

Colonial Assumptions in Federal Spaces and their Effects on Pueblo Religious Expression and

Freedom

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Southwest Studies Thesis

June 2015-April 2016

## 1. Introduction

The Pajarito Plateau is on the eastern slope of the Jemez Mountain Range that is located on a thirty mile stretch between Santa Clara Pueblo and Cochiti Pueblo. There are signs of human occupation going back 10,000 years. The Pajarito Plateau is a significant cultural site for Rio Grande Pueblos but also the Acoma, Zuni, Hopi, Navajo, Mescalero Apache and Jicarilla Apache nations (Masco, 2006). Thousands of religious sites and archaeological sites dot the plateau which demonstrates the longstanding Pueblo investment in the region and ongoing use of the Plateau in spiritual life today. The plateau is home to multiple spiritually significant areas including ruins, shrines and a striking natural environment, which together give meaning to mythohistorical emergence and creation stories (Masco, 2006).

Despite the significance of the area to the Pueblo people, the Pajarito Plateau has been a space of colonial occupation, first under the Spanish and Mexican states second under the U.S. State. Yet the original owners of the land, the Pueblo people, have lost governance over the area. Colonial rule on the Pajarito Plateau greatly affected native religious freedom and identity. During the decades leading up to the 20th century, the Pueblos, as well as other Native American tribes, experienced many direct attacks that branded indigenous religion as demonic and unchristian (Kravitz, 2013). Colonial prejudice and resentment against non-Christian indigenous religion presented itself either through outright religious bans, discrimination or punishment for practicing native religion. While multiple colonial powers practiced oppressive tactics toward native people, these appear to have lessened. Yet the influence of colonial assumptions toward native peoples and their religious freedom still prevails. Land that once existed under a colonial structure has just refigured itself into a modern federal space with

post-colonial assumptions embedded in environmental management and political philosophy. Native rights and religious freedoms are still violated within these federal spaces of the Pajarito Plateau, but now under the guise of national security goals or the oft-used phrasing of “the public good” (Wilson 2014). Under the auspices of the National Park Service and their goals of conservation and preservation and Department of Energy and their goals of national security, the land of the Pajarito Plateau has been divided into Bandelier National Monument, Valles Caldera National Park and Los Alamos National Laboratory. Our post-colonial nation state still displays colonial values through embedded cultural assumptions in the management and sovereignty of these spaces.

Bandelier National Monument was set up as a cultural heritage preservation site that operated under the false assumption that the “real Indians” had left. The Monument followed colonial behaviors in which it told the narrative of the ancient Puebloans under the assumption that nearby Pueblo peoples had no modern connection with Bandelier. In contrast to Bandelier, Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) was created as a nuclear weapons facility as a part of the Manhattan Project during World War II (Masco, 2006). The Lab operated with a national security trump card that allowed the Lab to exploit local communities’ health in order to create weapons of mass destruction. The Lab embodied this colonial behavior of exploitation by poisoning local communities through radiation (as many Pueblos claim) and through refusing to include the concerns of local Pueblos. Los Alamos National Laboratory stretches for 43 miles on the Plateau, containing 150 miles of roads, 1,000 buildings, 400 miles waste pipes, 94 air emission sources, and 123 liquid discharge. Among this military-industrial complex exists 17,000 sacred or symbolic sites for the Pueblo people (Masco, 2006). Through its development in this

spiritually important area, LANL transforms Pueblo sacred ground into a secular security plateau. The Manhattan Project unleashed a new force on the Pueblo spiritual geography and societies, denying tribal members access to certain sites while destroying others. Those downwind and downstream face the consequent health and environmental impacts. Lastly, Valles Caldera National Park was initially created as a private Trust Management Site to conserve the wilderness and unique geological features of the area (Debuys, 2009). This newly-created federal space demonstrates enduring post-colonial assumptions through the land management goals of the space that value conservation over native presence in wilderness. The resistance to such colonial assumptions is manifested through Jemez Pueblo's lawsuit to regain the Caldera under their ownership (Garcia, 2015).

## Theory

Joseph Masco, in *Nuclear Borderlands*, argued that indigenous religion is indirectly impacted when national security or national interests are prioritized (Masco, 2006). The colonial assumptions that public interest such as national security should precede native religion extend beyond the case study of LANL. While LANL justified exploitation of its people and their religion through the trump card of national security, Masco opens up a discussion that other federal spaces may have similar colonial assumptions embedded in their management and decision making that equally hurt native people and their religion. Under goals of conservation, preservation and national security, these federal spaces of the Pajarito Plateau embody colonial behavior by prioritizing the "public good" over native religious needs (Masco,

2006). These lands, Bandelier National Park and Valles National Park, are defined as public yet these “public lands” do a poor job of accommodating their original owners of native people. Native people are often considered merely “guests” and welcomed into the space only if they obey and follow the prescribed rules of the federal area. The existing colonial assumptions inherent in management of these federal spaces controls native representation, narrative, health and worldview, thus disempowering native people and upholding these colonial assumptions and values. Physical control of sacred areas and the ability of these federal institutions to control narrative and representation greatly alters religious freedoms and expression.

Using the case studies of Bandelier National Monument, Valles Caldera National Park and Los Alamos National Laboratory, I plan to explore colonial assumptions embedded in the various management decisions and philosophy of these spaces and their effects on Native religious freedom and expression. Native people get cast aside as these spaces prioritize an abstract notion of the “public good” over concrete and nearby native religious rights. The notion of public can include national security, wilderness conservation or cultural preservation yet natives and their religious freedom are damaged regardless of how the public good defense manifests itself. Through the creation and management of these federal spaces, nearby Pueblo groups have lost access to sacred areas, and lost the ability to represent their own sovereign spaces and stories. Examining these detrimental effects on religious freedom in these three federal spaces in New Mexico, I want to open a discussion to how Native people and federal spaces can best begin to correct colonial assumptions in these federal spaces as well as give natives the ability to represent themselves and assert their religious rights.

## 2. Bandelier National Park: The Archaeology of a Colonial Structure

Bandelier National Monument has taken on colonial assumptions through its foundation with the nascent archaeological projects of Adolf Bandelier. The monument's ruins are said to date to 1300 CE but were not discovered until the Spanish colonized the region in the early 1600's. At Bandelier, the National Park Service preserves and interprets the remains and ruins of the ancestral Pueblo people. This precedent of pre-historicizing the site's interpretation and representation was established by Adolf Bandelier who, in 1880, became the first to study and report on the dwelling sites of the Ancient Puebloans in Frijoles Canyon (Bandelier National Monument Website, 2016). Besides writing reports of his archaeological findings, Bandelier also published *The Delight Makers*, a fictional tragedy of his imagined perceptions of ancient Pueblo life. This book greatly misrepresented the Pueblo people as Adolf Bandelier duplicated the common romanticization and representation of native Pueblo people by archaeologists (Bandelier, 1916). These post-colonial assumptions of the archeologist's right to interpret and represent cultures embedded in the writing of Adolf Bandelier are evident in Bandelier Monument's modern day mission to interpret Bandelier's ruins. This mission of interpretation remains problematic as the U.S. settler colonial narrative dictates the native story. President Woodrow Wilson created Bandelier National Monument in 1916, under the Antiquities Act of 1906. The monument, containing ancestral Pueblo cliff dwellings and ruins, was part of Santa Fe National Forest, until it passed into the hands of the National Park Service in 1933. While archaeology has good intentions of preservation for the public good (and for science), it has directly impacted native people, as non-native people are allowed to create a story of native people, thus continuing post-colonial traditions of controlling native narrative and stories

(Wilcox, 2009). Controlling narrative and representation, while arguably not as damaging as physical control or enslavement, still has the ability to damage native identity and religious expression.

