

THESIS

TLAPALLI IN IQUIN ONITLACAT: IN TLATEOMATILIZTLI DE TLALNAMIQUILIZTLI

Submitted by

LeRoy F. Saiz

Department of Ethnic Studies

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the Degree of Master of Arts

Colorado State University

Fort Collins, Colorado

Summer 2014

Master's Committee:

Advisor: Maricela DeMirjyn

Joon K. Kim

Roe Bubar

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## ABSTRACT

### WHEN I WAS BORN RED: THE CEREMONY OF REMEMBERING

Research analysis within American Indian Studies establishes social change practices concentrating on American Indian, Alaskan Native, and Native Hawaiian communities—Indigenous communities recognized by the United States Government. Chican@ Studies inquiry locates a similar approach to scholarship, except social change becomes strategized in reference to Latina/o communities; more specifically, Mexican-American communities. In the American Southwest, Xikan@ racial representation is observed by outside Indigenities as Indigenous to North America. However Xikan@ ethnic representation is scrutinized due to its palimpsest features—a counterbalance to Spanish, Mexican, and American colonization. The purpose of this study is to identify a Xikan@ Indigenous identity and determine the factors that situate othered or sub altern Indigenous identities in the peripheries of Indigeneity. As exemplified through auto-ethnography and traditional storywork, the creation of a Xikan@ methodological approach can articulate the need to maintain hemispheric approaches to Indigeneity, while respecting the uniqueness of local epistemologies such as Xikan@ Traditional Knowledge (XIK).

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This work is created for my two boys, Nimani David, and Mati Xocoyotzin Padilla-Saiz. Ma tonemiliz tipaqui ihuan tichipahuac. Ma amehilcahuah amtixmaticahuan. Nimitznequi, nimitztlazohtla, amehhuantin anmacehualmeh...Nochipa! May you never forget your family. I love you both, and you both are Indigenous to this land... No matter what anybody may say, you are Indigenous to this land, Always! Ometeotl!

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## DEFINITION OF TERMS

American Indian- A person who is enrolled in a federally recognized tribal nation within the United States.

Anahuac- Nahuatl term for Meso-America, however, amongst Mexicah people today Anahuac is used as a pan-American term for North America.

Anahuacayotl- The practice of a North American Indigenous identity.

Aztlan- Southwestern United States.

Chicana/o- Mexican-Americans who identify with Chicano Nationalism and the Chicano Movement.

Chican@- Mexican-Americans who identify with Chicano Nationalism and the Chicano Movement, and support LGBTQ identities and matrilineal social societies.

Genizaro- A detribalized Indigenous person from Northern New Mexico and Southern Colorado.

Indigenous- An academic term defining the original inhabitants of a specific land base.

Indigenous American- A political term for Indigenous people in the United States, regardless of tribal affiliation.

Indigenous Mexican- A political term for Indigenous people in Mexico.

Indigenous Mexican American- A political term for Indigenous peoples whose tribal affiliation is from Mexico, but they themselves are living in the United States.

Ixanchilan- A Xikan@-Nahuatl term for the Western Hemisphere.

Ixanchilancah- Indigenous- Americans from the Western Hemisphere.

Ixanchilancayotl- The practice of a hemispheric Indigenous identity.

Macehualmeh- Indigenous people whose worldview is rooted within the Nahuatl language.



Macehualyotl- The practice of an Indigenous identity from within a Nahuatl worldview.

Mexicah- Indigenous people who identify with being from Anahuac, regardless of tribal affiliation.

Mexicayotl- The practice of Mexicah identity.

Native- An informal term for describing Indigenous peoples of the Americas, but primarily used in the United States and Canada.

Raza- A Chicana/o term for “the people,” or community.

Xikan@- Indigenous Mexican-Americans who are from Aztlan and practice any form of Indigenous Identity. Ie. Anahuacayotl, Ixanchilancayotl, Macehualyotl, Mexicayotl.

Xik@nismo- The practice of a Xikan@ identity.

Xikan@-Nahuatl- People whose identity is both Xikan@ and Nahuatl.

PROLOGUE: TLAYOHUAYAN, IN TLACHIHUALLI DE LOS NAHUI  
TEZCATLIPOCAMEH<sup>1</sup>

*Ometeotl gave birth to four sons: The Eldest was named  
Tlahtlauqui Tezcatlipoca and the people of Huexotzinco and  
Tlaxcala took him as their principle [teotl] and they called him  
Camaxtli. This one was born red. (Icazbalceta 1883)*

*It was close to midnight, during the Indigenous Mexican holiday of Dia de los Muertos.<sup>2</sup>  
I had already drunk a large amount of Tequililla, and I continued to drink. By this point, all I  
could think about was how fucked up my life was. I was around people who didn't care, they  
didn't care for much, except for drinking, drugs, sex, and with whom it didn't matter. As the  
night went on, I continued to drink, and drink, and drink. I began to reflect on my life and my  
cousin Xolotzin who I had made an altar for as we supposedly celebrated "Dia de los Muertos"  
(the Day of the Dead).*

*Xolotzin had lived only 22 years, and was murdered in Albuquerque's South Valley on  
Atrisco Boulevard and Central Avenue while walking out of Kmart. He was shot in the head and  
died on the hot summer parking lot pavement. He had only been in Albuquerque for a short time  
as an "ex" gang member from East Los Aztlan (Los Angeles). My father and my uncles had  
argued with him until his death that he needed to slow down, but he was young and was not  
trying to hear anyone. I remember my father telling him, "Hito, you're gonna have to change  
your ways, look at all your uncles and how we live, if you continue down this path, you won't live  
long." I remember his response to my father was always, "I know uncle Leroy, I know." My  
father would continue by saying, "Look ese, remember your father and how he died, remember  
he was killed living the lifestyle you live. Hells Angels did not care that he was a father,*

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<sup>1</sup> "In the Place of Darkness, the Creation of the Four Smoking Mirrors"

<sup>2</sup> The Day of the Dead.

*Husband, or a brother. He owed them money and that's all they cared about. The lifestyle you live does not look at you kindly, one mistake and it's all over."*

*A couple years later from my Dad's talk with Xolotzin, I was now living in Denver with my mother. I would take the RTD (public transportation) from my school to Downtown Denver, and then transfer to another bus that would take me home. It just so happened my second bus stop was directly across the street from the building where my mother worked. Usually, my Mom would wait for me there to discuss the things I had to do when I got home, or she would be waiting just to say hi. This particular day, my Mother was waiting for me, but I had noticed something was wrong just by looking at the expression on her face.*

*As I stepped off the bus, she said to me in a serious voice, "LeRoy, I need to talk to you about something... It's about Albuquerque." Now, between my mother and me, back then and until this very day, when we would say "it's about Albuquerque," we knew its bad news. I thought to myself, "My father is dead, he is finally dead, he must have got in a fight and somebody shot him." My mother continued, "Xolotzin was shot right outside the parking lot of Kmart, he didn't survive." She gave me a hug and said, "Baby, I have to go back to work, call me if you need anything, ok? I will see you tonight." I got on the 108 express and headed home, which was a painful bus ride home.*

*Going back to my night of binge drinking... I woke up from my drunken day dream during Dia de los Muertos. I realized how hungry I was; with hunger and anger from reminiscing about my cousin's death, I walked out of the club, grabbed (stole) a burrito from the little vejito selling burritos and walked away. A police officer had noticed me, and proceeded after me. In my drunken state, I turned towards the police officer and ran after him... Let's just say, out of all the dumb shit I have done in my life, running towards a cop with an object in your hand... Not so smart, I am lucky to be alive.*

*All I can tell you is that I wasn't arrested or even taken to detox, but knocked around enough for me to never do that again. Being as drunk as I was, I did not feel too much. I walked to my truck, and tried to punch the driver side window; instead, I shattered two of the bones in my hand, and drove home under the influence.*

*It was a couple weeks later that I realized; I needed to shed myself of this skin. Much like Xipe Totec, also known as Camaxtli, I needed to rid myself of the skin that no longer nurtured my development. From this point, I decided school would be my focus; it was at that time, Tlazolteotl, the tlazolcuani- the one who eats filth, ate the putrefication, the dead skin that Xipe Totec- Our Flayed Lord had carved off my body. While facing the West- Cihuatlampa, I began to let go of my past and surrender the moments in my life which I could not control. I released myself from my cousin whom I considered a brother, alongside my father, and my anger. At that moment in my life, I was born red.*

My research begins with a description of a past experience and marks the beginning of a journey towards unraveling an identity, which at the time was heavily entrenched in the logics of colonialism; violence, substance abuse, and internalization of hate and anger. The above stated introduction is what I consider to be an epistemological trait of mexicayotl/ xik@nismo and Xik@nehnemilizohtzin, or Xikan@ methodologies; it begins with positioning me “in a good way.”<sup>3</sup> It coincides with an Indigenous researcher’s use of a prologue, giving readers a clear understanding of the author’s position within their research. As such, personal features and motives behind the intent of the tlacuilo are exhibited.<sup>4</sup> A proverbial use of a proem represents similar exercises that take place in Indigenous communities throughout North America.

According to Margaret Kovach, “it encompasses essential information for the reader to make

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<sup>3</sup> Mexicayotl- See Definition of Terms section on p. vi – p. vii. Xik@nismo- See Definition of Terms section on p. vi – p. vii.

<sup>4</sup> Tlacuilo- scribe, writer, author

sense of the story to follow” (3). Furthermore, Kovach explains, “within Indigenous writing, a prologue structures space for introductions, while serving as a bridging function for non-Indigenous readers” (3).

The application of formal introductions or the use of storytelling allows community and non-community members alike to develop a group identity formed on the basis of a shared experience. The impact of “our” shared experience creates an active relationship focused on the subject matter at hand, while the meaning behind this act is to develop a sense of kinship and comfort ability. Hence, a feeling of belonging is developed into a practice of community participation.

*The second son, Yayauhqui Tezcatlipoca, was the worst and the main one who had authority and power because he was born between them. He was born black. (Icazbalceta 1883)*

*It is with good intentions I introduce myself. My name is LeRoy Saiz, I am of Genizaro-Tiwa descent on my mother’s side, and of Indigenous Mexican-American descent on my father’s side; I identify as Genizaro-Tiwa and Xikan@-Nahuatl.<sup>5</sup> I am originally from Albuquerque’s South Valley; specifically, I am from the neighborhoods of Armijo and Atrisco, which are originally Genizaro communities. I am now living in between Denver, Colorado and Ft. Collins, Colorado and currently enrolled in graduate school at Colorado State University in Ft. Collins.*

*Part of my introduction is to let you know about my lineage. Among Xikan@ communities, the North, or Mictlampa, the region of transformation is related to our antepasados- our ancestors.<sup>6</sup> When we as Xikan@ people face the North, we must remember those who have passed before us, as they are the ones who have laid down the foundations of our*

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<sup>5</sup> Throughout my writing, I will interchange between the use of Chican@ and Xikan@, as it is a representation of my identity at the moment of reflection. I will explain the differences and meaning behind each identifier as the paper continues to develop.

<sup>6</sup> Xikan@; @ is a representation of male, female, and LGBTQ2 community members. I use it in support of all of our community and its experiences.

identity. *An attribute of the North is tlalnamiqiliztli,<sup>7</sup> with our historical memory we reach into Mictlan.<sup>8</sup> Rudolfo “Corky” Gonzales, a Chicano poet and activist from Denver, through his poem “Yo Soy Joaquin,” attempts to remember what has been forgotten:*

*Part of that blood that runs deep in me  
Could not be vanquished by the Moors.  
I defeated them after five hundred years  
And I endured.  
The part of that blood is mine  
Has labored endlessly five hundred  
Years under the heel of lustful  
Europeans  
I am still Here! (28)*

*Much like Corky Gonzales and other Ixanchilancah- Indigenous people, my family has endured colonization over five hundred years. As mentioned earlier, my mother’s family, nonana teixmaticahuan are Genizaros who originally were from a Tiwa Pueblo located in Northern New Mexico.<sup>9</sup> However, the removal of Native women and children from their homes and families resulted in the de-tribalization of many. Within New Mexico, there are communities that today, exist as Genizaro Pueblos.<sup>10</sup> Atlixco, one of the barrios in Albuquerque where I am from, known today as Atrisco, was recognized in 2007 by the New Mexico State Legislature as a Genizaro community.<sup>11</sup>*

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<sup>7</sup> Tlalnamiqiliztli- memory.

<sup>8</sup> Mictlan- land of repose, land of our ancestors; dead.

<sup>9</sup> Social Anthropologist, Danna A. Levin Rojo argues the ethnonym, “Pueblo,” is a term given to the Indigenous communities of New Mexico who speak Tiwa, Tewa, Towa, Piro, and Keres (ch. 2). In Levin Rojo’s work, “Return to Aztlan: Indians, Spaniards, and the Invention of Nuevo Mexico,” she notes that Spanish Conquistadors, when traveling through la frontera directly north of Nuevo Espana wondered across what is now the State of New Mexico in search of “Cibola, the Seven Cities of Gold (ch. 2).” The Conquistadors recognized similarities in the adobe homes of the Indigenous population and that of the houses in the Iberian Peninsula in Spain as well as, the settlements of New Spain (ch. 2). Anglo scholars, after later analysis of Spanish accounts, would then begin the trend of labeling many of the Indigenous communities of New Mexico as “Pueblo” people (ch. 2).

<sup>10</sup> Genizaros are de-tribalized Indigenous peoples who were kidnapped during the Spanish colonial era and sold to Spanish Haciendas and U.S. households as slaves. Eventually, Genizaros were accepted into the Hispano families or communities whom they labored in, usually through marriage. In 2007 the State of New Mexico recognized Genizaro people in specific communities (including the neighborhood of Atrisco in Albuquerque’s South Valley) as Indigenous people. This was documented in House and Senate Memorial Bills, HM40 and SM59 (New Mexico State Legislature 2007). Most Genizaros are of Comanche, Kiowa, Pawnee, Pueblo, Apache, Dine (Navajo), or of Nahua (Indigenous Mexicans who came with conquistadores to New Mexico as slaves) descent, and today in New Mexico, most Genizara/os also identify as Chican@.

<sup>11</sup> “Atrisco” is the Spanish translation being used today in New Mexico for Albuquerque’s South Valley barrio. However, “Atrisco” is the Spanish translation of the Nahuatl word, “Atlixco,” meaning, “land near water,” which I assume is referencing the Rio Grande River. “Atlixco” was originally settled by Tlaxcaltecan and other Nahuatl speaking slaves who came with Juan de Onate before the Pueblo Revolt of 1680.

*Recognizing anahuacayotl epistemologies argues the point that we are still here, we still exist, and if we continue to understand that we are “nican tlacah” to the Southwest, we will continue to fight the oppression that has tried to eliminate our true identity. Many people, including American Indians will say, we have no ties to this land, and whatever Native culture we did have, we lost. Some will argue that we are Hispanics, Latina/os, and even Spaniards. As recorded by anthropologist Alan R. Sandstrom, we will respond with our ancestors in mind, “My flesh is tonacayo (corn), cintli ne toeso (corn is our blood)” (Sandstrom 1991).*

*I remember as a youth my grandmother on notata teixmaticahuan (my father’s family) would always say to me, “it’s good that you look to Indian identity coming from Indians in the United States, but don’t forget, we too, are Indian, only we are Indians from Mexico.” She then went on to explain, “when I was younger, my family and I were farm workers, and until I was a little bit older I followed work that went from Arizona to Colorado, and Colorado to New Mexico. When I was older, I met your grandfather while working in Colorado, eventually we got to New Mexico and your father was born in Bernalillo.”*

*Gonzales explains in “Yo Soy Joaquin:”*

*My back of Indian Slavery  
was stripped crimson  
from the whips of masters  
who would lose their blood so pure  
when revolution made them pay  
Standing against the walls of  
Retribution.  
Blood...  
Has flowed from  
me  
on every battlefield  
between  
Campensino, Hacendado*

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“Atlixco” is one of the oldest barrios in Albuquerque and it is suggested that it was named after the town of Atlixco, in Puebla, Mexico (Lucero 2009-10).

