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PART 1

Dh̄CWY T̄JS̄Q̄W̄J: anitsalagi idigalvladi

Cherokee Stories

*Then take our wreath, and let it stand
An emblem of our happy band;
The Seminary, our garden fair,
And we, the flowers planted there.*

*Like roses bright we hope to grow,
And o'er our home such beauty throw
In future years—that all may see
Loveliest of lands,—the Cherokee.*

From “Our Wreath of Rose Buds” by Corrine, a
Cherokee Female Seminary student (1854)

PREFACE

It was Easter Sunday afternoon in 1887 at the Cherokee Female Seminary, a quiet day except for the high wind. The girls who had remained at the school over the holiday were spending the afternoon quietly resting in the lounging garments. In Ida Collins closet, her prettiest dresses and blouses were scented like spring flowers. The recital of last evening had been a great success; and she, like the other girls who were becoming so well accomplished, had performed in a most creditable way. Below the window, the girls could hear the words of an itinerant preacher, one who smoked all the time and not one usually taking a part in the programs. Then they started smelling smoke. They ran to the window. "Fire!" they heard a girl cry. The preacher had knocked the ashes from his pipe—fire, ashes and all—into the unfinished column, with its collection of small dried shavings and bits of other debris. There was a glow, a flame, and the draft from the wind caused the fire to break into an uproar of conflagration. Below, they could hear the younger girls dragging their trunks across the floor. Like a sleepwalker, Ida began to snatch her wispy new spring dresses and blouses from their closet racks and to go running down the hall with them. Taking them to the window, she opened the window and threw her clothing out to whatever fate it might encounter, in the high wind. (Fry 1988, 101)

Ida Collins Goodale's narrative of the Easter Sunday fire at the Cherokee Female Seminary brings voice to the well-known event in Cherokee history. After starts and stops due to funding and the US Civil War that brought havoc and instability to Cherokee society, the Cherokee Female Seminary had reached an almost twenty-year uninterrupted stride out of the prairies of Park Hill, Indian Territory. Yet the carelessness of an outsider mixed with the high winds of land that wasn't always the Cherokees' took that away in one day. As the grounds of the seminary lay blanketed by the dressings and belongings of students, Ann Florence Wilson, the principal of the Cherokee Female Seminary, ran back into the burning seminary building to save one important piece of school property—the gradebook. Soon, the students from the neighboring

Cherokee Male Seminary, who had abruptly left Easter Sunday services as soon as someone burst in shouting the female seminary was on fire with no regard for the bewildered preacher, arrived and began collecting the garments that decorated the shrubs and trees of the prairie, remarking on who they remembered wearing what as they returned each one to the women, while the students of the female seminary had made sure everyone was out safely, ensuring that no lives were lost. The women who had been attending the seminary were now scattered, much like their garments, in various directions after the fire, with some continuing their education at the Cherokee Male Seminary, some returning home, some headed off to other schools, and some married (Fry 1988, 102). While the Cherokee Female Seminary would be rebuilt in Tahlequah two years later, the fire took everything with it that day—everything, that is, except for that one gradebook, three sturdy brick pillars, and the perseverance of the Cherokee people to rebuild and restore an education system. Even so, twenty-three years later, a similarly devastating fire occurred on Palm Sunday in 1910 at the Cherokee Male Seminary (which at that time was run as a coeducational facility) and destroyed the entire building that coincided with the newly formed state of Oklahoma's takeover of all of the Cherokee's educational systems, including the still-standing Cherokee Female Seminary.

As a Cherokee Nation citizen and a descendant of some of the many Cherokee women who attended the female seminary, I grew up in those tallgrass plains of Oklahoma hearing this survival story of Cherokee education from my elders, who would often begin by explaining how the Cherokee had always seen themselves as a people who first learned to write from Sequoyah's syllabary and continue writing when learning at the Cherokee Male and Female Seminaries. These stories of Sequoyah and the seminaries live and breathe alongside many other traditional stories about Rabbit, Wolf, Selu and Kana'ti, and stories of our ancestral lands "back home"; however, for how important these cultural institutions are in Cherokee identity, all that physically remains from the seminaries is extremely limited in scope and scattered across archives in libraries, boxes, and files all over the United States. Because of fires that devastated both seminaries and the forced takeover by the Oklahoma State government in the early 1900s, these scant archives of both seminaries unfortunately leave behind material traces of living stories that have as many gaps as there are teeth.

What I did find during my archival research on the seminaries mirrored the removal policies of the federal government during the nineteenth century. What few material artifacts remained of this important

time in Cherokee history were curated through approaches to archival science that championed classifying systems based on Eurocentric epistemologies (Duchein 1992). Because of the removal of the stories and Cherokee culture from these artifacts, the resulting written histories that exist of the Cherokee Female Seminary as well as its counterpart, the Cherokee Male Seminary, are overshadowed by narratives of removal, assimilation, and erasure—far from the stories of a celebration of Cherokee identity, survival, and perseverance I grew up with. These narratives informed by Eurocentric research methods still colonize and silence Cherokee ancestors' voices to this day, creating discord between the living stories of the Cherokees and the written histories about them. To speak to, with, and through that discord, I return to the scattered archives of the Cherokee National Seminaries to recover the histories of the Cherokee National Seminaries from colonized practices of research by critically weaving together student writing, recovered pedagogical practices, and the remaining archival artifacts from the tumultuous nineteenth century with multiple strands of Cherokee traditional stories that serve as an Indigenous theoretical and knowledge-making lens.

