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Los Angeles

*Not All Killed by John Wayne: The Long History of
Indigenous Rock, Metal, and Punk 1940s to the Present*

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of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts
in American Indian Studies

by

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

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Master of Arts in American Indian Studies

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Professor Maylei Blackwell, Chair

In looking at the contribution of Indigenous punk and hard rock bands, there has been a long history of punk that started in Northern Arizona, as well as a current diverse scene in the Southwest ranging from punk, ska, metal, doom, sludge, blues, and black metal. Diné, Apache, Hopi, Pueblo, Gila, Yaqui, and O'odham bands are currently creating vast punk and metal music scenes. In this thesis, I argue that Native punk is not just a cultural movement, but a form of survivance. Bands utilize punk and their stories as a conduit to counteract issues of victimhood as well as challenge imposed mechanisms of settler colonialism, racism, misogyny, homophobia, notions of being fixed in the past, as well as bringing awareness to genocide and missing and murdered Indigenous women. Through D.I.Y. and space making, bands are writing music which

resonates with them, and are utilizing their own venues, promotions, zines, unique fashion, and lyrics to tell their stories. The new wave of punk music and artists are making space for bands that are led by femme, transgender, and non-binary musicians. Moreover, Indigenous women are making spaces in historically white, male dominated scenes. I will be using the framework by Anishinaabe scholar, Gerald Vizenor of *survivance* which is “an active resistance and repudiation of dominance, as well as obtrusive themes of tragedy, nihilism, and victimry.”¹ In this case, I will be looking at punk as a form of survivance in four themes of environmental and Indigenous rights, D.I.Y. space making, gender/queer empowerment, and positive mental health and strength for the future generations. By using punk rock, this thesis will share stories of how bands have denounced being victims or static in the past. I will be using textural analysis, discursive themes, non-institutional archives, looking at oral histories, performances, zines, flyers, video footage, lyrics, digital archival evidence, documentaries, band social medias, newspapers, as well as using interviews to substantiate my arguments. Indigenous punk bands are continuing their long legacy and movement of punk rock in the Four Corners region.

¹ Gerald Vizenor, *Survivance: Narratives of Native Presence* (United States of America: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 13.

This thesis of Kristen Le Amber Martinez is approved.

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I would like to acknowledge the Gabrielino/Tongva peoples as the traditional land caretakers of Tovaangar (Los Angeles basin, So. Channel Islands).

Introduction

Sonora Querida

My family at its core has been primarily based near the Rio Colorado in Sonora, Mexico. Growing up as Mexican, our Yaqui culture was always something of pride and something we always knew about. My family surnames Orduno, Galaz, Trujillo, Morales, and Leal have lived in Obregon, Rio Yaqui, San Luis, Cajeme, Cocorit, Magdalena de Kino, Yuma, and Mexico City. Later, our family moved and settled to parts of East L.A., San Gabriel Valley, the Inland Empire, and Phoenix. These many cities and communities have shaped who we were as family. Much of my family from Sonora would be very invested with music, from history of Sonora with the Yaqui musicians and deer dancers that are very influential and sacred in Sonora, to mariachis, who were very prominent later in our family, music always played a role in our culture. My great grandfather Manuel Galaz Trujillo would sing Yaqui lullabies to my twin uncles Patrick and Ricardo in the 1970s. As a young woman, my grandmother Carmela was fond of the Beatles at an early age and played guitar with her younger brother my nino (godfather), Francisco (Poncho). In the 1950s and 1960s, my grandmother along and her sisters sang in lovely vintage fashions and with old-style microphones.

San Gabriel Valley Raised Me (Tongva Gabrielino land) El Monte (Houtngna)

Many decades later, music and culture were very important with my youth growing up in the San Gabriel Valley and coming from El Monte (Houtngna), California. Later I came to know the city was a place of Indigenous history, through the Tongva Gabrielino. I have also learned about the very musical side of El Monte, the El Monte Legion and visits by the Beatles and Ritchie Valens. The Penguins had a popular oldies song, "Memories of El Monte" that reminisces about the youth and dances of that time. An example of the diversity of El Monte is on Santa Anita boulevard, in the nearby Valley Mall, where you find a plethora of goods by

Asian, South Asian, and Latinx folks. From quinceanera gowns glimmering through the windows, to children's uniforms, the belts and botas my grandfather wore, spicy Mexican treats, jugos, aguas, paletas, shoes, and the occasional punk band shirt (a lot of Dead Kennedys and Misfits tees). The El Monte Valley Mall was a true representation of the city. El Monte both North and South had very rich punk scenes and history in the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s. South El Monte is the grittier of the two with more crust, grind core, metal, and the North side with street punk, post-punk (the Smiths, the Cure), and 1977 art punk. It is where much of my punk shaping started at the backyard shows and the post-punk "Funeral" nights at the Elks Lodge, hidden and nestled on Stewart Street across the huge auto dealerships on Peck Road. The El Monte scene still lives on today.

My freshman year as a student at Arroyo High School, an already awkward time living in fear of being different, being bullied or made fun of, was shaped by the attacks of September 11, 2001 that occurred my first week of high school. Punk became an outlet for my mistrust of the U.S. government, against terrorism, against xenophobia and an outlet for my anger, my depression, and a way to survive being bullied, and insecurity. I got introduced to punk music much like many that I have interviewed in this thesis, by a friend. On our way to gigs and all-ages shows, "The Days of the Phoenix" by AFI (A Fire Inside) blasting in the car. The chorus sang "Whoaa!! I fell into yesterday, our dreams seemed not far away, I want to, I want to, I want to stay, Ohhhhh I fell into fantasy." As AFI front man Davey Havok's power-filled vocals were projected in the vehicle, I had to know the name of this band immediately, diving into a fantasy far away from all the problems I experienced at the time and I never turned back. These memories and elements are very important to setting the scene where I come from and how I was shaped by my experiences growing up. This is how I learned about Indigenous history, came to

my own musical cultures, shaped by noises, learned who has the power, and who is the powerless, saw the diversity of communities or lack of, or politics around us growing up. The many musicians and bands I have interviewed in the Indigenous punk and metal scenes, primarily in Los Angeles, the Southwest, the Navajo Nation, the San Carlos Reservation, Seattle, Portland and other cities included in this thesis, have their own stories, and community that shaped their experiences and contributions to punk.

Why Study Indigenous Punk? Statement of Problem

In the documentary “*Beyond the Screams*,” about Latinx punk band Los Crudos, the documentary featured a montage of their punk shows, D.I.Y. networks, and communities that the band played for in the 1990s.² While studying the film for a class project, I paused the images to focus in on a badass Los Crudos flyer from a show at a Native punk gig in Leupp, Arizona. The flyer read, “Navajo Rez show, 50 miles east of Flagstaff.”³ While the documentary focuses primarily on the 1990s, it shared an Indigenous punk D.I.Y. flyer with a cartoon of a rocker with a long ponytail.⁴ As a prospective college historian, punk lover, fan, and Yaqui relative, I asked myself: “Why the hell hasn’t anyone chronicled this in punk history?” Being from a Mexican and Yoeme descended family, this Indigenous punk history is very important to both myself and the Indigenous community at large, because the contributions of Indigenous musicians and persons of color must be acknowledged and honored within the grand scope of punk history.

Punk music is the angry and fast paced music that appeared after the Vietnam War and disco glam era. It is an anti-establishment, anti-capitalistic, rebellious, outspoken movement against oppression and the status-quo. Yet, punk is not simply a genre of music or fashion, it is

² *Los Crudos*, “*Beyond the Screams: A Latino Hardcore Punk Documentary*,” Martin Sorrondeguy; 1999. January 19, 2010, YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iYph2q44MQU>.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

also a lifestyle. As the “Stay Free” Spotify podcast on the English punk band The Clash shares, “Punk was the rejection of the past” (We will come back to this later, because a rejection of the past usually means a rejection of Native peoples as they are often fixed as only being in the past, but also, Native punk rejects moments in the past, a rejection of treatment or control by settler colonialism, a rejection to narratives of victimhood, a rejection of demeaning stereotypes).⁵

Author and music writer Brian Wright-McLeod (Dakota-Anishinaabe) shares, “Yet the question remains: What is Native music? Is it the music or the musicians that make it Native? I suppose it’s fair to say that it’s a bit of both. It’s the music of the people who have known the land since time immemorial, but it has also been transformed along with the people and land to become the hybrids of modern sounds we recognize today.”⁶

Punk started in different areas for different reasons, it was a grittier and angrier form of rock music always being chronicled to have come from the English working class youth who felt their promises weren’t met in the 1970s.⁷ Punk was also created by the art crowd in New York who borrowed Indigenous, Latinx, black, and South Bronx street style.⁸ In Southern California, it emerged during the Reaganomics era in parts of Hollywood and East Los Angeles, where it served as a rejection of “dinosaur” stadium rock and glittery disco that many felt had sold out. But punk also has an early history in the Southwest with Indigenous musicians. In this region, punk rock was a form of resistance to settler colonialism, a tool to speak out about stolen land, and also served as a conduit to express important values such as taking care of the community and instilling pride in Native cultures. For the youth of the community, punk also fulfilled the

⁵ *Stay Free: The Story of the Clash*, narrated by Chuck D, (2018; London United Kingdom: BBC Studio, 2018), podcast.

⁶ Brian Wright-McLeod, *The Encyclopedia of Native Music: More Than a Century of Recordings from Wax Cylinder to the Internet* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 2005), 3.

⁷ “Stay Free.”

⁸ Jessica Schwartz (Professor) in discussion with the author, February 2018.

desires of wanting their own scene. Indigenous rock bands had a largely unknown but profound mark on metal and punk rock music. “Since the start of rock and decades after, tribal communities and youth are scenes of extreme music and culture (extreme country, metal, punk, rap, etc.), heavy emotional vibes seem to dominate: anger, loss, rebellion,” artist and scholar Gerald Clarke (Cahuilla) shares.⁹ In interviews with bands Sihasin, and Jordan Steele from Lo Cash Ninjas, both state that in the early 1990s, Flagstaff punk brought many large non-Native and Southern Californian bands in their earlier days to play the Southwest such as the Vandals, the Offspring, Naked Aggression, The Slackers, and Leftover Crack, to name a few.¹⁰ This brought a lot of punk rock music into the reservations. Native punk gigs have always had a large following and fanbase. The scenes also have immense innovation, these continue to be shows that musicians always go back to, and the communities made it happen.

As articulated by Clayson Benally (Diné) of bands Blackfire/Sihasin, who have been essential in forming the scene, he shares:

People perceive us-- always have the perception of us as Indigenous people in the past, now, they don't see us in the future. So how do we look in other people's eyes, when we pull up to a place wearing beads and feathers and playing punk rock? It was like we threw a bucket of cold water and woke them up-they're like wow...okay, Indigenous people are alive and well, they were not all killed off by John Wayne...we are still here in the present.¹¹

Native punk music must be acknowledged within the greater community because it has a long, significant, and unique history in punk rock. I use the theoretical framework of *survivance* by scholar Gerald Vizenor (Anishinaabe), who argues that many people in the world are captivated and obsessed by the produced images and stereotypes of the Indian character and their cultures as essential victims. Yet, *survivance*, in Native studies is a practice and an active sense

⁹ Gerald Clarke (Professor) in discussion with the author, March 2019.

¹⁰ Jordan Steele and Sihasin (Musicians) in discussion with the author, March-May 2019.

¹¹ Sihasin in discussion with the author, March 2019.

of presence over historical absence, removal, or separation from their Indigenous culture or home, or of the perception of being unaware or oblivious.¹² Vizenor states, “The nature of survivance is unmistakable in Native stories, natural reason, remembrance, traditions, and customs and is clearly observable in narrative and personal attributes, such as the Native humanistic tease, vital irony, spirit, cast of mind, and moral courage. Survivance stories are renunciations of dominance, detractions, obtrusions, the unbearable sentiments of tragedy, and the legacy of victimry”¹³

In this thesis, I argue that Native punk bands use punk rock as a tool to speak up for a variety of issues ranging from resistance against western settler colonialism, stolen land, missing and murdered Indigenous women, heteropatriarchy, colonial thoughts of gender and sexuality, and used to challenge representations that fix Indigenous peoples in the past. Bands are using music as their form of survivance to challenge these issues as a way to speak out, bring awareness, and make space for themselves. I find that punk is a form of survivance in these four ways: In the first section, I will explore how punk first emerged hand in hand with activism in Flagstaff, Arizona. I will be looking at the roots of Native punk in ecological involvement, and how bands have used music as survivance to inform others, demand their presence, denounce racism, and claim their authority over the environment, sacred sites, medicine, and Native lands. I also look at how bands decolonize their thinking and identity despite imposed borders and colonization. I examine both rural and urban settings throughout the Southwest.

In the second section, I will discuss how punk is used to rearticulate colonial ideas of gender and sexuality. I will be looking at Native punk as a form of gender and queer

¹² Gerald Vizenor, *Survivance: Narratives of Native Presence* (United States of America: University of Nebraska, 2008), 3-5.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 3-5.

empowerment in a context of missing and murdered Indigenous women. Several bands are using lyrics to educate the general population about the ongoing disappearance and murder of Indigenous women. I look at how bands have been resilient and openly queer on the reservation. Additionally, bands are also creating an inclusive and safe space for women, LGBTQ, Two Spirit, and Non-binary peoples in the scene which has been historically a white, male dominated space. In the third section, I will explain space making by bands in urban and rural areas in the face of colonial mechanisms and lack of resources. Despite isolated areas in the Southwest desert, many bands, artists, organizers, and activists have denounced victimhood by creating venues using D.I.Y. (Do it yourself) punk aesthetics. There are tremendous entrepreneurial ventures in regard to promotions, booking, touring, merchandise, networking, community work and creativity throughout the punk scene. Moreover, these gigs and space are giving the youth a place where they can create and speak on issues that are important to them. This in turn is creating a historical impact, and network between intertribal and intergenerational members at shows. I also interview Indigenous women who are changing the standard of beauty in pinup and goth subcultures. The communities use punk to create youth music programs, persist on the radio airwaves, start collectives, incorporate culture proudly on flyers and skateboards, and create zines to tell their own stories in their own way. The last section looks at survivance in the form of positive mental health and how punk lyrics, songs, performances, skateboarding, and organizing for the youth have been positive and empowering to channel a lot of the historical trauma and transform it into a connection, a community, and platform for uplifting one another and denouncing stereotypes or victimhood. Bands are creating safe spaces and are trying to be good role models for the next generations to come.

For this project, I did approximately thirty interviews with bands, artists, activists, organizers, promoters, engineers, models, and community members. This is ultimately a project that has relied heavily on input by the communities. Being a punk, I am an insider, but at the same time, I am not part of some of the Southwest communities included in this study, therefore I am also an outsider. Many bands have such a powerful and diverse scene that deserves recognition in music history. In trying to define Native punk, it varies, as every tribal community brings their own nuance, knowledge, humor, and voice. These bands are learning from elders, empowering the youth, and creating a new generation of musicians.

An important starting point in this project would be with the very powerful and important Ghost Dance of 1890 and the banning of traditional Native music and dance throughout the late nineteenth century. The banning of the Ghost Dance was significant because it was a resistance movement, a prayer in motion that made Indigenous people immune to the bullets of settlers.¹⁴ Because of the erasure and genocide by settler colonialism and white Americans, there was the ban of music and traditions. Many Indigenous people continued their dances, singing, music, and songs resisting these colonial mechanisms. Around the Federal Indian policy era of the late nineteenth century, there was forced assimilation, removal, allotment, and many communities were forced onto individualized reservations. Relocation played a major part for Indigenous musicians. Around the 1870s, Native children were forcefully taken to boarding and residential schools where they were made to learn “westernized” music to assimilate them into “proper” citizens. The Indigenous students were taught marching songs, cadence, and routines, and high school sports songs with anti-Indian sentiments against other teams. Despite this, some Native

¹⁴ *Rumble: The Indians Who Rocked the World* is a feature documentary about the role of Native Americans in popular music history, documentary, Catherine/Bainbridge, Alfonso Maiorana (2017; Montreal, Canada: Rezolution Pictures/Christina Fon, Executive Producer, Rezolution Pictures INC, 2017), film.

youth used the music in their own way, rebelled by maintaining their traditions, songs, and languages through their performances and talents. Throughout years of relocation in the 1950s and meeting other musicians, listening to radio, and exposure to a various array of instruments, Native musicians became interested in playing in Dixie jazz bands, blues bands, and later rhythm and blues.¹⁵ Congo Square in New Orleans is where many African, Afro-Indigenous, and inter-tribal peoples performed their ancestral songs and is the birthplace of rock 'n' roll.¹⁶ Some parents also passed these skills onto their children while instruments such as guitar, drums, and banjo were easier to travel with. Because of this earlier influence, Los Angeles (Tongva Gabrielino territory) has a very Indigenous rock 'n' roll history as early as migration of Indigenous families to parts of Downtown Los Angeles, the Valley, and Hollywood. There was a shift for more harder rock within the 1980s, as well as a very heavy presence and contribution of Indigenous and Latinx rock musicians in heavy metal, thrash punk, and hair glam metal. Also, Los Angeles' quintessential punk band the Germs was led by powerhouse guitarist Pat Smear, who was also in Nirvana and is currently in the Foo Fighters, is of Afro-Indigenous descent.¹⁷ Later, in the 1990s, many bands such as Aztlan Underground (Mazahua, Raramuri, Opata, Mayo, Comanche), were connecting to other communities over the Southwest. The region continues to have a very large, heavy metal history that stems from the 1980s. Through this channel, and by elders, family or friends, Indigenous youth became interested in punk rock.

Literature Review

The first comprehensive work on Native rock was by the author Brian Wright-McLeod (Dakota-Anishinaabe). His first book, *The Encyclopedia of Native Music: More Than a Century*

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Frank Tortorici, "Pat Smear Archive," MTV, August 4, 1999/May 11, 2018, <http://www.mtv.com/news/516421/pat-smear/>.

of Recordings from Wax Cylinder to the Internet appeared in 2005. Wright-McLeod grew up in a mixed white and Metis adoptive family and has been very aware of his Indigenous roots. He began working as a journalist in 1979. He is a radio host in Toronto, Canada for Renegade Radio, a music journalist for *Indian Country News*, and a novelist. He has compiled a substantial 450 page work, as well as executively produced a companion 3-disc compilation set of American Indian music titled *The Soundtrack of a People* (EMI Music Canada).¹⁸ In his book's introduction, Wright-McLeod shares, "I provide a representation of what exists, what has been lost, and what yet can still be found."¹⁹ In a 2006 music interview, he shares, "It is as definitive as one can hope, but an incredible amount of information remains yet to be included."²⁰ During his radio career, many of the African American DJs introduced him to an abundance of Native music artists.²¹

Wright-McLeod asserts early on, Native music has been recorded since the 1890s over wax cylinder recorders.²² With the Ghost Dance during the 1890s and onto the start of relocation, the U.S. government eventually tried to ban and regulate traditional Native music. Native children were relocated and forcefully taken or enrolled by their parents in residential schools according to Wright-McLeod. While these Indian schools removed children from their homes, an unexpected outcome was that some turned out musicians and ultimately, some Indian youth went into the world playing music for Dixieland jazz bands.²³ Wright-McLeod explained further, "From the residential school and relocation experiences, large numbers of trained Native musician emerged, some excelled in jazz and other forms, whereas those in the rural areas in the

¹⁸ Wright-McLeod, *Encyclopedia of Native Music*, 3.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

²¹ Strongfront.tv, "Jesse Green and Brian Wright-McLeod on APTN's Contact," YouTube, March 17, 2006/ accessed: May 30, 2018, URL:https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vxle_SuWUfo.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

Southern United States found expression in the blues, derived from freed slaves.”²⁴ The Relocation Era had a very important part to play for Native peoples to have been exposed to instruments, musicians, and different styles of music such as blues and jazz. Wright-McLeod states, “The acoustic guitar, fiddle, harmonica, and accordion made the migration to all areas because they were portable, and the simplicity of the songs accommodated any storyline.”²⁵ He infers, “By the early 1900s, many reservation-based players embraced the music and the instruments and during the 1930s, radio became accessible and brought new sounds of expression and influence.”²⁶ There was a need for this information by Indigenous communities and fans and Wright-McLeod did the work that is very much the groundwork for that archiving, research and knowledge. As rock-funk musician Stevie Salas (Mescalero Apache) shares, Wright-McLeod very much inspired the need for the *Rumble* film.²⁷

Four years later, the American historian, John W. Troutman wrote *Indian Blues: American Indians and the Politics of Music, 1879-1934*. This book provided an important early context of the banning of Indian music with the Ghost Dance while also discussing the regulating of music during the allotment and assimilation eras of Federal Indian Policies (1880s-1940s). Music by American Indians was seen as “dangerous,” “superstitious,” and “uncivilized” by the boarding schools and educators.²⁸ Troutman went in depth with the music education at the federal American Indian boarding schools such as Carlisle, the Sherman Institute, and Chilocco. He discussed their school songs, marching bands, and the dissonance by Native students who were maintaining their Indigeneity through musical talents.²⁹ Students were introduced to

²⁴ Ibid., 44.

²⁵ Ibid., 43.

²⁶ Ibid., 43.

²⁷ Stevie Salas in discussion with the author, January 2019.

²⁸ John W. Troutman, *Indian Blues: American Indians and the Politics of Music, 1879-1934*, (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2009), 233.

²⁹ Ibid., 233.

western classical music by boarding schoolteachers, shown string quartets, cadence, and regimentation to suppress their own traditional songs according to Troutman. Moreover, they were told “civilizing” music would help them to become “proper” Indians.³⁰ The football fighting songs taught to students contained stereotypes embedded about other Indian athletes.³¹ On the other hand, Troutman explained that Native youth used their stage performance as a platform and way to maintain their culture, “In a sense they became ambassadors: the stage provided a platform to audiences that heretofore inaccessible to native people--and native people had as much to say as they did to play.”³² Troutman continues, “One cannot dissociate expression culture from politics...More specifically, I began to understand that one cannot separate the violence of colonialism--the attempted destruction of tribal communities and the theft of Native lands--from the expressions of American popular culture that unavoidably shape our daily existence, our landscape.”³³ *Indian Blues* provides an important glimpse into the banning of Indigenous music at residential and boarding schools but how students challenged this by using the music to maintain their language and identity. This resistance and musicianship ultimately put Native youth in conversation with other musicians, different styles and other marching bands which then sometimes led to futures in jazz or rhythm and blues.

A very important contribution to the study of Native rock music is the 2016 book *Indigenous Pop: Native American Music from Jazz to Hip Hop* edited by Jeff Berglund, Jan Johnson, and Kimberli Lee. This edited volume attempted the ambitious task of covering many major music genres as “Indigenous musicians from all over the western hemisphere are writing and performing contemporary music in practically every genre of popular music today: rock,

³⁰ Ibid., 233.