*Slave and Master  
and  
Revolution. (24)*

**Amehautin Notlazohcihuapiltzin/ Todos Ustedes Mi Hermosa Hija<sup>12</sup>**

*To the third was given the name Quetzalcoatl, sometimes known as yoalli ehecatl. (Icazbalceta 1883)*

*Quetzalcoatl—Beautiful Knowledge and Cihuacoatl—Women Knowledge/ Snake Woman are located in Tlahuiztlampa<sup>13</sup>—the region of the spine light. When we as Xikan@ people look to the East, we recognize that this direction represents tlamachiliztli—traditional knowledge. When the sun rises, so does our ability to acquire knowledge. For close to five hundred years Nahuatl culture was hidden within our homes and our bodies—tochanhuan ihuan toteocaltin. Kurly Tlapoyawa member of the Mexika Eagle Society notes, the last tlahtoani<sup>14</sup> Cuauhtemoc spoke on August 12<sup>th</sup>, 1521, “axkan ihuan tiquin tochanhuan toteocalhuantzintli, tocalmecahuantzintli, totlachcohuantzintli, totelpochcalhuantzintli, tocuicacalhuantzintli —from now our homes will be our houses of youth, universities, ball courts, houses of young men, and houses of song.” Since Cuauhtemoc’s last speech in 1523, and before he was executed by hanging in Hondorus, we have hidden our identity, and we have resisted colonial worldviews (43).*

*In Mexican communities from the Southern most parts of the Yucatan to as far North as the State of Washington, Indigenous Mexicans and Indigenous Mexican Americans have prayed to “Our Lady of Guadalupe.” What most people outside of an Indigenous Mexican identity do not realize is the connection between “Our Lady” and Coatlicue—She of Serpent Skirts. With the arrival of the Spaniards, the image of Coatlicue was forbidden and replaced with the Virgin*

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<sup>12</sup> You all, my precious daughter.

<sup>13</sup> Tlahuiztlampa- East.

<sup>14</sup> Tlahtoani- Speaker of the people.



*Mary, the mother of Jesus. During the indoctrination of Mexica people into the Catholic religion, many tlamatinime—wise men/traditional scholars noticed there were many similarities connected to both the Virgin Mary and Coatlicue. For example, John Mini argues Mary was the mother of Jesus, and Jesus was the son of the god for Christians; her fundamental spiritual characteristics focused on the same moral concerns as Coatlicue, and this was noticed by many Indigenous people in the area (92-94). Coatlicue was also called Tonantzin-Coatlicue, or Our Beloved Mother-She of Serpent Skirts (92-94). Our Beloved Mother was symbolic of the Earth, She of Serpent Skirts was known as a teotl (deity/spirit) representing the Earth, therefore, Coatlicue was known as Tonantzin. While Mexica people were supposedly praying to Jesus (Teotl-Dios), in actuality, we were praying to Huizilopochtli, Quetzalcoatl, Tezcatlipoca and other teomeh/santos who were the guardians of our specific prayers, as well as representations of natural cycles and processes found within the natural world. “Our Lady,” was their mother, Tonantzin, the Earth, our beloved mother (Mini 92-94).*

*Furthermore, Mini notes many Nahuatl speaking communities in Central Mexico would go to the teocalli (temple) at Tepeyacac to pray to Tonantzin. With the Spanish invasion of Mexico, the conquistadors and priests agreed to build churches over the temples, including a church over the temple at Tepeyacac, the temple dedicated to Tonantzin. One day, Juan Diegotzin, a teopixqui—healer ran into the image of “Our Lady of Guadalupe,” she instructed Diegotzin to inform people of her existence, as she was supposed to protect those who were oppressed. Diegotzin did what was asked of him, and it was from this point on la Virgen de Guadalupe (the Virgin of Guadalupe) became a palimpsest for Tonantzin-Coatlicue (Mini 2000).*

*‘Til this very day Indigenous Mexicans and Indigenous Mexican Americans/ Xikan@ people hold the Virgin of Guadalupe in high esteem. Not because we are Catholics, but because*

*with the knowledge we have been given, we know that so many of our relatives including Cuauhtemoc, survive on.*

*As a young boy in elementary school, my father had always tried to teach me how to live “in a good way,” he explained that a western way of thinking was a life focused on how many books you can read and how much you can write. He noted, “School smarts is important, but without common sense, what good is your books and writing?” He would push for me to recognize some of the most important pieces of knowledge one can give to another person, for example, the ability to exist together. He focused on many various aspects of traditional knowledge such as generosity; sharing life, and knowledge. I remember him saying to me, “White people have all these crazy ideas of who Mexicans are. They say we don’t belong; we are not smart, they say we are dependent on food stamps, and they say they can’t trust us. But those are lies and they are ignorant. In fact, we are the exact opposite of everything they say we are.”*

*My father insisted, “We do belong here, we are from this land, even before there were White people, we were here. We are smart, we fix their cars, work on their farms, and we survive in places that sometimes don’t even have running water, plumbing, or electricity, let alone heat. They say we are dependent, yet they don’t stop to think, who picks their crops, who fixes their cars, who cooks their food, and takes care of their children and gardens? A rich White man will ask me how to fix things because they don’t know how, but I promise you this, I will never have to ask a White man how to build a house, work on a car engine, or how to raise you right. A book will not tell you how to love somebody and it will not certainly make choices for you. When you are faced with a decision, at that moment, you will not pick a book to figure out what to do; instead you will be forced to act, and act appropriately at that. They say we are*

*not to be trusted, but who is the one that has stolen land from Indian people? Who helped White people when they lacked the survival skills needed to live on this land? Yet were the ones not to be trusted.”*

*The East reminds us of our traditional knowledge of self, history, and culture. From Tlahuiztlampa, I argue the point that real knowledge, if we are to survive as Indigenous peoples lies within our cultural identity, when our sun (knowledge) goes down, we must hide as does the sun. However, when the sun arises, so do we, ready to build our knowledge base and share with those who are willing to learn.*

The fourth and smallest was called Omiteotl and also Maquizcoatl, whom the Mexicans called Huitzilopochtli because he was left handed. And in Mexico, he was the principal diety because he was so regarded in the land from which they came. (Icazbalceta 1883)

*It is told,<sup>15</sup> it is said that Huitzilopochtli—Left Hand Hummingbird was the Tezcatlipoca who looked after Huiztlampa, or the region of the hummingbird. He looks after topiltzinmeh ihuan toyaomeh, our children and our warriors, but Huitzilopochtli also represents tonahuatil tocalpultzin, the obligation to our community, which entails us to act as teyotica moceloquichtin (spiritual warriors). Part of becoming teyotica moceloquichtin is knowing when to speak, and when not to speak. It is being able to hold the respect of your community by your actions. A yaotl (enemy to be afraid of- a warrior) is someone who thinks before he acts, and every action is done with an intention in mind. He or she is the mirror for the children to imitate (Leon-Portilla 10). Therefore, before I continue on with my paper/prayer. I want to come in a good way.*

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<sup>15</sup> The use of the phrase, “It is told,” is one of many traditional sign posts for letting the reader know, the content is based on oral tradition. This concept is a fundamental characteristic of Indigenous storytelling amongst Indigenous communities throughout the Americas, or Western hemisphere. Joseph Bruchac and Michael Caduto note that while telling a story, traditionally, the storyteller would use key phrases to let the listener know when a story was beginning or ending (13). They explain that the storyteller would begin either by using phrases “It was told to me...,” “my story camps here...,” and so on (13). Within Nahuatl speaking communities, generally speaking, the phrase, “it is told,” is the marker for the beginning of a traditional story (Leon-Portilla 29).

*I want to let the reader know, that I do not hold palabra (the word) within any realm of the Xikan@ community, I am simply a Macehualli—common person or Indigenous person. In Susana Rostas’ work regarding the Concehero tradition of Mexico, she identifies the meaning behind the word “palabra” as, “the name given to those who are allocated named positions as the obligation (responsibilities during ceremony) starts” (87). A similar meaning and position is given amongst Xikan@s when using the phrase, “to hold palabra, or to hold smoke.” That in mind, I am not passing out information that is to remain privileged for specific community members, furthermore, information regarding my community and the practice of mexicayotl — Mexicah culture, is my interpretation of the Xikan@ community and not the perspective of the community as a whole. All information regarding specific ceremonies comes from sources that can be accessed by those who chose to do so.*

*I want to begin this ceremony of remembering, by apologizing to anyone who might be offended, or feel they are misrepresented, that is not my intention. I want to apologize to all the elders and relatives from my communities; I am not trying to act as if I am in any position of status or power. I know your wealth of knowledge truly exceeds any strand of comprehension I have regarding our traditional ways. From my elders and fellow community members I am honored to gain knowledge and hope to one day serve in a similar capacity, as all of you have done. To my ancestors and my relatives, I am a pitiful human being, and please look after me, I am ignorant and I look to you for guidance*

## INTRODUCTION

One of the intentions of this paper is to create a dialogue that locates othered/ sub-altern Indigenous identities in the United States, specifically Xikan@ Indigenous identity, at the same time maintaining the autonomy of American Indian, Alaskan Native, and Native Hawaiian identity and relationship to place. While previous generations of scholars have been able to define “Indigenous,” only recently has the ambiguity of its meaning come into question for myself and those walking in a similar path. Recognizing the Xikan@ community and American Indian community both, as Indigenous Americans, or Ixanchilancah has led to the development of this paper.<sup>16</sup>

These four [teomeh] constitute the primary forces that activate the history of the world. And the symbolism of their colors—red, black, white, and blue—permits us to trace their identification with the natural elements, the directions of space, and the periods of time allotted to their influence. With the four sons of Ometetol, space and time enter fully into the world. Both space and time are conceived not as empty stage settings, but factors that combine and regulate the occurrence of cosmic events. (Leon-Portilla 1963: 33)

Cynthia B. Dillard defines historical memory as “representative of a collective history” (3). Dillard’s work, “Learning to (Re)member the Things We’ve Learned to Forget,” describes her experience as an African American woman reconnecting with her Indigenous roots in West Africa. Throughout her journey she identifies many aspects of her North American identity, more specifically, a colonized women of color. However, many times throughout her work, she locates many memories of an action or event that takes place in her visit to Ghana, which is not of her North American character, but is herself remembering what she was taught to forget. For

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<sup>16</sup> Ixanchilancah is a Xikan@- Nahuatl term used to describe all Indigenous peoples of the western hemisphere. I have only heard this term in use amongst Xikan@s, furthermore, there is debate amongst the Xikan@ community about its use. I have not found any reference of its make up or use within any Nahuatl dictionary, and the only literature I have seen it in practice has been within Kurly Tlapoyawa’s book, “We Will Rise: Redbuilding the Mexikah Nation.”

example, through spirituality, praise songs of many African communities, language, images, places, and dress, she recognizes those connecting moments as memory that was left behind.

*I remember many times with my father, driving from the dumps near the foothills of the Manzano Mountains in Albuquerque to get rid of the trash that had accumulated while fixing my grandmother's trailer. While heading to our destination, we would listen to Radio Lobo, a popular Spanish station in Albuquerque. The radio personality would trigger our curiosity by unknowingly using an Aztecismo<sup>17</sup>. As my father and I would hear these words, we would comment on how interesting it was that certain Spanish words sounded much like an "Indian" word. As time went on, there would be other moments, triggering historical memories in both of us.*

*Driving by building walls in the South Valley, aerosol images of Cuauhtemoc (the last tlahtoani, or speaker of the people in Mexico-Tenochtitlan) opened our minds to a forgotten/ suppressed cultural existence. At that time, I did not know the history of Cuauhtemoc. While my Dad may have known, it was never conveyed who this person was. However, driving by, he would tell me to look at the image, and then he would say... "Doesn't he look like us? Hito, you ask about who we are. This is who we are, you ask about our Indian blood, we are not Indian's from the United States, but we are Indians from Mexico; these are our ancestors."*

Referencing Taiaiake Alfred, identity can be a means to empowerment, a path that can liberate an individual, as well as a community from many of the race, class, and gender inequalities. An identity can be formed by numerous independent variables; they can consist of

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<sup>17</sup> Aztecismo- A Nahuatl word that has become Hispanicized, or borrowed by the Spanish language. Scholars Guillermo Lux and Maurilio E. Vigil point out:

It is important to note that current pronunciations of the Hispanicized Aztec words usually drop the "l" or "i" endings from the original Aztec spelling due to the phonetic differentiation in pronunciation between the two languages. Aztec words ending in "tl" usually end in Spanish "te" (caxitl= cajete) and Aztec words ending in "li" end in Spanish "le" (tamalli= tamale). (102)

socio-economic, political, and spiritual features (27). A worldview then is formulated as a position located in the continuity of community. Therefore, an additional characteristic within my thesis is to identify the cultural characteristics of a Xikan@ Indigenous identity, and inform the reader of the parallels between Indigenous peoples from a national, continental, and hemispheric perspective. The end result will be “in xinachtli;” a seed planted, an extension to the original design of those who fought for the liberation of Chican@ communities. From a Chicano renaissance to the further development of a state of being—*chicanismo* to *mexicayotl*, this is our renewal ceremony, the survival of our Indigenous identity. This is done by analyzing my interpretations of my own Ixanchilancah-Macehualmeh identity using auto-ethnography and traditional storywork. Accompanying the analysis of my identity will be a literature review, examining a North American trans-national perspective of Ixanchilancayotl. Included will be an attribute of “In Xikanehnemilizohtzin,” a Xikan@ methodology which will reflect a methodological approach in kinship with various forms of Indigenous methodologies. The use of storytelling will exemplify the cultural connection between Xikan@s and other Ixanchilancah. Lastly, I will ask what are the contributing factors of a Xikan@ Indigenous identity to a hemispheric lens, and how are they interpreted by other Xikan@ community members. This is done through interviews and analysis of those interviews.

### **Hispanidad, Chicanismo, and Mexicayotl: Hispano, Latina/o, Chicana/o and Xikan@**

The intent of this section gives definition to the unique identity markers I use throughout my research. As previously stated, this is an auto-ethnographic piece, the various identifiers used, such as Chicana/o, Chican@, Xikan@, and Indigenous American to name a few, are my contemplative references to disaggregate the differences between many layers of ethnic identity I have experienced. Countless variations of these identities exist in the community, and either

concur or reject my definitions. I argue there are cultural differences to the use of each ethnic and racial term. I will give a political, social, and spiritual synopsis to the differences between my use of the terms Chicana/o and the use of the term Xikan@, and close with an explanation of my use of the Nahuatl identifier.

