

Place and Sacred Places in relation to Geologic Heritage

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Tsé bit'á'í, Rock with Wings, also known as Ship Rock)

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A *place* is any locality, real or imagined, that becomes imbued with meaning by human experience.

What begins as undifferentiated space becomes **place** as we get to know it better and endow it with value.

Yi-Fu Tuan, geographer, in *Space and Place* (1977)

Our access to space and time is how they happen in a given place.

Edward Casey, philosopher

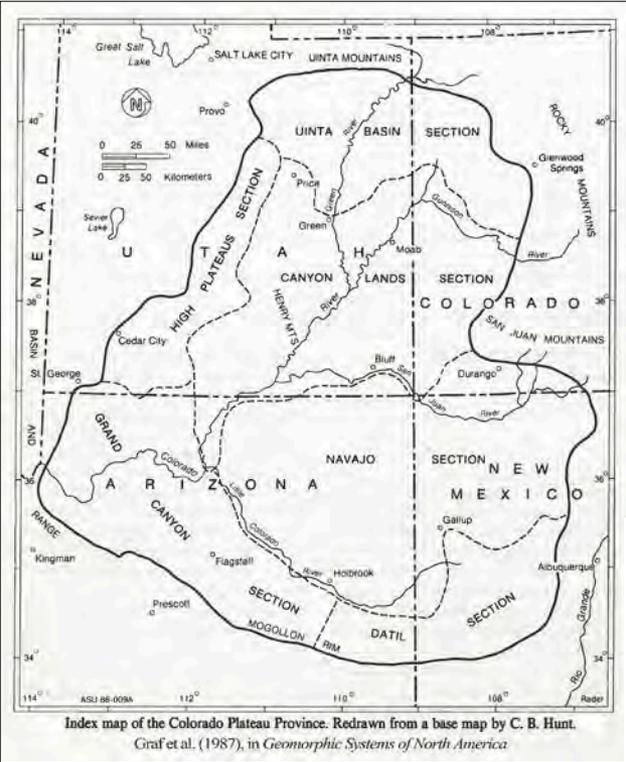


ASU students on the Trail of Time at Grand Canyon National Park

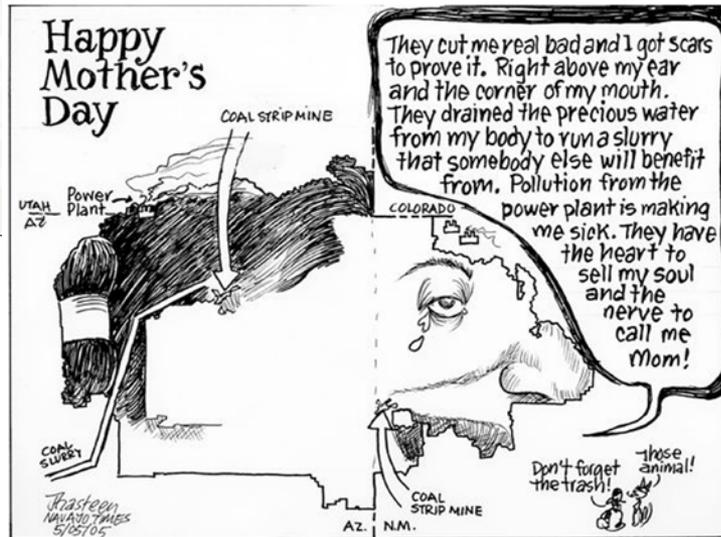
3 As we affix intellectual *meanings* to places, we also form emotional *attachments* to them, individually and collectively.

Sense of place comprises the meanings and attachments made in and for a given place.

Sense of place operationalizes the “connection to Earth.”



