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The stories of my family inspired me to study history and explore these Diné schooling experiences, seeking to understand our past and present. Although I was born and lived on the Navajo reservation as a small child, I grew up mostly in the metropolitan area of Washington, DC. In my youth, I knew that my father and family were Diné, but I was barely developing my identity as Diné. My journey to tracing and understanding my Diné identity enveloped me as I pursued the life track and service of a scholar and public intellectual, providing the basis for this study and book.

One of my mentors, history professor Katherine Osburn, called my work an “autoethnography,” which I embrace. As I revised this manuscript, more people and events encouraged me to amplify my voice and presence throughout the narrative. This book is not a comprehensive study of Navajo education but focuses on outliers and case studies to trace intricate details and experiences of diverse Diné students and generations from the 1930s to the 1990s. This approach stems from my aspiration to emulate Indigenous storytellers and truth-tellers, including those who have challenged scholars and specifically academic historians. They have framed historians as obsessed with Western notions of time and ontology such as linearity, chronology, and documented evidence. For example, an Indigenous scholar had once drawn a straight, flat line with her finger in the air to illustrate to me how she viewed “historians.” In a conversation with a Native American professional photographer, she scoffed at how scholars always want to summarize and generalize, while she “tells people’s stories.”

Regarding my positionality as the author, my perspective comes from bridging academic training and personal connections to the Navajo Nation and Diné communities throughout Diné Bikéyah and beyond. This
positionality makes this work unique qualitative research that emphasizes the significance of distinct experiences and what can be learned from them. As a Diné scholar who was raised mostly away from Navajo land, my questions of Diné identity and peoplehood begin with me and my family because these efforts of self-understanding motivate my work. While I write about “Navajos” and how “they” (re)connect to an earth memory compass and Diné ancestral teachings, I could personalize these descriptions using pronouns such as “we,” since I am also reorienting toward Diné identity by learning and linking with a changing and dynamic people—my kin. Academic writing has always reflected some bias despite claims and intent of objectivity. I am straightforward and clear about my subjectivities because they drive the purpose of this narrative. My perspective might be unique and distinct, but it also intersects with and features many diverse viewpoints; specifically, Diné experiences that remain overlooked and suppressed.

Although the Navajo Nation, my tribal nation, has been one of the most studied Indigenous peoples in the world, most people still know so little about us. As Jennifer Nez Denetdale emphasized in Reclaiming Diné History (2007), many scholars have distorted and misinterpreted Diné history and historical experiences. Many Diné voices have yet to be heard and understood. I cannot speak for all Diné people, but I speak for myself and those who have trusted me to speak for them.

In this narrative, I follow Diné conceptualizations of the Four Directions: East, South, West, and North. To Navajos, the Four Sacred Mountains and their accompanying elements stand for each direction. Sis Naají (Blanca Peak) is the mountain of the East and white shell. Tsodiił (Mount Taylor) is the turquoise mountain of the South. Abalone adorns the mountain of the West, Dook’o’osliíd (San Francisco Peaks). Dibé Nitsaa (Hesperus Peak), the mountain of the North, contains the black jet. I will elaborate on the meanings and teachings of the mountains and directions throughout this book to illuminate how Navajos have embedded memories in landmarks to serve as a compass to our people. This compass guides my journey to understand my Diné identity and those of other Navajos who live by diverse and distinct but interconnecting pathways with my own.
My parents and especially my father, Phillip L. Smith, have accompanied and bolstered me on this journey. My dad interpreted some of my presentations to different Diné chapter communities. He did not directly interpret but instead spoke what he sensed the Diné communities needed to hear in Diné Bizaad, the Navajo language, regarding me and this study. During one of these meetings when my father was interpreting for me, he once explained to the To’Nanees’Dizi (Tuba City) chapter community that my umbilical cord, or shits’ę́́’, was buried in Tuba City, Arizona. The To’Nanees’Dizi chapter community then understood why I was there. Navajos believe in an ongoing force between the umbilical cord and person. The parents and guardians of a child place his or her umbilical cord in a place that they want to continually influence the child as they grow. They create a bond between the child and the place where they buried the child's umbilical cord. We return to the place of our umbilical cord; thus, Diné Bikéyah, Navajo land, beckons me home.

I have returned to Diné Bikéyah after learning from family, scholars, and intellectuals of decolonizing methodologies, shared authority in research, and reciprocity between the researcher and Indigenous communities. I made a conscious decision to study Diné history to serve the needs and questions that the Diné, my clans, and my family have posed. I am present in this manuscript and study because I am a key part of the research process and interpretations. I take you on this journey with me in the Four Directions to understand diverse Diné learning experiences through ancestral cyclical conceptualizations of time and place that embed Navajos in a shared language of collective identity and ways of knowing and being.

During my time writing this book, another significant influence on me included a historic chain of events unfolding in Indian Country, America, and the world that resonated with many Indigenous and non-Native peoples. The Standing Rock Sioux Tribe withstood and rejected the Dakota Access Pipeline in North Dakota, reverberating and enlivening an Indigenous and environmental movement in 2016 that brought multiple nations and communities together to protect water and land for the present and future generations. Rather than writing, I wanted to serve and support Indigenous causes and struggles in person, whether in
Diné Bikéyah or in Lakota and Dakota Country. The US presidential
election of 2016 and the 2017 inauguration of the forty-fifth president
shook nations and peoples throughout the globe, especially since one of
the president’s first actions in office pushed the Dakota Access Pipeline.
History lives through these challenges, and the present also demands
action and movement. My concerns and personal commitments made it
difficult to balance writing narratives such as this book and organizing
events that bridged academia and these recent developments in Indige-
nous solidarity and resurgence.

During my doctoral fellowship at Dartmouth College in 2015, the
Gold King Mine wastewater spill hit and devastated the Navajo Nation
by contaminating one of the four sacred rivers, the San Juan River. The
news overwhelmed me with sadness, helplessness, and fear. In response
to these feelings, I decided to bring awareness to these issues by organiz-
ing a public event at Dartmouth in April 2016 that featured Diné voices
and perspectives. Soon thereafter, the Standing Rock Sioux’s stand
against the Dakota Access Pipeline to protect the waters of the Missouri
River motivated me to plan a forum in the oil metropole of Dallas at
Southern Methodist University on “Why Standing Rock Matters” in
October 2016, hosted by the Clements Center for Southwest Studies
and the Maguire Energy Institute.

The environmental catastrophes, such as the Gold King Mine spill
and the possibility of contamination in the Missouri River due to oil
spills, and struggles with resource development and capitalism threaten
the earth memory compasses that embody the connections between
peoplehood, lands, and water. Such destruction profits some descen-
dants of colonizers at the cost and disposal of most Indigenous peo-
lies who have remained and defended their very existence since time
immemorial. I hope that you, as readers, recognize these inseparable
connections between families, peoplehood, education, and the lands and
water. Whether we believe in an earth memory compass literally or fig-
uratively, teachings, guidance, and knowledge of an earth memory com-
pass bring the people and earth together, such as but not limited to the
Diné. Other Indigenous peoples have their own forms and understand-
ings of an earth memory compass, their connections and peoplehood
founded on epistemologies and ties with the earth, which they protect
and transfer to their posterity to remain Indigenous. Water is our life-
blood of the earth, sustaining all beings and “The People,” as the Diné
call ourselves.

Many people and groups, from universities to institutions, archives, li-
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ney to develop this book. My father connected me to Diné teachings and
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INTRODUCTION

These sacred mountains are our thinking, our knowledge, and our ways of life (lina). We as the Diné can use our psychological mind and common sense to see these sacred mountains, lands, valleys, rivers, trees, old hogans, old trails, to understand our stories of the past, present, and even the future.
—Wilson Aronilth, Jr.

For Navajos of the twentieth century, wanderings and journeys enabled growth through the life stages from birth to death. Navajos learned that they could only grow by traversing through the Four Directions—East, South, West, and North. They possessed what I translate as an “earth memory compass” embedded in the lands and waters—the earth memories—to guide them home toward one another as a people. “Earth memory compass” is not a traditional Diné term, but it represents a hybrid form and metaphor that I develop as Bilagáana (white) and Diné with ties to both Navajo and Euro-American education. I explore this concept to encapsulate the relationships between Diné identities, teachings, and homeland throughout this chapter and book.

This narrative focuses on Navajo boarding school students’ engagement or lack of connection with an earth memory compass by tracing historical experiences of understanding and living identity, of which spirituality is a part but not the sole element. The earth memory compass embodies teachings centered on Si’áh Naaghái Bik’eh Hózhó (SNBH), linking Diné culture, epistemology, spirituality, physical landscape, and
time. The earth memory compass is a form and embodiment of Indigenous (specifically Diné) knowledge. Navajos do not regularly use this term; I create and apply it to interpret and describe Diné ancestral teachings and knowledge specifically embedded in the Four Sacred Mountains and Directions, which uphold SNBH. The earth memory compass is a specific form of knowledge, rather than “culture.” As a metaphor, it reflects and engages with culture but also represents reciprocity between Navajos and their home(land). Navajos ingrain memories through generations in the land, and the land then leads them home, as in the journeys of Navajo students that I explore.