Politically, Chican@s allegiance towards a form of Mexican nationalism, which is “post-colonial (not to be confused with de-colonial)” at its root, is central to the foundation of our Chican@ identity; it maintains a theoretical lens of Octavio Paz, Jose Vasconcelos, Andres Molina Enriquez, and Manuel Gamio:<sup>18</sup>

It is now the task of the revolutionaries of Mexico to take up the hammer and tie on the apron of the forger to make a new patria of intermixed iron and bronze surge from the miraculous anvil. There is the iron... There is the bronze... Stir, brothers! (Gamio 24)

Gamio ignites perspectives of an autonomous Mexico, free from the grips of a colonial master, particularly Spain, France, and the United States. Leading the charge is Vasconcelos and his concept of La Raza Cosmica. “Predestination obeys the design of constituting the cradle of a fifth race into which all nations will fuse with each other to replace the four races that have been forging history apart from each other” (18). The formation of new race, or La Raza Cosmica was not, and is not possible today, without the nationalist Mexican agenda convincing its citizenship of the idea of mestizaje, the blending of African, Spanish, Indigenous American peoples and their cultures is a credible solution challenging North American (White Anglo-Saxon Protestant) imperialism. Referencing the concept of mestizaje, Octavio Paz wrote, “Mesoamerica was not a pyramid, but an assemblage of pyramids” (89). Andres Molina

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<sup>18</sup> Post-Colonial, within this study, is to suggest that during the Independence of Mexico and directly after, a post-colonial regime was formed. It does not suggest that a non-western form of governing and statehood was practiced. It implies that France and Spain no longer, in a physical form ruled Mexico. However, Mexico was not yet and is still not a decolonized state, as it still practices western forms of governance and has become subject to political and economic subservience to their neighbors in the north. De-colonial is to be free of the west, socially, politically, and economically. Very few countries are in this position today.



Enriquez in 1909 argued, Mexico's mestizo citizenship is the only viable population able to engage the ideals of a fifth race, a cosmic race formulated through mestizaje (1909).

The problem with using mestizaje lies within its value as a coercive tool. As a political apparatus, mestizaje creates class and racial divisions, those who are not mixed are either above or below the common. It becomes the means which the state assimilates Indigenous populations into dominant society. Guillermo Bonfil-Batalla explains the rationale for implementing mestizaje during the Mexican revolution:

The agrarian reform had only one meaning for the campesinos: recovering a territory that was an indispensable physical resource, but at the same time was a social space, full of symbolic and emotional meaning. It meant the possibility of survival, but also continuity. For the revolutionary planners and leaders of Mexico, the agrarian reform had another meaning: it was a way of indeed carrying out social justice, but above all it was a way of making the earth produce, through the new projects of national development. This plan did not support the continuity of [Indigenous Mexico,] but, rather, its incorporation—and its negation—in what was going to be a new society. For this reason Mexico had to be mestizo, not plural, and especially not Indian. (112)

Herein lays the difference between contemporary Chican@ and Xikan@ identity. As will be explained, a majority of Anahuatlamatinime (Anahuac scholars) in the United States and Mexico identify the use of mestizaje as problematic. Unlike Chican@ scholars, conflicting perspectives of Mestizo identities can be seen in arguments made by American Indian scholars, Andrea Smith and Simon J. Ortiz. For example, Smith argues that Chican@ identity's acceptance of colonial constructs and the identification with mestizaje, only embraces the continued silencing of Indigenous identity (55). Furthermore, when Nimipu (Nez Perce)/ Tejana scholar Ines Avila-Hernandez interviewed *Haaku* (Acoma Pueblo) poet Simon J. Ortiz about his perspective on Chican@ Indigeneity and connections to American Indian identity, his response stated:

There always was a connection between Chicanos and Indians although Indian people tended to see Chicanos as Spanish since Chicanos do consider Spanish heritage as a big part of their origin. So to some degree, Indians see Chicanos as Spanish and they regard the Spanish as the enemy and oppressor, liar, thief, killer.  
(24)

Ines Avila-Hernandez, Chair of the Native American Studies Department at the University of California-Davis comments on Ortiz's statements.

What are the threads that reveal a grounding that might bring these two (really multiple) communities together? Is there any possibility of a break-through in centuries-old antagonisms that keep these communities apart? For whatever reasons, Ortiz does not mention once the word "Mexican," or Mexico. He links Chicana/Chicanos to Spain and Spanish heritage. Yet it is the Mexican cultural heritage of mestizaje, I believe, which makes Chicanas/ Chicanos most suspect to Native Peoples in the U.S., and its Mexico's history of colonization and the attendant consequences to Indigenous people over the course of centuries that creates an invisible but palpable wall between the two communities. From an Indigenous perspective, this history is what makes it difficult if not impossible for Native Peoples to swallow (tragar) theoretical perspectives that purport solidarity but actually perpetuate critical stances which assume the right to reconquer.  
(24)

There is no denying Xikan@ communities also ascribe to a form of nationalism grounded in mexicanidad disguised as mexicayotl.<sup>19</sup> However, at the core of mexicayotl<sup>20</sup> are Indigenous epistemologies or political formas<sup>21</sup> rooted in traditional knowledge, which are not from European foundations of Western political philosophy. Elena Avila identifies the nahui ollin teotl<sup>22</sup> being an archetype in Indigenous epistemological placement of everyday governance concerning self and community. "The [nahui ollin teotl] system is an ancestral formula used by

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<sup>19</sup> Mexicanidad- Mexican national identity

<sup>20</sup> *Mexicayotl* (*Mexica* – People of Mexitli + *yotl* – Essence of) literally means, "the essence of Mexica culture." Culturally *mexicayotl*, much like other pan-Indigenous movements represents a spiritual road, a red road; a way of knowing, and a way of being.

<sup>21</sup> Forms.

<sup>22</sup> *Nahui Ollin Teotl*- Four movement spirit.

the Indigenous pueblos of Mexico to make decisions regarding health, spirit, relationships, nutrition and everything that has to do with life and the life of the universe” (33). Instead of the blending of racial, ethnic, and economic identities into one hegemonic society, Xikan@ communities much like Indigenous communities in Mexico and the Southwestern United States have negotiated aspects of their political, cultural, and social identity. Xikan@ identity denies the blending of cultures into one hegemonic identity, but argues for the negotiation of cultural traits for the survival of Indigenous communities and the continuity of the fundamental characteristics of Indigenous (traditional knowledge) values.

In my opinion, this is the separation point ideologically speaking between Xikan@s (shee-khan-ahs/ shee-khan-ohs) and Chicana/os (Chee-khan-ahs/Chee-Khan-ohs). Chican@ identity acknowledges Indigenous presence when looking in the mirror, but when one walks away from the mirror and out into the world, they leave their Indigenous identity in the past, and they do not bring Indigeneity into their present day interactions. In speaking of modern day interactions, participant in La Danza Azteca and the Conchero tradition, Mario E. Aguilar argues against the lack of understanding of cultural negotiations by “new age political Danzantes.”

They saw the world in two distinct time periods: Before 1492 when the American continent was an Eden, and post-1492, when the Europeans destroyed everything Indigenous. They were not aware (and most still are not aware) of the assertive and successful cultural, spiritual, and technological negotiations carried out by the surviving Indigenous peoples after 1492. (4)

Similar to the political differences, are the cultural differences between Chicana/os and Xikan@s. Jack D. Forbes argues “the Aztecas del Norte (an Azteca is a person of Aztlan or “the southwest”) compose the largest single tribe or nation of Anishinabeg (Indians) found in the

United States today” (13).<sup>23</sup> Forbes goes on to further explain that the term “Azteca” identifies a non-homogenous or unified group of peoples who also identify as Chicano, Mexican-American, Mexican, and even Hispanic who look to their use of the Spanish language as oppose to their racial or ethnic makeup (13).<sup>24</sup> In today’s context, the Forbsian notion of “Azteca” can be translated to identify as Xikan@, or as Tlapoyawa identifies as, “Mexikah” (Tlapoyawa), one automatically highlights their Ixanchilancah identity as their principal source of ethnic and racial make-up.

Looking at the unique conditions Macehualmeh<sup>25</sup> face in Aztlan (Southwestern United States), three colonial nations and their forms of governance (Spain, Mexico, United States) have tried to colonize the land and its inhabitants. Using Mario E. Aguilar’s “cultural negotiation” argument gives a clear understanding of the dynamics within Indigenous peoples use of the Spanish language. As a means of survival, but not assimilation, Xikan@s have retained the Spanish language, as well as molded it to fit our realities. Scholar James Diego Vigil notes the changes that Indigenous peoples have created to the European language:

Even the Spanish language underwent a syncretic change...Some words were integrated into the Spanish language because they represented a feature of Indian reality that was totally alien to the Spaniards... Moreover, many who learned Spanish fashioned a new sound and style. This resulted in the many regional patterns and intonations found today. (90)

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<sup>23</sup> Gloria Anzaldua, in the beginning of her book, “Borderland/La Frontera: The New Mestiza,”she also cites this particular passage from Jack D. Forbes.

<sup>24</sup> Jack D. Forbes’ “Aztecas Del Norte: The Chicanos of Aztlan was published in 1973, at that time the Genizaro identities of southern Colorado, northern, and central New Mexico were identities only recognized in their specific locations. Genizaros are de-tribalized Indigenous peoples who during the Spanish colonial era were kidnapped or sold to Spanish Haciendas and U.S. households as slaves. Eventually, Genizaros were accepted into the Hispano families or communities which they labored in, usually through marriage. His use of the term “Chicano,” as oppose to Xikan@, is representative of the time his work was published (1973). The intent of his book was not to argue the various dimensions of Chican@/ Xikan@ identity, but to inform readers of the connections Indigenous Mexican Americans had to the rest of Turtle Island (North America).

<sup>25</sup> Macehualli (singular) and Macehualmeh (plural) is a contemporary Nahuatl term for people or communities who identify as Indigenous to Anahuac- Turtle Island.

James Diego Vigil at the time was speaking to the successful influences mestizaje placed upon Chican@ culture. I disagree with Vigil in that the use of the Spanish language was a positive representation of mestizaje, and conclude; it features Aguilar's "cultural negotiation" which took place amongst Indigenous communities in order to survive Spanish oppression. A Xikan@ recognizes the use of the Spanish language as a political and social identity that was enforced by the colonial states of Spain and Mexico towards Indigenous populations in the Americas. For Xikan@s, Spanish is now used as a tool of resistance from settler oppression in the United States. As a Xikan@ person, alongside the use of the Spanish language, the revival of our original languages such as Nahuatl are becoming a form of resistance providing a pathway towards reclamation of Indigenous identities that were taken from us by Spain, Mexico, and the United States. This allows for the hyphenated use of Nahuatl in the identifier Xikan@; Xikan@-Nahautl.<sup>26</sup>

We understand that political and cultural negotiations have taken place among Xikan@ communities, and the same can be argued for the social philosophy among Xikan@s known as "compadrazgo," which establishes "social ties with nonfamily members (91)." Denise A. Segura and Jennifer L. Pierce note in their work, "compadrazgo is principally a feature of Roman Catholic Chicana/o families" (302). The above mentioned scholars relate compadrazgo to either mestizaje or Indigenous communities blending with similar Spanish kinship customs, or a cultural dynamic of Catholicism. Whereas, Sandstrom suggests compadrazgo is "particularly important among the Indians of Mesoamerica" (188). Furthermore, Zotero Citlacoatl in his research has cited the Calpulli Teoxicalli in regards to the reclamation of an Indigenous

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<sup>26</sup> Not all Xikan@s identify the Nahuatl language as the original language of our ancestors, but do recognize our original languages can consist of Mixtec, Zapotec, Mayan, Pipil, Tiwa, Towa, Tewa, Athapaskan, etc. Therefore, One can hyphenate the language from which their antipasados come from. Ie. Xikan@-Mixtec, Xikan@-Zapotec, Xikan@-Yoeme.

description of compadrazgo within Nican Tlachah communities.<sup>27</sup> Citlalcoatl explains, “a Calpulli is the basic social unit of Mexica society and is generally thought of as an autonomous union of families... Calpultin hold onto the memory of our ancestors, the ceremonies that make up Anahuacayotl Epistemology” (8).

### **La Raza Cosmica, Mexica en Excellencia<sup>28</sup>**

*Eternally we'll excavate, eventually I'll elevate. (2Mex 2001)*

*Decolonizing our minds then becomes an epic journey, as we travel through time and folding space: a journey where we join together the past, present and future all at the same moment. (Chi'XapKaid 2005)*

*The first time I ever heard of “La Raza Cosmica,” a title by the post científico philosopher Jose Vasconcelos was when I was a Dee Jay for KVCU Radio 1190am, broadcasting from the University of Colorado at Boulder.<sup>29</sup> I was one of their house Dee Jay’s for the Hip Hop show called “Basementalism.” As an award winning radio show, syndicated in Japan as well as, Poland, we made sure to play the newest underground Hip Hop coming out of the United States. One particular Saturday, I was listening to a new album release from East Los Aztlan (Los Angeles) artist 2Mex. His album was entitled “B Boys in Occupied Mexico,” and Chicanismo undeniably influenced half of the songs on the album.<sup>30</sup> One song in particular became the focus of a weeklong reflection and research journey; “Control Mexica,” which spoke used the term, “La Raza Cosmica.”*

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<sup>27</sup> Nican Tlachah is another Nahuatl term for Indigenous peoples, meaning, “from here.”

<sup>28</sup> “La Raza Cosmica, Mexica en Excellencia,” translates in English to “The Universal/Cosmic Race, Aztecs in Excellence.”

<sup>29</sup> Dee Jay- This is a Hip Hop interpretation of the word title. “DJ.” A Dee Jay is a disc jockey who “spins” Hip Hop music, as oppose to a DJ who plays everything else.

<sup>30</sup> Chicanismo is referring to all that is Chicana/o culture. The reason for using a “Ch” and a “c” in chicanismo instead of “X” and a “k” is because I am identifying a less Indigenous focused approach, but an approach that is located in cultural nationalism. When I use an “X” and a “k” I am identifying that which is Indigenous or coming from an Ixanchilaneah perspective.

*I searched endlessly for a historical description of “La Raza Cosmica” and where it was created. To me, it symbolized something that I never experienced when looking at Chicano culture. Identifying as Mexican, always seemed to have some sort of stigma to it, I saw it as an identity and way of life filled with hardship, drug use, gang and domestic violence. While reflecting on what it meant to be Mexican during my youth, it symbolized memories of my aunt picking me up with glasses covering her bruised and abused face, it meant brown girls and their legs, it meant sex, it meant my cousins covered in gang tattoos, as well as stereotypical images of “Aztec emperors and princesses.” It meant music, such as banda, ranchera, and corridos, which I did not understand because, unfortunately, I do not fluently speak Spanish.*

*For some reason, with this particular Hip Hop song, and this particular phrase, “La Raza Cosmica, Mexica en excellencia,” I began to show interest in my identity. With my skewed interpretation of Chicano and my skewed interpretation of Mexican, how could there be any type of thinking in terms of “La Raza Cosmica,” and at that, Mexican people who identify themselves as “the cosmic race,” or “the universal race?” Who on God’s green earth would identify themselves, by choice, as the descendants of Los Hijos de la Chingada? After all, was it not the work of so many first generation Mexican-Americans to be seen as equal to white people? You cannot become equal to white people when you’re identifying with poverty, or at least that was the ignorance of my rationale at the time.*

*It wasn’t until I came across Internet sources on Jose Vasconcelos and his book, La Raza Cosmica that I began reading about Mexican people being a mixture of four races. Vasconcelos explained, “we have the four stages and the four racial trunks: the Black, the Indian, the Mongol, and the White” (9). It was in Vasconcelos’ writing that I begin to see us from a location of strength, and I began to break away from misconceptions of what it meant to be Mexican.*

*Vancocelos argues, “how can we still accept the fiction, invented by our European fathers” (p. 8)? In my early stages of identity development, I realized that amongst “los hijos de la chingada,” a term coined by Octavio Paz to identify Mexican people, we are more than just “children of the bitch.”*

### **The Mestizaje Project: A Colonial Fallacy**

*It was the introduction to mestizaje that set in motion a re-awakening of my true identity. Or at least, it opened up the door to begin deconstructing false interpretations of my identity put in place by European colonial projects. From Vasconcelos, I knew that I was a mestizo or a Mexican with a mixed racial identity consisting of both Indigenous and Spanish bloodlines. I also knew that from both my father and mother’s side of the family I had a mestizo identity. My mother’s side of the family also identified with their Tiwa and Genizaro ancestry. For many years I was involved with Denver’s American Indian community, and identified only as American Indian at the time. However, from that point on, I had a new perspective of my Mexican identity, it was not Hispanic, it was not Latino, but it was Mexican, it was Mexican-American, and it could also be Chicano.*

*In the beginning of the fall semester of 2006, I began my career in higher education as an undergraduate student attending Metropolitan State College of Denver within the Political Science Department; I minored in Chicana/o Studies and Native American Studies. This move towards self-improvement led to me taking an Introduction to Chicana/o Studies course. The professor at the time, required us to read “Occupied America” by Rudolfo Acuña, “Youth, Identity, and Power,” by Carlos Muñoz Jr, and suggested that we participate in student groups on campus focusing on the local Chicana/o community.<sup>31</sup>*

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<sup>31</sup> Acuña’s “Occupied America” is a book that is banned from being used in the State of Arizona.



