

Shił Nahólne’: Literary Arts & Oral Stories Symposium

**Hosted by BFA Creative Writing Program and
Navajo Nation Poet Laureate Committee**

**APRIL 17-18, 2025
Indian Pueblo Cultural Center
Albuquerque, NM**

Shił Nahólne': Literary Arts & Oral Stories Symposium



Photo Credit: Laura Tohe, Ph.D.
Artist: Laura Florence

APRIL 17 - 18, 2025

Indian Pueblo Cultural Center, Albuquerque, NM

Thursday, April 17, 2025

7:30 AM Sign-In Registration

**Continental Breakfast provided*

8:30 AM GENERAL SESSION (Silver & Turquoise Room)

Opening Prayer Sharon Nelson, *Diné Studies*

Yá'át'ééh Dr. Colleen Bowman, *Provost*

Introductions Dr. Jennifer Wheeler, *Associate Professor, English*

Anita Roastingear, *Associate Professor, English*

Gene Hult, *Assistant Professor, English*

Dr. Kendall Grady, *Assistant Professor, English*

9:00 - 10:00 AM Tanaya Winder, Southern Ute, Pyramid Lake Paiute, Diné,
Duckwater Shoshone Nation Authors, Singer-Songwriter, and Poet
Words as Seeds: The Medicine of Storytelling

10:00 AM Break

10:15 - 11:15 AM Joe Kee, Associate Professor, Navajo Language, UNM Gallup Campus
Hodízingo Oodáát – Walking in Reverence

11:15 AM - 12:15 PM BFA Creative Writing Student Presenters

Cheryldine Spears, *I Remember Shimá Sáni's House*

Jorah Thompson, *The Greatness of Nothingness*

Tamara June Yazzie, *Shinálí Asdzq (My Paternal Grandma): The Spiritual Strength of My Existence*

12:15 - 1:30 PM Lunch (on your own)

1:30 - 2:30 PM GENERAL SESSION

Lydia Fasthorse, Diné Language and Culture Educator

Shizaad Bee As'ah Naashá: My Diné Language - The Impulse of My Love for Life



2:45 - 3:45 PM BREAKOUT SESSION

(Chaco I Room)

Cuyler Frank, KCZY 107.3 FM NTU General Manager

(Chaco II Room)

Utilizing Navajo Language in Sports and Radio

Norman Patrick, Brown Diné Actor and Filmmaker

The Power of Diné Language in Theater and Film Narrative

3:45 - 4:00 PM Break

**Afternoon Snacks provided*

4:00 - 5:00 PM GENERAL SESSION

Emerald GoingSnake, Giduwa and Mvskoke Poet

Remembering: Ruminations on Indigenous Poetics

Friday, April 18, 2025

7:30 AM Sign-In Registration

**Continental Breakfast provided*

8:30 AM GENERAL SESSION (Silver & Turquoise Room)

Opening Prayer *Shyler Martin, NTU Student*

Yá'át'ééh *Dr. Elmer Guy, NTU President*

8:45 - 10:45 AM Hershman John, Diné Poet and Short Fiction Writer

Ekphrasis: Reading and Writing Workshop

10:45 PM Break

11:00 AM - 12:00 PM BREAKOUT SESSION

(Chaco I Room)

Asa Benally, Cherokee and Diné Costume Designer

Storytelling in Indigenous Theater

(Chaco II Room)

Hataa'ii, Diné Poet, Songwriter, and Musician

"Brown Fool Eyes": Introspection and Trying to Communicate

Understanding through Poetry, Songwriting, and the Arts

12:00 - 1:30 PM GENERAL SESSION

Lunch (Provided)

Talibah Begay, Diné Singer and Performer

1:30 - 2:30 PM Billy Luther, Diné, Hopi, and Laguna Pueblo Writer and Director

Native Stories - Fiction and Nonfiction Film, Scripts, and Documentaries

2:30 PM Break

**Afternoon Snacks provided*

2:45 - 3:30 PM BFA Creative Writing Student Presenters

Cheyenne Woodie, Eat Dessert First

Shyler Martin, *Flash Creative Nonfiction*

3:30 - 5:00 PM Navajo Nation Poet Laureate Luci Tapahonso, *Inaugural Navajo Nation Poet Laureate*