³¹ Ibid., 228.

³² Ibid., 8.

³³ Ibid., 9.

country, jazz, blues, hip hop, folk and heavy metal, among others.”³⁴ Chapter six of *Indigenous Pop* is called “We Were All Wounded at Wounded Knee: The Engaged Resistance of Folk and Rock in the Red Power Era,” and was written by Professor of English and American Indian Studies Jan Johnson. She emphasized Peter LaFarge (Narragansett), and pan-Indian bands XIT and Redbone during the Red Power Movement of the 1960s and 1970s. Redbone had many political songs but had the most mainstream success with their hit song, “Come and Get Your Love” which overshadowed their more radical stance on Indian issues.³⁵ It is very important that this scholarship stressed the very activist side of Redbone. Chapter six infers how New Mexico in the late 1960s was a very dangerous place for Indians as three Navajos were murdered by white teens.³⁶ XIT gained more resonance with Indian audiences and many youth described their rock as the voice of the Red Power movement being more political and resistant.³⁷ Interestingly, Motown signed XIT, and band member Tom Bee (Dakota) had his songs used by Motown for the Jackson 5.³⁸

Indigenous Pop is also one of the few books to incorporate an emphasis on an American Indian punk rock band. English Professor Jeff Berglund’s “Blackfire’s Land-Based Ethics the Benally Family and the Protection of Shi Kéyah Hozhoni (beautiful homeland)” is about the punk rock band Blackfire (Diné/Navajo). The members are Benally siblings Jeneda, Klee and Clayson of Tuba City, Arizona. They incorporated their father, Jones Benally, a *hatalli* medicine man using traditional chants and instruments.³⁹ Jeff Berglund posits that the band has been

³⁴ Jeff Berglund, Jan Johnson, Kimberli Lee, *Indigenous Pop Native American Music from Jazz to Hip Hop* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 2016), 230.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 101.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 101.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 101.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 11.

critiqued by not having enough traditional elements and being “too angry.”⁴⁰ A good point that this book makes is that these critics are trying to dictate how a Navajo person should be such as calm, peaceful, traditional, less harsh, and less abrasive. Jeneda mentioned she does not see herself as an activist, but simply cares. Blackfire purposely tries to book shows at traditional Native events to showcase their modern and different sound. The trio has played throughout the Navajo Nation as well as internationally discussing the struggles of the Navajo/Diné people and their land. Ultimately, the Ramones including Joey and C.J. became mentors to the band.⁴¹ Blackfire use traditional elements and have all their music on independent labels. It is important to note that Blackfire changed their name to Sihasin (Hope) going for a more dance-punk direction, and released the new album “Fight Like a Woman,” and currently will be playing in Europe.⁴²

One of the more recent projects on how undeniable Native American rock has been and underrepresented in history is with the 2017 documentary film, *Rumble: The Indians Who Rocked the World*. The documentary introduces a very common theme of the attempt to ban Indian music, even rock music. The film’s main character and focus is Link Wray (Shawnee) who graces the movie poster and opening sequence as many discuss his influence on guitar and rock. Link Wray created the power chord and distorted sound while affirming his Shawnee Identity by creating many songs on American Indian issues. What Link represented during the 1950s was freedom and an aggressive sound according to *Rumble*. Many musicians commented on how Link Wray influenced many popular rock artists such as The Who (especially Pete Townshend), and Led Zeppelin. Jimmy Page, the lead guitarist of Led Zeppelin, listens happily

⁴⁰ Ibid., 198.

⁴¹ Ibid., 181.

⁴² Sihasin, “Sihasin,” Word Press, accessed: June 14, 2018, <http://sihasin.com/>.

to his Link Wray album in the film. Just as in *Indigenous Pop*, Wray is deemed by Pete Townshend and David Fricke of *Rolling Stone* magazine to be the inventor of the power chord and distortion sound of his guitar and amp.⁴³ The film depicts the impact of Link's most famous 1958 song "Rumble" which had no words but was banned and believed to incite violence among and between youth.⁴⁴ The song "Rumble" had a harder sound unlike anything else at the time that influenced many hard rockers and punk rockers such as Slash (Guns N Roses), and Iggy Pop (the Stooges) who heard this at a University radio broadcast according to the film. Punk musician Marky Ramone of the Ramones discussed Wray's influence with the chords and its groove. A 1970s Detroit proto punk band, Mc5 and its member Wayne Kramer said punk rock points to Link Wray for modern electric guitar players.⁴⁵ These were the first inklings of rock 'n' roll sounds in the late 1950s.

What *Rumble* does is posit that there was always a Native presence in classic rock. Jimi Hendrix (Cherokee) was the voice of a generation and Woodstock in 1969. His grandmother Nora Hendrix (an African American slave and half Cherokee) lived on the Reservation.⁴⁶ Nora was a vaudeville dancer and singer with elaborate clothing--hats, fringe, feathers, and boas according to the film. Jimi loved the vaudeville clothing as well as the Native regalia. Musician John Trudell spoke that in the 1960s, with "Flower Power" and Woodstock festival, "hippies all wanted to be Indian."⁴⁷ The Hendrix family discussed how the significance of Jimi's distorted rendition of the American National Anthem at Woodstock was due part to what his generation

⁴³*Rumble: The Indians Who Rocked the World* is a feature documentary about the role of Native Americans in popular music history, documentary, Catherine/Bainbridge, Alfonso Maiorana (2017; Montreal, Canada: Rezolution Pictures/Christina Fon, Executive Producer, Rezolution Pictures INC, 2017), film.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

going through, and him embracing his Indigeneity.⁴⁸ Near the end of his life, his sister explains that Jimi got more in touch with his Native roots, he also went to the Tuscarora Reservation in New York to help with his sleeping problems right before his death.⁴⁹ Jimi received advice from a Medicine Man, Wallace “Mad Bear” Anderson to leave the prescription drugs he was using and then return on a date of his choice, Hendrix never returned and died shortly after.⁵⁰ Jimi has left such a lasting legacy in rock music and guitar. Robbie Robertson (Mohawk) of the Hawks and The Band discussed his earliest guitar lessons at the Six Nations Indian Reserve.⁵¹ In *Rumble*, Robertson played with folk music icon Bob Dylan during his very controversial electric guitar era. The film explained how inclusive and influential The Band and Robertson was in 1969 that every rock musician wanted to be a part of that music project. Jesse Ed Davis (Kiowa) provided an emotional turning point of this film. This musician just gave off a joy and excitement on the screen. He played with Taj Mahal and was very influential to Steven Tyler of Aerosmith, the Rolling Stones, John Lennon, the Beatles, Eric Clapton, and Bob Dylan. While working on tour with Rod Stewart, he began using drugs according to the film. *Graffiti Man* (1992) was a very remarkable album. On it, he and John Trudell worked together with spoken word while he was trying to leave drugs, yet they eventually took his life. *Rumble* helps musicians and those watching fall in love with Davis’ charisma.

The film also discusses heavy metal and the hair metal scenes on Sunset Strip in the 1980s in Hollywood. The Producer of *Rumble*, Steve Salas (Mescalero Apache) discussed his touring with Rod Stewart during which he indulged in fame and women.⁵² Randy Castillo (Isleta

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Craig Harris, *Heartbeat, Warble, and The Electric Powwow: American Indian Music*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2016), 163.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 163.

⁵¹ Bainbridge, *Rumble*.

⁵² Ibid.

Pueblo/Apache), a fellow musician of Salas suggested that he go back to Indian Country and get his life together. He was a positive influence of Salas' life. Robert Trujillo (Taos Pueblo) of Metallica shared that Black Sabbath and Ozzy Osbourne liked Native and Latinx drummers the most because their precision in drumming. Castillo was one of the most influential drummers in heavy metal and played with Motley Crue, Black Sabbath, and with Bret Michaels of Poison.⁵³ Cancer eventually cut Randy's life short but his impact on many rock legends remains.

Never Surrender: Punk Emerging with Indigenous and Environmental Rights

The word "punk" has its origins in Indigenous language, across the Atlantic, a new meaning for punk grew, a meaning that had never been used in Britain: punk as rotting wood, used for tinder, and eventually other things that smolder, like fuses and incense.⁵⁴ In Lenape language for example, "punkw" means "ashes," and "punxe" means "he puts wood on a fire."⁵⁵ The word then developed into a figurative use for a worthless person, a young hoodlum, as first found in a letter by E.E. Cummings in 1917, it then emerged as the slang term *punk kid* meaning a criminal's apprentice, which goes back to 1908.⁵⁶ Moreover, Indigenous influence is also taken from the Haudenosaunee and Iroquois. Scholar Brian Cogan shares, "The mohawk hairstyle, also known as the "Mohican," this distinct hairstyle, based on a Native American ritual haircut, involved a variation on shaved sides, sometimes with the liberal use of gel and hairspray to elevate hair to spikes."⁵⁷ The mohawk made its first widespread appearance on United States paratroopers during World War II for good luck in battle, and as a "warrior" symbol.⁵⁸ Yet the

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ JP Robinson, "Sources for 'The Rotten Etymology of Punk'," Medium, August 20, 2018/accessed November 24, 2018, <https://medium.com/@JPRobinson/sources-for-the-rotten-etymology-of-punk-4d66b9db93cc>.

⁵⁵ Lenape Delaware Tribe of Indians, "Lenape Talking Dictionary," Lenape, 2019/accessed May 1, 2019, <http://www.talk-lenape.org/detail?id=8978>.

⁵⁶ JP Robinson, "Sources for 'The Rotten Etymology of Punk'."

⁵⁷ Brian Cogan, *The Encyclopedia of Punk* (New York: Sterling Publishing Co., 2006), 197.

⁵⁸ JP Robinson, "Sources for 'The Rotten Etymology of Punk'."

mohawk quickly turned defiant in the 1970s. Additionally, Paul Schrader, the screenwriter of the film *Taxi Driver* (1976), discusses an interpretation of the mohawk: “Marty (Martin) Scorsese and Bobby (Robert) DeNiro interviewed an ex-Green Beret who told them if a Special Force member felt he was going to die, he would shave his head into a mohawk as a warning to his fellow soldiers, what he meant was ‘Don’t fuck with me. I’m going over the hill’.”⁵⁹ Martin Scorsese’s 1976 movie starred a young Robert De Niro as Travis Bickle, an unstable cabbie who shaves his head in a mohawk style when he wages war on New York City.⁶⁰ The mohawk has been used by punk musicians like Joe Strummer, Jean Beauvoir, Wendy O. Williams, Annabella Lwin, Brody Dalle, Adam Ant, Darby Crash, Tim Armstrong, Lars Frederiksen, and others. Overall, we must take note that elements in punk scenes including the word itself “punk,” and the very iconic mohawk hairstyle, have really been shaped by Indigenous peoples.



(Figure 1, Primitive Tribes live, Sasha Davis)

⁵⁹ John Thurman, “Embedded: The Anti-Imperialism in *Taxi Driver*,” Cineprism Wordpress, Dec 11, 2007/accessed November 1, 2018, <https://cineprism.wordpress.com/2007/12/11/embedded-the-anti-imperialism-in-taxi-driver/>.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

One of the scenes central to punk in the Southwest is in Flagstaff, Arizona. Flagstaff continues to thrive, largely because of its very early and prominent punk scene between the 1980s-1990s. Indigenous punk emerged alongside Indigenous activism, and as a practice of survivance, Indigenous punks have pushed for environmental justice in areas of sacred sites, protection of natural resources, demanding of Native presence, and against encroachment. Punk is still active with venues such as the Green Room and many bands from the Navajo Nation playing shows in the area. The Diné punk band Blackfire from the Northern Arizona area said that they started their band not only because of issues impacting their Diné, Navajo people, but also because of acts done on Indigenous communities by the U.S. such as coal mining, forced relocation, and further environmental degradation. The band shares that the corporate media was not telling that story. Therefore, their band “started taking arms with music,” as music has been their main means for communicating their need for dignity and respect.⁶¹ Clayson Benally, a Blackfire band member, shared that the sacred San Francisco Peaks located just north of Flagstaff are important to about twenty-two tribes.⁶² An article by *Indian Country Today* reported, “They are sacred to Apache, Hopi, Hualapai, Navajo, Yavapai and other Native Nations. These hugely important Peaks are home to many sacred beings, medicine places and origin sites. Myriad ceremonies are conducted there for healing, well-being, balance, commemoration, passages and the world’s water and life cycles.”⁶³ The Forest Service and the privately-owned Snowbowl ski resort, which is located on the Peaks, planned to expand the ski area and to use recycled sewage to make artificial snow.⁶⁴ Jeneda of Blackfire explained that

⁶¹ Journey of Action, “Navajo Nation-Blackfire,” Journey of Action, January 10, 2011/accessed November 19, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SOLUZh5gJVY>.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ “Sacred Sites: San Francisco Peaks,” *Indian Country Today*, June 21, 2011/April 12, 2019, https://newsmaven.io/indiancountrytoday/archive/sacred-sites-san-francisco-peaks-Hpeyj4HwD0q9_pdkm_YkLQ/.

⁶⁴ Ibid

there are endocrine disruptors in the water such as pharmaceuticals, steroids, hormones, caffeine, and pesticides. “The U.S. with its history of European immigrants is supposed to be based on respecting cultures and diversity and religious freedom, Indigenous communities do not have that right,” says Klee.⁶⁵

Native musicians Blackfire/Sihasin, Jordan Steele (Lo Cash Ninja/Anakin Skynwalka), Jerold Cecil (House of Bourbon/I Don’t Konform), and many fans in the Navajo communities have always recollected the decades long Flagstaff punk scene. Both Primitive Tribes and Blackfire have Indigenous members, and knew of the protests of moving Navajo families off of Big Mountain, and the continued protection of sacred sites and medicine. In many of the interviews I conducted, those who grew up in the Flagstaff area, share that they dealt with racism. Native communities and bands were speaking up about discrimination, the encroachment of land, and outside businesses in the area trying to build and profit off of the natural resources. Punk was used as a platform and a practice of survivance for activists and bands alike to share that Indigenous people have been living there and continue to live there in the present.

Singer of Primitive Tribes, Sasha Davis is a Professor at Keene University in New Hampshire who along with Blackfire, are part of some of the very influential bands from the area. Primitive Tribes are one of the bands I found late in doing this project, but one of the earliest in the scene. Sasha shares it goes even further back, that when he moved to Flagstaff in 1989, there was a scene prior, demonstrating to me that the timeline is much larger and much more work needs to be done. In first contacting Sasha, he shares, “I’m still in touch with all the original members of the band, but we are now scattered around. Fred and Sandy live near Pinetop in Arizona, Sandy works for the White Mountain Apache Tribal government I believe,

⁶⁵ Journey of Action, “Navajo Nation of Blackfire.”

Sean lives in Pleasanton, California, and I'm a Geography professor currently living in New Hampshire.”⁶⁶ Sasha shares that Sandy (Diné) who is their original drummer, has not played drums in twenty years.

Every year in Flagstaff, local bands past and present, play music and reminisce. He shares,

When we played last summer, Fred and Sandy don't play with us now, Mikey Sandoval from Flagstaff and Dave Norwood from Austin have stepped in. Sandy is the only member of the band that identifies as Indigenous, but I'm sure any of us could talk about our experiences of growing up and playing all around Northern Arizona and the punk scene in Flagstaff, as well as out on the Navajo Reservation and the many connections between the two.⁶⁷

Some of the other prominent figures in the early Flagstaff era include Tribal Existence, Refrigerated Nurses, Cranium Vex, Tripper Chick, Shitbastard, and Richard “Dick” Yazzie who is a traditional skinhead and is well known in the scene.⁶⁸ It is interesting Dick is also known amongst newer bands such as Lo Cash Ninjas, and friend James Lee Privett of Unstable Youth/Violent Traditions from El Monte. Sasha grew up in Phoenix and in the 8th grade, got into punk. He remembers being fifteen or sixteen and thinking, “Why is the world so fucked up.”⁶⁹ Punk gave him answers to the political atmosphere of the time. He then went to college in Flagstaff, Northern Arizona where he majored in Geography. The first band and punk show he attended was the Red Hot Chili Peppers. Sasha shares that many people laugh and have said the Chili Peppers are not punk, but in 1985, the band played in dive bars and were playing punk style

⁶⁶ Sasha Davis in discussion with the author, April 2019.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

music.⁷⁰ Sasha was also into British political punk bands such as Crass and Subhumans. In Phoenix, most of the bands came from California like The Vandals and M.D.C. (Millions of Dead Cops). Regionally, each scene in the punk movement, brings what is currently happening there to the forefront and musicians speak out about it through their lyrics. Interestingly, in discussing the flyer which started this research, Sasha shares that Primitive Tribes played with Los Crudos once in Rapid City. “There was not so much in Phoenix,” Sasha said, “But in Flagstaff, the scene brought a lot of different communities together with different backgrounds: “Rich kids, poor kids, kids from the rez, from the city, you didn’t see in all punk scenes.” He adds that the scene is where punks can be misfits together.⁷¹ Flagstaff was more of a supportive scene with not a big division or infighting.

Sasha and those involved in that scene have been archiving via tapes, flyers, cassettes, and pictures. From 1990 to 1994, Primitive Tribes were heavily touring and played consistently. The band members of Primitive Tribes draw on their land-based relationships while writing their songs. For instance, the lyrics for their song “Trail of Tears” talks about Indigenous struggles and rights.⁷² The lyrics were written by band member Fred Ellis. He and Sasha would switch off on bass and vocals and collaborated on lyrics. Fred wrote “Trail of Tears” about where he grew up in the White Mountain Fort Apache reservation near Pinetop.⁷³ “Fred always had a connection through family writing songs. Fred was really immersed in that scene in terms of relationships with those folks around the scene. Fred was a thinker, he saw in that song the parallels between Native American groups and how they were treated, U.S. colonial history, and how they are still doing that overseas, he does these jumps in the song that we (the U.S.) keep

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

doing this,” Sasha says.⁷⁴ The band has played in Fort Defiance, Tolani Lake, and Leupp, Arizona. Native fans of the band were such a large part of the scene in Flagstaff. Primitive Tribes had a band house where people could crash, “For any show, half of the people there were from the Navajo reservation. Many punks would drive from way over from the rez, huge numbers of people,” Sasha explains.⁷⁵

Similarly, to the *Los Crudos* documentary, this time period of the early 1990s experienced extensive rhetoric against immigration and xenophobia in the United States. *Los Crudos* wanted to change what was said about them as migrants and Latinx, and their music reflected that. In Pat Zavella’s essay on *Los Crudos*, she notes this by using the methodology by feminist scholar Ann Cvetkovich “Archive of feelings,” an “exploration of cultural texts as repositories of feelings and emotions, which are encoded not only in the content of the texts themselves, but in practices that surround their production and reception.”⁷⁶ Through lyrics and performances, *Los Crudos* were changing the narrative placed on them. They also frequented Indian Country and have played benefits or have stood in solidarity with activists. Many Native punk bands have done the same regarding stereotypes, modernity, trauma, and poverty by changing the imposed narrative.

Native bands have been using D.I.Y. and innovation for decades. Sasha shares, “The Native fanbase in Flagstaff includes many tribal groups such as Navajo, Hopi, Apache, Yavapai in the Prescott area, and a very large percentage off the rez, or youth from the Cottonwood area.”⁷⁷ Primitive Tribes played the reservation in Tolani Lake which was one of their biggest

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Zavella, Patricia. “Beyond the Screams: Latino Punkeros Contest Nativist Discourses.” *Latin American Perspectives* 39, no. 2 (2012): 27-41. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23238993>.

⁷⁷ Sasha Davis in discussion with the author, April 2019.

shows to date. “Back then, which there’s not much there (at a gig), there’s some houses, they had some plywood on the dirt, there were extension cords, they put some amps out...it gets dark, you look out, and see HUNDREDS of people. It was so insane, it is so remote, but you can be as loud as you wanted, it was a big party.”⁷⁸ As punk music was coming through the reservation, the band played in Fort Defiance at a movie theatre. Sasha shares, “The worldview of punk, there’s this idea, the tension between the traditional and the new, it was always very clear in the band, speaking personally, the myth that Native culture is an old thing that happened, or sticking to a traditional script to have a Native identity, it is clearly not true, there is always innovation in cultures. It is happening and finding value in modern and new things, punk had a philosophy-- oppression exists, you can look different, that’s okay, and the dominant society is full of crap.”⁷⁹ Punk was used as survivance to counter narrative the notion that Indigenous people are in the past, or cannot be punk rock. People have the misconception that punk is strictly British or a white male scene, yet as you can see, communities and fans made it in their own way. He shares, “This might have resonated in the rez and Native kids coming to Flagstaff. To me, it made sense to some people, it’s not true that you can’t be Native if you’re punk, that it’s a British thing...many music scenes have become hybrid.”

The environment and politics have really shaped the band’s name as well as the work Sasha is currently involved in at the University. Their band name Primitive Tribes came up collectively with Fred, and it served to make a statement, “about primitivist and an anarchist society, that civilization is a bad thing—the environment and ourselves, it is a valorization of technology, it is anti-technology or anti-modernization.”⁸⁰ On occasion, people thought the name

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

was racist, denigrating, or the fetishization of the primitive, but Sasha shares that it was far from it. He adds that politics had more to do with it, a smaller scale anti-tech way of being, to favor building a sense of community.⁸¹ He says, “For punk kids, its collectively saying that the dominant society is full of crap, if punks came from racial discrimination, or coming from a place of a lot poverty, exclusion, it is a message for all of us together, that we share a society that ain’t working as it should be, it is socioeconomic and might be resonating to Natives and other groups.”⁸² Primitive Tribes and Blackfire would play the same shows, Sasha shares he has more in common with Klee now politically than back then in regard to what is happening with uranium mining in Northern Arizona. Currently, Sasha is a professor and wrote his dissertation on nuclear and military testing on the Marshall Islands, Bikini Atoll, Guam, and other areas of the Pacific. His work looks at the sovereignty struggle, and looks to Indigenous scholarship and how Indigenous scholars have researched and resisted.

