Channing drumming is quick. Suspended is a thrash band with black and melodic inspirations. I saw the crowd go wild. It was the first time I had ever seen so many Natives in a mosh pit, and the audience all knew the words and lyrics.

³³⁹ Speed, *Incarcerated Stories*, 10.

They were cheering and throwing up their horns for them. It was also the first time I ever saw Indigenous women play heavy metal music. Growing up in a predominantly white environment, seeing a crowd of metalheads cheer so loudly and mosh so hard for these ladies was an experience I was able to continue to witness in my ethnographic work. There is something very special about this band, as I have heard a lot.

You could say that Suspended is such a skilled band that I witnessed a Navajo man bow down on his knees to them at the Navajo Nation Metal Fest at the Sport Complex in 2022 in front of their merch booth. He asked for an autograph and their photo with them. The line to meet the band extended around the corner, and the ladies sold all their merch, t-shirts, shot glasses, and posters with their autographs. I never imagined the kind of sounds and heavy metal I would experience by visiting their first show. Until sound check. The sounds of what many in my interviews of Rez Metal have described their vocals as “Cookie Monster” vocals.³⁴⁰ I was intrigued, needing to know more about their style of music. I stand watching in the crowd of many Natives moshing and headbanging to their heavy metal. To be honest, I have never seen an all-Native women's band perform in heavy metal in the way Suspended does. I drove to Amanda Castillo's house, where they graciously let me visit during their band practice time. I wanted to learn more from this band and was invited to their practice room in Amanda's house. When I first came in to knock on the door, Amanda asked me inside. I meet her younger daughters around elementary school age, rush in to greet their mom, and out of curiosity, who is at the door? As I did some introductions, I was led to their practice room.

Within Amanda's house is a smaller room on the right where the three of them practice. The room could hold four of us with our instruments, with maybe a few inches of give between

³⁴⁰See NPR, "Cookie Monster Vocals," *NPR*, January 8, 2015, <https://www.npr.org/2015/01/08/375836031/cookie-monster-vocals>.

them. When I saw Channy set up her drum kit, she had to squeeze herself into the corner while keeping her symbols aligned and everything else in check.³⁴¹ As they set up their practice sessions, they let me take photos with my camera, attempting to capture our space and lighting. Between their songs and while we waited for their bassist, Jessica, to arrive, I started to ask some questions about Suspended. I asked how they started, where they all met, and how the band was formed. I could not help but chuckle a bit because they came up with their band name together based on a collective shared experience: that every Suspended member of that band had been suspended from school before.

Based on her visual presence, I asked Channy how it was to navigate being a woman in the Rez Metal scene. Channy says, “Most of the time, people wonder if we are going to sound like Kittie.” Kittie is an all-female Canadian heavy metal band combining clean and death vocals. It was formed in 1996 by lead guitarist Fallon Bowman in London, Ontario. The band's sound encompasses the traditional elements of the metal genre, such as the drop C tuning, which gives you the low sound, fast-tempo drums, double pedal, heavy riffs, and chugs. Their vocals are identifiable and easily marked as female vocals if you were to listen to it on any streaming platform. Agreeing, Amanda adds,

Our values as women are definitely strength and confidence. Cause a lot of people are very supportive but we do also run into those guys when we are bringing in our gear “Hey Sweetie, why are you carrying your boyfriend’s guitar”? You know stuff like that, and we are like “oh well whatever let’s just do our own thing.” And then after our set. They are like “Holy Crap I didn’t know you could play guitar”³⁴²

Channy explains, “Yeah, when people only listen to our CD and see us come out on stage, they mention I had no idea you were women until you came out.”

³⁴¹ I mention this because Rez Metal's practice sessions are adaptable to the spaces they work with.

³⁴² Amanda Castillo, interview by Viki Eagle, December 2019.

The assumption voiced during the interview makes clear that even for women in the Heavy metal scene, many have the expectation that they will be easily identifiable women singing and playing guitar, not in a less “heavy” manner, or that they will be less skilled musicians than men. As I continued my interview with Suspended, I wanted to ask about their song "The Beast Within," in particular.

Before the interview, I watched their music video, "The Beast Within." The video starts with an acoustic melodic opening, with the first scene focusing on an industrial room with a young woman tied to a chair with a single light bulb shining over her head. The light brightens her face as her body is tied with rope and her mouth covered with duct tape, sealing her lips closed. As the melodic acoustic guitar plays, the camera zooms in on these young women's faces, and in a blink, her eye opens and widens in fear as she realizes she is a captured hostage. The Metal riffs play faster, and the drums play to a faster tempo.

The video moves through the memory of the woman before she was bound. We see the woman walking on a sidewalk on a clear summer day in New Mexico. The scene then shows a white male who is drinking and driving a grey van. He then sees this woman walking in the street. The man slows his car until it comes to a complete stop. All we see is the vehicle stops, and suddenly, in the next scene, we see the woman tied and bound, thrown into the van as a kidnapped hostage—the guitar riffs and fast drum pace play. The white man then carries the woman into the room, where she currently remains as a hostage. She breaks free from the rope and the duct tape and starts to run and find an escape. She sees the exit door, but finds a dead body wrapped in a sheet lying by the door. As she runs out the door, she runs into the neighborhood as fast as possible as the sun is setting on the Adobe-style houses and the desert dirt. She stops running and looks back to where she was. As she pauses, you see her turn around

and start running faster. She enters the room where she was kidnapped and grabs the rope that she was bound to. She takes the rope and finds her kidnapper in a separate room, sharpening or cleaning what appears to be an axe. With a smirk on her face, and make-up running down her eyes, she pulls the rope over her kidnapper's neck and starts to use force and choke him. The man slowly falls until he dies in the music video's last scene. The ending scene shows the woman walking away from the room.³⁴³

After I watched this video, I asked Channing about this music video and their goals in making it. She explained that it was made to empower women. In her words,

I think Beast Within is a great example of that. We have a music video for that, and it's a bit more on the darker side. But towards the end, it revolves to the women not letting the male take over her and control her, or even get to the point of killing her. She fights back, she gets up and she fights, and she gets her revenge. But she also, you know, does it because she knows that there's other women out there that this happened to. And she wants to be that person to be able to break free and continues to go on for these women. The song also alludes to Missing Murdered Indigenous Women who also suffer from these realities of being taken and we are showing how we can reclaim our power back into that situation. We wanted to make a song that shows that as women we can fight back.³⁴⁴

Channing began to expand the band's presence at Albuquerque community events that raise awareness about MMIW issues. Channing tells me that Suspended performs for free at these shows to support the cause and raise awareness. . Not only that, but Channing is also an active member of the Urban Albuquerque Native community and a waitress at the Pueblo Cultural Center.

Their participation in community MMIW events reflects an Indigenous feminist perspective that offers a different understanding of gendered politics. As Indigenous studies

³⁴³ Suspended - "Beast Within". YouTube. YouTube, 2016
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IJA_2vGVEZw.

³⁴⁴ Channing Concho, interview by Viki Eagle, December 2019.

scholar Cheryl Suzack posits, a critical paradigm is needed to analyze how gender injustice against Indigenous women emerges from colonial policies and patriarchal practices that inscribe gendered power dynamics to the detriment of Indigenous women, especially in law and literature.³⁴⁵ Throughout the *Suspended* music video, the artists are encouraging women to reclaim their power and take control of their realities for the future. Mapping these visual centers is an indigenous feminist practice, as Goeman marks how Native women text document the violence within their community and a critique of the spatial restrictions of their land, bodies, and nations.³⁴⁶ *Suspended* mapping is not limited to lyrics but engages across media through their video production.

Interested in their video production, I asked Channing: “What message do you hope people take away from your band and music video?” She replied,

Just to stand strong and keep doing what you are doing as a female. Especially in Pueblo, the matriarch and women are the head of the household. We always take care of the men, but in the same way, I feel we should be respected in the same sense. Where you know we see the females and help them out, and same kindness as another bro band would you know. And for me, that is the respect in an all-female band. The fact that we are all Native American, you don’t see that very much at all. So being able to empower women and being Indigenous and being able to show them. Look, we started on the Rez, too. We’ve have been jamming out in Laguna pueblo, you know, since we were 17 years old, and you can get shows, you can put together something even if it’s doing it yourself. I find more than ever I find that woman are standing up more than ever and doing things themselves. I think that is the biggest highlight of it. We value our community and do free concerts for the community and Rez. We have an upcoming show to raise awareness for missing and murdered Indigenous women.³⁴⁷

Channing reflects on the relationships in a matriarchal society where women are the head of the household. In this discussion, Channy notes that in their roles of taking care of the

³⁴⁵ Cheryl Suzack, "Indigenous Feminisms in Canada," *NORA: Nordic Journal of Women's Studies* 23, no. 4 (2015): 261.

³⁴⁶ Goeman, *Mark My Words*, 15.

³⁴⁷ Channing Concho, interview by Viki Eagle, December 2019.

community, it is a role that they take seriously, that it is a part of who they are that they support men and empower women while also showing up for the community on the rez. This web of relationships gives meaning to how women understand kinship. As Suzack points out, Indigenous women deploy the idea of kinship relations to draw attention to wider state practices of injustice that Indigenous communities suffer from.³⁴⁸ The wider state practices affected the Indigenous community, extending to Suspended not just women but also the community impact through raising awareness by participating with the community for free shows for the urban and Rez community.

4.5. Missing and Murdered Sonic Cartography

Suspended's practice of community of care can be interpreted as charting sonic cartography and a gendered mapping framework. During the first-ever show, I had in Denver, Colorado, at the Levitt Pavilion, an outdoor amphitheater. It is a community event space dedicated to uplifting local music. I draw from education scholar Jon Wargo, who describes "sonic cartography as the practice of mapping narrative through sound."³⁴⁹ To discuss cartography, I draw from geography. Juan Herrea's use of cartographic memories reminds us that remembering is not just an act but a political remaking of geographies that emphasizes the contributions of certain groups.³⁵⁰ Suspended sounds of thrash Heavy Metal performing their song Missing and Murder at the Levitt Pavilion performed a sonic cartography is an example of the political remaking of geographies.

