“Tséyi’ first, because Navajo language was here before contact”: On intercultural performances, metasemiotic stereotypes, and the dynamics of place

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Abstract

This article analyzes portions of an intercultural performance by Navajo poet Laura Tohe to a non-Navajo audience in rural Illinois. By analyzing Tohe’s metalinguistic commentaries about the use of Navajo, as well as her actual uses of Navajo in her performance, it is argued that Tohe presents a metasemiotic stereotype of Navajo language users. In performing such stereotypic displays, Tohe also indexes her own Navajo identity and becomes iconic of such an identity. Paying close attention to the uses of Navajo language place-names also reveals the ways that Tohe connects her performance with larger concerns about Navajo claims to place and language shift.

Keywords: Navajo; poetry; intercultural performance; metasemiotic stereotypes; place names; phonological iconicity.

1. Introduction

In this paper, I analyze portions of an intercultural performance by Navajo poet Laura Tohe to a non-Navajo audience in rural Illinois. By analyzing Tohe’s metalinguistic commentaries about the use of Navajo, as well as her actual uses of Navajo in her performance, I argue that Tohe presents a metasemiotic stereotype of Navajo language users (Agha 1998, 2007). In performing such stereotypic displays, Tohe also indexes her own Navajo identity and becomes iconic of such an identity. Paying close attention to the uses of Navajo language place names also reveals the ways that Tohe connects her performance with larger concerns about Navajo claims to place and language shift.

After laying the intellectual and contextual groundwork, I discuss how she introduces herself to the audience in Illinois. Then, following the order
of her performance, I describe how she connects the Navajo language with the Navajo code-talkers and with the current language shift occurring on the Navajo Nation. I then turn to the ways that she uses Navajo place names and to her discussion of these place names. Fourth, I discuss the links she makes to learning to become literate in Navajo. Finally, I examine her discussion of the felt attachments and the poetry that adheres to Navajo forms. Each point is also implicated in the other points as well. I turn to this in the final section.

This paper is also a contribution to the discourse-centered approach to language and culture (Sherzer 1987; Urban 1991). In focusing on a single discursive event and the ways that it interconnects outwardly (both to the Navajo Nation and to more global concerns), I argue that we can begin to see how Native American intercultural performers lay the groundwork for future encounters with outsiders. That is, how do Navajos and Native Americans more generally, create links between themselves and non-Native Americans about issues of import both locally and globally? It also should remind us, that while Native American poetry is sometimes superficially valued for its aesthetic qualities, icons of quaint Indian-ness or New Age spirituality, political claims to place are often essential to understanding both Navajo poetry in particular and Indigenous intercultural performances more generally.

2. Indexing identity in intercultural performances

The performance was given on 9 October 2006 in Carbondale, Illinois, as a part of the Indigenous Peoples’ Day celebration. Besides Laura Tohe there were no other Navajos in the audience. Yet, this performance has a number of uses of Navajo language. Such uses of Navajo can be understood as “emblematic identity displays” in the sense of Michael Silverstein (2003a). As Silverstein explains:

It is important to realize that the key identity-relevant attributes of such cultural texts are not necessarily anything like represented “content” as such, but rather all the verbal and nonverbal signs that, displayed by and around the self, in effect wrap social personae, social spaces, moments in the social-organizational time, even institutional forms, with “in-group” (versus “out-group,” of course) status. (Silverstein 2003a: 538)

In a recent article Jocelyn Ahlers (2006: 62) has insightfully described non-fluent Native Americans in California use of a speech style she terms Native Language as Identity Marker (NLIM). Ahlers (2006) discusses how
non-fluent Native American speakers’ displays of Native language use — formulaic displays at that — come to formulate a shared Native American identity. The forms are spoken in the speakers “heritage language” by non-fluent speaker, to an audience often committed to learning their own heritage languages (which may be different than the speakers; Ahlers 2006: 65). As Ahlers points out, “neither the speaker nor the audience can be assumed to have a native, or even a working knowledge of the language used” (2006: 65). They act as emblems of identity. Such uses also create a “Native discourse space” (Ahlers 2006: 71), so that what follows in English is recognized as “coming from a Native perspective” (Ahlers 2006: 72) to a Native audience.

In Carbondale, on the other hand, we had an “intercultural” performance more akin to the discussions by Julie Cruikshank (1997), Fred Myers (1991, 1994) and Laura Graham’s (2002) discussions. Cruikshank (1997) has described the Yukon International Storytelling Festival as an intercultural performance. There Yukon elders must delicately calibrate their performances in relationship to their audiences. They must balance assertions of place that may go un-recognized by outsiders, with assertions that will challenge public law in subtle ways. The use of place-names, for these elders, then becomes a potent — if potentially obscure — way of making claims about connections to place (see also Dinwoodie 1998). Likewise, Myers (1991, 1994) has discussed the intercultural performances behind Australian Aboriginal acrylic art. There Aboriginal acrylic art, based on The Dreamings, can be misrecognized by outsiders as traditional without any understanding of what the linkages to The Dreamings are and how, in some cases, these are political claims to place. The political linkages to place in such intercultural performances are not always — intentionally or unintentionally — clear or overt. Finally, as Graham writes concerning Yanomami displays in intercultural performances, we see the way linguistic practices are enmeshed in such displays of identity, “Here the words and gestures index ‘Yanomaminess’ for outsiders, rather than calling forth particular spiritual or mythological referents as they would do for fully traditional Yanomami listeners who understand the way these propositions and imitated supernatural gestures index traditional beliefs underlying them” (2002: 203).

I argue that Tohe’s performance acts as a form of second order indexicality (Silverstein 2003b) as well, that indexes a Navajo identity to “outsiders.” That is, while many of the poetic and linguistic devices Tohe uses in this performance clearly are linked with recognizable Navajo genres, indexing links to kinship and landscape to the mythic, in the context in which they were performed they often became referentially empty to non-Navajo audience members who did not understand Navajo. The indexical
linkages were not to a stock of Navajo knowledge, but rather these indexical linkages were to an assumption of a stock of Navajo knowledge. For many audience members, then, Tohe becomes an index and an icon of Navajoness (see House 2002; Webster 2008a). Tohe’s continued use of the Navajo place names and of poetic forms of Navajo, throughout the night, reinforced the importance of the use of Navajo that Tohe was describing. They also become emblems of Navajo identity.