Indigenous punk scenes had a large enough scene that bands from all over the world came into the reservations in support. In terms of the span of the Flagstaff scene, Sasha shared the wave of punk before them, “R.N. (Refrigerated Nurses) played the last two reunion shows, there was a generation before them.”⁸³ Sasha explains,

It was a big deal, the time where the band M.D.C. from San Francisco and R.N. played at Big Mountain, which is part of the reservation, there was a huge controversy over with the mining companies trying to move Navajo families off of Big Mountain. Outside, there were activists, it got a lot of notoriety and political support from bands like Midnight Oil from Sydney. They didn’t play the rez, but met with people and had concerts in the mid-eighties for it. In 1985, some punk bands became involved in political issues. The punk bands played in support for Big Mountain and brought punk out to reservations. You see origins in Northern Arizona, and the politics predated, it seemed like it came out at the same time.⁸⁴

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

Sasha discusses the venues of the Flagstaff scene, “One of the hardest things in the punk scene was finding a place to practice and play, which is the whole reason the band moved in together to an uncool part of town--in the punk rock house.”⁸⁵ In terms of playing, their band created spaces with D.I.Y., Sasha adds, “Dagnabbits pushed all of the records on the side for room, being a record store, they did this just so our band had room to play.”⁸⁶ In regard to the infamous Elks lodge, he states, “It is interesting that in Flagstaff there was two. One was considered like the ‘rich white people Elks lodge’ and one was run by an African American family, it was sort of racially segregated thinking about it. The African American family were amiable to renting out the hall, and the bar was a great size, the venue threw a lot of shows.”⁸⁷ The band would rent picnic ramadas that were outdoors with electricity so they would pass through a cable to hook up and play, as well as pass a hat around for money.⁸⁸

Sasha shares how important Sandy’s input and words are to the band. Sandy’s niece Mowana Honyumptewa from Flagstaff is a very important figure and went on tour with the band when she was around twelve years old.⁸⁹ The band played in New York City and were interviewed. The interviewers wanted to ask Sandy questions but were very blunt in doing so about how it was like being a Native woman drummer in a punk band. He details, “She kind of rolled her eyes and said, ‘I just played drums,’ The question was with contempt, we all thought that’s the worst question...a very blunt question.”⁹⁰ Sasha shares that Sandy’s perspective is interesting, important, different, and special. “At the time, being a drummer that happened to be a Navajo woman that was just into punk and metal, she did not talk about it, she just did it,” he

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

says.⁹¹ Sasha urged me to talk to Sandy as her input is VERY important in this project's progression. Primitive Tribes are keeping the punk spirit alive in the Flagstaff scene every summer.

The Diné/Navajo siblings Klee (guitarist, vocalist), Jeneda (bassist, vocalist), and (drummer) Clayson Benally formed the metal-punk band Blackfire in 1989.⁹² Currently, Jeneda and Clayson branched off to their newest project, Sihasin. Their Diné clans include Bitter Water and the Wandering People.⁹³ Sihasin shares their immense knowledge in the early punk scene as well as their combating racism, sexism, and U.S. denial of mistreatment to Indigenous communities and stolen land. When asked what is the difference of Indigenous punk to any other kind, what makes it significant and unique? Jeneda answered, "Indigenous punk is unique because we have to be creative, resourceful, we do not have everything that other punk scenes do. We have to build alot, it is still truly D.I.Y. You can't just rent an amp from anywhere if you don't have one, you're gonna end up building one, or monkey wrenching one."⁹⁴ Clayson has had to build a drum set from barrels and buckets at a show. Jeneda shares a time when their family was truly D.I.Y.,

We couldn't play a show, because the fuse burnt out from the mixing consoles. Shoot. We are three hours from a place we can get another mixing console or anything to repair it. We had to be resourceful. Our dad, is a traditional medicine practitioner, he is so punk rock, he said 'this is what you have to do'...he jimmed the whole system with the foil from a chewing gum wrapper and we played the show.⁹⁵

Sihasin shares they didn't learn music in a school, or were formally trained. "Indigenous punks, we don't have music programs in school, there's a lack of art, we do it our own way of

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Sihasin in discussion with the author, March 2019.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

being creative and expressing yourself,” the band adds, “The fact that we are an isolated population, we have to be resourceful, that resourcefulness, and the environment we come from, we have been an oppressed people for so long...just now in recent generations, people are able to create our own media. The background of no running water, electricity, extreme poverty, commodity food, we didn’t have access to resources.”⁹⁶ The music Sihasin plays has gotten their band on a Hyundai commercial, to the United Nations, to travel nationally, internationally, and be invited to the White House.⁹⁷ For Clayson, what is most important are the schools they work with and also giving back to the community. They were able to sue the Federal Government, a right that their ancestors did not have.

Jeneda started playing bass when the bass was bigger than her. She discusses that there was a lot of sexism and racism which fueled her to play music. Male musicians would tell Jeneda that because she was “a woman having breasts, she can’t play bass” or that “she was not anatomically built for playing bass.”⁹⁸ She felt that the obstacles she had to overcome, needed to become challenges. Being from the reservation by the Grand Canyon, their families had to be resourceful and creative. The Benally’s were coming from one of the largest current relocation efforts in modern history. In 1974, Congress passed Public Law 93-531 allegedly to settle a land-dispute between the Diné and their Hopi neighbors, but in reality, the law forcefully relocated thousands of families to gain access to natural resources.⁹⁹ According to Jeneda, “Around 14,000 Diné people were relocated, their homeland was no longer their homeland.”¹⁰⁰ Their family was part of the resistance as well as their community members who were devastated. Jeneda adds,

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Sihasin in discussion with the author, March 2019.

⁹⁹ “Black Mesa Indigenous Support,” Support Black Mesa, /accessed June 1, 2019, <https://supportblackmesa.org/>.

¹⁰⁰ Sihasin in discussion with the author, March 2019.

“People moved, or the U.S. used them as their labor resource, they needed a cultural context to survive. Navajo communities were disconnected to all they have known in a foreign place. And due to heartbreak, we lost many elders.”¹⁰¹ Essentially, some Indigenous refugees did not accept relocation benefits and resisted. “Our lands were contaminated by one of the largest uranium waste and radioactive wastewater spills in American history,” says Clayson.¹⁰² He shares that their mom and dad had to make ends meet, that the ranch style they once had, was being taken away from them.

Their family grew up in protests for their Diné people, where they grew up realizing the grave, environmental injustices around them, they started to use “music as a powerful tool.”¹⁰³ The band wanted to write music that was different about the things happening. They lived in border towns near the Grand Canyon and noticed how the history books were including falsities about Indigenous peoples. Their mother Berta urged her children to keep true to their culture and beliefs, as well as understand the treatment by the United States. She would say, “No way you’re standing for the Pledge of Allegiance.”¹⁰⁴ Clayson shares, “I couldn’t join things like basketball that makes you cut your hair, or systems or things in place trying to destroy Indigenous ways of life.”¹⁰⁵ Their mother had to run onto the school on several occasions to advocate for her children’s culture, or to stop the school from cutting their hair. Clayson said they experienced extreme racism where people would grab his long hair. “This was the 1980s, before rock hair bands had long hair. It became a relief that it became cool to be male and have long hair,” says Clayson.¹⁰⁶ Jeneda discusses it is such a traditional Indigenous way to have pierced ears, tattoos,

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

and long hair. “Cutting the hair is conformity going toward a western context whereas Navajo Diné hair is long,” says the band. Clayson shares that he was teased, while he was always a pacifist, his brother Klee would always be fighting or stick up for them.

Some of their older neighbors had a punk mixtape which pushed the siblings to want to make music about what was going on around them. Klee had a practice pad and some drumsticks and Clayson started becoming a drummer around the age of eight or nine. Clayson drew the first band logo in high school which became their namesake “Blackfire.”¹⁰⁷ He explains, “The drawing was the world on fire, directly referring to the coal fired power plant up on the Navajo Nation, the NGS Mojave generator station but also the coal that was the heart of the relocation effort by the U.S., where the U.S. was pitting Navajo and Hopi tribes against each other.”¹⁰⁸ Their elders would go to Washington D.C. to different court hearings and the siblings would be by their side, “Hearing U.S. politicians making these claims and lying, and seeing our elders breaking down in tears, they were losing everything.”¹⁰⁹

The family moved to a larger border town of Flagstaff. Being Diné and being teased for his long hair, Clayson discusses that he was bullied. It was tough for him to share the racism and derogatory slurs, “Being in a larger border town it was the worst kind. Flagstaff, I experienced a lot of hatred. I was held in a locker room and people would be holding a lighter upside down burning me...outcasts will be your friends; they’ll support you and protect you.”¹¹⁰ Jeneda says, “Music definitely came from a place of truth, raw, uncensored, unapologetic truth that came from the heart.”¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

How they found punk rock was like an alignment. Their brother Klee who was the lead singer at the time, had a British accent or sounded like Jim Morrison, since what was on the tape was one to two songs from the 1970s which served as their “road map” and their only influences at the time.¹¹² Their father Jones Benally is a traditional singer and medicine practitioner.

Through powwows, ceremonies, and songs, there were certain elements the siblings began to really draw on. The song “Censored” was one of their first songs.¹¹³ The band practiced a form of survivance with their lyrics that touched on their history, and spoke out about not backing down against the U.S. Government. In sharing the very Indigenous history of punk rock, the band shares:

That the mohawk...the Cayuga, the Eastern seaboard, the colonizers--the French and British, and the warfare that was taking place...the idea of taking scalps (of Indigenous people), taking someone’s soul or identity, the hair was their cultural identity. The Haudenosaunee people decided to do the extreme by shaving their heads and created the first mohawk to say, ‘You’re not taking my power, my strength, my identity.’

In its meaning, the mohawk has an Indigenous history, and as a punk rock icon, its image goes deeper and further regarding an Indigenous resistance and form of survivance to defy victimhood. The encounter of resistance is very Indigenous according to the band.

Clayson shares that the Indigenous influence on rock can go as far back as taking it to the rhythm.

In European culture, they had 3/3 timing with the waltz, the polka, ‘one two, three, one, two, three,’ and country western. What was happening in New Orleans, we hung out with Cyril Neville and connected a lot with the Mardi Gras Natives at Congo Square. It was one of the only regions people could practice their songs and rituals openly in public. It is a small little park in New Orleans, people from Africa brought by slaves, Caribbean, Seminole, and different tribes from those regions that were taken for slavery and escaped

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

to the swamps and bayous in surrounding areas. That was the birthplace of rock n roll. That Indigenous element sparks what is rock 'n roll, and is the foundation where it begins and becomes punk rock. The rhythmic 4/4 pattern people call rock n roll, which would become punk rock, that is all from our horse rhythms of Indigenous people. The stomp songs, Iroquois smoke songs, fast rhythm, it was call and response, and are very particular...the 4/4, is the horse running or trotting.”¹¹⁴

The late Joey Ramone “the Godfather of punk rock” was a close friend and mentor to the Benally’s and shared to them where punk rock was *supposed* to go. “He saw it as rock’ n’ roll, the natural progression was punk rock...it wasn’t dangerous, it was just energy, pure energy and punk brought it to a certain point--folk, rock, then punk it was a natural build up, if you were to pull out a pie chart or graph,” Clayson says.¹¹⁵ Jeneda adds, “It ramps it up, building up, much like the song structure of the Ramones, ‘1,2,3,4!’ ”¹¹⁶ At Joey’s studio in New York, Clayson recalls them watching a documentary on famed punk band the Sex Pistols, “His (Joey) whole take on what transpired, he felt that the Sex Pistols felt contrived, a band was created for an image, a fashion line, a new look, they brought an element of that into the punk rock scene. Sid and Nancy were bringing this element of danger.”¹¹⁷ Joey felt they did a disservice to punk, and had taken away from it, to the point where parents thought it was too dangerous and did not want their kids near punk. Clayson adds, “For Joey, this powerful way of expressing emotion is being honest and true to yourself, and communicating but doing it you know, in punk rock style, it was a beautiful way he was expressing it.”¹¹⁸ Clayson discusses that in the 1990s-2000s, you see an emergence of pop punk, and the consciousness behind it transformed, it was less about the social political issues, communities, and families, in that these elements got stripped away from it.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

During the early 1990s, the band explains that there was so much creativity in Northern Arizona, about thirty plus bands played locally. Sihasin shares, “Flagstaff had a bar scene where touring bands were coming through. The Elks Lodge, and their friends Primitive Tribes brought more bands such as Naked Aggression, Vandals, and The Offspring.”¹²⁰ Bands started using the double bass pedal that everyone wanted to incorporate to be faster and louder. Blackfire played all over the reservation. The key for Blackfire was building a scene for the youth with empowering workshops that would utilize music and culture, teaching the youth that culture is cool.¹²¹ The band shares that the youth had pent up anger, and through their elders, grew up with bands like Metallica, and Slayer, to which punk rock came in like a spark with bands like the Horny Toads and Aztlan Underground from L.A.¹²² At that time, there was a lot of country music, so their family created the Hoodiitsa’ music festival (meaning ‘to hear’ in Navajo), during the Western Agency Navajo fair. The community saw that the youth were going out at night to party and were creating unsafe situations, and bad decision making.¹²³ What they wanted the festival to do was have the youth excited about punk music, metal, and rock. Jeneda shares that in both ways, people could get involved in social and environmental issues, plus get into music and have a sense of possibility. The band adds, “This was Joey Ramone’s first solo gig, Joey Ramone and the Resistance. He chose songs that would inspire the youth and a had letter statement to the Navajo Nation.”¹²⁴

The siblings make it a point to visit Indigenous communities far removed from cities. The band will seek out a venue, bar, and club, and have even played at an abandoned prison

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

penitentiary where activist and AIM (American Indian Movement) member Leonard Peltier (Chippewa-Lakota) was held prisoner at the time.¹²⁵ The Benally's have performed in Sonora, Mexico with the Comcaac (Seri) punk band Hamac Caziim.¹²⁶ Jeneda shared in that performance with the Comcaac people, they might not understand her Navajo language, but they both have the same struggle. Clayson shares in visiting the Comcaac, "My father was in Navajoa (Mexico) and they started speaking Navajo in Mexico. This was before there were borders, there was a trade route and our people were taken as slaves by conquistadors. People do not understand this."¹²⁷ As custom, the Benally's went to check in first with the Seri community elders in the north of Kino Bay. Clayson adds, "They said 'Your ancestors' descendants--people that came before you, fought with our warriors and repelled the Spanish.' People need to reconnect with history and realize that there are Natives in North America and still an Indigenous culture thriving in the South with their languages intact."¹²⁸ According to the band, "A punk rock album is that key that brings people back home, they might regain and learn their ancestral teachings, and knowledge."¹²⁹ By visiting Indigenous communities all over the world, Sihasin maintains stories and continues connections despite the historical attempts of settlers and imposed borders.

Their new project Sihasin wants to give back to their community and give power and strength. "As a forty-one-year-old man and father of two amazing children, it's expression, being true to yourself not how you dress or look, being honest...anger, aggression, you channel that in your artform, that's what punk rock essentially is. Where you see marginalized minorities in other countries and the most oppression, that are bottling it up, you will see the purest form of

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

punk rock,” Clayson adds.¹³⁰ Jeneda declares, “The punk rock look, how readily available it is to look like a punk now...It was D.I.Y., you had to use safety pins or duct tape it. How it’s changed, some of the most punk rock people I know don’t exteriorly look like punk rock, but are SO PUNK ROCK. Those that look so punk rock, so hardcore punk...but wow, they're not. They don't have that punk truth, that punk rawness, you know, they got that punk out of the bottle and put it on.”¹³¹ They add that Nirvana came in with their song “Smells Like Teen Spirit,” and everyone wanted to be in the (mosh) pit, yet some did not understand the words or creativity, but just the exchange of aggression and were looking for violence and a fight.¹³² When Clayson grew up, it was all about punk rock pogo dancing, he looks at pow wow traditional dancing and how it has a similar process. “The pow wows in the Americas, it went clockwise, but the mosh pit went counterclockwise, it’s a dance, not necessarily to fight, it’s whatever energy you put out there. In pogo, people can just freak-out,” he shares.¹³³ Many tribal communities with diaspora that were forcefully relocated went to places such as Los Angeles for example. The powwow dance is similar to the mosh pit at a punk rock show in that it is finding a community where there are people just like you.

Clayson shares that this chapter of Indigenous music of them speaking their truth, and its documentation, can preserve it. There are not a lot of people that are recollecting all of the history of local bands from Flagstaff according to him, which is important to their history because there is a cultural context.¹³⁴

Jeneda declares,

For so long our populations were told who we were through the movies, through books, through

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

fantasies, and romanizations, through the whole concept of being a “noble savage,” it’s only recently with our generation we are able to tell people who our identity is and are not be afraid of the backlash, not being afraid of getting our hair cut in school, not being afraid of being beaten for speaking our language. I think that is the difference...we have been oppressed for so long our stories are finally, FINALLY ours to tell...they always have been. There’s been repercussions, and so I think there’s so many differences in the punk rock you can find in a city, than punk rock that is Indigenous from our communities.¹³⁵



(Figure 2, Heart Museum, Anthony J. Lee)

Heart Museum is a Hardcore band from Shiprock, Arizona. Anthony J. Lee (Diné-Filipino) is the singer as well as a music promoter and activist for his community. He is twenty-five years old and is a father of two kids, and grew up on reservation. Anthony is also a farmer, and shares, “It has been a little difficult as far as running into a lot of issues here on the rez in regard to farming. With historical trauma, energy development, and the impact it’s had on people and the politics.”¹³⁶ Because of a long history of imposition by the U.S. government, settlers and violence, Anthony got involved in his community through music, and is involved on a few of his local boards, and has co-founded an organization called Diné Introspective Inc. The non-profit organization focuses mostly on health and wellness, physical, spiritual, mental wellbeing,

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Heart Museum in discussion with the author, April 2019.

and environmental issues.¹³⁷ Anthony also helped in starting the farming program, “Enchant the Environment” with the knowledge of elders, and also the youth, to teach resilience, sustainability, and abundance through farming and permaculture.¹³⁸ “I was one of the at the risk youth, unsheltered in my community, and there is a lot of us, the intersectionalities are very much real. We’re talking about sex trafficking, we’re talking neglect, trauma, and all sorts of violence. I turned to music as an outlet and it really was the only thing that made sense to me. I moved out of my parents at eleven, started couch surfing, out in community, and eventually got in a band,” he shares.¹³⁹

Through workforce programs, Anthony started working at age thirteen at a performing arts center, doing lights, sound, and stage management trying to apply that knowledge to his own shows. Anthony shares, “I started a band with some friends, at first it was difficult to get on shows, then I started posting my own. Attending local shows, it blew my mind, before the internet, there was graphic design, D.I.Y., and word of mouth.”¹⁴⁰ He would really try to find out where shows were happening, meet the bands, and was very captivated by it. The sound system for shows is his own, and Anthony started booking local bands. As time progressed, show offers came from bands out of town, later a booking agency, and then Anthony started to book bands from all over the U.S., and outside of the U.S. The other problem Anthony runs into is location, “A majority of buildings currently standing in our community do not have plumbing, most have asbestos, or are condemned, they need to be torn down and would cost about half a million for just one building to get surveyed.”¹⁴¹ He was renting anywhere he could and found “The Mod,” a

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

venue he currently rents for many events. There were negative responses from some members in the community saying it was a negative space, to which local law enforcement arrested Anthony and his friends for throwing shows. Yet, they weren't charged with anything. Anthony is trying to show his community how music is helping, while also finding a balance of activism and keeping the punk aspect. "It's a bunch of punk kids, getting crazy and having fun (haha), but I like the activism portion, the radicalization side, I'm sick of the way things are. We need to get together to make things happen, people just want to be there and have a good time, but with professionalism, it's a means of getting something done versus a means of recreation," he says.¹⁴²

Anthony started his own band as a junior in high school which went very well. First was his metal band My Deadly Dearest. His other band was End this Year which was a pop punk band that toured up in New York with Lo Cash Ninjas. End This Year was able to perform at the Albuquerque date at the Vans Warped Tour. He is not too confident to say they were the first Diné band to do so, but he was still very proud to be on stage thinking they would never have a chance to play Warped Tour.¹⁴³ Like many of his band and scene mates, Anthony is doing so much at twenty-five. He is also involved in New Mexico film, background work, and crew work. Anthony has been self-taught in his sound, graphic design, and his band have made their own music videos in the past. He adds, "We always had to work with what we got, the D.I.Y. mindset, with the internet, it's easier to collaborate and reach out."¹⁴⁴ With a successful team and organization, he is getting enough people to have a sustainable venue. With having a concert in

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

June at The Mod, he must repair the sound system, “Kids around here are fun and crazy but hard on my equipment.”¹⁴⁵

Anthony shares that the difference of his Diné punk scene is the D.I.Y. aspect, which is so prevalent on the Navajo Nation. Anthony discusses “digital justice” pertaining to cell phone and Wi-Fi service, therefore there are very distinct music genres like punk and metal, but he says things are opening up. For space he shares, “They don’t give a fuck if its five, ten, fifty people in a shack outside, or in a venue, they’re always down to do it, it’s good people that’ll do anything to make music.”¹⁴⁶ Anthony has had people hitchhike over the mountain to make a show, “You don’t see that with any other genre.”¹⁴⁷ What he sees in hip hop or rap is that fans are waiting for something to happen, or waiting for a show to come up. He says in punk culture, “You don’t wait, you do it yourself, whether its practice with friends, you make your own shirt or patches, whatever you got to do.”¹⁴⁸ Hardcore/emo music is still going on, and according to Anthony, “The Albuquerque scene is killing it. The scene is forming with Albuquerque which is a hard market to hit especially those out of the area or touring.”¹⁴⁹

In writing about these communities, I aim to give the utmost respect and share the bands’ experiences, the resiliency of the elders, and the youth. Moreover, to share the large contribution to music that communities continue to make denouncing victimhood. Anthony shares his opinion on writing the history of the Diné people in this project:

If you want honesty, straight up true, I’ve been referred to as radical thinking, this is all stemming from genocide. They tried to kill us off, they dwindled us down into the thousands, they took us off of our land, finally having the ability to voice out, it scares people...it does take a lot of patience, but if you look at historical trauma, the boarding schools, we have mothers, aunties, grandmothers that have spent their entire lives or

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

childhood in boarding schools. They weren't taught 'I love you,' not taught to share emotion and definitely not taught to practice culture or speak their language, our language. If you look at photos, they all look the same, it's practically like the military... 'Kill the Indian, save the man.' People refer to conquistadors around here as explorers, they talk about the Mormons discovering things, when people were there already. The irrigation and canals, people thrived because people lived there. A lot of us here don't understand that still, that is the direction music has taken me, helping others that are traumatized and want to be brainwashed. Every nuclear test has been on Indigenous land, uranium mining, and weaponization, we are the scapegoats. It's all about the anarchy, the U.S. government and capitalism.¹⁵⁰

Anthony with his peers have decided to not be silenced, but to turn to politics, using music as survivance to speak out as well as continue to build strong communities. In hearing stories, many of the communities care very much about their families and their people, this goes deeper than just a punk community, it is kinship. His current band Heart Museum is figuring out their next song which may be about treaties and colonialism. Anthony and peers have recently established "a community board that serves the Four Corners, is registered with the Navajo Nation, doing the sober thing, Native owned, and youth ran."¹⁵¹ Anthony says Diné Introspective are the "Millennial Diné," and adds, "We want our environment to be a product of us, versus us being a product of our environment."¹⁵² Anthony and a partner have a record label called Empty Nest Records and his band Heart Museum has an EP called "Bitter" on Spotify, and Apple music. There is a fair in Shiprock where everyone comes home the first week of October, this is where Anthony does over twenty workshops, throws shows, and also feeds people with free breakfast. Anthony (Larigot his rap name) as many other interviewees share, continues to do tremendous work for the music scene and his community.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid.