Building on archival research and the work of decolonial and Indigenous scholars, this book recovers the complicated histories of Cherokee education and the Cherokee women who received that education from dominant histories that simplify their existence as an extension of assimilation and deny the Cherokee people a heritage of survival and resistance during the nineteenth century. Throughout the book, I assert that Indigenous storytelling encourages scholars and researchers to re-tool dominant methods used in existing colonial structures to do the day-to-day work of knowledge-making that makes decolonized recovery work possible. When we re-tool our methods, we can do more than recover underrepresented histories; we reframe our historical narratives in ways that can teach us about our own contemporary experiences as scholars and teachers, especially in the ways that we are culturally positioned within academics.

DĤGWY İŞW&T DZP@E (ANITSALAGI VGATAH-
VI ANOTLVSGV): CHEROKEE KNOWLEDGE-MAKING

At a very early point in my research, I was intimately aware of three points of data I had collected—the Cherokee stories of storytellers, my grandmothers' stories, and the colonized stories of archival boxes across the United States. This was the moment I realized that my research

needed to be guided by more than already accepted archival research practices. My research needed to be complicated and practiced through a methodological approach that could navigate these complex, interwoven stories. What's more is that I also felt the cultural imperative to actively practice my embodiment as a Cherokee scholar through the ways I needed to think about writing about my research in addition to doing decolonial research through Indigenous methodologies, and without doing so my work may only replicate the colonial systems already in place. As Linda Tuhiwai Smith explains:

The problem is that constant efforts by governments, states, societies and institutions to deny the historical formations of such conditions have simultaneously denied our claims to humanity, to having a history, and to all sense of hope. To acquiesce is to lose ourselves entirely and implicitly agree with all that has been said about us. To resist is to retrench in the margins, retrieve 'what we were and remake ourselves'. The past, our stories local and global, the present, our communities, cultures, languages and social practices—all may be spaces of marginalization, but that have also become spaces of resistance and hope. (Smith 2012, 4)

To me, embodying resistance and hope in research necessitates synthesizing Cherokee traditional beliefs and practices with contemporary Indigenous research methodologies and writing this book in a way that follows a distinctly Cherokee path of understanding and ceremony grounded in the practices of balance and community, known as *SGAŃ* (*duyuk'ta*). As a way to embody the practice of *SGAŃ* (*duyuk'ta*), my role of a researcher is better understood as taking on the role of a listener and a storyteller. At each point in my research, I position myself in traditional Cherokee stories before listening to the stories out of the archives, whether they are told by material artifacts, written narratives, or ephemera of nineteenth-century students. In that reciprocal exchange between listener and storyteller, I also share my own story so that I can acknowledge my own relations in a good way and follow my own path, especially as it becomes woven within other Cherokee stories.

As a new parent who hopes to raise children who develop a deep appreciation for their Cherokee roots, I've sought out Cherokee stories in various bookstores so that we can begin to read and learn together. Typically, the stories that get printed for children are Cherokee animal stories—stories about Rabbit and Bear, why Possum's tail is bare, why Mole lives underground, and other similar anthropomorphic tales. It's easy to see why these stories get published in children's literature in our Disney-fied children's culture in America. However, as I have discussed, it's not the content of these stories that have power, and these aren't just

children's stories of simplistic adventures of forest animals. The Turtle Island Liars' Club tells these same stories, often called the "how" and "why" stories. Chris Teuton explains, "These stories tell about how our world was made and how animals came to be the way they are today. On the surface, they seem to be about the physical world. But kids aren't fooled. If you listen closely, you'll see that these 'how and why' stories are about how our thoughts and actions transform ourselves and the world" (Teuton 2012, 194). We shouldn't be fooled either by a Eurocentric coding of stories, for they hold much more power than a nugget of content, much more than entertainment and escape, and much more than a close analytical reading of a canonized text.

As you read the chapters in this text, I ask you to work to embody the ceremony of *SGAḌ* (*duyuk'ta*) as well by opening yourself up to your own stories, listening carefully to the stories of Cherokee education, paying attention to teachers such as Rabbit and Wolf, and putting yourself in relation with these cultural locations as part of your own knowledge-making process. Keep in mind that sometimes stories are slow to unfold, taking along a meandering path as we wander in our knowledge-making. The pathways, especially as they wrap around the (re)positionings of worldviews, ontologies, and epistemologies, may seem like the long way around through a book about the Cherokee National Seminaries; however, the long way around helps shift our ways of thinking from the hidden systems of Eurocentric means of gaining knowledge to Indigenous practices of participatory knowledge-making. The long way around gives us the time and space to listen and listen carefully to the stories that are being shared. Together, as a community of listeners and storytellers, we are making knowledge with the Cherokee ancestors and archival materials they left in a ceremony of learning.

OF JOURNEYS AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS: A STORY OF RECIPROCITY

As you might have realized by this time in the preface, this book is certainly an educational and pedagogical history of nineteenth-century Cherokee, and yet, it is also a book about the ways we make and understand those histories through storytelling research methods. Rather than approaching this book by asking *what it is*, think of this book of a journey, with each storying leading you along to experience knowledge rather than just being told the who, what, where, when, and why. Because, as you read, I hope you'll realize that this book didn't come into being by asking those five familiar W-questions. My own experiences and stories shaped my interactions with the material artifacts, people,

and stories I also learned along this writing journey. While storytelling is almost always associated with spoken word, writing as a means of storytelling is the material practice of unveiling a path through the kind of knowledge work that storytelling accomplishes. As the stories are told, my hands weave together the words as they appear on the digital white space before the blinking cursor. And yet, this process of sharing stories about my research, stories about the ways my ancestors taught me to do archival research in a good way, and stories about the ways to hear that they were still telling us took much longer than the “academic” archival research process took.

