Decolonizing Community Writing with Community Listening: Story, Transrhetorical Resistance, and Indigenous Cultural Literacy Activism

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Abstract

This article foregrounds stories told by Kiowa Elder Dorothy Whitehorse DeLaune in order to distinguish "community listening" from "rhetorical listening" and decolonize community writing. Dorothy's stories demonstrate "transrhetoricity" as rhetorical practices that move across time and space to activate relationships between peoples and places through collaborative meaning making. Story moves historic legacies into the present despite suppression enacted by settler colonialism, and story yields adaptive meanings and cultural renewal. When communities listen across difference, stories enact resistance by building a larger community of storytellers, defying divisive settler colonialist inscriptions, and reinscribing Indigenous peoples and their epistemologies across the landscapes they historically inhabit.

A Story about Story

Dorothy Whitehorse DeLaune, who proudly identifies as a full-blood Kiowa, spoke only the Kiowa language until the age of six. Born in 1933 to a father who was in his mid-60s and who taught her to speak her tribal language, she is one of the remaining fluent native speakers of Kiowa alive today. She serves as a vital source of cultural knowledge and a respected Elder in her community. Recently turned 85 years old, Dorothy's spryness, wit, and unstoppable commitment to her people keep her spirit strong. She lives her days recalling language, stories, and songs that shape the Kiowa cultural landscape, residing in memory, inhabiting a people and their history. Dorothy feels pressed to share what she knows, as she says, "before it's too late." She inherits her commitment to Kiowa cultural literacy from her Elders, particularly her father, "Charley" Whitehorse (Tsane Thiye Day in Kiowa). He kept Kiowa Ohoma (War Dance) songs alive throughout federal prohibition. Despite the suppression of Native American ceremonies during the Ghost Dance movement of the early 20th century, he hosted gatherings to sing the songs in secret. Dorothy grew up listening to her father sing these songs with his hand drum every morning on their back porch. She carries these songs, and the many stories attached to them, in her heart. They are who she is.

I have worked with Dorothy for eight years, picking her up once a week from her home in Anadarko, Oklahoma, stopping by the "Step and Fetch" on the corner to get

her 32-ounce Pepsi, and making our way to the cultural literacy class, formally called the Kiowa Clemente Course in the Humanities. We co-teach this class for the University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma. The community calls the class Kiowa College. My role in the course began as the Instructor of Record, but I have also always been a student, learning Kiowa language and culture alongside the class participants. Now I spend most classes transcribing and translating Kiowa on a projected screen as words, phrases, and names arise from Dorothy's memory and enter class discussion. Over more than a decade, the class also began to inform my research, as I gained experience at the intersection of Native rhetorics, cultural literacies, and community engagement. Each Thursday night, the class meets to practice the Kiowa language and learn Kiowa ways that include oral tradition, songs, military and women's societies, protocol, ceremony, history, and values.

On our drive, Dorothy tells me stories. She tells me about the last week's events in the community, the memories that have come to her on restless nights, and the Kiowa words, phrases, and songs she wants to record, transcribe, and translate. We keep an ongoing list. I have learned from Dorothy that in Kiowa Country everything has a story—usually more than one. Working with the Kiowa cultural literacy class for eleven years, I've spent most of that time listening. The Kiowa tell stories in episodes that function also as stories within stories, simultaneously drawing connections between them while also tying them to the contexts in which they are told. Story, or hayn tday gyah, structures Kiowa epistemology. Kiowa stories connect not only to each other but also to the storied landscape within which they reside. Stories unite people in relationships with the land and with each other.

Recently, after I told Dorothy about my idea for this article, she told me a story of the relative from whom her father, "Charley" Whitehorse (ca. 1873 – 1949), received his name. Whitehorse the warrior (1847-1892), her father's uncle, led war parties under the last Kiowa Chief, Lone Wolf (Khooyie Pah Gaw). That night, Dorothy told me a story about Whitehorse the warrior. In 1875, following the Kiowa's final military subjugation at Palo Duro Canyon, he was taken along with Lone Wolf to the Fort Marion prison in St. Augustine, Florida. This story is around 143 years old, spanning four generations. Dorothy tells me it has never been written down, until now. She learned it from listening to her father and older brothers tell it many times. I share it with readers now because Dorothy shared it with me in the context of our discussion of this article. This means she sees a relationship between the story of Whitehorse and the story of Kiowa cultural literacy and community listening that I am telling here.

That evening, as we waited at the stoplight on Central Avenue on the way to class, the winter sunset on the Southern Plains laid long shadows on the Anadarko streets. Dorothy and I consider each other relatives and interact like good friends. Like most everyone else in the Kiowa community, I call her Grandma. Her laugh makes me laugh, and we enjoy each other. We also work together and trust each other. It is with her, and with her permission, that I write this article. As we pull out of the Step and Fetch drive-through, our conversation resumes. I remind her I am working on this article draft, and she begins to tell a story. I hit record on the voice memo application on my phone. Dorothy continues with a story of Whitehorse at Ft. Marion:

> So, when they got down there, I guess in one incident they counted them out first because they wanted to make plaster casts of their faces. It's kind of funny. The Kiowas had seen what they done to the Cheyennes. If someone puts something on your face and fills it with powder, you'd be afraid too. They thought they were death masks, that they would be killed, that they were getting witched. (DeLaune #2)

Dorothy explains that the plaster molds used to make the masks must have looked like books to the Kiowa warriors. The Kiowa language, like Kiowa stories, works through description, comparison, and analogy. At any rate, the warriors had no words in Kiowa for a plaster cast face mold. The word for book, khoot, was the closest descriptive fit.