Early archaeologists, as well as the curators of the original Bandelier museum, created a narrative of the ancient Pueblo people and were able to erase modern day sacred Pueblo connections to Bandelier. Bandelier as a ruin was treated as (pre)historical entity, rather than being connected to the living communities of the nearby Pueblos. Bandelier National Monument embodies an archaeological based view of its ruins as it imagines that the real natives are gone and that the ruins are neutral places of an ancient time (Spurr, 1993). This view and treatment of the space disregards modern sacred connections and direct lineage relationships to Bandelier. Bandelier National Monument embodied post-colonial values as they crafted a historicized narrative of the Pueblo people, as early archaeologists imagined the Pueblo as a people without history (Wolf 1982).

The Civilian Conservation Corps, a depression-era New Deal program, was responsible for furthering the pre-historic narrative of negating the modern connection to Bandelier National Park. The CCC Camp No. 815 at Bandelier National Park was an unemployment stimulus program that came out of Depression era. The Frijoles Canyon Camp opened in November 1933 and attracted hundreds of young men to Bandelier. At this time, Bandelier was only accessible by horse or by foot. The CCC camp got to work and between 1933 and 1941 built a main road and a visitor structure in Bandelier as well as reconstructed some of the ruins (Bandelier National Monument Website, 2016). Bandelier National Monument, at its founding, was meant to preserve archaeological valuable places for generations to come. While the

intention of preservation is not inherently a negative action, it unintentionally cast the Pueblo as disconnected to the prehistoric site of Bandelier. The early development of Bandelier National Monument was conducted by the CCC with the goal of creating a site that would attract tourists, rather than properly representing the ancient Puebloans. Bandelier adopted the mentality of the American romanticization of the Wild West and Native Americans, by employing people who could pass as native to act as Native Americans and do stereotypical “Indian” activities around the ruins such as dancing or pottery (Spurr, 1993). Bandelier National Monument was not above succumbing to the long history of portraying Native Americans as one dimensional, “extinct” characters to fit tourist expectations. Spurr argues that this flattening of native people is the trope of negation, which eliminates the depth and vivacity of the people (Spurr, 1993). Treating native people like a circus act may have appealed to tourist’s expectations of native people, but demeaned Puebloan identity and disrupted their sacred, ongoing connections to Bandelier. It also further distanced the pre-historic narrative at Bandelier from nearby Pueblo practices and sacred geographies.

The CCC, through their reconstruction and representation of the ruins, constructed a narrative that declared the original inhabitants of the ruins as long gone. At the time of the development of Bandelier, the CCC found no evidence of people living in the sites and assumed the ancient people to be long dead. Assuming groups of people to no longer be connected to an area eliminates any concern for modern day sacred connection to Bandelier. Archaeologists hurried to excavate the sites, with little regard to sacred connection. The staff and curators at Bandelier National Monument took many of the artifacts found along the sites and put them in the visitor center museum (Bandelier National Monument Website, 2016). By negating the



existence of a living culture and continuing to excavate the area for artifacts, Bandelier National Monument completely disregarded that local Pueblos could still have religious connections to the area, thus undermining the religious expression and freedom of the people. Bandelier staff and management could easily disregard modern day connections at the time, especially since Puebloan peoples were not considered native until the 1930s, as the Pueblos were considered Mexican citizens (Echo-hawk, 2010). Thus, Indian ruins were easily separated from their connections to nearby villages if most people considered nearby villages and people to be of Mexican origin.<sup>1</sup> The legal classification of Pueblos as Mexican people also helped to eliminate the notion that they would have any claim to Bandelier's "Indian" ruins.

The Bandelier National Monument museum continued stereotyping and misrepresentation of the Puebloan people. This New Deal era museum contained cases of artifacts and attempted to interpret them through describing the imagined lives of the cliff dweller. There was a heavy emphasis on the ancient people's relations with the Spanish Colonial settlers as the museum had a whole room about technologies introduced to the natives by Europeans such metal and mass produced textiles. There was no emphasis on the local tribes' sacred connections to Bandelier. Bandelier was portrayed like a graveyard of ruins and artifacts. This remains problematic to local tribes who still have connections to Bandelier, as we shall see.

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<sup>1</sup> The legal identity and path to US citizenship will be elaborated on in Section 3

## Decolonizing assumptions at Bandelier National Monument

The legal status of the Pueblos was debated from 1848 to 1913, as the Pueblos were considered neither US citizens nor Native Americans. In *US v Lucero* (1869), it was asked whether the Pueblo people were considered Indian under US law. This legal limbo continued until 1913 when the Pueblos were granted “indian status” in *United States v Sandoval*. This case considered the Pueblos to be “wards” of the federal government and thus gave the Pueblo people limited ability to self-rule (Echo-hawk, 2010). In 1924 Congress finally granted full US Citizenship to all Native peoples. However, Pueblos were denied the right to vote until 1948 which was 5 years after the start of the Manhattan Project. Despite being land based communities that have an interest in the Pajarito Plateau, these voices were excluded from any land use conversation at the time of the Cold War and the arrival of LANL in the late 1940s. The sovereignty and rights of natives were disregarded, thus ignoring the Pueblo as sovereign stakeholders.

The 1970s brought a new era of environmentalism that proved beneficial to native rights, especially in terms of Pueblo sovereignty and self-determination. New environmental laws such as the National Environmental Policy Act and Endangered Species Act also gave native people a tool to protect wilderness areas and thus indirectly sacred sites. The 90s provided further rights to Native Americans to have cultural rights, recognized as in 1990 Congress passed the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, which regulates the excavation of sacred objects, funeral objects, or bodies from gravesites (NAGPRA Website page, 2016). If a tribe can prove that they are culturally affiliated with the objects, then the removed objects can be returned to the tribe. Museums were required to reevaluate their

collections and alert tribes of the inventory. NAGPRA has finally forced a new set of conversations about how Native Americans are represented in museums and the role of museums in telling the native story. It has prompted not only repatriation of objects, but also the inclusion of native perspectives and voices into museum studies. If Native people are going to be studied, it is going to be on their own terms, through their perspective. It was often challenging for archaeological collections and museums to find close proximate “living cultures” that could be consulted. Tribes varied in their responses to archaeological material as some groups are interested in reclaiming and repossessing remains and artifacts, some are not (Wilkinson, 2006). Regardless of a tribe’s desire to reclaim material, NAGPRA guarantees consultation with tribes, thus allowing natives to impact how archaeological material is represented.

