Re-Enchanting the Land of Enchantment[1]: Religious Regeneration in a Native/Chicanx Community

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Despite the estrangement and loss wrought by colonization and its effects, transnational Native peoples continue to practice their religious traditions. Contrary to a popular assumption that American Indians are 'vanishing,' or even worse, no longer 'authentic,' complex contemporary religious movements among transnational Native peoples are taking place throughout the Americas (Huhndorf 2001). Reyna Ramirez's work on 'urban Indian' identity, for example, illustrates that Native identity is not a one-way road to dilution but acts dialectically from reserves to urban spaces. In addition, many New Mexican Chicanxs recognize themselves as mixed-blood descendants of local tribes or as having an Indigenous heritage from south of the U.S./Mexico border, such that Native and Chicanx identity in the Southwest is complex and overlapping. An increasingly pan-Indian and hemispheric Indigenous identity in this region appears now to be re-orienting Native and Chicanx peoples to Indigenous religious lifeways.[2] These cultural processes should not be considered new. The American Southwest was transformed during the Spanish colonial era. Plains Indians kidnapped by the Comanche for domestic labor—mostly Navajo, Apache, Pawnee, Paiute, Kiowa Apache and Utes—were sold to Spanish settlements (Brooks 2003). Referred to as *genízaros* by the

[1] This research and narrative takes place in Albuquerque, New Mexico's South Valley neighborhood. New Mexico's official state nickname is "The Land of Enchantment."

[2] Although religion is an imperfect label for the sacred experiences of peoples, whether they are Indigenous or not, religious studies scholars typically use the term religion or religious tradition in order to signify the metaphysical coherence of shared sacred phenomena. While spirituality is popularly characterized as distinct from religion, religious studies scholarship tells us that spirituality often acts as an expression of religion, or even as synonymous with religion, depending on the practitioner, since religion as a conceptual category encompasses much more than just institutional affiliation but also "religious experience," ritual, and diverse conceptualizations of the sacred. Thus, scholars of Native American and Indigenous religious traditions generally refer to these sacred phenomena as religion, religious traditions, or even as religious lifeways to denote them as holistic and inseparable from daily life. Some scholars in the field use the term spirituality either as an umbrella category for sacred phenomena or to denote certain dimensions of Native religion, however, there are socio-political repercussions for doing so, such as a social or even legal perception that Native religions are less legitimate than other forms of religion. For a discussion on how the legal framing of Native American religious traditions as "spirituality" as opposed to "religion" undermines Native American religious freedom, see Michael McNally's "From Substantial Burden on Religion to Diminished Spiritual Fulfillment: The San Francisco Peaks Case and The Misunderstanding of Native American Religion." *Journal of Law and Religion*. Volume 30, no. 1 (2015): 36–64. For more discussion on the relationship between spirituality and religion, see Nancy T. Ammerman's "Spiritual But Not Religious? Beyond Binary Choices in the Study of Religion." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 52(2) (2013): 258–278.

Spanish caste system,[3] these de-tribalized Indians would eventually make up one third of the population of New Mexico by the end of the 18th century, constructing new Indigenous lifeways, accommodated to their new environments (Gutiérrez 1991; Magnaghi 1990:86-95).

This paper examines the religious regeneration of a Native American and Chicanx community living in Albuquerque's South Valley. My focus is on La Plazita Institute, a community center that acts as a central hub for facilitating community regeneration and healing, addressing historical and currently experienced traumas. This research took place over a period of ethnographic immersion from July 2012-June 2013. These vignettes demonstrate that Native American and Indigenous religious traditions are actively woven into the 'urban spaces' of Albuquerque and its adjacent South Valley, fomenting Native survivance and 'regenerated' peoplehood.[4] I argue that this regeneration of Native lifeways serves as an earth-based pedagogy of possibility that contributes to a larger movement of Indigenous resistance.

Structural Violence is Colonial Violence

Chicanx and Native men across the country are disproportionately affected by structural violences, such as, poverty, inadequate schooling, and low-wage employment. Native Americans in border towns are more likely to experience discrimination in schools, qualifying for housing and through the criminal justice system (United States Commission on Civil Rights 2015). Although Native people make-up about 1% of the U.S. population they comprise 2% of those killed by police and have the highest incarceration rates, for example, Native youth make up 70% of those admitted to federal prisons (Males 2014; Arya and Rolnick 2009). When they get caught up in the criminal justice system, they are stigmatized for life. It is difficult for ex-cons to get a job or an apartment, making life after incarceration additionally challenging. Michelle Alexander (2010) argues that contemporary levels of incarceration are a modern form of slavery, resulting in generations of disempowered peoples in mostly black, Chicanx and Native communities. The men and women at La Plazita are attempting to break this cycle.

La Plazita's driving philosophy is 'la cultura cura,' or culture cures, meaning one's culture and traditions are the antidote to life on the street or in the system. La Plazita frames Indigenous identity as hemispheric, meaning they acknowledge the long-standing relationship between tribes of the Southwest and Mexico, which enables them to unite the diverse Indigenous and Chicanx communities represented in Albuquerque and the greater SW. Albino Garcia, Plazita's Apache/Chicanx

[3] Akin to the *Métis* in Canada, *genízaros* are currently recognized as Indigenous people by the state of New Mexico, *House Memorial 40 (HM40)*, "In Recognition," 2007 New Mexico State Legislature, Regular Session.

[4] Survivance denotes both the active nature of Native survival and the resistance endemic to it in Native American communities. It was originally used in a Native American Studies context by Anishinaabe scholar Gerald Vizenor in his text, *Manifest Matters: Narratives on Postindian Survivance* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999). See also, Natalie Avalos, "*Becoming* Human: 'Urban Indian' Decolonization and Regeneration in the Land of Enchantment" in *The Brill Handbook of Indigenous Religions: Pathways—Being, Becoming, Back* (forthcoming).

director, is an ex-con who views Native/Chicanx self-determination as not just material but primarily spiritual. He not only seeks to disrupt the school to prison pipeline by educating Native/ Chicanx youth on their histories and sacred traditions but also by providing alternatives to assimilation through an Indigenous oriented community—what he refers to as a *tiyospaye* that serves the neighborhood.[5] After his own incarceration, he was initiated into the Lakota Sun Dance and *inipi* (sweat lodge) traditions. The Sun Dance, a plains tradition of self-sacrifice involving fasting, prayer, and hours of dancing in the summer sun, is currently one of the more popular and accessible Native American religious rituals in the U.S.—not without contestation.[6] Albino and his son, also a Sun Dancer, hold a Lakota style sweat lodge once a week and take a group of young men and women up to the Dakotas every summer to participate in a Sun Dance, if they choose. These sweats are open to anyone in the community but are primarily intended for those they mentor. La Plazita seeks to affect change by reconnecting these men and women to Native religious lifeways that recognize an intelligent life force, referred to as Creator, and ceremonial life. This immersion in these earth-based practices intends to be spiritually transformative and deeply re-orienting, cultivating a deep respect for the earth and its immaterial dimensions.