The first chapter in Acuña's "Occupied America," titled "Not Just Pyramids, Explorers, and Heroes," argued:

*Where historians begin their narrative often depends as much on what they know as on what they do not know. When we begin to seriously examine the corpus of knowledge that comprises Chicana/o Studies in the late 1960's, where we stand the story depended on the specialty of the historian. We were locked into periods such as U.S. or Mexican colonial, nineteenth century or the national period history. Frequently, non-historians interpreted the body of knowledge on Chicana/os through the eyes of our own disciplines. They sought important answers about what it means to be human, and attempted to make moral, spiritual, and intellectual sense of the world's complexity. But their theories and their conclusions were often flawed because they excluded the Mesoamerican past. (1)*

*Acuña follows up by stating, "We [Chicanos] are the inheritors of a world created by past cultures. Hence, this narrative begins with Mexico's Indigenous history" (1). Both Acuña pieces sent chills down my spine, and I started to realize that my Mexican identity was not all that different from my American Indian identity, and looking to Mexico's Indigenous "past" only reinforced what I recently learned through Vasconcelos' "La Raza Cosmica." I had more to learn, I had to experience, and most of all I had to understand why the Chicanos I knew never really spoke about their mixed race identity, but really identified with political ideologies such as marxism and anarchism, in addition to Mexican nationalism. Who were the actors in reviving the Chicano identity I began questioning?*

*At this point in the course we were reading "Youth, Power, and Identity," by Carlos Muñoz Jr. It was within his material that I was introduced to M.E.Ch.A. (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicana/o de Aztlan), a student organization who fought for educational rights of Chicana/os and Mexicana/os as a means for liberating Aztlan from the colonial powers (Munoz*

3).<sup>32</sup> *In my research I found that there was an M.E.Ch.A chapter on the Auraria Campus, and weekly meetings were held. I attended one of their weekly meetings and was introduced to a book, whose author was a Mechista out of Pueblo, Colorado.<sup>33</sup> The authors name was Kurly Tlapoyawa, and his book was titled, “We Will Rise: The Rebuilding of the Mexikah Nation. In a particular section of the book, Tlapoyawa argues that:*

*For many, the easiest way to deny our Native heritage is by claiming the title of mestizo – a Spanish word which literally translates as ‘something which is mixed.’ According to supporters of the term, Xikano – Mexicanos are an entirely new people, an amalgamation of various races and cultures. This, mestizo crowd assertions completely negates our Native traditions, heritage, and culture – making it impossible for us to identify ourselves as being Indigenous to this land. It should be noted that this line of thinking mirrors the colonialist/ racist views held by the Spanish and American occupiers of this land. (70)*

*After reading this, I began to understand the meaning of Foucault’s term “docile bodies” (Foucault 1974). Was the knowledge about my identity carefully arranged by colonial constructs?*

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<sup>32</sup> Aztlan, in Nahuatl means, “land of blue heron,” however, by many linguistic scholars there is much debate about its literal meaning. Within Xikan@- Nahuatl communities it identifies the southwestern United States as the starting point of the migration for Mexica (Aztec) peoples, from Chicomoztoc (Seven Caves) to Mexico-Tenochtitlan (present day Mexico City).

<sup>33</sup> The Acronym, M.E.Ch.A. (Movimiento Estudiantil Chican@ de Aztlan), is purposefully typed with the “Ch” having the “h” in lower case format. This includes the use of describing MEChA members as MEChistas.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE: IN HUEHUETLATOLLI<sup>34</sup>

The knowledge the wise men of tradition left behind was precious. These words were jewels: precious jades, turquoises, and quetzal feathers. (Knab & Sullivan 1994: 109)

Important to this research is Bryan McKinley Jones Brayboy's article, "Toward a Tribal Critical Race Theory in Education" published in 2005. As I begin to locate a Xikan@-Nahuatl identity, it is important that I simultaneously identify the general landscape of othered/ sub-altern Indigenous identities in the United States. I use three of the nine tenants in Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribalCrit) described by Brayboy as the criteria needed to identify marginalized Indigenous American communities. The reason being for such a strategy can be found in the understanding that politics and culture (traditional knowledge) are strong factors in defining Indigenous communities and identities. Furthermore, TribalCrit's emphasis on colonization and U.S. policies towards Indigenous communities will challenge justifications behind the negation of a due process for communities claiming Indigenous ties to a specific land base.

### **Colonization is Endemic to Society**

Brayboy notes, "the primary tenant of TribalCrit is the notion that colonization is endemic to society (430)." Moreover, Brayboy describes colonization as "European thought, knowledge, and power structures [that] dominate present-day society in the United States (430)." A correlation between colonization and identity is argued by Kanienkahaka and Tsa La Gi scholars Taiiiake Alfred and Jeff Corntassel as "shaped and lived in the politicized context of contemporary colonialism (597)."<sup>35</sup> Settler society's ability to deny various Indigenous peoples right to identify with their Indigeneity via elimination of historical and geographical connections

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<sup>34</sup> "In Huehuetlahtolli" translates into "The Word of the Elders;" an anahuacayotl epistemology

<sup>35</sup> Kanienkahaka- Mohawk; Tsa La Gi- Cherokee

to a specific land base is essential in the disfiguration of Indigenous Americans capacity to recognize traditional Ixachilancah identities versus state imposed identities (Alfred & Corntassel 598).<sup>36</sup>

A settler interpretation of self-determination and sovereignty supports the idea of “being Indigenous towards a political-legal construction (Alfred & Corntassel 599),” and eliminates traditional knowledge as a means of legitimacy for identification. Identities that fall short of becoming what Alfred and Corntassel name as “incidentally Indigenous” (599)<sup>37</sup> can be distinguished through a “fourth world analysis,” as discussed by Benard Neitschmann. He explains the process of nation states eliminating traditional identities:

All states attempt to erase the histories and the geographies of the peoples they occupy: New names for new state peoples are invented, new maps are made, and new histories written. These new “scripts” are then given to schools and media to re-educate the various groups, teaching them that they are now “one people” living in “one nation.” (228)

In 1519 Cortes, without support of the Spanish Governor of Cuba, left the island of Española for what is now known as Mexico (Wright 1992:17). From this voyage, Spanish invaders confront the Nahua world. Beginning with the Tlaxcaltecah and onto the Mexicah, Cortes and his men would begin to colonize (rape, murder, collect slaves, and infiltrate the political and spiritual systems of Indigenous Mexico) Anahuac.<sup>38</sup> Upon first meeting,

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<sup>36</sup> An Anahuac community that has countered the discrimination Alfred and Corntassel address are the Metis of Canada. In a legal battle lasting over a decade, the Canadian government was ordered to now begin recognition of 200,000 Metis and 400,000 non-status communities as “status” Indians. However, the next step in defining what exactly that means begins with mapping out the Canadian government’s fiduciary responsibility. While this seems to be a moment of success for Indigenous peoples in Canada, there are underlying concerns which also are the arguments by Xikan@s and Genizar@s. In the process of gaining recognition, and in the case of Xikan@s, would we lose further autonomy over lands and culture? For Genizar@s, is it in our best interest to now have lands in trust over our 500 year old land grants?

The loss of culture and autonomy, defined within our languages, is problematic. This is also the concerns of many Metis, “The president of the Manitoba Métis Federation said they are taking Tuesday’s ruling cautiously, and wanting to make it clear that the Métis identity will not be lost. We have to be very cautious about the decision because being classified or bundled together as just Indians, or the title Indians, you know categorized as one group ... we are our own nation,” said David Chartrand, who is also vice-president of the Métis National Council of Canada.

<sup>37</sup> Incidentally Indigenous means an identity based on relationships with settler governments acceptance of Indigenous nations or groups.

<sup>38</sup> Anahuac at the time of Indigenous contact with European settlers was the home of Nahuatl speaking peoples.

Tlapoyawa argues there are two different narratives to the encounter between Cortes and the Tlaxcaltecah:

There exist two conflicting accounts of the events which followed. One account claims that the Tlaxkaltekah saw the Spanish march on Tenochtitlan as an opportunity to get rid of their old enemies, and the Tlaxkaltekah wasted no time in offering their help to the strangers. A more believable account states that the Spaniards attacked the Tlaxkaltekah, sparking a pitched battle which lasted over two weeks. Outgunned by cannons, handguns, armor, and warhorses, the Tlaxkaltekah were forced to surrender. The Spanish then took the Tlaxkaltekah leaders and elders prisoner, and in following the Anawak rules of warfare, the Tlaxkaltekah were obligated to serve as warriors for the Spanish forces. (32)

*During one of our M.E.Ch.A meetings, a conversation arose that gave emphasis to the type of lateral violence displayed amongst Xikan@s and American Indians. It also demonstrated the misconception both groups have regarding each other historically, socially, politically, and racially. It is as if two different narratives created by outside settler interpretations antagonized the social dynamics of Indigenous communities.<sup>39</sup>*

*While working for Jeffco Indian Education, our Parent Advisory Committee (P.A.C.) consisted of many parents whose interaction between Indigenous Mexican Americans and Indigenous Mexicans was limited. For the most part, the P.A.C. committee members were the only brown representatives between Indigenous communities and settler society in their tribal communities. From their perspective, they were the brown families and individuals...rightfully so. Some of the committee members came straight from reservations in the Midwest and Northern Plains, and in that environment, from what I gather, at that time there was white society, and brown-Indian people.*

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<sup>39</sup> De-colonial scholar and Psychologist Frantz Fanon argued in his work, "The Wretched of the Earth," "when the colonist bourgeoisie realizes it is impossible to maintain its domination over the colonies it decides to wage a rearguard campaign in the fields of culture, values, and technology. etc" (9). For further reading on colonial antagonisms, Fanon has written extensively on the issue.

*Additionally, one of the P.A.C. members was attending school at Metropolitan State College of Denver with me and the other MEChistas on Auraria campus.<sup>40</sup> On a consistent basis this particular parent, while at Jeffco, would explain to me many situations where Chicano and Mexicano students were bullying the “Native” students. We looked into one particular incident and found out there were many dynamics playing out in this situation, such as ethnic relations, socio-economic relations, language barriers, and gang and neighborhood affiliations; in the end, violence was coming from “both sides.”*

*What stood out the most to me with this instance was the perpetual uses of colonial logics by two groups of the same racial background against each other, hence, lateral violence in the form of internal oppression. The parent who had originally brought this matter to my attention concluded that the Chicano and Mexican students were practicing the same violence that their Spanish ancestors had always inflicted against Indians in what is now the American Southwest. The parent stated, “the Spanish students are always picking on the Indian students.” The parent was trying to make a connection between Spanish conquistadores, Mexican- American and Mexican students being one in the same, philosophically, culturally, and more importantly, racially.*

*I responded to the parent's concern regarding "Spanish" students bullying the Native students, and I agreed that there are issues between both groups. However, in order to counter such tensions, if we can get students, parents, and other community members to recognize what they have in common, maybe it's possible to create a healthy collaborative relationship between both groups. I explained to the parent that the common factors between both groups are their racial, ethnic, and spiritual identities. While their nationality might be different, both groups*

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<sup>40</sup> Metropolitan State College of Denver has now been renamed, Metropolitan State University of Denver.

*maintain the same racial make-up, what we have in common is our Ixanchilancah identity.*

*Scholar George Hartley argues the only real borders dividing Indigenous communities North and South of the Rio Grande river is "accepting the legitimacy of the nation-state borders" (53).*

*Our racial make-up is no different than other Ixanchilancah communities in the Americas. While we as Xikan@s, Genizaros, and other sub-altern Ixanchilancah identities may grapple with concepts founded through colonialism, such as mestizaje, we are now beginning to see the same struggles for other Ixanchilancah (status and non-status) throughout North, Central, and South America; in regards to caste systems determining Ixanchilancah identity. This also impacts Indigenous communities with mixed-racial identities. Instead of recognizing the cultural practices and traditional identities within our communities we affirm racial criteria arranged by settler governments. Jack D. Forbes notes:*

*the terms mestizo and metis (as well as such comparable words as half-caste, half-breed, ladino, cholo, coyote, and so on) have been and are now frequently used in Anishinabe-waki (the Americas) to refer to a large number of people who are either of mixed European and Anishinabe (Native American) racial background. (178)*

*Our ethnic make-up, at its core, holds true to the same fundamental beliefs as most Ixanchilancah communities; assuming colonization has not completely infiltrated identity. Gregory Cajete, professor of Native American Studies at the University of New Mexico identified in his book, "Native Science: Natural Laws of Interdependence," key principles that make up Indigenous Knowledge (IK), or what he terms as Native Science (NS). The first tenant needed to define IK is stories of creation and emergence. In the moment of (re)-membering, a term and action defined by Dillard as to "put back together" (3), or "an act of piece-gathering, of collecting and assembling fragments of a larger whole" (4); I begin searching for our beginnings. Conceptualizing the meaning of the term Xikan@ does not begin with looking at one*

*particular story for all who share a Xikan@ identity, it requires the nemachtiani/ student to observe the various stories that form into one identity.*

*Enrique Maestas notes three different narratives aside from European (mostly Spanish) infiltration, which help create the foundational aspects Xikan@ racial and ethnic identity:*

*Based on the land tenure and oral tradition of Indigenous Mexican American/ [Xik]ana/os, it can be said their mixed ancestry comes from three primary sources:*

- 1. Indigenous nations historically tied to their ancestral homelands.*
- 2. Apache and affiliated nations that resisted Spanish colonial intervention, and*
- 3. Azteca and affiliated cultures that accompanied the Spanish colonies to the north. (xx)*

*Much like the Metis of Canada we come from various Indigenous nations, therefore our creation story, as a unified and organized Xikan@ nation is rooted in the colonization of Anahuac. Emma Perez, in her codex, “The Decolonial Imaginary: Writing Chicanas into History,” reflects on the realities of our identities in relation to settler interpretations and patriarchy’s infiltration in the shaping of Chicana knowledge. “As I attempt to take the ‘his’ out of the Chicana story, I am also aware that I am too marked with the history I have inherited. There is no pure, authentic, original history. There is only stories—many stories” (xv). Reflecting in terms of Xikan@ traditional stories, Perez is right; there is and will be no original history, we are not defined in balance with lineal or vertical histories because we are not from “there moving towards here,” and we are not in search of a vertical identity to claim power (Perez xv). We are a circle of families, relationships, similar stories not moving towards something, but coming back, coming back to here, where we are from... Nican (here.) Our story is not clean of dirt (discrepancies,) and will not fit the settler government’s criteria for*



*Indigeneity, why should it? Similar thinking is produced by Metis scholar David T. McNab regarding the Metis of the Northern United States and Canada:*

*They do not fit within the racist identity based on blood quantum theory of Canada and the United States, which is used all too often to officially “register” persons, families, and communities. Metis in Canada (and the United States by implication) base their multidimensional identities on languages, cultures, families, and communities. (68)*

*We are made out of this earth, we are brown, our stories do reflect giants, and tricksters, first man and first woman, kinship with stars, sky, rocks, and all living things, which is why you will not find a Xikan@ creation story in any book, but you will find it amongst the huehuetlatolli of our elders, and our children, in our skin, and in our blood; our DNA.*

*We have many creation stories I could write about to satisfy the critics of Xikan@ Indigenous identity, I can write about “In Chicuace Tonatiuh,” I could write about the” nahui tezcatlipocameh,<sup>41</sup>” I could write about our emergence from Chicomoztoc, and our migration from Aztlan to Mexico-Tenochtitlan. For many Xikan@s and Genizaros in New Mexico, we could tell our creation stories and their relationships to the lakes, caves, and mountains in Centro-Aztlan. However, that’s for us to know and share through totlahtol ihuan in xochitl in cuicatl, our word and the flower and the song. Instead I will share this story.*

### **In Tlachihualli in Huitzilyaotzin**

*A man sat on the hill one day with no water, no food, all alone, and he was praying to the creator to help him, help him create the world. He was alone and he so desperately wanted to belong, to belong to a family and share his life with someone. The first day the sun came to him and said, “pialli tlacatzin, tlen titlatoah moyollo, what does your heart say human? The man responded, tonaltzin, I am alone and scared, so I am praying to the giver of life Ipalnemohuani,*

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<sup>41</sup> Note to the reader: I briefly explained the story of nahui tezcatlipocameh, if listening.

