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2. STORIES OF PLACE AND INTERGENERATIONAL LEARNING

Examples from Santa Clara Pueblo

ABSTRACT

I was born in Santa Clara Pueblo, one of six Tewa-speaking Pueblos in Northern New Mexico. I live in the home of my Gia (mother) and my great grandmother, Gia Khun (Mother Corn). My great-great grandmother also lived in the same home, an adobe house, which has nurtured several generations of my extended family. My sense of place is embedded in this home with its tangible evidence of the continuity of my matriline. My house, and my matriline give me the source of my organic or personal center. It is through these connections that I am fully nurtured by the past, which is also my present. Furthermore, these connections also extend my identity beyond my personal center to the whole of Santa Clara Pueblo. In this chapter, by focusing on family and Tewa stories of place, I explore significance of place and ideas of intergenerational learning in my home community in order to demonstrate the power of our stories and the richness of Pueblo lands and natural resources to our identities as Pueblo people.

FROM PUJE TO SANTA CLARA PUEBLO

Santa Clara Pueblo is my home. It is the place that I long for whenever I have been away for even a few days. It is the place I return to over and over again. I was born here, still live here and hope to end my life here.

The marker on the side of the road, before turning into Santa Clara Pueblo states that we have lived in this location since the 15th century, although sources differ regarding the date when the village was established. Archeological explanations say that my ancestors moved from Puje, ten miles away, and joined those already living in our present location. At the same time, archeological evidence suggests that ancestral people were living in the areas of present day Santa Clara Pueblo and within the mountainous community of Puje before the 1200s: “The earliest known Anasazi occupation of the Pajarito Plateau dates back to Pueblo II (A.D. 900–1100). It is represented by scattered small house units with pithouses. The Pueblo II population appears to have been sparse on the plateau” (Cordell, 1979, p. 137). Extant ancestral

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sites within our homeland show this to be true as do personal observations made during walks through the hills and sites with my sister, Rina. In other words, groups of people lived within the boundaries of Santa Clara Pueblo even before Puje and present day Santa Clara Pueblo were settled.

Archeologists also say that we lived at Puje until the late 1500s, “Glaze potters at Puye ultimately abandoned their mountain home—by about A.D. 1577, the latest tree-ring date for that site—and moved down to Santa Clara by the Rio Grande” (Peckham & Olinger, 2008, p. 203). Movement from one place to another is evidenced by the number of sites seen today on the landscape. Stuart Peckham made mention of movement of prehistoric and early historic Pueblo peoples to Puje (1987). Among the Tanoan speakers of that time were the Tiwa, Tewa, Tano, Towa (Jemez-Pecos), and the Piro (Parsons, 1939, 1996, p. 923):

Now extinct, Tano is considered by some linguists to have been a southern Tewa dialect. Although its influence on the Tewa at Puye may have been slight, it may have been enough to cause today’s people of Santa Clara Pueblo (who claim Puye as an ancestral village) to speak a dialect noticeably different from that spoken by the other Tewa pueblos (so different that the people of the latter pueblos make fun of the way the Santa Clarans speak Tewa. (Peckham, 1987, p. 281)

Puje is better known to the public and pronounced as “Puye.” We Santa Clarans use the “j” sound in our language and insist on calling our homeland “Puje”. The “y” sound is familiar to the other five Tewa communities who are the neighbors of Santa Clara Pueblo in northern New Mexico: Ohkay Owingeh, Tesuque, San Ildefonso, Pojoaque, and Nambe. The word, “Puje” in our Tewa language can mean “gathering of rabbits” or “brain-tanned leather,” depending on how quickly the word is spoken or where the emphasis of the sound of the word is placed.

Puje today sits on a mesa top, nestled in the canyons of Santa Clara Pueblo tribal lands and overlooks the Rio Grande Valley in what is now the state of New Mexico (see [Figure 1](#)). Individuals could have easily walked by foot from the mesa top having intimate knowledge of their landscape. Among the ruins of my ancestors’ homes are remnants of things they used in their everyday lives. These days, we visit and revisit our ancestral home to connect with the past and with the spirits of those who have passed on.

When we lived at our ancestral home at Puje, we took care of the land, planting and cultivating Indigenous foods (corn, beans, squash) and harvesting the many wild plants and animals. Life was difficult because of the dry and harsh climatic conditions in the mountainous area of Puje; nonetheless, my ancestors survived. We had survived for hundreds of years caring for and living off the land. When we completely moved down from the mountains and joined the villagers at present day Santa Clara Pueblo, many of the traditions developed in our ancestral homeland continued from generation to generation as we practiced the new ways of a hydraulic irrigation agrarian society.