As I have discussed elsewhere, Navajo poetry written predominately in English, will, at times use Navajo lexical items and code-switch into Navajo (Webster 2006a, 2006b). This code-switching often clusters around Navajo kinship terms, place-names, mythic figures, emotions, ideophones, and other poetic devices that many Navajos consider incommensurate with English (see Webster 2006a, 2006b, 2008b). These forms become emblems of what Navajo poets consider to be important about the Navajo language (on Navajo aesthetics see McAllester 1954; Field and Blackhorse 2002; Webster 2008b; see also Woodbury 1998). They become an affective register in and through poetry (see Irvine 1990 on affective registers). Her use of Navajo in this intercultural performance, and in the kinds of Navajo she uses, is thus consonant with the practices of other Navajos who write poetry in both Navajo and English.

3. Indigenous peoples’ day, Carbondale, IL

Carbondale is a small college community in rural southern Illinois. It is about a two and a half hour drive from St. Louis and about five hours from Chicago. Tohe had flown into St. Louis and had been ferried to Carbondale by the president of the Native American Student Organization (NASO), which sponsored the event. Through my contact with Tohe, she had been invited by the NASO to talk on “the importance of place among Indigenous Peoples” (flyer for Indigenous Peoples’ Day, personal collection of author). The event was metapragmatically labeled by the flyer produced by NASO as “speaking on the importance of place among Indigenous Peoples.” Tohe was identified on the flyer as a “Diné Poet and Writer.” It was her decision to be labeled “Diné”, the Navajo language ethnonym, and not Navajo. In my experience, when Navajo poets perform in front of non-Navajo audience they tend to use Diné more than they use Navajo (I discuss this in more detail in Webster 2008). She performed at the Student Center Auditorium beginning around 7:30pm. The performance, followed by questions from the audience, lasted for over an hour.²

Indigenous Peoples’ Day is a semi-annual event put on by the Native American Student Organization at Southern Illinois University Carbondale.
It acts as a counter-discourse to the more widely celebrated Columbus Day. The Native American Student Organization in 2006 was a small but active organization. Traditionally, Southern Illinois University has had a small Native American population (between 60–100). Most of these students come from Chicago or the surrounding area around Carbondale and St. Louis. As a faculty member who had worked with Native Americans and taught courses on Native Americans, I was recruited into helping with the planning for Indigenous Peoples’ Day 2006 by the president of NASO. She had also been in a class that I taught on Native American verbal art. Not only did she recruit me into helping with Indigenous Peoples’ Day, I was also recruited into helping with the annual Native American heritage month (every November) and with the organization of what would become SIUC’s Native American Studies minor in the Summer of 2008 (a topic outside this paper’s focus).

The audience consisted of around fifty to sixty undergraduate students, graduate students, faculty, and community members. The audience was largely sympathetic to issues concerning Native Americans. Including faculty concerned with Indigenous issues, students that had taken or would take courses on Native American issues, as well as students from the Native American Student Organization. None of the students in the Native American Student Organization was Navajo. Laura Tohe was the only Navajo in the Student Center Auditorium that night. The event was also covered by the campus newspaper, but not by the local newspaper.3

The audience was significantly different from those in my previous experiences video-taping and audio-recording Tohe perform her poetry. I had video-taped and audio-recorded her performances before largely Navajo audiences (Webster 2008a). Indeed, one of the poems she performed in Carbondale, “Cat or Stomp” (Tohe 1999), forms the basis of an article I have published elsewhere (Webster 2008a). In fact, Tohe had read and commented on that article for me and she knew it was a particular favorite of mine. Her performing that particular poem that night was, I believe, partly due to my presence. This was the first time I had video-taped her performing before a non-Navajo audience. Her performance differed from the previous performances that I had documented, in the explicit focus on the Navajo language and Navajo places. It was also more explicit concerning the brutality of the boarding school experience. This is something she has written about (see Tohe 1999), but in many performances before Navajo audiences she did not go into the details of the brutality (see ex. 6).

Though the event took place on Indigenous Peoples’ Day, Tohe’s performance was very much about being Navajo. Tohe had also originally planned to do a “PowerPoint presentation” (line 90) showing pictures of the Navajo landscape. However, the technology did not oblige that night
and Tohe could not use her slide-show. Because of that, this performance was in some ways more spontaneous than it might otherwise have been.

Laura Tohe is an associate professor of English at Arizona State University. She has published several books of poetry (Tohe 1999, 2005) and co-edited a volume of Native American women’s poetry (Erdrich and Tohe 2002). She mentioned all of these things later in her introduction, after she had introduced herself by clan, first in Navajo and then in English. She has performed her poetry before a variety of audiences. This includes largely Navajo audience such as I recorded while doing fieldwork and non-Navajo audiences such as she performed for in Lima, Peru (as she notes in her performance). She also speaks Navajo and she places that ability and her early childhood within the Reservation context early on during the performance.

(1) grew up on the Reservation 297
    born on the Reservation 298
    I spoke Navajo 299
    as my first language and then learn 300
    English 301

During my time doing fieldwork in the summer of 2000, she was taking classes at Diné College, the Navajo tribal college, to learn to write Navajo (on Diné College see House 2002). The fruits of those classes can be seen in her most recent book of poetry Tséyi’: Deep in the rock (Tohe 2005). Not only is the title in Navajo, but there are several poems that are written entirely in Navajo. Tséyi’ is an important geographic location in Navajo ethnogeography and has been transformed phonologically into the “Chelly” of Canyon de Chelly (see Kelley and Francis 1994; Jett 2001 on Navajo ethnogeography). The book also contains photos taken by Stephen Storm of Tséyi’. These photos visually link the written poetry with places in Tséyi’. That a Navajo place-name, in Navajo, forms the title of this book becomes a point for Tohe to talk about land and language. She is also clearly knowledgeable about the ethnographic and linguistic literature that has been written about Navajos.

4. I just gave you an introduction

On a mild October evening, Laura Tohe climbed onto the stage, and when she began speaking she said:

(2) Yá’át’éeh 1
    Shí éí Laura Tohe 2
    Shí éí Tséñabahílñii 3
    Tódích’íinii éí bá shishchíín 4
The audience in Carbondale, Illinois, almost to a person, did not understand the language that was being spoken. The language was Navajo, and Tohe was beginning to introduce herself in Navajo and by her clans. As she would explain after the introduction in Navajo:

(3) I just gave you an introduction language which is what we do when we speak before an audience we let people know that uhm we are members of our clans and uhh there’s anyone in the audience who might be a member of my clan will be considered relatives

I had seen Tohe perform this introduction several times before (Webster 2008a), but I had never seen her perform this introduction to an entirely non-Navajo audience. When I had done fieldwork on the Navajo Nation from 2000–2001, I had recorded numerous examples of this introduction in Navajo to largely Navajo audiences. As Tohe explains:

(4) Tony uhm he was on the Navajo reservation my reservation for about a year and a half and he was everywhere that we went and I als almost like my own personal stalker [LAUGHTER] but he was on the reservation so long that we started to call him our in-law
Tohe’s use of “Tony” here indexes for the audience her familiarity with me. It establishes a link for the audience to understand her presence in southern Illinois. The vowel lengthening in *tease* adds an affective quality to the phrase again indexing familiarity.