Map representing the Navajo Nation as Mother Earth: political cartoon in *The Navajo Times*, Ahasteen (2005)

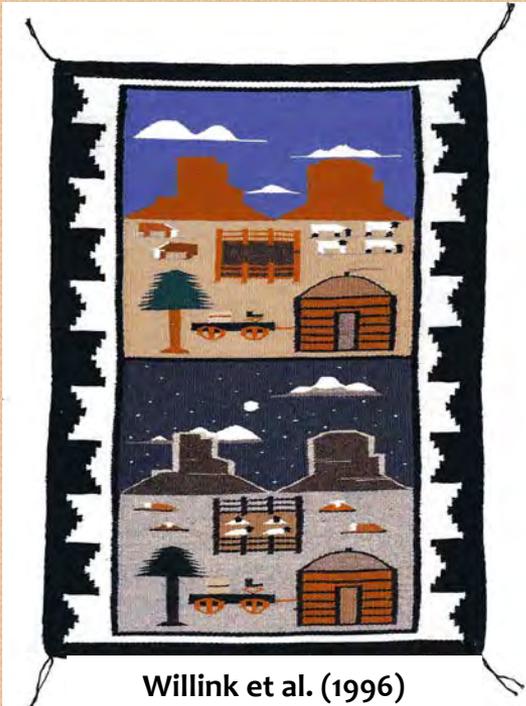
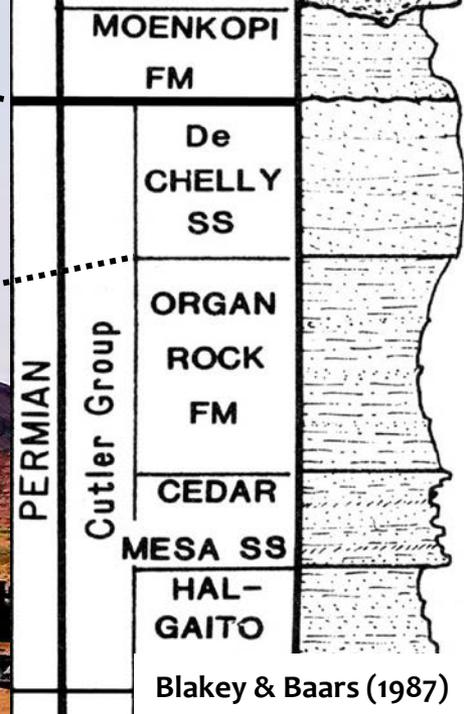
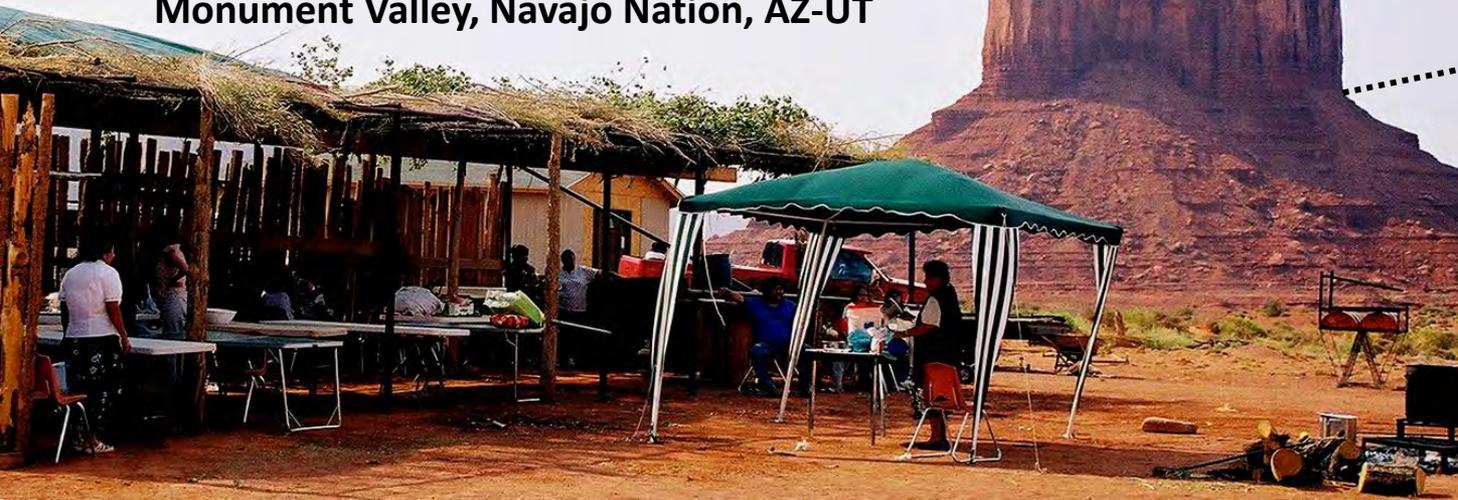