*to give me a family. Tonatiuh, feeling sad for his relative tlacatzin, looked down upon him and hugged tlacatzin, and told him, “hermanotzin, be patient, and know you are never alone.”*

*Tlacatzin didn't understand and continued to pray to Ipalnemohuani for a family.*

*Later that day, tlacatzin became thirsty as Tonatiuh stayed close to him, a coyote appeared and noticed tlacatzin praying. Coyote asked tlacatzin, “pialli tlacatzin, tlen titlahtoah moyollo, what does your heart say human? Tlacatzin responded, “I pray for a family, someone to share my life with, someone to love.” Coyote said, “I can help you tlacatzin, you look thirsty, hungry, and tired, eat some berries, drink from this bowl of water, and sleep, and while you sleep I will give you the family you desire.” Tonatiuh, crowded up against tlacatzin and whispered in his ear, “tlacatzin, remember this is Huehuecoyotl, do not eat, drink, or sleep, continue to pray, teochihua, persevere, have fortitude, surely Ipalnemohuani, that who is near and far, Tloque Nahuaque will hear you. Tlacatzin continued to pray.*

*As Tonatiuh continued to hug tlacatzin, two spiders, Ome Tocameh came walking down the hill and saw tlacatzin praying. Ome tocameh paused and asked tlacatzin, “pialli tlacatzin, tlen titlatoah moyollo, hello tlacatzin, what does your heart say?” Tlacatzin responded, “pialli hueinanatzin, hello Grandma, I am praying for a family, someone to share my life with, someone to love.” Ome Tocameh responded to tlacatzin by saying, “Oh Nopiltzin, what a beautiful prayer, but its saddens me that you pray for such a thing, I can now see why Tonatiuh sits here to console you. Nopiltzin, I will pray for you on your journey.” Tonatiuh then whispered into the ear of tlacatzin, “Offer your grandmother food, the food that Huehuecoyotl left behind.” Tlacatzin did so and Ome Tocameh was grateful, she sat down beside Tonatiuh while tlacatzin continued to pray, Tonatiuh then told tlacatzin, “continue praying tlacatzin, teochihua, don't give up, Ipalnemohuani will see this and surely be pleased.*

*Tlacatzin grew even more hungry, thirsty and tired, but continued to pray. It was becoming closer to evening when a set of hummingbirds appeared and noticed tlacatzin, and they asked him, “cualli tonalli tlacatzin, tlen titlahtoah moyollo, good day tlacatzin, what does your heart say? Tlacatzin, struggling responded, I am praying to Ipalnemohuani, that who is near and far, Tloque Nahuaque, bring me a family, someone to share my life with, and love. The Huitzilmeh took note of the word of tlacatzin, and they stated, “tlacatzin, Ipalnemohuani, the giver of life, Tloque Nahuaque, that which near and far sent us to tell you, he is pleased with your devotion to prayer.” They paused for a little bit and then spoke again. “Tlacatzin, listen, put your ear to East, do you hear that noise?” Tlacatzin did as told and listened, he responded, “that noise is so beautiful,” and begun to cry. Huitzilmeh then told him, “Tlacatzin, then sing prayer songs, and continue to pray. In the yohualli, when metztli arises, when Coyolxauhqui has defeated Huitzilopotchli, and Tonatiuh leaves for Tonatichan, Tezcatlipoca will visit you, if he feels you are ready to listen, then in the morning, we the Huitzilmeh will come back and further instruct you.”*

*As night came to be, tlacatzin lay sad and alone, but never stopped praying. Ome Tocameh had gone on her way, and Tonatiuh had commitments to Cihuatlampa, which he had to follow through with. Tlacatzin was alone, and sad, and then all of a sudden heard something living walk his way. He could feel whatever this animal or thing was behind him, it was not scared, and it was big, it made the surrounding environment still, the presence of Yacameztli had disappeared. A voice then spoke to tlacatzin and said, “tlacatzin, cualli yohualli, tlen titlahtoah moyollo? Nitooca Tepeyollotzin, in Tezcatlipoca, in Yohualli Ehecatl, Tezcatlanextia Tezcatlipoca ihuan Moyocoyatzin. I have heard your prayers, and tomorrow the Huitzilmeh will visit you and they will show you on your path. Man cualli ohtli tlacatzin.”*

*The morning came and tlacatzin faced towards Tlahuiztlampa and greeted Quetzalcoatl with a prayer song, after he was finished with his song, Tonatiuh greeted tlacatzin, and he begun to pray, teochihua. In the afternoon, after drinking sage tea, during his prayer the Huitzilmeh visited tlacatzin again. They told him, “listen tlacatzin, put your ear to Huiztlampa.” He did so and he heard cuicameh, music, quetzalcuicameh, beautiful music; the Huitzilmeh told tlacatzin, “there are beautiful flowers down there, where the singing is coming from, you will find flowers.”*

*So tlacatzin said goodbye to Tonatiuh and he began his journey down the hill.<sup>42</sup> He followed the singing, and as he got closer he noticed the singing was in a different tone. It became laughter and happiness, and it was children playing. He finally made it down the hill; he looked around, and noticed he was in a village. The tlamatini in this village guided tlacatzin to the temazcalli and he waited to be introduced to the world that he prayed for. Finally, the time came for his calpulli to greet him. He met and shook the hands of the other humans’ Ipalnemohuani had created; it was this point in time that he felt as if he belonged. At the end of the line he noticed Quetzalcihuatzin, a beautiful woman and two beautiful children waiting to greet him, and it was at this point in time he knew he could share his life and love. Tlacatzin hugged his family and afterwards, in cihuatl, the women told him, “We missed you,” and the children of tlacatzin spoke to their father and said, “Tata, you always come back!” This is the creation story of notlalticpactli.*

Cajete’s second tenant required in identifying IK focuses on earth-centered paradigms. Our creation stories exemplify our connection to the land, and the epistemological roots connected to a specific location; ecological, political, and spiritual association. Cajete

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<sup>42</sup> It is said, when Tonatiuh left tlacatzin, he hugged him. If one was to look at tlacatzin, many would notice his sun burned body.

determines Native philosophy emphasizes the use of language as metaphor and relates human connections to natural world processes (72). Within the Nahuatl language this process is defined as “In xochitl, In cuicatl,” translated as, “Flor y Canto,” meaning the flower and the song.”

Miguel Leon Portilla, in *Aztec Thought and Culture* notes that Nahuatl language scholar Angel Maria Garibay recognized the use of the flower and song as a *difraismo*, a poetic interpretation of praxis. Cajete argues that language unifies us to the natural world and its use can be diverse as our natural environments (72). Furthermore, language as an intermediary between humans and the natural world begins to shape a picture reflective of the land that we live upon.

The story, *In Tlachihualli in Huitzilyaotzin* reproduces the elements needed to nurture an earth-centered paradigm. It locates the relationship between *tlacatzin* and community (land,) and argues that it was *Tonatiuh* the sun, who brought light or knowledge/wisdom and warmth as perseverance to *tlacatzin* in his darkest and coldest moments. *Tonatiuh* becomes the protector of life, while *Huehuecoyotl* is a relationship in which the moral values of *tlacatzin* are tested. *Huehuecoyotl* offers water, berries, and sleep, during the time of ceremonial prayer, which are given as offerings to the *teomeh* (spirits and antepasados,) but are not meant for personal consumption; to do so would be a lack of will power and character. Through consultation with *Tonatiuh*, *tlacatzin* deflects temptation and no longer pays attention to *Huehuecoyotl*. Cajete notes, “it must be emphasized that what we think and believe and how we act in the world impacts on literally everything” (73) Cajete further states, “ [Indigenous Knowledge] is about creating the inner sensibilities of humans, or the inner ear, which hears the subtle voice of nature” (73).

Another tenant of IK according to Cajete is the establishment of interdependency of social and ecological paradigms. It is the visit from grandmother spider named *Ome Tocameh*

who shows compassion towards tlacatzin and offers a prayer; this in turn requires tlacatzin to give the elder the food on his altar. Earlier choices made by tlacatzin to not eat the food on the altar reflect his ability to show compassion to other living things by offering his food. Not only is tlacatzin showing an Indigenous value of compassion, but he also is giving recognition to another living thing as being part of a community, a social network.

The actions of tlacatzin and Tonatiuh's council throughout the story reflects the principle of an interrelatedness to nature (Deloria, Jr. 52) what Leroy Little Bear describes as the "locus of social organization" or a "spider web of relations;" an interdependent consciousness where the extended family is at the center of one's intentions (79). Concurring, Vine Deloria Jr., describes the "moral universe," as a subjective experience that requires the actions of a participant to consider his community and emulate his environment (46), that is to say, one must "walk in beauty" (Mcpherson 2012). Amongst those who write with red and black ink, in tllilli, in tlapalli, the spiritual jurisprudence of a moral universe within the practice of mexicayotl, is tlamaniliztli, "the totality of things that should last" (Leon-Portilla 146), or, to stand to the left of Ometeotl, "nopochco, nitzcac nimitztlaliz" (Sullivan & Knab 223.)

Other key principles of Cajete focus on herbology and the concepts of holistic health, which is presented in the story of the Tlacatzin Huitzilyaotzin; the use of sage tea and sweating inside a temazcalli are protocols in the ceremonial practices of Xikan@ communities that maintain the use of curanderismo. Tribal and Indigenous education is a fifth principle in Cajete's determination of Indigenous Knowledge, and demands an ecological and philosophical approach to animal mythology. Tlacatzin interacts consistently with the animals, birds, and arachnids of his environment, from a coyote, who is the trickster, Huehuecoyotl, to grandmother spider, Ome Tocameh, and the hummingbird warriors, Huitzilyaomeh, Tlacatzin's story opens up dialogue for

students of mexicayotl to analyze the social interactions of the noted non-humans with humans. This type of education can be considered as “neitlamachiliztli,” or “the act of giving wisdom to the face” (Leon Portilla 115). Furthermore, to “have a face” is to practice an ecological ethic bonded by a Native cosmological introspective, concluding the principles of Indigenous Knowledge according to Gregory Cajete.

## THE CREATION OF A XIKAN@ RESEARCH METHOD: XIK@NEHNEMILIZOHTZIN

*Before I can understand what independence is, I must break the chains that imprison me in the present, impede my understanding of the past, and blind me to the future. (Maracle 40).*

*Cihuayotl scholar, Lee Maracle argues to, “whine about the destruction of our language and customs, without trying to come to grips with the reasons for the destruction, is pure mental laziness” (89). For many othered and sub-altern Ixanchilancah communities, we are conscious of the marginalization and elimination which has taken place. The question we must ask ourselves begins with, are we ready to create the change necessary for the survival of our traditional ways of being? That is, how do we strategically maintain our traditional knowledge while underlining the importance of gaining political and economic power on a global scale as autonomous nations, free from our colonizer?*

*Maracle notes, to “dress our enslavement in Native garb is useless” (89). Therefore, we must begin to redefine our position in society, and this requires us to “reclaim our essential selves” (Maracle 89). “Investigat[ing] our history,” is crucial in re-defining our relationship in Cemanahuac—the Indigenous world and settler society. Mindful to not perpetuate settler society ourselves we must be aware that if we are to participate in an educational system, or as Maracle labels it, a “processing plant,” we need to take control of how we study our histories and plan for our future. Likewise, we must not allow for settler society to define the methods in which we are perceived in academia. Through the development of Xikan@ methodologies we reserve the right to define our place within society today.*

*The purpose of this section is to define a possible guideline, a roadmap into maintaining control of our identities and our future within the educational institutions that ultimately dictates*



*how we are to be perceived in western societies business, social, and political fronts. This particular method is not the only approach to Xikan@ research methods, but gives a good example of how to apply Xikan@ Traditional Knowledge to mixed methods research, as well as Indigenous methodologies. This style of research, for many Xikan@ tlamatinime—scholars can become the first step in liberating themselves, so they may continue to build a clear pathway for future Xikan@ tlamatinime and calpultin. Maracle states:*

*In the process of trying to free ourselves, we will learn. Change must be the basis for education and cultural development. It begins with learning. Learning begins with objectifying our condition and the condition of our homeland. To learn 'how we are to live among them' does not mean that we should segregate ourselves from or subordinate ourselves to them. It means that we must build a new society based on the positive histories of both. A critical examination of settler society is in order. Likewise, a critical examination of our society is in order. (92)*

In New Mexico there are Indigenous communities who are identified as Genizaros. Yoeme/ Genizaro scholar Vivian Delgado identifies Genizaros as de-tribalized Kiowa, Comanche, Pawnee, Oto, Apache, Navajo, Pueblo, and Nahua children who were sold by other Natives, Spanish, Mexican, and American capturers into slavery for Southwestern ranchers and elites of Spanish, Mexican, and American descent (38). Many communities throughout New Mexico and Southern Colorado are the descendants of family members who were captured and sold into slavery. For example, the barrio of Analco in Santa Fe, New Mexico, during the Pueblo Revolt of 1680 housed Tlaxcaltecah (Nahuatl speaking) families who served the Spaniards and Governor of New Mexico (Lucero 1). When the Pueblo revolt began, the community of Analco aided Po'Pay and other Pueblo revolutionaries against the Spanish colonizers (Folsom 110-112).