Figure 1. Puje

Today it takes us mere minutes to get into our cars whenever we choose to visit Puje. And for some of us (my relatives, especially), when we visit Puje many questions about the lives of our ancestors come to mind. Among the questions I ask myself are: Was moving from the mesa top to the plains an easy decision? What reasons prompted the move? We can only guess what was on their minds at the time when the movement began. Were there new people coming into the area from different directions threatening their lives? Was the move done in delayed sequences? According to archeologists, during the late 1500s a severe drought drove my ancestors down from Puje to join their Tewa kin living at Kha P'o Owingeh or Santa Clara Pueblo: "This event roughly coincided with a period of severe drought (A.D. 1577–1587) that affected the Puye district and further substantiates the Santa Clara tradition that Puye was its ancestral village" (Peckham & Olinger, 2008, p. 211).

The Tewa of Puje came down from the high mesa to present day Santa Clara Pueblo very close in time to the arrival of the Spaniards who came with intentions to colonize New Mexico in 1592. The Tewa they joined had been living at their village ten miles from Puje near the Rio Grande, for 200 plus years (Hill, 1982, p. 1). Residential and work sites still found along the Rio Grande were built by the village ancestors to make adjustments which coincided with needs of a hydraulic irrigation agrarian society (Dozier, 1970, p. 39). The Puje ancestors began to practice hydraulic irrigation in the fields alongside the River when they moved from Puje.

Spaniards had already begun their exploratory expeditions into northern New Mexico and immediately began to impose their religious practices and customs on people living at Santa Clara including the recent arrivals from Puje. Spanish oppression of Pueblo lifeways was experienced by the villagers for almost 100 years until 1680 when we had no choice but to join the Pueblo Revolt. According to oral tradition, Santa Clarans recount that during the time of the Pueblo Revolt ancestral Santa Clarans moved back to Puje to stay away from the turmoil. In spite of the horrific assault on our lives, we did the best we could to stay true to our own religious practices and beliefs. The Spanish Catholics (especially the clergy) eschewed our dances, prayers, songs, and all things that were part of our naturalistic

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lives and beliefs. Reflecting on my ancestors' past, I also often consider how we manage daily life in the present and will manage our lives in the near and far future at Santa Clara Pueblo.

Family Structures and Loyalties

Today there are differences of opinion about social, linguistic, and ceremonial changes occurring at Santa Clara Pueblo. Elders in the community say changes are too rapid while others say things are 'okay'. Certainly, when the Puje ancestors lived on top of the mesa, there must have been varying opinions about how life should be lived. For example, when the ancestors chose to leave their homes at Puje, it must have been a tremendous change for all. They had to adapt to a different lifestyle from a mountainous hunting-gathering and nominal agrarian existence to more of a sedentary horticultural lifestyle. Now as practically full-time farmers they had to manage their days differently; for example, now they had to pay close attention to the changing of the seasons and the effects of these changes on their crops and the availability of water:

Changes in the late 1300s up to the mid-1500s were rather dramatic. With a more dependable water source and the protection offered by aggregation into larger villages riverine farmers increased varieties of standard crops (including gourds) and also raised cotton and tobacco and turkeys (mostly for feathers). The canal system expanded as the population increased along the Rio Grande and its tributaries. Correspondingly, forms of government to control the use of these ditches had to become more sophisticated. With the advancement of their farming program came more craftwork and further religious ceremonies from planting season to harvest time

By 1540 the pueblos and their Anasazi ancestors had experienced approximately 3000 years of agricultural tradition. The very fact that they survived and expanded from their rather humble beginnings in the arid and unpredictable Four Corners region is a tribute to their inner strength, work ethic, innovation, resourcefulness, tenacity, and adaptability. (Vlasich, 2005, pp. 7-8)

Change is inevitable, and yet generations later many of the core values that existed then are still consciously practiced today. For example, *respect* is a key value, and the claim is that we owe respect for all things on earth and in the sky, the living and the dead, the movements of the clouds, the changing of the seasons—all of life. The everyday and the spectacular events are given the same attention and response as is the attention to work ethic, innovation, resourcefulness, tenacity, and adaptability.

One summer when I was nine years old, I remember sitting on a branch of a fruit tree across the road from our family home. It was late afternoon, a quiet afternoon, when I heard my mother calling me. I quickly came down from the tree and walked to the house. Inside the house, my mother said, "Na pava paa" or "make tortillas". I do not remember anything else about that late afternoon, but I do know that I

complied with my mother's request to make tortillas for the family. Early on, we children in the community were asked to participate in adult tasks. Rina Swentzell, Santa Clara Pueblo scholar and my sister, made the following comment in her 1982 dissertation:

There is no "waiting to grow up" for an individual to help build a house, care for the fields or cook for the extended family. Expectations to participate in all serious activities of the group are felt as soon as the individual is seen to be capable. Young girls of eight years may be expected to feed a crew of five to ten field workers, which is as serious a task as any "mature" person is expected to perform. Learning is through doing, and children are encouraged to understand and figure out real-life situations. The thinking is that if a child is to become a responsible person, he not only must be exposed to adults engaged in demanding tasks but also must participate in such tasks. There is a trust that the child is capable of real responsibilities. (Swentzell, 1982, p. 28)

My older brother who is 79 years old made a similar statement about children and youth who are requested to do adult tasks (personal communication, 2016). He recalled, "When our great grandmother wanted things done it was her way and, you know, everything was work oriented, "Weh se bo" or "right away." This was a command that was sharp and clear and there was no questioning that. Our mother was like our great grandmother."