Knowledge contains both constant and dynamic elements; parts of knowledge change while others remain relevant and meaningful in similar ways over time. The earth memory compass is the prime example of hybridization and hybridities that I highlight because of its simultaneous durability and flux over time. According to ancestral Diné teachings, language and knowledge are living. For those reasons, I use phrases such as the earth memory compass “sustaining” the Diné. Knowledge and people share reciprocal relationships. When people such as Navajos embed knowledge in the land, specific places can become synonymous with that knowledge through memories. This book relies on the conceptualization of the earth memory compass as a force of these moving and interconnected components of knowledge.

Institutions born from legacies of settler colonialism, particularly federal schooling in the United States, targeted and attacked some of the Diné intergenerational connections and knowledge of their communities, lands, and waters in efforts to dismantle this earth memory compass—to terminate Diné peoplehood. The US government separated American Indians from their families to attend schools based on a Euro-American standard since the founding of the country. Narratives and experiences of Diné learners reveal how Navajo peoplehood and their earth memory compass persisted despite the use of distant education in the form of federal boarding schools to dissolve those ties between the people, knowledge, and earth.

In 1969 Tom Ration, a Navajo from Crownpoint, New Mexico, interviewed Hopi-Hopi, a Diné elder, for the Doris Duke Collection of American Indian Oral History. In a series of interviews, Hopi-Hopi nar-
rated his life journey, exemplifying the significance of an earth memory compass to the Diné sense of peoplehood. His wanderings took him in various directions and to many different places, but like many Navajos in the twentieth century, he knew home and how to return there by an earth memory compass.

Hopi-Hopi’s mother was Navajo, and his father was Mexican. He does not specify his clans in the interview. He dictated his interview in Navajo to Ration, who translated and transcribed it. Hopi-Hopi claimed to be seventy-six years old during the interview, which dates his birth year to 1893. He believes, however, that he first went to school in 1884 or 1885 when he was between nine and twelve years old. The “police-men” took him from his home in Tohatchi, New Mexico, to a boarding school in Fort Defiance, Arizona, where he lived for about five years. He then started the fifth grade at the Santa Fe Indian Boarding School, where he stayed for two years until he ran away. I assume that he was between fourteen and sixteen years old when he first ran away from the school in Santa Fe.

Hopi-Hopi’s Escape and the Diné Earth Memory Compass

Hopi-Hopi was born in Tó Haach’í’, where he lived as a child before he went to a boarding school. In his youth at the turn of the nineteenth century, Hopi-Hopi earned his name for his running abilities to compete with the Hopis, whom the Diné respected for their speed and agility despite intertribal tensions over land disputes. He relied not only on his swiftness to run away from the Santa Fe Indian Boarding School but also on his knowledge and understanding of the skies, land, and waters through a Navajo earth memory compass. The support from Indigenous communities and family also ensured his escape.

When he was about fourteen years old, Hopi-Hopi and a small group of schoolboys collaborated and escaped to their homes. He declared, “I know which direction that I came from. I can go by the sun. I went around Mount Taylor and Sandia Mountain and on to Santa Fe. . . . This is the way I know our way, my way back to my home.” These young Navajos began to learn from infancy about their home and environmental surroundings. These early teachings and experiences with Diné knowl-
edge of respecting and knowing the Four Directions prepared them to map their way home by an earth memory compass.

The same river that directed the path homeward also blocked them. They had to cross the Rio Grande, which ran “strong and deep” before major irrigation diverted its flow, without a bridge. The teenage boys practiced swimming nearly every day at the boarding school for four months, preparing to face Naakaai Bitooh or the “Mexican River.” Only when he and the other boys could control and propel their movement through the water with ease did they determine to set out “towards the mountains.”

They headed north of the school, looking to the gray peaks that beckoned them. After a day, they reached the San Felipe Mountains and then followed the river southward. They slept without a fire, veiling themselves in the dark to evade search parties. Although the river rushed in force, the boys found a shallow in the canyon of the mountain to practice swimming against the current. They stripped their clothing and shoes, embracing the cold water with their warm skin. After two days of swimming practice in the narrow river, they traced on foot the flow south to a wide crossing.

As the sun appeared high in the south sky, the boys tied their clothing and shoes into bundles that they wrapped around their necks, and they immersed their naked forms in the running water. The balls of clothing tugged at their throats while they pushed and pulled their bodies through the rapid current. Hopi-Hopi reached in front of him for land. The water blurred his vision, but he touched the wet soil and knew instantly that they had crossed the river. They hurried to the nearby woods for cover, where they untied their bundles and hung their clothing to dry.

The hot red sand blanketed them for the couple of hours that they waited before redressing and continuing to walk by the riverside. Once the boys crossed the Rio Grande, they continued following the mountains home to Tohatchi. The river had covered their scent, confusing the bloodhounds that tracked their trail; the search party did not pursue the runaways past the waters. Hopi-Hopi and his group of runaways passed a stage then in their journey homebound; they came from the East to the South toward the West, using an earth memory compass as their guide.
In this narrative, Hopi-Hopi transitions from a boy to a man, which Navajos relate to the directional movements from South to West. Since the Diné affiliate the North with old age, the fourth direction does not pertain directly to this Navajo journey.

Throughout the twentieth century, Diné families thought and acted by the Four Sacred Directions to embed a Navajo self-understanding in their children. Navajos learned, by what I have encapsulated as a metaphor of the earth memory compass, to know themselves, their people, and their relationships with all things around them through their various learning experiences. I use the term “earth memory compass” to refer to the Diné philosophy and force of SNBH that leads to hózhó—the ideal of Diné society and a desirable state of being and environment. English translations of hózhó include beauty, harmony, and happiness. Navajos understand the relationships that compose their world and hózhó through teachings of the earth and directions. They have come from diverse walks of life, adhering to different and at times conflicting religions, politics, and cultures, but a Diné earth memory compass has provided them common grounds to know and understand their homeland as well as one another. The earth memory compass is not a religion or political decree; it is a system of knowledge and epistemologies based on collective memories, values of the earth, and ties between peoplehood and the land.

Anthropologist Keith Basso’s concept of “place [as] the object of awareness” and Tewa educator Gregory Cajete’s emphasis on “an ecology of indigenous knowledge” have shaped my articulations of the Diné earth memory compass. I argue that Navajos made an effort to build moments of “place awareness” for their children, reinforcing Diné earth memories that would persist against non-Navajo educational influences and attempts to erase or manipulate their ties to Diné Bikéyah (Navajo land) from the interwar era to the late twentieth century.

Most studies on American Indian boarding schools analyze the period between 1879 and 1930. After 1930, federal policy drastically changed by closing most off-reservation boarding schools. However, American Indians, especially the Diné in the Southwest, still attended boarding schools and programs with assimilationist goals. Navajos such as tribal leaders came to value schooling, but they continued to struggle with US
governmental and non-Navajo control over education. American Indian boarding schools exist to this day, but few studies examine the process of historical change in Indian education and boarding schools during the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

New pressures of assimilation developed after the federal government no longer officially upheld boarding school policy in the postwar period. Navajos have faced more recent challenges to the ties between their youth, tribal communities, and culture. The Latter-day Saint Indian Student Placement Program (ISPP), for example, placed many Diné children with Latter-day Saint families off the reservation to receive an education.13 Despite the good intentions of its sponsors, ISPP created distance and estrangement for some students. Scholars have started discussing such forms of Indian child and family separations in the historiography of boarding schools, comparing the programs, policies, and practices. After an era of assimilation in Indian education, numerous Native American students have attended a variety of different schooling systems.14 The Diné youth have experienced a varied array of schooling, including ISPP, Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) day schools, boarding schools, mission schools, on-reservation state schools, and off-reservation state schools. Historians have yet to assess the impacts of attending such a range of different schooling systems, which this study begins to consider.

Into the late twentieth century, government schools altered American Indian familial relationships and ties to home similar to what off-reservation schools did in earlier decades. I examine the impacts of schooling on Navajo communities as colonial remnants in US-Diné relations from the 1930s to 1990 in Diné Bikéyah. A question that guides this research is how government schools, whether far, near, or on the reservation, affected Diné students’ sense of home and relationships with their Indigenous community during the twentieth century. While some studies dwell on how boarding schools shattered students’ ties with family, community, and heritage, I concentrate on the ongoing connections of students to a Diné earth memory compass that reorients them toward SNBH and supports mosaics of their eclectic learning experiences.

Before attending school or any Euro-American student program, many Diné children received lessons at home, during which they de-
developed their identity and relationship with their family, community, and natural environment. These connections and teachings would remain with many of them for the rest of their lives, particularly in their later learning and growth experiences, as they journeyed in the Four Directions of life and time. In my journey of tracing twentieth-century Diné schooling experiences, I relate the narrative of Diné education to a cyclical movement from challenges to Diné processes of learning and knowing back toward honoring and living by hózhó and Dinéjí na’nitin (ancestral teachings).

The landscape, waters, and skies of Diné Bikéyah encapsulate these teachings and earth memories. Four mountains set the boundaries of Navajo land, representing the sacred directions of East, South, West, and North. Sis Naajini, or Blanca Peak in Colorado, towers over the Rocky Mountains like a lighthouse, shining in the daylight dawn to the East. Tsoodzíł, or Mount Taylor of New Mexico, sits in the South among the piñon, juniper, fir, and spruce, adorned in the green and blue hues of
turquoise. Dook’o’ojíi, or the San Francisco Peaks in Arizona, glis-
tens as amber in the sunset to the West. Dibé Nitsaa, or Hesperus Peak
of Colorado, blends into the jet-black darkness of the night sky in the
North.

