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Literacy Heritage Autobiography

Looking back at my earliest memory, I recall herding my grandpa's sheep with my cousin and we would play but also made sure of where the sheep had gone. Sometimes the sheep would go into canyons that were behind my grandpa's house and we would follow them to make sure no coyotes would get them. One moment in particular as we walked through the canyon we came across paintings and small holes at the top of the canyon walls. We were told not to touch the paintings and were told not to go inside the holes. As I grew up, I learned that it was the dwelling of the Anasazi, the ancestors of the Pueblo tribes.

I grew up in Holbrook, AZ for 10 years, where there was 1 public library, 1 head start, 2 elementary schools, 1 junior high school, 1 high school and a community college. Being in elementary school, I had a problem of trying to learn to read, I remember during the day I would have to get out of class to go to another where I would learn how to read in a thorough matter, my sister had the same problem as well but also became a better reader too. The first chapter book I that I was able to read from start to finish was *My Brother Sam is Dead*, which is a book set during the Revolutionary War, where it is told in first person about a boy's brother who runs off to the Patriot army and the family endures the hardships of war & they want to remain as neutral as possible.

Growing up I remember the public library clearly because they helped me in locating various Native American stories, tribes and books of various Indian chiefs. They helped in giving me the chance to look at other tribes who were not Navajo, Hopi, Pueblo or Apache. I often enjoyed reading about the Indian Wars and what I would have done but as I got older it was inevitable to read about assimilation, massacres, broken treaties and the forced marches that many had to face. The reference person would always be happy in bringing me book after book about the tribes and about their stories. I enjoyed reading about Navajos as I started to learn more and more about my own culture. Much of the Navajo culture is oral and I had to communicate with my parents to learn as much as I could.

My parents were the ones who really pushed my sisters and me to become better readers and to make sure we understood what each paragraph meant. They would tell us to sit in the

kitchen with them and to read out loud either the assignment or the pages. They would help but they would make sure we do it all on our own rather than depending on them to help us. My mom use to like the imagination I had as a kid because I could tell stories that were either Navajo or that would be of my own creations. She would often tell me to stand by her room and tell a story to my sisters who would fall asleep in a manner of minutes. She knew that I like to give details but also in painting whole pictures with words and I would give each character such strong individuality.

Coming from a working family, my parents always wanted something better for all of us, they gave us the push to make ourselves do well in school and to make sure we take the opportunities that are presented to us. I always give thanks to my parents for doing that, for always being there for support and making sure we do not miss out on opportunities, they want us to not know that feeling of breaking our backs to earn a meager paycheck.

As a web and graphic designer, I find myself always reading design books, just so I can be fluent in using certain techniques, updating my skills with a certain language and taking note of what I could do next. As just a reader, I love reading books by Hunter S. Thompson, Cormac McCarthy, Flann O'Brien, Max Brooks, Tony Hillerman, Sherman Alexie, Ward Churchill, Mark Daneilewski, Jeffery Zeldman, Stephen King, Sherwin Bitsui, Tom Clancy, Chuck Palahniuk, Art Spiegelman and James Morrow.

I have too many people to thank in giving me the ability to read, write and understand, without their support, I do not think I would be here sharing my past experiences and having the ability to write cohesive sentences. Thank you for reading and let's make this a good semester for all.