Thinking about the journey this book has taken and the ways others have shared their stories with me causes me to pause briefly and contemplate those who helped create the invisible threads that are tied together from the beginning to the end—my grandmothers. Without this pause to acknowledge them, the work they contributed so deeply to this book remains invisible since the knowledge they leant falls outside of the academic citation protocols. My Nana, Mary Lee (Haury) Moon, taught me early on that the everyday was worth documenting and that good stories came from these very real and lived experiences. In her house, where I spent a good portion of my childhood, were tiny, lined notebooks filled with her perfect cursive, scattered on various surfaces and stored in a handful of “junk” drawers. These were the kinds of notebooks that were usually used for grocery lists, calorie counting, Christmas gift ideas, random phone numbers, reminders, and the like. While these things certainly could be found in her notebooks, she also quietly wrote down stories of what she had experienced that day or what she noticed. I don’t know if she ever expected us to read those little notebooks, but stories of the everyday in them are priceless memories stored on faded paper. She also quickly adopted to new technologies, like picking up the earliest Gameboy to play Tetris “to keep her mind sharp” as well as buying the newest camcorders on the market. While we could always count on her asking my Papa to make sure to record every candle blown out at birthdays, every loud laugh while reading birthday cards, every “Ooo, ahhh, hey . . . that’s great!” uttered after a Christmas present was opened, she also would set up the camcorder and just record. Much to the chagrin of the extended family, this often included setting up the camera during the huge Thanksgiving dinners that spilled from the kitchen, through the eating area, and into the den. While there is nothing quite as unsettling as being surreptitiously filmed while eating the largest meal of the year, once the camcorder sank into the background these videos captured not just the stories we told and created but the ways those stories

came into being. She was the documenter of the family, and I learned just how this subtle yet important work happens.

My other grandmother, Mary Leota (Holmes) Legg, also documented life, not always in the everyday, but in the far reaches of history. She had a knack for family history and dedicated years of her life to working at the Family History Center, pulling together the genealogies of my grandfather's side and her side as well, all with the intention of writing these histories down into books to share with her kin and descendants. She would bring history books and notes home with traces of family history and create binder after binder of carefully indexed, cross-referenced sources. When looking through these binders, we joked about how it would be nice to see some of her handwriting, but she was so meticulous, she had typed out every note, label, and source. Everything was kept and everything was documented. Without her tireless work, our family wouldn't have been enrolled with the Cherokee Nation, as my great-grandmother, who was on the Dawes Rolls, had passed away when my grandfather was just eighteen months old. While her own family was of European descent, she took care to reconnect our family to our Cherokee past and, in turn, keeping our Cherokee heritage possible for our descendants. While she had written documentation of our families, she also took to heart every story and had the amazing ability to recall relative after relative, explain how we were connected, and share stories of them. When she knew her life was getting close to ending, she didn't pull any punches. Instead, she pulled me over, knowing that I was writing a book with some family history, and asked me to help her and my grandfather record some of their history. With my computer recording them, my grandpa started with the facts: where he was born and when, who his family was, who he lived with when his mother passed away, where he went to school, and so on. He ended with a quick story about how he proposed to my grandma in a letter (that he kept on the fireplace mantel along with their first picture together), and said, "Well, I think that's about it." Speaking up in her thick, Oklahoma accent, Grandma let out a huff and interrupted, "Well, Carl, that's not what she wants to hear. She wants to hear the stories, not just the facts." After a brief kerfuffle of documenting ideologies passed between the two of them, she made him start over. But this time, she made sure to interrupt with the stories.

Sadly, both of my grandmothers passed away before this book went to print. My Nana, Mary Lee, always wanted to hear updates of what I was writing, how it intersected with my research, and where in the publication process it was. She died just before I received my peer reviews,

but not before she had a chance to read the earliest complete draft of my manuscript. I received the call that my Grandma, Mary Legg, had passed away not even ten minutes before I found out that my manuscript had been fully supported by the peer reviews and the contract became official. In a way, their invisible guidance is woven deeply through these pages. Nana, teaching me the values of everyday stories, and Grandma, teaching me the importance of keeping the stories in with the documentations. Their influences are on every page turn, and without either of them, my journey would not have started. There is no book in your hands without them.

While my grandmothers' quiet influences shaped this book, those familiar with the academic publishing machine and the path to tenure might recognize that my writing this book humbly began in a graduate seminar the same semester I was asked to submit my dissertation prospectus. Under the thoughtful guidance of my dissertation chair, Pat Sullivan and committee, Jenny Bay, Samantha Blackmon, and Thomas Rickert, those research notes turned into a successfully defended dissertation. Three days later in that summer or 2016, my son was born, full of light and life and very little need for sleep. I went from the confident, newly christened PhD to the insecure new mother and new faculty member in a matter of weeks. Along that path, my relationship to my research and writing struggled, while the Eurocentric structure of the dissertation caused me to stumble as I tried to rework the text into something much more akin to the Indigenous knowledge-making my research was supposed to champion. Yet through that time, my husband, Adam Strantz, kept me going, offering me his strength when I was at my weakest. He would sit and listen as I paced the room, talking through my book. He came along with every research trip, often taking our son around museums while I hung out in the archives, digging for clues. To this day, his knowledge of Oklahoma history rivals anyone's thanks to those long museum days with a sleeping toddler in a stroller.