In addition to Plains Indian style ceremony, they use a Mesoamerican "five worlds" of the Aztec or Mexica people model for community re-integration. Albino adapted this model from a similar program that he worked for in Salinas and Watsonville, California, explaining that it helped bring down recidivism rates among ex-cons and former gang members. Albino described these five worlds and their significance in a staff meeting I attended, drawing them like constellations on a white board.[7] The 'worlds' consist of oneself, family, community, institution, and in the center is Spirit. These interconnecting parts must be addressed consecutively, simulating a journey along a spiritual path. Participants are asked to complete

[5] *Tiyospaye* is the Lakota word for the community of extended family who set up their tipis in a group and travel together. As a Sun Dancer initiated into the Lakota style *inipi* tradition by Leonard Crow Dog, Albino Garcia weaves together plains Indian terminology and ritual with that of the Southwest and even Mexico, creating a patchwork tradition reflective of inter-tribal urban communities.

[6] In Bruce Lincoln's "A Lakota Sun Dance and the Problematics of Sociocosmic Reunion," Lincoln positions the Sun Dance as a revitalized plains tradition shaped by a history of racist dispossession, spectacle and activist intervention. Although the Sun Dance's aspirations of sociocosmic reunion have re-emerged with a sober commitment in a post-AIM moment, the ceremony itself struggles to reconcile this history with a religious leader's instructions to make the Sun Dance "open to all." The proliferation of Sun Dances in the plains, SW U.S. and even elsewhere is both testament to the ritual's popularity but also to its contestations. Sun Dances are generally Native-led. Some are open to non-Native people, others are restricted to people of color, others are for queer women of color, and so on. La Plazita's own *inipi* sweat lodge ceremony and yearly pilgrimage to a Sun Dance in the Dakotas avoids these tensions with non-Native peoples to some degree. The lodge itself resides in a primarily Native and Chicanx neighborhood, is chiefly used by Native and Chicanx residents of the South Valley but is open to all that have come to participate in the *tiyospaye*—the circle of community made by La Plazita itself.

[7] Field notes, 08/10/2012.

five actions, one for each 'world,' for instance, cooking dinner for one's family or interviewing someone in the community. As participants follow the steps of the paths, they must evaluate the significance of each world and ideally come to value the role (and humanity) of others in their own life.

In this staff meeting, Albino tells us about 'Kenny,' a young man who had been in jail several times for gang related activity. Kenny was seventeen years old when he came to La Plazita and like many young men in his position was reluctant to reflect on his self-destructive attitude or behavior. For his 'family' world assignment he decided to cook a spaghetti dinner for his parents, who were in their mid-thirties and members of the working poor. He had never cooked a meal before. After spending over an hour in the kitchen, his mother pacing anxiously in the hall, he finally served his parents a spaghetti dinner. Albino attended this dinner to honor Kenny efforts. Kenny's father eats first and is stunned. Tears roll down his cheeks. He says to his son, 'this is the best meal, I've ever had.' The whole table is in tears.

For his 'community' assignment, Albino met with Kenny downtown. They sat at a donut shop discussing Kenny's options when Albino notes a homeless man sitting nearby. Kenny shot the homeless man a dirty look and snickered, 'he smells.' Albino suggested that Kenny interview this man for his community action. Kenny is reluctant but won't say why. Days later Kenny and Albino meet again. Kenny is in tears and explains that he did not want to interview this man because 'I know that man! I kicked him in the head a few months ago. I saw him sleeping on the sidewalk near my partner's house and I just kicked him in the fucking head.' Eventually, Kenny interviewed the man and learned that he was a Vietnam vet, struggling with drug addiction and PTSD. Kenny was devastated to learn of this man's struggles and how the system continued to fail him, even though he was a vet. This assignment helped Kenny better understand the challenges the people in his community face that may prevent them from living well. He realized that acting with contempt to these people only compounded their misery. Now when Kenny sees this man, he smiles and says hello. As Albino tells it, more than any other 'world' assignment, in this one Kenny found his heart. Bearing witness to the complex lives of others prompted him to extend care instead of cruelty, igniting his sense of compassion.

While Native American identity is generally understood to be place-based, meaning you are a people specific to a place, Indians have historically migrated throughout the Americas building sacred relationships to the land as they travel. Vine Deloria, Jr., argued that Native peoples understood the world and who they were in it through two basic experiential dimensions: *power* and place. *Power* could be understood as "spiritual power or life force" and pervades the natural world (Deloria & Wildcat 2001:2). Community survival in any given place depended on healthy (and reciprocal) relationships to the spirit world, its immaterial dimension. The spirit world, acts as the source of intelligence, guidance, sustenance, and purpose for the people. This symbiotic relationship rests on the understanding that all phenomena (humans, mountains, plants) are interconnected expressions of *spirit* (spiritual power). In this way, one is continually in dialogue (through ritual and prayer) with an unfolding universe,

necessitating an ethic of interdependence wherein one's own life is supported through the continued respect and care for the land and its inhabitants.

As a Sun Dancer, Garcia is acutely aware of this ethic and seeks to cultivate it through multiple means, one being the "five worlds" model described above. Internalizing an ethic of interdependence fosters personal accountability because one recognizes they are one component in a larger whole. Thus, one could step into one's own power with the knowledge that they were held in a sacred way by the universe and greater community. These ethics and religious lifeways facilitate community empowerment by teaching young men and women, ex-cons, and former gang members that they not only have value but that a healthy community is mutually supportive. When they treat others sacredly, with respect, they become its stewards and reap the benefit sown by all. While the men and women who participate in La Plazita's programs may be from tribes that originate in distant lands, they have an opportunity to plant themselves in these particular lands and act as its stewards and protectors. In this way, they cultivate a pan-tribal community composed of diverse, transnational peoples. As they converge, they articulate a hemispheric Native identity that crosses borders and stands in solidarity with Native peoples from near and far.