In the performance by Tohe here of her clan relations, there was little chance for the audience to understand the referential content of the opening use of Navajo. Instead, it had the pragmatic effect of indexically locating her as Navajo. Behind this use of Navajo and other uses of Navajo, as well as discussions about Navajo, was an implicit theory about languages (Navajo and English). The Navajo language forms precede the English forms. Tohe must explain to a non-Navajo audience what is and is not important for Navajos. She uses language as one way of indexing her status as a Navajo and of indexing the importance of the Navajo language to Navajo identity. However, she does more than merely describe such linguistic behavior. She also performs them as well.

I have recorded similar introductions by Tohe and a number of other Navajo performers to largely Navajo audiences. When Tohe performs before largely Navajo audiences, her opening in Navajo and by her clans is on the one hand, referentially informative. Navajos can reckon their clan relations with her. On the other hand, it also serves the indexical function of indicating that Tohe is the kind of Navajo that speaks Navajo and knows the Navajo names for her clans. It thus places her within a sphere of meaningful indexical linguistic practices. Even Navajos who are not fluent in Navajo will perform this greeting and introduction in Navajo (Webster 2008a). For example, at the Diné Language Fair in 2001 at Diné College in Tsaile, AZ, that I attended, elementary and middle school students were judged on the ease by which they were able to introduce themselves in Navajo. The second order indexicality here is that students who use such forms index that they are the kind of Navajos who learns the language and traditional greetings. Diné College, as well as middle schools and elementary schools, actively promote this modeling of Navajo identity through linguistic practice.

Such uses of Navajo formulaic introductions are, then, in some ways similar to Ahlers (2006) discussion of the use of Native language by non-fluent speakers. They aid in creating a Navajo discursive space that is akin to Ahlers (2006: 70) “Native discourse space.” It frames that what will follow, even if in English, will be from a Navajo perspective. It differs, however, in that there is also a referential component to this introduction.
Navajos can and do reckon whether or not they are related to the speaker by way of this introduction. It also differs in that Tohe is a competent speaker of Navajo. Her use of the opening here, grounded her in a Navajo identity and highlighted the importance of the Navajo language to that identity.

5. **We were not allowed to speak the language at school**

Knowing the Navajo language is not a neutral proposition. It is, as Tohe notes, not a given for Navajos. The Navajo language has recently been described as an “endangered language” or a language shifting to English (see Field 2001; House 2002; Spolsky 2002; Benally and Viri 2005; Webster 2006a). Indeed, there is evidence that the number of children speaking or understanding Navajo entering elementary schools has dramatically decreased in the last twenty years (Holm and Holm 1995; see also Crawford 2008: 426). Tohe brings this point up early on in her poetry performance. She does this in connection with the Navajo code-talkers. Tohe’s father had been a Navajo code-talker, and she had written a poem about her father and the other code-talkers. In bringing up the Navajo code-talkers, she also attempts to establish a shared (or potentially shared) background knowledge based on American pop culture. She does this by referencing the 2002 big budget film *Windtalkers* which ostensibly was about the Navajo code-talkers.

(5) some of you have probably seen 453
the film *Windtalker* which is based 454
there’s a story 455
in there 456
about 457
uhm 458
one of the characters or 459
two of the characters are 460
are Navajo code talkers 461

Linking to a wider, non-Navajo movie about the Navajo code-talkers, is one way that Tohe can validate the global value of the Navajo language. Tohe then turns to discussing her father’s service as a code-talker. She then turns to the “ironic thing” (line 480) about the use of the Navajo language as a code during World War II. Namely, that while the United States was using Navajo as a code during World War II, the language was simultaneously being actively suppressed on the Navajo Nation. On the one hand, the United States could appropriate the Navajo language for its purposes in
war abroad. On the other hand, the United States could actively suppress the Navajo language in the Navajo homeland.

(6) back on the reservation
    back on
    at ho=me
    we were not allowed to speak the language at school
    we were not allow=ed
    to
    uhm
    speak in our classrooms
    uhm
    if you did
    you were punished for it
    so our language was
    a lot of ways
    during that assimilation era was
    uhm
    beaten out of us
    if you spoke your language
    you’ll end up standing in a corner
    facing the wall
    you had your hand slapped
    with a ruler
    sometimes your mouth was washed out
    with soap and water
    and as a result
    you know [LOW and SOFTER]
    what you do when that happens you don’t speak
    you don’t wanna speak
    because you are afraid
    you’ll be
    punished for it
    so while the
    war was using the Navajo language
    as code
    on the reservations we were not allowed
    to speak our native language and I think
    for
    for that reason an and other
    reasons
    uhm
    many of the
    generation of Navajo people after
    after me
    don’t speak the language
Tohe presents this time on the Navajo Nation as one of active suppression of the language. She highlights the violence that was often involved with the suppression of Navajo. As she states, the language “was beaten out of us.” Notice the use of the exclusive first person here. Tohe is linking herself with the experiences of other Navajos. She is excluding members in the audience. She has done this previously when she stated that, “We’ll always use our own names.” In both cases, Tohe speaks for the Navajo “we-ness” (see Silverstein 2003a). She again uses “we” for Navajos when she discusses the efforts to “save” the Navajo language. Notice in line 523 that she quiets her voice and speaks softly when she says “you know” after she has described the punishments. There is an affective quality here as she then turns to the results of such punishments.

She also connects the violence of the “assimilation era” to the current language shift from Navajo to English. She has already established her own Navajo credentials earlier by opening the performance speaking in Navajo. Her choice of connecting the current language situation with the well-known Navajo code-talkers is instructive here. She clearly links the Navajo language with, as she says earlier, “when the Navajo language was being used to help save America.” Note the lexical parallelism here:

(7) when the Navajo language was being used 482
    uhm 483
to help sa=ve America 484
(8) and so we are though 542
    trying to 543
    sa=ve our language 544

The lexical item ‘save’ recurs. In both cases the vowel is elongated, calling into relief the utterance. In the one case, the Navajo language helped “save America” and now Navajos must try to “save” the Navajo language. The recurrent use of the lexical item “save,” then, echoes between the use of the Navajo language for the code-talkers and the current language situation that Navajos face. It puts the two propositions into relief together.