Dr. Laura Tohe, *Navajo Nation Poet Laureate*

Naming of the New Navajo Nation Poet Laureate

Ahéhee' Dr. Casimir Agbaraji, *NTU Dean of Undergraduate Studies*

Closing Prayer Anita Roastingear, *Associate Professor, English/Creative Writing*

GUEST SPEAKERS



Tanaya Winder
Poet

Tanaya Winder is an author, singer-songwriter, poet, and motivational speaker with an intertribal lineage from the Southern Ute, Pyramid Lake Paiute, Diné, and Duckwater Shoshone Nations. She earned a Bachelor of Arts in English from Stanford University and a Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing from the University of New Mexico. Winder's poetry collections include "Words Like Love" and "Why Storms Are Named After People and Bullets Remain Nameless." Tanaya specializes in youth and women empowerment, healing trauma through art, creative writing workshops, and mental wellness advocacy. You can learn more about her work at: www.tanayawinder.com

Words as Seeds: The Medicine of Storytelling

How do words shape and mold us into the people we become? When we think of words as seeds, we become even more aware of the intention behind words that are planted with positivity and those that cause harm. Indigenous storyteller Tanaya Winder will offer testimony on the power of words and their impact on our spirit's traumas and triumphs.



Joe Kee
Associate Professor, UNM

Joe Kee, Associate Professor of Navajo Language and Navajo Government at the University of New Mexico Gallup Campus, brings forth his extensive 25-year experience and knowledge of the Navajo culture, history, and language as a university professor. He is originally from Tónahalííh (the place where water flows to), between Steamboat and Cornfields, Arizona. Teaching the Navajo language, culture, and history through lessons, songs, and stories requires a fine balance and understanding of an ever-changing world within the Navajo cultural base. Professor Kee's work as a movie script translator with the Navajo-dubbed Star Wars: Episode IV in 2013, Finding Nemo in 2016, and Fistful of Dollars in 2019 enriches his work, revitalizing the language from the past, tying it to the present and preserving and retaining it for the future generations.

Hodízingo Oodáát: Walking in Reverance

The Navajo concept of Hodízingo Oodáát touches upon the philosophy that emphasizes living in harmony with the natural world and respecting all forms of life. This traditional teaching encourages mindfulness, gratitude, and a deep connection to Mother Earth and Father Sky, guiding individuals to lead lives of balance and spiritual fulfillment. By understanding and embracing these principles, we can foster a more respectful and sustainable relationship with our Navajo teachings, the environment, and with each other."



Lydia Fasthose
Diné Language & Culture
Educator

Lydia Fasthose is from Shiprock, New Mexico. She is of Oozéí Táchii'nii clan and born for Áshjiihí (Salt) clan. She attended boarding schools where she learned English, but her mother tongue, Navajo, remained a strong part of her. With her literacy skills, she wrote and co-authored several children's books and developed curriculum for teaching Navajo. Additionally, she worked as an ethnographer and published a book of Navajo stories narrated by monolingual Navajo speakers. Her classroom teaching of Navajo language includes the years at Rock Point Community School, Diné College, and Window Rock High School, where she just completed her 23rd year. She retired from classroom teaching in Arizona in May, 2023.

Shizaad Bee As'ah Naashá: My Diné Language - The Impulse of my Love for Life

This session is about a Diné Language teacher's passion blossoming. She will share how her love for her Diné language and culture inspired her career as a teacher and writer, how learning to write her Diné language empowered her to do more, and how she began documenting the beautiful spoken language and voices. She will share some poetry and stories written in Diné.



Cuyler R. Frank
KCZY Manager

Cuyler R. Frank is Naakai Dine’é and born for Ta’neezahnii. His grandparents are Táchii’nii and Nóóda’í. He is originally from Kin Łizhin (Blackhouse Valley), New Mexico. Cuyler received his undergraduate degree in Communications and graduate degree in Mass Communications both from New Mexico State University in Las Cruces, New Mexico. He is currently General Manager of KCZY 107.3 FM at Navajo Technical University.

Utilizing Navajo Language in Sports and Radio

Cuyler will share his story about how he learned Navajo language and the benefits it can provide to one’s personal and professional life. He will also share his personal short stories that he writes in English and Navajo.