Through laws such as NAGPRA, museums and museum spaces such as Bandelier have begun to decolonize museum studies and archaeology. Bandelier National Monument has made changes to attempt to encompass native perspective through engaging the voices of the Pueblo People whose ancestors inhabited this region of New Mexico. Bandelier undertook a museum and visitor center reconstruction for \$4 million to renovate the New Deal era museum that negated modern Pueblo connections to the museum (Bryan, 2010). The new museum conveys the Pueblo peoples’ enduring connections to Bandelier and how Bandelier is not an educational playground, but rather a sacred place that deserves respect. Rod Torrez, the monument’s chief of inspection remarks on the progressive improvements of the museum stating, “There really are few places where you have such a strong integrated viewpoint from the local tribes in an exhibit, he said. A lot of places just hang on to what they’ve had, and they

might refresh their cases and things, but they've never gone that extra step. Here, I can walk through this museum and feel confident that what I'm looking at is something that's accurate and true to the heart of the people who are around here, (Bryan, 2010)."

While NAGPRA and the return of sacred items continue to empower tribes and their sovereignty, the empowerment must extend to the maintenance and new respect of sacred places under federal ownership. To undo past archaeological exploitation of indigenous religions, sacred site access and respect must be part of the repatriation process. Even at sacred sites, such as Bandelier, that are seemingly vacant, Pueblo communities still utilize these ancestral and sacred sites for connecting with ancestors, praying and practicing ceremonies (Naranjo, 2015). Sacred sites, such as Bandelier, are alive, as they provide access to the spiritual realm for tribes. Bandelier has begun to recognize the need to grant native people access to sacred areas by allowing private ceremonial use and traditional plant gathering. The Monument has also made attempts to respect Pueblo sacred sites and ceremonies by closing certain areas of the park on certain days. Floyd Pecos, a former governor at Cochiti Pueblo, said that it's important for visitors to understand the people of Bandelier have not disappeared. "We're still here, you know, he said. That's where we originated from. Those were our ancestors and whatever we picked up and was passed on to us and other generations before us came from there. We still make journeys back out to some our sites at Bandelier" (Bryan, 2010).

Archaeology and museums embodying post-colonial assumptions that value white voices over native ones have negatively stereotyped and misrepresented native cultures. This misrepresentation affects native religious freedom by denying enduring connections to Bandelier. Just preserving a sacred place like Bandelier is not enough to satisfy the religious

rights of tribes as preservation will not replace the disconnection experienced by Native Peoples and the religious neglect caused by colonial power assumptions. National Monuments such as Bandelier have begun to take steps toward decolonizing engrained assumptions in management as they have begun to transcend traditional goals of preservation and representation, and attempt to make native religious concerns and representation, stemming from native voices, a priority. Through redoing their museum, and recognizing modern day sacred connection, preservation at Bandelier National Monument has begun to take on a new, more inclusive form to ensure that all rights, not just those of tourists, are ensured. NAGPRA has done much to restore the ancestors of existing peoples back to their original homes, but the sacred geographies of the Pueblo still have not been restored as part of their religious landscape.

### 3. Los Alamos National Laboratory: Weaponizing Sacred Space

In the midst of World War II, the U.S. government became concerned with the development of a new form of weapon. Fission had been discovered in Germany in the 1930's and scientists, including Albert Einstein, believed that it was possible the Germans could use fission to create an atomic weapon. This perceived threat led to the creation of the Manhattan Project, which later became Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL). Robert Oppenheimer, a prominent physicist, was chosen as the scientific head of the project and thus was responsible for selecting a site for the Manhattan Project, known as site Y (Smith, 1995). He knew that the location of the Manhattan Project was crucial, as location would determine the security and secrecy of the project. Secrecy was of utmost importance in finding a location for the Lab as Oppenheimer had to consider the various security threats that could occur.

In his letters to military director Major General Leslie Groves, Oppenheimer wrote about the possibility of locating the Lab in the Jemez Mountains where he had visited as a child at the Pecos Boys Camp, on top of Parajito Plateau. From his initial letters written to fellow scientists and directors of the Lab, there is no evidence that Oppenheimer acknowledged the native presence that already dotted the plateau. The only indicator for his acknowledgement of native presence was in Oppenheimer's letter to John Manley November 6th, 1942.

Oppenheimer delineates his concern of human resistance in creating the Lab on the plateau as he says, "It is a lovely spot and in every way satisfactory, and the aspects, and the only points which now have to be settled are whether the human and legal aspects of the necessary evacuations make insuperable difficulties" (Smith, 1995, 346). However, this comment about "necessary evacuations" might simply be a reference to the Los Alamos Ranch School which

was then on the plateau. Despite some initial concerns, the Plateau was quickly cleared of all human inhabitants as Pecos Boy Camp and its Ranch School agreed to close for the cause of national security.



Figure 1. Graduation day at the Ranch School (November 1942). Source: Los Alamos Collection

The official notice of closure was received on December 7th, 1942 from the US Government and a few months later in February 1943, the school was shut down. Nobody knew the true reason for its closure. The closure of the school signified the start of the Manhattan Project. Many nearby residents believed that when the Manhattan Project arrived on the Pajarito Plateau in 1943, it would only be a temporary war time presence on the Plateau, just as Oppenheimer himself believed at the time (Masco, 2006). Despite its seemingly temporary presence, the Manhattan Project would come to have a permanent nuclear presence on the Plateau.

In 1942 when Oppenheimer chose the Plateau to be the site for the Manhattan Project, the native Pueblo people in the area had little recourse to fight for their land or sacred areas on the Plateau. Native people have long been subject to government seizures of their land and attempts to undermine native religious practices. Even though the Pueblos had newly been granted US Citizenship in 1924, the Pueblos had few resources to fight against the Project's use of the Pajarito Plateau in the early 1940's. They had even fewer political resources to question the project's location. Pueblos, for example, were denied the right to vote until 1948 which was 5 years after the start of the Manhattan Project (Wilkinson, 2006). Despite being land based communities that have an interest in the Pajarito Plateau, these voices were excluded from any land use conversation at the time of the Project's arrival and were not considered legitimate stakeholders of the Plateau.

While the narrative that dominates the Manhattan Project is of native cooperation, many Pueblo people were reluctant to give up claims to these lands. Even today, Los Alamos' Bradbury Science Museum's informational entrance video claims that the natives were happy to give up their lands for the cause of science (Bradbury Science Museum, 2015). Bradbury Science Museum flattens native identity to say they were all happy about this change, allowing no space for alternative narrative. The U.S. military forced the Pueblo people off their land as he felt that the US government was entitled to that land. Arguably the "national security" trump card still embodies post-colonial assumptions of entitled land seizure and use, as people who live on those areas, such as the Las Cruces residents who were downwind of the Trinity test. The Trinity bomb was dropped in southern New Mexico in 1945, before being used weeks later in Japan. The residents of the area, mostly poor ranchers, were displaced by the Trinity



test, and subsequently suffered disproportionately high cancer rates that accompanied the blast (McCleery, 2015). Trinity and the Manhattan project both demonstrate the ongoing post-colonial assumptions prevalent in government actions in the name of national security interests.