As I began the trial by fire with my husband that is parenthood, I realized that I needed the guidance of my mothers, grandmothers, and ancestors before me to raise my children in ways that were responsible to their Cherokee culture, to their relationships, and to the world (and everything) within them. And yet, I had this book manuscript reminding me that my work and writing was slow with every annual activities report due to my chair. Stories are like that, though. They take their own time to unfold and in the middle of them, we don't see our linear sense of beginning or ending. During this time of what felt like stagnation in my research and writing, I decided to turn to gardening and finding a

more (literal) grounding of who I was becoming. Besides, if I could get plants to grow in ground that had been left untended for years, perhaps I could get those words to grow on a page that definitely felt like had been untended for years. Like many stories, the details get a little fuzzy between failing to grow a decent crop of corn in Ohio (of all places), having so many tomatoes that I didn't mind sharing with the squirrels in that midwestern August heat, and preparing for coursework for the upcoming semester that I began to see the relationships that were forming between the different ways I was gaining knowledge. I realized that, like a budding garden plot, a dissertation needed to be reworked and resown in ground that had been tilled, fertilized, and respected with each rock I (and the hand tiller) took out of the ground that has then ended up in my son's rock collection. In Ohio, I found many colleagues and friends, both local and across state lines, who offered to read and give feedback along with words of encouragement. Even more, their friendships steered me back to an understanding of what self-care truly looked like. It was during this time and with their gracious help that I also went back to cultivating my love of reading, which had slipped away somewhere in the sleepless nights of parenthood followed up with the pressure pot of the tenure track during the day.

Somewhere along this path, I picked up Robin Wall Kimmerer's book, *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teaching of Plants*. While part of me was hoping it would help me grow corn in Ohio, the lessons went much deeper and were much more entangled with what I was struggling against in my own writing. Through her, I learned that relationships grow with reciprocity, responsibility, and restoration (Kimmerer 2013). In her teachings about the relationship between goldenrods and asters, mothers and children, humans and Earth (and all of the other-than-human relations within), she explains:

Responsibility to the tree makes everyone pause before beginning. Sometimes I have that sense when I face a blank sheet of paper. For me, writing is an act of reciprocity with the world; it is what I can give back in return for everything that has been given to me. And now there's another layer of responsibility, writing on a thin sheet of tree and hoping the words are worth it. Such a thought could make a person set down her pen. (152)

Writing is reciprocity—a line I have circled, underlined, and drew hearts around in my now worn copy of her work. My writing is reciprocity toward my ancestors, who share their knowledge through stories and through this writing; I am responsible to the knowledge they have generously shared. My writing is also reciprocity to all of those names and stories I mentioned here, whose experiences have quietly shaped each

word on the page. *My* writing is reciprocity to those who will come after me, reading through these stories in their own lifetimes. Through the sharing of reciprocity and responsibility in my writing, I finally caught the deep knowledge that my ancestors and those at the Cherokee National Seminaries had been sharing all along: Writing is *restorative*. For the Cherokee, the syllabary helped restore a nation; the seminaries, through their teaching, helped restore a community; and the shared stories about them continue to restore the Cherokee people. All it took for me to finally hear those teachings was loving grandmothers, gracious family and friends, a failed corn plot, and a new book (and a lot of patience and listening).

ፀ፻SGA፻ (WINIDUYUK'TA, DIRECTIONS)

Just as Kimmerer discusses the restoration of the land and the healing of the Earth (2013, 326), the lessons the Cherokee students at the seminaries had poured over have turned into the act of healing for myself. What I learned is that writing *with* my ancestors provides the same restorative act of healing a broken Earth through the pathways of a childhood dream, the pursuit of knowledge, the want of teaching others, and in turn, being taught more about myself and the traumas of a mixed-blood existence. Similarly caught in the tensions of white-presenting and culturally (and politically) Cherokee, the students at the Cherokee seminaries helped me understand that restoring the archives with Cherokee knowledge and culture would lead to stories that love us back, restore us, and heal us. Such is the way of stories when grown through the Indigenous wisdoms of understanding our relationships in the world. As I began to see the ways that these students navigated the tensions of white-presenting assimilation with their words, language, and stories, I understood that Cherokee knowledge-making is much deeper than the words presented on the page. Thinking through the practices of the Cherokee, I turned to the Cherokee medicine wheel and cardinal directions to guide my process back to writing after my pen had been silent. The Cherokee medicine wheel, when embodied and materially practiced, steers us through the directions of the world around us. Each path is taken in ceremony and reflection of the ways we work together in SGA፻ (*duyuk'ta*), balance. It is here, in ceremony, that my dissertation, pruned through Eurocentric academic processes, finally began to thrive in the teachings of Cherokee culture. As I carefully took apart each chapter, followed through on stories that had yet to be heard during the research process, and found their places in

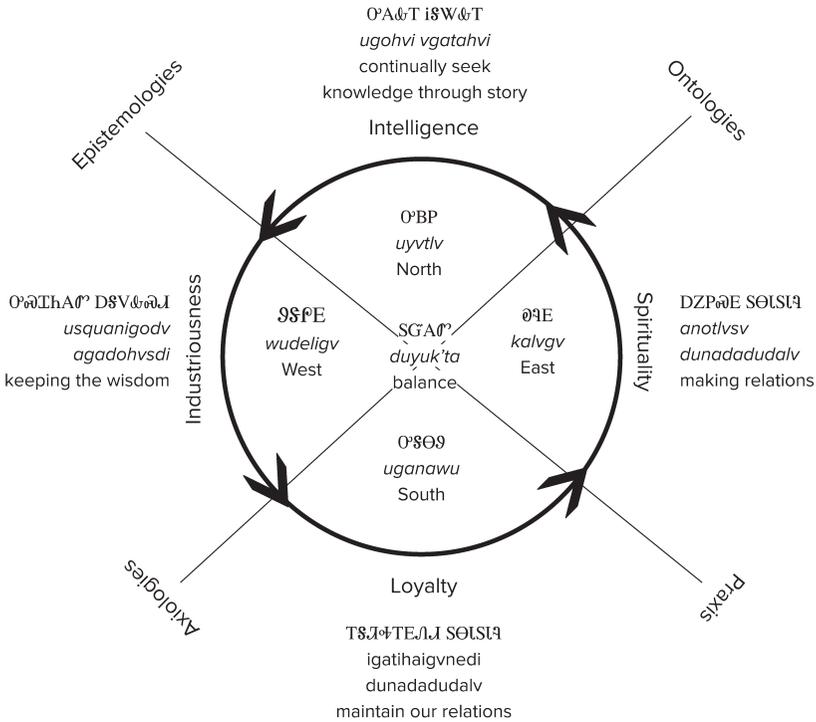


Figure 0.1. Map of the Cherokee medicine wheel as a research methodology.

ceremony along the medicine wheel, this book began to take the shape that you find it in today. Along the way, I also gave up my need to try to make the corn grow and instead let the goldenrods and asters return to my garden beds to bring the bees back to my tomatoes, okra, and beans.