Deloria and other Native scholars, such as Gregory Cajete, have noted that Indigenous religious traditions are not static and continue to change based on the needs of the community (Deloria 1994:67; Cajete 2000). Indigenous people have been migrating throughout the Americas for centuries, bringing their traditions with them wherever they go, for example, Native American residents of Albuquerque may travel home for ceremonies but they often develop communities in the city to foster their cultural identity (Carpio 2011). For those who maintain ties to their home reservation and communities, Native traditions, religious and otherwise, often remain alive and well. However, for those who have become estranged from their home community, through the relocation program, forced migration, or other structural violences, access to traditions are more difficult.

Renya Ramirez's work on 'urban Indians' demonstrates that Native identity in cities is supported by 'hubs,' consisting of pow wows, cultural centers, home sweat lodges, etc., that are frequented by networks of Indian people. By framing Native peoples as transnational, oversimplified assumptions of urban Indians as assimilated are troubled:

> This assertion will, I hope, begin to rectify the negative portrayals of urban Indians in some past academic works and popular discourse that assume that Indians' move to the city is a *one*-way trip that not only means cultural dysfunction but also loss of Indian culture, community, identity, and belonging. Thinking of urban Native Americans as transnationals complicates prior definitions of transnationalism that were based on relationships between nation-states, ignoring the importance of tribal nations as well as other cultural or national identities (Ramirez 2007:200-201).

When Native people are understood as 'transnationals' their relationship to their homelands and people is emphasized—Native nations become salient and agentive. This broader definition of transnationalism also recognizes those

that retain cultural citizenship or reclaim their Indigenous identities, whether they are enrolled members of tribes or not. As Ramirez explains, cultural identity does not stop at national lines, for those living under colonization or forced diaspora, citizenship often involves multiple sites of allegiance. In this way, we can better imagine the possibility that inter-tribal communities may articulate a claim to community—peoplehood and even nationhood—outside of singular Native nations. While some Native transnationals have cultural allegiances to both a Native nation and an inter-tribal community in the city, several others have become estranged from their home community due to dislocation—a common effect of colonization—and thus, view inter-tribal communities as their new 'tribe.'

The land base that is now New Mexico has one of the largest Native American populations in the country, besides Oklahoma and Arizona. It is the site of my own Native roots north of the border. My Apache grandmother grew up in Hurley, NM after her mother and grandmother became separated from their band during the Apache Wars of the late 19th century. This scenario reflects the experience of many Native people in the U.S.; they live on or near their native lands but have become estranged or separated from their people. New Mexico was traversed, roamed and settled by Utes, Comanches, Apaches, Navajos and Pueblos. Large clusters of these tribes still reside within its boundaries; however, their ancestral homelands may extend beyond its borders into Mexico, Texas, Arizona or Colorado. New Mexico is home to 19 Pueblos and 3 reservations: Jicarilla Apache in the North, Mescalero and Chiricahua Apache in the Southeast and the largest Native nation, the Navajo, in the Northwest. *Genízaros* played a major role in the growth of New Mexico and were among the first urban dwellers of towns created during the Spanish colonial period, including Albuquerque and Santa Fe. Although, some New Mexicans who trace their families to the Spanish colonial period consider themselves 'Hispano,' meaning of 'Spanish' descent, others recognize that they are in fact descended from local Native tribes and identify as '*genízaros*' or even Chicanx.

Most tribes in the New Mexico region that were intact after the 1848 Mexican-American War were confined to reservations by U.S. forces in the late 19th century. However, many Native peoples escaped confinement, fleeing into Mexican territory for a generation or posing as 'Mexicans' to avoid capture. Thus, many Southwestern Indians were never listed on tribal census rolls and/or became 'Hispanicized' yet note that their Native identity is not contingent on the criteria established by the settler state. Federal strategies to address the 'Indian problem,' such as boarding schools, unlawful adoption and relocation programs have compounded estrangement. Contemporary issues like disenrollment or family conflicts have also contributed to estrangement from tribal communities and have fostered new inter-tribal or pan-tribal communities in urban spaces. Thus, transnational Native people in New Mexico, and in the greater U.S., are diverse—some are enrolled members of tribes, others are not, some descend from one tribe, others from multiple tribes or are mixed-race, some grew up with 'traditional' ceremonial lifeways, others as Christians or Catholics, still others were raised with exposure to both.

Learning to be Human

As Albino's "five worlds" model demonstrates, reconnecting with one's humanity is an important step to re-integrating to the community in a productive way. Rosie Thunderchief, a young woman who works at La Plazita Institute, provides a different perspective for exploring one's humanness, arguing that we're all in a struggle to understand what it means to be human and that our connection to the spirit world aids our quest. When we meet, she is soft-spoken and reserved. Her pretty round face is adorned with wire-rimmed glasses and her long black wavy hair is kept tied back in a knot. She is Diné, Pawnee, Arapaho and Ho-Chunk and grew up in the Southeast heights of Albuquerque. Her parents, who were estranged from their home communities, are both sun dancers and Rosie attended her first sun dance at two years old. She then decided to commit to her spiritual path as a sun dancer at six years old. Typically someone will begin dancing in adolescence, but Rosie had a clear sense at this time that this was something she should do. This commitment has often set her apart from her peers:

> [I]n my teenage years I felt like no one understood me because I saw life through a spiritual lens, and I still do, first and foremost in everything that I do. And other people don't. And that realization that other people don't was kind of shocking and surprising, and kind of sad to me. Because it made me feel like not that something was wrong with me, but like there's very something different about me.[8]

She met La Plazita's director, Albino Garcia, at a Sundance many years ago. Once their respective families realized they were neighbors, she began coming to La Plazita regularly and is now working for them through AmeriCorps.

Although people are often sent to La Plazita to do community service through a court mandate, Rosie believes people really end up there for spiritual reasons saying "for some reason or another, their spirit has called them to this place… I kid you not, people just come here off the street, saying 'I was walking by and saw these tipis and these murals…'"[9] Unfortunately, the projects at La Plazita and life in the South Valley are sometimes complicated by what she calls 'tribalism' or the bias that tribal members may hold against Native peoples that are mixed-race, have been raised off reservation or are un-enrolled. She says, "my people don't accept me because of my hair and the fact that I was born and raised here." Despite tensions, La Plazita seeks to address the social and spiritual needs of those marginalized by tribalism. She explains that tribal members are sometimes kicked out of their own tribal communities. They often come to Albuquerque because it is a big town with lots of other Indians. La Plazita has become a refuge for these displaced peoples. By using basic features of ceremonial knowledge, such as the medicine wheel, and generalizing upon them to acknowledge sacred shared relationships to land and community they develop a *lingua franca* that brings ceremony to community members. So far, this has been effective. Rosie counts over 40 people on average at their weekly sweat, many of them rotating members, meaning that not all the same people come every week, so they estimate that 100-200 people in the surrounding

[8] Interview with Rosie Thunderchief 11/09/12.