Four rivers stream life throughout Diné Bikéyah: the Sá Bitooh or
San Juan, Tó Nts’ósíkooh or Colorado, Tólchítíkooh or Little Colo-
rado, and Naakaai Bitooh or Rio Grande. The Navajo Nation covers
approximately 27,425 square miles of these ancestral homelands within
the state lines of Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah, encompassing various
ecosystems such as deserts, plains, and coniferous forests. Drought and
aridity intersperse with the couple of moist seasons. By summer, green
corn enlivens some of the gritty brown plains. Diné Bikéyah reaches
an altitude from 4,000 feet in the Colorado Valley to over 11,000 feet
in the outlying San Francisco Peaks. Mesas, buttes, canyons, waterfalls,
streams, lakes, and varieties of red cedar, pine, and cottonwood repre-
sent only a portion of the diverse landscape that Navajos know and call
their home.

How did earth knowledge frameworks for decision-making persist
and support Diné collective identity through the twentieth century?
The Diné have exerted their sovereignty in relations with diverse influ-
ences by ensuring the transfer of their collective rationale and identity.
They continue to propagate their epistemologies through emblems and
layers of symbols in forms such as songs, oral repetitions, oral histories,
stories, parables, sayings, prayers, and physical practices—such as rituals
and signs—relating to the earth and land. Orality and language transmit
meanings that constitute worldviews and epistemologies through gen-
erations.

Historical developments such as the penetration of mainstream Amer-
ican influence and hegemony through schooling have changed Diné
language and its ideologies. Schooling refers to the institutionalization
of Navajo learning through the apparatus of the state and government,
whereas Diné education implies the holistic experiences of acquiring
knowledge throughout life. Many Navajos have learned to pass on at
least one song in Diné Bizaad, the Navajo language, to their posterity.
These emblems constitute a “map” or “compass,” with directions and
landmarks—the Four Sacred Directions and Mountains—that guide
Navajos on a shared course of epistemology, knowledge, understanding, and decision-making.

Although I was raised mostly far from the Navajo reservation, my family continued to foster connections to Diné Bikéyah by regular contact with our relatives there. My Diné elders and father stressed to me the significance of clan relations and Diné Bikéyah as our homeland. We are Diné because our clans have maintained ties with the lands since time immemorial. My father has repetitively sung one song that he learned from his father about the Four Directions, life stages, and mountains throughout my life. This song, which I introduce later in this chapter, has become a road map for me to understand my ties to Diné people and homelands. I repeat the Four Sacred Mountains to reorient where I am in relation to my people, and I teach my children this song so that they may always find their way to family and home. Hopi-Hopi’s journey resonates with me because he also used the mountains and skies as his guide to Diné Bikéyah, home, and family.

**Hopi-Hopi’s Return Home**

The mountain stood as a beacon to Hopi-Hopi and the other runaways, as they continued their homebound journey. They also received aid from non-Navajo “Indians” who provided food, shelter, and directions along the way. Hopi-Hopi called them “Indians” without identifying their tribe. This family drew them a map to the Navajo reservation and pointed out the way there, advising them to stop at the Zia Pueblo village (*Tl’ógi* in Navajo or *Tsiya* in Zia).

Zia Pueblos fed and helped them, after learning that they ran away from school. At that point, they were only sixty miles away from Navajo lands. The boys “went through the mountains there, right straight over the mesa,” making their own path. They reached Navajo territory and first sighted a sheepherder with his flock. They recognized their “own people” and knew they “wouldn’t starve” and “were safe” in their land. They pushed on westward to the Torreon Mountain.19

After a week of traveling, they reached Be’ek’id Łigaií, Lake Valley, New Mexico, where they visited their relatives for about nine days. They then set off toward Tohatchi Mountain, walking the last stretch to their home in the moonlight.20 Hopi-Hopi remembered, “We was near the
mountain there and we know where we live, it was on the foot of the To-

hatchi Mountain. . . . We was, back home, where our real home was.”

With the support of Native American families and communities along the way, Hopi-Hopi and his entourage of schoolboys walked about two hundred miles following the maps that their ancestors transferred to them as young children through language, oral tradition, ceremony, and earth knowledge. Diné educator Manley A. Begay, Jr., explains how Diné children like Hopi-Hopi would have received lessons of Shá bik’ehgo As’ah Oodáától, or “A Journey with Wellness and Healthy Lifestyle Guided by the Journey of the Sun,” which would raise them “into adulthood with all the blessings of, among others, good thinking, planning, independence, strength, knowledge, health, happiness, and sense of hope.” These teachings formed a Diné lens to understanding the
landscapes, waters, and skies—particularly the movement of the sun and its representation of time—underlying a peoplehood and their values.

**Elements of the Compass**

Navajos have referred to the earth memory compass, which guided Hopi-Hopi home, as a “map” or “formula.” Benjamin Barney, as director of the Center for Teacher Education at Diné College in 1994, claimed, “I think the Navajo formula and this little map of getting there is within families, within the Navajo. It might be a slightly different map from one family to another, but you need to have that piece of a map, a sense of becoming really a person.” Navajos interacted better with different peoples and cultures in the past, according to Barney, because they knew this map of Diné identity on various personal levels. At the turn of the twentieth century, the Diné needed this map more than previous generations due to processes of globalization, urbanization, and migrations that separated Navajos from their communities and homeland. Navajos have collaborated with various communities to support bilingual programs and schooling that emphasize Diné culture and identity through Diné Bizaad (Navajo language). In Flagstaff, Arizona, for example, Puente de Hózhó serves as a trilingual magnet school that includes a Navajo program. As a core stem, Diné Bizaad connects the various parts composing a map to Diné peoplehood and identity.

The Diné map does not necessarily bind Navajos in a frozen static state. The map enables them to experience a wider world and adjust while maintaining a “rooted” self-identity. Barney asserted “that I do have a home, but the home is not a burden. That I have a culture, a language, but it does not stifle me.” Diné foundations of identity have shifted like the earth’s surface of moving tectonic plates. The earth maintains its characteristic shape but consistently, though at different rates, transforms within itself. Barney described these mechanics in terms of Navajo language, culture, knowledge, and epistemology—the plates of Diné identity. The Diné earth memory compass empowers Navajos by providing them the tools to forge their own paths. Hopi-Hopi used the mountains, skies, and earth as a map, but he also made his “own road” by applying the earth memory knowledge as a compass.
Many of my generation, born in the late twentieth century, did not learn Diné Bizaad fluently. Some of us, including me, did not learn explicitly about SNBH. We each can trace, however, an ancestor who knew Diné Bizaad and ancestral teachings of SNBH and the earth memory compass. This intergenerational thread connects us and leads us to a constancy of earth memories even if we each come to them from distinct points. Thus, Navajos change and are dynamic people but also link to living histories of the earth memory compass. Some Navajos might forget and even sever those ties, but they have historically endured; some Navajos sustain them.

While studying at Arizona State University, I engaged with both distinguished and emerging Diné scholars and educators, who often addressed difficult questions about Diné identity and education. Although we came from different backgrounds and perspectives, we shared a common experience of asking and seeking to articulate what it means to be Diné throughout our lives. My understanding of the earth memory compass arises from both direct and indirect dialogue with them and other Diné learners.

One of my Diné colleagues, Waquin Preston, underscored how Diné scholars have framed their works through SNBH from various approaches, reflecting the complexities of “this core philosophy.” Many definitions and educational frameworks of SNBH have existed, since “how SNBH is achieved and lived in individual lives is up to the discretion of the individual” despite “a shared metaphor of SNBH among Diné people.” By adhering to SNBH, Navajos have upheld “the autonomy of individuals as a part of the larger community.” SNBH has functioned as a metaphor in some ways, as Navajos have understood and related to it on individual levels. Some Navajos have also perceived SNBH as tangible and living in both physical and metaphysical senses.

Regardless of how Navajos have comprehended SNBH, their engagement, or lack thereof, with the ancestral teachings represented their connection to Diné peoplehood through the twentieth century. This narrative centers on Diné generations that spoke Diné Bizaad fluently and learned SNBH since birth. Although some Navajos challenge them, these older generations continue to influence Diné collective identity;
therefore, their common conceptualizations and variations of Diné epistemology and knowledge predominate in this book.

**Diné Bizaad**

Navajos have shaped and transferred the guides of the earth memory compass as oral traditions through Diné Bizaad, which establishes the epistemology and conveys the knowledge of the people. Thus, the language and epistemology coexisted in a reciprocal relationship through the twentieth century. The Diné ceremonial system, the basis of Navajo knowledge and epistemology, exists through Diné Bizaad. John Harvey, a Navajo who identified himself as a “medicine man initiated into several chants,” claimed during a Navajo Tribal Council meeting in 1940, “There is a very distinctive mode of performance—different Navajo chants—they are so classified according to the laws of nature that without it we will perish. It is in our blood, the songs, the wonderful prayers and sincerity that goes with the Navajo religion.” To Harvey and other Navajos of the twentieth century, their body, spirituality, and language together support their existence as a people. The Navajo language in forms of song, prayer, and performance for example, actualizes the Diné and their natural world.