³⁴⁸ Suzack, "Indigenous Feminisms in Canada," 261.

³⁴⁹ Jon M. Wargo, "SoundingOutMySilence: Reading a LGBTQ Youth's Sonic Cartography as Multimodal (Counter)Storytelling," *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* 62, no. 1 (2018): 13–23, <https://doi.org/10.1002/jaal.752>. 15.

³⁵⁰ Juan Herrera, *Cartographic Memory: Social Movement Activism and the Production of Space* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2022). 14

As I chatted with Channy Bee following the Levitt performance in Denver, Colorado, over social media to request access to the song they played. The stage lights flickered with colors and lit up the show. I remember watching Amanda Trujillo, where she spoke clearly into the microphone. She said this song is dedicated to the “Missing and Murdered.” She then played the notes to their new, unrecorded song that had not been released yet. I recalled asking Channy if I could write about the song "Missing and Murdered" for this dissertation and requesting the lyrics. Channy replies to me that the song “Missing and Murdered” did not have lyrics and was purely instrumental.³⁵¹ I typed Oh! There are no lyrics. Channy said they intentionally decided to keep the song without lyrics.

We felt that the song spoke for itself. Everyone’s stories of their loved one fill in the blanks. We wanted to keep the feeling of the song to tell the stories of the many who have never shared theirs. As our way of paying tribute to them.³⁵²

As I read her messages about the song's meaning, I am always in awe of how we never imagined mapping these stories. While *Missing and Murdered* was intentionally not written as only for MMIW cases, but to anyone with a story of missing and murdered persons. *Suspended* provides us complex inter-sensorial mapping of New Mexico and the MMIW epidemic through visual arts from their music video and their performance of Missing and Murder as a sonic cartography that raises awareness of gender-based violence and women's empowerment. The song centers on emotion and memories. In this case, the idea behind the song with no lyrics is intended to allow any person to create the song using cartographic memories of those affected, with families and relatives who fall under the MMIR cases. These narratives are mapped through

³⁵¹ In my memory, I thought there were lyrics to the song but realized after the fact that the song was purely instrumental.

³⁵² Channing Concho, personal communication with author, September 2023.

the stories that have yet to be written by community members or audiences who have those experiences.

Another critical factor is that Suspended intentionally uses sounds of Thrash Metal with no lyrics for those people and families who have never shared their stories. This concept is a heavy truth that carries deep meaning in Indigenous communities, that stories of violence have yet to be told. I present that this song is a sound cartography that charts the relationship to the community because the song leaves space for those memories and stories to be filled in by those families and the band members. The interaction between the audience and the performers adds a new listening positionality, where the listener can think about lyrics to write, or to those directly affected by the stories within their communities. This was how I saw that the values of Suspended had deep relationality for the whole communities and families affected by the epidemic of MMIR. This performance of Missing and Murdered created a moment and space of remembrance and empowerment shared as a collective experience with the audience. This song invited the audience to enter a space for collective healing and imagine a better future for Indigenous communities.

Indigenous feminist frameworks offer a new lens to understand Rez Metal life and how women musicians reframe our understanding of spatial experiences and stories of land through their relationships. As Speed states, “Indigenous women are showing us a different way of living in the world, and most importantly, Indigenous women are leading the future. This future involves our relations with each other and the earth, which consists of a politics of care for our human and non-human relations.”³⁵³ Bands like Suspended are a prime example of how this can occur in Rez Metal spaces, demonstrating a feminist remapping.

³⁵³ Speed, Shannon, “Indigenous Resistance” AIS 187A: Indigenous Women and Violence”. Class Lecture at UCLA, Los Angeles, CA, March 11th, 2021.

In this section, I will also present the unique experiences of Native women in the Rez Metal scene. According to Goeman, Native women's texts often document the violence imposed on their communities. In so doing they serve as a critique of the spatial restructuring of their land, bodies and nation. These women's imaginative geographies are the stories that construct, contest and compose a mapping of Americas.³⁵⁴ Goeman argues that Native women carry stories and that these mental and sound in the stories shape relationships around us and serve to imagine identity and community differently.³⁵⁵

Goeman notes that Native women's mapping involves presenting social relations that lead us beyond a settler heteropatriarchal mapping of space. Therefore, I argue that these acts as mapping and relationships are beyond the ideas of women's roles in a traditional sense. While Channy says we do take care of men, she emphasizes that it is the community they care for as a whole. In summary, I present how Suspended as Native women with this concept of mapping violence and empowerment of Native women through their music video, visually reclaim power for women. Yet, something was very critical for me to discuss: the values that Suspended emphasizes in caring for the community as a whole.

I share the geopolitical climate of the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) crisis in New Mexico. In my last interview with Sage Bond, she revealed that her song "Under the Sun" was made in response to the MMIW case of Ashlynn Mike. Similarly, Suspended wrote a song called "Beast Within" about empowering women. Additionally, their song "Missing and Murdered" was created so that families could write their own stories within the song. Before delving into Suspended and their songs. I use this section to open critical discussions on the endemic of violence to Native women, highlighting how these songs are

³⁵⁴ Goeman, *Mark My Words*, 11.

³⁵⁵ Goeman, *Mark my Words*, 25.

centered in an Indigenous feminist framework of deep reciprocity by amplifying the voices of Native women and communities.

4.6. Rez Metal Aesthetic and Relationality: Weaving Kinship; the making of a Tsiiyée, Ribbon Skirt and Heavy Metal Velveteen Dress

As my friendship with Suspended grew, I attended more shows. I started this journey in 2018, and I witnessed a lot of change over the years. For example, since 2018, I watched Channy become a mother and their bassist Autumn formed. But our friendship and connection continued over the years. Here it was in 2023, I headline Suspended at the Denver Levitt Pavilion show. As we were in the backstage room of the Levitt, Channy, her mother, Autumn, and Amanda called me over. Channy's mother is a designer seamstress who makes ribbon skirts. She took out a folded black cloth, and as they unfolded it, I could see the shape of a skirt that had a light green ribbon sewn on. As I realized it was a ribbon skirt with a giant letter “S” in a Metal style font for “Suspended”. This was a traditional Native American ribbon skirt (see figure 4.4) designed as a Rez Metal Skirt, designed and etched for women in Rez Metal, and they wanted to gift it to me. I could not help but be so moved and taken aback by such a thoughtful gift. The skirt exemplifies how tradition and Rez Metal are interwoven through generations of a matriarchal society.



Figure 4.4. *Suspended Ribbon Skirt made by New Sun Sage Designs*. Photo by the author, 2025.

Indigenous women utilize heavy metal music for their own aesthetic, cultural purposes, and political grounding. At times, women's performances in Heavy Metal can be perceived as imitating or copying masculinity, particularly through deep growls and death vocals. However, I argue that Native women who adopt a Rez Metal aesthetic do so for their own purposes to center, uplift, and empower other women and girls. A gender studies scholar that is helpful in contextualizing aesthetic of (re)making of cultural production, is José Munoz who writes about queer feminisms and disidentifications aesthetic.³⁵⁶ This theory explores how identities are not limited to culture and sexuality within mainstream cultural norms. So, rather than specifically

³⁵⁶José Esteban Muñoz, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999). 26.

identifying with dominant groups and norms, he discusses how these communities transform these works of fashion for their artistic purposes. Muñoz calls this process “disidentification.”

Through a study of its workings, he develops a new perspective on minority performance, survival, and activism. Disidentification also serves as a framework to describe the sewing projects created by Native women through Rez Metal Aesthetics, which included Rez Metal theme ribbon skirts and Navajo velveteen dresses, as presented towards the end of this chapter. I demonstrate how these sewing projects map relationality, kinship, and gift giving through the creation of traditional Native clothing attires, creating another form of a Rez Metal aesthetic. I also draw attention to the fact that these aesthetics are inspired by the practices of relationality in Indigenous feminisms.

I would call this “disidentification aesthetic.” I thought about how the ribbon skirt in our Native community’s scene is sacred and traditional clothing. I thought about how traditional ribbon skirts infused with a Rez Metal aesthetic produced new cultural meanings. Through the creation of these skirts, I argue that these new creations could remap stories of ribbon skirt history, cultural traditions, and how these clothing items are made by women woven in kinship and deep reciprocity. I thought about how Channy’s mother practices our values of creating and gifting this skirt, embedded relationality, gifting, and reciprocity. This was a unique and one-of-a-kind handmade skirt, which was sentimental and meaningful for me.

Within my fieldwork, I also examined the role of Native women in the Rez Metal scene and their critical role in supporting the scene. It is not uncommon to find that women are the primary audience and supporters of the Rez Metal scene. There are also a lot of women who help with running the merch booth and are roadies for the band members at the shows. In addition,

Native women are also involved with promoting, selling tickets on behalf of the bands, purchasing merch for the bands, and putting on the shows for the Rez Metal bands as promoters.

Another example of an aesthetic practice is from a Diné -owned business called Winston Paul, which is run by Calandra Etsitty, a Navajo seamstress. She specializes in creating traditional Navajo velveteen dresses, skirts, jewelry, and makeup bags. Winston Paul is located in Many Farms, Arizona.³⁵⁷ Her work had a beautiful drop, combining heavy metal music patches on graduation and velveteen dresses. Her dresses were black with studs and had an Iron Maiden Patch. The most famous song for Native people written by Iron Maiden is “Run to the Hills.” This song was about the Native Americans' genocide and being removed from their land. While Iron Maiden as a band is Native American, this song has meaning in many Native communities.