I interviewed another male elder years ago when my older brother and my sister, Rina, were working on a book project, *Sacred to Secular: Transformation of a Gendered World*, at the School of American Research in 1996 (unpublished). A male elder involved in this book project said the following regarding children and work in the community:

Hard work applied to both boys and girls. The families, the girl's side will look at the boy's side and say, "He's not lazy." They'd look at it that way. On the girl's side, they'd say the same thing...Down here, "nice girl!" is all they say, "Hiwodi-namu. Hae-wi-tehki-naha", she knows how to do everything, make bread, she knows how to cook. (Male elder, 1996)

Still today one can still see children in the community being given tasks that in another society would seem inappropriate for a child. In our community, though, we are all seen as being capable of assuming adult responsibilities. Imitating a task usually performed by adults is demonstrated in numerous ways. Young children work with clay because they see their mothers, aunts, and grandmothers making pottery at the kitchen table. During our ceremonial dances children make the same steps as adult dancers. With continued participation the dancing steps, awkward at first, become equal to the steps of adult dancers. Swentzell following Pearce's writings introduced the notion of imitation in this way: Pearce referred to preliterate cultures as dependent upon what was referred to as "willing imitation," whereby imitation

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is both play and incorporation of the child into the adult world of action and where children gain their sense of reality through this play (Swentzell, 1982, p. 28).

To the generation in which I grew up, the community was the whole world, and Tewa, the language spoken at Santa Clara Pueblo, captures the core values held dear in that world. For example, everyone in the community was your ko-o, your aunt, your mae-mae, your uncle. In other words, we are all related. Other elders who also participated in the *Sacred to Secular* book project explained,

When I was growing up, I felt related to everybody whether they were related or not. You called them aunt or uncle even if they weren't your aunt or uncle. You were more respectful to them than now. We learned to work together, care for each other, to work for the good of the community. In Tewa there is no word for family because we are all related. Instead, "matuu" or "relative" is the word used when we talk about our relations. Individuals and families were part of the communal group. Santa Clara values came out of this collective understanding. That's what community is – a group of people who are bound together by a set of values not just living together but where you have strong bonds not only within family but inter-family. (Female elder, 1996)

Community? Community always meant Oweh-neh or Santa Clara to me. When the drums start beating we dropped everything and started running, as children, into the Bupingeh (plaza) and it was the most exciting thing about being a Pueblo child. It brought all the people, it just called everybody. The next symbols of community to me are mae-mae, uncle and ko-o, aunt. Everybody was either mae-mae or ko-o in my mind. Oweh-neh was totally like being in a womb, totally in a place where you belonged. (Male elder, 1996)

Exercising these relationships in everyday life and during special times remains visible in Santa Clara. For example, we lived and still live according to the changing of the seasons: spring, summer, fall, winter. In the early 1940s, springtime for men meant cleaning the farm field ditches, which would be used for irrigation. They also made rows for planting and cultivating crops. Crops such as corn, beans, and squash would be planted in the fields south of the village. During this time, women and children gathered wild, natural plants such as whaa or Rocky Mountain Bee plant. We also collected t'simahaa, a celery-like plant. Whaa is eaten as a vegetable dish and t'simahaa is used as seasoning in bean dishes and other stews.

Summertime meant that male members would be in the fields tending the growing plants. Water from the Rio Grande was the main source for irrigating these plants. Water for cooking the vegetables and stews came from the Santa Clara Canyon creek that feeds into the Rio Grande, which it still does today. Women and children made daily treks to take lunches to the men working in the fields. Elderly community members recalled that as children in the early 1900s, they walked to the fields with emptied lard buckets now filled with food for male relatives working in the fields. One elder woman remembered those times. She said, "Men were hard working.

The women or children would carry lunches to them. For myself, I would carry my tortillas on my back and two little lard pails with food in them for my father.” When time allowed, men and older boys would walk to the Santa Clara Canyon ponds or to the Rio Grande to catch fish. During this time, women kept busy doing home chores, tending children and making pottery. At the end of summer, the community would come together to celebrate the community’s harvest.