Language, as anthropologist Gary Witherspoon explains, is the medium of creation, control, classification, and beautification in the Navajo world. The Diyin Diné, translated as the “Holy People”—gods, deities, or supernatural beings—created the Navajo world with the articulations of their thoughts in “speech, song, and prayer.” These thoughts and their expressions tie the Diné to their surroundings and homeland. To this day, the Diné renew those ties by reiterating the origins of thought and speech in their oral traditions and ceremonies—especially the Hózhóójí or Blessingway. In the chants of the Hózhóójí, two beings emerge from First Man’s medicine bundle. First Man recognizes the first being as Thought and calls him Si’á Naagháí, “Long Life.”

Unlike the first being, the second being is female. First Man identifies her as Speech and Bik’eh Hózhó, “Happiness.” Thought and Speech unite as Si’á Naagháí Bik’eh Hózhó, bringing “long life” and “happiness” to the Diné world and defining their ways of life since time imme-
morial. According to oral traditions and ancestral teachings, the Navajo deity, Changing Woman or Asdzá’ Nádlehéé, personifies Si’áh Naaghái Bik’eh Hózhó. She embodies the abilities of Navajos to procreate and transform as a people. Si’áh Naaghái Bik’eh Hózhó undergirds Diné conceptualizations of place and earth knowledge. Navajos seek to live until old age with “hózhó . . . the end result of which incorporates one into the universal beauty, harmony, and happiness described as sa’ah naagháií bik’eh hózhó.”

Navajos refer to the sacred directions and mountains in ceremony and everyday life to reinforce the process of Si’áh Naaghái Bik’eh Hózhó.

Diné Bizaad embodies Speech and the female entity of Bik’eh Hózhó. Navajos have recognized the language as a female being who breathes and thinks on her own. She provides the code and communication system that encapsulate Diné rationale and epistemology. The structures, concepts, terms, and applications of Diné Bizaad to the earth, specifically the sacred mountains and directions, distinguish Navajos from others while relating them to one another. Dmitriy Nezzhoni, a Navajo graduate in curriculum and instruction at Arizona State University, describes the relationship between his identity and Diné Bizaad as inseparable: “It is the language that my Holy People understand, the language my spirit understands, the language my ancestors understand, my language is my existence.”

Diné Bizaad has linked Navajos to their origins and family through all generations. Generations of Navajo students accessed the earth memory compass through Diné Bizaad for guidance in the twentieth century.

The perpetuation of the Navajo language through teachings of sense of place connects the Diné with decision-making processes that define them, although constant hybridizations of Navajo and diverse influences transform Diné Bizaad and her people. Until the end of the twentieth century, most Navajo children learned the Navajo language fluently, even though they went to school. In Rock Point, Arizona, for example, “98% of the children entering school in 1979 were dominant in Navajo, but ten years later only 3% knew Navajo fluently.” Navajo learners have experienced cycles of confronting tensions and struggles both inside and outside their communities that determine their epistemology and ways of life. In these cycles, they continue to draw from Diné collec-
tive memories of earth knowledge sustained by vehicles such as oral traditions, thought, song, and prayer. These devices serve as the elements of the earth memory compass, by which Navajos remember who they are as a people and kin.

The Diné history of their language follows the central Navajo philosophy ingrained in the Four Sacred Directions, colors, worlds, and mountains. According to oral tradition, the Diyin Diné created the language “with holiness, prayer, meditation, thought, sound, and through that process came forth the Yoolgai Saad or the White Shell language.”

Four kinds of languages developed, correlating with the sacred directions and stages of life. The directions model ways of thinking and actualizing. Yoolgai Saad aligns with the East, Early Dawn, and birth, which teaches Navajos to think positively, prepare, and organize well. Dootl’izhii Saad, the Turquoise language, points to the South, Blue Twilight, Day, and adolescence, which Navajos emulate by developing critical thought and planning. Diichilii Saad, the Abalone language, comes with the West, Evening, Sunset, and adulthood, encapsulating all life experiences and understandings. Baashzhinii Saad, the Jet language, brings the North, Night, and passing to a new cycle, epitomizing hope and faith prayers. The four languages tie into the condensed system of Diné decision-making, or the “map” and “compass” of collective memories and knowledge.

The language also evolved to reflect the balance between genders, especially male and female. The “Corn Pollen Boy language” or Tadaadiin Ashkii Saad parallels Thought and Si’áh Naaghiá (“Long Life”). The “Corn Beetle Girl language,” Taniltanii Ateed Saad, corresponds with Bik’eh Hózhó (“Happiness”) and Speech. Táádidíín (corn pollen), the powder from the top of corn stalks on the tassels, represents a source to the sacred that interweaves Diné language and traditions. The Diné compass of the Four Sacred Directions leads to these higher entities of Thought and Speech, characterized by Táádidíín, which together maintain the societal ideal of Si’áh Naaghiá Bik’eh Hózhó, long life in beauty.

A Cultural Hybrid Framework
Since the late nineteenth century, Native American scholars have relied on the oral traditions and voices of their communities to depict experiences in federal Indian boarding schools. Former Indian boarding
school students shared their stories and experiences in writing as Native intellectuals during the early twentieth century. Indian boarding school histories have developed from their works to academic studies of reclamation and decolonization that apply Indigenous methodologies of oral traditions and historical paradigms.

The historiography of American Indian education has followed two main methodologies and source bases. One methodology involves examining the official documentation of the federal government and schools, sifting through the written evidence to understand Indian schooling experiences. The other methodology rests on oral histories and interpretations of the narratives that Native Americans pass on about school life and their identities. Scholars have combined both methodologies, and some historians have examined the many parallels between Indian schoolchildren's experiences and those of other Indigenous children during past eras of worldwide colonialism and imperialism. The main points of these historical works include the intentions and goals of the US government and society that operated Indian schools, child removal and continual military conflict, and resiliency and resistance among Native Americans.

Oral histories of students bring nuance to historical narratives of American Indian education. Despite the hardship and tragedy in American Indian boarding school history, much of the literature recognizes the resiliency and positive qualities of these Indigenous experiences. K. Tsianina Lomawaima, a Mvskoke/Creek scholar, finds that American Indian students established a new community at boarding school. She portrays the students’ “ingenuity” and abilities to claim boarding school education and experiences for themselves. Lomawaima was one of the first scholars to primarily use oral histories and interviews with former boarding school students to focus on their perspectives, stories, and memories. She features the former students’ voices by incorporating large passages from her interviews with them. My methodology of oral history emulates this approach, relying on Indigenous historical perspectives and building on established frameworks of Diné thought processes in the structure and research.

Jennifer Nez Denetdale, Eva Garroutte, Bryan Brayboy, and several scholars of Indigenous studies have recently called on American Indians
in academia. They ask Native Americans to draw from their cultural heritage in their work and to “unlearn” colonized methodologies. Bryan Brayboy, professor of Indigenous education and justice, and several of his colleagues identify “Critical Indigenous Research Methodologies” as the essential path to a joint effort between scholars and Indigenous communities. Indigenous communities must direct and shape research and its processes for and by their people, centered on their epistemologies and ways of life. This collaboration enables Indigenous peoples to “(re)claim research and knowledge-making practices” with an awareness of colonization, past and present, and how to uphold Indigenous sovereignty. While seeking to stand with Diné communities, as a scholar and tribally enrolled member of the Navajo Nation, I hybridize Diné historical study by creating a framework based on Si’Áh Naagháí Bik’eh Hózhó and the Four Directions process of rational thinking. My methodologies depend on ongoing relationships with Diné communities.

I examine Diné educational history through approaches of cultural hybridity, which theorist Homi K. Bhabha explores in postcolonial studies. Indigenous people with a colonized past hybridize their culture when they depend on but resist the “assimilationist technologies” and forces of the postcolonial modern state. The colonized, including sovereign Indigenous nations and the Diné under the US government, use “the cultural hybridity of their borderline conditions to ‘translate’” and shape that state in exchange. The state, associated with “metropolis and modernity,” refers to varieties of Western (European-American) cultures and what theorist Antonio Gramsci identifies as hegemony—the control of a capitalist system involving both the government and civil society. I “reinscribe” this hegemonic culture, as other Navajos and subalterns have done in their everyday lives, to create a new framework of study through cultural hybridity between and through both Diné and Western epistemologies.

Navajos have navigated not only two worlds, as many scholars dichotomize Native American and white worlds. In 1993 Rosemary Henze and Lauren Vanett criticized the common metaphor in American Indian education that described Native Americans as learning to “walk in two worlds.” They revealed how this two-worlds metaphor jeopardizes the future of Indigenous generations, as “part of the systematic politi-
cal and social inequity” that “reduces and distorts the options of young people.” Other scholarly works continue to build on these points, while the metaphor remains pervasive in American Indian education. “Walking in two worlds” overlooks how Navajos have crossed myriad different worlds, including the spaces that distinguish Diné communities throughout Diné Bikéyah and elsewhere.

Societies such as the Diné have faced American colonialism and hegemony as forces of difference and challenges to their sovereignty, cultures, ways of life, and abilities to bridge multiple worlds. Some Navajos have continued to appropriate and hybridize these forces, such as the indoctrination of their youth in schools, to determine their influence. In his studies of colonization and decolonization, historian Frederick Cooper stresses “the ways in which colonized people sought—not entirely without success—to build lives in the crevices of colonial power, deflecting, appropriating, or reinterpreting the teachings and preachings thrust upon them.” This study creates a cultural hybrid framework to understand such “crevices of colonial power” and ways that Navajos have persisted as a people within (post)colonial structures.

