

Why are acequias important to your family, culture, or community?

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This will be our first year living in Chamisal. We own our home and property. Home is with my mama, older sister and younger brother. My brother and I have two dogs, birds, butterflies and some bees live around the yard.

My grandparents describe me as the delicious middle of a sandwich. I am in the sixth grade and attend Penasco Elementary.

During the spring, a good friend of our family and I had planned on planting the seeds I had collected from the semilla exchange with our family and friends. Our friend worked in Los Alamos. Early one morning driving to his job a car drove towards him and he died. The summer turned very dark and sad. The vegetable garden didn't happen, but we took care of our pretty flowers that we had planted together. Our flowers bloomed beautifully as if he was taking care of them.

We visited mama's parents in Vadito every afternoon. Grandpa Adonais is 90 years old and Grandma Alice is 80 years old. They still plant their vegetable garden just to pass their culture and traditions to their grandchildren. Southside Acequia runs on the side of their property.

They taught me how many seeds to drop into the hole and to step on the ground over the seeds. We planted purple havas, sweet peas, carrots, lettuce, garlic, onion, corn, strawberry popcorn and different pumpkins.

Later on the week the Acequia is open and water gets into the garden through rat holes and the ground gets wet.

The rows that we planted were out about two weeks later. Many other plants were out and I thought they were weeds.

My grandpa says that grandma thinks she is a curandera, a person who collects herbs and uses them as medicine.

In the Vadito Community there are several Acequias. One Acequia gets water from the Rio Pueblo which also passes by our front yard. At the end of Vadito it goes into the river again. I call my grandparents home our home because when I was six months old they took care of me while mama went to work and then she would take me home. Even now after school my brother and I stay with them until mama comes and drives us home to Chamisal.

When we get home after school grandma or moomsy as we call her blesses us with a bunch of sage tied together and smoke flows over us. It smells funny but good.

We pick sage during the summer and she says, "if you have sage in your garden you don't die young." I think that is why they have lived so long. While tying the sage she would tell me that when she was a little girl she had epileptic seizure and her mama was always giving her sage tea and would put some leaves in her pocket. She tells me that sage cures a lot of illnesses and it even keeps the evil spirits away.

One hot day while taking a break we got into the Acequia and started talking about herbs, people and medicine. Her story goes that long ago when people were injured, sick or in pain they turned to plants and learned which plants were good remedies.

Next to me there were a bunch of pretty green plants with white tiny flowers. Moomsy said it was watercress. When we had a bunch the order made our nose wrinkle and we were laughing at each other.

That evening our dinner included a salad with watercress, lettuce, carrots and other plants from our garden. Moomsy says that watercress improves our brain.

The Acequia teaches us about the culture and traditions. I enjoyed learning about herbs while getting our feet wet with tiny fish tickling our feet. I learned about medical plants that I thought were weeds.

Weeds were getting out of control and we started pulling them. I pulled a tall green plant and felt pain all over my hand. It was poison ivy and moomsy cut a plant called aloe vera. She said it was an herb for burns and itching. It took a while to take the pain and itching away but I learned never to touch it again just let grandpa pull them using gloves.

During the summer I took notes not knowing that I would use the information on my essay. We also found malvas growing everywhere. We boiled them and washed our faces leaving our skin soft and silky. I also learned it was good for sores and stings. We dried some to use in the winter. Herbs are for beauty too.

Mint also grows next to the acequia. It makes good tea, hot or cold with ice cubes. It is also good for stomach aches.

We have already cleaned the garden of dry weeds, planted a garlic patch, saved our semillas and cooked chicos to celebrate the good harvest. Our biggest pumpkin will be cooked for Thanksgiving dinner by making pies. Pumpkin seeds are good for our intestines to kill worms in case we have them. We roast them and they are delicious.

Grandpa has a big pile of wood and another pile of ocotitos to make real luminarias on Christmas Eve.

I enjoy my visits with my grandparents. Acequias not only bring water for gardens and animals that provide the community with good food, herbs and just enjoy working together with family. I miss going to the semilla exchange day.

Acequias gives us life and keeps us safe. While learning about our culture and traditions. Everyday I thank God for giving me a great family.