(Figure 3, Now or Never, Naabaahii Bitsuie)

The band Now or Never is a ska, rockabilly, punk band from Tsaile, Arizona. Naabaahii Bitsuie is the singer and guitarist for Now or Never (N.O.N.) who shares that the band met from punk band Rei Gurren. In May 2005, Naabaahii, Jeff, and Byron formed N.O.N. Naabaahii is part Hopi, part Navajo, and Sac and Fox. His clans include Sac and Fox Thunder Clan, Coyote Canyon Clan from the Window Rock area, the Hopi Sun Clan of Holy Priests, and Sun Ray Clan from Third Mesa.¹⁵³ He shares Jim Thorpe is one of his great grandfathers and another grandfather was a Navajo code talker.¹⁵⁴ His Hopi side is a lot more traditional, non-violent, praying for everyone and all living things.¹⁵⁵ Naabaahii stresses how important grandparents and elders are, with many band members including himself, having to help with wood for winter and chores. In Navajo culture, many youths are doing community work, and making sure their families are taken care of.

The band's punk songs touch on poverty, low wage income, difficult times, surroundings, family, history of U.S. government and their own government on the Navajo Nation. Yet, they

¹⁵³ Now or Never in discussion with the author, March 2019.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

also touch on art, film, resistance, having fun, and throwing shows in the summers.

Naabaahii shares,

What Trump does affect our way of life on the Navajo Nation, like the government shut down, he was electing and would hire people into Congress or in office that control money in the U.S. government, but also into Indigenous government. Even for the national monuments all over the U.S., how he was going to have control, some of those spaces are sacred to Indigenous people and are being violated.¹⁵⁶

The band's songs are a form of survivance as they inform and resist environmental decisions and imposition on their communities. Their song "Hell No" speaks to this and resisting laws that directly infringe on Indigenous peoples. Many of their songs inform and share their sovereignty. The band has distinct horror punk (punk influenced by horror films or science fiction B-movies) and psychobilly (a mixture of rockabilly and punk) themes such as song "Psycho" based on the film "American Psycho," "Creature" based on Mary Shelley's "Frankenstein," a book Naabaahii really loves, and "The Howler" is a song about the Werewolf and accidentally killing your true love like Van Helsing.¹⁵⁷ The band's song "Peaches" on SoundCloud is a rockabilly song about a rockabilly woman.¹⁵⁸

Seasonal weather plays a large factor with Southwest bands. Weather makes a big difference for when and how shows are put on. Some bands are in isolated areas or are getting stuck by snow or stuck in the mud, shares Naabaahii. "Some venues have no heating, it is freezing, and bands must cancel shows, or play through it," he adds.¹⁵⁹ "Summers End" is about

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

being outside partying, not wanting summers to end because it is the best time for shows.¹⁶⁰

Naabaahii learned guitar and tuning by ear at age thirteen, and also picked up the guitar from his mother's friends. Naabaahii's mother was a broadcaster on KTNN Native radio, a station in the Navajo language that covered Native American music fests, many different music genres, and artists like Whitefoot and Casper.¹⁶¹ A factor his band has worked through is that of the internet signal control, cell phones and service can prove difficult to live stream, play games live or online, and at times, services are very limited access to outside of the rez.¹⁶² The internet came in when Naabaahii was seventeen years old. This never stopped him as he pursued music with friends.

Space has also been a factor to work through, as his band members live about one mile or five miles away. Their bassist is in Phoenix and for shows, they try to practice as much as possible and make it work. Unless it is a big event such as the Navajo Nation fair, Fourth of July or holidays, it is tough to throw shows. Some venues are happier to book country bands, yet punk is discouraged. "We have to keep punk secret or private, it's underground and last minute. We have closed it off, 'a friends only' kind of show, or cops will raid it, or people will go against it," he explains.¹⁶³ According to Naabaahii, some elders think that punk influences fans with drugs and alcohol but that is not the case. "To put a legit show on its really expensive, opposed to a backyard, liability insurance, how many people will be there, some music is discouraged from venues. There has been property damage, and vandalism from previous punk and metal shows."¹⁶⁴ Many musicians are trying to show that punk is helpful for the youth where they can

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

speak out on issues important to them. “Some people think punk is not good enough musically, (opposed to metal) the chugs, squeals...many artists can play like that.”¹⁶⁵

I noticed a South El Monte, California gig flyer, Naabaahii shares, “We went all the way from Arizona for free, the promoter helped us with ninety bucks, our band saved about 3,000 dollars to drive out, and the gig got shut down.”¹⁶⁶ The promoter said they did not have a place for them to stay out there. The band tried to get a hotel, but could not book a room, so they had to sleep in a van in front of Walmart. At the time, there was a marathon going on in L.A. which created no vacancy. He says, “We only set up our equipment just to tear it down because the cops came.”¹⁶⁷ Now or Never were very excited to play, but the bands that were local, kept jumping on the show and went on before them. As they tried to go on first coming all the way from Arizona, no one listened. Networks, and making sure bands are taken care of is big with Indigenous music communities. Many spaces and venues must take into consideration the sacrifice musicians make to travel and make a show out of town.

Naabaahii’s favorite spots are Tsaile as it got so crazy at a show when N.O.N. did a cover of Catch 22’s “1, 2, 3, 4.”¹⁶⁸ “There were about fifty people in a little 20 x 30 shack...being sardines in a little shack,” he explains.¹⁶⁹ In Tuba City, children and elders really liked their music. Now or Never has opened up for Nekromantix, Michale Graves, C.J. Ramone, Left Alone, The Brainz, Wednesday 13, B Movie Monsters, Lewis Idle, Psychobilly Three, The Blissins, and Kats of Horror which is Jeff’s other band who plays about once a year. Some members have families and responsibilities, so they are unable to play that often.¹⁷⁰ Both he and

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

Jeff have sons and try to make time for music and involve them in the process. He wants the youth more involved in music and wants to open up a studio. Many bands “make it” and leave, but Naabaahii wants to create spaces for Native youth to record and play.



(Figure 4, Miracle Dolls at Rad Coffee, Dani and Dezy Doll)

Miracle Dolls are sisters Dani and Dezy (Comanche-Kiowa-Hidatsa-Mexican) located in the Los Angeles and Beaumont area. The Miracle Dolls are from the Midwest and teach rock music and punk songs to the youth at Sherman Indian High School in Riverside, California. A former Indian boarding school created in 1892, Sherman was built by the U.S. government to assimilate Indigenous youth and teens. Currently, the Bureau of Indian Affairs/Education along with the U.S. Department of the Interior, and Native communities have taken control over to serve their students from over 76 federally recognized tribes.¹⁷¹ The punk-indie duo teach children how to play guitar with songs such as Green Day and the Ramones. Their goal is to buy guitars for the youth in every Indian reservation. They also sing and advocate for water issues,

¹⁷¹ Sherman Indian High School,” Sherman Indian High School, n.d./accessed June 10, 2019, <https://www.shermanindian.org/>.

big oil divestment, and treating our home and planet better. The sisters have created the Native American Youth music program and provide healing in their community. They have seen the staggering suicide rates and decided to create a program to make positive changes.¹⁷² They discuss how important this generation of youth are.¹⁷³ They have donated ten guitars and created guitar classes on the reservations with the goal of having students and youth use music to connect to their emotions, as well as use it as therapy and to combat anger, family issues, and historical trauma. The sisters have played Vans Warped Tour, local universities, and at Indigenous Pride L.A. preshow.¹⁷⁴ Dani and Dezy Doll continue to join Native marches, Los Angeles City Hall protests, and play all over the country. Miracle Dolls sing about immigration, D.A.C.A., detainment, and border issues connecting to other communities of color.¹⁷⁵ They have received push back for topics they have sang about and have faced surveillance from U.S. government entities.¹⁷⁶ Miracle Dolls have a song “Water is Life” that discusses the importance of taking care of the Earth and how sacred water is during the protests at Standing Rock.¹⁷⁷ Through their music, a form of survivance, they are a voice for Indigenous rights, presence, land rights, and the environment. Growing up punk, they share, “We had mohawks (hair style) on our rez and we were going to college in North Dakota, and all the elder women were sitting out there and they were laughing at us, “You guys ready to die!? That Mohawk you have...that means you’re ready to go to battle and die.”¹⁷⁸ The sisters currently created a D.I.Y. antique and clothing shop in Beaumont, California. “Mothers Blood” is their newest song out. The Miracle

¹⁷² Miracle Dolls, in discussion with the author, November 13, 2018.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

Dolls continue to talk about ecological rights and empowering the youth through punk and guitar.



(Figure 5, Aztlan Underground, Yaolt)

Although much of the environmental activism is in the Navajo context, it can also be seen in other urban areas as well. As for Los Angeles (Tonvaangar) punk, Aztlan Underground is a metal-punk band who despite settler colonial mechanisms, have practiced survivance in reclaiming their Indigenous ideals and heritage. The band's current members include singer Yaolt (Mazahua-Raramuri), Joe "Peps" (Comanche), Bulldog (Mayo), Caxo (Caxcan from the Chichimeca), and Ethan "Thunderbird" (Opata).¹⁷⁹ Past members include Chenek "DJ Bean," Alonzo Beas, Ace Campos, Claudio Rodarte, and members that have passed away are MC Serpiente, and Nahui Ollin.¹⁸⁰ Aztlan Underground are one of the earliest rap-rock groups in Los Angeles that have brought Native and Chicax themes of resistance, and incorporate Native instruments. Some of their songs include titles such as "Indigena," "Medicine," and "Revolution."¹⁸¹ They started out in the early punk scene in East Los Angeles. Singer Yaolt was

¹⁷⁹ Aztlan Underground in discussion with the author, April 2019.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

in an anarcho peace punk band called Iconoclast around 1981 to 1985.¹⁸² Along with the group Bodycount (not the one with rapper Ice T), they were one of the first anarcho peace punk bands in Los Angeles. Yaolt shares that they were influenced by Discharge and Crass. Yaolt's early bands were very much influenced during the early 1980s with what was going on in the U.S., also the Russian Cold War and threat of nuclearization and bombing which he says, "we still live under."¹⁸³ These events informed his artistic path, and Native thought inspired his ideals. Around 1984-1985, he was inspired by the post punk band, Dead Cult which later became The Cult led by singer Ian Astbury. Yaolt shares that Astbury "grew up on the Cree Reserve and wrote about Mother Earth, Native culture, and concepts about Wovoka, which got me interested into Indigenous value systems."¹⁸⁴

One day, Yaolt's father saw a poster of the Lakota leader Sitting Bull on his wall, and said "What's up with this Native stuff, you know you're an Indian,"¹⁸⁵ Yaolt thus gathered "a decolonial epiphany."¹⁸⁶ He had seen a flyer for the Four Directions with poet John Trudell and an Aztec dance group, which started to decolonize his thinking. In 1986, he joined the first Aztec dance group which was a precursor to all the dance groups in East Los Angeles.¹⁸⁷ By the late 1980s, Yaolt heard the new Run DMC album in San Francisco and was also inspired by Public Boogie Down Productions. They spoke on animal rights, black empowerment, white supremacy, and deconstructing colonialism. This inspired Yaolt and "got him into his identity and Native rebirthing."¹⁸⁸

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

Yaolt shares that Javier Martinez was the manager of Iconoclast and wanted to start a group that spoke on their identity and who they are.¹⁸⁹ Yaolt grew up being called a “beaner” and “wetback” in the San Fernando Valley which was very racially polemic, he grew up always feeling ashamed of who he was at first.¹⁹⁰ He used the band as a platform to speak on racism, Indigeneity, rights, and resistance. He shares, “Around that time, Aztlan Underground was emerging, and our group was sampling music and went to my homie (Bulldog) Frank’s house.”¹⁹¹ He was the only friend who had a computer and the group worked on tracks. This is where they first heard Frank rap and share his family’s Indigenous history. Yaolt shares, “Bulldog is the funk, I am the Fury.”¹⁹²

In the early 1990s, some people passed on or quit after the L.A. riots, as the group had gigs during that time.¹⁹³ Yaolt shares that everyone was afraid of the rebellious stuff during 1992 Los Angeles, and its history of police brutality to communities of color. In 1992, Aztlan Underground had a cassette tape with a single denouncing Columbus Day and the year 1492.¹⁹⁴ In 1994, the Zapatistas emerged which blew them away as they were Indigenous rebels trying to declare who they are. Aztlan Underground met with singer Zack De La Rocha (Rage Against the Machine) and went to New Mexico with him. By 1994, Rage Against the Machine was blowing up, and Zack was going on a trip to the Zapatista communities. In 1996, the band went to Chiapas through Zack, where they met with the Zapatistas who taught them about identity politics. They taught the band on how they lost their identity, and were being somewhat Nationalistic embracing a Spanish paradigm.¹⁹⁵ Through the Indigenous knowledge and lens of

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

the Zapatistas, the band did not call themselves Hispanic. They wanted to write music on reclaiming their Indigenous roots as a form of survivance demonstrating that their framework and identity was not lost due to imposed borders or settlers. Yaolt touches on the 1960s and 1970s idea of “Aztlán” in the Southwest which has changed as of late. He shares it is more of a state of mind that many people have migrated, or were force relocated back and forth.¹⁹⁶ Yaolt states that we are older than the borders, but are not reclaiming or declaring a state of Aztlán.¹⁹⁷ Therefore, the band changed their name as Anahuak Underground.¹⁹⁸ Through 1999-2000, the band started travelling to Canada and met with Natives there, also connecting throughout Arizona with punk band Blackfire. The “Farce of July” is an annual music fest in L.A. that Yaolt and the group have organized instead of acknowledging the Fourth of July. Aztlán continues to do a lot of work for Los Angeles and the San Fernando Valley Indigenous communities and are active with the punk rock community. Using their early days of punk in East L.A., they have used punk elements to speak out on cultural issues, resistance, and a resurgence for Indigenous and P.O.C. rights. Aztlán Underground urges an Indigenous consciousness as survivance which settler governments have tried to strip away. In Los Angeles, law enforcement are widely known for police brutality on African Americans, Aztlán are also speaking out on the treatment of black leaders, and communities of color in the L.A. and Valley areas.

Excuse my Beauty: Gender, LGBTQ2, and Non-Binary Artists

Through resiliency, many artists and punk bands are using their music to educate others and empower those like themselves. Using punk as a tool of survivance, artists are speaking out about missing and murdered Indigenous women and treatment of LGBTQ2 communities.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

Musicians are also decolonizing western ideas of gender and sexuality. The on-going genocide of Indigenous women is indeed gendered. Music scenes are coming together to make change to protect, empower, and lift up their loved ones. Before we begin contextualizing important punk artists, I would like to recognize queer, Two spirit (an umbrella term that bridges Indigenous and western understandings of gender and sexuality), non-binary (a spectrum of gender identities outside the gender binary and cis-normative) artists that came before and in the true spirit of punk, challenged societal norms on sexuality and gender. I would like to recognize Albuquerque Native drag queen, Lady Sug (Diné) who is a prominent voice and non-binary activist for their LGBTQ2 Navajo community and is the current winner of Miss Sidewinders, as well as a former Miss New Mexico Pride.¹⁹⁹ I would also like to recognize Stephanie Yellowhair (Diné), who has also become a revered icon in Two Spirit and LGBTQ2 communities. Her pride for herself against harassing police on the show *COPS* has become a legacy. Stephanie demonstrated she did not need the approval of anyone for being her true self, and for several years forward, has been an icon for younger LGBTQ2 members. Her phrase, “Excuse My Beauty” has gone viral giving testament that Stephanie is inspiring new generations like her, and her phrase has been even coined by drag icon, Ru Paul Charles.²⁰⁰ New spaces such as the Los Angeles Indigenous Pride organization are showcasing bands from New Mexico and fundraising for Native LGBTQ2 youth. Another important figure to punk is Brad Charles (Diné), who “wants you to know there's

¹⁹⁹ Jeremy Meek, “Photos of Queer Life on a Sprawling Native American Reservation,” Vice, November 14, 2017/May 29, 2019, https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/43np4q/photos-queer-native-american-life-navajo-nation.

²⁰⁰ Jeff Leavell “The Death of Stephanie Yellowhair and the Resilience of the Queer Spirit,” Vice, April 6, 2018/May 30, 2019, https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/3kj5bw/the-death-of-stephanie-yellowhair-and-the-resilience-of-the-queer-spirit-excuse-my-beauty.

more to rez music than metal.”²⁰¹ Discotays/Plantagent Cherokee is the work of Brad Charles an organizer for the Two Spirit Gathering of Queer Nations IV.²⁰² Playing in the late 2000s until recently, Charles and his partner, Hansen Ashley from Sanostee, New Mexico made up the Navajo Nation based post-punk duo Discotays. Their band name is after the “disquotays,” a group of drag queens in South Central, Los Angeles in the 1960s.²⁰³ The band worked to increase queer visibility on the reservation, and dealt with homophobia in the beginning as some poked fun of them by calling them “Queertays” or “Discogays.”²⁰⁴ Brad states, “We used to start off all punk rock—real aggressive and as loud as we could be. That gave (the audience) a new idea, like, okay, these guys are gay, but they're in this kind of band that I like. It gave them a different outlook on things.”²⁰⁵ Charles organized a showcase to coincide with the 100th annual Northern Navajo Nation Fair, as well as the Indie Electronic Punk fest, and shows organized by his B.I.A. productions.²⁰⁶ Naming their group after a South Central, Californian group of drag queens, Discotays shared a network and connection for queer activism and identity, by expressing themselves freely through punk music as a conduit to inspire other queer youth to survive on the reservation. Not the popular metal scene, Discotays/Plantagent Cherokee are pushing against regional, music norms. In some Indigenous communities, LGBTQ2 may not be traditional or accepted, yet in others, Two Spirit and non-binary individuals are revered and honored in Nation specific understandings.²⁰⁷ The new wave of punk bands are making space in

²⁰¹ Samantha Anne Scott, “Electronic Blessings Fest spotlights new wave of Native musicians,” *Alibi*, October 6, 2011/ accessed: May 30, 2019, <https://alibi.com/music/38713/Electronic-Blessings.html>.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ “What Does “Two-Spirit” Mean?” InQueery/Them,” YouTube, December 11, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A4lBibGzUnE>.

the music scene for being femme, queer, Two Spirit, and non-binary artists in a predominately white, male space.



(Figure 6, Weedrat, Becki Jones)

Weedrat is one of the most important punk bands from the Southwest punk scene. The band are members Becki Jones, Greg Yazzie, and Adrian Burke who are from Window Rock, Arizona. Their Bandcamp describes their sound as “Angry pop punk from the land of enchantment.”²⁰⁸ I was fortunate to see them last August at the Lotus Lounge in Hollywood. The screaming and singing from Becki Jones blew the place down. It was electric, and the power from her guitar was amazing. Becki is a punk rock Diné badass singing about topics on anger and cultural appropriation. A fond memory of that show is Becki shouting in the beginning of a song, “Cultural appropriation is wrong...SO DON’T DO IT!!” The drumming of Greg Yazzie rocked the entire venue and it was met with the very punk bass of Adrian.

Becki Jones (pronouns are she/they) is the front women and guitarist of Weedrat, and backup vocals and guitarist of Nizhoni Girls, as well as her other projects Cat Teeth and Sing

²⁰⁸ Weedrat, Bandcamp, n.p./accessed May 1, 2019, <https://weedrat.bandcamp.com/>.