Fall season meant continued harvesting of foods such as chile, apples, peaches, and apricots. Young and old were kept busy helping with tasks that included peeling, cutting up, husking, storing, and grinding (see [Figure 2](#)). Mothers, aunts, and grandmothers were especially busy braiding corn for drying, braiding chile into long strands, and drying corn to make t’si-kho (chicos) in the outdoor beehive ovens where bread would be baked all year long. Children were included in these activities. One elderly community member remembered how she helped in corn preparation:

As a child I remember mounds of cornhusks in front of homes and people sitting in the middle of these piles. I remember feelings of energy and purposeful activity. Families, of course, were husking the corn, drying them for their family and animals. During my lifetime, I remember various times spent braiding corn, preparing it to be hung to dry. I also remember, as a child, seeing corn being dried in hornos [outdoor ovens]. A bushel or two of wet corn would be placed over a thin bed of ashes inside the horno. The door to the horno would be sealed with mud so that no heat would escape. The next day the corn would be taken out, braided and hung to complete the drying. We would say, “Eh tsii-ko paa or, we made chicos. Kernels from the corn would later be made into chico stew. Another corn soup called posole was a big favorite. All dried foods were stored until needed. (Female elder, 1996)

I grew up in the early 1940s, and as a child, during winter, I remember my father bringing home wild game, especially deer and elk. He was a skilled fisherman also. Often, we ate trout for breakfast, noon meal, and supper. Much of the deer and elk was dried and prepared for storage by my mother, me and my sisters. The meat would not last an entire winter because we found it too delicious. Another activity for the men was to gather and chop wood for winter cooking and heating inside of our home. Once winter came and all the food stuffs were stored it was time for storytelling, a time to reinforce our values through stories. It was generally a time for bracing against the cold elements, a time for quietness allowing the earth the time it needed to replenish itself. Winter dances consisted of animal dances such as the deer shadeh and the buffalo shadeh.

Throughout the whole cycle of the seasons, all of our lives were bound by activities that would ensure our survival in ways similar to what our Puje ancestors had to do. Through working together—individually and with extended family and other community members—our lives would come together as a whole, whatever the activity. The ideal was for each community member to subsume himself or herself

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Figure 2. A “teaching moment” to Santa Clara Pueblo youth: Dalien K’u-sunu P’in Naranjo (seated on ground); Julien Ogowi Naranjo (with glasses); Ezra T’on Naranjo Smith (seated to left of Pueblo elder), Gilbert Muwae T’sae Naranjo

for the good of the community. We survived as a collective rather than as individuals. In order to and function together we had to work and contribute.

Life Lived Like a Story

Stories have been part of Pueblo life since the beginning of our time. In the Pueblo world, stories help us remember our past. Through stories we remind ourselves about who we were and what we must become to be good citizens of our community. Storytelling helps us move from one generation to the next, carrying the stories of our past with us. We gave power and meaning to stories told in the many places where they were situated. Through stories there is always the hope that the young ones will become responsible for and carry on the cultural knowledge of the elders. As a child in the 1940s there were various ways to pass on stories—inside the kiva where the men gathered; at home where extended family members came together for storytelling sessions; and, in our everyday lives as we went about performing daily tasks. We found every possible reason and situation in which to tell stories.

Through stories we heard about current community happenings, about our collective past, gossip about the outcome of relationships and about standards of behavior. Stories held us “close to the earth” as Acoma Pueblo scholar and community member Simon Ortiz stated in the narrative script for the film, “Surviving Columbus.” In the preface of his book, *Men on the Moon: Collected Short Stories*, Ortiz also wrote about stories in this way:

Story speaks for you. Story speaks for one. Simply put, story speaks for us. There is no other way to say it. That's a basic and primary and essential concept. Story has its own power, and the language of that story is of that power. We are within it, and we are empowered by it. We exist because of it. We don't exist without that power. As human beings, we, as personal and social cultural entities, are conscious beings because of story, no other reason. (1999, p. viii)

I have lived with stories all of my life. As children we were taught about appropriate behavior through stories. As a child, storytelling gatherings at my great grandmother's home were memorable evenings. In the early evenings, my family, as well as additional extended family members, would walk to Gia Khun's adobe home located in the center of the village. We would sit and wait for the stories to begin. Often, stories continued late into the night. During times of late evening storytelling, we children would fall asleep while adults continued the stories. Gia Khun, the oldest person in the room, remembering how life was lived at an earlier time, held everyone's attention during these special gatherings.

Memories of these gatherings are clear and locked into my mind even after 60 plus years. In the late 1940s, television was not a common fixture in homes at Santa Clara, so telling stories was our community's way of gaining information about the community, teaching through stories, and warning of witchcraft (including those caught transforming himself or herself into an altered form). We believed that individuals who transform themselves usually have intentions to cause harm. These stories were the ones most disturbing to us. After an evening of witch stories, walking back home in the dark with family I would feel my back tingling. I was certain a witch was trying to grab me.

Storytelling was not only reserved during evenings when extended family came together. Stories were also told in our everyday lives. A Pueblo elder male recently asserted, "Our daily life was in story form. The Pueblo was a virtual grapevine. We talked about what was happening ceremonially and what was happening in the community...Everything was a story" (personal communication, 2016). As a teenager, this elder remembered walking to the fields with his cousins where a variety of stories would be told between them.