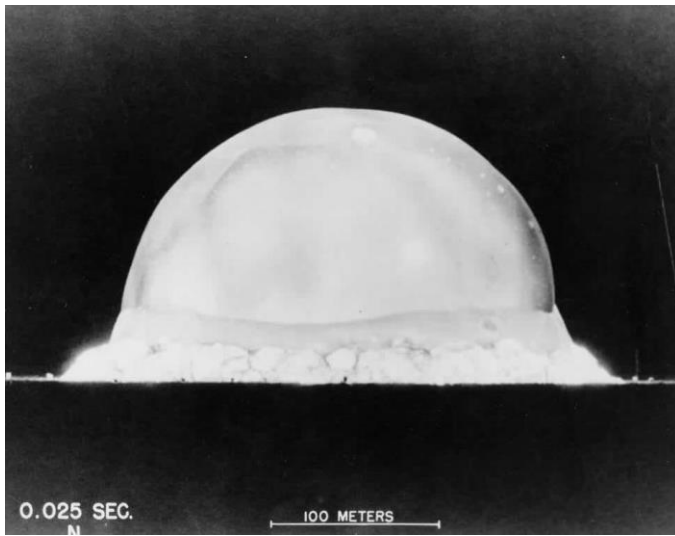


Figure 2. Number Trinity Test, 1945. Source [www.atomicheritage.org](http://www.atomicheritage.org)

### Effects of Colonial Assumptions on Religious Freedom

Unequal power dynamics barred Pueblo people from having ability to participate in the regional land disputes of the early 1940s. The Pueblos also faced the challenge of communicating and negotiating with Western knowledge systems. Masco delineates that cultural matters of the Pueblo people are often kept secret as the disclosure of sacred information is damaging to native identity and world view (Masco, 2006). The secrecy of the Pueblo religion is predicated on the idea that knowledge is not open to all and, unlike most

Western knowledge, cannot be earned from studying. While post-colonial assumptions may lead non-natives to feel entitled or earning of sacred information, however, nobody, not archaeologists nor nuclear scientists are entitled to sacred information. The Pueblo people believe that some knowledge is made for certain people depending on their gender, age or level of commitment. In his novel, Masco quotes a Pueblo member warning of the sacredness of Pueblo knowledge stating, “for anyone to tamper with knowledge, or to pry into, is courting serious, serious trouble” (Masco, 2006).

While LANL has often proved reluctant or unwilling to negotiate access to sacred areas, they have attempted to appease Pueblo sacred site concerns by requesting cultural impact reports. These cultural impact reports would require the tribes to describe sacred areas and their damage. However, Pueblo leaders have made it clear that the cultural impact reports would only be pursued if the information is kept secret. Pueblo people understandably want to determine who has access to the sacred information and for what purpose. This desired secrecy to maintain Pueblo knowledge is challenging for communicating with non-tribal people (Ortiz, 1984). Western institutions, embedded with colonial assumptions, including the US Government and LANL, often do not understand the importance of secrecy in preserving the sacred. Ironically, if “national security” is an area of secrecy respected by the Department of Defense, Department of Energy and the U.S. federal government, these same agencies do not extend the notion of secrecy to matters of religious practice. Thus, while U.S. agencies and scientists easily understand and respect the sacredness of a church, they struggle to acknowledge and respect sacred spaces of indigenous cultures that often require secrecy.

While the Manhattan Project relied on secrecy to further military science and national security, the Pueblos relied on secrecy as a form of cultural survival and to preserve sacredness. Secrecy in Pueblo religious traditions and knowledge systems proves to be problematic when negotiating with various stakeholders. These parallel cultures of secrecy are at odds on the Pajarito Plateau. *While the Lab uses secrecy to ensure national security, the Pueblo rely on secrecy to preserve the sacredness of their culture.* These parallel versions of secrecy cannot exist together as national security cannot allow for secret religious activities to occur on or near Lab territory. The secrecy of the Pueblos poses a potential threat to the secrecy of the Lab (Masco, 2006). The Lab continues to embody post-colonial assumptions when interacting with Pueblos as they apply Western notions of religion and sacredness to the Pueblos. The Lab defines secrecy and expects their definition and perspective of secrecy to be respected.

The Lab makes no attempt to accommodate or understand the Pueblo's different methods of preserving history, such as oral history. LANL and DoE are reluctant to dismiss their own assumptions of enforcing singular, Western definitions and accept alternate methods outside of the Western worldview. Environmental impacts statements (EIS) demonstrate the bind of secrecy and implementation of Western values, as these statements often require detailed explanations of sacred areas (Naranjo, 2015). While EIS can be instrumental in protecting sacred areas from development, these often intrusive documents require Pueblos to divulge sacred information that Pueblos won't divulge. These Western standards of legitimacy, such as EIS requirements of sacred site descriptions, demonstrate the prevalence to which colonial assumptions continue to guide such agencies in their investigative work.

I spoke with Marian Naranjo, a Santa Clara Pueblo member and longtime activist against the destructive actions of LANL. During an interview with her at the Pueblo, Marian told me the struggle to overcome colonial assumptions and Western values evident in the actions of government agencies. She told me that many researchers and data collectors from the American Cancer Society had come to Santa Clara over the years to investigate health effects potentially caused by LANL (Naranjo, 2015). While she was happy that the American Cancer Society was finally showing interest in investigating the high cancer rates of the Pueblo, she was displeased with their methods. She said that the researchers were so focused on Western methods of data collection that they neglected to listen to the residents and to collect stories. Oral history is considered, in many native cultures such as in the Pueblos, to be the sole way of passing on ancestral stories. Despite the importance of this native method of preserving data, it is often regarded as illegitimate or simply fiction in the eyes of western institutions such as LANL or the American Cancer Society. Marian argued that oral history can be problematic to Westernized institutions as they require their defined standard of concrete evidence such as data to verify health effects. Institutions, whether LANL or the American Cancer Society, refuse to cast away their post-colonial and empirical assumptions in defining legitimate evidence, and continue to demand western standards of legitimacy from native people.

The Pueblo people are land based people as they have a worldview which produces knowledge, security and sacredness on local terms. Their worldview is grounded in the logic of ecological management and the local landscape (Masco, 2006). Pueblo people maintain the ecological balance in their universe through religious practice and rituals at shrines and sacred sites. Nuclear science is problematic for Pueblo people's religion as this weapons science

destroys the environment which the Pueblo people depend on for continuous religious practice. The land based identity of the Pueblos worsens the impact of the Manhattan Project as the damage extends beyond just losing land. Pueblo spirituality considers humans as part of the specific geographic space in which they reside. Pueblo people have deep connections to their direct geographic space, as their ancestors lived on this land, were buried on this land and the land contains the energies of their ancestors (Masco, 2006). The past is brought to life through connections to the landscape in which ancestral and spiritual connections must be maintained. While Christians may rebuild a church, indigenous religions cannot simply rebuild a sacred area that had been bulldozed by LANL. Any environmental degradation, in other words, also degrades the indigenous land based religious view.