Down the Moon. Becki is a reproductive justice sex educator, activist for missing and murdered Indigenous women, advocate on LGBTQ2 rights, and organizer in her Navajo community. She always wanted to be in a punk band, but wishes there was a better scene for her to grow up in. “Idolizing a lot of the older bands when I was in high school, there are Native punk bands probably like ten or fifteen years older than me now. I wouldn’t recommend a lot of punk bands because of the misogyny or them being shitty.”²⁰⁹ She believes being in a punk band is more important than getting drunk or that stereotypical punk stuff. Many punk scenes have been misogynistic, and bands like Weedrat have been calling it out. “I don’t like calling myself a punk, but I am a punk. I don’t endorse a lot of shitty behaviors,” Becki shares.²¹⁰

Becki was motivated to start a band and was influenced by bands that had women in them, “I’ve always grew up listening to bands like Tsunami Bomb, Go Betty Go, they really inspired me. I always held myself back because of the lack of confidence.”²¹¹ Prior to creating a femme and queer punk network, Becki continues:

I recognized that I had a lot of internalized misogyny in myself, I hung out with a lot of dudes, I didn’t know that sisterhood was important and that we should not to tear down women. I Grew up with the mentality ‘I’m better’ I’m just one of the guys. I started playing bass with my partner Greg Yazzie, he has always been in band since high school.²¹²

Growing in her mid-twenties, Becki started trying out guitar and met female coworkers at her old job at Wholefoods. The band was looking for a bass player for an all-girl punk band, “I got to meet a lot of amazing women who were my age in their mid-twenties, we started jamming

²⁰⁹ Becki Jones in discussion with the author, February 2019.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Ibid.

and we were beginner status. That really was helping me grow and build that feminist outlook, a lot of punk women hanging out, talking a lot, and playing shows.”²¹³

Becki’s next band was Weedrat whose members have all been friends since high school. Becki states, “They were playing in high school, and had all the cool CDs and all the good music. It is hard to find women guitar players, there are not a lot of women playing guitars, but many women playing bass.”²¹⁴ Becki was prompted to write songs that spoke to her experience as an Indigenous woman and not just about getting drunk. Because this space was not available, she made it herself. In Weedrat, Becki finally found her voice which has helped build more on what she cares to sing about. Topics such as “reproductive justice issues, some songs about domestic violence, fucking up people who hold power, and there is a song dedicated to Donald Trump because he is an asshole, bashing on assholes, and girls getting sexually harassed,” she shares.²¹⁵

Becki is musically influenced by Greg and Adrian, also Against Me!, Propagandhi, Saves the Day, sharing she is an emo girl at heart and was into the emo genre years back. She liked NOFX back in high school, which helped shape her political views at an early age, also bands like Bad Religion and the Descendents. “I realized until I grew up later, it was all white dudes, really basic liberal stuff that doesn’t reflect me as an Indigenous woman,” she explains.²¹⁶ Becki likes Downtown Boys and how political they get, Jawbreaker, Fucked Up, and listens to a lot of different genres, the same stuff from high school, and hearing what other people are doing. Becki details, “Descendents shows are bro-ed out now, going to Descendents shows, you have a bunch of gross old white dudes that are problematic too. Bill the drummer has said some homophobic

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

stuff. It is kind of nostalgic; it was my first and probably going to be the last time seeing them...just to get off my chest.”²¹⁷ In interviewing Becki, it is important in looking at punk differently and with a critical eye, recognizing that a lot of stuff we like in punk is problematic and may stand in a different light as we are growing up. Many people of color and Indigenous youth are writing music about their experiences and what they ultimately want to hear. “Punk has its contradictions and is patriarchal,” Becki adds, “Punk still has some of the older generations that embrace homophobia.”²¹⁸ It is supposed to be progressive, but still, there is a conservative punk side, bands such as Weedrat are trying to take down that misogyny. “The Window Rock and Albuquerque scene is getting pretty big, there is a lot of brown people within the last decade, there are a lot of bands with more members who are queer, trans, and bands that have more women, or all women,” she adds.²¹⁹ In asking if there has been any pushback to her messages, Becki says, “No, I would probably yell at them.”²²⁰ But she shares she did call out a sexual predator at a venue. It made things awkward she says, but made her angry that they were at this venue/house show. She talked to people at the house, “Hey this guy is shitty,” and they supported her.²²¹ It made her feel uncomfortable, as he tried to lie about it, yet she knows multiple survivors of this person. Becki discusses she is “trying to call stuff like that out, letting people know, we’re not going to stand for that or people like that...an abuser.”²²²

According to Becki, issues arising in the punk genre include misogyny and the safety of women, trans and LGBTQ2 peoples. She says these topics and protections are necessary in the music. The central issues addressed by Weedrat is sexual and domestic violence, “We have the

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Ibid.

highest rates of every race and ethnicity in the U.S.”²²³ Personally, Becki has experienced child abuse, domestic violence and seen it at home, as well as substance abuse which she says stems from historical trauma and settler colonialism.²²⁴ It is all intersectional she adds, “Environmental injustice, is intersectional with why we have high rates of domestic and sexual violence, why there’s high poverty rates, lack of education, interdisciplinary injustice, lack of basic roads, grocery stores for people to get food, we have such a food desert on the reservations, not a lot of people are aware of our struggles as Indigenous peoples.” She wants to bring awareness saying, “‘Hey we are here,’ to shed light on issues for our territory and what is going on.”²²⁵ Becki shares the communities are not victims, but agents of change and strength. The goal for Weedrat is to inspire other people to find their voice and power. When Becki gets on the mic, she explains that she is really angry from her past life of seeing a lot of violence. She says, “It shaped the woman that I am today, the violence stopped with me, especially young people, I want them to know you can stop the violence in your family, that trauma does not have to pass to another person.”²²⁶ Becki explains that many of her peers have not grown up with traditional music, but rather different genres of music, or have different tastes, that is why there is a revitalization of punk music. Being involved in sexual health education, she wants to share how others can be preventatively educated and consent for what they want. She speaks out on important issues as a Diné woman and defends her community through education and punk music.

Creating safe and inclusive spaces in punk scenes and campuses has been important work for Kristian Vasquez, an undergraduate at UCLA, who is dual majoring in Chicano and Chicana Studies and American Indian Studies. He is a podcaster for Xicana Tiahui and a student

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ Ibid.

organizer for the Eagle and Condor Liberation Front in UCLA.²²⁷ Kristian is currently a Ph.D. candidate for UC Santa Barbara in Chicana Studies. His origins are his father is detribalized P'urhepecha from Michoacán, Mexico, and his mother is from Durango, Zacatecas, Mexico.²²⁸ Kristian is second generation in the U.S., his grandparents lived in Los Angeles in the 1960s, and both his parents were born in Southeast Los Angeles.²²⁹ Kristian was born in South Gate in a working class Mexicano, Chicana household.

Kristian shares,
The music I really found home was in punk, bands like the Ramones, Sex Pistols, and The Clash. It wasn't until I was sixteen years old until I got into more anarchist punk such as Subhumans, Crass, Conflict, Discharge, and bunch of these different bands with a more radical and political consciousness, a critique to capitalism and critiques to colonialism...Crass spoke a lot on antiwar stuff.²³⁰

As a young kid being mad at the world, punk music interested Kristian in high school. His punk politics changed when he went into community college. There, he was in the company of more black and brown students, and he found himself culturally and ethnically distinct from a lot of different people, also finding more of a Chicana consciousness. In college and in his community, he saw punk politics evolve in the Los Angeles punk scene. "We're not just punks, were Mexican, were Chicano, brown, not like the white punks that were dominant in the scene," he says. Transferring to UCLA, his own consciousness of punk changed through different spaces, and started to see this change all over the U.S. He discusses the Instagram social media account "Xingonas in the Pit" which is representative of punks that are black and brown, women, gender non-conforming, and non-binary, and throws shows for people of color and women of color.²³¹ Kristian shares his music palette ranges from corridos, punk, thrash, ska, but since

²²⁷ Kristian Vasquez in discussion with the author, April 2019.

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Ibid.

UCLA, his interests include more rock, rap, hip hop, trap, more Mexican music, banda and Indigenous artists.²³²

Kristian distanced himself from the L.A. punk because of things like sexual assault in spaces he saw in his experiences. He adds, “I stopped going to gigs and backyard shows because of too much drugs, drinking, sexual assault, and older men being creepy.”²³³ He shares that for punk to continue, those types of things need to stop. People he meets “smoke, drink, or are coping with shit in their lives but it should not come at the expense of the community people are trying to build.”²³⁴ He says there are “Machistas” (individuals with an exaggerated sense of manliness in Latinx communities) that don’t respect women.²³⁵ Kristian shares, “So trans, women, non-binary people are creating their own spaces because these male dominated spaces aren’t working out.”²³⁶

Kristian was exposed to zines (D.I.Y. informative pamphlets on music and issues) through punk. There was a zine that was about sexual consent enclosed in a vinyl record he purchased. Kristian and his partner Maritza Geronimo (Nahua) create zines on the UCLA campus. He created a collective with other students called “Xicana Tiahui” where they have created more zines. “It is poetry based, essays--zines inspired by what I have seen in punk scene, and things that matter to them,” explains Kristian.²³⁷ He aims to incorporate many people’s viewpoints, stories, and opinions. One of the zines is “Pueblos Libres” and his intention is “to create a dialogue on Chicanismo chicano/a/x and Indigenous politics in conversation.”²³⁸ For

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ Ibid.

him, punk is about trying to find a home, trying to find a community, and a connection. Kristian and his collective are working to provide those inclusive and safe spaces on and off campuses.

In the Seattle/Portland area, artist Black Belt Eagle Scout (Swinomish/Inupiaq) is a queer feminist, musician, and producer. Black Belt Eagle Scout developed a love for grunge music, riot grrrl (feminist punk), D.I.Y. shows, and views that music is a way to build.²³⁹ She calls on white riot grrrl to stand up for Indigenous women and bring them into the conversation. Black Belt Eagle Scout has recently gone on tour posting Indigenous ancestral names and places for her dates on flyers, reclaiming presence and that land is Indigenous land. “When I say, “Indians Never Die,” I mean it is a metaphor in the way that we’re going to be here caring for the land. Even though you kill us, we’re going to be here caring for the land,” exclaims Black Belt Eagle Scout.²⁴⁰



(Figure 7, WithxWar, Tish)

Hardcore music has been historically known as a white male music genre, yet there are

²³⁹ Black Belt Eagle Scout Instagram, “Black Belt Eagle Scout,” Instagram, n.p./May 17, 2019, <https://www.instagram.com/blackbelteaglescout/?hl=en>.

²⁴⁰ Black and Brown Indigenous Crew Facebook, “Black and Brown Indigenous Crew,” Facebook, n.p./March 19, 2019, https://www.facebook.com/BlkBrwnIndigenous/?epa=SEARCH_BOX.

many fans all across the states in support of band WithxWar, a hardcore band that is led by Indigenous and non-binary vocalist Tish. The band describes themselves as “Decolonial vegan straight edge” from Chinook and Duwamish lands.²⁴¹ Their Bandcamp shares, “With War acknowledges the original inhabitants of Portland and Seattle. We recognize the removal and injustice done onto the Multnomah Chinook. We honor the 38 nations currently existing in the colonial states of Oregon and Washington. Ahe’hee’.”²⁴² In a performance, Tish screams “Indigenous People, Take Back What’s Yours!” La Tisha (Diné) pronouns include they/them, Daniela on guitar, Zach on guitar, Tyler on bass, and Conner on the drums make up the band.

During Thanksgiving, also known as “Thanks Taking” (a different take on the U.S. holiday that discusses the treatment by settlers with Indigenous communities), Tish wanted to be in straight edge band and discuss the truth about the history of the United States as well as Indigenous issues. Tyler and Tish were talking, and found two guitarists, Zach and Daniela. After the holidays in January, the group started to hold band practice. Zach and drummer Conner had played in a vegan straight edge band before, and came to the consensus that they did not want to play in a straight edge hardcore band. But upon seeing the issues that Tish wanted to focus on, both changed their minds. Bassist Tyler wanted to play bass in a band that was not “white male fronted” and discussed real issues, so he contacted them.²⁴³ “Following Tish on the social media, the xGirlx zine and through mutual internet friends, I saw Tish post around Indigenous truth, it was everything I ever wanted in a band,” shares guitarist Daniela.²⁴⁴

Practice Native survivance, Tish shares central issues in their music and what the band aims to portray in song lyrics. Tish explains,

²⁴¹ WithxWar Bandcamp, “With War,” Bandcamp, n.p./April 22, 2019, <https://withwar.bandcamp.com/>.

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ WithxWar in discussion with the author, April 2019.

Currently our lyrics are talking about missing and murdered Indigenous women, we talked about the connection of animals and animal rights, to veganism to Indigenous rights... Indigenous peoples have different relationship to animals. We also have talked about recognizing there has been a genocide against Indigenous people that continues to today...that it's an ongoing genocide. We've discussed the boarding school era, and different ways Indigenous women, and people who are non-binary, having ovaries, have been impacted and forced to have sterilization. Also, the ways in which oil spills, and the way uranium is mined on my current Nation (Diné), the impact the mining has done on people's bodies, how fracking impacts water, and oil drilling impacts water...it's leaning toward environmental issues.

The band is using their Instagram to donate to the Oglala Lakota relief for the devastation of floods in the Midwest. WithxWar are created a network and bringing Indigenous causes and allies to their pages through their social media. In talking to the band about their audience and reactions to their lyrics, they share that it is a teaching moment in punk and hardcore scenes. The band states there is a big scene in San Diego, and after their shows, fans have asked for more information about missing and murdered Indigenous women. "A fan said they were going to go home later that night to do more research on the subject," explains Daniela. During shows, there might be awkward silence of "white guilt," they share, but it has mostly been positive.²⁴⁵ People really like what they are doing and what they stand for. Daniela shares that many fans thank them after shows. Another instance, a fan asked Tish how they can be a better ally or learn more about the issues brought in the music. Indigenous fans at the venues have shared with the band that WithxWar is everything they ever wanted for hardcore music.

The band is currently in the process of recording an EP with a new song "War Cry."²⁴⁶ While on tour, they put the Indigenous ancestral names of cities on flyers as well. In asking about the Pacific Northwest scene and Indigenous bands, "Two bands come to mind, By All Means is a hardcore band from Tacoma comprised of Indigenous men, and Mala Racha

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

(Grunge/Punk Rock) from Olympia/Seattle are P.O.C. and are Indigenous people and inter-tribal.”²⁴⁷ Also, the band Resistant Culture from Seattle play grindcore and are Indigenous.²⁴⁸ Tish shares, “In Seattle, there are guys, the Tribal Crew of Indigenous men, who have been a part of their hardcore scene. Also, the band Brotherhood is Indigenous.”²⁴⁹ WithxWar draws influences from several different sources. The biggest inspirations for the band is Foundation (Atlanta, Georgia), human rights, straight edge, Trials, Seven Generations, Gather, Content, 2000s hardcore, music that is socially aware, incorporates talks and rants, and “says some shit” for Tish.²⁵⁰ Also, Tish loves a Guatemalan straight edge band that sings in Mayan, and Homesick, which is an Australian Indigenous band. This band was the first time Tish heard a band be blunt about colonization, and violence against Indigenous peoples which sparks their writing. Currently, WithxWar is playing Break Free Fest, a festival for P.O.C. bands in Philadelphia, PA (Lenape lands).²⁵¹ Fans are more than ready to have this band decolonizing and Indigenous the genre of hardcore music.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ Ibid.



(Figure 8, Nizhoni Girls, Darklisted Photography)

Nizhoni Girls are “the trio of sometimes pink, sometimes blue-haired feminist rebels that rock hard all-over Indian Country and inspire new bands to find a way out through music.”²⁵² Becki Jones shares she did not know Liz McKenzie and Lisa Lorenzo too well, yet they were going to Weedrat shows. Liz lived alone at that time, and Lisa, not wanting her friend to be by herself, started to go out a lot to rock gigs and venues.²⁵³ The women talked about hanging out and creating an all-girl band. They were messing around with names for being a femme, Native band, joking around they said, “Let’s call it Nizhoni Girls,” which in Navajo means “Beautiful.”²⁵⁴ Becki shares they were all beginners, Lisa wanted to play drums, and Liz was the bass and main vocalist. The trio are inspired by the female pop bands that thrived between 2010 and 2015 like Vivienne Girls, Bleached, La Sera, La Luz, L.A. Witch, and Best Coast.²⁵⁵ Becki shares that their sound is “beachy, surfy, not so much punk,” but their message is indeed punk.²⁵⁶ The group promotes local bands’ shirts and gear such as the Flossies and the Ferrets. The group

²⁵² Laurel Morales, “The Rockers,” Fronteras Desk, September 13, 2018/or May 1, 2019, <https://fronterasdesk.org/content/698164/changing-woman-part-six-rockers>.

²⁵³ Jason Asenap, The Making of a Desert Surf Rock Band, *High Country News*, February 4, 2019/ February 11, 2019, <https://www.hcn.org/issues/51.2/tribal-affairs-the-making-of-a-desert-surf-rock-band> 15.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁵⁵ Laurel Morales, “The Rockers.”

²⁵⁶ Becki Jones in discussion with the author, February 2019.

encourages Indigenous girls to practice and purchase used, or cheap equipment that they can always fix up when starting out, and promote the use of YouTube.²⁵⁷

Liz has been active in her community and an activist for the Standing Rock No Dakota Access Pipeline.²⁵⁸ She shares that she would have been a third generation doctor, but went to culinary school instead.²⁵⁹ Liz discusses that she went to Standing Rock nine times around December, and was a cook and fed everyone, sharing it was really intense.²⁶⁰ “There was surveillance everywhere. The thing that messed me up the most was the concept of infiltrators in the camp. After requests to retrieve sacred items, they let loose on everything. They trashed it all,” Liz explains.²⁶¹ She books shows, does a D.I.Y. all ages music venue, organizes, and has donation drives for the community oriented Chinle nursing home.²⁶² During Easter and Christmas, kids write letters to the elderly, and many elders know Liz’s grandpa.²⁶³ Lisa Lorenzo is from Laguna, her clans are Big Water, Little Edge of the Water, and she works with fixing rugs, dying wool, and playing drums in another band.²⁶⁴ Lisa shares that growing up, she did not see a lot of Native American women in the music field, “It was always important to me to being that person that someone can look up to.”²⁶⁵

The boarding school era affected many communities, Liz and Becki share how their family’s history is very important showing their strength and resistance, “Like my last name is McKenzie because one of my great greats was stripped away from his family and given the name

²⁵⁷Shaihannahgans, Shannah x Nizhoni Girls, June 6, 2018, accessed: December 14, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oXmf6pU3VxM&t=75s>, youtube.

²⁵⁸ Becki Jones in discussion with the author, February 2019.

²⁵⁹ Asenap, 19.

²⁶⁰ Ibid., 19.

²⁶¹ Ibid., 20

²⁶² Shaihannahgans, “Shannah x Nizhoni Girls.”

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

McKenzie.”²⁶⁶ The Nizhoni Girls try to combat historical traumas by instilling pride in being Indigenous femme rockers inspiring young girls. Along with other organizers, the Nizhoni girls organize the Asdzáá Warrior Fest, a place to empower Native women against patriarchy with the concept of kinship in mind.²⁶⁷ They also perform at schools on the reservation and have music workshops for kids. Overall, the Nizhoni Girls want to help guide and empower young women to be resilient, make change, play music and take pride in being Indigenous. Nizhoni Girls share, “No one really understands that more than the other brown women around you, with a forward-thinking mindset.”²⁶⁸

Starting in Phoenix, Arizona, Turquoiz Noiz is a San Francisco based band that influences include art, psychedelia, and punk. Singer and guitarist Rocky Yazzie (Diné) is from Shiprock, Arizona. He describes Turquoiz Noiz as “Ratchet Rock” or “Powwow Punk.”²⁶⁹ He shares there was a blossoming Phoenix art scene with just a few Natives. Rocky wanted to start his own band and write a song about skinwalkers (transforming witches in Navajo culture). His girlfriend at the time was from San Francisco and missing home, so Rocky decided to follow and moved with her changing the band’s name from the “Skinwalkers” to “Sweat Lodge.”²⁷⁰ At a jam session, a friend brought their friend Rachel from Seattle, where she and Rocky jammed for hours.²⁷¹ That same night, he shares that they decided to see a friend play at the venue called Bottom of the Hill. The band broke up on stage that night, and the bass player walked up and said, “Do you need a bass player?”²⁷² Adam was the bassist that joined at that time. The band

²⁶⁶ Laurel Morales, “The Rockers.”

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

²⁶⁸ Asenap, 19.

²⁶⁹ Momo Chang, “Navajo Tacos in Oakland,” *East Bay Express*, Oct 09 2018/April 21, 2019, <https://www.eastbayexpress.com/WhatTheFork/archives/2018/10/09/navajo-tacos-in-oakland>.

²⁷⁰ Rocky Yazzie in discussion with the author, March 2019.

²⁷¹ Ibid.

²⁷² Ibid.

had to change names because another band had the name Sweat Lodge. They decided on Turquoiz Noiz and named the first album “Sweat Lodge” just to piss off the other band, says Rocky.²⁷³

Rocky shares ideas that the band incorporates in songs, “Really simple, nothing too thought out, but definitely conscientious of nature, elements, and things older than us having to respect it. We are at the mercy of fire, rain, water, wind, which kind of influences the writing process of the band.”²⁷⁴ Rocky moved to Seattle to write their third album, “Prayer for Rain” where he met a lot of Natives, and their new bass player Brandon. The band’s influences include “psychedelics, doing a lot of reading, art, and recreational tripping.”²⁷⁵ He adds that mescaline, peyote, and LSD helps open up something in himself that he cannot get out, and opens him up artistically.²⁷⁶ He goes to New Mexico, gets information from back home, and writes about it. His local scenes of Oakland and San Francisco are always challenging each other, bands are competitive, “Oh you did this? I’ll do this!”²⁷⁷ The band’s album “Sweat Lodge” is straight punk, where their new album is more psychedelic punk, more mellow, melodic, yet hard.²⁷⁸ Rocky shares he does not have family around in San Francisco, so the bands create a family.

Turquoiz Noiz is definitely a queer band according to Rocky, he shares members are queer, and feel safe in the Bay Area.²⁷⁹ “But if you go to Boise, Idaho, you had the crowd goers yelling, ‘What are you a bunch of f*****s!’”²⁸⁰ Rocky loves the Bay Area, “You can be who you are.”²⁸¹ He “likes to play art galleries, and all ages shows since it keeps people from getting

²⁷³ Ibid.

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

²⁸¹ Ibid.

all boozy.”²⁸² In booking shows, the band will try to book all age shows and venues so that everyone can go. He says he tries to make sure who he is playing with. There was an instance at a show where someone on the bill was abusive to women. “Bands have to be conscientious of who you are playing with,” he shares.²⁸³ The band have also played at Bridgetown, a D.I.Y. venue in La Puente, a close neighbor to El Monte, California.²⁸⁴

By drinking prior, Rocky shares the music and art saved him. “If he was back home, I’d be doing something else. Being in San Francisco keeps me on my toes,” Rocky continues, “It is hard being away from home, in what I write, it is always yearning for home, reminiscing and romanticizing.”²⁸⁵ Rocky shares he is one of the sole Navajo Native chefs in the whole Bay Area. His girlfriend at the time urged him to “sell that food.”²⁸⁶ He started selling food on the street. “A lot of people didn’t know what Navajo food was, what fry bread is, they don’t know what Navajo tacos are, or hot green chili,” he explains.²⁸⁷ Rocky runs “Rocko’s Tacos” at The Lodge and keeps getting published in *Washington Journal* articles, getting awards, accolades, and write ups. In our interview, Rocky is very humble, he says chefs think he is something, he went to culinary school, but did not know it would take off.²⁸⁸ He does artwork and graphics for the restaurant. In describing his dishes, “Fry bread and beans is what you’re usually eating. It’s what you would get on a reservation. It’s super OG. Fry bread is a food that was created in the 1800s during a dark period of American history: from the enslavement of First Nations peoples by the U.S. Army who were given government rations like flour, yeast, salt, sugar, and powdered

²⁸² Ibid.

²⁸³ Ibid.

²⁸⁴ Turquoiz Noiz Facebook, “Turquoiz Noiz Facebook,” Facebook, n.p./May 2, 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/turquoiznoiz/>.

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

milk,” he states.²⁸⁹ Using his skills by his grandmother in making his traditional Navajo food which also carries a resilient history, Rocky hones his craft and artistry through his food business. He is cooking for Greenpeace in fifteen days from our interview. Rocky wants to be doing it for the sake of art. He purposefully chose the album artwork by artist J. Slim for their newest album “Pray for Rain.”²⁹⁰ The band has joined bigger venues to open, and were asked to play SxSw (South by Southwest Fest). The band continues grinding on tour across the U.S. this summer. Rocky continues incorporating his traditional home in his dishes, music, lyrics, and art.