Navajos have also been teaching and speaking of colonialism in their own terms, incorporating discourse of decolonization in their ceremonies and oral traditions. In a personal conversation with Navajo scholar Emery Tahy, he described oral traditions of the “gambler” and how they referred to the potential harms of white people. Tahy remembered participating in Diné ceremonies that addressed decolonization, and he valued the advice of his elders who have told him, “You may go away to be educated, but you will always be Navajo.” Navajos have created their own discourse of colonization in their language and culture.

Some Indigenous peoples such as the Diné have sustained relationships with their environment on metaphysical as well as physical levels, shaping their rationale and identity formation. Historian Donald Fixico (Shawnee, Sac and Fox, Muscogee Creek, and Seminole) categorizes three dimensions of Indian history that scholars have produced, of which the “Third Dimension is Native ethos: how Indian people view history from their own perspective.” Historians of the Western tradition, who examine Native American histories outside of their respective communities, think and write in the First Dimension. Scholars under-
stand American Indian histories through the Second Dimension, when they emphasize the interconnections and significance of both Native American and Euro-American historical figures. The Native ethos and perspective of the Third Dimension, on the other hand, rests on various relationships that American Indians have sustained with other human and nonhuman beings.

“We need to construct a cross-cultural bridge of understanding,” Fixico insists, “to permit people to cross back and forth between western-mindedness and the Natural Democracy of indigenous existence.” The Natural Democracy, a reciprocal “respect” for all things, encompasses the exchanges between Native Americans and elements of their environment including other Indigenous peoples, the earth, animals, skies, and spirits. Fixico’s terms reflect the various worlds or spaces in which some Native Americans such as the Diné live, but the historians’ vantage points and perspectives limit understanding of those diverse worlds and Indigenous experiences. I consider how many Diné embedded their children in values and relationships of a “Natural Democracy,” especially through oral traditions and practice such as ceremony, stories, songs, and prayers, that they passed on from generation to generation. I also search for traces of this embeddedness in Diné student learning experiences through my journey in the Four Directions of Diné Bikéyah and interactions with different Navajo communities.

Diné historians, including Jennifer Nez Denetdale, rely on “clan narratives” since they form and support Diné conceptualizations of “the past when placed within a historical and cultural framework.” The “clan narratives,” oral traditions, and ceremonies connected to origins embody Diné ethos and historical approaches, which consist of Navajo relationships with their natural environment. In Diné Bizaad, the concept of K’é encapsulates the clan networks and teachings, which “constitute intense, diffuse, and enduring solidarity” and express “correct forms of address and behavior toward others and the natural world around us.”

The origins, existence, and significance of Diné clans and K’é intermesh with waters and landscapes. After Asdzáá Nádleehé (Changing Woman), a revered deity, created the original Four Clans of the Diné west of Diné Bikéyah, she provided a gish (cane) to each of them “to
dig a hole in the ground for water during their journey . . . back to the mainland.” Many of the clans derive from people’s access and relationship to water, including the original Four Clans. The water, which one of these clan members found with the gish, tasted bitter; therefore, they called the clan of this man Tódích’ii’nii (the Bitter Water Clan). In another area along the journey, an elder of a different clan released water easily after digging with the gish. His clan became the Tó’áhání (Near the Water Clan).

According to some Diné oral traditions, the man of the third clan stood against a canyon wall after failing to reach water with his gish. They called him Kinyaa’áanii (Towering House Clan), since he appeared to be leaning on a house. Lastly, the Tótsohníi (Big Water Clan) received their name when the fourth clan member unleashed a flood with his gish. Diné bilingual and bicultural programs reiterated these narratives and histories of Ké in schools such as the Rough Rock Demonstration School, which formed through the American Indian self-determination movement in 1966. Yet most schooling has disrupted or disregarded these teachings to this day. My father’s clan is Kinyaa’áanii, and my paternal grandfather was Tsínaajini (Black-streaked Woods People Clan) that “emerged from the sacred mountains called Sís Naajiní (Blanca Peak).” The stories and oral teachings of my elders taught me of Ké until I came across, as an adult, the Rough Rock Demonstration School materials and Diné curriculum of the Indian self-determination era.

This research brings together primary components of oral traditions, teachings of Ké, and an academic historical narrative about Diné education in the twentieth century to feature Navajo student connections and struggles with the earth memory compass. While US governmental schools distanced Diné youth from their families and the earth memory compass, many students wrestled and strained to reorient toward ancestral teachings, including my own family.

The Process of the Sacred Directions
Si’áh Naagháí Bik’eh Hózhó represents life as a journey, which necessitates ceremonies to maintain and restore the ideal. Anderson Hoskie, a hataálíí (Diné healer), stresses, “Healing is done within ceremonies, and every ceremony has a story that takes the patient on a journey.” The
journey to heal applies to everyday existence through a cycle of restoring balance and persevering in life. Oral traditions provide the patterns for healing and ceremony through journey and “knowledge acquisition, where all of us necessarily return to the source or the beginning.” Learning and “knowledge acquisition” propel the journey of life, and the sacred mountains and other markers of the earth remind Navajos of the process that ensures their path on the “Road of Beauty” or “Corn Pollen Road” leading to Si’áh Naagháí Bik’eh Hózhó. The mountains preserve knowledge of the beginnings, which Navajos consider crucial to persist as a people.

Four is a sacred number to the Navajos, and they emphasize the “four” directions. However, there are seven key directions that represent the Diné worldview compass: “east, south, west, north, zenith, nadir, and center.” Mountains, as discussed, signify this “Navajo sacred geography: east, Sisnaajini or Blanca Peak; south, Tsoodził, Mount Taylor; west, Dook’o’oosliíd, San Francisco Peak; and north, Dibé Nitsaa, La Plata Peak, with two additional landforms in the center [Ch’óól’íí or ‘Gobernador Knob,’ and Dziłná’oodili or Huerfano Peak].”

Many Navajos, like their ancestors, developed a “thickness of culture” in their early years at home, which affected their experiences in schooling and solidified their identity as Diné through the changes in education over the twentieth century. I acknowledge that increasingly more Navajos lived away from Diné Bikéyah and communities in cities and different settings after World War II, which altered their relationship with their ancestral homelands. Their ancestors, often their own parents and grandparents, went through a “hardening” of Diné culture and ties to land that affected them and encouraged many of them to sustain those conceptualizations of homeland.

Physical, mental, social, and cultural components of Diné teachings intertwined, which I highlight throughout this book. According to Diné elder Jones Van Winkle, who was a child during the 1920s, Navajos ran at the breaking dawn and would cover their bodies with snow or dive into an icy pond. These challenges hardened and strengthened them in physical, mental, and spiritual ways. Navajos ran toward the dawn to greet the Diyin Diné (Holy People) and show their vitality as well as to become capable of outrunning an enemy. These motions and teach-
ings represented a hardening of culture and worldviews by layering the bodily experiences with meanings. In the twentieth century, every Diné related to an ancestor with this “hardening” and “thickness of culture.” Some Navajos continue to support bidziil, or strength, by bathing in the first snowfall and following other teachings.

“Thickness of culture” refers to the layering of cultural symbols and meanings that support and maintain a rationale and sense of being that affects decision-making—a collective Diné identity based on their geo-piety and symbiotic relationships with natural environment. “Thickness of culture” stems from Geertz’s theory of “thick description”: “What the ethnographer is in fact faced with . . . is a multiplicity of complex conceptual structures, many of them superimposed upon or knotted into one another, which are at once strange, irregular, and inexplicit, and which he must contrive somehow first to grasp and then to render.”65 Some scholars seek to piece together the interpretative meanings of cultures exhibited in everyday life. My study considers how cultures developed these meanings and instilled them in their people as earth memories. The attachment to Navajo land, spirituality, family, and community has persisted for many Diné regardless of their experiences in their youth when they transferred from one schooling and work system to the next one. Visits and time spent with family and community could have reinforced their home learning and memories of early experiences. Intergenerational ties with family embedded in the culture and landscape of Diné Bikéyah have also sustained Diné peoplehood and collective identity even for those who lived outside of predominantly Navajo communities.

Luci Tapahonso, a Diné poet, describes in “A Radiant Curve” how Navajos celebrate a baby’s first laugh with the First Laugh Ceremony, ’Awéé’/ch’ideeldlo’, involving family and friends. Tapahonso writes, “This occurrence [the first laugh] showed that Shisói [her grandson] had consciously performed the act of thinking, Ntsékees, which is associated with the beginning of creation, childhood, and sunrise.”66 The Diné solidify their collective identity and connect all their children to their ways of life through traditions such as the First Laugh Ceremony, which teach the significance of the sacred directions. If they did not personally participate in such traditions, they often know a close friend
or family member who did, relating them to the process of cultural embeddedness.

Navajos have historically valued family and home, *k’é dóó hoogban*, which they have understood through oral traditions, relationships, and the earth memory compass of the sacred mountains and directions. Ta'ahonso asserts that “the ‘proper way’ to begin any task or project is to start in the east, then south, then west, and finally, north. This idea can be applied to cleaning a home, stirring a pot of food, leading a discussion, developing a project, or . . . preparing for a First Laugh dinner.”67 These practices stem from “the teachings associated with the clockwise movement around the four sacred directions,” which, as Diné educator Tammy Yonnie explains, “[promotes] the concept of *T’aa Sha Bik’ehgo Na’nitin* [sense of direction].”68 This sense of direction interlocks with processes of learning Diné (home)land, people, and self-understanding.