Norman Patrick Brown
Actor/ Filmmaker

Norman Patrick Brown, Tsénahabiłnii and Bįįh Bitoo’nii, has been a producer, director, screenwriter, theater, and screen actor since 1982. Writing/directing credits include: Awakening 1989; The Beauty Way 1989; Horse Song 2000; Rez Hope 2006; Power Paths 2007; Poison Wind 2008; The Rainbow Boy 2010. Theater credits include: The Ecstasy of Rita Joe 1980 Winnipeg/Vancouver, Canada; The Ecstasy of Rita Joe 1982 New York City; Film T.V. credits include: Raising Arizona, 1984; Black Day, Blue Night 1996; The Thin Red Line 1999; The Doe Boy 2001; The Lady of Guadalupe 2022; The Walker Independence: 4 episodes 2023; Modern Folklore 2023. Norman is a lifelong Diné activist and spokesperson working and organizing with many Diné grassroots communities and organizations against relocation, coal and uranium mining, R.E.C.A, water rights, and Navajo government reform. He produced the Navajo language Diné Drama High School Theater Festival from 1990 to 1994.

The Power of Diné Language in Theater and Film Narrative

An intimate view into my decades of film and theater footage, why and how the Diné oral history, culture, tradition, and language became the narrative voice of my creative process, development, and production in the early years of my Diné language theater and film productions.



Emerald ZṖb GoingSnake
Giduwa and Mvskoke Poet

Emerald ZṖb Goingsnake is a poet from the Giduwa and Mvskoke nations in Oklahoma. She has served as a panelist for the 2022 Western Literature Association Conference, is a 2023 Indigenous Nations Poets Fellow, and is the winner of the 2024 Maureen Egen Writers Exchange Award for poetry. Her work has been shared in Poets.org, Frozen Sea, Tribal College Journal, Terrain.org, and elsewhere. Emerald is currently in her senior year at the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, NM, studying both poetry and creative nonfiction. She plans to pursue an MFA in creative writing post-graduation.

Remembering: Ruminations on Indigenous Poetics

As a current BFA student in Creative Writing at the Institute of American Indian Arts, Emerald is working to determine where her own poetry fits within the wider landscape of Indigenous poetics. A poet working primarily with memory and the relationships she has to both the lands and the people around her, she aims to share how Indigenous poetics can, should, and do include more than our tribal cultures.



Hershman John
Poet

Hershman John is both a poet and a short fiction writer. He is Diné, Bjih Bitoo'ni. He was born in California and raised on the Navajo Reservation, near Sand Springs. Hershman received his BA in English and MFA in Creative Writing, both from Arizona State University. Hershman is a residential faculty member at Phoenix College (MCCCD). His works have been widely published by anthologies and literary journals, including *When the Light of the World was Subdued*, *Our Songs Came Through: A Norton Anthology of Native Nations*, *The Diné Reader*, *Arizona Highways*, *Poetry Magazine*, *Arizona Republic*, *Nuclear Impact: Broken Atoms in our Hands*, *Hayden's Ferry Review*, and *National Geographic*. The University of Arizona Press published his first collection of poems entitled, *I Swallow Turquoise for Courage*.

Ekphrasis: Reading and Writing Workshop

Hershman will first read from his book and share some new poems. He will describe the development stages of his writing. This presentation will then transition into a writing workshop. From Keat's "Ode on a Grecian Urn" to Alexie's "At the Navajo Monument Valley Tribal School," many writers use Ekphrasis to create an artistic impression. An impression can center around a photograph, a painting, or a musical piece. Through this workshop, you will use your creativity to capture an image, creating your own poetic impression.



Asa Benally
Costume Designer

Asa Benally, Cherokee and Diné, is a professional costume designer. His work has been used in *The Rez Sisters, 1939* (Stratford Festival), *T'əl - The Wild Man of the Woods* (The Royal Winnipeg Ballet), *The Rez Sisters, Red Running Into Water*, *Wounspe Wankatya-A* college education (New Native Theater), *The Clearing* (The Shaw Festival), *Whale Song*, *Devilfish*, *Cold Case* (Perseverance Theater), *The Winter's Tale* (HERE Arts Center), *Seven Minutes* (Waterwell), *Where We Belong* (Woolly Mammoth Theater, Baltimore Center Stage, The Goodman Theater, The Public), *Mrs. Warren's Profession* (The Gingold Group), *Blues for an Alabama Sky* (Keen Company, Drama Desk Nomination), *Somewhere Over the Border* (Syracuse Stage), and many more. He attended Yale School of Drama where he earned his M.F.A in 2016, and the Parsons School of Design program where he earned his B.F.A in 2009.