Communities such as Analco exist in Albuquerque as well; the barrios of Atrisco, Los Padillas, Pajarito, Tome, and Belen all are historically Genizaro communities. In Northern New Mexico Abiquiu, Chimayo, Ojo Caliente, Ranchos de Taos, and parts of Las Vegas were and still are Genizaro communities. In Southern Colorado, many towns have community members who are also of Genizaro ancestry. Learning about this part of my identity, again leaves me to question the history of mestizaje, what was the lived experience of the people involved? What was the experience of women and children who became part of the Spanish caste systems in the late 1600's? What is the psychological impact on the self and the relationship to land when one is forcibly removed and de-tribalized? What are the effects of de-tribalization and other assimilation efforts of European colonizers on community identities? To be aware of our Indigenous ancestry, how does the identifiers of Mestiza/o or Hispanic impact our worldviews?

In Andrea Smith's book, "Conquest," Smith locates a "present absence in the U.S. colonial imagination, an 'absence' that reinforces at every turn the conviction that native peoples are indeed vanishing and that conquest of Native lands is justified" (9). Smith goes on to explain that settler attitudes position Indigenous bodies (particularly, Indigenous women) as "polluted with sexual sin" (10). "In the eyes of the colonizers, [Ixanchilancah] are marked by their sexual perversity" (Smith 10). Smith continues, "because Indian bodies are 'dirty,' they are considered sexually violable and 'rapable'" (10). As Indigenous women were raped and "voluntarily" married into Spanish, Mexican, and American households, a biological battle was in action. "Marrying" a European settler not only lowered membership of Indigenous communities, but it promised the eventual erasure of Indigenous bloodlines through giving birth to mix-raced (mestizo) children. The existence of Native communities lessened in the eyes of the colonizer and opened the door to "manifest destiny."

*For many Macehaulmeh women, if not through marriage, assimilation into European culture took place in boarding schools and the slave trade amongst Indigenous communities, Spain, Mexico, and the United States; promoting the elimination of their cihuayotl—identity as Indigenous women. Thus, giving birth to a Mestizo identity that would limit the survival of Indigenous culture and communities. Within my mother’s family we held the last names of Sandoval, Garcia, Romero, and Valencia. Those names are both familiar names within Tiwa communities in New Mexico, as well as, in the Hispano communities of Northern New Mexico. I want to know how these names came to be my family lineage, and how the historical process led to us becoming the community of Genizaros we are today.*

Chris Finley argues, “Native women need to be hetero-sexualized to justify conquest” (35). Is it possible that Indigenous women, against their will, took on the last name of a male Spaniard? By taking on the last name of the man, the argument they, by choice, married into Spanish bloodlines becomes legitimate and not an act of genocide. Finley goes further by describing the role of Native women in the United States with men of European descent, “housing” their children, and holding the seed to create a nation built on U.S. nationalism and patriarchy. When a child of mixed racial descent is born, the mother’s identity and her peoples Indigeneity is erased, and the child assumes the racial makeup of the man’s European ancestry (Finley 35). That child also becomes the inheritor of the land while his/her mother’s identity dies off and the settler becomes the new Native to the land, the settler also assumes that Ixanchilancah women submit to a hetero-normative standard of gender roles (Finley 36).

*How do I deconstruct these apparent colonization techniques in my family history? To begin, I will ask, “Who are Genizaros?” Genizaros are not entirely of mixed race identity, particularly that of Spaniard and Indian descent. They are of Native descent from ancestors who*

*were placed into servitude, and then eventually absorbed into Spanish culture, such as through “marriage.”*

According to Shawn Wilson, being able to discuss my ancestors and where I come from is part of Indigenous methodologies, particularly as a form of storytelling known as “relational context” (8). This allows me as the storyteller to be able to give the reader an experience which holds to what Wilson terms as “relational accountability” (98). Meaning, everything is related and the writer must take into account the stories and the paradigm’s connectedness to community (99). It is important for me to relate my personal background within this story; it gives the reader a more intimate experience of who I am and why I write in such a format. Identifying personal experience within a topic creates an understanding and a purpose, a connection, or a relation to the author’s specific topic choice; it becomes the author’s legitimizing characteristic. From an introduction, I am able to lay forth a fluid and culturally grounded beginning to a particular argument (Wilson 2008).

With the intent of Margaret Kovach to “counteract the heinous repetition of western research in indigenous communities... there is a need for methodologies that are inherently and wholly Indigenous” (13). Using an auto-ethnographic approach for documenting Ixanchilancah narratives and developing narratives in the form of Indigenous storywork, I employ an Indigenous method that exemplifies “models of inquiry that truly honor the complexities of memories” (237). D. Soyini Madison notes that auto-ethnography “seeks to enter surfaces, but, moreover, enters what is often hidden in plain sight—the convolutions and complications below the surface, the systems that generate and keep surfaces in place” (190). Exploring the narratives of Xikan@ identities means uncovering the politically rendered stories put in place by European colonial projects; it means deconstructing identity and politics.

Jo-Ann Archibald/ Q'um Q'um Xiiem notes “an Indigenous philosophical concept of holism refers to the interrelatedness between the intellectual, spiritual (metaphysical values and beliefs and the creator), emotional, and physical (body and behavior/action) realms to form a whole healthy person” (11). My approach to each theoretical framework coincides with the Nahui Ollin Teotl (Four Movement Energy/Spirit). The Nahui Ollin Teotl, according to Avila is an epistemological method that traces a lineage as far back as fifty-two generations (30). Its foundations are rooted within Mexico-Tenochtitlan and the tlamatinime—philosophers and teopixqui—healers of the pre-Columbian era (30). The Nahui Ollin Teotl can be arranged in a similar fashion to that of the medicine wheel. It contains each of the cardinal directions as well as the sky, Earth, and self; it is designed to maintain a healthy mind, heart, and liver (mind, body, and soul).<sup>43</sup> However, within this research, I focused only on the four cardinal directions; East, South, West, and North.<sup>44</sup>

### **Tlahuiztlampa- The Region of the Spine Light**

Within Tlahuiztlampa—region of spine light; knowledge, or the East, I give priority to Tribal Critical Race Theory, particularly for its emphasis on traditional storytelling. In Bryan Brayboy’s article, he suggests “stories are not separate from theory; they make up theory and are, therefore, real and legitimate sources of data and ways of being” (430). From my perspective, placing traditional stories and personal stories as legitimate sources of data in the region of spine light, where knowledge is acquired is an appropriate stratagem.

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<sup>43</sup> Among those who practice mexicayotl (everything that is Mexicah culture), your tonalli (mind), yollotl (heart), and ihiyotl (liver) make up what would be the equivalent to one’s mind, body, and soul.

<sup>44</sup> In Xikan@-Nahuatl communities, the cardinal directions begin with the east moving clockwise and ending with the north.

## **Huitztlampa- The region of the Hummingbird**

Looking towards Huiztlampa—region of the hummingbird; warriors and children, I put into action, critical theory. Critiquing colonial systems that impact communities of color, is an analysis Indigenous scholars cannot avoid. David Macey argues critical theory “seeks to explain why social agents accept or consent to systems of collective representations that do not serve their objective interest, but legitimate the existing power structure” (75). Macey explains critical theory as “a theory that provides a guide for human action, is inherently emancipatory, has a cognitive content, and unlike a scientific theory, is self-conscious” (75). As a spiritual people, it is important for Indigenous communities to take on the role of warriors, to protect elders, men, women, and children in our communities. Critical theory will provide tools necessary to protect our families, land, and culture.

*Huitztlampa, the region of the hummingbird, is a region known for identifying with the children. The teomeh which are identified with this region are Huitzilopochtli, Left Hand Hummingbird, and Xochiketzalli, or, Beautiful Flower. When facing this direction during prayer, I think about my son, Nimani.*

*It is very important to know why the Nahuatl name Nimani, or “I exist” was given to him. My boy is the first in my family to be free from slavery. Generations before him have always been confined by the chains of colonization, which include racism, poverty, and unhealthy lifestyles. I have made it my number one priority in life not to be held down by the shackles of the settler society. However, it is not with me that complete change will come.*

*I can only do so much in one lifetime. With Nimani, he will build a better future for our family and the generations after him. This does not mean that he must become a lawyer, a doctor, a president, or even rich. This means he will never have to experience the struggles of*

*family members before him, he will never look to alcohol the way my uncle did and it will not claim Nimani's life the way it claimed his. He will not beat his wife, or children like the men in my family have. Racism will not keep him from success; while it is inevitable that he will face racism. It is his healthy mind that will deflect such negativity.*

*He will learn how to read and write unlike family members who were less fortunate to earn an equitable education. He will not be a victim of crack cocaine like my cousins, aunts and uncles. And, he will most certainly not die to gang violence or end up in prison because of gang affiliations like my cousins. He will not hate himself because of the color of his skin, or because of his cultural background the way my cousin and myself did and still do till this day.*

*Nimani, holds within him the struggles that have plagued my family for at least 500 years, the only difference is, he will not manifest the hate, hurt, anger, depression, and suffering through gangs, violence, domestic, substance, emotional, physical, and sexual abuse the way my present family members and ones before me did. He will succeed and through him we will exist, my father and mother will exist, my grandfather and grandmother and great grandfathers and great grandmothers all the way back to 1492 will exist. His name holds our future as well as his own, and through him Macehualmeh exist. When people ask him, "who are you?" He will respond by saying, "Nehuatl nitoca Nimani, Nehuatl niMexicatl, nehuatl niXikan@, Nimani— My name is Nimani, I am Mexicah, I am Xikan@, I still exist." When his name is said, then, no person in my family will have been a slave, struggled, and died in vein. It is because of our boy Nimani, We exist!*

### **Cihuatlampa-The Region of Women**

In Cihuatlampa—region of women; letting go, or the West, cihuayotl or Indigenous feminist theory is an applicable framework. In of itself, cihuameh or Indigenous women have

always applied a form of TribalCrit and other critical theoretical approaches to their work. Scholarly analysis and critiques of colonial social constructs is substantial among Indigenous feminist scholars. Ka'waika tlamatini, Paula Gunn Allen points out, "a feminist will be able to see how the interpolations of patriarchal thinking distort all the relationships in the story and, by extension, how such impositions of patriarchy on gynocracy disorder harmonious social and spiritual relationships" (240).<sup>45</sup> Hetero-normativity can be seen within the Chicano Movement's initial interpretations of Anahuacayotl epistemologies and ontologies. The misappropriation of Meso-American culture and symbols to ensure a patriarchal hegemony over movement participants dismantled traditional gender roles embedded within mexicayotl (everything that is Mexicah culture). Therefore, it is important that we let go of the hetero-normative, national, and colonial approaches to mexicayotl and begin to immerse ourselves in the advice given to Xikan@ communities by cihuameh.

### **Mictlampa: Region of the Repose; Ancestors**

The final cardinal direction is Mictlampa—region of the dead; where our ancestors are located, and what settler society labels as the North. Queer Indigenous Theory will be the theoretical approach implemented to represent Mictlampa. Qwo-Li Driskill, Tsa La Gi scholar, points out "Two-Spirit Cherokees are critiquing Indigenous nationalist projects modeled after colonizing powers and offering alternative notions of Cherokee nationhood" (97). Looking to our ancestors and the traditional ways of living, including the revival of political, economic, social, and cultural epistemologies is the only direction Indigenous communities must head, if we are to survive. Among Queer Indigenous scholars, a foundation based on traditional knowledge of self, including gender and other forms of sexual identity are valuable in uprooting

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<sup>45</sup> Ka'Waika is the traditional Kersean term used for Laguna Pueblo.



colonialism and begin planting our traditional seeds. Mictlampa, the region of our antepasados, is where we shall look to find our freedom, and from there, with Queer Indigenous theory in the forefront, we can create a contemporary research approach based on traditional Xikan@ modes of thought allied with various critical studies locating at very least, what Kovach describes (and is exhibited in figure 1 at the end of the chapter) as mixed methodologies (35).

Through auto ethnography and storywork I can describe my interpretation of Xikan@ identities, which has been exemplified in previous chapters. However, I want to give the reader a chance to see how Macehualmeh identity plays out amongst other Xikan@s. This required me to interview various members of the Xikan@ community to give a clear definition of the importance of Macehualmeh identity. Additionally, it gives the reader a viewpoint of where I locate myself within the community's perspective of Ixanchila[nismo,] Macehuayotl, Anahuacayotl, Mexicayotl, y cultura de Genizaro.

An important note within the process of Xikan@ methodologies is technique. With this particular study, my intentions are to describe a new Indigenous focused methodological procedure to Xikan@ Indigenous Studies. In this moment, my main assignment is to define the steps needed to simulate my approach, and in order to do so, interviews had to be conducted. This study then becomes theory put into praxis.

I interviewed fifteen Ixachilancah living in the Denver –Boulder Metro area. All fifteen members were affiliated with the Denver Metro area's Xikan@ community, and participated in ceremonial practices identified with mexicayotl. Each of the fifteen participants also hold affiliation with Macehualmeh communities either in Canada, the United States, and Mexico. This means they either self-identified with a federal, state, or unrecognized community, alongside claiming membership with and participating in the Xikan@ community.

Xikan@ community members were notified of the study by email from the Calmecha Aztlan and Huitzilyaotzin list serves. Word of mouth notification (as a result of the list serve notifications) came from the Calpulli Chilchiltic Tlalli, or the Red Earth Clan of the Genizaro Affiliated Nations of Colorado and generated participants. This snowball effect allowed for three additional participants from Danza Azteca Grupo Tlaloc and one member of the Nahui Ollin ceremonial runs. Consequently, due to all forms of notification participants came from three ceremonial circles, Teocalli Tepeyollohtlan, Iglesia de Aztlan, and Genizaro Affiliated Nations.

Of the fifteen participants I selected five of the male interviews and three of the female interviews to spotlight within this research. The motives behind such selections are focused around the geographical location in which certain participants connect their identity too. This particular study is focused on Xikan@ identities within Aztlan, specifically within ColorAztlan (Colorado) and CentroAztlan (New Mexico.) Since geographical location is a factor in identifying Indigenous identities throughout the world, the same must apply for this study. While there are foundational similarities amongst many Xikan@ communities, there are also diverse geographical locations which create philosophical and spiritual differences. My intent is to highlight the identities of those who are themselves originally from the New Mexico and Colorado, but are also at the same time connected through their ancestors to Mexico.

Another factor in locating legitimate participants focused on interviewees who did identify their principal identity as Indigenous. This study was not created with the intentions of comparing the Hispanic and Latino communities to members of the Xikan@ community. This would locate the Xikan@ community on the same stage as settler society, which has been part of the colonial logics practiced towards othered and sub-altern Indigenous identities. The

importance of this study is to identify amongst othered and sub-altern Indigenous groups the Anahuacayotl characteristics shared with federally recognized tribal communities in the United States. Once again, it is important to note that comparing cultural and ethnic similarities is not for the purpose of gaining any federal status, but to counter western hierarchical social and political structuring within Ixanchilancayotl concepts of autonomy.

Each participant was given a Nahuatl alias so no actual identification of the interviewees could take place. Before the interview process took place, interviewees were notified that no monetary or any sort of material compensation would take place. Those interviewed were also given a written consent form explaining there would be no physical or economic stress by participating in the interview process.