> When they went in there, to have these masks made, they had to figure out what to do. Lone Wolf told Whitehorse, "I'm gonna give this to you and you shoot it." Lone Wolf grabbed the mold and yelled, "Khoot baht taht tday! Shoot the book!" So, Whitehorse shot the book. And they got punished for that. They got the ball and chain and put in the prison dungeon. (DeLaune #2)

Khoot is also part of the Kiowa word for school, khoot aim, and for pencil, khoot ah daw, and for map, daum khoot gaw (Gonzales 123). This repetition of the word suggests the Kiowas saw a relationship between these objects that connects them all as western literacy practices.

Whitehorse the warrior and Dorothy's father Charley refused to be educated in English. Neither read or wrote in English and, more striking, neither read or wrote in Kiowa. Their relationship to literacy remained entirely dependent on the aurality of the Kiowa language, and listening was a primary function of that literacy. As Scott Lyons (Ojibwe/Mdewakanton Dakota) articulated so powerfully nearly twenty years ago, centuries of "cultural violence . . . located at the scene of writing . . . set into motion a persistent distrust of the written word in English" among Native American peoples (449). Writing was a weapon of the enemy. Books and anything associated with them, or even resembling them, were suspect. Even as Kiowas gained text-based literacy through missionaries, boarding schools, and seminaries, they retained the cultural practice of story and listening. Story and listening, like resistance—and, in this case, as resistance—is part of being Kiowa.

Dorothy and I continue toward class as the western Oklahoma sky illuminates our discussion and the sun sinks slowly behind us. I listen as she finishes the story by adding, "Whitehorse was my dad's mother's brother. Whitehorse didn't have any children, so when Grandma was expecting dad, he said to her, 'If you have a boy, I want to give my name to him.' That's why we're Whitehorse" (DeLaune #2). In inheriting Whitehorse's name, her father, and now Dorothy, inherit his cultural legacy.

Story Decolonizes Academic Discourse

At this point in the narrative I am led by western academic practice to impose a theoretical framework, a chronology, a colonial logic, on these stories. In writing an academic article, I am expected to present a clear argument, a well-honed thesis, and rigorous analysis with "credible" evidence as support. Western academic discourse privileges heuristics, taxonomies, categories, genres, and terminologies intended to impose rational order on otherwise organic ideas and spontaneous meanings. These practices provide clarity for western minds in so far as they "settle" these meanings, subordinating them to the logics that govern them. This is not an appropriate way to treat the stories I am telling here, particularly if decolonization is a goal. For the purposes of this article, settling meaning also interferes with the praxis of community listening, like laying a map on the storied landscape that erases those who live there. Written text has historically operated in much the same way in Indigenous contexts, determining and enacting limits while enforcing control and silencing Native peoples. Kiowa storytelling, as a culturally literate act that depends on community listeners for collaborative meaning making, invites us to listen without limitations. It asks us to imagine possibilities instead of parsing print. It urges us to attend to the potential meanings and possible actions the story opens: the relationships between the past and the present situation, between peoples and places, between "then and now" and "us and them." In this way, it asks us to understand why the story is being told, as it is being told.

In writing about Kiowa storytelling, I want to practice Kiowa storytelling, demonstrating how I understand it to work. As a decolonial move, I choose storying instead of articulating an argument, recalling theory, or constructing a literature review. Kiowa storytelling calls us as scholars to experience a kind of community listening, one that is specific to the Kiowa community and wholly different from established (largely western) community writing practices. Kiowa stories make meaning that is not captured by print or motivated by the goal of producing text or authorship. Rather Kiowa stories build relationships by extending cultural knowledge and values through an Indigenous cultural literacy practice aligned with historical resistance to western hegemony. Western literacy practices perpetuate western hegemony. In order to decolonize community writing in this academic context, we must listen—as invited by community members—to the story of Kiowa cultural literacy on Kiowa terms. I must tell the story without relying on the academic discourse that Writing Studies privileges, but rather on the integrity inherent in Kiowa epistemology and the literacy practices that extend from it. If we listen, the stories speak for themselves, as Indigenous peoples have always spoken for themselves.

While I am not Kiowa, I am enrolled Cherokee and a Native Studies scholar committed to the goals of decolonization. This means I believe the Americas are Indigenous lands that belong, despite the rhetoric, violence, and genocidal tactics of settler colonialism, to the Indigenous peoples who have historically inhabited them. Narratives of US history by contrast present settler colonialism and western expansion as discreet, naturalized, inevitable phenomena, "settled" once and for all through supposedly benign federal policies. In actuality, these were genocidal policies that in-

cluded violence, militarism, containment, land theft, removal, relocation, and assimilation. The Academy, as a western institution on an Indigenous landscape, places both explicit and implicit limits on Indigenous voices, practices, and perspectives to avoid unsettling these narratives. Dakota scholar and activist Waziyatawin writes, "A growing number of [Indigenous scholars] believe that as Aboriginal intellectuals we can best be of service to our nations by recovering the traditions that have been assaulted to near-extinction" (Wilson 69). As a Cherokee woman and Indigenous scholar interested in community writing, I forward storytelling and community listening as a means of recovery and resistance that provide possibilities for decolonizing academia and community writing in multiple ways. I choose story because it creates resistant spaces for cultural regeneration and community building both within Native communities and beyond them.