The trope that the Navajo language helped “save America” is in wider circulation on and around the Navajo Nation. For example, it was often repeated at public meetings concerning Arizona Proposition 203, which meant to restrict bilingual education and which many Navajos I spoke with saw as an affront to the Navajo language. Homemade signs on the Navajo Nation often had printed on them, ‘Dooda Prop 203’ (dooda glosses as ‘no’) (see also House 2002; Webster 2006a). I attended a number of local
meetings on the Navajo Nation that were held to discuss the potential ramifications of Proposition 203 and how to oppose the passage of the proposition. At a number of meetings, the audience usually composed of Navajos from a community, elder Navajo speakers wept as they spoke about their devotion and respect for their language, “Diné bizaad” (which is the conventional way of saying ‘the Navajo language’ in Navajo: Diné ‘Navajo people’ or ‘people’ + bi- 3person possessive -zaad ‘word, language’).

Such a comparison, as Tohe draws, clearly taps into a wider discourse that can be found in the United States on “fairness” and “hypocrisy.” It is that discourse that Tohe seems to be tapping into in her discussion of the suppression of the Navajo language while it was simultaneously “saving America.” This is a critique of assimilation policies, policies that did not recognize the importance of the Navajo language to the survival of the United States. This trope, that Navajo helped “save America”, elevates the Navajo language to global importance. It also rhetorically obligates the non-Naovo American audience to the “debt” they owe the Navajos and their language.

6. We’ll always use our own names

Keith Basso (1996) opened new ground in Native American studies and in linguistic anthropology more generally with his careful studies of Western Apache place-names in didactic and other morally interpersonally potent discursive events. Since then, a number of insightful discussions of Native American place-naming practices have appeared building on Basso’s work (Cruikshank 1990, 1998; Kelley and Francis 1994; Dinwoodie 1998; Jett 2001; Samuels 2001; Cowell 2004; Collins 1998; Webster 2007; Thornton 2008; Nevins 2008). A number of these works have focused on the tensions between Indigenous place-naming practices and Euro-American inscriptive practices (Collins 1998; Samuels 2001; Cowell 2004). James Collins (1998), for example, discusses the use of Tolowa (Pacific Coast Athabaskan) place-names as a way of asserting a prior placement to English or Spanish place-naming practices. As Collins explains, “Xus We-yó’ [Tolowa Language] argues for the ancientness of Tolowa occupation of that region. But it also argues for a link between that archaicness and the present period” (1998: 150).

David Samuels (2001: 289), in discussing what he terms the “phonological iconicity” of place names, points out that Britton Goode, a Western Apache linguist, had attempted to discern an Apache etymology for what is often regarded as a Tohono O’odham inspired place-name: “Tucson.” As Samuels argues, “finding an Apache meaning in the English name Tucson
denies whites the final right of denotation and insists that the meaning of any such name is not closed but rather contains its own response” (2001: 290). Samuels shows how Western Apaches have actively engaged in the decoding of place names and the inherent ambiguities that such punning creates and sustains (see also Nevins 2008).

Andrew Cowell (2004) has discussed how Euro-Americans in Colorado re-imagined Arapaho place names and re-inscribed them onto the landscape, especially Rocky Mountain National Park, in a manner that is contrary to Arapaho naming practices and, in effect, removing the Arapaho from the lowlands of Colorado (where they lived) and placing them in the mountains (where they did not live). As Cowell notes, “The specific Arapaho names now on the map reflect White interests and conceptions of exoticism in the twentieth century” (2004: 29). Cowell’s analysis reminds us that even the appearance of Indigenous names can be fraught with complexities that, in fact, erase the presence of Indigenous people as they re-inscribe and re-imagine.

Tohe (2005) titles her most recent book *Tséyi’: Deep in the rock*. She does not provide the English place-name Canyon de Chelly in the title. Rather she glosses the Navajo form into English. *Tsé* is a noun and can be glossed as ‘rock’ in English. -yi’ is a postpositional and can be glossed as ‘between, inside, on the interior.’ *Tséyi’* is both the conventional word for ‘canyon’ and the place-name for what is commonly referred by non-Navajos as Canyon de Chelly (Jett 2001: 190); Chelly [sê’i] or [sê] is the phonologically reanalyzed form of *Tséyi’*. This is phonological iconicity that obscures indigenous placement. Note that even the phonologically altered (and redundant) Canyon de Chelly re-inscribes the place with an indexical link to Spanish influences on the Southwest. Her book also intertextually taps into and evokes Navajo “genres of place,” much Navajo verbal art begins at named and knowable ethnogeographical locations (see Thornton 2008: 23 on genres of place).

Towards the middle of her performance at Carbondale, Tohe discusses the title of the book and her use of Navajo. Here Tohe explains how the use of Navajo in her title and the use of Navajo place-names are important to her and Navajos. Notice that she presents this discussion as a series of reported speech events. She first quotes herself in lines 1056–1057. She then uses quoted speech to report the response of the press in lines 1060–1066. Such uses of quoted speech make the performance of the discussion more vivid for the audience.

(9)  *Tséyi’* is our name for this place that Navajo Canyon de Chelly printed on the map
“Canyon de Chelly”

that work

we’ll always use our own

for the places on our homeland

so when I was uhm
gonna publish this book I was asked

what I want to
title this book

and so I said

like

“Tséyi’
depth in the rock”

but the press
came back

and said “we prefer
depth in the rock

Tséyi’

for marketing purposes

people will be able to understand that

uhm

better”

and

I was

very insistent

that

uhh

we have

Tséyi’ first because

Navajo language was here

before

contact

and

so

they pu

they

uhm

they were convinced by that

so that’s why it is called

“Tséyi’ depth in the rock”

Notice that Tohe contrasts the name “printed” on a map with the Navajo name. Thus while the maps may have the name “Canyon de Chelly” on
them, the Navajo “always use our own names for the places on our homeland.” Here she signals that Canyon de Chelly is not a Navajo name, and that Tséyi’ is a part of the Navajo homeland. Her statement that Navajos always use their own names for places is reminiscent of comments a number of Navajos made to me while I was doing fieldwork, namely that Navajo place-names could not be translated into English; that one had to use the Navajo place-names for Navajo places.