Pueblo people are rooted to their direct surrounding through mytho-history such as creation stories. These creation stories often describe the ancestral journey of how the Pueblo ended up in the exact geographic location. Their emergence stories tie the people to the earth as the specific geographic place is spiritually charged with ancestral significance. These stories define the world and describe how the landscape, animals, cardinal directions and elements came to be (Schlosberg, 2010). The Manhattan Project disrupts this specific order in the Pueblo world through their entitled destruction of sacred land. One Tewa resident describes the damage of the Manhattan Project on indigenous spirituality stating,

“We lost an area that was used for ceremonial purposes. We’ve now got the right to go up there but we don’t own it anymore. I remember my uncle going up to a site and crying because they had put in pipes that ruined the area. Once the buildings go in, the religious character of the site is ruined. The physics facility rests on a number of archaeological sites, as does Area G. They also do archaeological excavations up there. All of these are acts of desecration and the laws often fail to protect our religious

interest. It's always the anthropologists, archaeologists and engineers that have the legal advantage" (Masco, 110).



Figure 3 Area G, Nuclear Waste Disposal Site. Source Los Alamos Study Group, [www.lasg.org](http://www.lasg.org)

Destruction of sacred sites and the surrounding environment is especially damaging for Pueblo peoples due to the land based interconnectedness with nature. The western viewpoint and colonial assumptions embedded in modern science poses human identity as separate from the natural world. LANL embodies these western colonial assumptions and thus does not realize the intense cultural damage that occurs when these basic building blocks of the Pueblo universe are damaged.

Indigenous sacredness transcends the definition of Western religion sacredness as indigenous cultures consider all elements of the world, the mountains, springs, caves and valleys to have an element of the sacred. While Western culture places value on human made spaces such as churches, indigenous cultures place emphasis on the environment (Ortiz, 1984). Pueblos view construction and development as problematic to sacred traditions as they view the entire environment as sacred, rather than a way to make money. This differing value of environment makes it problematic for indigenous cultures to battle development projects, such

as LANL operations, that threaten this spirituality found in nature. When LANL sets off explosives or dumps nuclear waste into sacred areas, religion, indigenous culture and identity is damaged as well. Governor Walter Dosheno of Santa Clara Pueblo argues for respect of indigenous spiritual worldview and rejection of Western colonial views of the environment stating that,

“we shouldn’t be required to specify in measurable terms why a sacred area is sacred. We shouldn’t have to fight for a law that segregates national protection of our religious beliefs from the same rights accorded other religious beliefs in America as outlined in our constitution and bill of rights. We should not have to defend or expose cultural sites in an environmental review process that is not required of any other religion “ (South West Organizing Project, 1993:9).

Indigenous religion is not just practiced in a space like a church or synagogue, but rather, it exists everywhere in nature around them. Western religion would acknowledge the sacrilegious action of building a ski resort on Notre Dame Cathedral, but struggles to understand the religious damage of dumping toxic waste near/ on sacred sites.

LANL is located near the Jemez Mountain range which almost all nearby Pueblo communities consider to be a sacred location and source of spiritual power. Having a lab on the foot of these mountains is problematic as it is a direct offense to Pueblo belief in the spiritual value of undeveloped nature. A pueblo member describes the unfortunate location of LANL stating,

“The lab itself is located in what we consider one of the most sacred areas among the northern Pueblos, located in a place of fire, it is right at the foot of a volcano [Valles Caldera]. There is always reflection on exactly which the lab is there, because we are Pueblo peoples believe that nothing happens by accident, that situations evolve because in many ways they were meant to. So here you have basically an entity dealing with the very deepest secrets of nature which is, in a sense, releasing the eternal fire,

which is the energy that is such an essential part of the life of the cosmos itself, and it being surrounded by some very, very sacred sites” (Masco, 2006, 114).

The US nuclear project takes on a specific meaning within the Pueblo universe as implications of weapons science within a land based religion and worldview.

Pueblo religion and environmental connections are irreconcilable with the capitalist notion of private property. The Pueblo people believe that nature is a sacred entity and therefore should be untouched by development. However, the Western values of private property and capitalism are dependent on the development of the environment. Western sacred religion can exist among western values of environmental development as western religion can arguably produce infinite sacred spaces through the creation of built space such as churches. However, Pueblo religion cannot just replace a now-toxic mountain or move to another location. The notion of having to get permission to access certain areas or not having access to sacred land is foreign to the worldview of Pueblo people. Private property or federal exclusionary property, such as LANL, infringes on pueblo access to sacred spaces that may be located on Lab property. For LANL to demand a guest policy for native people, reinforces post-colonial power structures of assumed inferiority of the natives and their claims to the space. Geronima Cruz Montoya (San Juan) comments on the difficulty San Juan religious leaders now have in completing yearly pilgrimage to the top of Tsikumu P'in, a peak located to the north of Los Alamos due to private property law stating,

“Just recently- say in the last year or so- our people went on their annual pilgrimage and were shot at, so they really ran for cover in a hurry. Another time they asked ahead of time for clearance, so what did they find? White men waiting with camera. Our people, of course, turned back disgustedly and disappointed and couldn't go to the top for their rituals. Now I understand, the shrine is full of beer cans and other trash. Desecration of such sacred places has inflicted deeper wounds on the Indian



people than some of the worst political injustices. For the disappearance of such sanctuaries has left a vacuum which nothing the white man has to offer will fill,” (Shutes and Merrick 1996:142; Ford 1992).

The disrespect and misunderstanding of indigenous religion and spirituality is evident in the desecration of sacred spaces and the colonial assumption that private property views can be forced upon or obeyed by natives, who have a different worldview.

Even prior to the Manhattan Project, Pueblos of the Pajarito Plateau had been subject to the Western values of private property and a cash economy. In the 1600s the Spanish introduced notions of private property that differed from Pueblo views. The Anglo Americans brought their own notions of common law private property that further differed from Spanish views. While private property and land seizure was not a new concept for the Pueblo people, the 1930's and emergence of LANL brought new changes to the Pajarito Plateau. In the 1930's the Pueblos lost ownership of over 18,000 acres of farmland to the US government (Masco, 2006). The emergence of a cash economy also made it harder to live from traditional farming practices. Many pueblos were forced into the cash economy and the loss of farmland forced them to lease their lands for coal and uranium mining as well as seek alternate forms of employment.

The arrival of the Manhattan Project, and the acceleration of the cash economy, opened up tribal land for mining (elsewhere) as well creating new workers for the lab. The pueblo people had little choice but to work for the lab. The capitalist economy forced western values upon the Pueblo people that would further lead to cultural assimilation. Despite the tension between LANL and the Pueblos, there exists a delicate reliance upon the lab as a source of employment. Governor Dasheno of Santa Clara recognizes this dependence stating “any change

in the direction, reduction in budgets, new mission are of viral concern to Pueblos. Downsizing Los Alamos, for example, could have a devastating impact on our economy,” (Southwest Organizing Project, 1993, 9).