When I ran into Calandra at the Santa Fe Indian Market booth, I was super excited about her hand-sewn skirts and makeup bags that she makes. I casually asked her about the shoot and if I could interview her about the creative practice of making these velveteen dresses for high school graduation. For many Navajo, wearing a velveteen skirt during graduation is part of the cultural ceremony. From Winston Paul's Facebook post, it is mentioned that this collection was made for those who are traditional but also metal. I asked her how it was received in the community and complimented her on the beautiful collection. Calandra told me it had mixed reviews in the community, that there were so many folks excited for the drop and loved how the photos came out. She also sold out of all the dresses, as they were in high demand. However, while there was excitement around the collection, and she sold out, there was backlash from the community that traditional velveteen dress attire needed to be left alone without Metal. I could

³⁵⁷ Winston Paul, "About Us," accessed June 1, 2025, <https://winstonpaul.co/about-us>.

understand the generational difference that the Iron Maiden Zombie logo on a traditional Navajo dress during graduation could cause concern for the elders. I could also understand that combining Iron Maiden messages on Navajo dresses could convey that this dress was no longer traditional in rooted culture.



Figure 4.5. *Winston Paul designs: Iron Maiden Velvet Dresses for Navajo Graduation.* Photos taken by Stevevost Jim. Used with permission.

At the same time, I found her work to showcase the meaning of combining traditional practices in making new art that speaks to the younger generation of Navajo women. I can also understand and empathize with traditional Navajo elders and the Christian or Catholic Navajo who disagree with the message and see it as inappropriate. While I am not Navajo, I can understand the concerns, which may be similar to how my elders would respond to metal slogans on Pow Wow regalia or ribbon skirts as not being in line with tradition. However, something about her work speaks to many aspects of the Navajo community. There was an excitement and feeling that both identities represented within these dresses that tells an important cultural story.

Even with the cultural practice of weaving metal into traditional clothing regalia, there are pieces here that also weave relationality and kinship ties to each other. Remapping by Mishuana Goeman also emphasizes the maps to better futures. What are the elements that remap possibilities for better futures? I share this final ethnographic example to illustrate how all these creations are made within the space of Rez Metal. If we imagine Rez Metal as a place where the community comes together, this also incorporates how culture is created within these musical spaces.

During the Levitt Pavilion, I will not forget the relationships with so many Native women in life who have supported my educational endeavors and, to this point, brought Rez Metal to Denver. I refer to my Navajo friends as close as my sisters, Stevie Lee and Amanda Williams. My former PhD Advisor, Christine Nelson from the University of Denver, was also there to support my show. As I transitioned from one program to another, I felt the support from Christine for this work beyond just having to be my advisor, but into friendship. While Suspended was playing their song, I saw the audience engage in a mosh, moving their bodies to the rhythm of the guitars or jumping to the drums. I see my friend Amanda make a Tsiiyéé during the Suspended show. I see Stevie Lee holding her arms out parallel to each other.

Stevie needed a traditional Tsiiyéé – a woman's hair tied for a bun for the Native graduation ceremony at the University of Denver the next day. I understand that a Tsiiyéé represents the Navajo tradition and knowledge through their hair tie. It is a long hair tie created with multiple combined strings of white yarn that hold the hair in a bun together in a special knot. I watched Amanda in her black high-heeled boots, black shorts, and shirt start to unwind the white yarn. Stevie is holding her left and right hands out at arm's length so that Amanda can take the yarn and wrap it around her hands multiple times, walking back and forth as she wraps

the yarn around Stevie's hands. I looked at Dr. Christine Nelson and said, “Oh wow, they are making this traditional Tsiiyéé as Suspended women rocking on the stage.” I thought about the connection to the sound being played by Indigenous women empowering Indigenous women at the same time as making this hair tie, that the energy in the space of Rez Metal was able to create tradition. As a concert, Rez Metal held a moment where traditional arts and the web of relations surrounded the arena.

My relationships with Dr. Nelson and my colleagues Clementine and Taryn, who were also in attendance, were experiencing this moment together. This moment highlighted how all these women are woven within Rez Metal and my educational journey together. Stevie, Amanda, and Christine Nelson were formative to my education journey in Denver before coming to UCLA. Clementine and Taryn were also instrumental to my success at UCLA with this Rez Metal project. I saw how this moment weaved all my kinship ties and relationality to other Native women and relatives. These relations are part of the imagined space of Rez Metal that, as Indigenous women, we create through mapping practices. This was a new space where Indigenous women practiced our relationality to each other; our creativity was shared through music and ideas.

Most importantly, our traditions continue to be created simultaneously, not separate from each other and instead supporting each other. These were moments of making new ribbon skirts and a Navajo Tsiiyéé in this Rez Metal space. The relationship as Indigenous women in this space is special in that understanding our relationality exists when we support and uplift each other. This makes Rez Metal unique through an Indigenous feminist approach of deep relationality.

In summary, these relationships are meaningful and what I call a deep reciprocity in supporting nature could be envisioned. These maps are also the maps of how possibilities of Native Women in education can be supported in the scene of Rez Metal by affirming their creative practices in an alternative music scene. I thought about the two Native Americans who were stopped by campus security from the CSU tour and their experiences of being unwelcome. However, in these ethnographies, there was the possibility of support for women pursuing education to wear a traditional velveteen skirt for graduation. There was support for the scene in writing this dissertation by women within my educational journey, who came to support the show and bands.

4.7 Conclusion: Headliner Suspended. Indigenous Feminisms Take Center Stage.

The portraits capture the faces of Suspended band members, Autumn, Amanda, Channy, and their roadie Chante (see figure 4.6). As I photographed the Suspended band, I aimed to portray them in a way that showcased how patriarchy is demonstrated in the Rez Metal scene and to document the bands that played at the Levitt Pavilion. Visually speaking, seeing Native women play in a Rez Metal band did so much, visually, for Native youth. I have been to multiple Suspended shows during my fieldwork, where I witnessed numerous women and girls come up to them, applauding their set and saying they were an inspiration to see that. A common thread in my study of Suspended is that people do not expect the women to be themselves when they listen to their recordings or audio files on CDs. I realized Suspended as a band was doing something more with their music than blowing away the audience. They were pushing boundaries of colonialism, gender normativity, and expectations of Native American women.



Figure 4.6. *Suspended Portraits at the Denver Art Museum*. Photo by the author. June 2023.

In conclusion, throughout this chapter, I provided a lot of ethnographies and examples. I intentionally made this a long chapter discussing ethnography because women are not always centered in this scene when talking about Rez Metal—neither documentaries from Revolver nor Rez Metal center women in their films. While *Suspended* is briefly included in the Rez Metal documentary, doing a short interview, they were not the primary focus or center of that particular documentary, which follows the band's journey, *I Don't Konform*.³⁵⁸ I aimed to draw attention to the many relations within the ethnography that center Native women's stories through music and sound.

³⁵⁸ Ashkan, Soltani Stone et al., *Rez Metal*. Leomark Studios, 2022.

Suspended as a three-piece female-fronted band that pushes the boundaries of Rez Metal gender norms as Native women. Both Sage Bond and Suspended makes visible the settler colonial structures that affect Indigenous women and violence. Not only the awareness but the action of reciprocity of giving back and empowering women is part of their musical practice. I argue throughout this chapter that a gender analysis of Rez Metal music expressed through Native women does more than just resist gender, race, and class-based assumptions but follows an Indigenous feminist praxis that remaps a relationality to culture, community, land, and place.

As Navajo scholar Jennifer Denetdale mentions, “Native women have suffered under colonialism, but they continued to challenge and counter gender oppression.”³⁵⁹ I As a scholar, Mishuana Goeman invites us to consider that a healthy relationship to land and place through a Native feminist lens can play a key role in our thinking about connections between land, individualism, and constructions of nations. Native feminism can invite us to refuse the ideals of nationhood and political boundaries. Native bodies marked through the corporeal or performance, whether through gender, race, sexuality, or nationality, articulate differently in different spaces. As Native bodies travel through various geographies, they are read differently and thus experience lived realities that are constantly shifting.³⁶⁰

Throughout this chapter, I presented how Native women push against the assumptions of gender norms for women. Still, more importantly, I saw how the creative practices of Indigenous feminism make visible the colonial systemic violence, and at the same time, empower Native women. I draw on the critical need to use Indigenous feminist praxis of utilizing stories to understand how structures of settler-colonialism affect Native women. For example, part of

³⁵⁹Jennifer Denetdale, “Chairmen, Presidents, and Princesses: The Navajo Nation, Gender, and the Politics of Tradition,” *Wicazo Sa Review* 21, no. 1 (2006): 10, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/wic.2006.0004>.

³⁶⁰Mishuana Goeman, *Mark My Words: Native Women Mapping Our Nations*, 1st ed. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 12.

extractive practices inherited in settler logics involve more than just the management of lands through the reservation system confines Native populations; they undeniably have harmful consequences on Indigenous women. As Shannon Speed importantly emphasizes, "telling Indigenous women's stories is important because, through them, the large form of invisibilization of colonization is rendered visible, and their stories come from a distinct ideological perspective and experience that needs to be brought to light."³⁶¹ So, not only do we need to tell stories of the land, but we also need to tell stories of Native women's experiences, as bands like Suspended have done. In *Writing as Witness*, Mohawk author Beth Bryant argues that Native women's stories are by their very nature political and contestatory to the colonial structures and legacies that silence Indigenous voices and make invisible our collective experience.³⁶² To combat settler logics of erasure and extractive practices like settler land management, we must turn to Native women's stories.

By utilizing multiple ethnographies and themes, I provide a gender analysis of Rez Metal. I demonstrate how women in Rez Metal experience the scene differently from men and resists colonial heteronormativity. I draw upon the music created by Suspended as an example of a (re)mapping practice that utilizes heavy metal music calling for the rising gendered empowerment.

³⁶¹ Shannon Speed, *Incarcerated Stories*: 9.

³⁶² Speed, "Incarcerated Stories", 9. Beth Bryant (1995) quote in *Incarcerated Stories: Indigenous Women Migrants and Violence in the Settler-Capitalist State* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019), 9.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION MAPPING A NEW HOPE

"It is time for us to be seen." -Secret Earth.