While this written medium can cause the knowledge to stagnate, as it is always presented in the same way, I have consciously organized each chapter through Cherokee ceremony, the living practice of embodied cultural knowledge. To do so, the structure of this book follows a traditional Cherokee path through the cardinal directions in a counterclockwise method: east, north, west, and south.

The four directions, expressed as spirituality, intelligence, industriousness, and loyalty, organize the book into four sections. When mapped onto the contents of this book, the following structure unfolds: part one (east) complicates Eurocentric means of archival work and historiography by acknowledging and making relations with the histories of the Cherokee National Seminaries with Cherokee ontologies and traditional stories; part two (north) develops archival research praxis grounded in

Cherokee epistemologies to build relationships between the archival artifacts from the seminaries and Cherokee traditional storytelling practices; part three (west) recovers disciplinary histories at the Cherokee National Seminaries by applying and maintaining Indigenous storytelling methodology; and part four (south) makes connections between learning from our ancestors and a progressive rhetorical history at the Cherokee Female Seminary, storytelling, contemporary Indigenous experiences, and pathways for Indigenous and settler scholars to enter into an accomplice-based relationship with Indigenous methodologies. By entering into research and writing through ceremony, this path establishes Cherokee ontologies and epistemologies (spirituality and intelligence) as a process of building relationships within research with the accountability and maintenance of those relationships through applied methodologies (industriousness and loyalty) in contemporary Indigenous experiences in higher education and Eurocentric political systems. I have also structured my book into seven chapters throughout these four sections as a means to maintain the metaphysical importance of the number 7 that is represented through Cherokee Clan structures and council houses. Just as the medicine wheel follows the embodied practices of Cherokee basket weaving, these sections and chapters are woven together following the cultural and materialist practice of weaving Cherokee double-walled baskets (Awiakta 1994; Driskill 2016), which follow the counterclockwise directional paths as the reeds are woven around the ribs of a traditional Cherokee basket.

One of the key takeaways from the Cherokee medicine wheel model and organization is that knowledge-making *with* Cherokee ancestors and storytelling in this way takes time. So, while this book is indeed a rhetorical and pedagogical history of the Cherokee National Seminaries, the ceremonial pathways to understand and listen to those stories is slow and methodical. In this sense, this book provides an Indigenous storytelling way of presenting the deep layers that Cherokee ontologies, epistemologies, language, culture, and history are carefully woven together. What began as a typical dissertation had to be prepared, the reeds of knowledge stripped of their Eurocentric bark, soaked in water to create a pliable organization out of once rigid and friable runners, and re-woven following centuries-old ways of basket weaving and knowledge-making. These were the lessons my grandmothers were trying to teach me, and it wasn't until I slowed down and took time to deeply listen that I began to understand that this kind of knowledge-making was happening on *their* time. And it was *good* time. As I finally put the finishing touches of story into this manuscript, I looked out of the windows in the

sunroom where I spent a good deal of a pandemic writing and would lose my train of thought in the goldenrods I didn't pull from the flowerbed lining the road in front of our house. I remembered the words of Robin Wall Kimmerer:

Wevene, I say to myself: in good time, in a good way. There are no shortcuts. It must unfold in the right way, when all the elements are present, mind and body harnessed in unison. When all the tools have been properly made and all the parts united in purpose, it is so easy. But if they're not, it will be futile. Until there is balance and perfect reciprocity between the forces, you can try and fail and try and fail again. I know. And yet, despite the need, you must swallow your sense of urgency, calm your breathing so that the energy goes not to frustration, but to fire. (2013, 352)

When asked about the theoretical uptakes of this book for particular audiences, my first response is to channel the wisdom of Kimmerer and remind everyone: *in good time and in a good way* toward balance and ceremony. Like stories, the path to knowledge and theoretical uptakes (in an academic sense) meander through important shifts in the ways we do things and a (re)positioning in our relationships to story and knowledge-making to strip away the deeply embedded tendencies of Eurocentric meaning-making. My hope is that in presenting the stories of the Cherokee National Seminaries to you in this way you also may be a part of the ceremonial restorative act that is grounded in ontological and epistemological reflection; reciprocity both to and from the ancestors who maintain these stories, histories, and Cherokee culture; and the focus on *SGAḌ* (*duyuk'ta*, balance) that brings a healing fire to the archives as well as to ourselves as researchers and writers as the stories of the seminaries return that healing back in cyclical reciprocity.