Map of *Diné bikéyah*—homeland of the Navajo people—and environs, Rock Point Community School (1982)

Index map of the Colorado Plateau, Graf et al. (1987)

Geologically iconic places will have different meanings to different people.

e.g., *Tsé bii' ndziszgii* (Clearing Among the Rocks)
Monument Valley, Navajo Nation, AZ-UT



Willink et al. (1996)



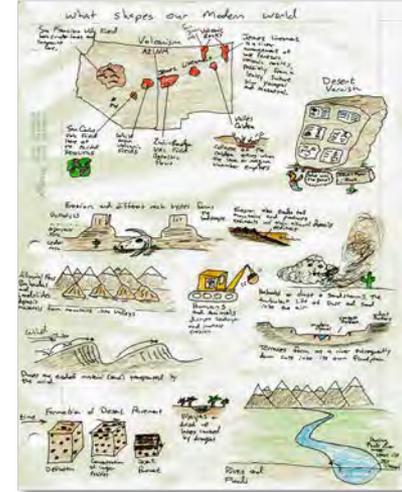
Ford & Cooper (1949)



Arches Tours (n.d.)

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Sense of place and its components place meaning and place attachment can be *characterized, measured, and assessed* in ways of potential value to the geologic heritage movement.



Sense of place can be measured directly by **quantitative** methods (e.g., surveys), and **qualitative** methods (e.g., focus groups, interviews, observation), and indirectly through **artifact analyses** (e.g., texts, photographs, artworks).

Sense of place can be useful in **defining the attributes** of a potential geologic heritage site and the **objectives** for establishing it, and in **evaluating the impact and value** of the site at any time.

Place-based education, which leverages sense of place in teaching, is akin to **interpretation** as practiced at Parks and Monuments:

An educational activity which aims to reveal **meanings** and **relationships** through the use of original objects, by firsthand experience, and by illustrative media, rather than simply to communicate factual information.

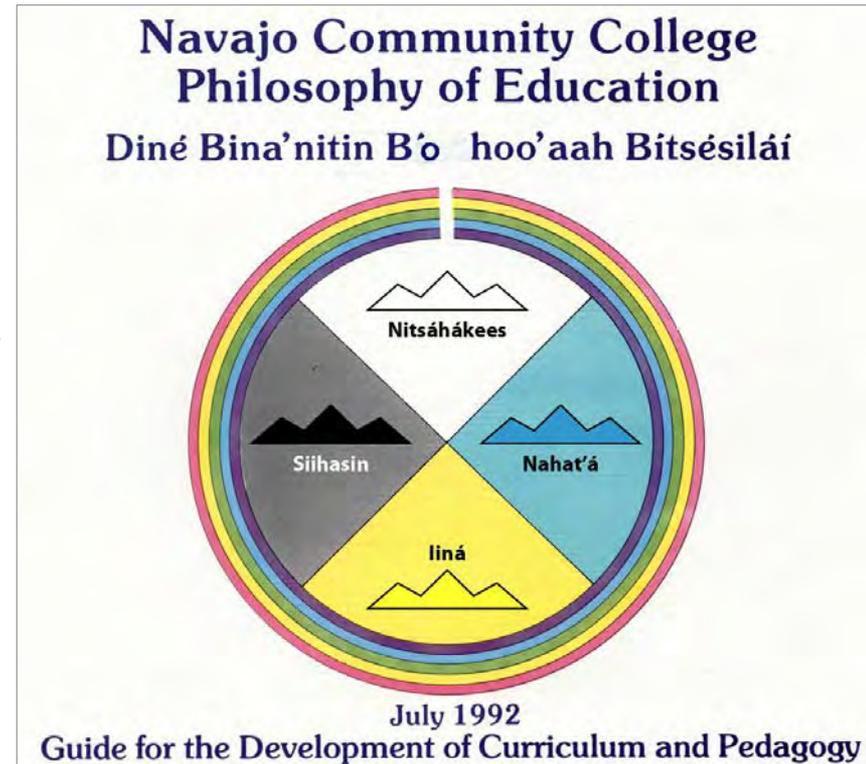
Freeman Tilden, in *Interpreting our Heritage* (1957)

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Place is existentially central to the **cultural identity** and **cultural sustainability** of Indigenous and historically resident peoples.