[9] Interview with Rosie Thunderchief 9/21/12.

community take participate in this event. Because La Plazita acknowledges that people of "Mexican" descent are also Indians, it brings this occasionally divided community closer together for such occasions. Ceremonial models are altered depending on the occasion. For instance, she and Albino use a Lakota model they both learned as Sun Dancers in order to bring medicine and prayer to Native people incarcerated in surrounding jails or prisons.

Rosie is keenly aware of her spiritual life and mission. She asserts that we're all in a struggle—a struggle to reconnect with spirit and come to understand what it means to be human. Rosie explains that what makes the human experience unique is that we don't necessarily know what it means to be human—how to be in the world. We must ask this and figure it out:

> I feel like the life we live and the fight that we're fighting is a spiritual one. And it involves politics, it involves finances, and day-to-day little things, but on a grander scale… we're all here to learn something together. The reason I like working here in this space so much is because a lot more people are conscious and conscientious about the whole movement and the changing in the cosmos, and how it's affecting us. I feel that there's a struggle for us as human beings to remember what it means to be human beings and that a lot of us—maybe not even myself—don't truly know what that means to be a human being. Sometimes I get so caught up in the day-to-day, like oh, 'I've got to get up. I've got to go to work. Or I've got to take the kids to school, or I've got to stop at the bank, or I've got to go grocery shopping.' You know, those kinds of daily things that we forget or neglect to notice… we are a part of something greater.[10]

For Rosie, daily struggles, such as, illness, depression, poverty etc. are symptoms of the disease—the disease being a disconnection from Spirit. Working at La Plazita allows her to explore this effort to reconnect to the spirit world with others who also recognize the spiritual significance of their collective struggle. In order to understand "what it means to be human," one must connect spiritually to the forces of the universe and seek insight on what it means to live—what holds most value, what are one's responsibilities to self and others.

> In our community, we're a part of this earth that is alive. That is not only spinning, but orbiting around the sun, that's alive as well. It's almost like there's something keeping us from making that realization, because when we are in tune with that, we understand that the matrix of modern society is not a reality. It's a human created matrix for people to be herded into workhorses and the division of labor, so that human society can function into what we have created it to be. But on a grander scale or at least from a spiritual lens, that's not real. What's real is the sprinkles that we felt today outside. Or the clouds that are there right now. There has never been or will ever be that same exact moment… just to be conscious and aware of that. I mean like the sun, the moon, the earth, the wind, the clouds… all coming together to create life. And our experience of life and what can we learn from those entities if we are conscious and aware of them. Other than, you know, our day-to-day lives of driving in traffic, and things like that.

[10] Interview with Rosie Thunderchief 11/09/12.

Rosie notes that the process of life continually unfolding around us is so dynamic yet many of us seem to barely acknowledge its significance. People are caught up in what she calls "human created" endeavors, working, trying to survive, etc. These are just distractions from real life—real life being the dynamic action of the cosmos. Rosie insists that when we are "in tune" with the dynamic flow of the universe, when we can gain insight, we come to understand what it means to be human—what our ultimate purposes are.

She categorized the struggle we face as primarily a spiritual one, not a political one. Part of this human struggle is finding connection, something that we all need. We seek community and seek belonging. For Rosie, politics is secondary to religiosity. In a spiritual context we must govern ourselves. We are responsible for our own behavior, our own shortcomings and our own failures. It is a struggle undertaken with Spirit.

> The struggle again at its most basic, for me, it's remembering your own spirit. And for us as Indigenous peoples, that is people of color, our cultural traditions had their own teachings and ways of life to help an individual realize their own spirit and remember their own connection to the original source. They had different ceremonies. They had different songs. They had their own languages, and within that language an entirely different worldview which was much more conducive to opening the mind up to understanding the intricacies of how our histories, how the cosmos all come together to create your own body as a manifestation of creation. And understanding your specific role within this world, within this life, within this community.

Rosie describes the struggle as a process of remembering. Part of the human experience, particularly for Indigenous and colonized people, is remembering who you are in relation to the metaphysical framework that says that all phenomena are an expression of spirit and thus, must consciously honor this connection in order to live well. This connection allows one to understand their role in the world, more specifically their role in the community. In essence, it helps one understand their own identity in relation to others and thus, whom they are responsible to. This connection was described by many of my consultants. It is the spiritual tether to the processes of life. Access to this connection is described as a struggle because colonial processes have made this relationship more elusive and constrained.

Since Native religious lifeways are generally place based, when a tribe or community is removed from their place, the spiritual connection to that place is severed. Other features of colonialism, like forced assimilation, compulsory education and loss of language only compound the loss of this connection. Rosie knows first-hand the suffering of this loss. She knows it has a purpose because "healing is a continuing process of self-transformation."[11] In this suffering, she is re-made. In this way, her spiritual lens allows her to make sense of life and gives meaning to her struggle.

In the above testimony, Rosie describes the *raison d'être* for the disenchantment emblematic of modern life. Max Weber famously argued that modernization through protestant

[11] Email correspondence with Rosie Thunderchief, 05/27/2015.

economic ethics and a post-enlightenment desire for rationality (scientific and philosophical)—both of which estrange us from the land (and one another)—will produce a form of disillusionment or 'disenchantment' that foreclosed sacred interpretations of the natural world and stigmatized religious experience as 'superstition' (Tambiah 1990:144-145). Although Weber ultimately concluded that modern, i.e. European/ Western, forms of rationality were grounded in subjective perspectives, a desire to know the world through rational means drove imperial projects, 'civilizing missions' of Indigenous peoples, and continues to marginalize non-European knowledges. In her description of fighting to remember our spiritual identities, Rosie not only notes the existing forms of disenchantment—the loss of sacred self in mundane activity—but also observes a form of re-enchantment taking place through religious and cultural revitalization. These forms of cultural/religious revitalization taking place at La Plazita actively champion Native/ Indigenous knowledges to empower Native and Chicanx communities but also work to resist their continued marginalization.