Stories continue at unexpected times, and the values embedded in them continue to be shared. For example, while eating at the Santa Clara community Senior Center on any day, conversations with other Tewa speakers at the table will invariably include core values. Not too long ago, I spent time at one table with a female elder. The stories began from the time we greeted each other until we finished eating. The particular story that she told me was about my great grandmother, Gia Khun, Mother Corn. When my lunch partner was a young child she had a high fever that reached dangerous levels. Gia Khun was called to help lower the fever. Gia Khun got particular herbs she kept in her back room, walked back to the child's home, and rubbed her body with herbs made into paste. The female elder at the table said, "I

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remember to this day how the fever went away. It is because of your Gia Khun that I am still alive.” This female elder is now in her mid-eighties.

Gia Khun was an herbalist. As children we would go with her to gather plants that she would use for curing. I remember walking into her back room and seeing various plants hanging from the ceiling. I never asked her what they were but somehow knew they were part of her treatment supply.

Gia Khun, born in 1867 lived in an adobe house where her mother, Martina Cahete (born 1843) and grandmother, Tani-povi, Parrot Flower (birthdate unknown), and great-grandmother lived. Gia Khun was mother to eight biological children and raised seven more children who needed nurturing. I recall my older sister, Rina, most strongly describing Gia Khun. She said once that “Gia Khun was of the world view and lifestyle that fostered the nurturing ideal.” Gia Khun was also one of the midwives who served the entire community during her adult life. She delivered me and my three older siblings. In the late 1930s and into the 40s, community members were afraid to use Indian Health services in Santa Fe. When Gia Khun delivered me, she was 74 years old.

Besides being a midwife, Gia Khun had other important responsibilities in the community. The community recognized and responded to her strong female presence. She was capable and rational. Gia Khun’s principal language was Tewa. She could talk a smattering of Spanish but almost no English. When the U.S. Government first introduced Western education into Santa Clara Pueblo in 1891, Gia Khun attended school less than one week. Many years later we children would tease her by asking her to recite the alphabet. If she was feeling silly and playful she would say, “aah, beh, seh” (a, b, c), then quit because this was as far as she could go with the alphabet. We all laughed at the game we played. We learned Tewa because this was how she would communicate with us. Gia Khun’s Western education was non-existent but her community cultural education could not be matched. Men from the community respected her community knowledge and would pay her regular visits. Her cultural knowledge and commanding presence always held the attention of the males in the community. In those days it was men who talked about issues affecting the community but here she was giving advice when it was sought. There was high value placed on elders and since she fit into this category, it only added to the regard community members held for her.

The world that Gia Khun grew up and lived in, between 1867 and 1952, was truly lived in story form. Stories were told throughout each day as the teller remembered to tell a story appropriate to that moment. A story could be told when males were going by wagon to the agricultural fields to work, when a woman thought of a story while cooking in the kitchen area, or while making pottery. In my mother’s case, I remember many stories she would offer while she was at work or at rest. Once, when my mother was quite old, I put her in the car and drove her to town. The afternoon was warm and clouds were visible. With her trembling finger she pointed toward the sky and said, “Deh waa k’won deh” or “They are making eggs.” I was stunned by

her prediction of cloud formations that would bring rain. I have never forgotten that moment when my Gia, my mother, and I were in town and she simply said, “Deh waa k’won deh.” To this day, when I look at particular cloud formations I remember her words. Like these moments, I have more *story memories* given to me from my mother, more so than my father because as a female I naturally spent more time helping my female relatives wherever we were together.

Another story that remains with me to this day is the story my Gia told about our ancestral movements to find a place to build our homes, to make a community. The story goes this way:

We were coming from the direction of Santa Fe. Some were stopped. First they were going by Oga-P’o-geh. There they buried Kha-je (sacred objects) that will bring soft rain. From there they traveled and got to Te t’su-geh (Tesuque). Some were left at Te T’su-geh (Cottonwood tree place). From there they traveled to Nambe (Pueblo of the roundish earth). They traveled again and stopped near P’osuweh-geh (Drinking water place) and from there they went to P’owho-geh (where the water slides down or San Ildefonso Pueblo). From there they came to O-weneh (Santa Clara Pueblo), singing. Then the leaders went to Ts’i kumu (Santa Clara’s western sacred mountain). There a Kha-je was planted and so if a cloud appears, a very heavy rainstorm will come, make mean clouds. It’s because the Kha-je are angry. From there some of the people went to Ohkeh (San Juan Pueblo). From there others went to Picuris and Taos. Taos is called P’insuu because the mountains are so tall in that area. They went to Blue Lake and that became the place with the most P’in-nung (to have great power) because that’s where the Kha-je which have the P’in-nung were left. (personal communication, 1992)

Not only were stories told in narrative format, stories were also built into song, verse and dance, and contained important themes for our community. A children’s song provides an example:

Tunjo kwaje na povi saa, tunjo kwaje na povi saa, ts’e okhi t’a gi wagi na povi saa, p’in povi, p’in povi, do muu dang kuun, kanyi na nang dang ku, di si dte deh (On top of Tunjo there are flowers, on top of Tunjo there are flowers, I see them so far away, I cry).