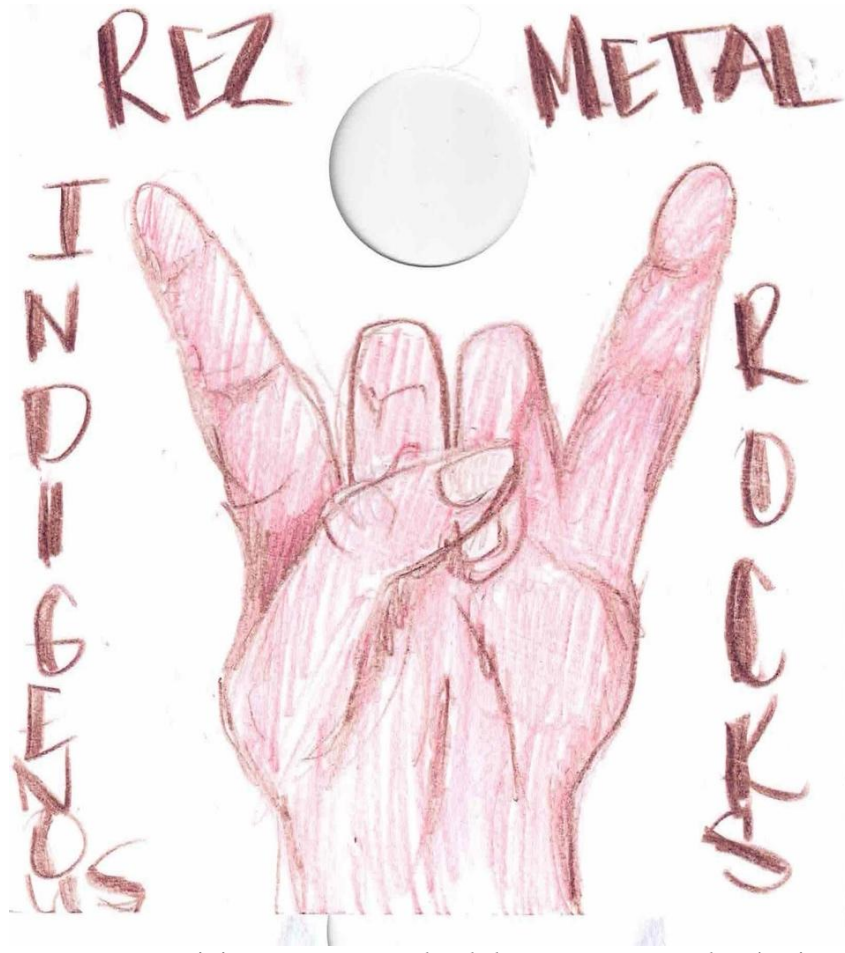


Figure 5.1. Anonymous participant, *Rez Metal exhibit response card*, submitted to community response wall, collected by the Denver Art Museum, May 2023. Used with permission.

5.1 (Re)mapping a Rez Metal ReZistance

This dissertation, *“(Re)Mapping a Rez Metal Rezistance,”* presents a Rez Metal cartography that charts an Indigenous Sonic Rezistance. This work critically examines how Rez Metal musicians challenge settler colonial logics of elimination and recenter Native people’s connection to land and place. Through the sonic sounds of Rez Metal music, this research investigates how these bands have disrupted dominant historical narratives that

rendered Indigenous people as invisible. Additionally, using the term 'Rez' is a powerful act of reclaiming space and remapping the narratives associated with life on the reservation. I draw from Secret Earth's interview about the museum exhibit at the Denver Art Museum to expand upon the definition of Rez Metal.

The music performance we gave after our interview was an example of what the reservation is. Heavy, soft, loving, harsh, embracing, dismissive, humorous, but genuine. Always. This is so important to us. To our peers. Not just our village, but for the scene. When one of us wins, we all win. It's all love at the end of the day. This exhibit gives the Rez another voice. Another outlet to express ourselves. **To live and heal.....** It's gonna be seen by so many people. **Good! It's time for us to be seen!.....** I hope this encourages more rez kids to create and get more music going.³⁶³

My work articulates Rez Metal as a (re)mapping practice reflected in Native feminist spatial mapping that leads us to better Indigenous futures.³⁶⁴ I presented how Rez Metal is an everyday practice of reimagining Native life on the reservation, expressed through music-making, Indigenous imagination, joy, and the radical hope reflected in the work of Rez Metal bands and musicians. As Secret Earth powerfully states, "*it is time to live and hear and it is time for us to be seen,*" which underscores the importance of needing to build better Indigenous futures by amplifying Native voices that have been suppressed for so long.³⁶⁵ Secret Earth's reflection also captures the Native experiences on the reservation as complex but meaningful in shaping their identity as a Rez Metal band. They also encourage Rez kids to embrace creativity, to find joy in music, and reimagine what is possible.

This work draws from multiple disciplines, including Anthropology, Geography, Native American Studies, Music, and Sound Studies. Throughout I employ interdisciplinary

³⁶³ Velasquez, Patrick, e-mail message to author, March 14th, 2023.

³⁶⁴ Mishuana Goeman, *Mark My Words: Native Women Mapping Our Nations* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 3.

³⁶⁵ Velasquez, Patrick, e-mail message to author, March 14th, 2023.

frameworks and creative approaches to deepen data analysis. Methodologically, this dissertation explored a photographic (re)mapping practice that investigated how Rez Metal challenges the colonial production of prevailing stereotypes of poverty and imagery of the reservation. Methodologically, this dissertation explored a photographic (re)mapping practice that investigated how Rez Metal challenges the colonial production of prevailing stereotypes of poverty and imagery of the reservation. This work foregrounds Indigenous methodologies rooted in deep reciprocity with community-engaged research. By drawing on the insights of Indigenous scholars such as Margaret Kovach who remind us that “Story is a gift” and then references Rauna Kuokkanen, who also theorize Indigenous methodologies and story work within methods and data collections, we gain an epistemological perspective to viewing data as an action of “learning from the gift.”³⁶⁶ Kovach expands that stories are rooted in Indigenous oral tradition and are about connections and not merely data or a thing. Instead Kovach invites us to see data collections as gifting another story to the researcher. Instead, Kovach said “Story compels responsibility. Story is a gift. And in research this changes everything.”

This is important in shifting the relationship as a researcher to my role as an Indigenous scholar to have responsibility to the community. As Margaret Kovach reminds us, “indigenous epistemologies are action-oriented. They are about living daily according to certain values.”³⁶⁷ Therefore, in this work, I centered the community and highlighted Rez Metal musicians lived experiences and voices to represent the Native perspective authentically. As I approached this work to learn and understand the lived experiences of

³⁶⁶ Kovach, Margaret. 2021. *Indigenous Methodologies : Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts* Second edition. Toronto ; University of Toronto Press.155

³⁶⁷ Kovach, Margaret. 2009. *Indigenous Methodologies : Characteristics, Conversations and Contexts* Margaret Kovach. First edition. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. 62

these musicians, I focused on listening to stories of place, traditional ways of living, and how this music was created. The dissertation chapters are organized to critically engage with spatiality, visual images, aesthetics, and sound through epistemological frameworks of Indigenous knowledge and creative expression, thereby deepening our understanding of Indigenous spatial experiences and their relational ties to land and life. Throughout my dissertation, each chapter presented a Rez Metal Cartography articulated through story, sound and visual mapping. Chapter four focused on Native women (re)mapping relationality to stories of land and place. This research expands on Indigenous Sound studies to the specific sounds of Rez Metal and their various manifestations in the context of live performances, rehearsals, and recordings.

Chapter one investigated the potential origins of the Rez Metal scene and expanded on how Indigenous people make place by relating personal and communal experiences and histories to specific locations and landscapes. Maintaining these special relationships is one of the most crucial components of politics and our sense of identity. This chapter illustrated an Indigenous map-making practice through storytelling from both the “Navajo Code Talker Guitar” and the “Rockstar Bracelets” that reflect Rez Metal, created from the relationality of place and stories of lived experiences. Kovach emphasizes that stories remind us of who we are and our sense of belonging.³⁶⁸ Indigenous story work is also essential because it carries knowledge while representing the web of relationships.³⁶⁹ In this chapter, I relied on Indigenous stories and relationality to center the work of map-making practices.

Chapter two presented a map through the sound and lyrics of Rez Metal, examining how it engages with and challenges colonial logics. This chapter explored how sound

³⁶⁸ Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies*, 94.

³⁶⁹ Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies*, 94.

articulates Indigenous sound cartography that remaps the relationships to land, language, and identity. I highlighted bands such as Graves of the Monuments and songs like *Dying Language* and *Herbalist* that challenge colonial narratives through their lyrical content and songs about traditional plant knowledge and language revitalization. Through the music of M.I.S., I demonstrated that Rez Metal music not only confronts the history of assimilation and the legacy of U.S. boarding schools but also reclaims space through sonic resistance. These songs are forms of cultural survivance through Indigenous knowledge. Rez Metal is not just about the music but the act of performance as a form of refusal of settler colonial logics of elimination. I argued that Rez Metal music is a form of cultural expression and resilience of Native American experiences. This music inspires the community and others while raising awareness of larger issues of Native American injustices. Rez Metal further demonstrates the relationality between land, culture, human, and non-human kinships.

Recalling the beginning of my dissertation, I discussed how “nativeness” is often associated with the backdrop of vast open lands, and that Native people have been portrayed as a relic of the past. Native Americans “once lived” on the lands and were only seen “visible” in regalia. This chapter challenged Native American tropes and stereotypes by calling attention to how visual media continues to frame and portray Native American peoples.

While serving as the Spring Native Arts Artist in Residence, the (Re)Mapping a Rez Metal Rezistance exhibit was on public display from March 2023 to June 2023. Chapter three framed the visual methodology and photoethnography to (re)imagining “Rez Metal” as a visual spatialized experience. I curated a photography exhibit using photo-ethnography inspired by Collin Calloway’s description of Indian maps as “pictures of experiences” which

I frame as an Indigenous mapping practice at the Denver Art Museum.³⁷⁰ The exhibit aimed to reconfigure place-making and (re)map Indigenous experiences by producing Rez Metal photographs and material culture.