Religious studies scholars have challenged Weber's theory of rationality as leading inevitably to alienation and disenchantment, arguing that disenchantment may not be a dead end for one's religious life. Sam Gill's exploration of 'disenchantment' in Hopi religious life argued that disenchantment was a necessary "crises" that ultimately led to a "quest for a fuller understanding of the world" (Gill 1987:70). In essence, it is this period of disillusionment that catalyzes an authentic exploration of religious experience. Rosie is aware of Gill's argument but frames disenchantment in different terms—as a way to make sense of the estrangement and loss of religious knowledge through the colonial project—an experience shared on a grand scale by many Indigenous peoples in the Americas:

> [A]t some point every human being goes through this, where they become disenchanted with their spirituality. They feel like it's a lie. It's not real. There's no possible way that can be real. You know, like you've been duped this whole time. But in any human being's life I think that we go through that moment when we like totally question everything we've ever believed in. It's only through questioning everything that we've ever believed in can we come to a greater understanding of it. So I feel sort of like the past 500 years have been on a spiritual scale for an entire people in multi-generations a disenchantment so that we can somehow find a greater, deeper, fuller, more meaningful understanding of our spirituality. And obviously not take it for granted. I don't know if that was the case 500 years ago, but it's definitely something that we cherish now because it has been taken away from us. It's something that we protect now because it has been taken away from us.

For Rosie, this contemporary move to re-enchantment is a form of self-determination, reflecting the way Indigenous people are determined to protect their spiritual knowledge because this connection was broken or compromised. She argues that this period of rupture and disconnection from the spirit world may have been a necessary spiritual lesson for different Indigenous communities and possibly—reflecting Gill's thesis here—a necessary stage in developing spiritual insight. In essence, the current struggle to re-connect with

the spirit world fosters an authentic pursuit of religious experience.

Rosie feels as if she was led spiritually to La Plazita. Working there has taught her a valuable lesson about treating the sun dance as a "way of life."

> Just being here at La Plazita it felt like I was guided to be here one way or another by some kind of power unknown, unnamable to me. Something drew me here from the moment that I met Albino and his family at the Sun Dance… I wanted to be involved here because there's nowhere like it. It introduced to me the idea of sun dancing as a way of life. Not just as a ceremony, but as a way of life. And really, working here I really feel that, and it's an entirely different feeling. It's almost indescribable. It's like taking those four days and stretching them out and wrapping them around the year.

The work done at La Plazita brings a sacred dimension to daily life—they have built a sacred space that nurtures Native lifeways. There is a sacred quality to the work of rehabilitating people, reintegrating them into the community and reconnecting them to a sacred way of life. In this way, La Plazita acts to regenerate a healthy and strong community that is committed to one another and honoring a spiritual lifeway and value system. It does this one person at a time.

Ultimately, Rosie argues that our disconnection from spirit causes us to believe that society's matrix—part of the illusion she alluded to earlier—is real even when it is an illusion. This spiritual disconnection or rupture (disenchantment) actually makes us sick. We manifest it in other physical and even emotional ailments but at the root is our disconnection to the spiritual world that is harming us. One may believe that these daily struggles are real life when in actuality one's REAL struggle is to recognize and honor one's connection to the spirit world. However, Rosie recognizes that social change is not only possible it's most probable through changes in relationships to power:

> When the people who lead us understand that they are public servants and not high and mighty on top of hill and that we should bow down to them, then I think we can make some real changes. As a people and especially as people of color, I think we're coming to understand that we have to break down those walls between us and them. Between the man and the people. Because as long as there's that separation, the us versus them mentality, we're going to be fighting. And until we can learn to work together across the entire spectrum nothing's going to change. And I think that we are starting to make those changes. I think that colonization not only created the sickness among humans, but that we extended that sickness to Mother Earth. And in our spiritual teachings, Mother Earth, she is alive. She is her own entity. She's not this piece of rock that we live on. She is a being. And we have made her sick. And I think people are starting to hear that cry. It's definitely not something we can fix overnight. But I think that we can help change those things. And I think that's part of what this whole organic movement is about, too. On one hand it's about providing good, healthy food for the community by the community, but it's also talking about keeping the water clean. It's also talking about revitalizing the respect for Mother Earth, and creating that reciprocal relationship between the land and the people.

For Rosie, a critical component of moving forward spiritually is breaking down the

barriers between "us" and "them" meaning the power structure and the community. In essence, the community must become the power structure and negotiate power in ethical ways. Colonization and the misuse of power contributed to the objectification and abuse of the earth. Since the earth is sentient and alive it is also suffering the repercussions of our disenchantment. Indigenous communities remind the greater world that we need to consider the earth's wellbeing. Re-enchantment is not just about developing an individual religious life but honoring a Native metaphysic that recognizes the interrelatedness of all phenomena. The realization that one is dependent on the dynamic movements of the universe to gain spiritual direction contributes to social changes, like choosing to farm organically, because it respects the needs of the earth to be treated with care. In this way, one's choice to honor a reciprocal relationship with the land nurtures a healthy connection to the spirit world.

Native American Religious Regeneration

I frame this process of re-enchantment as a result of religious *regeneration*—a re-immersion in a metaphysical world that is understood to be alive and actively guiding this community to peoplehood. Taiaiake Alfred, one of the leading theorists on Native self-governance, argues that the first step in attaining true autonomy for Indigenous peoples is their regeneration (2005:19-38). For Alfred, regeneration means choosing to live a distinctly Native way of life or 'lifeway.' Native lifeways are the lived epistemologies of Native peoples, from their languages and ceremonies to their cosmologies and values. *Regeneration* can be understood as a form of conscious re-traditionalism where one looks to the past, the lifeways of their peoples, and chooses to embody it in a new way in the present. Because Native lifeways are contingent on land, the spirit world and all one's relations, nurturing and regenerating the sacred connection to them is vital.