ENTERING INTO CHEROKEE CEREMONY

To begin by weaving, my research enters into ceremony by beginning in the east, *ḌĪE* (*kalvḡv*). By telling Cherokee stories alongside the histories of the Cherokee seminaries, an example of tribally run education during the nineteenth century, I complicate our pedagogical histories and previous histories of the Cherokee seminaries by interrogating our origin stories in chapter 1. By questioning our origin stories, I turn my focus to the ways that these stories have severed the Cherokee seminaries archives from the stories they are telling when we approach our research through Eurocentric means of recovery work and historiography. As such, I draw specific attention to archival research as a space of conflicting stories and tensions between dominant and nondominant

research practices in chapter 2. On one hand, the archivist maintains distance and seeks out provenance and origins of the artifacts to develop a classificatory system for the archive collection. However, the other story, as I have explained, is that by definition this mode of classification is inherently colonial in practice and serves to sever the relationships of those artifacts. That dark, dusty, often neglected space of the library where the things to research are tucked away in standardized gray archival boxes that keep their contents hidden from the scholar's eye is a place of colonization and oppression if the researcher is not attuned to those histories and stories. To talk about the archive as a place, Derrida begins with the concept of the *arkhe* as the base of archive. He writes, "Arkhe . . . names at once the commencement and the commandment. This name coordinates two principles in one: The principle according to nature or history, there where things commence—physical, historical, or ontological principle—but also the principle according to the law, there where men and gods command, there, where authority, social order is exercised, in this place from where order is given—nomological principle" (Derrida and Prenowitz 1995, 9). In other words, the archive, coded with the concept of *arkhe*, is the place where things begin and power originates—both starting points. It is a place, and a present gathering of whatever power is being exercised at any time and at any place. When the power of that place is contextualized through colonial and Eurocentric views of research, the power of place and the stories contained as part of that network are something that researchers need to acknowledge. Even today, archives are places of Eurocentric power as artifacts held by federal institutions are threatened by the removal of artifacts from their Indigenous homelands when these federal institutions are placed up for sale or change hands (Johnson 2021). Yet, despite the forced erasure of these Indigenous histories and removals, the material evidence that remains is stories and documents that still speak to us. To strip the archival documents from these histories told and presented by the Cherokee Nation denies the researcher the stories that the archives themselves are asking us to listen to. This history and the archives of the seminaries are then caught between the oral stories of Cherokee teachings and the assimilation narratives and policies of the nineteenth century that are often told and retold throughout history books. The first part of this book seeks to place the institutional histories of the Cherokee National Seminaries, the remaining ephemera of the seminaries and legal documents from the creation of the seminaries, and Cherokee stories back into relation with one another, **DZPᵒᵒE Sᵒᵒᵒᵒ** (*anotlvsᵒ dunadadudatu*, making relations).

After entering through and with stories, the book makes its way through the north, ᎠᎩᎩᎩ (uyvltlv) and builds on the theories and epistemologies developed in the first two chapters in order to develop archival research reflective practices (praxis). In doing so, we can uncover and navigate the tensions between colonization, assimilation, and gender in the Cherokee Female Seminary and its artifacts (Legg 2014, 73–74). Because of the complicated and colonized state of the history of the Cherokee Female Seminary, the archival research and historiography of this time in Cherokee history calls for an indigenized methodological approach to archival research. As researchers, we ramble through the archives, searching for that historical data that seems to emerge out of the various boxes we sift through to increase our general knowledge and help us dream of new knowledges (Connors 2016). But our rambling and inventive knowledge-making is tied to place—a place of power and a place of politics (Biesecker 2006). My work then turns to Cherokee ancestors to seek the knowledge of understanding the ways that Eurocentric methods of research and Enlightenment-era archival processes have erased the cultural bearings of the seminaries. By seeking knowledge with our ancestors, I ground my recovery work with and in Indigenous theories and epistemologies in order to develop archival research reflective practices (praxis).

Specifically, in chapter 3, I draw upon the living oral archive of Cherokee stories, and I expose Eurocentric worldviews in materialist stories that create part-to-part relationships, such as Latour’s actor-network theory (ANT) and Ingold’s environmental meshworks. To weave, I turn to Cherokee stories, such as “Grandmother Spider,” that bring together the researcher, the artifacts, and their cultural ecologies within an Indigenous worldview that relates the part to the whole in relationships. By grounding materialist theories within an Indigenous worldview, this chapter extends *all our relations* as Indigenous materialist ontologies that constitute a reflective and process-driven praxis (practice as theory-work). It is through these Cherokee stories that Indigenous teachings situate archival research as a sustaining process of relationship-building and knowledge-making between researcher, artifacts as participants, environments, technologies, and cultural practices together. As I rambled through the archival places at Northeastern State University, I approached my research with the same desire to find a new knowledge through points of historical data that I hoped may decenter the histories of rhetoric and composition. I brought with me experiences and stories from my own family and my own research background in Indigenous histories, Cherokee practices, and Indigenous philosophies. As I also

sifted through yellowing folders and gray boxes, I tried to listen to the stories these documents were telling. I reflect back to that moment, and the archives were also listening back to me. Acting as agents in this participatory knowledge-making praxis, the archives listened and acted against their predetermined cataloging and classifying. They existed in that moment as material remnants of these teachings and once again were a part of that Indigenous relationship shared through storytelling. Those colonial structures no longer shaped the archive, and the archives listened by dispossessing bias and assumptions made through those structures.