The main Four Directions of earth knowledge orient the Diné toward hózhó in their life journey and struggles from East to North, symbolizing the different seasons and stages as follows:

1. Preparation
   Ha’a’aah/East, Sis Naajini/Mount Blanca, Yoolgai Dziil/White Shell Mountain, Hayoolkááí/Dawn, Łigai/White, Daan/Spring, Oochiil/Birth, Nitsáhákees/Thinking

2. Activity
   Shádi’aah/South, Tsoodzil/Mount Taylor, Doott’izhii Dziil/Turquoise Mountain, Nihodeetl’iizh/Blue Twilight, Doott’izh/Blue, Shį/Summer, Tsílkéíi/Adolescent, Nahat’á/Planning

3. Reflection
   ’E’e’aah/West, Dook’o’oslúid/San Francisco Peaks, Diichiłí Dziil/Abalone Shell Mountain, Nihootsooi/Twilight, Łitso/Yellow, Aak’eed/Autumn, Hóyáanii/Adult, ’Iiná/Life

4. Conclusion/New Beginning
   Náhooko/North, Dibé Nitsaa/Mount Hesperus, Bááshzhinii Dziil/Obsidian/Black Jet Mountain, Chahalheel/Folding
Darkness, Łizhin/Black, Hái/Winter, Sğı/Old Age, Sihasin/Faith Prayers

These Four Directions, mountains, and symbols associated with them guide this overarching study and my journey of understanding Diné educational experiences in the twentieth century. Diné educators have already designed and implemented such approaches to scholarship as the “Diné educational philosophy model (DPL)" at Diné College. I seek to emulate their learning frameworks in this historical narrative.

Wilson Aronilth, Jr., of the Red House Clan and the Zuni Red Streak Running into the Water Clan, who developed most of the initial Diné College curriculum, explains that “our Navajo spiritual and social laws are represented by the sacred mountains, as well as the four seasons and the four parts of the day.” Each mountain or direction signifies a major step in the historical methodology to which I adhere as a Diné scholar.

This methodology follows my journey as a Bilagáana Diné historian, seeking to understand diverse historical Navajo learning experiences by turning to each of the Four Directions and their meanings. I explore Diné perspectives of education and schooling on the reservation between the 1930s and 1990 by using a Four Directions model of Navajo philosophy. The sacred mountains define Diné Bikéyah, while representing a compass and guide to the Diné. The four mountains symbolize more than boundaries of Diné Bikéyah; each mountain also marks a direction and natural stage, especially “the diurnal process of dawn, day, evening, and night,” which guides my interpretations of Diné schooling experiences over the past century. Diné scholar Herbert Benally notes that “the federal government’s policy of forced assimilation and acculturation into mainstream Western life included the concept of time.” Navajos understood time through the cycle that the Four Directions and Four Sacred Mountains embodied. Seeking to indigenize history, narratives, and interpretations of movements in time, I often do not follow strict chronology but themes of the Four Directions.

Chapters in Four Directions
This book consists of four chapters, reflecting each of the Four Directions that guided me to certain regions, cases, and time periods in Diné
Earth Memory Compass painting by Jonathan Totsoni (2017).
Bikéyah. The first stage is Sis Naajini, the White Shell Mountain that stands for Ha’a’aah, the East—the time for goal setting and intellectual development. This part of my narrative focuses on Diné learning experiences before schooling. It considers how Diné from throughout the reservation instilled their values and collective identity in their children through oral traditions such as stories, songs, and prayers that they passed on from generation to generation, preparing them to uphold their “Navajoness” in schooling away from home. Navajos also performed oral traditions with physical activities such as dance and running. In Ha’a’aah, Navajos learned to find their “way home” by the earth memory compass.

The second chapter explores the Shádi’áah/South in Navajo education, when Diné youth went to boarding schools and community schools during the interwar era to learn important life skills such as self-sufficiency, responsibility, and leadership. Tsoodžíl, the Turquoise Mountain of the South, represents the summer of life and adolescence. At this point of Diné education, Navajo youth faced pressures to receive crucial lessons through distant education. Although many Navajos went to on-reservation schools, such as the Crownpoint Indian Boarding School, their schooling separated them from home. This chapter turns to Crownpoint, a region affiliated with Tsoodžíl, to understand challenges of Navajo students in the early twentieth century. By examining student writings from the 1930s and intergenerational perspectives of the Crownpoint Boarding School, this chapter emphasizes the ongoing struggle not to teach “Indians to be Indians” but to “teach the Diné to be Diné.”

The ‘E’e’aah/West section features Diné educational experiences after World War II, between 1945 and 1965. This chapter examines the post-war school developments and student experiences in the western area of the reservation, centered on Leupp, Arizona, and surrounding communities near the mountain of the West, Dook’o’oosliíd. Increasingly more Diné students attended schools, both denominational and governmental institutions, which accelerated effects of American schooling on Diné families and communities. Navajos continued to receive an education distant from their home and ancestral teachings, which perpetuated colonial affronts to their peoplehood. This chapter delves into the mis-
fortunes of some Diné girls during an influenza epidemic that hit the Old Leupp Boarding School in 1957, tracing the dynamics between the school and Diné community that shaped student experiences and lives. The “Leupp Incident,” as government officials called the tragedy, offers a glimpse into the ways that Diné communities sought to regain control, protect 'Iiná (Life), and restore hózhó in Diné education.

The chapter of Náhookoš/North brings the book full circle in my Four Directions framework by examining the self-determination era of Diné schooling, epitomized by the efforts of the Rough Rock Demonstration School and Navajo Community College. Since 1965, Navajos have led Indigenous peoples in redirecting their learning systems and asserting their sovereignty in schools. This chapter highlights major transformations in the northern region of the reservation, around Monument Valley, Utah, when community members united to build their own schools. These grassroots efforts relied on student experiences and testimonies, culminating in the Sinajini case of 1974 and the terms of its legal agreement that ordered the development of Navajo community schools in Monument Valley. An introduction and epilogue frame the Four Directions chapters, outlining this hybrid Navajo-Western historical approach.

**Hybrid Histories of Diné Education**

The oral traditions of the Four Sacred Directions and Four Mountains underlay this hybrid approach of Diné educational history. Jan Vansina, a scholar who advanced interdisciplinary methodologies in African history, noted that “culture is reproduced by remembrance put into words and deeds. The mind through memory carries culture from generation to generation.” Vansina defended oral tradition as history by stressing the connections between language, memory, and culture. Jennifer Nez Denetdale upholds oral traditions as the key to “[enlarging] the historical scope to include those people conventional Western history has ignored and excluded” such as Navajos. Diné oral traditions and historical perspectives dictate all relations, centering on memories and meanings embedded in homeland and water.

Reconciliations of Navajo and Western historical methodologies involve processes of hybridization and focusing on the interstices of Indig-
enous experiences when the American hegemony of culture, ideologies, and epistemology surrounded the Diné especially through schooling in the twentieth century. The colonized shape their own peoplehood in the furnace of the cracks between their precolonial and postcolonial existence. As the US government colonized Diné Bikéyah and Indigenous homelands, white settlers and their leaders colonized the Diné and Native peoples with irrevocable ties to the lands. Navajos have searched to understand themselves in the interstices of American hegemony and white settler colonialism. In such liminal and transitional spaces, Navajos formed a cultural hybridity that entangled varying languages and epistemologies. This study highlights Diné voices of the interstices to relate these entanglements and hybridities of languages, oral traditions, and epistemologies.

Colonial encounters and dynamics constantly catalyze hybridity. Hybridity, in the sense that I apply, does not imply an equal bicultural dualism but rather refers to both the congruities and incongruities that intricacies of colonialism bear. Consider, for example, how children inherit features from both of their parents. The children represent hybrids of their ancestors. They are distinct and new beings, different from their forebears, but they could not exist without their ancestors, drawing from them in spontaneous yet orderly proportions in their very makeup.

This work also represents hybridity in that Navajos have interpreted their world and experiences into English to exchange and convey their understandings of Diné epistemology and knowledge. My father, Phillip Smith, who is fluent in the Navajo language, has served as my principal informant and interpreter throughout my life and research. This book primarily relies on oral histories, including twenty-six official interviews that I conducted using the English language between May and July 2015 in the featured areas of Leupp, Tuba City, Crownpoint, and Monument Valley. Informal conversations and interviews also directed me. For my interviews, Navajos had to translate meanings of their learning experiences since early childhood in their minds, although most of them spoke English fluently. Other supporting sources derive from archival records, especially the Bureau of Indian Affairs files, and legal documents.

Each of the chapters follows the Four Directions process in its case study, as I emphasize the struggles and journeys of students in the South
and West phases of their lives—the learning and experimental stages—to their return North when a new cycle restarts with the East. This methodology focuses on microhistories and local cases, as I delve into the intricacies of Navajo lives and community to comprehend how they self-identify and relate to each other and their world by passing on an earth memory compass. The chapters reflect the diverse but interconnecting experiences of Diné students from different times and regions of the reservation. Their journeys move in revolutions around the earth memory compass that their families instilled in them through the ancestral teachings and practices of the East since infancy.