### Reclaiming Space for Religious Freedom

Despite the atrocities committed against sacred traditions and the unwillingness of the Lab to navigate alternate modes of communication, the end of the Cold War marked an era where the Pueblos begin to learn about their rights as Pueblo People and as Americans in face of environmental degradation and potential pollution caused by the Lab. While the Pueblos suspected pollution and radiation poisoning among their communities, there was little research to confirm such reports. As LANL did not take the reports seriously, the Pueblo people started to use legal tools to make LANL accountable for their actions. Starting in the 1980s, Pueblo leaders began to hear from Santa Fe based groups about environmental problems affecting their Pueblo communities. Pueblos demanded more investigation by outside sources, rather than just LANL sending personnel to investigate.

In 1992 San Ildefonso began to initiate talks about radioactive waste. Despite LANL reports of no hazardous waste, San Ildefonso challenged the veracity of LANL reports by going to the University of California to discuss representation in lab concerns (Masco, 2006). The Pueblo claimed that they were excluded from their public right as no representative had come to address Pueblo Laboratory concerns with them. Locals were excluded from Los Alamos initially, and they continue to be left out of the fallout conversation. Using more legal tools and

bargaining positions, the Pueblos began to force themselves into the post-Cold War LANL conversation. The Pueblos are now aware of how their communities were directly impacted by the side effects of the Lab and started to demand mitigating resources and a voice at the table.

In August 1993, LANL held the first public meeting to discuss the historical impact and future of the lab. The Pueblos took advantage of this inclusive conversation to demonstrate the racism and exclusion they had faced, and continue to face in issues concerning the Manhattan Project. They “sought to derail the authority of LANL as ‘national security’ institution and shift the ideological terrain away from cold war logic prioritizing national security”(Masco, 2006, 112). The Pueblo people brought up issues of narrative and the vast amount of externalities falling upon the local communities. Despite the Lab’s intention to uphold security, the Pueblos questioned whose security the lab was protecting.

This post-Cold War era also provided the Pueblos with more legal tools to combat LANL and demand accountability for the local Pueblo communities. Several Acts were made into law including The Native American Graves and Repatriation Act (1990), Executive Order 13007 on Indian Sacred Sites (1996), and Native American Religious Freedom Act (1978, amended 1996). These gave the Pueblo formal venues to address cultural and religious issues on the Pajarito Plateau. The U.S. government, including federal agencies such as Department of Energy were required through these laws, to discuss cultural impacts with tribal governments. These laws also gave Native American nations the ability to set their own environmental standards that neighbors would be required to meet. National environmental legislation such as the Clean Air and Water Acts as well as Executive Order 12898 on Environmental Justice also demanded a

new level of cooperation and reciprocity between neighboring communities over environmental impacts statements (EIS).

Despite almost half a century of no legitimate communication with LANL, the post-Cold War era led to increased power in Pueblo nations. Pueblos suddenly had the ability to set up own environmental standards which would affect upwind activities of the lab. In 1994, the Department of Energy also signed agreements with the four Pueblos that immediately neighbor LANL, Santa Clara, San Ildefonso, Cochiti and Jemez Pueblo. These agreements set a precedent for government to government relations, a level of communication never before used in LANL and the Pueblo's history. These accords set up new lines of communication- plans for environmental monitoring of these lands, process of consultation over Pueblo cultural interests within LANL boundaries, emergency response training, environmental science training for pueblo members, and on-going discussion on employment opportunities (LANL 1995, Shaner and Naranjo 1995).

Following this increasing Pueblo power, in 1996 the Native American tribes and their leaders came together at the New Mexico State House to acknowledge and empower each other. For the first time, Pueblo governments were formally recognized by all legal entities that directly impact their communities: the State of New Mexico, University of California, Department of Energy and the Los Alamos National Laboratory. Despite decades of silence, the Pueblo people would be silenced no more. (Masco, 2006). Yet the options open to de-federalize or reclaim LANL are limited so long as the lab remains the only nuclear plutonium pit manufacturing plant in the U.S.

#### 4. Valles Caldera: National Parks Embodying Colonial Assumptions

The concept of national parks was originally created to preserve the grandeur of the Wild West for future generations of Americans (Burnham, 2000). The experience of viewing the Western landscape was considered an essential part of the American experience, representing American values such as freedom and individualism. The creation of the parks was inspired by national pride for America's natural splendors, rather than a concern for preservation of ecology or biodiversity (Burnham, 2000). This 19th century romanticism of the American West inspired a perception of wilderness as beautiful and untouched by humans. This romanticism of wilderness promotes longing to preserve American wilderness as void of human presence. National park conservation celebrates the new frontier and provides the public with nostalgic monuments that represent the American courage of the Anglo-American pioneers of Manifest Destiny. Yet, quite paradoxically, national parks often make post-colonial assumptions as they continue to exclude the historical impact and presence of native people while valuing a version of nature that is void of the native presence that often created the conditions deemed worthy of preservation.

The early National Park Service (NPS) portrayed a Muirian view of conservation<sup>2</sup>, in which they believed true conservation land should be void of human inhabitants (Child, 2011). Spurr argues that post-colonial assumptions are embedded in this Muirian notion of nature as the preservation of an empty canvas. Manifest Destiny and the entire development of the West relies on this notion as nature as void of humans to justify conquering and development by a

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<sup>2</sup> John Muir is a Scottish, American environmental activist and writer. He founded the Sierra Club and was instrumental in promoting conservation in the US

settler-colonial state. National parks were also created out of a colonial mindset that the land was free for taking, and would benefit from land-use by settlers. This colonial assumption embedded in the settlement of the West was devastating for all native groups. Native groups that survived outright genocide and violence were kicked out of designated national park areas, as conservation area managers needed to maintain the notion of the West as an empty space filled with nature. And yet, quite paradoxically, Native American peoples were often sentimentalized as part of the frontier experience. Employed as tourist attractions or seen as circus animals such as at Bandelier National Monument, Native people were tolerated only as naturalized props to enforce a particular vision of the West. Native- National Park Service relations began under colonial and post-colonial assumptions as the NPS was dedicated to a vision of parks void of natives and yet appropriated native people as props. Despite these lingering and problematic Native-National Park Service relations, over time the modern National Park Service has begun to commit itself to more cross-cultural integrity and cooperation with native tribes (Wilson 2014).

### Fighting Back: Decolonizing Valles Caldera and National Parks

Land management models have influential roles in the imagination of the American public. Dilsaver and Young go so far as to argue that national parks are statements of American values, and are “tightly regulated political space” and often “battlegrounds between factions that promote different and often conflicting uses”. National parks such as Valles Caldera are spaces for “class, ethnic and gender conflicts as well as for environmental ones (Dilsaver and

Young 2007). Jemez and the US government disagree over elements in Valles Caldera Preservation Act (2000) concerning management, ownership and property rights of the Preserve. The Jemez Pueblo feel that their issues and concerns are not prioritized, since environmentalists who value the preservation of the land often conflict with that the beliefs of native people who claim access and ownership to their cultural and sacred areas in these federal yet public spaces.