I assert that for these reasons, we need Indigenous methodologies, specifically storytelling, to do recovery work and to understand how these stories can retain power in already powerful places. As a means of decolonizing research, chapter 4 calls for an Indigenous approach to archival research that is grounded in Indigenous theory-making, that is, storytelling. Making the move to Indigenous storytelling in archival work begins the decolonial work of dismantling colonial power structures in research and moves to navigate these colonial systems in a way that is rhetorically and culturally networked and situated. In order to resituate myself, my story, and the artifacts in the archives that I encountered, I needed to reframe my own knowledge-making through constellating and relationship-building in basket weaving. When we frame basket weaving as more than just an activity and as a cultural and embodied practice (Driskill 2016), we begin to situate ourselves within Indigenous ways of being in relation. By situating my research within Indigenous ontologies of all our relations (Powell et al. 2014; Weaver 1997; Wildcat 2001b), I reflect on the rhetorical and methodological practices of all our relations as taught through traditional Cherokee stories in order to uncover the materialist impulses (Bennett 2010; Ingold 2008; Barad 2007) in research. Indigenous storytelling methodology impacts archival practices and the disciplinary histories of rhetoric and composition and encourages participatory knowledge-making practices that ask researchers to engage in human- and object-centered ecologies. I argue that these methodologies are absolutely necessary in order to de-center the histories of rhetoric and composition and to push the boundaries to relandscape our disciplines so that other stories and voices are heard and recognized. Once we make these moves, we can start the process of bridging together our stories, seeking out “all our relations” in rhetoric and composition histories. When analyzing institutional archival artifacts such as blueprints and legal proceedings, stories, such as “Wolf Wears Shoes,” situate researchers as colonial settlers and

uncover a theoretical and cultural positioning in the archives. Using the rhetorics of Cherokee storytelling as an Indigenous intervention with other theories of networked ways of knowing and ecologies (Barad 2007; de Certeau 2013), this chapter develops a networked knowledge-making praxis so that we may re-tool dominant methods of research that exist within colonial structures and top-down knowledge-making practices.

By indigenizing our archival research methods, we enter a balanced relationship within our research that does the work of sustaining materialist and networked ᏈᏈᏈᏈ (*sgadug*, Cherokee for “community”). Uncovering this research path opens up the archives so that we can listen to the Indigenous histories of the Cherokee National Seminaries. Sustaining ᏈᏈᏈᏈ (*sgadug*) calls for researchers to understand the actions of ᏍᏎᏎᏎ (*duyuk’ta*, Cherokee for “honest”) as a right, and balanced spiritual path that is created through storied practices. All of these storied practices encourage participatory knowledge-making that ask researchers to engage in human- and object-centered ecologies within the ᏈᏈᏈᏈ (*sgadug*). Our path through the north reminds us as scholars to continually seek knowledge through story, ᏍᏎᏎᏎ ᏈᏎᏎᏎ (*ugohvi vgatahvi*) in all our relations, even if those relations are buried deep in the ephemera of dusty archival boxes and prepares us as we enter into story and to seek knowledge with Cherokee ancestors in the ᏍᏎᏎᏎ (*wudeligv*, west). The heart of this book finds its place in the west, ᏍᏎᏎᏎ (*wudeligv*), the direction that turns us to ways of keeping the wisdom, ᏍᏎᏎᏎ ᏍᏎᏎᏎ (*usquanigodv agadohvsdi*). While Western philosophies draw distinct lines between the ontological and epistemic, Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies of storytelling come together in order to recover, reacquaint, and relate our beings and ways of knowing. After developing an Indigenous methodology for archival work, I turn to ways of keeping that wisdom as an active practice that employs storytelling. Storytelling acts as a methodological framework in the Cherokee National Seminary archives that reimagines the role of Cherokee culture through the impact that Cherokee education had on the Cherokee people during this tumultuous time in history. From these recovered histories that emerge through the application of Cherokee traditional stories with archival artifacts, we gain a nuanced understanding of the ways that Cherokee used education as a pathway that navigates survival and resistance.

The insights we can gain from this wisdom of nineteenth-century Cherokees serve as a case study for histories that challenge Eurocentric models of education and assimilation narratives. In chapter 5, I frame institutional documents such as blueprints, tribal law documents, and

course catalogs through the Cherokee stories of Selu and Kana'ti that teach Cherokees ways to understand balance and gendered relationships. By applying the teachings of Selu and Kana'ti to the recovered artifacts and stories of the seminaries that are placed within the intersections of gender, race, and colonization, my archival research complicates assimilation narratives of Indigenous education, and instead offers a culturally motivated means of institutional practices and pedagogies. Answering Royster's call to relandscape rhetoric and composition, the histories of the seminaries that have been buried in archival practices provide a culturally Indigenous landscape that complicates our understanding of the origins of composition and rhetorical pedagogies.

Chapter 6 turns to the writing practices of nineteenth-century Cherokee and constellates the turn to literacy alongside the pedagogical means of teaching writing at the seminaries. In this chapter, I trace the relationships the Cherokee have with writing from the ancient stories of the Ani-kutani, a priestly clan of the Cherokee who used writing as a means of restricting knowledge and creating a hierarchical power structure within Cherokee society to the development of Sequoyah's syllabary as a means to retain sovereignty when faced with aggressive policies of erasure that Andrew Jackson ushered in. Through these stories, we learn that, for the Cherokee, writing was a material orality, and teaching writing in a way that acknowledged the material orality of the Cherokee meant developing and adapting writing pedagogies grounded in materialist methods. Courses at the seminary, such as Object Lessons, taught Cherokee students that writing was best learned through experience and that experience was gained through material exposure and relationship-making.