Navajos that I know will occasionally play with Navajo place names and “translate” them into English. For example, Tséyi’ was sometimes called Disney by a Navajo neighbor I had in Chinle, AZ. Following Samuels (2001), the pleasure that my neighbor had in using Disney was from the phonological iconicity between Tséyi’ and Disney. They “sound alike.” Another Navajo I knew said that rather than Tséyi’ being Disney, it was instead Tsé Ná’áz’élí ‘the rock that water flows around.’ This place is also in Tséyi’. That Canyon de Chelly is now a tourist stop for both American and international tourists, brings a relevance to the verbal play by Navajos of Tséyi’ or Tsé Ná’áz’élí as Disney. These places are like Disney in that they attract American and international tourists. In such ways does linguistic play call attention to social realities such as the influx of tourists onto the Navajo Nation (see Sherzer 2002). When Navajos pun Tséyi’ as Disney, they are challenging de Chelly as phonologically iconic of Tséyi’ and offering their own substitution with its attendant social commentary.

The importance of writing, suggested in her reference to maps, becomes more important once she recounts the story concerning the press wanting to use the English glossing first and not the Navajo place-name. Tohe must convince the people at the press that they should use the Navajo place-name and that the Navajo place-name should come first. She argues this by pointing out that the Navajo language precedes “contact” (the time when Europeans and Native peoples encountered each other). The use of the Navajo place-name indexically links the Navajos to a prior placement, but it also reasserts the Navajos current placement. Inscribing it on the cover of her book of poetry only further validates both the currency and the primacy of Navajos. Note also that by placing the Navajo place-name before the English glossing, it is iconically connecting with the Navajos being here before Europeans and their languages. Thus the title iconically maps out the historical order: first Navajos and then English (and both present).

She makes the point concerning maps again when she discusses a poem about The Long Walk and the internment at Hwééldi (see Tohe 2007 for her view of the importance of remembering Hwééldi; see also Denetdale 2006 on The Long Walk).
(10) I make some references also to Hwéeldi, which is a place for it’s at southcentral New Mexico where the Navajo people were incarcerated for four years from 1864 to 1868 just around the time of the civil war that the Navajo people were forced out of this homeland and other places of our reservation to Hwéeldi, which is a Navajo word but in again in the map see it as Fort Sumner.

Note again the contrast that Tohe creates between the Navajo form and the “map” form. Again we see the Navajo form as the “prior” or “legitimate” form and the English form as somehow inauthentic or inaccurate. In line 1267, Tohe draws out and lengths the vowels in o=ut, ho=meland, and o=ut again and in the retroflex in for=ced. In doing so, she calls attention to for=ced ou=t and ho=meland ou=t. She is emphasizing that this was a forced removal. They did not leave willingly. She repeats this emphasis on both homeland and forced in lines 1270 and 1271 respectively. Note also that in line 1267 she uses Tséyi’ here without further explication. Her use of the Navajo word links back to her earlier discussion of the importance of using Navajo place names.

Implicit in her discussion is a view that argues that since the Navajo language preceded European languages, they are not equivalent. Navajo and English are not equivalent precisely because Navajo was here before English. The place name in Navajo is thus a better fit to the place than any English place-name would be. This, I might add, fits a trend on the Navajo Nation where Navajo Chapters (regional political units) are changing their
names from English names to traditional Navajo names. For example, the Chapter formerly named “Hogback” has legally changed their name to the Navajo place-name Tse’ Da’a’ Kaan (Tsétaak’ą́ʼ ‘rock that slants into the water’). This place name was originally used for a prominent place near the current community in northern New Mexico and was and continues to be the Navajo alternative to the English place name. In such ways, Navajo place-names have different indexical linkages because, as Navajo Nation Council Speaker Lawrence Morgan, stated, “Most of those are names [English names] given by the early settlers, and then they moved away... The Navajo names have always been there (Whitehurst 2007).”

7. I wanted to become literate in my own language

As I discussed above, during my fieldwork on the Navajo Nation, Laura Tohe was taking classes at Diné College in Tsaile, AZ to learn how to read and write Navajo. As she explained earlier in the performance (lines 299–301), she is a Navajo speaker. However, like many Navajo speakers, she was not literate in Navajo (McLaughlin 1992; Spolsky 2002). Navajo literacy is still rather limited among Navajos. There is a small corpus of poetry written entirely in Navajo. Both Rex Lee Jim (1995) and Nia Francisco (1977), for example, have written poetry entirely in Navajo. In this example, Tohe describes her own attempts to learn to read and write Navajo. She also connects the Navajo language to Navajo ceremonies.

(11) I wanted to become literate
in my ow=n
la=nguage
uhm
I wanted to
learn how to rea=d in my
so I took courses at Diné College
uhm
for four summers
and uhh
I learn how
to
rea=d and write
my language
I’m still lea=rning
I won’t say that
I’m
uhm
perfect in it but
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I’m trying to read and write in my own language so that other Navajo speakers can read this and this. I love the stories I love to hear the stories in Navajo language I think because I think the language is a way to connect to the worldview of the Navajo people it’s a way to become intimate with the worldview of the Navajo people and it’s a way to participate in the ceremonies of the Navajo people which I have done I’ve participated in the Blessing way ceremonies

Here I want to call attention to the ways that Tohe defines the importance of the Navajo language. First, writing in Navajo becomes a way for Tohe to speak directly to other Navajo speakers. This is so, even though most Navajo speakers do not also read the language. But the ideal is that Navajo speakers will be able to read her poetry in Navajo. It is still the case, however, that most Navajos gain access to Navajo poetry written in Navajo as an oral phenomenon on KTNN (the Navajo Nation radio station) or at public readings at Diné College, the Navajo Nation Museum, Navajo fairs, or at other festivals (see Webster 2008a).

However, Tohe’s book is sold on the Navajo Nation. I saw copies of it at Gloria Emerson’s ‘Ahwééh/Gohwééh Coffee Place in Shiprock, NM. ‘Ahwééh and Gohwééh are two Navajo words for “coffee.” Emerson is a Navajo educator, painter, and she also writes poetry and has had her own
book of poetry and painting published (Emerson 2003). It was also sold at Cool Runnings in St. Michaels, AZ, which is a music store that also produces Navajo musicians and has published Navajo poetry (see Ashley 2001). Both of these are locally controlled businesses and are frequented by a Navajo clientele. Tohe’s book was not sold at the Visitors Center at Canyon de Chelly National Monument which sells a number of books about Canyon de Chelly and is frequented largely by non-Navajos.