The stories Dorothy shares allow us to understand how Kiowa story performs transrhetorical resistance by moving meaning across temporal, spatial, and cultural locations and thereby creating relationships across these sites in order to form the broader movements upon which decolonization depends. Kiowa storytellers do not ask us to analyze their stories or take them apart. They ask us instead to put them together by bringing what we know –not as scholars but as humans –into storied space in order to engage and participate in the story, to share in making the narrative rather than taking control of it. Stories enact intimate, interpersonal relationships built on trust that the stories will be told again, in the right ways, and in connection with other stories. Rather than appropriating these stories for colonial purposes, the task for scholars committed to decolonization "is to challenge the academy as an agent of colonialism and carve a place for [Indigenous] traditions as legitimate subjects of scholarly study, but on [Indigenous] terms" (Wilson 73). This means continually listening to our communities.

In this article, working primarily from stories Dorothy told me in a series of interviews, I tell a story (made up of stories connected to other stories) of community writing to demonstrate how Kiowa storytelling functions as decolonized cultural literacy that depends upon community listening. While I draw in part from the concepts of "cross-cultural conduct" and "rhetorical listening" (Royster qtd. in Ratcliffe *Rhetorical Listening* 1), I believe Dorothy's stories disrupt these concepts, decolonizing them for Indigenous landscapes. In Native spaces, I characterize "community listening" as transrhetorical and define it as a literate act that engages listeners as collaborators in meaning making across multiple sites. These listeners work together with storytellers to construct and sustain cultural knowledge by building storied connections across difference. Like other decolonial tactics, Kiowa storytelling enacts a collectivity that operates across traditional Indigenous cultures. Kiowa stories therefore provide a counternarrative amidst the dominant settler culture inscribed on the landscape and against hegemonic history, the English language, and subsequent cultural erasures. Rather than the singular, monolithic narratives voiced by objective authority in the western tradition, Kiowa stories live and grow, nourishing and expanding culture across sites of knowing and defying the fixed and finalized print of colonial

control. Kiowa stories continue to be told because listeners become tellers, building connections across time and locations.

For Kiowas, listening is composing, not consuming. Kiowa story intervenes in the western rhetor/audience (speaker/listener) binary by calling listeners into collective identity and a shared responsibility for cultural knowledge. Anthropologist Gus Palmer (Kiowa) explains that Kiowa stories "open and remain open so the listener is able to interact with the storyteller by adding comments, asides, stories, interpretations, or other responses or remarks that make the story grow" (109). "Growing" a story suggests that Palmer, like me, observes listeners adding meaning throughout the storytelling process, creating the narrative with the storyteller, and holding accountability for its telling. In this way, Kiowa storytelling resists settled narratives and cultivates instead the continual rewriting and renewal of Indigenous culture and history. Kiowa storytelling not only disrupts colonial discourse. It also performs culturally literate community action as a means of decolonization.

These stories also demonstrate how story operates transrhetorically. I define transrhetoricity in the context of Royster and Ratcliffe as rhetorical patterns that move across time and cultural locations, above fixed rhetorical situations, and beyond limited categories to activate dynamic intersections of race and place that honor difference. In Indigenous spaces, story provides a vehicle of transrhetorical resistance, effectively moving historically silenced legacies and cultural knowledges into the present context to yield adaptive meanings and cultural renewal to the extent that we listen to them together. Likewise, my project ultimately extends Kiowa resistance into the broader community-writing community and asks us to consider the ways we reinscribe settler colonialism in our work. It invites us to listen differently, *with* a community rather than *to* a community or *for* a community. Kiowa stories as a kind of community listening call us to consider the ways in which community writing occurs beyond the colonialist implications and limitations of printed text. In the historically marginalized realms of aurality, meaning remains dynamic and continual despite settler colonial force. If community-writing scholars and advocates seek social justice through their work with diverse communities at intersections of identity that include place, race and ethnicity, class, and gender, then community listening helps us to honor the dynamism operating at these intersections. Likewise, by acknowledging the transrhetorical resistance occurring across the sites where we engage communities dealing with the shared consequences of settler colonial history, together we can understand community writing more broadly as decolonial work. Community listening defies the divisions settler colonialism inscribes on communities while restoring Indigenous peoples and their epistemologies to the landscapes they historically inhabit. By acknowledging the Indigenous landscapes on which our communities reside and the rights of Indigenous peoples—and all peoples—to their own cultural literacies, we align the goals of community writing with the goals of decolonization.

Decolonizing Rhetoric and Transrhetorical Listening

After a decade of listening to Kiowa stories, I still struggle to articulate how these stories work and what they mean. Though I am a Native woman, I am not Kiowa. My sense as a community listener is that Kiowa stories make meaning beyond articulation. "Growing" Kiowa stories, as Palmer suggests, requires making new connections that depend on listeners' imaginations, their willingness to let go of their assumptions, and their desire for clear-cut conclusions. Doing so requires a different kind of listening, transrhetorical listening, that moves meaning across, above, and beyond two-dimensional, dualistic, and linear models. That transrhetorical movement facilitates a web of simultaneous possible meanings also makes it decolonial. Kimberly Wieser, Native Studies scholar of Choctaw and Cherokee descent, characterizes this aspect of Native American rhetorics as "indirect discourse" (xiii). In her recent publication, *Back to the Blanket: Recovered Rhetorics and Literacies in American Indian Studies*, she explains how story works for multiple purposes in Indigenous contexts. She also underscores how story depends upon the co-construction of narrative and the communal articulation of meaning:

> Indigenous American articulation of philosophy and science—who we are and how we see the world, what our position in it is in relation to the rest of creation, how other aspects of creation relate to each other—has often been accomplished by indirect discourse, by saying something without directly saying it. We are traditionally taught by story, and typically explain by story, not merely exposition. Stories, along with oratory, can rhetorically function as argument in Native cultures. Knowledge—cultural, familial, and individual—is often embedded in narrative and must be deduced. (xiii)

In settler colonial situations, the cultural imperative for survival combines with the cultural practice of listening to become community action. Wieser writes, "existence hinges spiritually and culturally on remaining 'storied peoples'" (9). In settler colonial contexts, the telling and the listening become a unified act of resistance and meaning making, a process that has occurred continually across time, whereby listeners become storytellers themselves, equally empowered in mapping out multiple meanings together.