In English, Tunjo is called Black Mesa, which is an important site for Tewa people in northern New Mexico. Black Mesa also serves as the accepted visual and physical divide between Santa Clara and San Ildefonso Pueblos. My Gia would sing that song often. As a child my Gia was taken to the Santa Fe Indian School. Whenever I sing this song I imagine Tewa children being taken to the Indian school, staying away from home for months at a time and singing this song whenever they felt lonesome for home. This song tells not only of significant places, but also of our past, recounting that time when the U.S. Government took Pueblo children away

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from their homes in an attempt to groom them into “acceptable” citizens of the United States. My mother has been gone for twelve years, yet every time I pass Tunjo I sing the song all the while remembering her.

Another verse that my Gia taught me is a teaching story about being industrious, being responsible, and sharing in household tasks. The verse goes like this,

Phinini-ae ang ba deh t’a, deh t’a, giin (corn children they grind, grind, like this)
Saja-vi-ae ang ba deh t’a, deh t’a giin (Grandmother’s children they grind, grind, like this)

Huu chenu, huu chenu (Huu, throw, Huu, throw)
Huu huu huu

We no longer grind corn to make flour but Gia Khun would have had to work at this task given to her by her mother. Even though we no longer grind corn, the core value of being industrious remains. In other words, being productive is what was passed along generationally, from Gia Khun’s mother to Gia Khun, to Gia, to me.

Celebrations of Life in Nature and Homes

I have eight biological brothers and sisters (two more were added making the count ten siblings). There were many of us in the home and as youngsters each one of us had to help. The boys would go fishing and bring home trout to feed the family. They would also go out with our father during the fall season to the Santa Clara Canyon and elsewhere to bring home two to three deer so that we may have food to eat. I remember Gia calling our names as we slept. She needed extra hands to help cut meat. I was a child, but I knew when she called I had to respond to her call for help. She was adept at making jerky and storing food from cuts of the deer meat.

Community for people in Santa Clara did not just include other people, but also the plant, animal life, and other beings. While our men hunted to feed their families, they also gave great respect for the lives of the creatures feeding us. This regard and reciprocity was expressed through community ceremonial practices such as animal dances, corn and harvest dances.

Ceremonial dances have been an important part of our lives for many generations. Dances occur throughout the seasons. There are harvest dances in the summer and animal dances in winter. Reciprocity, a basic core value, is a big part of any dance. For example, we dance to give appreciation for our blessings, for the food that is grown and harvested and for the animals who sustain us. In the case of the deer (See [Figure 3](#)), it gave up its life so that we may have life and so we are compelled to honor and pay respect to the deer through dance.

The deer dance is a winter dance. When the dance is petitioned and danced in the plazas we create a drama where the deer come from the mountains, enter the center of the village and are with us for the day. When the deer came in 2016, it was early Sunday morning, February 14th, Valentine’s Day for the rest of the United States.



Figure 3. Deer dance

For us, it was time again for the deer dance, planned and performed by the Summer Moiety (one of two units into which the community is divided based on unilineal descent). My niece and I left my small adobe home at sunrise wearing colored Indian blankets around our shoulders. We walked toward the sounds of singing and drumming, a short distance away from the main village. My older brother, his daughter, and granddaughter were already waiting at a small knoll where the singers and drummers called through song the deer, rams and antelope to come down from the two hills, a short distance away. Many other villagers wearing colorful blankets waited anxiously for the animals to make their trek down from the two hills. The crisp early morning air, singing by the Summer Moiety men and the anticipation of everyone who waited brought about feelings of a blessed day. Adding to the magic of the moment, a group of geese suddenly swirled above the men while they were singing and drumming. The flock of geese swirled and swirled ever so gently and silently for several minutes. After making their presence known, the flock of geese quietly flew away until they were no longer visible.

When the one hundred plus animals, in stately fashion, made their way down the base of the two hills and inched towards the singers and drummers, reverence for the deer filled the air. With blackened painted faces, the deer were dressed in kilts and white shirts, deer antlers fastened atop their heads and each holding two sticks to help them walk on all fours. The deer pranced forward bringing with them two

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antelopes and two pairs of male and female buffalo dancers who joined them. As the hundred plus animals came closer and closer the singers and drummers separated to allow them to continue their walk into the village's large plaza. All onlookers slowly followed behind the deer, the other animals, drummers and singers. The singing continued until all humans and animals reached the plaza. As soon as the animals reached the plaza area they formed two straight lines to begin their first dance of the day. Soon after the animal dancers started their dance, amazingly, a different flock of geese appeared as if by magic and circled the animal dancers. The geese also became onlookers swirling around and around. In that moment, we all, animal dancers, singers, drummers, geese and humans became locked into a common moment. The geese swirled around the dancers for several minutes before they flew away and were no longer visible. We who were watching felt blessed.