Colonization in the U.S. and Canada was facilitated by state policies of extermination and assimilation, resulting in the systematic dispossession of Native peoples over a period of hundreds of years. This dispossession separated Indigenous peoples from their lands and ways of life. Native American religious traditions, such as the Sun Dance, were banned at the end of the Indian Wars in the 1880's, when most Native tribes were confined to reservations and Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) agents, along with missionaries, policed their daily activities (Holler 1995:110). BIA agents and missionaries targeted medicine men and other religious leaders, as a 'corrupting force' in the community. Religious leaders were often jailed or even executed, leaving many tribes devoid of traditional leadership and spiritual guidance. These bans would not be lifted until 1934 and protection for Native American religious life would not be extended to Native peoples till the American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978 was passed. However, many tribes are still trying to not only understand the damage wrought by the myriad forms of dispossession but how to recover from them. For Alfred, one of the most critical losses was a sense of responsibility to "the land and one another," necessitating its re-deployment (1999:5). The land, community, and spirit world were respected and held sacred because they were understood to not only be an extension of oneself but also to sustain

your life. Thus, in an interdependent world, one has the responsibility to care for oneself as well as for others (land and community) because they are all contingent.

I argue that community spaces like La Plazita act as pedagogies of possibility for urban Native and Chicanx peoples, instigating personal/spiritual change for individuals who have been marginalized and whose lives are often most impacted by structural violence in these spaces. The education that La Plazita offers is grounded in Indigenous aesthetics and religious lifeways that seek an authentic connection to the spirit world. In the following vignettes my consultants explain how they and their work bring deep transformative to those that they serve.

Recognizing Creator and the Sacred

La Plazita Institute is a grassroots organization that serves the local Native and Chicanx community by holding community meetings and workshops, connecting residents with local services, running several large community gardens and mentoring youth, former gang members and ex-cons. It is located in the South Valley, an unincorporated area that borders Albuquerque's SW side, an area many people consider to be a part of Albuquerque. This neighborhood dates back to the Spanish colonial period and was initially settled by Navajo *genízaro* slaves (Magnaghi 1990:86-95). These families became farmers and many properties sit on large lots containing large gardens or small crops. While the South Valley is rich in culture many of its residents are struggling to get by. Like the "war zone" in SE Heights, drug trafficking and gang violence plague the neighborhood. Their director, Albino Garcia, was inspired to open the institute after his life changed due to the Sun Dance. La Plazita has access to several farming spaces throughout the South Valley. Some of these lots are community based and others are on private and donated lands. They sell the resulting produce at local farmers markets and direct the monies to La Plazita's cultural works. The primary objective of La Plazita is providing a spiritual base for the surrounding community of Native and Chicanx peoples. They hold sweats and host a group of curanderas, who provide spiritual cleanses, on a weekly basis. They also provide Lakota and Nahuatl language classes, along with classes on tai chi and yoga.

When I first visited La Plazita, I noticed two large teepees and a sweat lodge located in the rear part of their large lot. Tomas Martinez greeted me when I walked in. Tomas is in his mid 50's, covered in tattoos, with dark brown skin, and a wiry build. His long black hair was pulled back in a ponytail and he wore a large handlebar mustache—he looked like a Chicanx biker right out of the 1970's. He ran the TMAC Program, which stands for 'Thugs Making a Change.' He explained that this program was intended to bring youth into a supportive community of men, like Tomas, who are ex-cons or former gang members who have turned their lives around by reconnecting with traditional Indigenous practices and values. They act as role models to the young men and women who come through La Plazita, encouraging them to consider life beyond the streets—gangs, dealing drugs and other illegal activity. They help these people of all ages, by advocating for them in court, helping get their GED's, or enrolled in school. Tomas and the other men there explained that many of their mentees have gone on to become social

workers or educators, some receiving an AA, BA or even a Master's degree.

La Plazita and the many intersecting organizations it works with share some of the same earth-based values that have come to signify life in New Mexico. Many of its community organizers and activists have echoed Rosie's observation that real social change is bottom up—coming from changes made in the community not through national structures—but also rooted in Indigenous ethics that honor and protect the land. One such organizer is Esteban Velez, who volunteers at La Plazita.[12] He works for the Agri-Cultura Network, a local famer owned brokerage that grows and sells food to local businesses but had been working for La Plazita as well. He explained that the traditions of people in New Mexico were rooted in reciprocity—interactions where one is expected to give if they'd like to receive. He is about twenty-three years old, but he speaks with the conviction and authority of someone much older. Like me, he is somewhat light skinned with Indian features. He moved to Albuquerque from his hometown of Peñasco, in northern New Mexico several years ago. As we talked he explained that his Indigenous identity was very important to him. He identified as *genízaro*. Although his community in Peñasco knew they were related to the surrounding Pueblo tribes and many Pueblo acknowledged this, *genízaro* people were barred from participating in Pueblo ceremonies.[13] Thus, the danza azteca movement has grown there due to its utilization of Indigenous Mexican religiosity and its acceptance of mestizo peoples. Interestingly, *genízaros* were acknowledged as Indigenous peoples by the state of New Mexico in 2007.[14] Esteban described the South Valley as made up of old Mexican families, many having had lived there since the 18thc. A source states that in 19th c. negotiations with the U.S. government, Navajos claimed that over half the tribe at that time was held in captivity as *genízaro* slaves, many of them in the South Valley (Brugge 1968). This population became "Mexicanized" during the transition from the Spanish to American colonial period, however, many families still acknowledge their Native identities. Given this context, La Plazita's mission and framework made sense.

Esteban was drawn to the Indigenous oriented ceremonial life that intersects the social justice model at La Plazita and so began volunteering in their community garden. He was raised in a land based tradition, his father and his father's father had all worked the land, so he wanted to cultivate a lifestyle that allowed him to stay home in Peñasco and not have to find work in Los Alamos or commute to Taos etc., which were the main options for employment. He says small towns like Peñasco are riddled with problems: substance abuse, violence and poverty but have a long history of struggle against U.S. rule over the recognition of land grants, assimilation and gentrification. It is this history that inspired him to both claim an Indigenous heritage and work as a farmer. He began a ceremonial life with Concheros, an Indigenous spiritual tradition from Mexico, at a young age, through a teacher and mentor. He is a danzante, or a

[12] Esteban Velez is an alias used to protect this person's privacy.
[13] Field notes 08/01/2012.
[14] *House Memorial 40 (HM40)*, "Genízaros, In Recognition," 2007 New Mexico State Legislature, Regular Session.

dancer, with an Albuquerque based Conchero group that claims a lineage to the Mesoamerican Chichimecas. Once connected to the danza tradition, he began to better understand his identity as a *genízaro*, giving him a "justification for who I am," meaning the relationship between Indigenous people and their land-based tradition that he was raised in.[15] It also gave him a sense of faith in the divine, not like God in the Christian sense but rather a divine force that inhabits the world. Practicing this tradition made him more understanding and accepting of others, especially himself. He rejects the Christian idea of innate sin that he was raised with through his parents' Catholic faith and instead embraces the idea of man as frail and fallible. This sensibility reinforces his sense of *querencia*, which he defines as a sense of care for the land—treating it as a home or sanctuary.