Storytelling in Indigenous Theater

An exploration into the world of Indigenous theater through concept and development to performance. How does storytelling shape and grow through the creation process?



Hataahii
Poet/Songwriter
/Musician

Hataahii is a 22-year-old musician from Navajo Nation. Named "2023's Breakout Star" by SPIN magazine, Hataahii has released various records, and plays numerous live shows across the country. However, as Yoo'í Dine'é, Tsi'naajinii, Kin Yaa'áanii, and Yé'ii Táchii'nii, he is also versed in literature, having published a book of poetry by WRY Press, which led to poetry readings at literary events such as San Francisco State University and the University of New Mexico. He was also featured in the 57th issue of Denver University's *Denver Quarterly*, where his poem "downer" became a 2023 Pushcart Prize nominee. WRY Press claims that Hataahii's "works are full of strange swerves, with an extremely unique and intense personal vision/mythology for a writer so young." His work is "laced with explicit words and doodles in his pockets, pulling moments and images he clung to and dissecting them with a sharp tongue and wit" (*The Daily Lobo*) and "weirdly genreless and out-of-time, yet constantly reach[ing] for some sort of cosmic agency" (*Aquarium Drunkard*).

"Brown Fool Eyes": Introspection and Trying to Communicate Understanding through Poetry, Songwriting, and the Arts

Hataahii will share some of his writing experiences, who and what inspire him, what a typical writing process looks like, and how he continues to grow on his journey as a poet, songwriter, and musician.



Talibah Begay
Singer/ Performer

TALIBAH BEGAY is Diné and comes from Shiprock, New Mexico. She is the Red Cheek Clan, born for the Towering House; her maternal grandparents are the Red Running into the Water, and her paternal grandparents are the Mexican People Clan. Talibah attended Navajo Technical University and Diné College, with a major in psychology and minor in Diné Studies. Talibah is a former Diné culture teacher at Dream Diné Charter School in Shiprock, teaching Kindergarten, first, and second grade students. At the age of 13 years old, Talibah released her first album titled Talibah's Traditional Songs, at 14 years old she released her second album Talibah Salutes the Veterans, and at 16 years old she released her third album Navajo Songs for the Children. Talibah was nominated for "Best Female" and "Best Traditional" in the NAMMY's (Native American Music Awards) held in Niagara Falls, NY in 2005.



Billy Luther
Writer/Director

BILLY LUTHER (Diné, Hopi, and Laguna Pueblo) is the writer/director of the award-winning feature film Frybread Face and Me, Executive Produced by Taika Waititi and distributed by Ava DuVernay's Array for Netflix. The film was selected as part of SXSW 2023's Narrative Spotlight and TIFF 2023's Discovery and New Wave Selects His feature documentary Miss Navajo, premiered at the 2007 Sundance Film Festival and aired nationally on PBS' Independent Lens that same year. His second documentary feature, Grab, premiered at the 2011 Sundance Film Festival and was screened at over 80 film festivals around the world. His short documentary film, Red Lake, had its world premiere at the 2016 LA Film Festival and was nominated for Best Documentary Short at the 2016 International Documentary Association Awards. In 2018, he launched his web series alter-NATIVE for PBS' IndieLens StoryCast. He served as a writer and director for the AMC series Dark Winds. (filmindependent.org)

Native Stories: Fiction and Nonfiction Film, Scripts, and Documentaries

Writing and directing as an Indigenous artist comes with its own set of challenges. Yet, there are moments and ideas that effortlessly align. Staying true to yourself and your art can help guide you through the often difficult journey of being an artist. Drawing from your personal stories and experiences can open doors you thought were closed. And as for the many "No" you'll encounter along the way, they're just part of the process.