One story told to me by Dorothy helps me to simultaneously explain and demonstrate this process of transrhetorical meaning making. She has shared this story many times with me over the years I have known her. I have also heard her tell it to others. Each time she uses the story to connect the past to the time and place in which she tells it. Her stories function this way here as well, so that readers must draw out the connections listeners had to make for themselves on each occasion. Dorothy does not state these connections directly. Her strongest memory of her father, which she tells here, comes to her as part of a larger story. As she talks, I listen and, in this case, I record, transcribe, and write her stories into the story I am telling now. Every morning, when she was a child, Dorothy remembered her father playing his hand drum and singing Sate Ahn Gyah's death song. I asked her once in an interview who inspired her cultural activism, and she answered by telling me this story:

> Daddy would get the hand drum and he'd sing that man's song every morning. And then he'd say a few side words and then we'd hear him praying. And it was always facing to the east. He says, it says, "Sate Ahn Gyah ee daw gyiye ain tdoe hadle." He saved us a song and I will sing... "Gyah daw tdaw. Gyah daw khoon tdaw." And then it says, "Sate Ahn Gyah ee daw gyai ain tdoe hadle." And it says, "I'll sing it and I'll sing it forever 'cause he saved it for me." And he sang that. And we were no descendant of that man. (DeLaune #1)

These are not the words of the death song itself, but rather words Charley Whitehorse inserts as he sings, adding to the song's story as he sings it. Sate Ahn Gyah (ca. 1800 – 1871), Sitting Bear, was a member of the Kiowa's most elite Warrior Society, the Koiye Tsane Gaw (Horse Soldiers). Dorothy explains:

> You stake yourself to the, you know when you're in combat, you stake yourself. And you couldn't let loose unless one of your friends came by and cut you loose. And they stood there until their death." (DeLaune #1)

In battle, the Koiye Tsane Gaw stake themselves to the ground and face the enemy, an act that embodies their spiritual commitment to fight to the death for the Kiowa land and people. I hear in this story resonances between Dorothy's cultural literacy activism, her father's singing, and Sate Ahn Gyah's fierce resistance in battle. Even after multiple tellings and multiple listenings, the meaning of these connections continues to move and change.

Because the process of listening in Kiowa storytelling requires collaboration between the teller and the listener, community listening in this Indigenous space (and others) differs in some ways from "rhetorical listening" as it has been taken up in writing studies. Responding in part to Jacqueline Jones Royster's call for the construction of "codes of cross-cultural conduct," Krista Ratcliffe argues for the practice of "rhetorical listening" as a trope for "interpretive invention" (*Rhetorical Listening* 1). In *Rhetorical Listening: Identification, Gender, and Whiteness*, Ratcliffe maintains that sites of cross-cultural interaction and exchange provide the antidote for "the US culture's dearth of discursive possibilities either for articulating intersecting identification or promoting cross-cultural dialogues" (*Rhetorical Listening* 3). "Interpretive invention" and "cross-cultural dialogue" provide useful ways to think of meaning making in Indigenous contexts, yet they are still concepts grounded in the western rhetorical traditions. In particular, cross-cultural dialogue carries forward western binary logics that reassert mean-making as a process occurring between two parties. While it is tempting to understand listening to Indigenous storytelling through the lens of Aristotelean rhetoric and dialectic, to do so in Indigenous contexts foregrounds rhetorical theory as a western cultural logic rather than listening for Native epistemologies via Native cultural literacy practices.

"Community listening" decolonizes "rhetorical listening" to the extent that it reflects Indigenous community practices that transrhetorically resist the binaries inherent to western dialogics. To be fair, my focus here centers on community literacy practices, whereas Ratcliffe takes up public discourse, inclusive of literature, scholarship, and classroom conversations. Within communities, particularly Indigenous

communities, the possibilities for co-constructing narratives and meaning are necessarily different. Ratcliffe's applications of rhetorical listening have also been effectively aimed at understanding whiteness, or rather how whiteness, which she characterizes as "unstated," "signifies as an assumed norm, which haunts discourses on any topic" ("In Search" 282). She suggests, "at its best, whiteness studies questions the dominant culture's tendency to define race in binary terms of black/white while only articulating blackness" (Ratcliffe "Eavesdropping" 88). Ratcliffe acknowledges here how whiteness enforces itself as the presumed norm against which white culture compares, measures, and articulates "other" perspectives. Indeed, this portion of her argument applies to what I am attempting to discern here, that is, how whiteness haunts community writing discourse and silences other cultural perspectives. This rhetorical silencing, which Ratcliffe positions rhetorical listening to interrupt, results from how "rhetorical theories were presented as ahistorical structures that could be lifted from, say fourth-century BCE Greece and dropped into" other contexts unchanged ("Eavesdropping" 87 – 88). The ahistorical movement which she points out mirrors the historic western imperialism that animates settler colonialist expansion. Settlers transplant colonial values wholesale, without regard for the Indigenous peoples or cultures already living in place on the landscape. Rather than relying on listening to Indigenous cultures and adapting to new contexts, settler colonialism and the discourses that accompany it depend on displacing and erasing those cultures.