This chapter delved into the theory behind the t-shirt wall as a visual representation of the Rez Metal Map. This map illustrates community connections and the band's artistic expression of resistance. This exhibit was unique in that it expanded the scope of Native American art beyond just cultural histories and traditional arts and challenged the boundaries of music spaces that tend to be exclusive for only "fine art."

Over the past decade, social and historical accounts have demonstrated how Indigenous women, and their voices have become increasingly political. The role and rise of the matriarch have ignited across Indian Country in the recent era, challenging new forms of Indigenous resistance movements created and led by women. Through these conversations, Indigenous Feminism shows us that allies and educators need to understand the significance of the "matriarchal roots" of many local Indigenous communities.³⁷¹

Often overlooked in the Rez Metal scene, Indigenous women are vital in building the music community. Chapter four centered on Native Women in the Rez Metal scene (re)mapping land and place through music. Indigenous women in the Rez Metal scene make visible the layers of gender violence within the context of New Mexico border towns, which have some of the highest rates of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) cases³⁷². The central theme of this chapter emphasizes women's empowerment

³⁷⁰ Calloway, *One Vast Winter Count*, 13.

³⁷¹ L. Jane McMillan Janelle Young and Molly Peters. 2013 "Commentary: The "Idle No More" Movement in Eastern Canada" *Canadian Journal of Law and Society / Revue Canadienne Droit et Société* 28(3) p. 429.

³⁷² UIHI, *MMIWG Report*, 11.

and raising their voices to take action against violence against Native women. The all-female band Suspended and Sage Bond makes people aware of the importance of advocating for Native women and girls through their songs that center MMIWG. They demonstrate that Indigenous female musicians in the Rez Metal scene employ an Indigenous feminist approach to remapping and relationality, as expressed in their music.

Most importantly, Native women in the Rez Metal scene reimagine how a heavy metal music scene is a (re)emerging cartography rooted in Indigenous knowledge, tradition, and culture. I highlighted how Rez Metal aesthetics are made within Navajo velveteen dresses and traditional hair ties that weave together relationality and Indigenous feminist geographies. This chapter reveals Rez Metal women's multiple contributions and labor in the community. I also highlighted the mothers who supported these Rez Metal musicians and their dreams.

5.2. “Undoing Anthropology”: Mapping Community Hope and Joy.

This dissertation makes visible how community-engaged methodologies contributed to theory. Ultimately, the learning outcomes of this dissertation are to utilize Rez Metal as a (re)mapping framework to create better Indigenous futures. I emphasize that world-making and community-building are not easy endeavors. It requires everyday practice of patience, understanding, and taking risks, where we do not always have a guaranteed outcome. I have learned that putting on a show, getting bands to get on board, and finally getting them to envision a new stage as well as work with new partners is not always easy work. Through the hard work of putting on shows with the bands, the outcomes so far have been met with joy.

As an Indigenous scholar, my relationship with anthropology is one of conflict. As part of undoing anthropology, I reference the work of Bolles who discusses a decolonized anthropology as an ongoing process. The includes practices of collaborating, prioritizing community engagement and participatory research and centering the experiences and perspective of those who have been excluded historically from the field.³⁷³ I use this dissertation as a framework map of possibilities of how anthropology can contribute toward imagining better Indigenous futures. In this work, I openly discuss what it means to work alongside and with my participants in co-creating new futures for Rez Metal. As Bolles also notes that anthropologist should strive to make their work accessible and applicable to the communities rather than just spectacles or objects of research.³⁷⁴

Therefore, as an Indigenous researcher, I prioritized Indigenous methodologies to reclaim our stories and be accountable to our communities. Dr. Shannon Speed reminds us “as Indigenous anthropologists working with Indigenous peoples, we are faced with a pressing imperative to decolonize our research and not to recolonize ourselves in the research process.”³⁷⁵ Speed advocated for Indigenous methods that incorporate and utilize critically engaged activist research. This type of research combines a commitment to the research participants that works towards a shared social justice goal.³⁷⁶

Within my methodologies I explored ways to decolonize my research and incorporate forms of community building into my methodology. This dissertation opens pathways in creating new imagined spaces informed by the community. Throughout this

³⁷³ A. Lynn Bolles, “Decolonizing Anthropology,” *American Ethnologist* 50, no. 4 (2023): 521, <https://doi.org/10.1111/amet.13199>.

³⁷⁴ Bolles, “Decolonizing Anthropology,” 521.

³⁷⁵ Speed, “*Incarcerated Stories*”, 8

³⁷⁶ Speed, “*Incarcerated Stories*”, 8

dissertation, I have argued that Rez Metal transcends the boundaries of the reservation and the fixed identities assigned to Native people. Most importantly, I emphasize that Rez Metal serves as a counter map to the colonial logic of elimination. I argued that Rez Metal is an act of resistance that responds to colonialism while also reimagining spaces that draw from the experiences of reservation life. I explored the interplay of music and resistance in Rez Metal by focusing on remapping and place-making. The reactions from social media about the Denver Art Museum exhibit of the band called Guardians, made me aware that Rez Metal music contributes to a remapping of reservation life that actively resists the logic of settler colonialism.

In this dissertation, I also presented how Rez Metal can reclaim the images of the reservation and the music scene, often depicted in such dark, poverty-stricken scenes of barren lands. At the same time, Rez Metal continues to be written from such a dark and somber story of struggle, teen suicide, and poverty. I do not argue that these stories do not exist on the reservation. However, the historical context is often left out of conversations therefore I expand on the complexities of reservation life. However, stories of reservation life are often told only through sadness and deficit without also discussing the hope and joy created from Native expressions within these environments, which are a testament to Indigenous resiliency and strength.

This work also adds to research methodological approaches, such as photo-ethnography and visual anthropology within contemporary music studies. While there is a growing body of Indigenous sound studies research within contemporary music, this dissertation expands on community engaged methods such as curating photography exhibits

at the Denver Art Museum and putting on Rez Metal pop-up shows on college campuses. As an artist and scholar, I believe the Rez Metal exhibit adds to expanding methods of curating Native American photography beyond traditional regalia, and beyond a backdrop of nature. There is a lack of exhibits that showcase subcultures in fine art spaces and elitist museums, including Heavy Metal sounds within the exhibit space. This work will contribute to the growing body of studies on contemporary Native American photography, emphasizing methodologies and approaches that center Native youth and young adults, especially in the context of music. This exhibit highlighted that Native identity and expression are so much more expansive. Rez Metal acts as a great medium to challenge the public's conception, pushing boundaries in multiple areas of art, music, and fine art gallery spaces.

Following all the media critiques I discussed of how Rez Metal is often portrayed. During my time as the Artist in Residence I completed a portrait series with the Rez Metal bands that came to visit the gallery. I approached my photography and Rez Metal portraiture, I insisted it needed to be displayed alongside other community members, rather than in isolation. At the same time, the practice of portraiture in photography provides the viewer with a unique visual experience through individual portraits. I want to emphasize the togetherness and community by placing them in a row, similar to the ones below. These portraits are the photographic stories of the people who are in the scene from musicians, fans and roadies.



Figure 5.2. *Portraits of the Rez Metal community.* Photo by the author. June 2023.

5.3 Final Outro: World-Building Agendas

This dissertation aims to reimagine new possibilities for working with communities to create better Indigenous futures. In summary, Rez Metal provides a framework for envisioning better futures and engaging new audiences within the community. The Rez metal scene is also where joy is found, for example, in the mosh pit where excited young people want to belong and enjoy this music, as seen in many of my shows. It is a place created by the community, where Native people are at the center of the stage, sharing their music and voice through creative expression. If we build it together as a community, anything is possible on the Rez Metal stage. I presented in this dissertation that, as a community, to envision Rez Metal bands as legendary rock stars on stage, we need to build it. I imagine the possibilities of these stages and shows, where any band can play, grab a meal, and be a safe space where Native youth can express themselves.

The feedback from the bands themselves is important for illustrating potential future collaborations. It is also encouraging to note that the community positively received the project. I hope to convey the experiences of the band that interviewed me and to illustrate

the themes of reciprocity and good intentions in creating this exhibit, as highlighted by Alliance, which were instrumental in framing this exhibit space.

We met Viki at a show we booked at the Juaggernaut. Fast forward, roughly five years later, and our paths cross again. This time, the space is much brighter, stronger, and what was an idea was unfolding before our very own eyes. Viki is leading this revolutionary view of putting local metal bands from different reservations at the forefront of the Denver Art Museum and to the world. It's insane to say we and a number of our friends in the scene are being displayed for 100s, if not 1000s, of people to see! There's no really telling who you'll meet on the your journey but we are beyond grateful. Kinda insane to think we're a part of something historical.³⁷⁷

These quotes highlight that there is a place for this music and for the community to enjoy this scene. I also want to note that when Scottie described being a part of something historical, I argue that Rez Metal as a whole has not been publicly made visible, and that by putting on an exhibit at the Denver Art Museum and a dedicated Rez Metal show at the Denver Levitt Pavilion, was not something that could have been imagined prior. While Rez Metal shows do not always draw the largest crowds, even the show I put on at the Denver Levitt has had growing attendance. New show opportunities at the Denver Levitt that give us a free venue space, eliminate the barriers of marketing, ticket sales, guarantee, and dedicated venue production for Rez Metal. Community based shows at the Levitt help reimagining the music industry and taking collective action as a community to empower our bands and elevate their creative expressions. With more dedicated time and new venue spaces, the Rez Metal bands can create more fans in the Denver scene and prepare themselves to imagine themselves on a bigger stage.