Second, Tohe argues for a felt attachment to the Navajo language. Tohe “love[s] to hear the stories in the Navajo language.” As a number of Navajos told me at different times, for some things, Navajo is just a “better” or “more accurate” language than English (see Webster 2006a). This is the felt attachment to language (Webster 2006a, 2006b). There is a pleasure in hearing and using the Navajo language. To know the Navajo language, for these Navajos, then, is to become “intimate with the worldview of the Navajo.” This is an essentialist discourse and has been documented for Navajo educators at Diné College by Deborah House (2002).

Third, following on that point, the use of the Navajo language is connected to a Navajo “worldview.” The term “worldview” echoes with the work of Gary Witherspoon (1977). Witherspoon created a largely idealized and decontextualized perspective on Navajo language and culture. It assumes a homogenous Navajo worldview and homogenous “the Navajo universe.” In my experience, however, Navajos tend to disagree on a number of points (see Webster 2006a). In fact, Tohe directly engaged that topic during her performance when she discussed the “fourth world/ or fifth world depending on/ who is/ telling the story” (lines 127–130). When she was asked about the variation between fourth and fifth worlds during the Q&A, she replied with, what I have come to expect from Navajo consultants when I try to pin them down on topic, “It depends” (line 1973).

However, as a trope, the idea that the Navajo language connects with an entire “worldview” or “philosophy,” is quite common among Navajo educators. Some argue that the use of Navajo connects to an entire philosophy, an entire way of understanding the world (see House 2002). Consider, for example, a recent discussion at a conference involving Navajo educators and community members, where some self-identified Christian Navajos did not want the Navajo language taught to their children because they believe that Navajo philosophy (i.e., religion) and the Navajo language cannot be separated. Indeed, some non-Christian Navajos agreed with this perspective as well. For them, English lacks the connection to Navajo religion that the Navajo language has. As one Navajo explained to me, English is more powerful in the secular world, Navajo is more powerful spiritually. That is why — according to him — English and Navajo cannot be translated, the one into the other or vice versa. In such ways, Navajo
and English are said to be not equivalent because they tap into two entirely different stocks of knowledge (compare with Richland 2007 on similar linguistic sentiments among the Hopi). Finally, some Navajos have told me that only Navajo should be spoken at Navajo ceremonies like the Blessing way.

8. *Nihik’inizdidláád “luminescence is all around”*

Throughout the night, Tohe had repeatedly mentioned that the Navajo language was a “poetic language.” She had discussed the poetic uses of repetition in Navajo songs and the use of repetition in other Navajo poets’ poetry. Again, this idea that the Navajo language was a poetic language was an idea that many Navajo poets often expressed to me during fieldwork. Indeed, this was one of the key places where Navajo poets expressed incommensurability between Navajo and English. The Navajo form was just more “poetic” or “better.” These were feelingful associations. That is Navajos couched these statements in emotional terms. Navajo “felt” better than an English form. Navajo and English then are not equivalent, because they do not have the same felt attachments.

To get a sense of that I want to provide another example. This example concerns a discussion by Tohe about her attempts to translate a poem written entirely in Navajo into English. This example is from late in the performance.

(12) the Navajo language is very poetic
    when I first started writing
    I used to think about poems in Navajo
    and then write
    turn them into English
    and I guess maybe in some ways I still do that
    because like I said the language is very poetic
    the way it looks at the world
    the world in terms of dualities
    and even that
    there’s this line in that poem about female rain
    about how the luminescence is all around
    it took a long time to try
    to find an equivalent in English
    because the word itself a=h

    there’s that one word
    I love that word in Navajo
    /nihik’inizdidláád which
First notice that when writing poetry, Tohe states that the Navajo language form comes before the English form. Navajo again precedes the English form. Navajo poetic forms begin in Navajo and then must be translated into English. In that translation they lose something. Notice also that Tohe frames the poetic nature of Navajo as a general condition of the Navajo language. Notice still further that Tohe connects the language with a way of looking at the world. This is done indirectly when she states that, “Navajo it’s verb based.” Many Navajos, Navajo academics and Navajo non-academics, often pointed out to me that one of the major differences between English and Navajo was that English was “noun based” and that Navajo was “verb based.”

This kind of local categorization of the Navajo language as a verb-based language was a widely held position among Navajo writers and educators that I worked with. This is no doubt based on the importance of the verb in the Navajo language and a familiarity about the linguistic literature on the importance of the verb in Navajo (see, for example, Witherspoon 1977 and Young 2000). Navajo is a verb based language, where nouns are adjuncts (optional) to a full clause verb form (see Willie and Jelinek 2000). Navajo novelist Irvin Morris, in his book From the glittering world, writes this about his language and in particular the movement-based nature of place names, “The word and name Tséhili [Where it flows into the canyon] refers simultaneously to the locality and the act of the creek entering the canyon there. The language is like that, full of motion. Diné bizaad [Navajo language] is verb-based, whereas English is noun-based” (Morris 1997: 99).

Tohe also makes a feelingful connection to the Navajo language. She explains how she “love[s] that word in Navajo.” She highlights nihik’inizdidláád with a slight rise in pitch when she produces the Navajo
form. The word *nihik’inizdidláád* can be morphologically analyzed as follows:

(13) nihi-  cessative or termative prefix  
- k’i-  straight  
- niz-  faraway  
- di-  extending along a line  
- dláád shine a light

Tohe poetically glosses this as “luminescence is all around.” But note that Tohe considers this glossing to be incomplete. It misses something. It “seems a little flat.” Rather than evoking the moment, it is rather merely a report of what has happened. The pragmatic relationship between language use and language form is missing in the English gloss. This relationship, as Tohe notes, is a “personal connection to light” that is evoked by *nihik’inizdidláád*. Part of that personal connection may arise from the homonymy between *nihi-* the cessative or termative prefix and the first person possessive plural prefix *nihi-* ‘our’ (e.g., *nihizaad* ‘our language’). Structurally the termative *nihi-* and *nihi-* ‘our’ do not align (the termative prefix is attached to verbs, the possessive prefix attaches to nouns). However, as potentially evocative, the homonymy here adds another layer of resonance. Navajo and English are incommensurate because English lacks the feelingful attachment between linguistic form and speaker. What I have elsewhere termed the felt pragmatic iconicity of Navajo (Webster 2006b). By felt pragmatic iconicity I mean the felt attachment that a linguistic form has to the moment of utterance and to what that moment evokes (see also Taylor 2006; see also Sapir 1921; Friedrich 1986).