The Jemez Pueblo believe that they have waited long enough to have control and ownership of their lands of the Valles Caldera. Through Spanish, Mexican and American sequential post-colonial policies, the Jemez believe that it is their time to once again assert sovereignty and regain access and ownership of their sacred areas. While other groups feel a sacred connection to the Jemez Mountain area, the Jemez Pueblo believes their claim to the land to be preeminent (Widener, 2015). Many environmental historians attribute the obstacles faced by native groups to the root concept of pristine, Muirian wilderness that has infiltrated the minds of Americans. Environmental historian Mark Spence explained that “the idea of wilderness or nature in the American mindset has “contributed to a sort of widespread cultural myopia that allows...Americans to ignore the fact that national parks [and in the case of the Caldera Preserve, and trusts] enshrine recently dispossessed indigenous landscapes” that were ancestral homelands to Native Americans (Spence, 1999, 5). Due to financial viability concerns, the park passed from a privately-held Trust Management system to the National Park Service in May 2015. Jemez knows the history of National Parks and worries that with the government purchase and inclusion in the NPS system, their homelands will be gone forever.

While the Caldera Preserve is protected through laws valuing conservation, ultimately the National Park Service answers to the public, not the Jemez specifically. Management decisions can be affected by public stakeholder input rather than just Pueblo input. The Jemez argue religious freedom is directly infringed upon through their inability to fully access and control management of their sacred areas. Every year the tribe makes pilgrimages to the sacred Redondo Mountain, one of the most sacred areas in Valles Caldera. Since this land is within the boundaries of the Valles Caldera Trust, the Jemez Pueblo must follow a guest policy for Valles Caldera established in the 2004 Valles Caldera Trust Tribal Access and Use Policy. Pueblo people are treated as the “other” as they as they are considered guests on their own land as stated in the Trust Tribal Access policy. The Trust Management goals tend to prioritize wildlife conservation over native access rights thus demonstrating post-colonial constructs of wilderness conservation void of people. At the end of the list of management goals, the list finally mentions Native people’ religious rights stating, “Recognizing the religious significance of the Preserve to Native Americans, the Trust bears a special responsibility to accommodate the religious practices of nearby tribes and pueblos, and to protect sites of special significance” (Widener, 2015). While the Trust seems accommodating of native people and their religious freedom, native people are merely viewed as guests, not original owners of the land. Nor is it assumed that the Jemez or nearby Pueblo groups will have the power to protected sites of special significance. There is still a discernible post-colonial assumption in these management goals, as native people come second to conservation to maintain a vision of pristine (frontier) wilderness.



Despite a desire to eliminate colonial assumptions prioritizing conservation and regain ownership, the Jemez Pueblo people have conflicting views on how to best manage the Caldera. I spoke with Chris Toya, the Jemez Pueblo's Traditional Cultural Properties project manager, who believes that the Pueblo could not properly manage the Caldera due to lack of financial resources to take care of the area. While the goals of conservation do not always directly align with the preservation of sacred sites, Toya argues that this conservation protection is better than nothing (Toya, 2015). While the tribe might not have federal control, the NPS can at least guarantee that these areas won't be developed and destroyed. Not all tribal members are opposed to government ownership of the Caldera but just want to ensure their voices and rights are honored.

Despite disagreements over whether the government or the Pueblo would best manage the Caldera, the Jemez Pueblo People as a group filed a lawsuit against the US government, claiming that they should receive ownership of the Caldera (Garcia, 2015). However, the US government claims that the title was extinguished in 2000 with the passage of the Valles Caldera Preserve in 2000. They claim that the tribe should have fought for their title back in the 1950's when they had the chance. However, this claim of the Pueblo being too late to make a claim is absurd, as the Pueblo people were just given the right to vote in 1948 (Wilkinson, 2006). It is not realistic to expect that Puebloans would have been aware of their legal rights to make a land claim for the Caldera. The Pueblo has filed an appeal in hopes that they can challenge this ruling of being too late to make a claim. Inclusion of the Caldera into the National Park Service could mean that the government could choose whether the area would become a park, preserve or refuge, affecting Pueblo access to sacred sites. As the lawsuit between the

government and Jemez Pueblo continues, it remains uncertain how sacred site access issues will be treated in the future.

It is likely that the lawsuit will not be decided for many months or years. Many criticize the Jemez lawsuit, however, as the tribe has no means to financial resources to manage the area. It is possible that the lawsuit is just to gain political leverage for a cash settlement or to empower Pueblo political sovereignty. Until the lawsuit is decided, the Trust system will continue to function until the NPS constructs a mission statement and guidelines for the park. The Jemez believe that the current management system is problematic as there are colonial assumptions embedded in the Trust management system concerning the protection of cultural sites in the Caldera. The Trust is required to have one Jemez Board member but this is little representation to assert the desires of the Jemez Pueblo peoples. The only assurance that the Jemez Pueblo receives concerning their sacred sites is a pledge that states that “no new roads or structures would be built and no motorized access would be permitted above 10,000 feet” in order to preserve the “cultural significance of Redondo Peak (US Congress 2000a,b). The land Trust model of the Caldera concerns the Jemez people as they are unable to fully protect (and enforce protection, more pointedly) their own sacred areas. Jemez leaders realize that the majority of their sacred ancestral lands are in the hands of the government. They state that they regard Valles Caldera as a “central spiritual gathering point” and that tourists take away from the sacredness of traditional practices. Realizing the imminent damage through National Park Control and the weak sacred sites protection under the Trust system, the Jemez believe that they have no choice but to assert a land claim (Widener, 2015). Many members feel that the sacred site protection that the NPS and current Trust system offer does not go far enough

to ensure sacred site protection. The colonial assumptions embedded in the NPS and current trust system simply do not prioritize native rights over conservation.

While the NPS does not have reputation of respecting and prioritizing native rights, the NPS has made attempts to improve relations. In 1978 the National Park Service began to draft a Native American relations policy in 1978. However, it was not until 1987 that the National Park Service (NPS) made an official commitment, in its Native American Relationships Management Policy, that it would actively promote tribal cultures as a component of the parks themselves (McAvoy, 2002). This process of improving native relations goes beyond official policies, as it attacks colonial assumptions embedded in our social perceptions of native people. The NPS seeks to eliminate all native appropriation and misrepresentation. To truly improve relations with native tribes, NPS is working to cease the portrayal of native people as stereotypes such as the ecological Indian or the Indian victim (Smithers, 2015).

An initiative to involve native people in NPS to gain control of native narratives has not been without struggle. Even alongside native lands such as Ute or Navajo Reservations, the NPS has struggled to hire native people. Hiring and promotion of Native Americans makes slow progress because entry level jobs in the NPS are low paying. In addition, many natives prefer to remain near reservations and relatives, whereas administrators advance in the NPS through long distance career moves and frequent moves between NPS site assignments (Ruppert, 2003). Native people may also view the NPS as a mere government institution and therefore have reservations working for a system with such embedded values. Native people also continue to criticize the extent to which NPS adapts regulation such as the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 that began a new era of government tribal relations recognizing

tribes' ability to self-govern (Burnham, 2000). This Act gives tribes such as Jemez sovereignty and thus control over their own laws as well as sacred areas on their land.