To demonstrate the significance of this project, I will share the Museum's responses to the Rez Metal exhibit. Between my office hours at the Denver Art Museum Native Artist

³⁷⁷ Noline, Scottie, personal communication March 2023.

studios, I would engage with the Museum guests in person weekly hosting office hours and also checking my response wall. Every morning, I would walk by the response wall to see how museum guests interacted with the question I provided. The “Response Wall” is intentionally designed to provide an opportunity for museum visitors to have an interactive experience. The wall had multiple round peg hangers installed into the wall that could hold paper responses. The museum printed out signage with questions that rested on the top shelf.

Museum guests were invited to respond creatively by drawing or writing a response to the questions. As the curator and artist, I was also interested in learning about how visitors reacted to the space, and I encouraged museum guests to think about music and its meaning to them. I was also curious if people saw Native American communities in a different light by bridging the common interests of music, subcultures, and graphic art.



Figure 5.3. Photograph by author, *Denver Art Museum Response Wall*. March 2023

The questions that read on the yellow placard are the following:

- How does music express feelings, ideas and meaning to you?
- What kind of music do you listen to most often? Why?
- Do you have a favorite heavy metal band or musician? Who are they?
- What concert do you remember most fondly or vividly?
- What album or song influenced you most? Why?
- What musicians or bands inspire you? Why?
- For heavy metal fans, what does this space mean to you?

These responses I received illustrated how the guest engaged with the exhibit. I received a diverse amount of responses on paper mixed of writing, lyrics, or drawing music albums. While reflecting on Sarah Pink's sensory ethnography that explores placemaking through memories, sound, and place. I found the responses insightful, as the connection of music and place serves both a metaphor and a physical location for engaging with sound.³⁷⁸ This collective exhibit captured heavy metal fans and music enthusiasts' reactions, fostering creative responses from public museum guests of all ages and backgrounds.

I was also informed by the Denver Art Museum staff and organizers that, as the Artist in Residence, I had the largest group visits and the highest level of engagement from visitors. I received thousands of responses, including a mix of written reflections, drawings of music album covers, Rez Metal responses, nature, sound waves, diagrams, favorite artists, and various places that reminded them of music. As guests sat within the Rez Metal exhibit space, their responses reflected personal experiences of music, memory, and place-making. These responses are filled with hope and positive engagement, drawing attention to how this music scene inspired others to reflect on and consider the power and influence of music as part of a shared experience.

³⁷⁸Sarah Pink, *Doing Sensory Ethnography*, 2nd ed. (London: Sage Publications, 2015), 44.

Finally, I am sharing the photo provided by the Levitt Pavilion when *Suspended* played as the final headline for the Rez Metal. This event was significant as it marked the first time the Rez Metal community put on a show of this magnitude in terms of production, and in a new venue. I genuinely appreciate Andy Thomas, the Denver Levitt Venue Operations Director, who advocates that metal and rock music can be family-friendly. For our community, the research I have conducted on the Rez Metal scene shows that it is family-friendly.

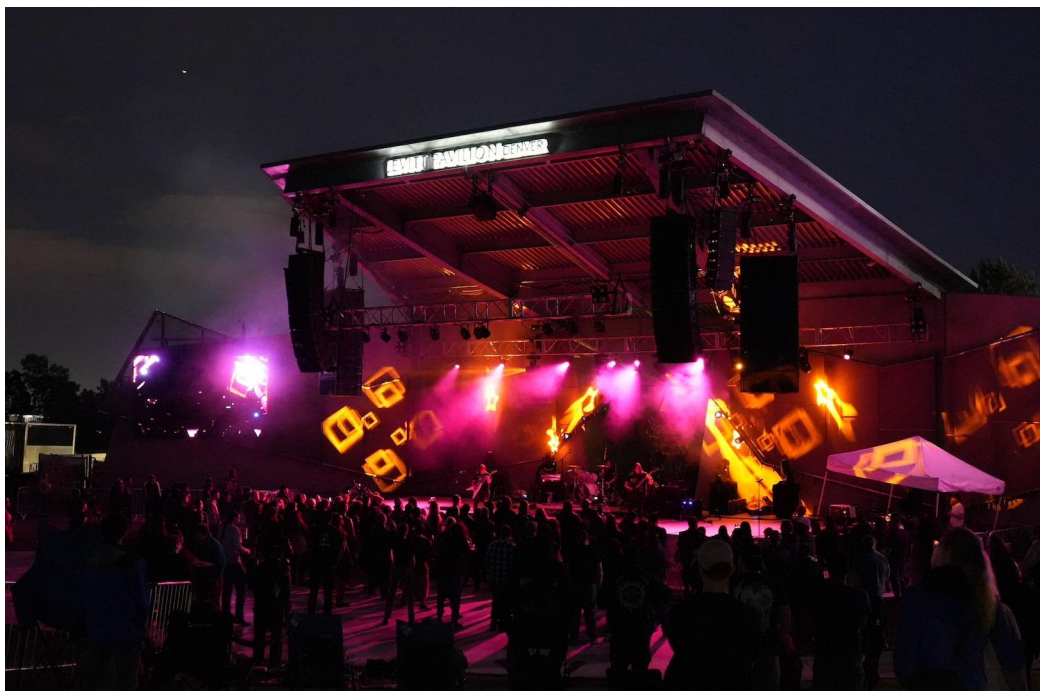


Figure 5.4. *Denver Levitt Pavilion first annual Rez Metal show *Suspended* performing.* Digital Photograph. From Denver Levitt Pavillion, 2023. Used with permission.

Part of being a researcher with world-building agendas involves new approaches in engaging with tribal communities in ways we never imagined. I thank the people I have met, who have been so gracious and generous in sharing their life stories with me. I dedicate this work to the many people who have profoundly impacted this dissertation and the community. Six years ago, when I told my advisor at UCLA about my project, I would have never seen myself as a promoter of this scene and organizing bands at the forefront of the

Labriola at Arizona State University, with the largest mosh pit I have ever seen on a college campus. I also never imagined bringing the Rez Metal community to UCLA to perform alongside my advisor, Jason DeLeon's band, featuring Iggy and Lolo, with the War Pigs, to showcase this research to my colleagues. These are a few examples of the new ways of engaging research and community collectively, bringing the music to the institutions rather than the traditional research methods of subjectivity and theorizing data behind a screen. Instead, getting the Rez Metal community together at institutions such as ASU and UCLA opens new pathways to imagine research reciprocity that honors the voices of the community. Historically, educational institutions displaced Native people from their lands while attempting to eradicate Native American culture and languages. Instead, this work has centered the community in research endeavors by bringing these bands to share their creativity and story through Rez Metal pop-up shows.

As a final point I emphasize the importance that as researchers in the institutions we should work together with the community to build better Indigenous futures. As I finish this dissertation, I am excited to continue our Rez Metal show for the third annual year with the Denver Levitt Pavilion. Rez Metal worlds can be created anywhere with our community and that and this scene is ready to be seen.

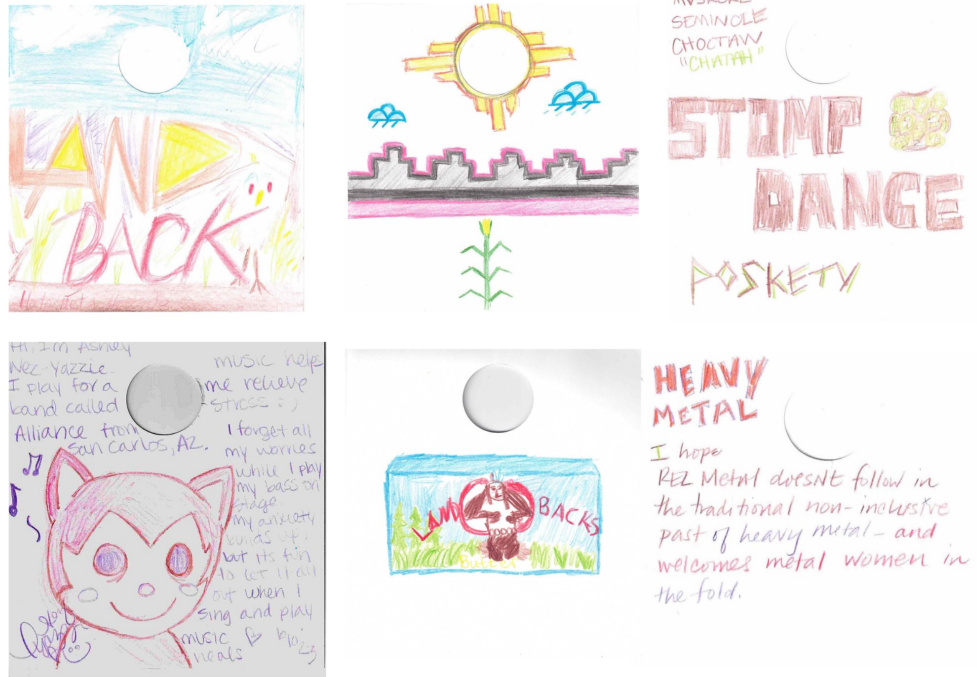


Figure 5.5. Anonymous participant, *Rez Metal exhibit response card*, submitted to community response wall, collected by the Denver Art Museum, May 2023. Used with permission.