As Tohe’s performance suggests, as well as the quote above from Morris, place names are one especially salient poetic use of Navajo language (see Webster 2006a, 2006b). It was certainly something that other Navajos told me as well. They are also political claims to place and placement.

9. **Panel wants Tséyi’ back in Navajo hands**

I have presented several snippets of an intercultural performance in Carbondale, IL by Navajo poet Laura Tohe to a non-Navajo audience. I have focused primarily on snippets that concern Tohe’s metalinguistic discussions concerning the Navajo language and her displays of the Navajo language. I have also attempted to connect her performance to other performances that I recorded where she performs before largely Navajo audiences. Her opening frame in Navajo is done both in front of Navajo and non-Navajo audiences. In Tohe’s performance in Illinois, it indexically linked her to a Navajo identity, an identity she aided in constructing.
through metasemiotic stereotyping (Agha 1998; see also Agha 2007); that is she is constructing a stereotype of how Navajos use the Navajo language on the reservation. Here we have an intercultural performance of a metasemiotic stereotype. A part of that metasemiotic stereotype is that Navajos always introduce themselves by clans and in Navajo.

Another part of that metasemiotic stereotype is that Navajos “always use” Navajo place-names on the Navajo Nation (lines 1046–1049). Her claim here is not so much about actual linguistic practice, but rather about the importance of Navajo language place-names. Place-names in Navajo are important emblems of Navajo identity and they are repeatedly used in Navajo written poetry (Webster 2006b). Tohe performs both these idealized ways of speaking at her performance in Illinois. That is, she is not just describing how Navajos should speak, she is actively performing such idealized ways of speaking for a non-Navajo audience. In doing so, she becomes not just an index of these idealized ways of speaking, but an icon of them.

Her book and her performance are an attempt to re-establish the indexical linkage between place and placement. In this way, the uses of such place-names in her performance in Carbondale are reminiscent of the use of Tsilhqut’in place names in public discourse in Canada (Dinwoodie 1998). David Dinwoodie (1998) has described the debates that concerned the use of native names for a Canadian park and how they were entangled in concerns with recognition. As Dinwoodie notes, “The selection of the park name registered continuing Tsilhqut’in presence in the area. For the Tsilhqut’in people of Nemiah Valley, and whether reluctantly or not for the government too, the choice indicated a degree of political recognition” (1998: 212). Dinwoodie’s position assumes recognition that an indigenous language is indigenous and of indigenous placement. But as Cowell’s (2004) discussion of Arapaho place names in Colorado parks reminds us, this may not always be the case. Note also the way that Tséyi’ has been phonologically reanalyzed as Chelly in ‘Canyon de Chelly’ and thus obscuring Navajo placement and replacing it with Spanish placement. It marks Tséyi’ foreign as the ‘Chelly” of de Chelly.

There are other discourses that attempt to remove Native American languages from the “native” category and make them foreign. Discourses that Tohe’s performance is in a delicate dialogue with. As Barbra Meek (2006: 120) thoughtfully shows for ‘Hollywood Injun English,’ “representing the speech of Native Americans as substandard and foreign portrays Native American speakers as foreign, as NOT native” [emphasis in original]. I would argue that not only can Hollywood Injun English index foreignness, but the use of a Native language, such as Navajo, can be read as “foreign.” Thus, for example, it is still the case that people like conservative pundit
Phyllis Schlafly (2002), can decry the use of Navajo in ballots in Colorado as “foreign language ballots.” In a web article published in 2002 at her site Eagleforum.org titled, “Foreign language ballots a bad idea,” Schlafly lists ballots written in Navajo and Ute as examples of these “Foreign language ballots.” Navajo, for Schlafly, is a “foreign,” non-native language. It cannot be assumed that Navajo, or any indigenous language, always indexically links to “native-ness.” Thus, Tohe must remind the audience that Navajos were here before contact. Tohe is challenging a linguistic ideology that naturalizes English with being “native born” to America. She is arguing for a prior placement and a continued placement. Furthermore, she also taps into a recurring trope among Navajos that the Navajo language helped “save America.” At the same time, she notes that the Navajo language was actively and violently being suppressed. This is a powerful rhetorical gambit.

Dinwoodie’s (1998) article also raises the issue of “going public” with Native language place names and the politics of recognition. Tohe’s use of Tséyi’ both in her book and in her performance links with larger concerns about land claims (both locally and more globally). On the one hand, her uses of the Navajo language place-names for Tséyi’ links with a whole clustering of associations that Navajo place-names can evoke for Navajos (see Kelley and Francis 1994; Jett 2001). This clustering is largely outside the awareness of those in the audience. Place names are also aesthetically pleasing uses of language. On the other hand, my neighbor, who used to call Tséyi’ ‘Disney’, was also one of the first people to alert me to the idea that Navajos would like Canyon de Chelly National Monument returned to the control of the Navajo Nation. In fact, an article in the Navajo Times on 6 April 2006 runs the headline “Panel wants Tséyi’ back in Navajo hands” (Yurth 2006a; see also Yurth 2006b). I do not think it surprising that the Navajo Times’ headline also uses the Navajo name Tséyi’ here. In figure 1, we see the Navajo place name in a sign from Chinle, AZ — which abuts Canyon de Chelly National Monument — which combines the Navajo place name Tseyi’ with the imprint of capitalism (taken in 2007). One can hear on KTNN at various times, live remotes from the Bashas (a local grocery) at, “the Tséyi’ shopping mall in Chinle, AZ” (recorded 27 August 2000). Tséyi’ is a recognizable form both visually and aurally.

Some Navajos do want Canyon de Chelly National Monument, an important historical and mythic place (see Kelley and Francis 1994; Jett 2001), returned to the Navajo Nation, as the article from the Navajo Times makes clear. The United States Park Service currently manages Canyon de Chelly National Monument (see Keller and Turek 1998). Not all the residents that live in Canyon de Chelly National Monument are pleased with the ways that the Park Service has managed the Monument (Yurth
2006a, b; see also Keller and Turek 1998). There is now then a debate concerning legal rights to place between Navajos and the United States government over Tseyi’. Tohe’s use of the Navajo form in the title of her book and in her performance in Illinois can then be linked to concerns about the control and management of Tseyi’.