It is easy to imagine stories being told to listeners generations ago at *Puje* as they collectively gathered to hear stories or when a story was told while they worked at their daily tasks. Like our ancestors, we believe that all things have life such as the clouds, the trees, and the clay from which pottery is made. My Gia was a great potter and would make big bowls and jars from micaceous clay that was collected in the mountains of Northern New Mexico, a number of miles away from Santa Clara Pueblo. When she went for red clay, closer to our village, I would also go with her. Before she began gathering clay she would ask permission of the clay to bring it home. Here is her plea to the clay, "Nang ochu quijo, we have come here to see you. We have come to take you. Just as you will eat us, you will feed us and clothe us so please do not hide...please don't cry."

Documentation of Our Practices and Beliefs by Insiders and Outsiders

Many people who are not Tewa have been interested in telling our stories to the outside world including Ruth Benedict, Elsie Clews Parsons, Mabel Dodge Lujan, Clara True, Mary Disette, Margaret Jacobs, John Peabody Harrington, W. W. Hill, Charles Lange and many others as the years passed. Most recently, the book, *Ladies of the Canyon*, by Lesley Poling Kempes tells the story of the early women's fascination with the Tewa world.

Most of our stories remain in the community, but a few stories have been published. The first person to recount stories of Santa Clara Pueblo was Elsie Clews Parsons, a Euroamerican anthropologist from New England, as were many women who wandered into our world in the mid-1800s to the end of WWII. Parson's book *Tewa Tales* (1926) became both popular and professional reading in the U.S. and abroad. Although she gained popularity outside of the Pueblos, present day Santa Clarans do not remember her, even though she stayed at Clara True's ranch, located between Santa Clara and San Ildefonso Pueblos. Recently, an elder Santa Clara male said about Parsons, "I don't know of anyone who remembers her. I am sure that individuals met her, but it was too long ago, at the turn of the century, to remember who she was."

Well known storyteller and enrolled member of Santa Clara Pueblo offered a local perspective from within community: Pablita Velarde published a story about “Turkey Girl” in her book, *Old Father Story Teller* (1989). In the story, Turkey Girl lived with her unkind foster mother at Shupinna, an ancient pueblo site across the canyon from Puje. Each day Turkey Girl was sent out to find food for the turkeys she was responsible for. One day she managed to get to the celebration at Puje and with the help of her turkey friends was transformed into a beautiful young woman. When she arrived at Puje everyone was stunned by her transformation. Even her foster mother gasped at her beauty. The jealous foster mother told the young men who were fighting over her that she was a “black-hearted witch.” Turkey Girl felt fear so she shortened her time at Puje and went back to her home where she felt safe with her turkeys and away from the pursuing young men. She ran as fast as she could to get away from them. She ran into the mountains. As the young men came near her the turkeys spread their wings to hide and protect her. This allowed Turkey Girl to escape safely into the mountain that came to be called Turkey Track Mountain or P’in di ang and there she lived out her life with her turkey friends.

I have known about this story most of my life. To this day, when I see P’in di ang or Turkey Track Mountain, I remember Turkey Girl. To me, this story carries a reminder that sometimes relatives are not kind, even when a child is industrious and enjoys participating in community events. In this case, Turkey Girl’s desire to participate was thwarted by young men who were pursuing her so she dashed home to be in the safety of her turkey friends who ultimately saved her from the pursuers. More deeply, within this story we learn the name of the village where Turkey Girl is from, its location, the place the people go for ceremonies and why the people named the mountain, P’in di ang. Telling stories that are part of the mythology or folklore of the Tewa world is a deliberate attempt to place in the minds of others the mechanisms whereby Tewa people tell the stories of their past and present, how they tie meaning of everyday events to instructions for the children, cautions for adults, information about the importance of the place names in our landscape and so much more.

In 2000, my sister Rina Swentzell published a book titled *Younger-Older Ones*. She needed to write this book for herself in response to certain archaeological explanations that had been given about migration of our ancestors and the establishment of our villages. Only 50 copies were printed by a very small press, Weaselsleeves, in Santa Fe, New Mexico. The story is a captivating tale of a Tewa Pueblo set in the early 1400s. The Pueblo was experiencing great upheaval, having to contend with many social uncertainties that had thrown the community out of balance. Among the most serious was a voracious gossip who was telling tales and causing suspicions about other individuals and whole families and many unexplainable deaths occurring in a short period of time, the cause of which was ultimately attributed to the one the gossip accused of witchcraft. Her name is Ojegi. Ojegi wanders through the hills on seemingly personal whims causing villagers to suspect ulterior reasons for her behavior.

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In the story, Ojegi is the daughter-in-law of Gia-Cah, the matriarch of one extended family. She is asked to come back for a funeral. Now a conversation takes place between Ta P'in (head of the Winter people) and Gia Nang Owing and Gia Cah (Ojegi's mother-in-law). In a small room, Ta P'in speaks: "Ojegi is fiercely independent and goes on many walk-about's leaving her children and home behind as she explores ways to settle her restlessness. Ojegi's mother died when Ojegi was small, so another woman, Gia Nang Owing, raised her. At a certain point, Ojegi is told by elders to leave the village.