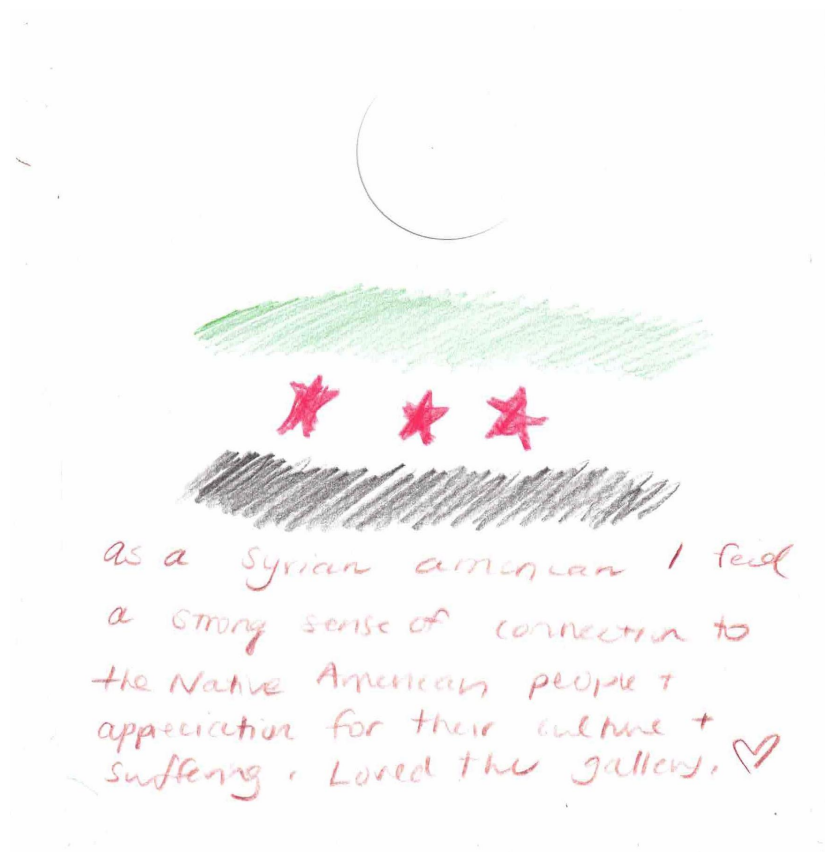


Figure 5.6. Anonymous participant, *Rez Metal* exhibit response card, submitted to community response wall, collected by the Denver Art Museum, May 2023. Used with permission.



Figure 5.7. Anonymous participant, *Rez Metal exhibit response card*, submitted to community response wall, collected by the Denver Art Museum, May 2023. Used with permission.



Music, particularly genres like blues, jazz, rock, metal, punk, and hip-hop, tend to be played more loudly, faster, more energetically or more chaotically. This creates what I like to call sonic disruption. As any activist can attest, getting loud contributes to the power of disruption as a way to demand attention, to focus emotion, and to make ourselves heard. In this way, music can be both a tool for personal self-expression and self-realisation and as a collective weapon for socially, economically, and politically marginalised and disenfranchised peoples. It can reach across divisions of race, sex, sexual orientation, gender, age, class, and even ideology. When loud enough, music can shake the walls of the establishment, whether it's a concert venue, the homes of the rich, or the halls of government. It can shake us from our feelings of apathy and helplessness, evoke emotion, provoke thought, force us out of our comfort zones, and implore us to reconsider our beliefs and our perspectives. Music is revolution you can dance to. It's self-expression you can connect with other people to.

MUSIC IS MIGHTY!

Figure 5.8. Anonymous participant, *Rez Metal exhibit response card*, submitted to community response wall, collected by the Denver Art Museum, May 2023. Used with permission.



Figure 5.9. Anonymous participant, *Rez Metal exhibit response card*, submitted to community response wall, collected by the Denver Art Museum, May 2023. Used with permission.

Appendix II
Rez Metal Flyers Collected from fieldwork

RANCID-SAVAGE PRODUCTIONS
P R O D U C E S

NAVAJO NATION
METAL FEST ★ TAA'

SUICIDE
SILENCE

OTTO

SCORPIONS THE ORDER OF ELIJAH HEAVENS MIGHT
MURDER MACHINE TESTIFY Ocean Harvest DECLARING DEATH MONITOR
ethyle de generation DECAPITATION EXISTENCE AD M.I.S. HELL THRONES
ENEMY MACHINE FATAL CORRUPTION AYE Back Mountain RECKLESS HEROES
REI-CURREN MISHAP SURRENDER SUNS

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 1ST
NAVAJO NATION FAIRGROUNDS
WINDOW ROCK, ARIZONA
DOORS AT 10:30AM / SHOW AT 11:00AM

TICKETS AVAILABLE AT:
HOLDMYTICKET.COM, JUGGERNAUT MUSIC (GALLUP, NM),
DAY CUSTOMS (WINDOW ROCK, AZ) AND ALL LOCAL BANDS

Promoter, Sponsors, Bands, and Venue are not Responsible for any Theft, Damage or Loss!



MUDDY BOOTS PROMOTIONS & JUGGERNAUT MUSIC PRESENTS
THE 7TH ANNUAL

ALIEN 710 FEST

FEATURING

SIGNAL 99

Dissection
OF A NEW
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Lil Mgyo
&
Lil Jay Jay

CHIEFMAKER

D JAAY

ZOMBIEKALIBUS

SATURDAY | JULY 10
JUGGERNAUT | GALLUP, NM
SHOW @ 11AM | \$15 ADMISSION

MUDDY BOOTS PROMOTIONS AND JUGGERNAUT MUSIC ARE NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR THEFT/LOSS/STOLEN ITEMS, INJURY OR ENDS. THIS IS A DRUG AND ALCOHOL FREE EVENT.

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ALL FEMALE FRONTWOMEN EVENT



EXPENDABLES
WALLS WITHIN
Quell Occult
condemn the world
i am LIVID

5PM | ALL AGES
SATURDAY
MAY 25, 2019
JUGGERNAUT MUSIC
308 E ROUTE 66 GALLUP, NM

TICKETS AVAILABLE AT [HOLDMYTICKET.COM](https://www.holdmyticket.com)

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Native REZ-olution Concerts & REZ-olution Radio Hour presents
The 10th Southern Ute Tribal Fair Youth Concert

REZ-olution X

2 PM • SAT, SEPT. 8, 2018 • SKY UTE FAIRGROUNDS • IGNACIO, CO

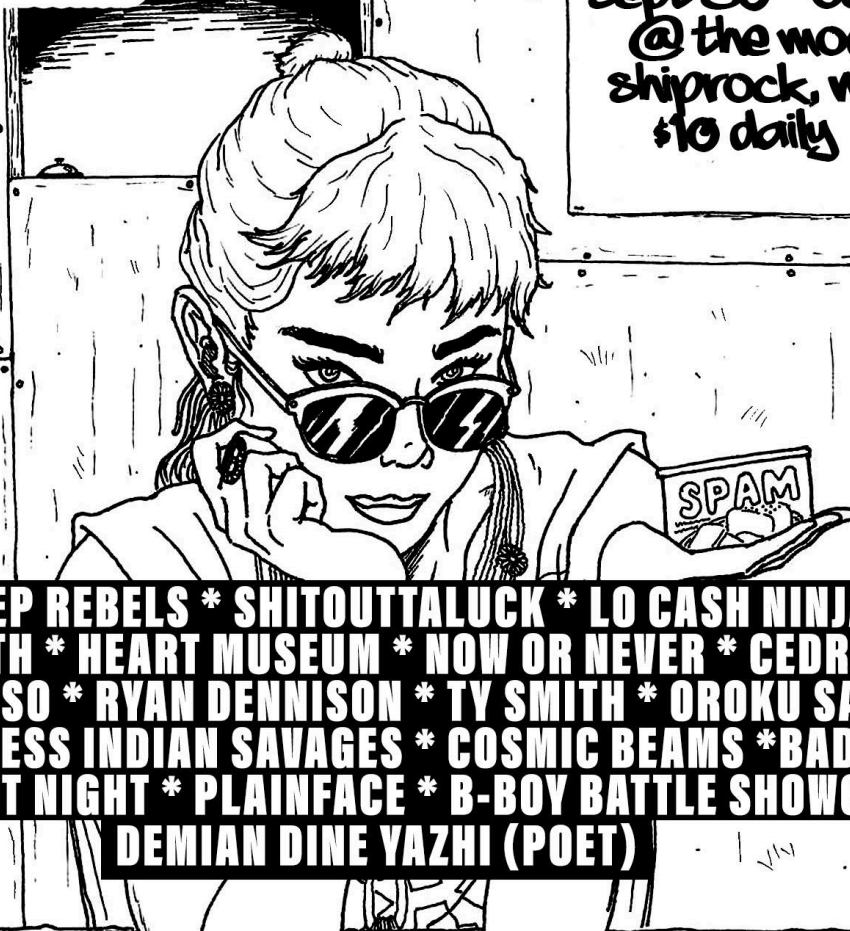
SOULS ON MONDAY
BLIND DRYVE
GRAVES OF THE MONUMENTS
SUSPENDED
UNDER EXILE
BORN OF WINTER
ETHNIC DEGENERATION
TESTIFY
ETHAN 103
CONDEMN THE WORLD
1000 ROGUES

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**12 STEP REBELS * SHITOUTTALUCK * LO CASH NINJAS
LILITH * HEART MUSEUM * NOW OR NEVER * CEDRO
DJ BEESO * RYAN DENNISON * TY SMITH * OROKU SAKI
MERCILESS INDIAN SAVAGES * COSMIC BEAMS * BAD FIX
SCARLET NIGHT * PLAINFACE * B-BOY BATTLE SHOWCASE
DEMIAN DINE YAZHI (POET)**

UNITED STATES **TOTEM** TOUR 2023

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POP-UP REZ METAL SHOW
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2023
7:00 - 9:30 PM
HAYDEN LIBRARY, ASU TEMPE CAMPUS

SAGE BOND

M.I.S.

Meriless Indian Savages

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AISA Metal Night
at ASU

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Event



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REZ METAL

June 9th, 2023 6pm.