To further contextualize the progressive role of tribal education and literacy practices within the Cherokee Nation (Nelson 2014; Brown 2018; Justice 2006), I offer an analysis in chapter 7 of Cherokee student writing from student newspaper publications that range from 1850 to 1880 that I recovered in my archival research. By building on Ellen Cushman's work on the Cherokee language as perseverance (Cushman 2011) and situating the use of the Cherokee language as ontological, chapter 7 analyzes student writing that is published in the Cherokee language and pushes back against other publications that frame these newspapers as evidence of assimilation. These student writings and the publication practices of including both English and Cherokee stories follow a model created by the Cherokee Nation in their tribal newspapers and also uncover the roles of Cherokee women that follow traditional matrilineal structures. As part of an exchange program with

other seminaries and colleges during the nineteenth century, these newspapers and student writings perform the dual role of navigating an expectation to perform “white” while Cherokee while maintaining sovereignty by centering the Cherokee language, which would be seen but not accessible to a white audience, through student writings that are for a specifically Cherokee audience. We know from oral stories as well as documentation that the Cherokee were an agrarian society with a robust political structure based on a clan system that set up the governmental structure for each of the Cherokee towns. The pastoral images that the Cherokee students describe, however, are not entirely accurate representations of Cherokee life and, in fact, seem to mirror the colonial settlers’ images of the “noble savage.” Were the Cherokee so far removed from their culture that they believed the settlers’ stories of who they were in the past? The details about the specifics of Cherokee culture, including references to the stomp grounds, stickball, Green Corn Ceremony, and subtle repetitions of the role of the hunter, Kana’i, and the Corn Mother, Selu, make it almost impossible to think that the Cherokee had forgotten who they were. Instead, what the students have done is create a mirrored existence through their writing of what the dominant society believes of the Cherokee. In all of these stories in the newspapers, the Cherokee students remark on how they are no longer this “noble savage” of white narrative dominance. By doing so, they shift their past and their culture onto a metaphorical past and culture that can be “erased” by claims of civilization. By recovering nineteenth-century Cherokee women’s writing, my archival research situates writing practices at the Cherokee Female Seminary as embodying indigeneity in Eurocentric educational systems and exemplifying what Joshua Nelson calls “progressive traditions” that seek a third path of identity through rhetorical acts of survivance and cultural balance (Lyons 2000; Stromberg 2006) as a response to the realities of assimilation at a time of Native removal legislation and marked erasure.

Turning to the south, ᎠᎿᎠᎿ (*uganawu*), in the Afterword, I share the ways we can strive to maintain our relations, ᎠᎿᎠᎿᎠᎿᎠᎿ ᎠᎿᎠᎿᎠᎿ (*igatihaigvnedi dunadadudaku*), by constellating Indigenous histories and the lessons we have learned from our ancestors with contemporary experiences of Indigenous peoples. Eurocentric histories have taught us to think that the past and our ancestors belong in museum displays and protected in archives, but our stories teach and steer us otherwise. Our pasts and our presents are cyclical and relational, and our ancestors are still with us, teaching us, through story. Colonization displaces our ancestors and their stories in the past as if our survival after the Trail of

Tears was not grounded in our traditions and practices that resisted and survived. For Cherokees now, we can turn to and listen to our ancestors who have so much to teach us about walking the path between survival and resistance. In order to maintain these relationships, I ask us to begin questioning the borders and boundaries we place between our research practices and our ways of being and knowing in the world. If Enlightenment thinking can construct a viable research method still in practice today, so too can Indigenous practices reframe our research methodologies in lasting ways. Storytelling, when it is recognized as such, transcends our borders between scholarly research and ways of being in the world. Even more than a methodological framework, the participatory nature of storytelling is a lived and embodied act that sustains a community of knowledge-makers across time.

It is here in the south that I synthesize connections between storytelling and the histories of the Cherokee National Seminaries so that we can see our current academic practices in ways that are reflective, performative, and transformative. Rather than a linear history that tells us to learn from a fixed past, I argue for a cyclical, relational, and material knowledge-making from communities that transcend temporal boundaries. In doing so, my book constellates the progressive rhetorical pedagogies at the Cherokee Female Seminary, storytelling, contemporary Indigenous experiences, and current methodological and pedagogical applications so that we may also walk the path between surviving and resisting colonial strongholds within academic institutions. By synthesizing these connections between nineteenth-century and contemporary academic experiences, I articulate the ways a colonial institution can be indigenized from within through storytelling and sharing contemporary experiences of Native American sovereignty within the walls of ivory towers. By reflecting on my archival work, I draw upon the experiences and writing practices of nineteenth-century Cherokee women who had to navigate the insider/outsider positionings of being Indigenous within the academy. By putting Indigenous practices in relation with academic experiences, I offer ways that those who are positioned as settlers in Indigenous knowledge-making practices can act as accomplices so as to join in *with* a community of knowledge-makers. These communities are woven together through story, ancestors, and all our relations through the ways that network individual knowledges within lived experiences that are culturally and rhetorically situated. Through these practices woven in both the content and structure in this book, we (Indigenous and settler scholars alike) can reflect on our own pathways in ceremony and work to Indigenize our teaching, our writing methods, and our storied ways.

Ultimately, the stories I tell in this book fall into such categories as Indigenous methodology, revisionist history, disciplinary landscaping, and archival research. Given that this story is also steeped in Indigenous teachings, locations, and culture, my aim is to tell a story through interdisciplinary constellations realized through Indigenous storytelling methodologies so that the stories here can speak of the Cherokees' own histories of composition teaching in the Cherokee seminaries. Always mindful of the Indigenous ways of being that I invoke in this book, I weave together Cherokee stories, Cherokee language, and Indigenous epistemologies in conversation with contemporary theories of materialism and object-oriented ontologies. By weaving together these approaches, my work reaches beyond illustrating interdisciplinary scholarship to performing, modeling, and actively participating in interdisciplinary scholarship through decolonial and Indigenous lenses. Through an interdisciplinary and Indigenous weaving of archival research, Cherokee stories, theoretical work, and historiography, this book steers us back to several present realities—the reality that the archives of the Cherokee National Seminaries have always already been Indigenous even in a colonized state; the reality that our methodological need to navigate and resist colonial structures still is present; and the reality that we, as scholars, must seek reflective practices that are constantly aware of our own cultural ecologies.

And so, let us breathe in together slowly, ready for the stories to unfold, so that we may work together to keep the fire of *SGAḌʷ* (*duyuk'ta*, balance) burning . . .