*Amongst our calpulli, Chichiltic Tlalli, when we pray as a community we go into our totemazcaltin, our sweat houses; the ceremony itself is known as a temaliztli. The ceremony represents the growing of a corn stalk, from seed to a mature stalk of corn (as shown in diagram 2 on page 53)(Atecpatzin 2002). In a song booklet of Tzotzollin, written by David Atecpatzin Young, called "Mexikateokwikameh: Sacred Songs of the Aztecs," the first round of a temaliztli is called Xochiniltia, or the planting of the seed (2002). I picture it as teocinxinachtli, the corn seed's spirit. The usual protocol consists of singing six songs, in chicuace cuicameh. This is a time for the community to give an offering to the teomeh we have called upon to be present. We are planting a seed and must be aware of our intentions. Within this research ceremony, what has been offered to the teomeh are six questions from which the participants in the ceremony can then lay down their prayers (in the next round); their responses to the questions.*

*The next round is called tlaceliyac, or the round of struggle; it is here where toteochihua, we pray (Young 2002). If we have properly offered our gift of songs to our antepasados, to the*

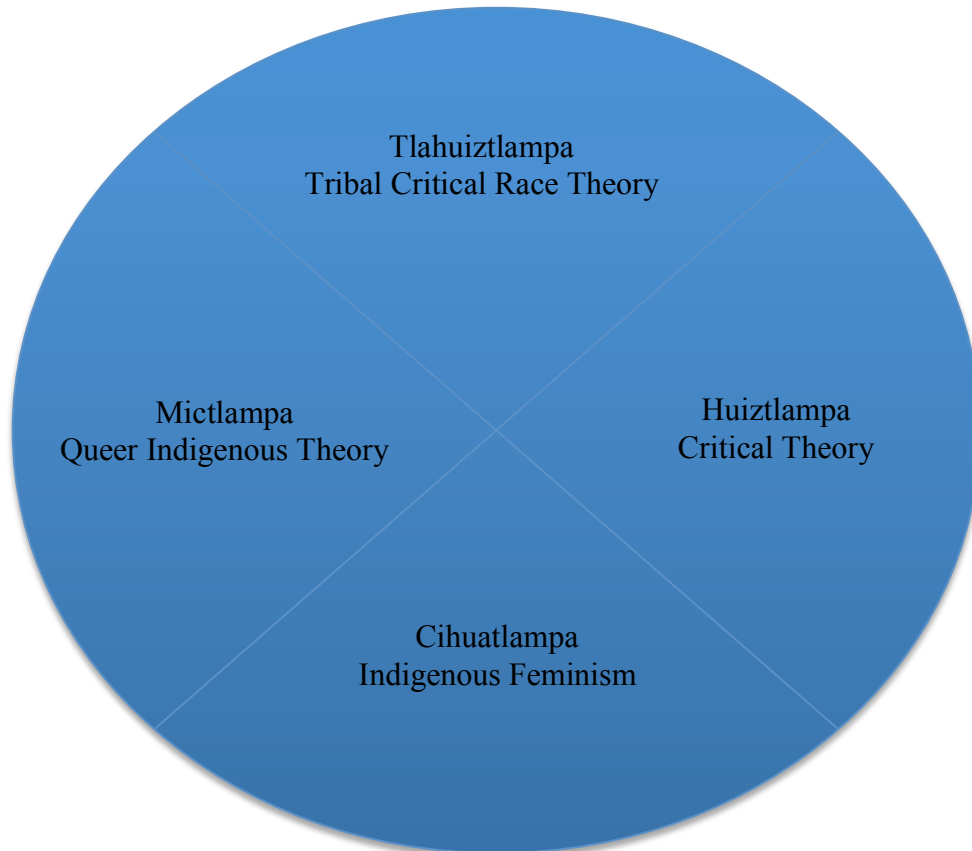
*teomeh, it will be at this point that our seed, our prayer will grow. In context with this ceremony, the round of struggle is the participant answering the research questions. That being said, this is a round of struggle, and in order for the teocinxinachtli to grow, similar to life, we have to overcome struggles and obstacles usually put in to place by our own doing.*

*The final round is called tlacueponi, the round of blossoming and thanksgiving (Young 2002). Within this round we sing thank you songs and give thanks for the teocinxinachtli which has gone from a seed planted in the ground to an ear of corn ready to sustain the lives of Ixanchilancah. To the research participants, tlacueponi represents the analysis of their responses and its ability to create an understanding of the lives Xikan@s represents daily.*

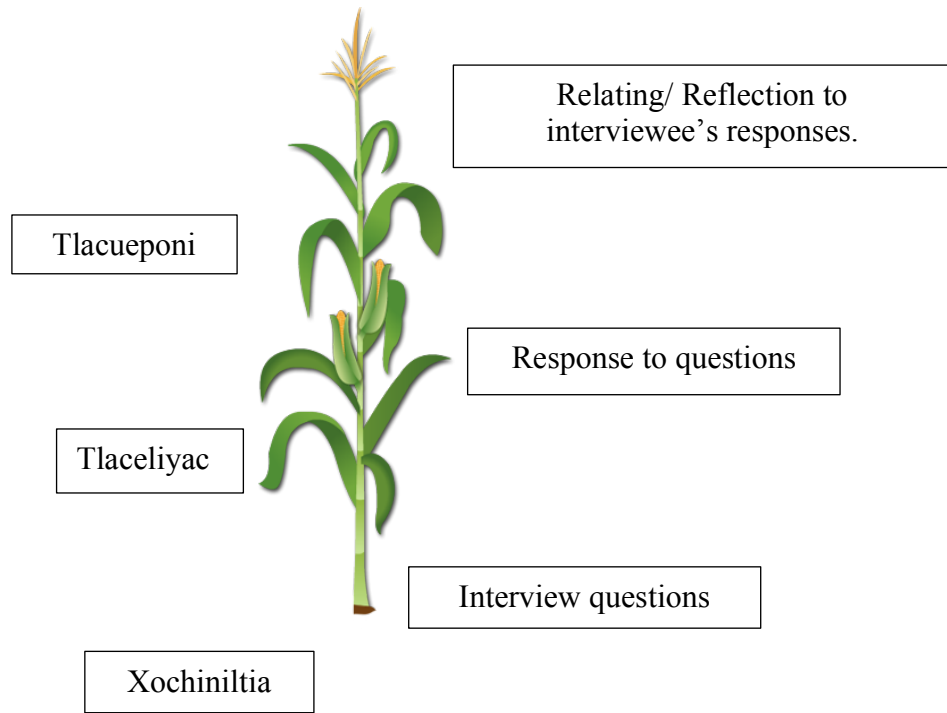
*It is important that I don't implicate the interviewee's prayers/responses to my questions as good, bad, or in agreement with my work. The teochihua tlatlahtolanmeh, or the prayers/questions of the interviewees should be respected and regarded as a conversation between themselves, Ometeotl, the antepasados and teomeh. Therefore, it is not our place to say what the outcome of their prayers should manifest. As noted earlier, the analysis of the interviews will be within the round of thanks, or tlacueponi, I have constructed a personal reflection of what I gathered from the interviews and the entire ceremony of research.*

*Ontologically speaking, the metaphor of a temalitztli is one approach to the practice of Anahuacayotl epistemologies within Xikan@ Indigenous Studies and in our calmecatzinmeh, our schools. Within each Xikan@ community throughout Anahuac, tlamatinime, or scholars can use the appropriate method reflecting their community in the interview process, or ceremony. Furthermore, the use of traditional knowledge, tlamachiliztli Xikan@ ihuan Macehualmeh, should be at the approval of community. It can be worth investing*

*time for women and matriarchs, elders and youth, and spiritual leaders to discuss the idea of tlamatinime formally earning palabra in terms of research.*



**Figure 1: Mixed Methods- Nahui Ollin Teotl and Critical Studies**



**Figure 2: Interview Process- Xik@nehnemilizohtzin**

**Xochiniltia: Planting the Seed**

*o Ce Cuicatl: What is your racial/ ethnic make-up?*

Juan Gomez Quinones argues that “social analysis of the Indigenous in the social sciences and humanities is overwhelmingly communicated in racial terms” (72). I often identify myself as a “brown” man, or we as “brown” people, but I am curious to know how this informs our sense of mexicayotl or xik@nismo. What are the points of reference for my community to identify their Indigenitude? Do Xikan@s recognize Ixanchilancayotl as racial or cultural identity, or both, and is it at the foundation of our identity?

*oo Ome Cuicameh: Explain the significance of identifying as Indigenous, Xikan@, Native, Mexican@, or American Indian?*

We are not Hispanic or Latino-these are terms used to describe white Europeans and their descendants. The terms Hispanic and Latino are deliberately promoted by the so called “United States” in order to destroy our Native history, heritage and culture. By calling ourselves Hispanic and Latino, we have been duped into thinking of ourselves as white Europeans and not Native people (Tlapoyawa 47).

Identifying the importance of naming ourselves as Indigenous, Ixanchilancah, Macehualmeh, Xikan@, Mexicah, or Mexican@ allows us to reclaim our Indigenous identities, meanwhile, still recognizing the unique position we have in Aztlan, Anahuac, and Ixachilan. We are not Hispanic or Latino; while many of our Macehualmeh stories due to colonial oppression are hidden within and identified by western scholars as part of mexicanidad, latinidad, and hispanidad we maintain traditional Macehualmeh identities rooted in the same geographical land base as many Macehualmeh who are recognized by the United States government as Indigenous communities. However, our fight is not for federal recognition, but it

is for recognition of our Macehualmeh identities, it is for our children to recognize who we are, for us to accept ourselves, and to look past the lies, and be able to look in the mirror with pride. We do look for confirmation of other Ixanchilancah groups, not to for status or power, but for healing.

*ooo Yei Cuicameh: What does it mean to be Indigenous to this continent? Are there political, social, or spiritual implications/ connections aligned with an Indigenous identity?*

Gomez-Quinones argues:

Space, like time, has more consciously constructed aspects for Indigenous than may be apparent at first glance. Space is not just terrain and distance, space is also history and memory; there is also the space of imagination. Space, in short, is contextualized, and spatial identifications are as varied as the people themselves (75).

The separation between settler society and Macehualmeh in our relationship to the land is within our history and our memory. Our creation and origin stories are rooted within the land. Our languages connect us to a specific place within Anahuac. The importance of our original place names for this land gives examples of the interconnectedness and interdependency we have with the land. For example, the name Aztlan, while politically was revived by Alurista during the first annual National Chicano Liberation Youth Conference in 1969, symbolizes more than just the politics of the time. It represents the memory of our beginnings in a land that was already in motion way before any Spanish, Mexican, or American settlers walked upon its ground.

To know that my relatives, my ancestors, regardless of tribal affiliation, prayed, ate, socialized, and loved on this land since its creation; this is the spiritual aspect of Aztlan. That is why it's spiritual, because now I remember the importance and the responsibility I have to maintain my identity, worldview, and cosmo vision of Aztlan; my children and their children, and their children depend upon it. All my living relatives depend on me to ensure Aztlan exist



for all future generations. It is within this awareness of my identity and its connection to the land that makes our ethnic identification political, social, and spiritual.

The political requires me to become educated in as many different formas that are available to me. Politicizing our identity means, we eat right and go back to our traditional diets, the seven warrior foods, chicome yaomeh tlacualli. It means exercising and making sure we have the strength mentally and physically to defend our land. Our identity is also very much socially defined, as we must continue to follow the traditional social structures that have been laid down for us since our antepasados walked across Aztlan.

We are a matrilineal people, and we must not forget the important role our women play in the survival of our identity. Furthermore, hetero-normativity has plagued our consciousness for a long time and we must break cycles of violence that not only harm the intended target of that violence, but we must also understand that it is our youth who are recipients of that violence through experiencing it with their mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, and aunts, uncles, and friends.

The spiritual connections are the re-emergence of our ceremonies and the importance of land within our spiritual practices. While I don't condone this practice, it is possible to mimic our ceremonies anywhere in the world. A German could design a temazcalli and hold a temaliztli within its structure, a Japanese community could set up camp and participate in a tlahyohuiliztli/netzahualiztli ceremony, and certainly people in Kenya could start up a grupo Danza Azteca, you might even find Conceheros in Canada, and Matachines in Hawaii, or even Maine. However, missing is the spiritual, political, and social connection to the land these practices come from. Each song we sing, each dance, and each breath used in order to speak our traditional languages is our medicine. It is filled with our intentions for survival of all living

things that call Anahuac and Aztlan home. Our ceremonial actions hold intentions, and they focus on a relationship based on renewal. It is the environment we are in that further validates and solidifies our focus and intention.

Have someone who is not Xikan@ pray in our language anywhere in the world using our cultural nuances, have another person pour for a temalitztli ceremony and I promise you it's not as strong as my prayer in Nahuatl in Chicomoztoc, Colhuacan, Copala, Analco, or Atlixco; not because they are any less of a person, but our prayers are rooted in our land and so is our intentions. You can't hold Teonezahualiztli in Richmond, Virginia, it can only be mimicked.

*oooo Nahui cuicameh: Would it be inaccurate for Xikan@s to identify as American Indian politically or racially? Explain?*

There is no need to ensure ourselves that we have the right to identify as Ixanchilancah, Macehualmeh, or Mexicah, but what are the consequences of us not taking action in identifying as American Indian? Politically, it seems as if it would actual be a loss of power to go from Latinos or Hispanics to American Indian in the American political environment. However, we have to remember, we are not looking for political leverage so we can then manage an imperialist nation, which would also require completing the assimilation process, as well as handing over our Ixanchilancah identities for a Hispanic or Latino identity; that I am not willing to do.

However, there is the chance of destabilizing an already unstable political environment in Indian Country, that being said, I am not willing to do this also. If we were to identify as American Indians as oppose to Indigenous Americans, what are the implications?

*\_\_\_ Macuil Cuicameh: Can Xikan@s have a unique Indigenous identity, separate from that of American Indians?*

Instead of destabilizing Indian Country claiming American Indian identity, why not create a new door that reflects all the realities of Xik@nismo. Can we begin to look at Ixanchilancah identities as a growing landscape? As times change, identities grow, so why can't Ixanchilancah identity grow? If we are to look at Ixanchilancayotl within a spiritual landscape, we understand that world is in constant flux, forever changing in chaos. It is not to our advantage to try and change nature, but to work with it and mold our realities in a way that applies our needs while maintaining balance. There is no reason why we have to dip into American Indian communities political gains via self-determination, but we can maintain our own histories and political leverage as Ixanchilancah, Machehualtin, and Xikan@s. The important identity in this conversation is the recognition of Ixanchilancayotl, not the label of American Indian.

The argument will be made that with an American Indian identity there are certain privileges granted to those who claim, and, are recognized. My response is, no... No there is not. The fight for recognition is a fight for sovereignty, a battle between those who participate within an un-balanced battlefield. Our fight is a fight for recognition, not by western governments, but from our peers and our relatives, from there, one day we can then begin to discuss autonomy. For now, we need our Ixanchilancah community, and their support, so we can reclaim our Mecehualyotl.

*o Chicuace Cuicameh: Does Mestizaje impact Xikan@ Indigenous identity, and how?*

As Xikan@s we have to hold Chicana/o Studies accountable, we have to understand, as tlamatinime (researcher-scholars) and as students of our field; we stand amongst other disciplines that require a trans-national lens. Therefore, we must reflect on issues that impact trans-national Indigenous identities, and create a dialogue around the relationship Xikan@s have with other

Ixanchilancah. This means, recognizing we live in an environment which our actions impact other Ixanchilancah.

In comparison to Metis identity alongside many other[ed] Ixanchilancah identities Xikan@ Indigenous Studies and research must define a similar approach to what McNab defines as “Metis history in the twenty-first century” (77). McNab states, “it will be interdisciplinary, international, and transnational, leading to, and being part of, a new hemispheric and transnational approach based on Metis knowledge and thought” (77). A Xikan@ Indigenous Knowledge (XIK) approach to research, in xikanehnemilizohtzin—Xikan@ methodologies, is a foundation for tlamatinime to begin building a “sixth sun” philosophy to Chicana/o Studies; Xikan@ Indigenous Studies.