In defense of NPS efforts, the National Park Service is a large bureaucracy located inside the super bureaucracy of the Department of Interior, making it inevitable that the service would act like any bureaucracy and be slow to concern themselves with individual or small tribal claims. The government to government relationship between the NPS and native territories is often seen as consisting of slow, unresponsive bodies. It is unrealistic to expect fast response from either agency as both NPS and tribal nations have to first take care of the concerns of their own businesses and people (Game, 2013). The NPS has to deal with managing a tourist footprint of over a billion people each year while tribal nations have to deal with issues of water rights, poverty and land management affecting tribal people. Maintaining and improving a relationship between these two different groups is not always a primary concern for either party. However, the relationship between tribes and the NPS is also spatial lopsided as the NPS is just a small branch of a larger government agency and is not a sovereign power. Yet Jemez Pueblo is a sovereign and is still restricted in scale and space. The lingering unequal scalar power dynamic between NPS and native tribes thus manifests the post-colonial challenges between NPS management of the area and tribal claims to the same area. The tribes, as sovereign powers, should have the upper hand, yet the asymmetrical power dynamics never manifest in that way.

Despite struggling relations between these two agencies, the NPS has improved in sensitivity and awareness as it now embraces an inclusive history with more diverse perspective (Smithers, 2015). Environmentalists alike have learned from the relationships between the park

and tribes that land management decisions cannot be based off of colonial assumptions of prioritizing pristine wilderness void of people. Awareness of history and commitment to open-minded dialogue will not necessarily change wholesale policy regarding native rights, but this discussion can aid land managers in multidimensional decision making of national parks.

Knowledge of the NPS' abusive history, native genocide and colonial assumptions still associated with the management of national parks, can help to transform future management decisions away from post- colonial assumptions that hurt native people.

## 5. Conclusion

The Pajarito Plateau has seen various forces of federal institutions manage sacred areas with colonial assumptions and values motivating management their decisions. Despite the significance of the Plateau to the Pueblo people of the region, the Plateau has been a space of colonial occupation, seldom belonging in the control of the Pueblos of the area. The Spanish, Anglo-American and US Government have all embodied colonial reign of the region, as these people and institutions have deprioritized and often eliminated native presence or voice. While native people will no longer be punished for practicing their religion or asserting their rights, colonial assumptions still linger within the framework of institutions on the Pajarito Plateau. Colonial assumptions manifest themselves within the management, priorities, values and philosophy of the federal space as native rights and religious freedoms are still violated within these federal spaces. Bandelier National Monument, Valles Caldera National Park and Los Alamos National Laboratory may not seem to embody colonial assumptions in their management yet do so under the mask of national security or public good.

Bandelier National Monument continues colonial assumptions as it operates under the false assumption that Pueblo peoples had no modern connection with Bandelier. While it has made significant strides in decolonizing engrained assumptions in management as they have begun to alter traditional colonial controlled museum studies to incorporate native voices. They have intended to make native religious concerns and native lead representation a priority. Bandelier National Monument has begun to prioritize natives, as an equal stakeholder to Bandelier as a tourist. However, institutions such as Los Alamos National Laboratory continue to exploit local communities for the benefit of national security. LANL is the most unchanging

institutional with ongoing colonial assumptions as it will always value national security above native rights. While LANL has proved reluctant to work and negotiate with sacred sites claims and native rights' groups, Pueblos have gained laws and policies to combat the colonial forces of LANL. LANL has been forced to decolonize some of its assumptions and treatment of local peoples through policies such as the Clean Water Act, Executive Order 13007 on Indian Sacred Sites (1996), and Native American Religious Freedom Act (1978, amended 1996). These acts gave the Pueblos formal venues to address cultural and religious issues on the Pajarito Plateau despite having little negotiation power with LANL itself. Valles Caldera has also demonstrated colonial assumptions through its management goals prioritizing human-less conservation over native sacred rights to the area. While Valles Caldera and its new ownership of National Park Service show willingness to accommodate native claims and access, native people, specifically Jemez Pueblo are not satisfied without legal ownership of the Caldera.

The lawsuit between Jemez Pueblo and the US Government over rightful ownership of the Valles Caldera poses a discussion of how to fully decolonize a space. While institutions such as Bandelier National Park and Valles Caldera have made attempts to decolonize their philosophy and management, it is debatable whether these institutions will truly be decolonized without being returned to their original owner, the Pueblo people. These parks, although they are defined as public, poorly accommodate natives as natives as considered just another stakeholder or a guest to the space. As long as natives are treated as guests on their own ancestral lands, these institutions will continue to embody colonial assumptions and will disempowering native people and discredit their worldview and sacred concerns. Physical

control of sacred areas and the power to control narrative and representation with colonial assumptions greatly affects religious freedom and expression.

While returning Bandelier, Valles and LANL to their original owners may be neither practical nor realistic, the question of federal spaces as a reflection of post-colonial values is a valid concern among natives. It is important to consider possible creative forms of managing federal spaces such as Inter-tribal governance. One unique multi-tribal governance experiments being proposed at Bear's Ears in Southern Utah. Leaders from multiple tribes, Hopi, Navajo, Zuni Pueblo and the Ute people have come together to found the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition in July 2015. This multi-tribal governance has proved historic as presenting an innovative option in land management. The tribes are committed to conserving the landscape of Bears Ears as well as its cultural access for native people. Bear's Ears has spiritual and cultural significance to various tribes in the area and is a place where "tribal traditional leaders and medicine people go to conduct ceremonies, collect herbs for medicinal purposes, and practice healing rituals stemming from time immemorial, as demonstrated through tribal creation stories" (Bears Ears website, 2016). Despite the potential success of Bears Ears as a model to accommodate federal and tribal concerns in a creative management model, Bears Ears still fails to be completely independent from federal and post-colonial forces. Financial funding from the government still connects Bears Ears to dependency on the nation-state. It is debatable whether a space can still be considered decolonized with ongoing financial dependency on the colonial institution of the U.S. federal government.

Moving forward in a means of further decolonizing our federal spaces, we must look to non-traditional land management models that incorporate native voice on an equal pedestal



with federal voices. This paper offers the Southwest Studies field a springboard for discussing land management decision in terms of decolonizing its federal spaces. While it does not offer distinct policy solutions for land management conflicts, it manifests the complexities in the process of decolonizing our spaces. These complexities in decolonization prompt a discussion of native inclusion and redefining the management of our federal areas. Federal land management decisions should be pursued on a case to case base, depending on the specific needs and desires of the people affected. Through continuously asserting and demanding their needs, and if need be creating their own management solutions, native people will be able to regain various levels of control and decolonize federal spaces that continue to impinge on native religious and ceremonial practices.

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