Like Rosie and others at La Plazita, he is concerned for the health and well being of his people as well as of the land. He believes that food sovereignty is the most critical issue of our time, saying that "access to healthy food is a basic human right" and without it we will perish. Thus, he focuses much of his energy on community farming and teaching others to grow their own food. He notes that his spiritual tradition has helped him understand the sacred dimension of growing food. The Conchero ceremony emphasized a connection to the earth; food growth reflects the sacred cycles of life, from planting a seed to its germination and harvest. Humans are dependent on this sacred cycle to live but also experience their own cycles of birth and death. In this way, the harvest reflects the cycles of life that we all share. Esteban teaches others to tend the land because it nurtures a spiritual consciousness, where others who learn to work the land are better able to reconnect to this sacred cycle. Although Esteban is rooted in a different religious tradition than Rosie or Albino, he can appreciate the underlying Indigenous metaphysic and resulting ethics that they share. His articulation of religious regeneration parallels the process of re-enchantment explained by Rosie.

Becoming a Warrior

Another powerful testimony to the process of re-enchantment and its facilitation of possibility is expressed by one of La Plazita's pillars—Tomas Martinez. Tomas works as a mentor and runs the TMAC meetings. Tomas is considered a BTDT, or a 'Been There Done That,' meaning he is an elder that has experienced life on the streets and in the system. He has no illusions that it is a viable option for anyone. He has done three terms in prison for drug dealing. The last term was for fourteen years. He was in a one of the first gangs in the South Valley and lived life as a drug dealer for 38 years. Eventually, he became tired of being in the system. He had been involved in a 1980 prison riot, where he was almost killed, that allowed him an opportunity to later negotiate a contract for better conditions at the prison. When he got out, he got back into the life—dealing and using drugs. It took another short term of one year and long term of 14 years for him to recognize that he didn't want to continue living this way. After the death of his partner from cancer and an accident that left him with a broken neck, he decided to fight his last charge. He enrolled in school and a friend connected him to La Plazita for work-study. At first,

[15] Interview with Esteban Velez 08/01/2012.

he struggled to see himself as someone who could help others. Once he started to participate in the sweat lodge and "cleanse himself" his transformation began.

> So, I came, and I sat down, and I talked to Albino. I listened to what he had going on, what he was talking about, La Cultura Cura, the culture. I knew I was a Chicanx and an Indio, but I had never really got into my roots. I mean I had never really gone back to 'em and done anything with it. So, when I started working here through work study and started working with these youth… and I did the sweat lodge. That thing saved my life. It changed me completely. You know, cleansing myself inside the mother's womb. Something I always tell everybody, 'You know what? You have to find a spiritual – something spiritual is gonna change you, because we can't do it alone.' You know, ex-convicts, addicts cannot do it alone. I don't care who you are, I'm saying you have to find something that's gonna help you. And that helped me. It changed me; it changed me for the better.[16]

He began to recognize that Creator was there to help and support him. He realized that after all the damage he had done—the "evil" he had visited upon his community—he should be dead. Yet, he wasn't. He has now been with La Plazita for seven years and says it has given him a new purpose in life. He sees himself as a warrior. Not someone who is fighting the law or rival drug dealers but fighting for his people, like a steward and protector. "I'm a warrior now because I live for my people. I want to help my people." He is able to give back to his community in a way he never imagined. He is respected and sought out by others because they know he can help them.

> I grew up right here in this barrio. I did my dirt here. I did my gang banging; I did my drug dealing; I did my drug using right here in this barrio, right here in the South Valley, *sureño valle*. Now I do positive work here. I see a lot of people, and they know me. They know what I'm doing. They know who I am. People call me and ask me for help. It's a great feeling that I'm giving back to the community. You know what I'm saying? I'm not taking anymore 'cause I took so much. If you had a known me years ago, I was an evil man. I was. So, it was all about me and what you could do for me. What do you have? What can I take?

He is no longer focused on his own needs but thinks about how he can serve the needs of those in his community. This shift in identity has also changed his relationship to himself—he feels good about who he is and recognizes that he is happier being an actively supportive member of his community. He notes that this work sustains him in the same way that he works to sustain others. "These youth help me every day. They think that I'm helping them. In reality, they're helping me. I'm saying we're helping each other, because when I see one of 'em making it and changing, it's like me. Change comes from oneself. You have to want to change." He had no children; he never wanted kids because of his lifestyle but now he acts as a father to many of these young men, many of who have no other father figure.[17]

While he doesn't really consider himself an activist, he is invested in helping others. However, he was ambivalent about the potential for organizations like La Plazita to

[16] Interview with Tomas Martinez 08/09/2012.

[17] Field notes 08/09/2012.

contribute to large-scale social change. The structures around them were too powerful and profit driven, particularly the private prison industry. He wears a shirt that reads 'education not incarceration,' and promotes education among those who have re-entered life after serving time. In Tomas's experience, people do well once they've empowered themselves through education and an authentic spiritual life. He felt that focusing on individual and local change was a more realistic goal for La Plazita:

> We need to make ourselves a better person because we can't change nothing like that, but we can change what we do here. We can learn how to be healthy. We can learn how to get education. We can learn how to work and do everything that we have to do for ourselves and not worry what's going on out there, because we're not gonna change that out there. Never. You know, the world's what it is. But we can be better. We're not ever gonna change the system, the courts, or our prisons. They're all privatized. Privatized why? Because it's all about money. You know, they get close to $90,000.00 a year to keep one inmate locked up.

Tomas realizes that the system is stacked up against poor Native and Chicanx peoples. Now that private prisons have become such a lucrative industry, men of color are grist for the mill (Cohen 2015). He notes that Native American men serve the longest prison terms among men of color. This knowledge only strengthens his resolve to help others. Ideally, La Plazita enables the community to eat better, live better and be self-supporting.

> When you come here, it's like being at home. You feel at home in this place. Everybody that comes through these doors thinks they're like at home because we're so grassroots. We're our own world right here. We're against everything out there. So, you know what? We're kind of "change oneself," whatever that change involves. You know, you got these probation officers. There's some of them that want to help, but they have such a big case load; they'd rather lock 'em up and get rid of it. And we work with the worst of the worst. Those are the ones that I want to help, that society wants to lock up and throw away the key, because everybody deserves a chance. Everybody. They can make it if they want to try, but they have to want to.