If we evaluate the role of Chicana/o Studies within Indigenous Studies, we will have to note that it has become irrelevant. Chicana/o Studies has now become seduced by the relationship Latinidad and Hispanidad has with settler society notions of equality rather than decolonial strategies. Chicana/o Studies must critically analyze what impact reformist scholarship has on liberation of our future generations. For Xikan@s, we must either re-define Chicana/o Studies or separate ourselves from this particular arena.

A conversation of reclaiming Xikan@ Studies must start by redefining our relationship to “post-colonial” theories such as hybridity, or mestizaje. From a trans-national perspective, mestizaje has been the justification for the elimination of Ixanchilancah identity and life, so much so that we as Macehualmeh and Xikan@s must re-evaluate its value among Xikan@ Studies scholarship as a foundational theory behind our identity. Meaning, we as Xikan@ Indigenous Studies scholars know mestizaje was a process of racial mixing which took place in Anahuac for good and for bad, we must accept this reality, but we don’t have to perpetuate the

process! We don't have to submit to the idea that mestizaje and la raza cosmica was in our best interest, and the conquistadores and cihuameh fell in love at first sight. In fact, it is our responsibility to write and analyze how such colonial processes have impacted our community, and what we can do to counter it impact on Ixanchilancah communities today.

### **Tlaceliyac: The Round of Struggle**

Most of the people interviewed identified themselves as Indigenous to the Americas. Chipahuatzin, however, noted that "I identify as an Indigenous man. The racial part is very much like a construct." Oquichtli de Zapatazin explained that his identity was informed by community leaders such as Corky "Rudolfo" Gonzales, and he made a conscious effort not to enroll in his principal tribe due to the politics and racial identity it perpetuated:

I identify as Chicano-Indio. Yo Soy Jouquin helped me to first identify with Indigenous, it was a name not given to us but we accepted. When whites loved us we were Spanish, when whites hated us we were Mexicans. We identified as Chicano. In the early 70's I made conscious decision not to tribally enroll. I always saw it as genocide. I'm 60 years old and still struggle with identity; what about today's youth? It's a question of making it with no identity at all or a general identity. General identities always get lost in the confusion.

All the participants had more than one identifier; however, all the identifiers were connected to each other. Cihuaotomitzin identified with a specific tribal identity alongside a Xikan@ identity. When asked how she identified she noted, "Otomi, Yoeme, Mexicana, and Xikan@-Indigena." Totoyollotzin responded by proclaiming she is Xikan@-Native American, Mexicano, and "inhabitant of Turtle Island." Tizoc, like many Xikan@s, identified as "Xikan@ and Mexica." Ome Maitzin reminisced about his grandmother's interpretation of his family's identity. Not only did she recognize their Macehualmeh identity, but Ome Maitzin explained she subconsciously made a correlation between "Azteca" and a political consciousness:

[My]Grandmother always said we were Aztec. It is a pan Indigenous identity before conquest. People would identify Azteca as a political identification during the Mexica empire-it is a national identity. We practiced the native language of Nahuatl, knowing we were Mexican and lived the Indigenous Mexican culture. We had a profound identity as Mexican and Aztec. Going to school is when western interpretations of Hispanic came about. In the 60's I became politically and ethnically Chicano. I liked the term Chicano because it allowed for me to go into my cultural space.

All of the participants in the study agreed the meaning behind Indigenous identifiers was correlative to a kinship with a specific land base. Cihuaotomitzin notes alongside identifying as a Xikan@ she also identifies as a Mexicana, and both identities at their root “assert a heritage tied to this continent.” Ilatonelitzin explained his identity Xikan@, Native, and Indigenous tied him to the Xikan@-Nahuatl word, Ixanchilancah, revealing he is Indigenous to the western hemisphere:

I am not foreign to this land; I am connected to Native peoples across borders. It's a political stance, saying that we belong here. It represents dignity and self-determination, maintaining culture and language, reclamation [of] what has been lost due to colonization. It represents social, spiritual, and recognition of migration. It's a responsibility and means to identifying with other Indigenous groups.

Both Xochitlanetzin and Totoyollotzin reflected on Xikan@ identity and its connection to this continent as a reflection of the Chicano movement and liberation. Tizoc explains an Ixanchilancah and Xikan@ identity means “there is a connection to this land,” He also stresses that it's about “learning about the connection to sacred sites.” Chipahuatzin adds:

As far as being Indigenous to this continent, what it means is that environmentally, that Indigenous identity is focused by the area around you. By how the mother preaches to you, whether it is in the high mountains the deserts, or the wet area. The grandmothers and grandfathers taught us in that way to use what was that around us, so that is what makes us unique to this continent; just like the Aborigines in Australia have their own way, they are most

definitely Indigenous, and that has been in part formed by the environment around them. So it does have to play with your geographical regions as well.

Concerning Xikan@s identifying as American Indian most of the participants directed their answer toward a hemispheric approach to *Ixanchilancayotl*. From most responses the interviewees were hesitant to take on an American Indian identity, but open to an approach that did not focus on a national identity tied to the United States. I feel the reason behind evading the label of American Indian is the recognition of being American Indian in the United States still maintains a sense of nationalism directed in favor of the nation-state. An example of the said thinking comes from Xochitlanetzin, she explains that “everything is political; there are responsibilities that come politically with American Indian identity.”

For Xochitlanetzin, her concern with the responsibilities of an American Indian identity, alongside being political, was the concern of appropriation. For her, American Indian identity is “not our political experience.” However, she does not deny Xikan@ identity being a Macehualmeh identity. “We do have a unique indigenous identity. It still honors who we are and [its] not trying to fit American Indian identities.” Additionally, she notes that “we will never fit an American Indian identity in how it’s viewed, constructed, and maintained. Many of us don’t have that identity.” She pauses and then concludes, “there are more variables in there that we have to consider than just American Indian.” With most participants, trans-national Indigenous identities also factored into the questions, the response of Tizoc exemplified this. “There are tribes that cross international borders.” He noted that most Xikan@s are mixed with Indigenous Mexican identities.

Oquichtli de Zapatatzin argues against Xikan@s identifying as American Indian because “American Indian means you have to embrace state criteria, a colonial construct...genocide.” He

argues “Its ok for white people to be Cherokee but not ok for Mexicans to be Apache?”

Furthermore, Oquichtli de Zapatatzin explains “the problem with identifying as American Indian is you having to fit into the recognized identities, but we don’t usually fit into that bill.” It is important to understand why we don’t “fit into that [American Indian] bill.” Not because we are racially less Native, but due to the different historical and political colonial experiences, we Xikan@s, are automatically eliminated from being identified as Indigenous to North America. Simply explained, there are political and economic ramifications that Americans, both American Indian and settler society, are not ready to confront.

Zapatatzin noted that due to colonization our identities have been forgotten over time, and for some they have been stolen. The Chicano Movement allowed for many Chicana/os to gain strength and publicly announce our Indigeneity. Many Chicana/os have been deprived of a sense of Indigeneity resulting of the loss of our elders and the traditional knowledge they applied and carried. Many of our tribal identities are located in both the United States and Mexico, and for some, the reclamation of Indigeneity could only be accessed through American Indian allies from the American Indian Movement. Collaborative efforts to gain social justice within our communities in the seventies fostered relationships from which Chicana/os could begin to rebuild a frame of reference around Indigeneity. This does not mean that we now claim other Ixanchilaneah spiritual practices as our own, but at one point in the effort to decolonize we looked to our relatives for help, and this is how it was applied. When asked about Xikan@s adoption of other Native communities’ spiritual practices and the appropriation of spiritual identity, Oquichtli de Zapatatzin explained:

The only way we appropriate identity is by going outside and participating in something. Politically, we are Chicanos, historically, we have our own histories. We have identities that transcend geo political borders. When you keep identity separate,



we are developing our own identities of who we are. We don't need a card. We are not walking the road as Apache, as Lakota, as Cheyenne, we are walking this road as a human being- la raza; Raza, meaning the people. It's not about American Indian or Indigenous, but about eliminating oppression of the people, so empires cannot appropriate resources.

Ome Maitzin has a similar stance on identifying as American Indian and Xikan@s having a unique Indigenous identity. However, he argues that we also can identify as American Indian as well:

It is appropriate if your identifying with Indigenous identity as a oppose to a nationalist identity of Mexican or Hispanic. We have to look at historical trauma and how that plays into identification. It depends on terminology. When the colonial system defines who Indian is, it is using a specific worldview. Chicanos empowered ourselves, El Plan de Aztlan means self-determination. I stay within the Indigenous scheme and language is an issue. When we accept our communities culturally and spiritually, then we are practicing a true form of Indigeneity. Is it appropriate to identify as American Indian? Yes. Do registered Natives accept us? No.

The response to the final question regarding the impact of mestizaje was much different than I expected. It seems that participant opinions on mestizaje were open to a mestizo identity, and they found a way to still reclaim Ixanchilancah identities while still preserving a Chicana/o Studies lens. This perspective looks at the mestizaje process as a positive motion towards liberation as oppose to a colonial tool used to oppress Ixanchilancah communities. An exception came from Itlatonelitzin, who weighed heavy on mestizaje. He argues:

It is a way to homogenize everybody and it has been used as a tool to oppress in Mexico. For Chicanos they used it towards liberation, however, this is a new day, and it can be looked at as a myth. It does not apply to Xikan@s. Identifying with colonizer can be problematic, not all Mexicans can fit into the mestizaje concept. It does not fit a Xikan@ objective. It is not about mestizaje, but reclamation of Indigenous identities.

Ome Maitzin begins with a similar tone as that of Itlatonelitzin, but then shifts his viewpoint in

favor of mestizaje as a beginning towards recovering Ixanchilancah identity:

Mestizo culture in us is a fantasy culture. Problems of mestizo identity are real because it becomes a barrier for Xikan@s. However, for young blind Chicanos, mestizo identification from a Chicano definition (an Indigenous mestizo) is a beginning. Mestizo is much better than Latino, Hispanic, or nothing, because at least they're in our house, our calli. Identity can be a form of privilege.

Oquichtli de Zapatatzin takes a similar approach as Ome Maitzin:

Mestizo is a first good step to re identifying with identity, but that then needs to go on the shelf once we become reacquainted with identity. On the other side, we are not all Aztec, but we are from many various tribes of Mexico and the southwest. It's more important to understand our original identity than make up identities.

Tizoc concludes:

It's better to accept your identity. I'm a Conchero of the peyote way. The Conchero tradition is good example of how mestizaje is a positive on Xikan@ identity. Walking the middle road is healthy.

## TLACUEPONI: TLAZOCAMATI HUEL MIAC-GIVING THANKS

*How many, already, have been condemned to premature deaths for having borrowed the master's tools and thereby played into his hands. (Ha 1987: 79).*

*Within Mexikah and Xikan@ communities there is a saying from cihua mexikanista Izkalotzin passed on “In Mexikayoyeliztli Aik Ixpoliuz” (Tlapoyawa 197). Meaning, “that which is Mexikah culture can never be lost.” It is with our everyday interactions in the Western world that we somehow find the missing pieces of the puzzle. Cynthia B. Dillard states that in the process of decolonization we have to “remember the things we learned to forget” (230). For myself, as a Xikan@-Nahuatl man, I must look to nocencaltin—my family to see where we come from. It is here that I draw my strength, here that I have come to understand the complexity of how our antepasados have been portrayed, and it is here that I have uncovered our story.*

*I remember when I was growing up in Albuquerque's, South Valley, my Hueinana—grandmother and I would walk back home from the Smith's grocery store, and as we followed the arroyo, Nana would tell me, “you have to be careful when you walk by the arroyos, because there is a women who has lost her children, and she is longing for them to come back home, and if you're not careful, she will take you. At night time when you are going to bed, listen carefully, and you will hear her crying.” As I grew up I knew this story to be that of “La Llorona,” and as I went through my schooling, I learned that this was one of many “Hispanic” stories told by grandmothers to their grandchildren from Mexico City all the way to Minneapolis, Minnesota. This story would not have that profound of an impact on me until my undergraduate career began in the Chicana/o Studies Program at Metropolitan State College of Denver.*

*It wasn't until I met Xikan@ community members in Denver who spoke about how our Xikan@ identity as a step towards remembering what many tried to have us forget. Many old school Chicanos told me, "you will be told you are Hispanic, Gringos will tell you that you are Latino, and they will tell you our stories are Hispanic folk tales. Go back home, ask your relatives, ask your grandmother, your elders, where these stories come from!"*

*Dillard notes, "our memories are based in a sense of connective and collective time from which we both re-cognize our identities and from which we can trans-form those identities" (235). As I begun to question my identity, my grandmothers told me, "hito, somos Indigena!" I now awaken to the reality of these stories, and I re-interpret my Grandmother's conversation. "La Llorona is the story of Cihuacoatl—Snake Woman, she is crying for you to come back home to La Gran Tenochtitlan and back home to Aztlan, she wants all of her children to come home. Xi hualla tehuantin tichanti in Mexico-Tenochtitlan (We all come home to Mexico-Tenochtitlan). Cihuacoatl cried right before Hernan Cortes y los Conquistadores arrived at Lake Texcoco, she was crying for us, she was crying because she was going to lose her children, she has been crying ever since, and now she cries because she wants her children back, she lost her children, and she wants them back."*

*As I heard each of nohueinanameh—my grandmothers speak about our stories, I realized they were not speaking in Spanish anymore, I realized that what I was told was Spanish was really Nahuatl, my grandmothers would repeat "somos Indigena, somos Indigena" and now, as they keep repeating, it goes from "somos Indigena" to "Tehuan ti Mexikah, tehuan ti Macehualmeh, tehuan ti Nican Tlacah!" As I begin to remember my original identity, I start to remember the things notata-my father told me about how to live, how to survive. He would say "we are Indians, we are Indians from Mexico." What I forgot soon begins to come back to me.*

*For instance, my father and I going to Bernalillo to watch Mexikah Mitotiliztli—Danza Azteca, or ca icniuh notatzin—my father’s friends from Ka’waika—Laguna Pueblo and Tuf Shurn Tia—Sandia Pueblo explaining to me how Mexikah and Pueblo people were related.<sup>46</sup> All these conversations never meant anything to me as a young boy and in my teenage years; the cultural nuances and stories still meant nothing to me in my early twenties, I ignored their value, I ignored myself, and I got sick.*

*Dillard argues, “I am because we are” (234). It was only when I tried to find my way home, find my way back to Aztlan ihuan Cihuacoatl that I began to remember Hueinana’s stories. Conquest and Colonization took a lot from us, but it can never take away my memory, my historical memory. Now, as my wife makes etl—beans, tlaxcalcintin—corn tortillas, Chilli ihuan pozolli—posole, and we sit down and pray, “Cenca tlazokamati huel miac totatzin, cenca tlazokamati huel miac tonantzin tlalli coatlicue...” I look at my boys and think, “there are just some things they can never take from us, and there are some things we must never forget.”*

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<sup>46</sup> See the Pueblo of Sandia website (<http://www.sandiapueblo.nsn.us/>) for further information.

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## APPENDIX I

### Interview Questions

1. What is your racial/ ethnic make-up?
2. Explain the significance of identifying as Indigenous, Xikan@, Native, Mexican@, or American Indian etc?
3. What does it mean to be Indigenous to this continent? Is there a political, social, or spiritual implication/ connection that come with an Indigenous identity?
4. Would it be inaccurate for Xikan@s to identify as American Indian politically or racially? Explain?
5. Can Xikan@s have a unique Indigenous identity, separate from that of American Indians?
6. Does Mestizaje impact Xikan@ Indigenous identity, and how?