SKODEN: Indigenous D.I.Y., and Space making



(Figure 9, the Ferrets, the Ferrets Facebook)

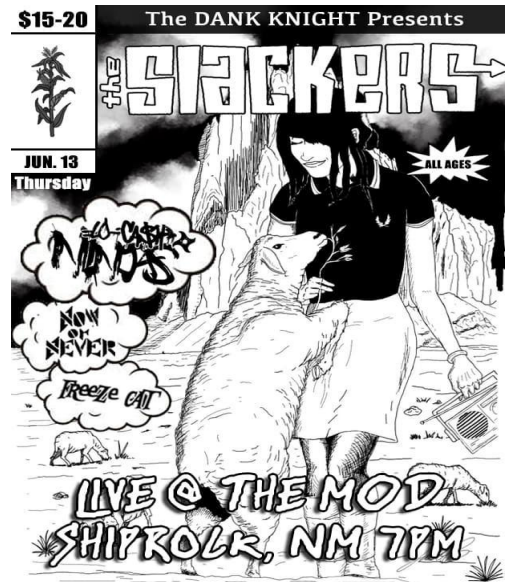
In examining survivance, Indigenous bands and musicians have been creatively building communities using punk aesthetics of D.I.Y. for venues, warehouses, skateparks, studios, backyard shows, despite rural areas and limited resources imposed by U.S Government. There are also desert festivals and house shows thrown by bands and promoters in the D.I.Y. fashion. In the case of some Indigenous communities from more rural, desert areas, they have had difficulties due to location that ranged from rationed internet, to gigs and shows that were far

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

from one another. But in general, bands in communities throughout the Southwest improvise extensively, even on occasion having punk shows in shacks and warehouses, using plywood for a stage or even a flatbed truck. Many musicians in the Indigenous punk and metal scenes take on roles of band management, booking, and promotion. Some tribal communities have their own amphitheaters, casino venues, tribal festivals, and fairgrounds, and music is showcased at powwows, becoming the forerunner in music. According to several interviews, non-Native bands are coming onto the reservation such as Three Bad Jacks, Left Alone, Misfits, Jerry Only, Nekromantix, The Rocketz, Soulfly, Anthrax, Korn, and Michale Graves. Raemus Catron from punk band Rei Gurren was asked to sing on stage with Jerry Only of the Misfits during a Navajo Treaty Days Festival.²⁹¹ Many local bands have opened up for touring bands. As a practice of survivance against “victimhood,” and limited resources, bands are using the D.I.Y. aesthetic, and are currently building gig space as well as using creativity in the arts, zines, journalism, and record labels to do music on their terms, and tell their stories in their way. Ultimately, they have created long standing and successful scenes and legacies.

²⁹¹ Rei Gurren in discussion with the author, March 2019.



(Figure 10, The Dank Knight Presents flyer, Jordan Steele)

Jordan Steele is from the small town of Teec Nos Pos, Arizona and grew up the majority of his life in Shiprock, where he first experienced music. His maternal clan is Yucca Fruit Strung Out Together, his paternal clan is Zuni people, and his maternal grandfather is Oraibi Adopted clan and his paternal grandfather is Reed people.²⁹² Currently, Jordan is a teacher's assistant at the special education department at a Chinle school, and is attending classes and graduating in hopes to pursue either education or history. Jordan is also a very well-known person in the Navajo punk scene as well as Los Angeles. As fellow El Monte punk and band member of Unstable Youth/Violent Traditions James Lee Privett shares, "My buddy Jordan Steele is Native, he had one of the best-known punk bands from Arizona on the rez."²⁹³ Lo Cash Ninjas have played ska, punk, grindcore, and hardcore during the second wave of the Native punk scene in the Southwest. The band has a song and video called "Corn Pollen Kisses" which shares a young

²⁹² Jordan Steele in discussion with the author, April-May 2019.

²⁹³ James Lee Privett in discussion with the author, April 2019.

couple with the backdrop of the Southwest desert in Shiprock and Wheatfields.²⁹⁴ The room in the video is filled with countless punk posters from the Exploited to the Misfits. The young woman in the video has a shirt saying, “Strong Resilient Apache” and later in the video, she is in her beautiful, traditional Native regalia. Lo Cash Ninjas has played with various bands including Aztlan Underground at a show in Downey, California, Three Bad Jacks, the San Diego ska scene, Berkeley, as well as the San Carlos Apache Skate Park.²⁹⁵

Jordan grew up with the “skater kids who had older brothers into Crip stuff and hip hop, but the younger brothers were listening to punk rock such as really old AFI, Tiger Army, NOFX...a bunch of good stuff we were listening to back then, just scratching the surface.”²⁹⁶ Skateboarding was a huge part of growing up. Jordan watched the skate video “Sorry” from Flip skateboard team. He shares, “The video had really good punk rock on there...there was a lot of 70s and 80s punk rock.”²⁹⁷ Near the end of middle school, Jordan shares he received a CD from a friend and remembers it till this day. The CD that he listened to was Choking Victim which blew his mind, especially its ska element. He was not too fond of ska; he had heard bands like Less Than Jake, but this changed everything. Jordan looked up to No Cash, Stupid Stupid Henchmen and many bands whom he later met and became personal friends with.

In high school, he immersed himself into punk rock music. Jordan had to go out of town for punk since locally, it was all metal. “It was majority all metal, every weekend the Horny Toads, Ethnic De Generation, we had nothing else to do, so we would mosh and hang at the metal shows.”²⁹⁸ Jordan recalls he busted open his head at a show located at a sheep or cattle

²⁹⁴ Lo Cash Ninjas Corn Pollen Kisses Official video, November 17, 2017, accessed: December 14, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9c99hvKzBRk>, youtube, youtube.

²⁹⁵ Jordan Steele in discussion with the author, April-May 2019.

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

corral, “It was gnarly, one of the shows, there was sheep shit on the floor. We got in the circle pit there was sheep poop residue, and feces went in the air, flying into the gate everywhere...I was bleeding and thought it was sweat. I washed it off with water and went back into it. I guess it wasn’t that bad.”²⁹⁹ Jordan had to travel out to Albuquerque and Flagstaff for punk shows. At sixteen years old, he hitchhiked to see Leftover Crack who was playing in downtown Flagstaff. That evening, there was a punk show and a full-on riot in the street.³⁰⁰ This was his first introduction to hitchhiking and going into a punk show outside his town, all in the same night. The first time he heard Native punk rock, he entered a skate competition in Window Rock, the capital of the Navajo Nation. He rolled up to the skating competition and took third place. In a hall nearby, he heard crazy music that sounded cool to him which was punk and rock n roll.³⁰¹ The band Third Degree from Window Rock played originals and covers. Jordan shares, “They were rockabilly and straight up rock n roll. And till this day, I am pretty sure it was also S.O.L. (Shit Outta Luck) a Navajo band just starting out.”³⁰² A lot of the bands were older than him, but he wondered about starting a band of his own.

Jordan’s knowledge of the Native punk scene surpasses many, he is a true historian and shares how he had to create a scene in Shiprock. He essentially brought punk to his community. He mentions how he puts bands in categories or phases, with waves of punk bands throughout the years. The first wave was the Northern Arizona scene with Blackfire and bands like Primitive Tribes. He shares the band Blackfire was also in the very beginning. Jordan had a conversation with Klee Benally of Blackfire who witnessed the Flagstaff scene firsthand. “The scene had Natives and the hardcore metal of the 1980s, which crossed over to hardcore metal and punk

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

³⁰⁰ Ibid.

³⁰¹ Ibid.

³⁰² Ibid.

rock. This was the first introduction of 1980s Navajo music emerging,” says Jordan.³⁰³ Klee Benally already noticed this phenomenon in Navajo music in the 1980s. Jordan shares that in the Navajo culture, there are different creation stories with four different worlds. Klee shared this with Jordan, in that the different music genres and scenes were like the four worlds submerging. “He really painted the picture,” Jordan continues, “You can’t leave out Klee, he paved the way so bands like me can hit the road, that were D.I.Y., doing things, and keeping the message of resistance in the music, and Klee is a major influence to Lo Cash, and all punk bands all around.”³⁰⁴

He shares, “Third Degree, S.O.L. (Shit Outta Luck) were bands that caught the last of the first phase along with Downplay, who were all the pioneers of punk rock.”³⁰⁵ This as he says was before stuff was on the internet on the reservation. In looking at old photos, Jordan saw how D.I.Y. and resourceful Native punks were in their fashion style. He shares, “They had JNCO pants that were tapered, the weird frosted hair, the crazy spikes, and all kinds of crazy color stuff,” he adds, “This was like the first phase of punk, being on the rez, they didn’t have access to that stuff, they did whatever they could with whatever they had, they would modify their clothes and turn their cheii’s (grandfather) trousers into punk rock pants, dad’s or cheii’s leather jacket and deck it out or bedazzle that, back then I thought it was the coolest things ever...this is actually stuff they found from the sheep camps they put together in their punk rock wardrobe.”³⁰⁶ Jordan takes pride in his community of Shiprock, a sheep camp community. Native punks were incorporating Navajo textiles in their punk fashion and Jordan has also incorporated the sheep

³⁰³ Ibid.

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

camp community in his punk flyers. He says, “Bands like Distorted Youth, Child Left Behind, was the first phase, it was the ‘spikey hair drunk punk’ and ‘pop punk Blink 182’ phase.”³⁰⁷

The second phase was Jordan’s band Lo-Cash Ninjas and others which caught on and became really popular. Jordan shares that the second phase included:

The Womboz, the Blissins, Solitude, Enemies of Society, Wulfsbane, Child Left Behind (kind of, maybe the first phase), and the third phase of punk is kind of phasing out now, we’re seeing a lot more punks. There’s more of the Indigenous feminism included in the scene. I think it’s really dope, a lot of women or identifying as femme are picking up instruments and are telling the boys, ‘This is not just yours anymore, this is everyone’s, this is ours,’ they are killing it, doing dope stuff, and writing great music.³⁰⁸

The “Crack Shack Scene” was with Alex Begay in Tuba City at their little shed on his family’s property.³⁰⁹ Begay played in Downplay and these bands were the early 2000s shows, and as I hear from many bands in researching, a very big time for rez and Native punk. The Slackers played there early on as well as Still Ugly which was an Oi! (non-racist skinhead street punk) Diné band.³¹⁰ Alex Begay created a record studio called 320 Records in Tuba City and recorded Navajo bands from all over the rez.³¹¹ Tuba City was the “spikey hair drunk punk phase wearing studs,” Jordan adds, “Cameron was as far as fifteen miles from Tuba, the ‘Band Room’ was in Cameron, also known to locals as ‘C Town’ that popped up on the rez.”³¹² The Band Room was a D.I.Y. space where many bands of different genres congregated. In photos from Lloyd Cisco, a member of Anakin Skinwalka, you see members from black metal bands in attendance of a punk show at The Band Room.³¹³ In Chinle, Josiah Clyde created Child Left Behind after watching Downplay. He and Begay from Downplay started Distorted Youth which

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

³¹⁰ Ibid.

³¹¹ Ibid.

³¹² Ibid.

³¹³ Lloyd Cisco in discussion with the author, May 2019.

was pop punk/emo and came out with the first actual “rez hit” called “Out in the Cold.”³¹⁴ Jordan explains it is similar to what country rez band hit singles are on the reservation. “They have like the singles for the reservation country bands, they usually have a single, everyone knows this song,” he continues, “Child Left Behind wrote the first actual rez hit single called ‘Out in the Cold,’ basically punk rock break up music written ‘rezzy style’ and the band blew up, everyone loved it.”³¹⁵

Jordan lays out how distinct particular punk scenes were during this second wave. According to Jordan, they would host shows at Josiah Clyde’s mom’s home in Chinle, AZ and it was also where the big skate scene was. Window Rock was vibrant with horror punk. There was Third Degree and a few horror punk bands that hit the punk scene hard. They were very much influenced by the Misfits, bands like Five Cellars Below who now are Rei Gurren.³¹⁶ “Kayenta is one of those places that was very metal dominant. It wasn’t a punk cobblestone,” says Jordan, “If there was a punk show, many from all over would travel there. There is a psychobilly band Kats of Horror from Kayenta. The Bandits came from Tsaile and Chinle and were very good at instrumentalism. In Tsaile, the music was very good, with Small Town Boys along with Distorted Victimz who played some ska.”³¹⁷ The punks did not have venues and the fairs usually brought metal, so they made their own spaces, “ ‘Take Down Get Down’ was a skate competition and music concert, and the Fourth of July in Chinle at Josiah’s family’s house was another event. There was a house to throw shows, an older dude named Danny would have parties and punk bands, which was my band’s first performance outside of Shiprock.”³¹⁸ Jordan

³¹⁴ Ibid.

³¹⁵ Ibid.

³¹⁶ Ibid.

³¹⁷ Ibid.

³¹⁸ Ibid.

says, “Danny’s pad in Lukachukai, Arizona, Lo Cash played with This Bike Is A Pipe Bomb which was a big show that showcased metalcore and got our foot in the door. Danny’s pad was the first show out of Shiprock with older people and kids in a trailer.”³¹⁹

“The Dojo” was the name of the practice space of Lo Cash Ninjas, where they practiced from 2009 to 2012.³²⁰ Jordan was essential in trying to bring big bands to Shiprock to play. He figured out the process in watching his friends book shows, it then became second nature to host events, “Shiprock had a good scene for a while.”³²¹ In 2012, Lo Cash started touring the states and it was hard to keep booking locally while touring. They had to stop booking bands and during that time, some other members of bands that were their age, passed away which was very hard on the scene during that era.³²² Hardcore and emo had a small following and fans moved to Phoenix. Jordan explains some in the emo scene became “too embarrassed to be from rez” it seemed.³²³ In terms of influence of Lo Cash, rap and the politics of Blackfire really influenced Jordan. Words from white political punk bands were not resonating with him. Therefore, Lo Cash created the album named “Broke, Brown, and Beautiful.”³²⁴ Jordan and bandmates decided to make their own lyrics speaking on their experiences being Diné. Their song “Still Here” has a chorus of: “I’m not a mascot, I’m not a drunk, I’m not extinct you fucking punk, I’m not an immigrant I’ve been here, I’ll survive genocide another thousand years,” as a form of survivance going against the imposed narratives of Indigenous peoples.³²⁵ Jordan and bandmates are challenging punk history through lyrics, making space, and recollecting their long standing punk

³¹⁹ Ibid.

³²⁰ Ibid.

³²¹ Ibid.

³²² Ibid.

³²³ Ibid.

³²⁴ Lo Cash Ninjas Facebook coverpage, “Lo Cash Ninjas,” Facebook, May 15, 2017/accessed May 1, 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/LoCashNinjas/>.

³²⁵ Ibid.

history, and innovation in fashion. Currently, his new project is with bandmates Lloyd and Grim, called Anakin Skynwalka, a take on the shapeshifting Navajo witch in their culture and *Star Wars* characters. Lo Cash is reuniting with longtime friends the Slackers in June. The band is currently touring, writing new music, and throwing shows continuing to keep the scenes alive with Indigenous punk.



(Figure 11, Blue Bird Pinups, Jessica Hoyungowa)

As mentioned earlier with regards to LGBTQ2, punk music, especially in the Southwest, has gone beyond its musical confines to represent not only a genre of music, but a desire to challenge societal norms, and in this case, the Blue Bird Pinups have reflected this in their style of clothing. The Blue Bird Pinups are Native rockabilly women that are engaged with their community through cultural events and fundraising across the Four Corners region. They incorporate “pieces of their culture, traditional tribal regalia, jewelry, and also aesthetics and

fashion from vintage clothes from the 1940s through the 1960s.”³²⁶ The BBP (Blue Bird Pinups) are essentially creating a space for Indigenous women in the world of pinup which has been dominated by Anglo standards of beauty--features such as blonde hair and blue eyes. Jessica Hoyungowa, one of the cofounders of BPP, tells us the history of the group.

Jessica shares,
The Blue Bird Pinups started in 2012. Here’s our story, I was Arizona State Representative for a pinup group out of San Diego and this group focused on volunteering at military related events. Being a part of the Navajo tribe, I knew the history of our tribe’s participation in World War II, so once I found the Navajo Code Talkers Day event held in Window Rock, AZ it was definitely something that I wanted to be a part of.³²⁷

Jessica is from the Hopi and Navajo Tribes. “My Hopi clan is Kachina. My Navajo clans are Dzit’aadi, Near the Mountain People born for Ta’chii’nii, Red-running into the Water People. This is how we are taught to introduce ourselves to let others know where we come from. I am from Moenkopi Village, Arizona which actually borders the Navajo and Hopi reservation line and I currently reside in Los Angeles,” says Jessica. ³²⁸ She moved to California with her son in 2014 to pursue a career in Criminal Justice and makes trips back home every couple of months to visit family and to take part in ceremonies at her village.³²⁹ She states, “If I am not working, you can usually find my son and I hitting up thrift stores and flea markets, or exploring L.A. and Orange County, hiking, Downtown L.A., finding new spots to eat, or at Dodger Stadium as we both love baseball!”³³⁰

The unique “Blue Bird Pinups” name, is centered on their Southwest Indigenous cultures.

Jessica explains it this way,
At that time there was five of us and we were all a part of the Navajo, Hopi, and Apache tribes so we started to think of items that stood out to us within our cultures. Among those items were turquoise, velvet, moccasins, painted desert, frybread, mutton, blue bird flour, and

³²⁶ Blue Bird Pinups in discussion with the author, April 2019.

³²⁷ Ibid.

³²⁸ Ibid.

³²⁹ Ibid.

³³⁰ Ibid.

so many more. We knew for a fact that we had never seen any pinup groups out there that were Native American, and we wanted our name to reflect who we are and where we come from. Blue Bird Flour is pretty much like a staple to Indigenous families when it comes to making fry bread and tortillas.³³¹

Jessica explains how as Native women from these tribes, making bread is an essential skill taught by your mother and grandmother.³³² “A meal is not complete without your bread and there is nothing like the taste of your bread with Blue Bird Flour. So, we obviously chose the name Blue Bird Pinups, which mixes our culture with our love of vintage fashion,” Jessica explains.³³³ Incorporating the flour in the BBP name, the women maintained a cultural connection among the many tribes of the Four Corners region as well as creating a network to uplift and support each other through love of fashion and music. Again, with the use of the story of bread and Blue Bird flour, much like Turquoiz Noiz, a very dark part of U.S. history is turned around and used to inspire, educate, and create Indigenous spaces.

Jessica reached out to a few other Native women such as Sophia Foxx and Krystle Platero who shared similar interests in the scene such as pinup fashion, music, and were happy to volunteer. Sophia Foxx (Sophia Arviso) discusses how she got into Blue Bird Pinups, “I have been a member since the beginning, and I must say that it has become a passion in my life. It really helped me become the lady that I am now.³³⁴ There were challenges in her life that she was facing but says she somehow overcame them. Sophia shares how she gained her pinup name, and the confidence her vintage look has given her,

Before I was ‘Sophia Foxx,’ I was ‘Miss Honey Rose.’ The name was very apple pie, sweet and warm. I was still very shy and a late bloomer. I say late bloomer because I was still trying to find myself as a woman. I overcame some personal hardships that wrecked my self-esteem and motivation. I didn’t realize what emotional and physical abuse did to me and how it changed me. I had to move out of the shadow and start thinking about myself.

³³¹ Ibid.

³³² Ibid.

³³³ Ibid.

³³⁴ Ibid.

That did take some time, but I was so grateful to be a part of the Bluebird Pinups. We have been together for almost seven years and it really helped transform me into a courageous and confident Indigenous woman. Jessica suggested that I change my Pinup name. With her help I became ‘Sophia Foxx,’ that was the best move I ever made. It became my way of thinking when I got up every day. What would Sophia Foxx do? It was my alter ego like Superman.³³⁵

Another pinup is Krystle Platero, who is Navajo and Isleta Pueblo originally from Window Rock, AZ. Krystle shares, “In Navajo, we begin by introducing ourselves with our clans so that is what I will do here. I am of the Bitter Water Clan (Todch'iinii) Born for the Isleta Pueblo. My maternal grandfather is of the Mexican Clan (Naakai Dine'e) and also my paternal grandfather.”³³⁶ She came to Las Vegas at the age of eighteen to attend the University of Nevada Las Vegas and graduated with a B.A. in Political Science.³³⁷

Krystle shares, Through my academic career, I was the President for the Native American Student Association (NASA) and I also held the title of Miss Native American UNLV. As Miss Native UNLV, I represented our Native American student population on and off campus. Throughout my reign, I was invited to speak at different schools, from elementary to high school, around the Las Vegas valley and also made appearances at different campus functions.³³⁸

After graduating from UNLV, Krystle worked for the Las Vegas Paiute Tribal Court and later for the Grand Canyon Skywalk that is located on the Hualapai Reservation in Arizona, while still residing in Las Vegas.³³⁹

Jessica shares her thoughts on fashion, style, hair, and makeup. The “bad girl” vibe is her

³³⁵ Ibid.

³³⁶ Ibid.

³³⁷ Ibid.

³³⁸ Ibid.

³³⁹ Ibid.

favorite. Jessica loves vintage western because of the fringe and gets her vintage western inspiration from Wanda Jackson.³⁴⁰ Jessica's hair styles have definitely changed over the years from Bettie (Page) bangs to pink and purple hair, vintage waves, victory rolls, but at the moment it is long and her natural color. "I'm not a huge makeup person so I stick with red lips and winged liner. It's always my go to," she shares.³⁴¹ Jessica continues,

Although I'd love to buy amazing pieces from these eras (1940s-1960s) at vintage shops, I find that it is really expensive and of course I am a single mom so saving money is always on my mind; I am definitely about the thrift life. It might take more time digging for vintage or vintage reproduction, but I think it's more fun that way especially because it reminds me of digging through my grandmother's closets and going to the reservation flea markets. I also like to tell people that I got my pieces for like five dollars (haha). I used to really be into full skirts and swing dresses with petticoat but nowadays, I lean more towards fitted wiggle dresses and cigarette high waisted pants.³⁴²

Community work is very important to BBP as they have sold pinup calendars and collected donations from anyone who visited their booth. This event was created solely by the descendants of the Navajo Code Talkers (children and grandchildren) which they all paid out of their own pocket to run this event.³⁴³ There is an Easter event and "Blue Christmas" held in Ft. Defiance, Arizona at the local Chapter house.³⁴⁴ Sophia shares, "We have either styled hair, modeled, or worked at events behind the scenes."³⁴⁵ The Native art and fashion community has been growing and BBP have worked with OXDX Clothing on fashion shows, as well as photoshoots, *Native Max Magazine*, social media *Indigenous Goddess Gang*, the Heard Museum, Los Angeles Unified School District Indian Education Program, St. Michael Association of Special Education, and so much more.³⁴⁶

³⁴⁰ Ibid.

³⁴¹ Ibid.

³⁴² Ibid.

³⁴³ Ibid.

³⁴⁴ Ibid.

³⁴⁵ Ibid.

³⁴⁶ Ibid.