They also seek to create a stronger healthier community by nurturing strong, functional individuals, who have worked on developing themselves spiritually. Many of the men and women that come to La Plazita have never had a stable home or no longer have any real resources. La Plazita acts as a 'home' for these individuals—a base of support in which they can grow and develop into better functioning members of the community. Their approach of 'la cultura cura' also helps ground their mission in an ethic rooted in thier own identities. When he says they are against "everything out there" he means normative settle (white) culture—a culture that not only devalues Native and Chicanx lives but profits from their incarceration. By providing a space that not only actively resists assimilation and normative settler culture but also actively promotes Native/Indigenous lifeways, they are essentially creating a safe space where Native/Chicanx individuals are celebrated, appreciated and nurtured instead of policed, criminalized and alienated.

He notes that social change is possible, but it is rooted in individual change. He

speaks at schools frequently and remarked that if what he says affects one person out of thousands, it is worth it. Tomas hits on a critical point. Social justice work relies on a transformed individual. If you have not affected change within yourself, how will you affect change in the world? For Tomas, guiding those who are most alienated, who are most deemed failures in our society is a major win for the entire community:

> I went to talk to a boy the other day, and I don't usually go into their houses. They need to come here and show me that they're for real. But this one lady, she made begged me, "Please, *por favor, ayudame mi hijo*," So, I went down there and I talked to him, and now he's coming to the meetings. And he loves it. He said, "You know what, Tomas? When I go talk to counselors it's bullshit—when I talk to you, you're for real. You're for real because you've lived that life." And I don't try to bullshit 'em. Sometimes I can be hard, but it's called 'tough love.' It's about tough love.

It is Tomas's own criminal history and life as a 'thug' that gives him credibility with even the most hardened young men. He earns their trust and respect because he is one of them. He serves as a living testament for living differently.

He explains that while he's tough on them, holding them accountable for their behavior and choices, he gently nudges them to take advantage of La Plazita's spiritual resources and participate in the sweats. It was his own experiences in the sweat lodge that help him envision a whole new life:

> I think when I got in that sweat lodge, and I started to pray, and I started to experience the whole thing, and I started to visualize and seek of what I wanted to be, of who I wanted to be – you know, because I never knew who I was really. I was looking for my identity all these years. I didn't know – I always thought that this was gonna be my life, that I was gonna be this drug dealer and spin out that I was gonna die in prison, or die of an overdose, or die by gunshot. But when I got in that sweat lodge, and I started to pray in that darkness, and I started to see that there was a better life, there was a bigger world than just the barrio, that there was more out there. And I started to experience that.

In the sweat lodge, Tomas gained perspective on the petty everyday power struggles of the barrio that had previously meant so much for him. He realized that life could be radically different. As he began to envision this, he and his life were able to change. At La Plazita, he seeks to foster this kind of change. He recognizes that many people that come through are carrying a lot of emotional burdens from the hardships they've faced in their lives and encourages them to seek help from Creator to heal these emotional wounds:

> You know, if you hold everything inside, it's like a powder keg ready to explode. You need to express it. I tell these guys – a lot of 'em haven't done the sweats. I got new guys coming in all the time. And I always tell 'em, 'You know what? We do a thing called 'La Cultura Cura,' culture heals. And then I explain about the mother's womb. I explain about the Earth, working with the farm and learning the whole culture of all of it. So, they need to experience that in order to understand what we're about. They can sit in these pews, and we can talk. But if they don't experience it, they'll never get it. So, they have to go through it. And I always encourage 'em, 'Come to a sweat.' Some of 'em can stay through the whole

> thing, and some of 'em need to come out of there, 'cause it's so hot in there, and they haven't really been through that. So, we have to be gentle with it. But the more they get into it, and the more they start to learn it, the more knowledge the gain. They're getting a whole bunch of wisdom out of it, and that's what I've gotten out of it: knowledge and wisdom.

While releasing emotional and even psychic burdens is an important step in healing and transformation, Tomas notes that gaining insight on your life is another critical factor. Without this inner knowledge one can never develop wisdom—the kind of deep spiritual knowledge that helps guide to live a good life, a life with integrity and heart. It is this kind of spiritual transformation that La Plazita is invested in—fostering a Native lifeway that not only connects people to their community in a meaningful way but helps them connect to a fruitful spiritual path; a path that serves as a productive alternative to white settler consumer culture and systemic violence. Over the course of several conversation with Tomas he said, "it's not quantity its quality." In other words, political action and protest may be effective means of greater structural change but affecting inner transformation among individuals one at a time may be more impactful in cultivating healthy communities over time.

Conclusion

La Plazita acts as a beacon of decolonial healing in Albuquerque's South Valley. Through a diverse set of Indigenous religious forms, that combine Mesoamerican logics with Lakota style ceremonies the people at La Plazita take a hemispheric approach to reclaiming Indigenous identities and regenerating Indigenous religious lifeways. They are acutely aware that, as Alfred has noted, assimilation does not work. Religious regeneration enables participants to reposition themselves in the community, revitalizing relationships to the land, one another, and the spirit world. As Tomas says, many of the young men, although there are many young women who also feel this way, relate deeply to the role of warrior. Not a warrior that violently fights the power structures but instead a warrior who "works for his people" and seeks to strengthen his community by acting with care and integrity within it. Esteban stresses the importance of learning how to work the land, get to know its cycles and recognize those cycles as a sacred reflection of your own life's processes. In this way, people simultaneously become stewards of the land and their community. The deep spiritual transformation described by Tomas illustrates the ways that mentorship and a renewed spiritual life help one heal from the structural violences that have shaped their lives, such as, poverty, abuse, and racism. As Rosie notes, the work of La Plazita brings the sacred healing and regenerating energy of the Sundance to others year-round. As participants become aware of themselves in a larger sacred universe they heal, which, in turn, heals the entire community. In this way, religious regeneration or 're-enchantment' acts as a pedagogy of possibility, wherein Native and Chicanx people step into their own power and live authentically and productively. At heart, living again as your own peoples, as renewed peoples, is the essential goal of decolonization and solidifies the pathway to self-determination. The sacred lifeways regenerated by La Plazita's model enables a way of being in the world that asserts a

Native peoplehood in solidarity with Indian survivance throughout the Americas.

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