While exemplary cases of Navajo educational experiences happened beyond the four areas of focus, this book does not claim to represent a comprehensive study of the countless and widely diverse Navajo educational experiences. I seek to understand intricacies of what Diné students learned through the twentieth century in places and communities that I crossed to follow the Four Directions and their respective meanings. Various interdisciplinary works have featured certain Diné schools, assessing multiple facets of institutions such as the Rough Rock Demonstration School, Rock Point Community School, and Tséhootsooi Diné Bi’Ólta’ in Fort Defiance. The histories of this literature contextualize and contribute to evaluations of self-determined Diné bilingual and cultural programs. Educators produced most of these narratives, based on their direct experiences in the historical developments of Diné schools, such as Galena Sells Dick who grew up in Rough Rock where she eventually directed the bilingual program. Some academically trained historians have developed extensive histories of several off-reservation boarding schools where many Navajos attended, including the Phoenix Indian School, Albuquerque Indian School, Sherman Indian School, and Stewart Indian School. This book links conversations of Diné education and boarding school histories.

Much work remains to map Diné schooling experiences in the varied geographies, spaces, and communities of cities, border towns, and areas throughout Diné Bikéyah and elsewhere. Although this book does not cover such a scope, I emphasize the diversity of Diné education through the different regions, schools, and perspectives that I highlight. The selected cases in my journey of Four Directions focus on some under-
studied schools and communities in discussions of Diné and Indigenous education. While some of these cases, such as the Leupp Incident that I explore in chapter 3, may qualify as “outliers,” they offer key parts of Diné stories, histories, and narratives. Outliers reveal what a community views as “normal” and “central” in contrast to their framing as “abnormal” and “deviation”; therefore, the Leupp Incident and other outliers delve into conceptualizing what Diné communities sensed as foundational experiences.

What Ts’aa’ Carries

Some Navajos have used a hybridized symbol of ts’aa’, or wedding basket, to illustrate how Diné youth acculturate and balance their identity in education. Several publications of the Navajo Curriculum Center have featured this emblem. Laura Tohe, a Diné poet and professor, first introduced the image to me. The Diné, she said, hold onto ts’aa’, an emblem of their oral tradition and culture, but carry what fits in this basket from outside influences. This portrayal of ts’aa’ exemplifies the possibilities of cultural hybridity.79

Although this journey concludes with the North, the revolving point of all Diné narratives and life experiences, it demarcates the beginning of new cycles. This book is only one cycle narrative, and many other cycles continue with possibilities for broader studies and explorations. I begin to consider the future of Diné education, family, and community while reflecting on the previous phases of the Four Directions. Shizhé’é yázhí, “my little father” or uncle, Albert Smith of the ’Áshijji (Salt People) and born for Tsinaijini (Black-streaked Woods Clan) declared, “The mountain is my church.”80 As my Diné elders have taught through Diné Bizaad since time immemorial, the mountains guide Navajos in understanding ourselves—past, present, and future.

Generations of Indigenous intellectuals have exemplified hybrid approaches to understanding histories of American Indian education. The stories of their ancestors’ boarding school experiences inspired them and their studies.81 Some American Indian scholars such as Hopi historian Matthew Sakiestewa Gilbert have used tribal-specific paradigms in their boarding school histories. Gilbert emphasizes that migrations
and movements have been integral parts of Hopi experiences since time immemorial, but the Hopis always remember to return to their homeland. He frames the Hopi boarding school experience in the Sherman Institute as one of many migrations that strengthen his people. Scholars such as Gilbert exemplify how to see boarding school history through Indigenous perspectives and commit to practicing shared authority by working with the communities.  

Diné scholars have “reclaimed” ancestral intellectual processes in the histories and general studies of their people. Jennifer Nez Denetdale calls for “reclaiming Diné history,” and Lloyd L. Lee, a Native American studies professor, collaborated with various Navajo intellectuals to produce Diné Perspectives: Revitalizing and Reclaiming Navajo Thought and Navajo Sovereignty: Understandings and Visions of the Diné People. They have laid the groundwork for Diné Critical Indigenous Research Methodologies. Former president of Diné College Ferlin Clark modeled a version of the Four Directions methodology in his dissertation, “In Becoming Sa’ah Naaghai Bik’eh Hozhoon,” which examines the historical developments and educational designs of the Navajo Community College (now Diné College). These
works apply ancestral Navajo teachings and methodologies to address community-based questions and research, which this book follows in an overarching narrative of Diné educational history and experiences of the twentieth century.

This book also intersects with literature about inequalities and racism faced more broadly in US education. Scholars have traced boarding school histories to large-scale strategies of American power and racial dynamics entrenched in population control, including forms of surveillance, extermination, and incarceration. Thomas Dichter, an academic in history and literature, for example, connects past and present systems of captivity by underscoring the correlations between race and state violence in the United States. He includes boarding schools along with military prisons and internment camps in his analysis. This discourse reaffirms what historian Kelly Lytle Hernández argues: “Mass incarceration is mass elimination.” Tria Blu Wakpa, who holds a PhD in ethnic studies, examines (dis)connections between embodied programming (such as dance and performance) and education at the Saint Francis Mission School on the Rosebud Reservation from 1886 to 1972. She compares how Lakota education at the facility changed but continued to apply embodied practices after the boarding school became the tribally run juvenile hall Wanbli Wiconi Tipi (Eagle Life Home) in 2005. My study demonstrates how boarding schools perpetuated such American hegemonic forces to challenge the earth memory compass and Diné identity; most importantly, however, this narrative stresses how Indigenous people have both co-opted and overcome these attempts to control them and their future.

The Sinajini case, discussed in chapter 4, exemplifies ways that Navajos contributed to civil rights movements by advocating for equal education. As scholars have deemed, the US Supreme Court’s decision in Brown v. Board of Education (1954) did not dispel all educational inequalities and forms of racial segregation. Professor James D. Anderson investigates the complicated impacts and meanings of Brown by recognizing the significance of the case among multiple groups and contexts that blur black-white binaries. In my focus on Monument Valley, for example, many Navajos contested the terms and mechanics of integration and “busing” to uphold their educational sovereignty and equal rights.
Historians have come to see American Indian school experiences from personal, national, and global viewpoints. The global historical developments represented by similar Indigenous experiences of peoples such as the Canadian First Nations, Australian Aborigines, and West Africans in colonial school systems have informed this research but are the focus of other studies. After considering a vast array of Indigenous education histories, this book aims to decolonize and indigenize history by centering on Diné stories of their past, following the models of Diné intellectuals such as Denetdale, Clark, and Lee.

**Working with the Navajo Nation**

Following models of decolonizing methodologies and Indigenous studies, my work addresses the needs and pertinent questions to my people, the Diné, in conjunction with my interests in colonial studies. In 2008 I interned for the Diné Policy Institute (DPI) where the director and former Navajo chief justice Robert Yazzie urged me to consider how my research could affect Navajo tribal policies and communities.

This study depends on the approval of and communication with Diné communities by fulfilling the requirements of the Navajo Nation Human Research Review Board (NNHRRB) and Navajo Nation Historic Preservation Department, which involves discussing the project and working with the following chapters: Leupp, Tuba City, Oljato, and Crownpoint. I also addressed the Bird Springs Chapter, since a part of the book highlights their community. The NNHRRB evaluates how research benefits Diné communities. To receive community support and approval, I traveled extensively throughout the Navajo reservation, attending and presenting at chapter meetings and the NNHRRB meetings oftentimes in Diné Bizaad. I reported to the chapter leaders and communities as well as the NNHRRB quarterly. Since 2015, I have periodically presented in person at meetings and learned to translate my presentation in the Navajo language with the help of my father and a colleague, Davis Henderson, who are both fluent. My research aligns with relationships that I sustain with Diné communities, as I prepare parts of this project for Diné Education and local historical preservation through collaborations with tribal representatives and community members. The NNHRRB, consisting of ten members in a council, received drafts of this book to
review and approve before publication. This book would not exist without their support, and I honor and respect their service to the Navajo Nation.

“I Did Not Run from the Education”
Histories of American Indian boarding schools have come from worldwide perspectives, involving comparative studies with other Indigenous peoples in colonial contexts, and personal family and Native viewpoints that teach about peoples’ survival, perseverance, and life. Indigenous historical experiences and memories of boarding schools not only inform but also ignite action and change. The National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition (NABS), for example, formed in 2012 “under the laws of the Navajo Nation” to “develop and implement a national strategy that increases public awareness and cultivates healing for the profound trauma experienced by individuals, families, communities, American Indian and Alaska Native Nations resulting from the U.S. adoption and implementation of the Boarding School Policy of 1869.” Organizations and initiatives such as NABS rely on the myriad perspectives, testimonies, memories, and oral histories of former boarding school students.