10. Conclusions

The Navajo language and Navajo place names are subjects of continued discussion on and around the Navajo Nation. Whether it is the recent discussion concerning the banning of employees speaking Navajo at RD’s Drive In and the subsequent lawsuit (see Zachary 2005) or debates on the Navajo Nation concerning whether or not to use Navajo in an educational setting or the attempt by some Chapters to re-inscribe their names with traditional Navajo language place names or about the felt attachments that speakers have to their language, they continue and expand apace. There are playful and politically salient puns of Navajo place names as English language place names. Signs in Navajo were more common on the Reservation in 2007 than they were when I first did fieldwork in 2000–2001. There is also discussion concerning who controls Tseyi’, the United States government or the Navajo Nation. There is still lingering resentment about Arizona Proposition 203 (which passed) that was expressed to me in 2007. Public displays of a Navajo language matter in all of this as well.

Such discussions are also, and clearly, moving beyond the Navajo Nation and its surrounds. Tohe must negotiate these debates as she engages in an intercultural performance. They are a backdrop into which her intercultural performance and her book are now entangled. As the work by
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Graham, Cruikshank, and Myers suggests, these kinds of performances are more and more common throughout the United States as well as beyond. These performances are enmeshed in both local and global discourses; discourses concerning the control of *Tséyi’* and the infusion of tourists on the Navajo Nation as well in discourses about language endangerment and what it means to be Navajo and who defines that. These are all part and parcel with larger global debates about identity, language rights, Indigenous rights, and land claims (see Hill 2002; Errington 2003). By paying attention to both the metalinguistic commentary and to the metasemiotic stereotypes that Tohe both describes and displays, we can begin to understand the ways that some Native American performers attempt to speak to larger political issues (such as land claims and language shift) as well as the ways that they simultaneously construct their own identity within such performances. That is, we can begin to understand how individuals locate themselves in relation to others.

Notes

1. By Navajo poet I mean Navajos who write poetry. This is a broad category and the term is mine. Some, like Laura Tohe, can be usefully termed as educated elites. Others, like the Navajo poet I knew who worked at a restaurant on the Navajo Nation and had only a high school education, but was actively interested in the works of Tohe and other more well known poets, would not be considered part of that educated elite system.

2. There were approximately twenty minutes worth of questions. This portion of the transcript begins after line 1941. The questions ranged from the bizarre (a question about the Navajos and the television show *The X-Files*) to the more obvious (a question about “Navajo shamans”) to those that dealt with language (the question on the Navajo writing system). During this time she was also asked to read another poem in Navajo. She read that poem and then discussed it (see lines 2211–2242). She read eleven poems in total that night. The first one, “Gallup Ceremonial,” dealt with “Midwesterners” misrecognizing Navajo tradition (lines 380–405) and aided in establishing Tohe as “the” cultural authority. The second one concerned the Navajo code-talkers (lines 549–726). The third poem (lines 843–888) concerned the riots at the Santa Fe state prison in 1980 and the boarding school experience (see Tohe 1999: 38). The fourth poem (lines 935–987) was “Cat or Stomp” (see Tohe 1999: 6; see also Webster 2008). The fifth poem (lines 1330–1356) concerns *Hvééldí* (see below) and is also a “love poem” (see Tohe 2005: 3). The sixth poem (lines 1542–1578) is a bilingual poem in Navajo and English and is titled “Many Horses” (Tohe 2005: 7). In that poem, Tohe performed both in English and in Navajo. The seventh and eighth poems (1669–1696) are the English language versions of “Female Rain” and “Male Rain” (Tohe 2005: 26–27). The ninth poem (lines 1804–1875) contains some Navajo, which she performed that night as well (Tohe 2005: 17). The tenth poem (lines 1891–1940), which was the final poem before the Q&A is titled “Poem about You” (Tohe 2005: 39) and in that poem Tohe says the Navajo word *nidlohísh* ‘are you cold’ in an affective manner. The switch here to Navajo is very similar to Irvine’s (1990) discussion of affective registers. Here Navajo becomes the affective register. The elev-
enth poem, Niłtsą Biką “Male Rain,” was the Navajo version of an earlier English version poem and came as a request by an audience member for her to read another poem in Navajo.

3. Oddly, the local newspaper as well as the campus newspaper did cover a presentation of an earlier version of this paper that I gave in 2007 for Native American Heritage Month. Neither covered, however, a “reading” (as it was billed) by Navajo poet Sherwin Bitsui for the 2007 Native American Heritage Month at SIUC. Nor did they cover screenings by Navajo film-maker Bennie Klain also in 2007 at SIUC. It is interesting that the metatalk, the talk about a talk by a faculty member, would draw the attention of both the campus newspaper and the local newspaper. On a purely aesthetic level, my performance style suffers mightily in a comparison with Tohe, Bitsui or Klain. We should also note that the local newspaper here replicates my role as “anthropologist,” “cultural broker,” and “expert”. They do not need to cover the actual event, because I will explain it for them. My talk was meant to promote the pending establishment of the Native American Studies minor.

4. The transcript that follows presents individual lines based on pause structure. In presenting the transcript based on pause structure I hope to present something of the cadence and rhythm of the performance. In general, I follow the transcript formatting as used by Evers and Molina (1998: 39) in presenting a Yaqui lecture or hinivaka on ‘the flower world.’ Lengthening has been indicated by = and a rise in tone is indicated with /. I will have more to say about these stylistic devices in the paper. The slowness of cadence aids in the construction of the metasemiotic stereotype of the carefulness of Tohe’s speech. The entire transcript runs to just over 2500 lines. The opening lines gloss as follows:

it is good
I that one Laura Tohe
I that one Sleeping Rock People
Bitterwater People that for them I was born for

Yá’át’éeżeli is a conventional Navajo greeting. Tsénapahilnii and Tódích’íinii are Tohe’s maternal and paternal clans respectively.

5. de Chelly is also a regional diacritic for in versus out groupness in the Southwest more generally. A pronunciation of de Chelly as either [di šɛli] or [di čɛli] clearly indexes an out group status in reference to the Southwest.

6. The tone marking on the/[e/] is not included on the sign, but the glottal stop is included. Dinwoodie (1998) discusses the role of the representations of glottal stops in relation to the Tsilhqut’in place name for the Canadian park.

7. While Tohe does not live on the Navajo Nation she does keep abreast of the issues circulating on the Reservation and she does return periodically. Tohe, for example, was the person her told me that KTNN could be heard on the Internet and she emailed me the link. She also periodically emails me links to topics on Navajo current events.

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