Music is a big part of Sophia’s life, both rockabilly, psychobilly and punk. “Rockabilly is a big part of the 50s and is thriving today. Although it’s not mainstream, the combination of rock and country has a following. Then again, I do have an old soul and anything before 1970 is a favorite,” Sophia says.³⁴⁷ Krystle shares, “When I was growing up on the reservation, our radio stations were limited, and so country was one of those stations. I also listen to a lot of 1980s hair bands, metal, and punk.”³⁴⁸ Krystle also loves to dance, so reggaeton and hip hop are important for her as well. Overall, similar to how punk rock took mainstream rock n’ roll and added a change of aggressive strumming and a faster tempo, the Blue Bird Pinups empower their community with beauty, body empowerment workshops, music, vintage aesthetics, and are involved in new, cutting edge Native fashion, while at the same time, adding traditional elements that maintain their traditions. Whether living with their communities or states away, the women have created a network to share their pride in being traditional and modern Indigenous women.



(Figure 12, Albuquerque, Daphne Coriz)

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

³⁴⁸ Ibid.

Daphne Coriz (Kewa Pueblo) is an alternative Native American model with the hashtag she created for herself, #RezBettie.³⁴⁹ She is also a very accomplished full-time hairstylist of six years at Regis Salon.³⁵⁰ Daphne is from Kewa also known as Santo Domingo Pueblo, New Mexico and has lived on the reservation her entire life residing there with her family. “I do consider myself a Rez girl, but I fully have submerged myself into the alt/goth lifestyle,” Daphne shares.³⁵¹ Involving herself into goth, metal, and alternative music, Daphne discusses how it made her stand out on the reservation, “I was about seven or eight years old when I got my first taste of metal and hard rock music. This was during the late 90s when the nu-metal music scene was starting to grow. I have two older brothers who were starting to dive more into the scene, going to concerts, and began blasting bands such as Coal Chamber, Kittie, Korn, Slipknot and, of course, Marilyn Manson.”³⁵² She fell in love with the sound, the looks, the dominance and the fact that it scared everyone on the reservation. Daphne also works with many known and up and coming Native American fashion designers whom she has done runways shows and magazines for. She adds that the music scenes on the Pueblos aren’t vast as it could be. The few pretty well-known bands are in the Albuquerque music scene which has amazing members varying from different tribes and pueblos.³⁵³

A lot of the music she listens to has inspired much of her style and her personality.³⁵⁴ Daphne continues, “Many times, I will create looks and content representing both my cultural side and my edgy side. I have found that my modeling has defined a lot of who I am and my own personal style. On social media, I have found to hashtag my own little ‘labels’ of #TheRezBettie,

³⁴⁹ Daphne Coriz in discussion with the author, April 2019.

³⁵⁰ Ibid.

³⁵¹ Ibid.

³⁵² Ibid.

³⁵³ Ibid.

³⁵⁴ Ibid.

a spin on Bettie Page who is a pioneer of Pin Up modeling whom I am greatly inspired by, and #Indigegoth, simply, Indigenous Goth.”³⁵⁵ She has been modeling for eight years now and a majority of it is alt (alternative) modeling, a style that branches away from the mainstream idea of “beauty” as well as showcasing modern, and cutting edge Native fashion design in the industry.³⁵⁶ Daphne is changing the narrative of fashion and beauty, being a petite model, it does not stop her. The fashion industry has been known for having difficult barriers to transcend, yet Daphne is much sought after and continues to advocate for models of all sizes, races, and styles.



(Figure 13, Tohono O’odhamxApachexYaqui, Matthew Ugalde)

In hardcore punk, there are many Indigenous Promotions, D.I.Y. and hardworking communities putting it all together. One of the comments on Matthew Ugalde’s social media by Yaqui DJ Nate Killa Robot on above photo says, “They all used to war, look at us now!”³⁵⁷ Desert Dwellers Fest and Promotions have created a hardcore punk scene amongst a new generation of intertribal youth in the Tucson and surrounding areas due to founder Matthew

³⁵⁵ Ibid.

³⁵⁶ Ibid.

³⁵⁷ Matthew Ugalde Instagram, “Matthew Ugalde,” Instagram, n.p./May 2, 2019, https://www.instagram.com/sulfuris_/?hl=en.

Marcum Ugalde (Tohono O’odham/Mexican).³⁵⁸ His social media shares, “Desert Dwellers is named as a homage to Indigenous people of Tucson and Arizona. The Tohono O’odham, Akimel O’odham, Yoeme, Apache, Quechan, Diné, and Hopi. Recognize where you stand and what people were here before you. Arizona hardcore.”³⁵⁹ The “Ward6” is the D.I.Y. venue Matthew and friends built and acquired in Tucson. Last year, Matthew and Desert Dwellers donated some of the earnings to D.A.C.A. “Because as a P.O.C./Mexican American, I have family members and friends who depend on the D.A.C.A. program to stay in the U.S. So, as a mission statement, it would be to provide info to the community, whether it's our scene or the outside world and helping one another,” he continues, “To me, what I value the most in hardcore and punk is the conscious thinking behind the music. I wanna listen to something that’s gonna provoke me into thinking better and give me some insight on how I can better myself and the people around me.”³⁶⁰ He suggests that Arizona hardcore is a different beast in his eyes, it is often overlooked, especially in Tucson, yet, “people will pull up and just go off the whole time (shout out Tucson hardcore for keeping it real).”³⁶¹ Through space making, Desert Dwellers are denouncing victimhood, demanding Indigenous presence, bridging generational and intertribal tensions, working together and creating communities in Tucson through hardcore music.

Chapter House is a record label/collective by Greg Yazzie from bands Weedrat and Midnight Stew. During the holiday season, they hold the annual “Home for the Holiday III.”³⁶² Chapter House asks for clothing, shoes, boots, thermals, socks, food, and anything that can help.

³⁵⁸ Bruce Hardt-Valenzuela, “Desert Dweller Fest Founder Matt Marcum-Ugalde Brings Hardcore Party to Arizona,” *No Echo*, August 24, 2018/May 7, 2019, <https://www.noecho.net/interviews/desert-dweller-fest-founder-matt-marcum-ugalde>.

³⁵⁹ Desert Dwellers Fest Instagram, “Desert Dwellers Fest,” Instagram, n.p./May 4, 2019, <https://www.instagram.com/desertdwellerfest/>.

³⁶⁰ Ibid.

³⁶¹ Ibid.

³⁶² Chapter House Instagram, “Chapter House,” Instagram, n.p./March 16, 2019, <https://www.instagram.com/w.w.c.h.d/?hl=en>.

Being in cities such as Flagstaff, Arizona that get snow frequently, winter clothing are much needed. Chapter House books and throws shows all over the Southwest making a punk network and inclusive space for many artists. Another promoter is “The Dank Knight,” Jordan Steele of Lo Cash Ninjas and Anakin Skynwalka, who throws shows at “Duh Shack” and other D.I.Y. venues.³⁶³ “O’odham Bastard Presents” and “Dulce Rock” are promotions for the Tohono O’odham and Jicarilla Apache scenes.³⁶⁴ Engineer and member of Everything Burns, Jude Candelaria (Zuni/Latinx) discusses the thriving music scene and potential that the Indigenous music community has, “There was a place called Industry Gallery in downtown (Gallup) that would pop off with shows and let anyone play which happened for three years,”³⁶⁵ Jude continues, “Booking the same bands, it pumps up the older metal heads, but is not doing anything for the future scene.”³⁶⁶ The youth and community need to make it happen he urges. According to Jude, last year during Ceremonial, three other promoters booked shows that same Saturday. “One dude said, ‘My show’s free!’ during the festival, So I put mine up too, ‘let’s free it up!’”³⁶⁷ He says bands played, and there was a free show at the flea market and at a local venue. “There was like a dude that went to all of the shows and music, and said it was cool, ‘Its’s like a SxSw scene!’” Jude never thought about that, and thought it was awesome how at that time, they could throw all of those shows at once.³⁶⁸

Radio has been one of the most important modes for the underground with regards to music, community, and politics. While settler forces and U.S. Government having tried to

³⁶³ Ibid.

³⁶⁴ O’odham Bastard Presents, “Weedrat (Alb.,NM)/Lilith (AZ/NM)/Thra/Earthwalker,” Facebook, August 12, 2018/February 1, 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/events/221033431944766/>.

³⁶⁵ Jude Candelaria in discussion of the author, February 2019.

³⁶⁶ Ibid.

³⁶⁷ Ibid.

³⁶⁸ Ibid.

surveillance or ban the Indigenous airwaves, radio disc jockeys, musicians, community members, activists, and fans have kept them alive. Just as in the Occupation of Alcatraz in San Francisco Bay in 1969 with the late activist and poet John Trudell, radio has become an outlet and medium to share networks and connections to the community. Bobby Steele “The Navajo Rambo” and Reese Valiant Soul of Savage Radio are both DJs and sources of metal on “The Station That Rocks the Nation.”³⁶⁹ Steele Savage Radio is a non-profit internet radio station that supports the underground music scenes. Jude explains, “Radio is the forum playing the underground music and Indigenous people have been restricted to do so,” he adds, “It is where everything went lost, the airwaves, lost rebellion, and art in the 1960s...lost DJs, but the playlists keep the music network.”³⁷⁰ The airwaves are a form of survivance of cultural space and changing the narrative.

In his book *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*, Dr. Glen Sean Coulthard (Dene) calls for a collective Indian resurgence for a transformation of colonial relationships between Indigenous people, with the settler state and institutions, as well as changing the many decades of liberal “politics of recognition.”³⁷¹ This brought me to think of music recognition, some record labels that do not know Indigenous struggles, might want to play on the anger, “Indian-ness,” or how anger relates to “punk anger.” Or, what if musicians even want to sing about their culture or sovereignty? What if music outlets do not understand that particular fight for sovereignty? Things like the Native American Music Awards (Nammys) and Native independent record labels were created for this very reason, to have a space to honor

³⁶⁹ Steele Savage Radio Facebook, “Steele Savage Radio,” Facebook, n.p./May 5, 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/SteeleSavageRadio/>.

³⁷⁰ Jude Candelaria in discussion with the author, February 2019.

³⁷¹ Glen Sean Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2014) 15.

music, accomplishments and artists on their own terms.³⁷² Coulthard looks into Hegel's Master/Slave and its rework by Frantz Fanon's critique of "liberal" politics of recognition, this recognition from the U.S. was forced on Native peoples, and a mechanism to make it seem like they are disappearing which is not true.³⁷³ For many years, communities used that recognition on their own terms with their tribal specific sovereignty. Some communities have turned their back to settler colonialism. In looking at Coulthard, there is a Native resurgence in music history, academia, record industry, and music business. Indigenous music artists are showing their music is modern, innovative, important to punk, and that they are very much present. The history of music owes much to their contributions.



(Figure 14, Indigenous Punks HolySmoookes Instagram, Karlene Harvey)

Indigenous punk bands are making jewelry, zines, patches and merchandise as well as using social media to promote and celebrate their love of music. "Black and Brown Indigenous Crew" is a Instagram social media platform that works to "create spaces and networks that center black, brown, and Indigenous peoples, center BIPOC (black and Indigenous) queer, trans and

³⁷² James E. Cunningham, "The Nammys Versus the Grammys: Celebrity, Technology, and the Creation of an Indigenous Music Recording Industry in North America," *The World of Music* Vol. 49, No. 1, Indigenous Peoples, Recording Techniques, and the Recording Industry (2007), pp. 155-170, 157.

³⁷³ Glen Sean Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*, 15.

dismantle oppressive structures through punk, hardcore, heavy metal, rap, hip hop, indie and alternative music.”³⁷⁴ Many social media accounts are becoming spaces and practices of survivance for flyers, archives, and graphic art such as “Indigenous Punks” by Karlene Harvey (Tsilhqot’in).³⁷⁵ Becki Jones also creates her own medicine jewelry for communities of color called Moongrrrl666.³⁷⁶

Originally made by scissors, paper, and cut and paste, punk zines can inform, educate and help share ideas. Contrary to popular belief, though many credit science fiction as the start of zine culture, in the 1930s a postal worker created the “Negro Motorists’ Handbook” to prevent incarceration, and as a guide for love ones to share what hotels they should stay at, which roads to take, and who were the white allies in the U.S.³⁷⁷ This was prompting more people in the network to contribute and keep the medium going. Later, groups like the Black Panthers, and Brown Pride members also took risks publishing these types of sources.³⁷⁸ American Indian zines (D.I.Y. pamphlets) have been circulating for years and now there are the popular ABQ and L.A. Zine Fest. In 1999, there was a zine called “Broken Box” by a San Carlos Apache artist, Ben who discussed Indigenous struggles, politics, and rez life.³⁷⁹ The “O’odham Solidarity Across Borders Collective” zine offers an Indigenous perspective on immigration policies and aggressive policing of the United States-Mexico border.³⁸⁰ The zine argues “how aggressive border control is not only violent and colonial, but a gross denial of tribal sovereignty.”³⁸¹ The

³⁷⁴ “Black and Brown Indigenous Crew.”

³⁷⁵ Karlene Harvey (Holy Smoookes) in discussion with author, May 2019.

³⁷⁶ Becki Jones in discussion with the author, February 2019.

³⁷⁷ POC Zine Project, Wellesley College, *Beyond Meet Me at the Race Riot: People of Color in Zines (1990-Today)*, February 26, 2013, accessed: March 15, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DWuPetaV17g&t=3307s>, YouTube.

³⁷⁸ Ibid.

³⁷⁹ Ibid.

³⁸⁰ Malana Krongleb, “Read A Zine! Indigenous Peoples Day Edition: 7 Native Zines to read Right Now,” *Blue Stocking Magazine*, October 9, 2016, <http://bluestockingsmag.com/2016/10/09/read-a-zine-indigenous-peoples-day-edition-7-native-zines-to-read-right-now/>.

³⁸¹ Ibid.

zine “Empower Yo’self Before You Wreck Yo’self” by Melanie Fey and Amber McCrary, is a zine by two Navajo women based in Arizona and Oregon.

The zine makers aim to,

Fashion a space where other Native women can join in to create, examine, and define what’s important to us, to fight back against assimilation caused by patriarchal and predominantly white male run society, to encourage women to confront their insecurities, and to say that Native women have a place in counter cultures as the Riot Grrrl scene, Hip Hop, Punk, Psychobilly etc. This particular zine includes a letter to the Governor of Oregon about cultural appropriation and the use of Native American mascots as the women accept stories, poetry, flash fiction, rants, music, movie reviews, and letters.³⁸²

The zine “Empower Yo ‘self’ changed to “The Nizhoni Beat” (Diné for Beautiful Girls) which discusses decolonizing one’s self, Black Lives Matter protests, and Indian depiction in films.³⁸³ Dr. Glen Sean Coulthard comes in again, as he urges for a turning away of “recognition,” Indigenous feminist zines are an Indigenous-resurgence in an Anglo-male dominated punk scene that aim to change narratives and notions of victimhood through music, words, and art.

Reality at Best: P.M.A. (Postive Mental Attitude) and the Youth

Amanda Blackhorse (Diné) is an Arizona based activist who shares how Native mascots perpetuate stereotypes, and affect the youth negatively by giving false representations of being fixed in the past.³⁸⁴ Organizers like Amanda, are calling for the removal of these images and practices, prompting the support of positive and true representations for the younger generation. This thesis ultimately aims to chronicle the long punk rock history for communities to see how influential elders and youth have been to music history and continue to be. Punk bands are

³⁸² Amber McCrary, Melanie Fey, “Empower Yo’self Before Yo Wreck Yo’Self,” Zine, no. 1 (2015). Accessed March 12, 2018.

³⁸³ Ibid.

³⁸⁴ Amanda Blackhorse, “Amanda Blackhorse on Teaching Children About Racism,” Youtube, April 17, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jCZQgKHV-sw>.

reclaiming their stories through lyrics, giving positive representation and an inclusive space for the new generations to express themselves. Many bands are using parts of their culture and reclaiming historical elements on punk flyers. Moreover, mental health and disabilities have been welcomed and touched upon in lyrics. Because of historical trauma, bands are refusing victimhood by promoting positive mental health, using lyrics with uplifting words and instilling resilient images in music videos, flyers, and album art. Many lyrics practice to not give up, uplift women, take care of the community, and that loss of loved ones is something one can work through. Music scenes are making a connection to put something out for the youth to channel frustrations such as skateboarding and playing music.

Music Programs have also been bringing rock music to the youth with the help of metal and punk members. Miracle Dolls use music programs to reach the youth in Sherman Indian High School. The Native American Music Fund in the Navajo Nation have workshops with teacher Jeff Lee who teaches guitar and volunteers to teach music to Indigenous youth.³⁸⁵ Tim Armstrong from the popular East Bay punk band Rancid visited with the Navajo female led band, The Sillyettes.³⁸⁶ Students at tribal colleges, the University of New Mexico, University of Arizona, Arizona State University, Diné College and many others are doing amazing work with music and scholarship, and also insightful conferences about Pueblo/Navajo feminist theories and activism.

Skating and skate parks have been very important in relation to punk rock scenes and for Indigenous youth. The San Carlos Apache Reservation is one of the top skateboarding communities. Many skateboarders have been in competitions and throw punk rock shows at the

³⁸⁵ Native American Music Fund Facebook, "Native American Music Fund," Facebook, n.p./April 11, 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/NativeAmericanMusicFund/>.

³⁸⁶ Ibid.

local skate parks. Both skate and punk rock are modes of fun, and escape from the pressures and hardships of adolescence as well as letting out frustrations. Douglas Miles (Akimel O’odham-San Carlos Apache) is the founder and artist of Apache Skateboards.³⁸⁷ The new film “The Mystery of Now” (2018) gives a “socio-political context around the history that lead to life on the San Carlos Apache reservation, and the personal history of how Miles started a skateboard brand and team of local youth leaders.”³⁸⁸ He has involved San Carlos metal band Alliance, and many of the local punk bands for music in the documentary. Miles has had his fine art take him to New York, South Bronx, and University of Columbia, but shares he wanted to stay in his home of San Carlos.³⁸⁹ Miles also shows that “fine art” is Indigenous, and not static in the past. The documentary introduces artist, Aunt Linda who makes traditional Apache cradleboards. She discusses how in the Geronimo days; Native women would run with cradleboards protecting their babies. The two types of boards have been very important in their culture.

Miles puts Apache and O’odham history on the skateboards, mixed with street art and made one for his son Doug Jr. which all the local kids loved. Miles decided to make a skate brand, “the Apache team” and “Apache Agency Skate shop.”³⁹⁰ Di’orr is one of the female skaters in the film and advocates for young girls to pick up skating, and skater Tasha, holds a skateboard that reads “Apachelypse Now.”³⁹¹ Punk rockers Santi and India share that punk and metal helps in keeping the youth away from issues, moreover, that rage felt by their ancestors and the energy is channeled through them in the pit.³⁹² Virgil is a punk rocker and musician that

³⁸⁷ Apache skateboards official, “Apaches Skateboards,” Apache Skateboards, 2014/April 22, 2019, <http://apacheskateboards.com/>.

³⁸⁸ “The Mystery of Now,” directed by Audrey Buchanan (January 18, 2019; San Carlos, AZ: Talk Shop Studios, 2019), DVD.

³⁸⁹ Ibid.

³⁹⁰ Ibid.

³⁹¹ Ibid.

³⁹² Ibid.

shares the importance of punk and skate, as well as promotes shows as “Apache Punk.”³⁹³ Navajo and Oneida punk band Ethan 103 frequents the skate competitions and help the youth with music and skating.³⁹⁴ Miles urges people to do as many Apaches have done for many years, visit neighbors and family, do good deeds, and do not always put it up on social media, it is essentially all helping the world.³⁹⁵

Alliance is an Apache punk-metal band from San Carlos, Arizona. The band refers to themselves as “Apaches in a band,” and includes Scottie Noline, Isaiah Patterson, Ashley Nez and John Henry. The band are inspired lyrically to write music that touches on mental instability, anxiety, depression, and bipolarism.³⁹⁶ They share they are very D.I.Y. and music is the forum to get through to the younger generation. The band wants the youth to be taking the torch, and share they are doing music for them. “The rez has a very high alcohol rate, drug use rate and suicide rate, there’s not alot to believe in,” Scottie Noline shares. Their songs have positive messages of resiliency, strength and power trying to change that. The song “Reality at Best” is the third song that they have ever written back in 2014 which “talks about being on the reservation, the opening lyrics are ‘I don’t want to be here anymore, I need to get away from here now, this place growing and now I’m consumed’ which is referring about alcoholism and drug abuse on their reservation almost everybody has experienced in sort of form.”³⁹⁷ Scottie shares he was trying to address this, “The song correlated lyrics really well how Isaiah writes the song heavy, thrashy and melodic and there is a whole change from chorus to the third verse it’s like two songs combined into more hopeful and uplifting at the end, speaking in terms of you don’t really have to go

³⁹³ Ibid.

³⁹⁴ Jerold Cecil in discussion with the author, February 2019.

³⁹⁵ Ibid.

³⁹⁶ Alliance in discussion with the author, March 2019.

³⁹⁷ Ibid.

through all of this, everyone has power to do what they want to do in life, this ain't just it."

Alliance released a song in July of last summer called "A Lie I Must Comply." Back in 2014, the song was written with their old lineup, unreleased, and had never been played live. Its first meaning is from the band losing a classmate in their senior year, Elliot Henry which was the first death experience. They share that more people were passing away, very young, they lost friends in the music scene dying of fatal accidents, and situations unseen.³⁹⁸ Before interviewing the band, I had seen songs and lyrics written on a drum dedicated to Koolio on their social media. Former drummer Koolio passed away as he hitchhiked from one town to another. Scottie in discussing the high death toll,

Speaking on universal terms no matter what culture you come from, no matter what place you come from, what race you are, everyone experiences death and loss. The lyrics of "A Lie I Must Comply" is about not comprehending the loss of somebody in the chorus, 'I'm confused with my life, is this really how it's supposed to be? I will be fine. Such a lie I must comply. I give up my life.' It is our most popular song, and speaks to the truth when you lose somebody. The whole crowd sings the whole chorus because everyone can agree death is hard.³⁹⁹

The band has been through a lot, but does not let that deter them as they continue to honor those that have passed, inspire the youth, and network with bands in the Gila, Navajo, and O'odham Nations. Alliance is trying to push bands to get out there and pursue music, the band says, "People have to say, 'Fuck it, let's do it,' try."⁴⁰⁰ Scottie shares that he wants his daughter who is already musically inclined at a very young age, to know how much hard work was put

³⁹⁸ Ibid.

³⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid.

into being a musician.⁴⁰¹ Alliance has been in the documentary *Metal from the Dirt* by *Revolver* magazine along with a full page spread of their bassist Ashley Nez.⁴⁰² They would like to see more bands and see what the next generation can present to them—“Punk rock, metal, bring it on!” says Isaiah.⁴⁰³

The Ferrets (Diné) are from Kirtland-Farmington, New Mexico and describe their music as post-punk, western punk, and “cowboy punk.” Members include bassist and guitarist Macee, drummer Isaiah, bassist Alex, and singer and guitarist, Ethan Two Bulls. The band have a song called “Heavy Heart” on their SoundCloud that gives fans a glimpse of their hard sound. Singer Ethan Two Bulls shares that their project started with playing at a talent show. “My school had a yearly talent show and I wanted to play a couple Joy Division songs, so I asked a couple friends of mine, Anson Yazzie and Suede Begay. We enjoyed it so we added my friend Jerrell Tsosie and just decided to start making original music.”⁴⁰⁴

Ethan’s sister introduced him to the Misfits and Against Me! and he took up learning guitar. His friend’s father gave him his first guitar amp. When the group started the band, they all liked punk, hardcore, ska, and metal. Some of the central themes in the band’s music is a disapproval with society, and they mention that one of the prior members wrote a song called “Thunder Boys,” essentially about cowboys, white people, and settler colonialism.⁴⁰⁵ In regard to what they would like their mark is on music, drummer Isaiah Talley shares he is not the best drummer but pushed himself out there, and wants the youth to do the same.⁴⁰⁶ He did not think he could do it but took a risk and played. Bassist Alex, who is very ambitious and loves music,

⁴⁰¹ Ibid.

⁴⁰² Ibid.

⁴⁰³ Alliance in discussion with the author, March 2019.

⁴⁰⁴ The Ferrets in discussion with the author, February 2019.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid.

shares he would still do music regardless of what happens in the future, he would be in the scene no matter. Macee Hunt shares, “I loves when girls are at our shows because they’ll have their faces light up happily when they see a female in an all-male space.”⁴⁰⁷ She wishes she saw more female musicians and wants to inspire young girls to play music. The band also wishes they had more support from their community, and hope that the scenes become more open minded, tolerant with eased tensions, “It is not good to fight racism with racism,” they share.⁴⁰⁸ Ethan adds, “There’s not really a scene in Farmington, the closest thing we have to a scene is the Shiprock area and rez. It’s a pretty small community but everyone knows everyone. It centers around punk, metal, ska, hardcore, and rap. The scene in Albuquerque is cool. I’d love to be a part of that.”⁴⁰⁹ The band share that they wish they saw a bit less drinking in scenes. The Ferrets do music and want to uplift the youth, so they do not fall into trouble. Macee is very talented with Diné hoops, film, mentoring the youth, photography, and skateboarding. She has been awarded for her educational and mentoring for the Four Corners Filmmakers and San Juan College Digital Media Arts and Design program for Navajo youth building, along with bandmate Isaiah Talley. The Ferrets share that at first, they did not believe in their talents, yet their talents in video, cinematography, graphic design, lively performances, and connection to their audience speak volumes. Singer Ethan shares his mark on music, “I just hope to be someone’s inspiration. Like how I felt when I’d go to a local show and stand in the front and admire whoever was playing. I want people to feel that when they see us play. How it’s easy to start a band and become part of a scene,”⁴¹⁰ he adds, “I’d like to see more unity with everyone. A lot of people do

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁴¹⁰ Ibid.

their own thing and I really wish we'd all come together. I also wish there would be more coverage on other Indigenous bands. They deserve the same love.”⁴¹¹



(Figure 15, Rei Gurren, Raemus Catron)

Rei Gurren, formerly Five Cellars Below, are a polished, pop-punk anime-core band in a sea of metal bands. By using their personal and anime influenced lyrics and unique punk, they strive to help fans with anxiety and mental health. They are from Saint Michaels and Window Rock, Arizona in the Navajo Nation. The band has played Alien Fest, Tuba City Spring Fest, the Navajo Nation Fair, and with Doyle W. Von Frankenstein.⁴¹² Reuben (Johnny Rx) of Rei Gurren started out by helping behind the scenes at local shows assisting with cables, speakers, and mics. Around 2008, he was about to study film, but became more involved in music listening to metal bands. Reuben shares that he did not know how to play much, but became more involved in the band with Raemus. Singer Rae Catron is full blooded Navajo and was born and raised in Window Rock, Arizona also having lived in Pennsylvania and Alabama. Rae is the lead singer, guitarist, and songwriter, and Reuben is the bass player and backup vocals. Reuben also plays the bass for metal band Testify with Darius Yazzie, along with Darius' father and Navajo council

⁴¹¹ Ibid.

⁴¹² Rei Gurren in discussion with the author, March 2019.

member, Edmund Yazzie.⁴¹³ David Kinsel is on guitar and also in Testify. The band has recently added a new drummer, Bryant from Los Cruces. The band shared they started jamming to Slipknot, Metallica, and Iron Maiden.⁴¹⁴ A prior bandmate from Michigan introduced them to the Ramones, the Pixies, and the White Stripes. “A friend of mine pirated a CD and said, ‘listen to it’ and ‘I said, what is it? I can’t read it,’ and he said ‘it’s Misfits bro.’ It was the Famous Monsters CD,” Rae explains.⁴¹⁵ Rae got an old CD player the “size of a toolbox” and heard the big drums loudly come through, and a chanting noise roaring on the first track which was the song “Forbidden Zone.”⁴¹⁶ From then on, they started their journey into punk. As their drummer and singer moved on, Rae took over as singer and reformed the band.

The name Rei Gurren is a cross of two of their favorite Japanese animes, “Highschool of the Dead” and “Gurren Lagann” by merging the two names together.⁴¹⁷ Rueben shares that the older community were offended that it was not in the Navajo language, but in Japanese.⁴¹⁸ Yet many fans liked how different it is. Rei Gurren are influenced by a lot of bands, the anime fan community, metal, Slipknot, and Cannibal Corpse, Japanese rock, and Rae throws in Ritchie Valens.⁴¹⁹ Rueben shares the scene is metal dominated and his favorite venue is the Juggernaut in Gallup, New Mexico. “There have been about eight to nine punk bands in the area including Lo Cash Ninjas, Weedrat, The Flossies, and there are many more bands with their own styles. The Shiprock scene has Lo Cash Ninjas that made their own scene that is still thriving, and Gallup is metal, thrash, and speed type metal,” Rueben shares. Although punk is in the shadow

⁴¹³ Julie Turkewitz. “Lookin to Uplift, With Navajo “Rez Metal,” *New York Times*, January 25, 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/26/us/looking-to-uplift-with-navajo-rez-metal.html>.

⁴¹⁴ Rei Gurren in discussion with the author, March 2019.

⁴¹⁵ Ibid.

⁴¹⁶ Ibid.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid.

⁴¹⁸ Ibid.

⁴¹⁹ Ibid.

of the immense metal scenes, many fans share that they started listening to punk because of watching Rei Gurren live.⁴²⁰ Metal communities are happy to hear the band because of their instrumentation, and Rae's distinct and talented vocals are some of the best. Reuben shares, "Many bands have a four-chord progression 1, 2, 3, 4, yet our band will try to throw random chords, Rae has guitar solos, he has things here and there that disrupts the simple punk."⁴²¹

The band would like their music and lyrics to help people. Their song "Lost Woods" is "hoping to inspire people if they have anxiety, suicidal thoughts, or depression that you have to lose yourself to find yourself again," says the band.⁴²² "Untouchable Queen" is a song based on "strong female leads, including mothers, grandmothers, for all they have done or sacrificed."⁴²³ The band shares many fans love that song. Most songs are about helping others, real life situations, and about people they know. " 'Twilight Princess' is a song which has been a hit with many people about finding purpose for anybody, whatever it may be," Reuben adds, " 'Saber' is about those we have lost, left us, or moved on, or might not have a lot of contact with for so long."⁴²⁴ A fan in Tuba City went up to Rae and raved that he was happy that Rei Gurren's music was "not all about darkness or about being depressed," but that they are going to help somebody.⁴²⁵ With this, the band felt this is probably what they aim to write for. Some bands that Rei Gurren have played with did not like their message, but simply write about alcohol, substances, murder, and killers, yet Reuben says, "You need something to navigate you out of the darkness."⁴²⁶ He wants to hear variety; he is intrigued the with acoustic and R&B style of music that Irv Wauneka does who is the singer of metal band Born of Winter. Reuben shares he

⁴²⁰ Ibid.

⁴²¹ Ibid.

⁴²² Ibid.

⁴²³ Ibid.

⁴²⁴ Ibid.

⁴²⁵ Ibid.

⁴²⁶ Ibid.

has a box full of flyers from local shows and the scene from 2003-2009. “Native punk is its own thing, people might have a preconception, but if people took the time to hear every genre out there, and be open minded, the songs have a deeper meaning and we use anime as a medium not just trying to throw it out there, but little nods.”⁴²⁷ Rei Gurren is self-taught, with no vocal coaches, and very D.I.Y. Through punk mixed with the medium of Japanese anime, the band creates a network for those suffering loss, anxiety, frustrations, and hardship. It is a form of survivance that can combat anxiety, depression, pain by creating art, and succeeding in whatever you want to do. The band’s mark on music is “to be mentioned years from now, how they helped others, and to not self-harm or do something stupid the way bands like Rise Against has influenced them,” says Rueben.⁴²⁸ Rei Gurren keeps doing what they want to do and by having fun, enjoying life. The band shares, “Rae has anxiety and I have dealt with dark depression. Music is our medicine and helps us out, and is a fuel for some people to do something different, whether it’s music or art, music is to not give up.”⁴²⁹



(Figure 16, Photography, Wade M. Adakai)

⁴²⁷ Ibid.

⁴²⁸ Ibid.

⁴²⁹ Ibid.

Wade McKinley Adakai is a photographer, philosopher, graduate student in theology and Native American theology, and a punk organizer. Wade was born in Tuba City, Arizona, and raised in Utah. When he entered kindergarten, he moved to Fort Defiance near the capital of the Navajo Nation, Window Rock, Arizona. At the age of twelve, Wade was trying to figure out what he saw happening with the rock scene and realized his affinity for music. He was sneaking metal CDs in his house which was not encouraged by family who were very Christian. Wade was interested in bands like Darkthrone and Cannibal Corpse. “I would play at a very low volume while I would lay right next to speaker,” he shares.⁴³⁰ The introduction he had to hard rock was listening to the hardest Christian rock and CDs he could get back then. Wade says that a friend found a CD with a weird “S” on the roadside, this album was Slipknot.⁴³¹ The first heavy record he bought was Killswitch Engage’s “Alive or Just Breathing” at a mall in Gallup, New Mexico.⁴³² It was the soundtrack through many years that helped him see the world. He adds, “It was not just to be brutal as fuck for the sake of listening to death metal, black metal, this was the turning point in our community or people group that it can address it in a very unique way.”⁴³³ Wade shares that Kill Switch’s singer Jesse Leach’s lyrics were using:

Spiritual vocabulary and concepts to express the social tension he observed, and was using it as a mechanism of expression with this medium of heavy music. And that really shaped part of my ethical growth were his lyrics, and he came from a punk rock scene himself. The way he would talk about social concerns or the treatment from other people, hearing it from him passionately screaming it gave me as a young boy, a view of the world. I can be expressive in the most unique way with the intent of spreading a message.⁴³⁴

Growing up, Wade noticed a pattern that country music was the benchmark of being a non-Native art, and many country bands had been around for decades. “This was a medium of

⁴³⁰ Wade M. Adakai in discussion with the author, March 2019.

⁴³¹ Ibid.

⁴³² Ibid.

⁴³³ Ibid.

⁴³⁴ Ibid.

expression and entertainment which brought guitar playing,” Wade adds that “Natives had access to guitars and drum sets,” and later came rock music.⁴³⁵

He shares much like his grandparents, Native Navajos, have always been hard workers. “Native Navajos we have livestock, we have horses, we have sheep, a way of life, and when westernism started coming into play, a lot of these thing became prohibited,” he continues,

What was wealth at the time was livestock, many people had an abundant amount of livestock and the western world said ‘Nope, you’re only allowed this many things, these many horses,’ really taking a shot at our version of economy and our view of what is wealthy and started to replace it with jobs. And you know, Navajos have always been hard workers. My grandfather was driving a bus waking up at four am in the morning with a few hours of sleep to support our family, never a complaint out of him, his generation never complained. You start to see this disparity in our economy and what you will see in cities. We have a geography disadvantage and there’s not many jobs around.⁴³⁶

Wade shares that people are spending their money outside in border towns such as Gallup, Flagstaff, Page, and Cortez, so the money does not stay in the reservation.⁴³⁷ People in his community find peace and comfort in religion or art, and hold on to traditional beliefs, or Christianity like he has. He infers, “You see a whole generation of kids latch on rap music, early rap music, latch on to metal, latch on to punk. All this rage is built seeing what all of their family are going through,”⁴³⁸ Wade continues, “You see this growing resentment for the western world was sort of coming. When it comes to punk music, this response to the western world, understanding the history, and challenging the system, to create chaos because this system was a thing causing so many hardships in our lives.”⁴³⁹ Punk and maintaining Navajo culture became a channel of survivance to challenge and battle this western imposition on Navajo culture and livelihood.

⁴³⁵ Ibid.

⁴³⁶ Ibid.

⁴³⁷ Ibid.

⁴³⁸ Ibid.

⁴³⁹ Ibid.

Generations later, millennials are now seeing the importance of the Nu Metal genre to mental health. “Nu Metal in the late 1990s bands like Korn, Limp Bizkit, and Slipknot were suddenly what people were clinging to, and I can understand why people listen to Korn. Korn’s lyrics are really reflective of mental illness and that’s what you see, it seems the more we were exposed to different mediums of art, the more we were able to express what was going on in our communities,” he says.⁴⁴⁰ There was a turn, in the late 2000s of the emo music genre that Wade really enjoyed. It was a sub movement that was big in Phoenix. There was an interesting transition between 2009-2012, which was the turning point Wade points out. Regarding emo/hardcore, “Okay, we wanted chaos for a long time, now we want order and stability, we see this growth in hardcore. Hardcore heralds values, and it has standards and values community,” explains Wade. When the music genre of straight edge/hardcore began in the 1980s, it promoted no substance use, no alcohol, monogamy, no self-harming, and community. Wade continues, “You see a growing number of people want that structure, you see not only expression, but they see it as practice. It seems like rap, metal, and punk rock were *descriptive* of our social conditions, but hardcore was *prescriptive* how we react to it or what is our standards.”⁴⁴¹

In asking Wade about what is going on in the scene now, he believes it is partly due to the disconnection of the social media age that has affected the scene:

I think when social media came, that eliminated potential community. It’s funny that it’s called social media--Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter and all these avenues...Soundcloud. Social media, it damages real social potential. Well, the fun part was being with your best friends, going around passing out flyers. The ritual of being in the music scene, that was sort of the glue of punk rock, of metal, these categories are not

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁴¹ Ibid.

just art itself, but the ritual of putting on a show, it was a ritual of texting, a mass text telling their friends, and word of mouth. It was a community event and the lack of access, like when we would get in contact with bands that were touring on the other side of the rez, there was a lot of peer curiosity why people would come out.⁴⁴²

The internet was not even an option back then according to Wade. His peers would bring some money in case they would like a band, and go to the source to experience it. He shares that the experience is no longer available or the need or want of that experience, “When I was about twelve or thirteen years old it wasn’t just about the art or performance, but the journey. It reminds me of that movie when those dudes go to see a concert in *Detroit Rock City*, back then in the rez we had to go on these road trips to see bands, they hardly played the rez. They’d have a show in Albuquerque or Phoenix, and we all pitched in money to make a journey.”⁴⁴³ He says it does not exist much now, people can just watch it on YouTube, live stream, or see pictures on Instagram.

In promoting and throwing shows, Wade remembers every band that came, they would have meetings prior. They told everyone, “Meet five people, try to get to know their names, this is not our show, it’s not our show to praise us, or put us on a pedestal, we’re here to entertain them.”⁴⁴⁴ Wade remembers this community starting to grow and all these kids that were struggling with mental health, domestic abuse at home, fighting depression, and anxiety in many communities came to the shows. These particular issues are why youth in general are into punk rock music, as many lyrics and bands touch upon these issues. Wade details that the scene had a responsibility now with music, “You are this social doctor, you treat these kids with medication

⁴⁴² Ibid.

⁴⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid.

that they can't get in the hospital, that has no price on it, we have to give them an experience for the shit that they are going through."⁴⁴⁵ As a Christian, Wade was always bashed on for his beliefs, when he and friends became the older guys, regardless of people's beliefs, the music let them forget everything and forget about what they were going through. "It's their people, their scene, and their friends. It was a healthy moment for this community, kids were not out drinking, doing drugs, doing dumb things, driving, or spending money on stupid things like pills, they were not by themselves. They were here at the show."⁴⁴⁶ Wade shares that their group made sure the energy level was so high and consistent, so gig and music goers would be as tired as possible, that they would just go straight home after a Saturday night filled with memories.⁴⁴⁷ Wade and his fellow organizers knew where the kids would be and used punk as a positive source for the youth.

Wade asks, "Is there a reason for music?" Wade thinks and asks himself what is this aiding in, as well as what is punk music used for? He says, it is more of an education and history, and different than a western framework, "We do see a small revitalization in experimental music, flyers, a small movement toward Indigenous activism similar to punk rock that is using music as the tool to smash some sort of system or ideology and white patriarchy, American nationalism, American exceptionalism, and putting minorities at a disadvantage and Native Americans at a disadvantage."⁴⁴⁸ He shares the K'é infoshop which is an Indigenous activist oriented collective with the spirit of punk.⁴⁴⁹ "A thread of punk rock has always been acquainted with Indigenous resistance," he adds. "Flyers, conversations, and compiling of memories gives it a sort of

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid.

credibility to the scene, it can be for an impact or used as a tool through social conditions, not just chaos, but to build community,” says Wade.⁴⁵⁰

Wade studies theology in a conservative grad school, and his doctrinal study is labeled as “conservative” when it comes to theology. Native American theology is why he got into seminary. He is “looking at how God has shown himself through our Navajo stories, and to look at our Navajo perspective,” Wade continues, “That through Indigenous perspectives, I can interpret and communicate a lot of what my white colleagues can’t comprehend and it challenges them...that this brown kid shows up, already understands what they already know, but also gives them insight on a whole different world they don’t know about, they put this defense up because all they might know is a mere branch of data we can experience and collect in the human world.”⁴⁵¹ Wade was belittled for going to college by some locals saying he was just “trying to be a white man,” yet, he shares it was his call and purpose “to learn and master the western world, before it masters me.”⁴⁵² He had received some flack in his own community, his own scene, and says it is similar like that movie *Selena* about the late female Tejano singer talking to her dad about being Mexican-American, “We got to be more Mexican than the Mexicans, and more American than Americans.”⁴⁵³ One of the many important takeaways Wade shares is that people may not comprehend the difference of what it means to be Navajo punk in the Navajo way.⁴⁵⁴ Being punk can mean something so different to the Navajo community. Many are attuned to western music and framework, or a western lens of punk, that we will miss the Indigenous framework that comes into play. Each tribal community has specific elements it

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁵¹ Ibid.

⁴⁵² Ibid.

⁴⁵³ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid.

brings to the table. Currently there are approximately 573 Federally recognized tribes and many that are not recognized over the U.S. As punk fans, scholars, or activists, we can bring these knowledges into this music conversation. As well as Indigenous conversations all over the world. Native people are not a monolith, each community brings their own nuance, sense of humor, resiliency, innovation, insight, and expertise. As many Indigenous communities have their own creation stories, musicians have their own punk story. The most punk rock thing to Wade is “keeping integrity in the music scene,” as he says the research can give social change in Indigenous communities and activism, or help communities take a stand, and knowing the community whom we write for which is the most important.⁴⁵⁵

Conclusion: The Continued Legacy of Indigenous Punks

Through their sovereignty, identity, and resistance, bands are preserving their culture using traditional and modern elements in their music and lyrics. By way of D.I.Y. punk aesthetics, the music created is combating many facets of settler colonialism. Musicians and fans have been resourceful and made do despite how the U.S. government has failed them. What makes Indigenous punk different is the very different relationship tribal communities have to the U.S. government. Unique punk lyrics and themes that resonate with their community are used. The music has become an outlet and artform for many people. The aim of this thesis is to show positive examples for Indigenous and P.O.C. youth, and chronicle this very important music history. This thesis can be a launchpad to start conversations about Southwest punk and Indigenous histories in surrounding areas. The scenes and spaces are also creating generational, and intertribal connections, in some cases mending relations, reclaiming identities otherwise infringed upon by imposition by settlers and made up borders. Many bands also do not want to

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid.

simply dwell on issues, but take their audience to a fun, safe, and supportive atmosphere. Indigenous youth were introduced to punk and metal by their elders, parents, friends, CDs, skate competitions, tribal radio, and other mediums. Many punks have been prompted to play in bands, organize or attend shows whether being in the midst of an environmental and cultural crisis similar to the U.S. government imposition on communities in the Southwest, protesting relocation, combating racism, creating an inclusive space rejecting the very white and male problematic behaviors in punk, rewriting stereotypes and notions of being Indigenous, or during the “War on Terror” era for my generation, or even the now Trump-Pence era. Punks are trying to find out who they are, and by seeing their relatives working hard and making ends meet, their community’s resiliency in maintaining ancestral places and culture—these are the moments that pushed musicians to play music who are now inspiring more generations of Indigenous musicians to play some punk rock music.

In closing, this is one of the first attempts to chronicle and put into conversation this influential and long standing movement of Indigenous punk music. Indigenous bands continue to use punk as a practice of survivance to denounce victimhood, tell their stories, create communities, making space for women, trans, non-binary, queer and two spirit communities in the newest wave. Through themes such as environmental and Indigenous rights, LGBTQ2, queer, gender and femme empowerment, D.I.Y. spaces, and positive examples for the youth and mental health, bands have disrupted any preconceptions and narratives about their communities. The bands demonstrate Indigenous people are not static or in the past, but modern agents of their realities. They continue to having a long and unique historical contribution to the punk canon.

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Rocky Yazzie (musician) in discussion with the author, March 2019.

Sasha Davis (musician) in discussion with the author, April 2019.

Sihasin (band) in discussion with the author, March 2019.

Stevie Salas (musician) in discussion with the author, January 2019.

The Ferrets (band) in discussion with the author, January 2019.

Wade M. Adakai (musician/organizer) in discussion with the author, January 2019.

Weedrat (band) interview in discussion with the author, February 2019.

WithxWar (band) interview in discussion with the author, April 2019.