This book adds another layer of perspectives. One of these perspectives comes from my father, who once told me that he “did not run from the education” when he tried to escape boarding school as a child. He knew his mother loved him, but she wanted a better future for him. The costs of boarding school education, however, included emotional, psychological, spiritual, and physical strains on children like my father. He ran away twice after encountering physical and sexual assault, especially from other youth who became bullies. Most of my father’s family went to boarding school. His mother and her father went to off-reservation boarding schools before him. Diverse stories, memories, and experiences of boarding schools from multiple generations reveal facets of perpetual efforts to erase and control Indigenous ties to their communities and lands. They also illuminate and support ways that Diné communities, families, and schoolchildren protected and sustained those ties, while creating new ones with their changing environment and people.
Despite each of their schooling experiences that pressured them to forget their Navajo language and heritage, many of my forebears still embraced and passed on to their posterity Diné songs and oral traditions. They worked to preserve the Diné philosophy of Si’áh Naagháí Bik’eh Hózhó and its embodiment in the compass of the Four Sacred Mountains that mark Diné Bikéyah. As a Diné scholar, my personal connections to this history intertwine with historiographies of American Indian boarding schools and Native American identity, which highlight processes of Indigenous persistence, regeneration, and resurgence.

Distant Education
Diné youth experienced a “distant education” in government schools, at times without traveling far from their communities. “Distant education” represents the mechanics of schooling that isolate the student from personal connections to home(land). American Indian boarding schools exemplified distant education by teaching and applying foreign manners to Diné pupils, and by attempting to transform their identity in relation to their home(land). In the context of Diné boarding school experiences in the twentieth century, I often consider home and homeland as entangled and synonymous, which I communicate through the term “home(land).” Distant education disrupts and erodes Diné self-understandings that relate their homeland of the Four Sacred Mountains to their sense of home and peoplehood. The US government and other designers of distant education more easily removed Navajos from their homelands by initiating “internal displacement”; they alienated and set Diné youth as foreigners and minorities in their home(land) through schooling. More non-Navajos could then benefit from accessing the lands for resource development and extraction.

Navajos including my family have had to reconnect since such processes as distant education have fractured traditional relations that solidified their community and ties to home(land) in the past. This study shows how Diné schooling experiences and learning evolved from this distant education to recentering more on home(land) and the community through the journey of the Four Directions. I experiment with a hybrid Indigenous-Western historical approach to indigenize history and
scholarship. Navajos redirected their education toward their home(land) through periods of maturity and self-determination in the late twentieth century. Yet their journey as a people continues with constant challenges, as outside forces (including the US government) continue to seek control over Diné lands and resources to the detriment of Diné existence as a people and sovereign nation.

Diné Song in My Self-Identity
The songs and *saad nazb’qa*, poetry, that I have learned from Diné instructors, mentors, and elders have altered my self-understanding and sense of my Diné heritage, which permeate this study.

*I am of the Crosslan family (Anglo-American or white on my maternal side), born for the Towering House Clan. My maternal grandfather is of the Harris family (white). My paternal grandfather is of the Black-streaked Woods People Clan. Because of this, I am a woman.*

While my family lived in Maryland, my schoolteachers often asked my father to come to my classes to present on Native American culture. Friends wanted him to sing a Navajo song during their sons’ Eagle Scout receptions. The Boy Scouts feel a strong affinity to Native Americans, and they like to “play Indian” or learn from “Indian wisdom.”

My father’s public performances of “Indianness” exposed me to parts of my Diné heritage. I did not recognize at the time, however, the layers of meanings in my father’s presentations and songs. Andrew Natona’bah advised, “We should live by the stories [songs] given to us long ago.” He stressed the importance for Navajos to know even one song. My father has taught me at least one song. Like Luci Tapahonso, I hope to “always wear the songs [our ancestors] gave us.”

My father’s displays of Indianness, specifically his singing, were expressions of Diné philosophy and worldviews. By learning Diné history and culture from various angles, including inside and outside of Navajo communities, I am gradually understanding my father’s songs. In a way,
like how Keith Basso describes “Earth Stalking,” I perceive Diné ways of life like a language with layers of meaning, which Navajos learn from basic to deeper levels to connect as a people with a common homeland. My other siblings or many audience members who have not known Diné philosophy still cannot fully hear the song that my father sings. I do not fully hear the song to this day, but I understand more of it as I learn the earth memory compass.

I only began to interpret the meaning of his songs and presentations later in life after returning to spend more time with my Diné family and studying Diné Bizaad and culture. Such learning opportunities have revealed more layers of meaning to the messages that my father carried through his songs. My father was trying to pass on certain teachings and worldviews from his upbringing as Diné to his audiences, including his own children, but his audience could not fully grasp them. Navajos shape and internalize their identity by singing certain songs. The audiences of my father’s performances often exoticized his singing and did not recognize the songs as Diné philosophy. Navajos also can forget their songs, and their songs can fade along with the knowledge that they transfer.

My father often sang one song during Eagle Scout receptions and later at the weddings of my siblings. He would simply call the song “The Honor Song.” He never translated what he sang in Navajo during these events. He explained the song in more detail at my younger brother’s wedding in 2012. He told the audience that he was singing about the life of my brother, Aaron, and his bride, Loren. He described how Aaron has grown over time and the impact of meeting Loren. He sang about their future together as they would build their family. He ended by emphasizing that he does not sing about the North, because they must avoid the North at this point in their lives. I still did not understand the song after his explanation until I started learning the interconnections of Diné origin stories, oral traditions, and meanings of songs. Andrew Natonahab sings “By This Song I Walk,” George Blueeyes recites “Díí Dził ahééniílíi Nihi Bee Haz’áanií át’ẹ” (“Our Navajo Laws are represented by the Sacred Mountains which surround us”), Luci Tapahonso writes “This Is How They Were Placed for Us,” and my father sings “The Honor Song.” Their words and contexts are not the same, but
their central messages are identical as compact forms of Diné philosophy in Diné Bizaad.

My father was singing about the compass of Diné life—an earth memory compass—the Four Directions, sacred mountains, and stages of life. He was describing the laws that guide Diné ways of life. He was teaching about the way to walk with hózhó in our lives. He begins the song by focusing on the East, the Dawn, of the honoree’s life. He then describes the South, the youth and possibilities of his or her life. He then speaks of the future and hopes that the honoree will live a long life to see the West and eventually the North (the Old Age and Dusk) of life. His song was a condensed version of Diné philosophy, SNBH, which he learned orally in Diné Bizaad from his parents and ancestors. My siblings and I have memorized the melody, but I have just begun to learn the words and started to hear the message and teachings when he sings. I aspire to sing with him and to my children. I desire that my children may one day learn these songs, which orient us and guide us to happiness as Diné.

I sing “The Honor Song” with my father as in this following version:

Heé ya’ho hwe’yaajineé [Navajo Chant]
Heé ya’ho ha’aa’a’déé In the East . . .
    hwe’yaajínée
Baahozhogo hwe’yaajineé
Baahozhogo bidiishch’i’ dóó He was born
    biyaaho’a’

Heé ya heé, hwe’ ya heé hwé [Chant]
    ya heé
Heé heé ya, heé ya heé heé
    ya heé ya heé

Heé ya ho hwe’ yaajinee
Heé ya ho shadi’ahdéé hwe’ In the South . . .
    yaajinee
Binilsi’kee ya’át’ééhgo biyaaho’a’ He grew up and went to school
    Olt’a’go biyááho’a’
Hee ya hee, hwe ya ho hwe’ [Chant]
yä hee
Hee hee ya, hee ya hee hee ya
hee ya hee

Hee ya ho hwe yaajinée
Hee ya ho a’a’a’ahdeejí hwe’ In the West . . .
yaaajinée
Binaanish nizhogo dóó He went to work and started his
bidzilgo nína’ own house
Bighan yá’át’ééhgo bił haash’a’

Hee ya hee, hwe ya ho hwe yahéé [Chant]
Hee hee ya, hee yahee hee ya
hee ya hee

Hee ya ho, hwe’ yaajinée
Hee ya ho nahokosdee In the North, we do not speak
hwe’yaajinee of yet
Hee ya ho hwe haa ho—hwei
ya héé.100

Through the medium of Diné Bizaad, the Holy People may recognize us as Diné. Marilyn Help, a former Miss Navajo, outlines these connections:

Our traditional way of living, our religion, reflects the teachings of the Holy People. They say that before the Holy People left, they taught the Diné everything about life and what it is going to be like. . . When they were ready to leave, they said, “We’ll be in your mountains, we’ll be in your songs. That’s the way to remember us. We’ll be in your symbols. That’s how you will remember us and our teachings so that you may have a good life.” And that is how we remember them and their instructions. We remember them through our stories and through our songs.101
Diné Bizaad is the key to creating these symbols and “universe” of Diné epistemology. The entanglements between Navajo language, oral tradition, knowledge, and epistemology reveal understandings of the experiences and effects of Navajo schooling and learning in the twentieth century on Diné identity formation and community.

The Diné relationships to earth, spirits, and all things are crucial parts of these foundations of epistemology. Marilyn Help stresses that the Holy People will be in “your mountains [and] in your songs.” The mountains are the symbols and living spirits of the earth. By working through the ties between language, its forms, and epistemology, I trace historical transformations of the Diné and hybridizations of Navajo and mainstream American ways of knowing and being. The Diné earth memory compass embodies the intricacies of the ties between historical experience, memory, language, environment, knowledge, epistemology, and peoplehood that Navajos carried with them through four directions of Diné education into the twenty-first century. Hopi-Hopi and the runaways found their way home, turning to the mountains and probably carrying their songs—a Diné earth memory compass. I turn to this compass on my journey to understand Diné schooling and learning experiences in different directions of Diné Bikéyah over time.