Sometime past, we asked that Ojegi leave our Owingeh [our village] because things were not right. She and Sokhuwa (her husband) are here now because our child's breath has left and no one objected to their coming. However, there is much talk and disturbance out there because Ojegi has been seen chasing through the trees. That is not good. Her actions are causing turmoil in our midst. We should all be of one mind this night and not torn apart among ourselves with the fear that she has brought into our hearts. (Swentzell, 2000, p. 19)

The elders were concerned this night because of the need to help the soul, the breath of the deceased child to move more easily on its journey. Sorrow captured everyone's mind in the meeting as they did strive to honor the breath of the child. Some felt greatest sorrow because of the insinuation that Ojegi was causing all the problems of the Owingeh, the village. Even Ojegi had to leave from this situation because of her own sorrow. Still, as she left, she wondered why she always "chose not to be a part of the people" (p. 22).

In the whole story there is emphasis on interpersonal relationships between women of various kin and non-kin as Rina explored the origins of power in the community. It is ultimately the matriarchs (or individual women) who decide on ways for dealing with major issues. Here is an example of a matriarch gently mediating the current problems: The matriarch, Gia Cah, (or "leaf mother") has traveled to one of the major pueblo shrines near the village with the gossiper "Povi Cah" ("leaf flower") and prays at the shrine].

We come here to share our thoughts with you. Listen to us and care for us. Help us to care for each other. Sometimes it is so hard but that is all we have of importance. Our Owingeh, our village is not right because we do not care for each other. There is too much talking and not enough listening. There are many unkind words being said. Those words make us uncaring. Our breaths are being taken away because of our unkindness to each other. Another is about to leave us, and, yet, we do not change our thoughts and hearts. Help us. (Swentzell, 2000, p. 36)

As time moves along, Ojegi convinces her husband and some of their children to join her in a place by a river in order to set-up a new household where she has moved. Her grown daughter (now a mother, herself), Okhuwa Povi, cloud flower, visits Ojegi in her new center-place. Okhuwa Povi returns to the Owingeh of origin and

tells everyone about Ojegi's new place. Soon a meeting is held in which the merits of staying or joining Ojegi are debated. Finally, all listen as Ta P'in, the elder, speaks:

My children, we have heavy hearts. We have been many days to talk with [the spirit] Wind-Old-Woman. What she has to say takes courage. Our corn seeds that we have placed in our Gia (Mother) Earth are not being received by her. Wind-Old-Woman hears their crying and comes to sing their song with them. The Cloud-Bearers have also heard the song of the corn seeds as well as the stories of those who have gone to them from our Owingeh, our village. They talk about our uncaring. They talk about how we have each gone into ourselves and do not clearly feel our Gia Earth, the clouds, the wind, the birds, each other. We must again listen with our whole being to the sounds around us to know that we are all younger-older ones, that we are all women-men. We are to leave this center place and go south as all the people before us have done. We must go with good thoughts and hearts of kindness so that we can hear where to go. But there is much to do before we leave. (pp. 81–82)

Time passes, and little by little, all the villagers have joined Ojegi and her family in their new “center-place.” Eventually, this movement of the village people to a new location, down from the Mesa to a river site, establishes P'osongeh Owingeh, Santa Clara Pueblo, in Rina's story.

From this story, we are left with a clear understanding that within this world, one woman, made a difference. The power of women is confirmed. In our communities, we have always known about the power of women in all domains of life. On the other hand, anthropologists and dominant Western scholars, in their writings, do not seem to notice the gendered world that our ancestors and we have created. Yet, because of the activities recounted in our stories we can see the gendered world around us where complementarity of roles remains critical to holding our culture intact.

CONCLUSION

An elder Santa Clara man talked with me recently, and he said that we do not write many of our stories. We live in a culture that primarily maintains order through the oral repetition of metaphors represented by aspects of our performances, songs, verses, stories, and prayers (personal communication, 2016). We pass the culture on and interpret it to our children the way we understand and perceive it, and this is best done orally in the form of stories.

If we revisit the story of “Turkey Girl,” we understand that she is shielded from the boys who are chasing her by the turkeys for whom she has been caring. The narrative sets the stage for learning why she can get home without harm—her goodness towards the turkeys is returned to her. She runs away with the turkeys who then put up huge beautiful wings to hold her back from her persecutors. At the right moment, the wings pop up, giving Turkey Girl and her flock a chance to escape to “the cave of shrines, into a better land” (Velarde, 1989, p. 36).

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Others who study us have their own ways of searching for answers to the migration of Pueblo Peoples, of their movements. However, we do not concern ourselves with Western scientific proof of our movements. Through our many oral stories—some told, others not—we resurrect our memories, and within these memories are the elements of our cultural and community values. Through this process, some present-day Pueblo communities are still able to recount the ancestors' steps along the way to their current homelands. We know then where we belong and how we came to be. To Pueblo people, many have told the stories when asked for them; others among us respect and hold close those stories we choose to reserve for ourselves.

Hae heh. That is all.

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