Luci Tapahonso
Inaugural Navajo Nation
Poet Laureate

LUCI TAPAHONSO is Diné, a professor emerita of English Literature (UNM), and was the inaugural Diné Nation poet laureate (2013 to 2015). She is the author of six award-winning books of poetry and prose, including A Radiant Curve and Blue Horses Rush In, as well as three children's books. She also taught at the Universities of Kansas and Arizona. Recent recognitions include a 2024 Helene Wurlitzer Artist Residency, the 2022 Distinguished Literary Achievement Award by the Western Literature Association, the 2021 Ostana (Italy) International Prize, which honors authors who write in their mother tongue, the keynote address at the 2022 Annual Taos Writers Conference and in 2020, she was a Bosque Redondo Memorial Museum Artist Fellow. In 2020, Tapahonso recorded and published in Living Nations, Living Words: A Map of First Peoples Poetry (U.S. Library of Congress), When the Light of the World Was Subdued; Our Songs Came Through, and The Diné Reader. Her poems were featured in "The Slow Down with Tracy K. Smith" (American Public Media and Poetry Foundation) and "Poem-a-Day" (Academy of American Poets). She wrote for the "Creating Tradition: Innovation and Change in American Indian Art" Exhibition at Walt Disney World's Epcot. Professor Tapahonso has presented at various institutions, including Princeton and Harvard Universities, the Tbisili International Literature Festival, the Republic of Georgia, and the University of New Zealand at Auckland and Wellington. (Photo credit: Karen Willetto)



Laura Tohe
Navajo Nation
Poet Laureate

Laura Tohe is Diné and Laguna. She is Sleepy Rock People clan and born for the Bitter Water People clan and the daughter of a Navajo Code Talker. She is a poet, writer, and a librettist. Her works include three books of poetry, an anthology of Native women's writing, and an oral history on the Navajo Code Talkers. Her librettos, *Enemy Slayer*, *A Navajo Oratorio* and *Nahasdzáán* in the *Glittering World* performed in Arizona, Colorado, Utah, and France. Among her awards are the 2024 Guest Editor for the Academy of American Poetry Poem a Day program, 2020 Academy of American Poetry Fellowship, the 2019 American Indian Festival of Writers Award, and twice nominated for a Pushcart Prize. She is Professor Emerita with Distinction from Arizona State University.



Chyenenne Woodie

Eat Dessert First

Chyenenne Woodie is a student at Navajo Technical University, pursuing a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Creative Writing and New Media. She is Navajo from Steamboat, Arizona. Her interests include reading, traveling, journaling, music, and attending concerts. Inspired by many Indigenous writers, she hopes to follow in their footsteps. Ms. Woodie credits her creative writing instructor at NTU, Anita Roastingear, for helping her grow both personally and professionally. She aims to bring enlightenment through her knowledge of the world.



Cheryldine Spears

I Remember Shimá Sáni's House

Cheryldine Spears was born in Crownpoint, New Mexico, and raised in Gallup. She is Diné and from the Red Lake band of Chippewa; her mother is Táchii'nii, and her father is from Miskwaagamiwi-zaaga'igan/Red Lake Nation. Cheryldine is a junior at Navajo Technical University, pursuing a Bachelor's degree in Creative Writing and New Media. After 22 years away from the Navajo reservation, living in Phoenix, Arizona, and Las Vegas, Nevada, she returned home to Gallup at the age of 55 to complete her education. Her journey has brought her back to her roots, and she is passionate about sharing her experiences and heritage through her writing.



Jorah Thompson

The Greatness of Nothingness

Jorah Thompson is a student at Navajo Technical University in the BFA Creative Writing program. He is enrolled in the Umatilla tribe but grew up on the Yakama Reservation. Jorah discovered his passion for writing during his time at Salish Kootenai College in Montana, where he earned an associate degree in digital design.



Shyler Martin

Flash Creative Nonfiction

Shyler Martin is a senior at Navajo Technical University, majoring in Creative Writing and New Media, and expects to receive her Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in December 2025. She is Ta'neesahnii (Tangle People Clan), born for Kín Yaa'áanii (Towering House Clan), with grandparents from Kín Yaa'áanii and Naaneesht'ézhí Táchii'nii (The Charcoal Streaked Division Running into Red Water People). From Antelope Lookout, New Mexico, Shyler's aspirations include film, scriptwriting, graphic design, and creative nonfiction/fiction writing. Motivated by her family, she enjoys cycling, hiking, painting, and spending time with them.

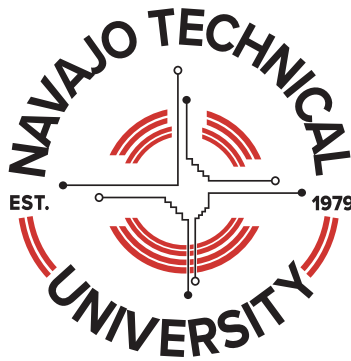


Tamara June Yazzie

Shinálí Asdzǫ́ (My Paternal Grandma): The Spiritual Strength of My Existence

Tamara June Yazzie is Bit'ahnii (Folded Arms People), born for Haltsoóí (Meadow People). She is currently pursuing a dual major in Early Childhood Multicultural Education at Navajo Technical University, with the goal of opening a Diné Language Daycare program in her community. Supported by her two children and the love of her life, Tamara is driven to nurture her dreams. Her creative passions include storytelling, designing beading patterns, creating stunning earrings, baking, and finding new ways to love and care for her family.