I also hear in this passage the binary of black/white reiterating a problematic settler colonial frame that has historically defined and restricted racial categories and suppressed otherwise far more complex relationships enacted across difference. Such constructions reproduce the limits of dialogic western rhetoric that Indigenous community listening and transrhetorical meaning making resist. Native Americans (among others) are not represented in the black/white binary at all, which replicates the distinct racial policies of assimilation versus segregation authorized by the U.S. federal government to control Native American and African American populations. Settler colonialism is built upon, as Tuck and Yang put it, "an entangled triad of settler-native-slave" (Tuck & Yang 1), where the militias that formed to repel Native Americans from the land eventually also functioned as slave patrols (Dunbar-Ortiz 60). Tuck & Yang remind us of Franz Fanon's unyielding assertion in *The Wretched of the Earth* that decolonization "sets out to change the order of the world" and only becomes clear when we can "discern the movements which give it historical form and content" (Tuck & Yang 2). Indigenous cultural literacy practices such as storytelling and listening work transrhetorically to move and make meaning in traditional ways that defy historically reductive, false divisions to reveal a complex web of relationships both within and between communities. By focusing on the white/black binary as an object of study and critique, Ratcliffe also reinscribes it. Kiowa storytelling and listening resist the imposition of such colonial constructions, refiguring not only racial binaries that reinforce disconnection and isolation, but also potentially restructuring the way rhetoric works in the world and how we understand cultural literacies.

Co-constructing a narrative, particularly in and with community, differs entirely from the rhetor/audience binary where ideas are seemingly exchanged between two

parties and the rhetor retains authority over the audience. When Dorothy tells me a story, she is not asserting an argument but rather drawing a connection to the meaning we are making together in the moment she tells it. The listening involved in these two processes necessarily differs as well, as community listeners do not function as a passive audience but rather as active participants. My job as a listener is to work alongside Dorothy to draw those connections. Wieser explains that for Native Americans, "argument does not proceed the way it does in the kind of academic discourse [where] the rhetor leads the hearer/reader to a specific conclusion." Rather, "meaning making is equally distributed" and the listeners "must make active choices […] particularly when argument is done by analogy, by putting pieces of discourse in association with the actual context" in which a story is being told (Wieser 11). Additionally, Kiowa storytellers rely on listeners to draw connections to their own sources of cultural knowledge, including their experiences, family histories, and other stories they have heard before. Story as a "rhetorical practice highlights communal meaning-making systems" (Wieser 12). As such, stories promote Indigenous literacy practices such as community listening while also sustaining Indigenous rhetorics and cultures.

Kiowa Cultural Literacy Practices and Resistance

Anadarko, Oklahoma, sits in the southwestern portion of the state, a small rural town that hit its economic peak in the earlier part of the 1900's and remained fairly strong through the mid-century. Like many rural towns based on agricultural economies and fluctuating oil prices, since then the town has struggled with steady decline and increasing poverty. Built on top of the historic lands of the Wichita and Caddo peoples, which then became the treatied lands of the Kiowa, Comanche, and Apache, the town and surrounding landscape tell the story of a complex settler-colonial history and a persistent, though obscured, Indigenous presence. Anadarko, for instance, while currently considered a part of the Kiowa, Comanche, and Apache reservation, takes its name from a smaller tribal group affiliated with the Caddo. Thus, the settler colonial map blurs distinctions between peoples, cultures, and histories. According to Eve Tuck and Marcia McKenzie in "Decolonizing Perspectives on Place," "in Indigenous worldviews, relationships to land are . . . familiar, and if sacred, sacred because they are familiar" (51). They point to "the tendency to romanticize Indigenous relationships to land inside the Western cultural tradition" as "a misunderstanding of the nexus of Indigenous identity and land" (Tuck and McKenzie 51). Land, story, and identity intertwine in Indigenous epistemologies, so that a particular location presents layered narratives and storied connections that comprise the present landscape.

Clearly, the Kiowas have lived *on* this land and *with* this land prior to recorded histories of the landscape. Their survival depended on *knowing* the land—the weather patterns and seasons, the waterways and windbreaks, the plants and animals, and the people. Kiowa stories, especially when told in the Kiowa language, retain this cultural knowing. In Indigenous contexts, the impacts of 500-plus years of post-Columbus colonization continue to erode Native cultures and languages. While it is difficult to argue against the central role languages play in cultural epistemologies and communi-

ty identities, the settler colonial formula simply reverses this: to erase a people, erase their language. Adam Gaudry, a Métis scholar and Indigenous Studies professor at the University of Saskatchewan, argues for "insurgent research" methodologies aimed at decolonization. He puts it plainly:

> It is no secret that most Indigenous languages in North America are in danger of being lost forever, nor do we kid ourselves that the hegemony of the English language is anything but responsible for this. There is a well-developed body of Indigenous research that demonstrates the centrality of Indigenous languages in understanding an Indigenous worldview. (129)

For Native peoples living in settler-colonial contexts, then, community writing is more accurately understood as cultural literacy, because the work in these communities focuses not on reading and writing or producing texts. It focuses instead on sustaining cultural knowledges via tribal cultural literacy practices, despite historic suppressive forces, and revitalizing the Native stories and languages that house them. Any reading or writing of texts necessarily serves this goal.