5pm VIP Doors • 5:30pm GA Doors • 6:15pm Showtime • 10pm curfew

SAGE BOND
M.I.S.
ALLIANCE
HEART MUSEUM
SUSPENDED

Sage Bond ▼
Merciless Indian Savages ▼
Alliance ▼
Heart Museum ▼
Suspended ▼

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LEVITT PAVILLION DENVER



RANCID-SAVAGE PRODUCTIONS
P R O D U C I N G P R E S E N T S

NAVAJO NATION METAL FEST ★ DII'

IN FLAMES



GRAVES OF THE MONUMENTS • UNDER EXILE • PERSEVERANCE
DRUNKTOWN ZOMBIES • SIGNAL 99 • SECRET EARTH • TRIBUS
ALLIANCE • PROJECT BC • AWAIT THE DAWN • ENDS EMBRACE
GREEN LIZARD • WAR MOTOR • HELL THRONE • CELESTIAL EXILE
928 \$LAM CREW • NARBONA • SAGE CORNELIUS • 'IISNÁÁHÍ
SALVATIONS LOST • MORBID JUSTICE • HERESY • EXISTENCE AD

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 18TH

WINDOW ROCK SPORTS CENTER

WINDOW ROCK, ARIZONA

DOORS AT 10:30 AM / SHOW AT 11:00 AM

TICKETS AVAILABLE AT:

HOLDMYTICKET.COM, JUGGERNAUT MUSIC (GALLUP, NM),
DAY CUSTOMS (WINDOW ROCK, AZ) AND ALL BANDS

RANCID-SAVAGE PROD + JUGGERNAUT MUSIC
P R O D U C E D B Y P R E S E N T S

INCITE



TRIBUS
WAR MOTOR M.I.S. HELL THRONE

FRI • MAY • 13
JUGGERNAUT MUSIC

308 E. HWY 66 | GALLUP, N.M. | (505) 863-3333

DOORS AT 6:30PM • ALL AGES • WWW.HOLDMYTICKET.COM

TICKETS AT: [DAY CUSTOMS](#) - 928-871-3488 | [JUGGERNAUT MUSIC](#) - 505-863-3333

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Never Reborn

OCTOBER 21ST

GUARDIANS

WAR MOTOR RECKLESS
HEROES

MARIONA

PRESALE \$15

DOOR \$20

308 E 66 HWY

GALLUP, NM

DOORS
7:45 PM
SHOW
8:00 PM

JUGGERNAUT

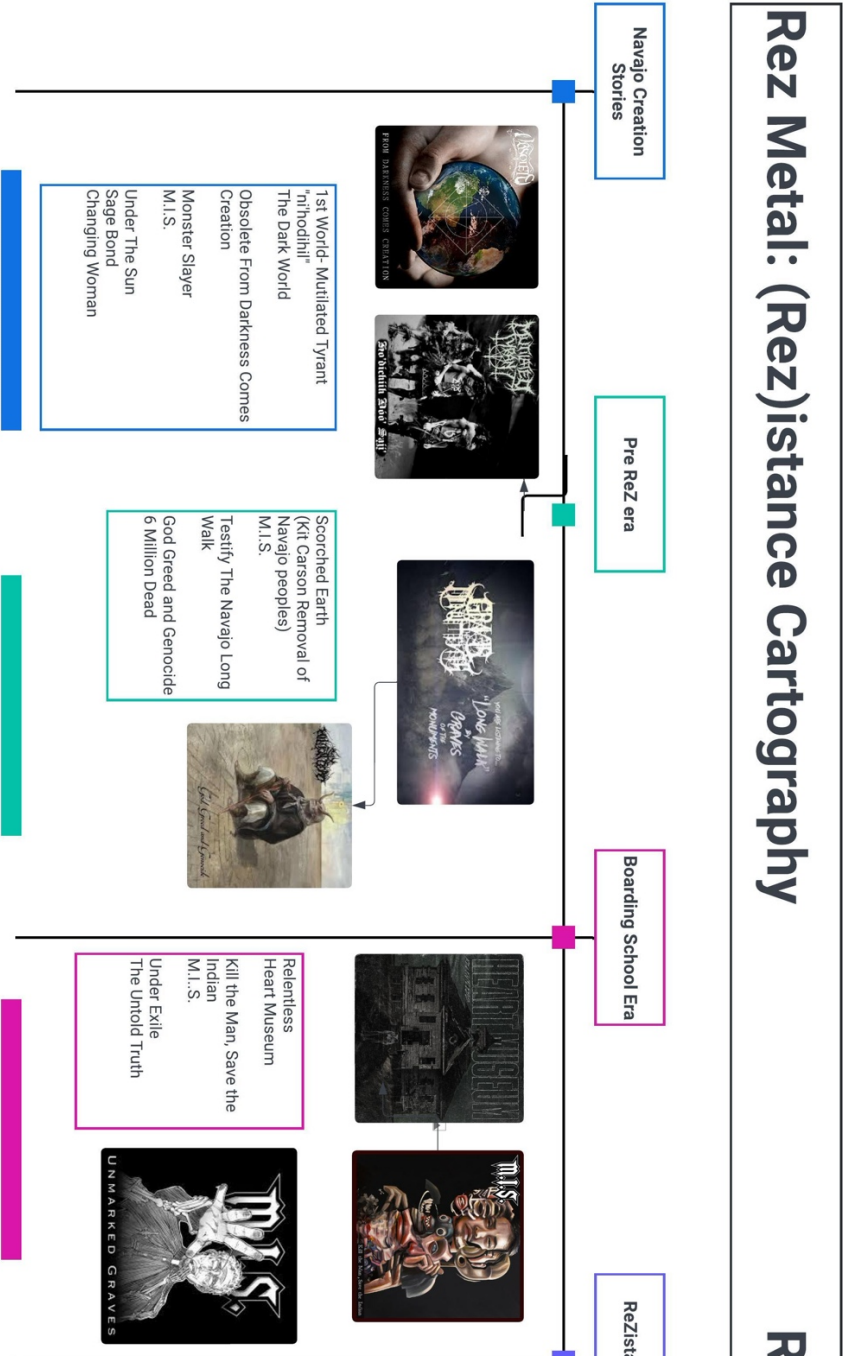


Appendix III
Alphabetical list of Rez Metal Bands 4 Corners
List adapted from Jagna Cyganik 2015 Updated Viki Eagle (2025)

Number	Band Names	Locations/ Tribal Nation
1.	Absolute Redemption	Window Rock, AZ
2.	Akklamation	Tuba City (Navajo)
3.	Alliance	San Carlos (Apache)
4.	Alchemy	AZ
5.	Ashtaroth	Flagstaff, AZ
6.	Black Circle	Bloomfield, NM
7.	Black Mountain	Pinon Arizona
8.	Blind Hatred	Cuba, NM 2008
9.	BlindDryve	ABQ
10.	Bloodline	Manuelito/Gallup, NM 1998
11.	Blood Haven	Mesa, AZ
12.	Born of Winter. Creepy Puppets	Window Rock, AZ
13.	Boundwithin	Torreon, NM
14.	Burned In A Church	Torreon/Ojo Encino, New Mexico
15.	Celestial Exile	Bylaz AZ
16.	Condemn the World	Red Valley AZ
17.	Dark Awakening	Farmington, NM 2012
18.	Dark Divinity	Ft. Defiance, AZ
19.	Decapitated Savior	Manuelito, NM
20.	Decapitation of a New Day	Dulce
21.	Death Mantra	Death Mantra
22.	Defined	Manuelito, NM
23.	Decapitation of a New Day	Tohajiilee, NM
24.	Diminished/Butcher the Sheep	Tohajiilee, NM
25.	Distorted Ritual	St Michaels, AZ
26.	Drazil	Gallup, NM
27.	Dying Tribe/ Endless Infection	Flagstaff NM
28.	Grave of the Monuments	Paige, AZ
29.	Guardians	AZ
30.	Ethnic Degeneration	Kayenta, AZ
31.	Enemy Machine	Bylas AZ
32.	EYE	ABQ
33.	Fatal Corruption	Gallup
34.	Firewater	Chinle AZ
35.	Funerary Beliefs	
36.	Hell Throne	Phoenix AZ
37.	Heart Museum	Shiprock
38.	Hunters Moon	Chinle, AZ
39.	Horny Toads	Farmington AZ
40.	I Don't Konform	Mesa, AZ

41.	Incide	Farmington AZ
42.	In Vengeance	Kayenta, AZ
43.	Lo Cash Ninja	Shiprock, NM
44.	Matheson	Window Rock, AZ
45.	Merciless Indian Savages	AZ/AK
46.	Mutilated Tyrant	Ganado, NM
47.	Native Blood	Tuba City/Flagstaff AZ
48.	Narbona	Gallup
49.	Ocean Harvest	AZ
50.	One Bullet Away	Kayenta, AZ
51.	Obsolete	Kayenta, AZ
52.	Poison Insanity	
53.	Paranormal Slaughter	Farmington NM
54.	Reckless Heros	Gallup
55.	Relentless	New Laguna, NM
56.	Rei Gurren	Gallup NM
57.	Rez-of-War	Scottsdale, AZ
58.	Ritual Homicide	Flagstaff AZ
59.	Sacred Blood	Gallup NM
60.	Sage Bond	Many Farms NM
61.	Sagorith	Many Farms NM
62.	Salvations Lost	Tuba City/flagstaff AZ
63.	Savage Brutality	Chinle, AZ
64.	Scarlet Night	Shiprock
65.	Scythe	Church Rock NM
66.	Séance	Manuelito NM
67.	Secret Evth	San Felipe
68.	Shadow Remain	Thoreau, NM
69.	Sheepheads	Flagstaff, AZ
70.	Signal 99	Farmington, AZ
71.	Six Million Dead	Phoenix, AZ
72.	Sleep Tastes Pretty	Gallup, NM
73.	Suspended	Albuquerque
74.	Testify	Collidge/Thoreau NM
75.	The Broken Circle	Farmington NM
76.	Tribal Kills	
77.	The Last Hour	Ganado AZ
78.	Tribus	Gallup, NM
79.	Under Exile	Shiprock NM
80.	Undying Hate	Farmington, NM
81.	Unsheathe	Ft. Defiance, AZ
82.	War Motor	Gallup, NM
83.	When Darkness Falls	Acoma Pueblo
84.	WxAxR	Shiprock, NM

Appendix III (REZ)istance Cartography Timeline Chart



Rez Metal: (Rez)istance Cartography



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