Ahéhee' nihaa nooyá. Hahgo da shíí ahít nináadahwíilne' dooleet.
**THANK YOU FOR JOINING US. WE LOOK FORWARD TO THE NEXT TIME
WE CAN SHARE STORIES AGAIN.**



MISSION

Navajo Technical University honors Diné culture and language, while educating for the future.

VISION

Navajo Technical University provides an excellent educational experience in a supportive, culturally diverse environment, enabling all community members to grow intellectually, culturally and economically.

PHILOSOPHY

Through the teachings of Nitsáhákees (thinking), Nahátá (planning), Íina (implementing), and Siihasin (reflection), students acquire quality education in diverse fields, while preserving cultural values and gaining economic opportunities.

SYMPOSIUM COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Dr. Jennifer Wheeler, *Associate Professor, English*
Anita Roastingear, *Associate Professor, English*
Gene Hult, *Assistant Professor, English*
Sharon Nelson, *Lecturer, Diné Studies*
Dr. Kendall Grady, *Assistant Professor, English*
Dr. Laura Tohe – *Navajo Nation Poet Laureate*

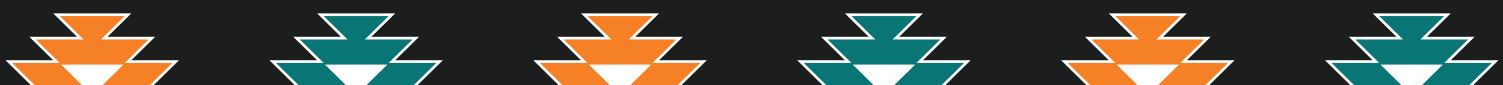
SPECIAL THANKS

Dr. Casmir Agbaraji, *Dean of Undergraduate Studies*
Dr. Colleen W. Bowman, *Provost*
Dr. Elmer Guy, *President*
Dr. Peter Moore, *Chair, Arts & Humanities*
Delila Nakaidinae, *Administrative Assistant, Arts & Humanities*
NTU Marketing & Communication Department
All presenters and attendees at this year's Symposium!



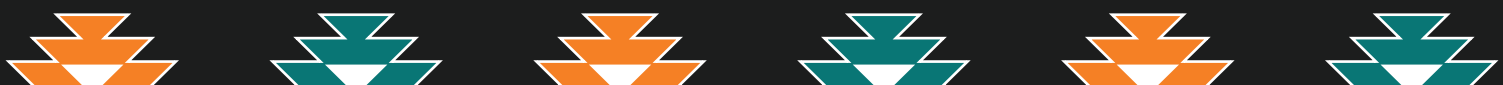
NOTES

A series of horizontal dashed lines for writing notes.



NOTES

A series of horizontal dashed lines for writing notes.





NOTES

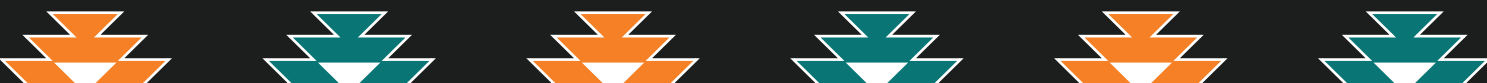
Lined writing area with horizontal dashed lines.

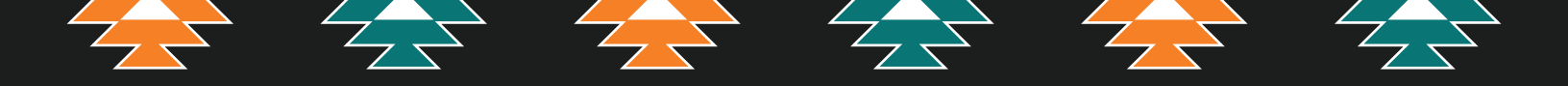




NOTES

Lined area for writing notes, consisting of multiple horizontal dashed lines.





NOTES

A large area of the page containing numerous horizontal dashed lines, intended for writing notes.