Indigenous cultures are oral cultures, which also means they are aural cultures. Listening is as critical a literacy tool as speaking well. For Kiowa people, speaking well means telling stories well, particularly in community contexts. Dorothy teaches language while sharing stories, incorporating Kiowa words, phrases, names, and locations, and singing songs in Kiowa. Community listeners share their own stories in response, making them grow by compiling narratives and co-constructing Kiowa cultural knowledge to forward into the future. In these stories, I hear the historic persistence of the Kiowa people using Kiowa literacy practices to work against cultural erasure, and so I also see resistance in action. Community listening becomes a critical tool, particularly when today's Elders learned Kiowa aurally and used it orally, rather than textually. Elders rely on other community members to listen to their stories, to place them on the storied landscape, to thread them together and connect them to their own family histories, to make meaning of them, to share them with others. Kiowa culture depends on these stories, so the stakes for storytellers and storylisteners are high. These are their stories. These stories are who they are, who their children and grandchildren are. These stories make them Kiowa.

The story Dorothy tells of Sate Ahn Gyah's death, the story that explains the origin of the song her father sang every morning, and one I've heard her tell many times, comes to mind here. Sate Ahn Gyah participated in multiple war parties and raids in the years prior to the Red River War (1874 – 1875). General William Tecumseh Sherman arrested Sate Ahn Gyah, along with several others, for their participation in raiding a wagon party of would-be settlers. They were imprisoned at Ft. Sill, Indian Territory (now Oklahoma), and ordered to trial in Texas, making them the first Native American war leaders to stand trial in U.S. Court. In an act of defiance, Sate Ahn Gyah refused to be taken to trial. This is how Dorothy explained it to me, after telling me the story of her father singing Sate Ahn Gyah's death song.

> They caught those three together at Ft. Sill and they already had those other two, BigTree [Ah Daw Ate] and Sate Thiye Day [White Bear], in custo-

> dy. And they were gonna put this old man in one of the other wagons. They were taking them to prison in Texas. The real Kiowas, that's the way I was told, you say when you have medicine, you say, "Daw daw." He had medicine and he told, he said, "I'm not going alive." Some of the Kiowas used to say he ingested that knife. (DeLaune #1)

Sate Ahn Gyah refused to get in the first wagon. They put him in irons and loaded him in a second wagon. Other versions of the story say he chewed his own wrists out of the iron cuffs and pulled a knife from his throat to attack the guards, killing two of them.

> Course they rode on off with Sate Thiye Day and Big Tree. Sate Ahn Gyah said he wasn't gonna go past where that creek was. And they said the soldiers were laughing at him. "That old man can't do nothing." And all of a sudden he appeared with a knife. He broke hisself out of the handcuffs and he got two of them before they filled him with bullet holes, and yet he lived long enough leaning against the tree, singing that song. (DeLaune #1)

This is the song Dorothy's father sang each morning while she listened as a little girl. This is the story Dorothy told to explain the cultural sources of her literacy activism, a story that in this telling recalls both Sate Ahn Gyah's and her father's resistance, all born from a deep commitment to the Kiowa people and their landscape.

Kiowa Community Literacy as Decolonized Cultural Literacy

The Kiowa Clemente Course in the Humanities, across the nearly fifteen years since the class began, intersects distinct cultures, interests, and institutions. It began in conjunction with the Clemente Course in the Humanities Program of the National Endowment for the Humanities. Developed by Earl Shorris in conjunction with Bard College, the Clemente Course model rests on beliefs Shorris articulated in his 1997 book *Riches for the Poor: The Clemente Course in the Humanities*: namely, that exposure to the humanities instills "the poor and the unschooled" with the power to reflect and think critically rather than react to forces that oppress them (Vitello). According to the Clemente website, "[T]he aim of the course [model] is to bring the clarity and beauty of the humanities to people who have been deprived of these riches through economic, social, or political forces." Shorris piloted the first course in the Roberto Clemente Family Guidance Center in Manhattan's East Village in 1995. In its early iterations, the curriculum consisted of canonical readings from multiple western humanities disciplines such as logic, history, literature, art, and philosophy. Shorris passed away in May 2012 at the age of 75, with Clemente Courses being offered on five continents in locations as variant as the Yucatan and Darfur. Anadarko, Oklahoma, is one of these locations.

The Kiowa Clemente Course development began in 1998 under Dr. Howard Meredith (Cherokee), Professor of Indian Studies at the University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma in Chickasha. A small group of Kiowa students, led by Jay Goombi and including Jackie Yellowhair, along with Kiowa Elders Alecia Keahbone Gon-

zales, Bob Cannon, Richie Tartsah, and J.T. Goombi, developed the curriculum by adding Kiowa cultural content, community interests, and pedagogical practices to the Clemente Course model. Shorris includes a description of their process in the last chapter of *Riches for the Poor*, entitled "Other Countries, Other Cultures" (248-249). Jay Goombi (Kiowa), one of the students who participated in the course design and implementation, consulted with tribal Elders for input into the course format and content. Multiple conversations between USAO's Indian Studies students and these Elders resulted in a unique community-driven curriculum, one that incorporated transrhetorical inquiry from the start, that developed a comparative, interdisciplinary humanities model that revised, or rather decolonized, the original Clemente Course model for an Indigenous context.