From Miles et al., *History of the San Carlos Apache* (1997)



American Indians hold their lands—place—as having the highest possible meaning, and all their statements are made with this reference point in mind.

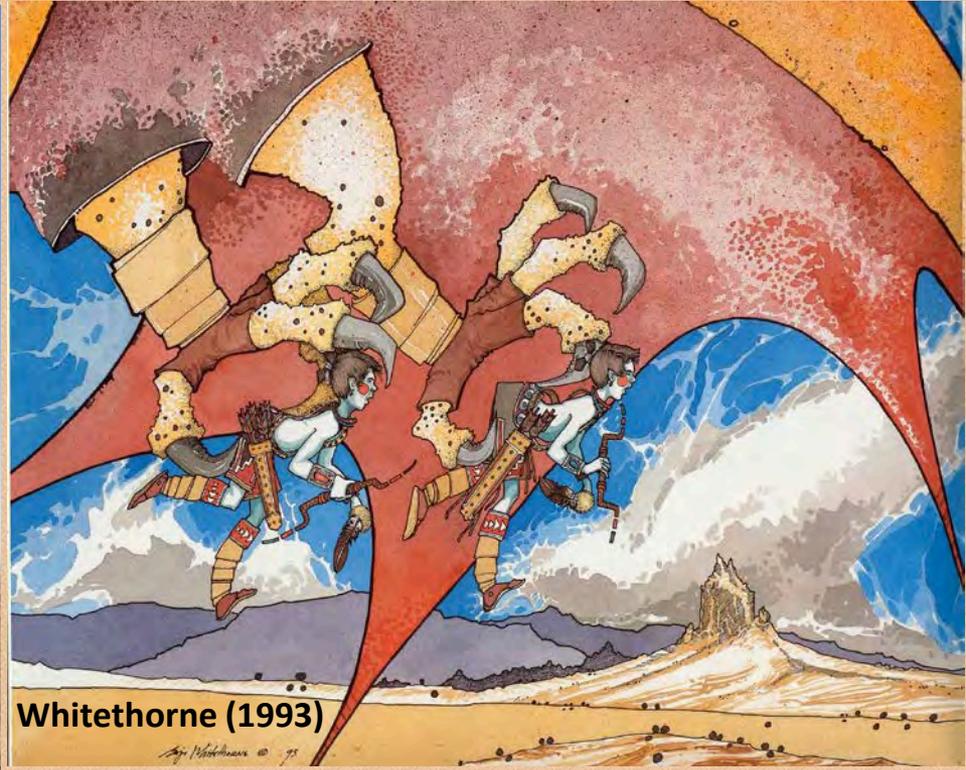
Vine Deloria, Jr. (Lakota), late attorney and educator, in *God is Red* (1972)

The first way of thinking and knowing has to do with one's physical place... where one physically lives. One has to know one's home, one's village, and then the land, the earth upon which one lives.

Greg Cajete (Tewa), humanist and science educator, in *Look to the Mountain* (1994)



Tsé bit'á'í



Whitethorne (1993)

Navajos, like other Indians, say, **“The whole land is sacred.”** This statement evokes how soil, moisture, air, and light...become food that in turn becomes the people’s flesh and blood. It also evokes the social relations between mortals and the immortal “Holy People” whose outer forms are landscape features, animals, plants, the atmosphere, and celestial bodies...

Mortals who live on the land have a...**right to use these places** for communicating with the immortals in ways that sustain both.

Stories usually go with [sacred places]. **People visit the places** to connect with their power.

8 Native Americans hold their places to be **sacred**.

How the Diné language expresses sense of place:

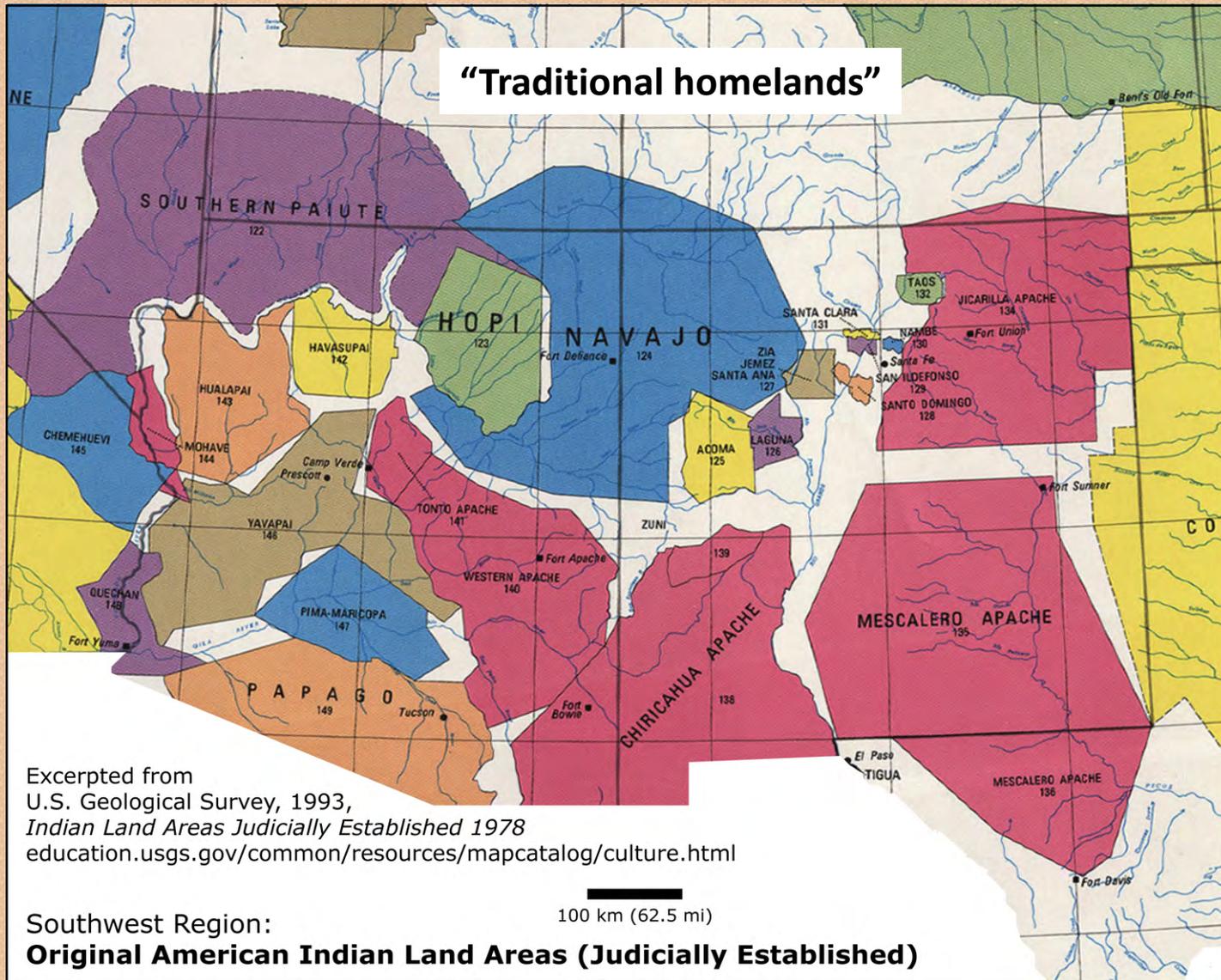
K'é (kinship) → **ké yah** (“under foot,” homeland)

The term **kéyah** [homeland]... expresses the Navajo concept of a bond between Earth and the individual.

Grace McNeley (Diné), educator, in
Home: A Family of Land and People (1987)



Many sacred places no longer exist in areas of Native American jurisdiction—but Natives have not forgotten these places.



Place and Sacred Places in relation to Geologic Heritage

- Places of geologic significance will likely hold different meanings for diverse people.
- For example, many iconic geologic features, landforms, and landscapes in the USA are considered sacred places by one or more Indigenous or historically inhabitant groups.
- These places are indispensable to the cultural identity and cultural sustainability of these communities. Many are outside the modern boundaries of Native American jurisdictions.
- Sacredness implies enduring personal and familial relationships to the land.
- A sacred place is not necessarily a prohibited or private place, but one that should receive reverence and care.
- The sense of place, which incorporates meanings and attachments, is a potentially useful construct in defining, establishing, operating, and evaluating geologic heritage sites.