From the beginning, the Kiowas who participated in the collaborative course design included both USAO students and Elders. Together, they rewrote the course objectives to meet their cultural needs, demonstrating one way that decolonization works at an Indigenous community literacy site. Instead of aligning with the problematic goal to disseminate the western canon and "help" the "unschooled," the Kiowa Clemente Course took a comparative humanities approach by studying western texts alongside Kiowa oral tradition, story, and song, putting them in conversation where meaning could be negotiated. Instead of turning to western texts for "clarity and beauty" as in the original Clemente Course curriculum models, the Kiowa Elders wanted to study them for other reasons. As Jay Goombi, now a writer and activist, explained to me early on in my own involvement with the course, the Elders saw the inclusion of western texts as a means to "understand white ways." They wanted to understand western culture, not to better adopt it, but to better subvert it where it conflicts with Kiowa values and practices, adapting it only where it is useful to do so. Likewise, the Elders wanted each class to include a beginning and closing prayer, a shared meal, and a Kiowa language lesson. Each of these original components of the class privileges Kiowa community needs and cultural practices over western educational goals, and the class still includes them. The course was originally entitled, "Yee p'ay gyah maw tame aim" which means in Kiowa "two ways of knowing."

My involvement with the class began in 2007 when the class still used the comparative humanities model developed in its original design. During my first few years of teaching, students and community participants began to express in class a desire to omit the western content entirely. At first, this was an awkward conversation to have as the instructor assigned to present the western perspective on the weekly topic. However, after listening to several semesters of comments, complaints, and suggestions, and acknowledging dwindling attendance, I worked with the Elders involved in the class to redesign it. Now, the course focuses completely on Kiowa language and culture, and our weekly attendance averages between 20 and 30 people, a testament to the community's approval. Not everyone enrolls for college credit. Many come just to listen, practice, and learn about their language, culture, and history, to hear the stories of who they are. Though students can only enroll for a total of six hours of credit over two semesters, many return year after year. Over time, they also take on roles and responsibilities, which include providing food for the class meal and sharing cultural

resources from their own family histories and archives. In this way, the class dynamic reflects Kiowa community and cultural practices. In any given semester, we prioritize deep inquiry into the topics that emerge from student interest and discussion, and the group identifies course priorities collaboratively, thinking through together what they would like to learn next. They depend on Dorothy's knowledge to help them.

Our course texts range the full spectrum of modalities. They do include books produced by several white ethnographers, the earliest of which, Jane Richardson Hanks' *Kiowa Law and Status*, was published in 1935 and based on oral interviews with prominent Kiowa Elders of that era. Dorothy's father Charley Whitehorse was one of the Elders Hanks interviewed. Dorothy was two years old at the time. He recorded a total of sixty songs with Hanks and in class, we use Hanks' archival sound recordings as cultural resources. These recordings include a wide range of songs, from ceremonial songs belonging to specific Kiowa societies, to child-rearing songs, to Kiowa Christian hymns. We listen to them and transcribe them collectively into Kiowa, and then translate them with Dorothy's help into English. We also use other ethnographic and archival texts (written in English) and photographs, many of which have been brought to class by students from their own family collections. For instance, in class we read aloud from the papers of Morris Doyeto. He was the grandfather of one of our returning students, Martha Addison. His personal papers reside in her possession. Doyeto was educated outside of the Kiowa community and completed seminary in Chicago in the 1920's. Doyeto's explications in English of Kiowa religious and ceremonial history are not only rich in cultural information, but they also provide an opportunity to observe and discuss the influence of western education and text-based literacy on Kiowa stories and storytelling.

One of the key characteristics of traditional Kiowa storytelling that Dorothy models for the class regards their cyclical nature. That is, Kiowa stories are told in cycles according to the seasons. For instance, the stories of the primary deity in Kiowa culture, the Zie Day Tahlee or Split Boys, must only be told in the springtime after the first thunder. In our class, Dorothy shares these stories in preparation for our annual field trip, which she describes as a pilgrimage. The trip includes a visit to at least two of the ten Medicine Bundles sacred to the Kiowa people. In one of Doyeto's treatises, he writes down in English a long series of episodes related to the Zie Day Tahlee which we use in class as a primary text. The stories tell of the boys' origin, exploits, and heroism as they use their medicine to confront monsters and make the world safe for the Kiowa to inhabit. The class participants take turns reading Doyeto's version aloud, one episode at a time. The room grows still as these sacred stories fill the air between us, drawing us into relationship with the past. Everyone focuses together, and I can almost hear us listening. We are rapt. Throughout Doyeto's rendering of these stories, he characterizes the Zie Day Tahlee as "the Author of Religious Liberty and Freedom from Tyranny," a rhetorical move that the students never fail to notice—and question. Through our discussions of his possible motives for identifying the Zie Day Tahlee in this way, Doyeto's stories allow us to see both the dissonance between his cultural upbringing and his western theological training as well as how they intersect. We discuss his motivations and the impact of writing the stories down. This

conversation, still centered on story, acknowledges the influence of western thinking on Kiowa culture while also disrupting it and decolonizing the course curriculum. Because the community prefers to focus on Kiowa content, the western humanities component has been permanently dropped from the syllabus and course calendar.

Story as Transrhetorical Listening and Cultural Continuance

Dorothy's father, Charley Whitehorse, even though he received the name of a great warrior, never saw battle. Born in approximately 1873, he was a small child when the Kiowas lost their last military battle with the United States at Palo Duro, and Whitehorse was taken to prison in Florida. Still, Dorothy's father inherited along with his name a legacy of resistance, one that he continued through the turn of the century as the Kiowas faced allotment and the lottery that opened their remaining lands to white (and black) settlement in preparation for statehood. Federal assimilation policy included the prohibition of Indigenous ceremonial practices, which began most famously with the Battle of Wounded Knee. The violent and unprovoked U.S. aggression against the Lakota decimated a camp of primarily women, children, and Elders with the goal of suppressing the Ghost Dance Movement. Kiowa ceremonies included not only a yearly Sun Dance, but the songs and dances of the Kiowa military societies. When I ask Dorothy what resistance means to her, she tells me this story:

> Well, in 1919 my dad was the head of one of our three existing, now existing, Kiowa organizations. One was the Gourd Clan. One was the Black Leggings. And the other one was the Ohoma War Dance Society. We had ten, but the others had gone out of existence. I guess it was earlier than that. Early 1900's when they made us quit the Ghost Dance and everything. Well, uh, they told these organizations, if you don't quit, you're not getting any rations. But my dad kept on. They'd put up the teepee after dark, and pray all night, and then break it down before daylight. And then, uh, they never quit dancing. Danced in secret. All through my homeplace. (DeLaune #1)

Her story connects her father's resisting the suppression of Native ceremonies to her own work to sustain Kiowa culture. Never having learned how to read or write in Kiowa or English, Charley Whitehorse learned these songs by listening to his Elders sing. He saved them by singing them for and with his community, despite the risk of punishment.

The sixty songs he recorded for Hanks several years later in 1933 include Sun Dance (Kxaw Tdoe) songs, Tohn Kohn Gaht (Black Leggings) songs, Tdiye Pay Gaw (Gourd Clan) songs, in addition to Ohoma War Society songs. In one of Hanks' recordings of him singing, Dorothy's father inserts words into the song, as he did with the Sate Ahn Gyah's Death Song that he sang each morning on his back porch, adding his own story to the stories the songs tell of Kiowa history. He pauses between the lyrics and addresses the listener directly, appending phrases in Kiowa that suggest his own motivations for recording them. They translate roughly as: "I feel good when I sing these songs because my grandfather sang them to me"; "these songs are the only things we have left"; and "after I am gone you'll still hear me" (DeLaune #3). In these

phrases, he calls the listener into the song and the song's story, to listen as he did, and to learn them as he did.

In another song, he inserts a prayer for Dorothy, who was only a small child on the floor next to him, listening as he sang. He says, "Tdoe dohn gyah thohm kaw day ah ahm mah hope," or "the one crawling on the floor, let that one be proud/persevere" (DeLaune #3). Dorothy, whose Kiowa name is Daw Tsai Gyah Ahn Thah Gyah (She Comes With Good Prayers), thrills when she hears him pray for her. She was named as an infant in a Peyote meeting. Her father passed when she was only sixteen years old. Despite Dorothy's strong memories of his singing, the Hanks recordings house many songs that would have otherwise been lost had Charley Whitehorse not kept them to share with others:

> The only Kiowa organization that never died out completely was the Ohoma. My dad led that. And to this day, if you came to the Ohoma ceremonials, we have a song. It's the resistance song. It's by no means radical, like let's kill 'em or anything. People will say, "Sing the resistance song." It says, "Don't quit dancing, 'cause you enjoy it. Even if we have to go to jail, we're gonna keep dancing." And those are the Kiowa words. "Dah ba tohn pahnt bah." It says, "Let's go on and go to jail, okay?" To me, that's where I get it. From my dad, I guess. He defied 'em. (DeLaune #1)

These are the stories she tells when I ask her to explain resistance. Sustaining her culture—as her father did, and as Whitehorse the warrior did before him—and telling these stories comprise the same resistant, cultural, and literate act.

The community listening enacted in Dorothy's storytelling connects her great uncle Whitehorse the warrior's story, Sate Ahn Gyah's story, her father's story, and her own story to the larger story of Kiowa resistance, and now, through this publication, to the broader community writing network. These stories decolonize our academic understandings of community writing by asking us to participate as community listeners co-engaged in making meaning from them. What possible meanings we hear in them depends upon how we listen transrhetorically to the stories and to each other in understanding them together. These stories ask us to consider how and where we extend them and to whom we tell them. Who we are depends upon listening as a community to storied landscape rather than the *settled* landscape. Where we reside and the connections we make between our own locations and others—and how we make those connections as scholars committed to decolonization—matter to our work. We are telling a story together that moves across spaces and beyond time, sustaining Indigenous knowledges, languages, and literacy practices that nourish the cultural continuance of Native peoples to whom this land belongs.

Stories survive not just through the telling, but through communities listening to them together, adding to them, building them into larger narratives that connect us in relationship with each other, and telling them again. Charley Whitehorse recorded Sate Ahn Gyah's Death Song, the one Dorothy heard him sing every morning as a child, with Hanks in 1933, knowing he would be heard again in the future beyond his own death. Sate Ahn Gyah, the Kiowa war leader who staked himself to the ground in

battle and who chose death as resistance to leaving the Kiowa landscape as a prisoner of the United States, leaned up against an old Cottonwood tree as he died from gunshot wounds. As he died, the story—as Dorothy shares it—says he sang:

> "Haw ah gome," I walk around. "Ahdle haw ah oiye boiye gome thaw day." I won't be here forever. "Oiye p'iye day kee oiye boiye kxaw." Only the sun will be here forever. "Oiye dohn gaw kee ay oiye boiye kxaw." Only the land will be here forever. (DeLaune #1)

Though the sun and the land may outlast them, as long as the story of Kiowa resistance continues to be told so that others can listen, the Kiowa people will continue as well.

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Dorothy Whitehorse DeLaune is a widely acknowledged and highly honored elder in the Kiowa community. She works as a cultural advisor, storyteller, and language teacher with many programs and offices in the Anadarko area. She is Co-Instructor for the Kiowa Clemente Course in the Humanities (University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma) and serves as project staff for Kiowatalk.org. She is an active member of the Kiowa War Mothers Society and the TOHN KOHN GAHT (Kiowa Black Leggings) Society.