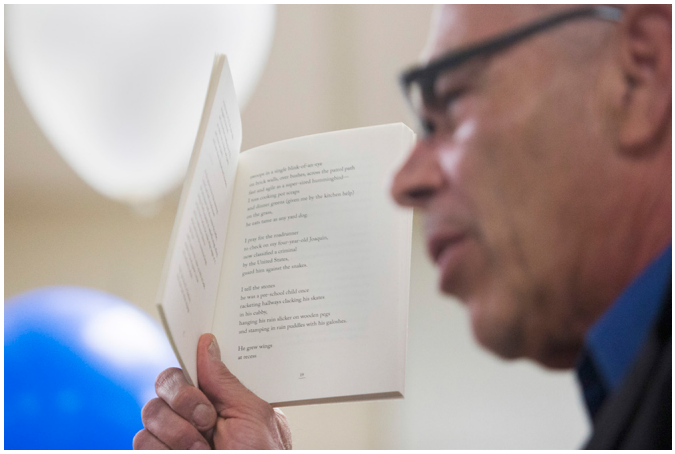




FEATURED: A FILM ABOUT FRYBREAD

A schedule of events along with local authors hit the Gallup area on April 12 - 13. Films and presentations were shown at the El Morro Theatre and El Morro Event Center.

Authors on hand were: Travis Holt Hamilton, Jimmy Santiago Baca, Curtis Quam, Sunny Dooley, Jessica Helen Lopez, and many more. “Poetry Out Loud & Indigenous Storytelling.” was held at the ArtsCrawl. Children’s events were held at the Children’s Branch,with film screening at the El Morro Theatre. The film *More Than Frybread* (2011) by Travis Holt Hamilton, was a hit at the El Morro Theatre.

Originally, from Idaho, Hamilton grew up in Arizona. Famous for his films *Turquoise Rose (2003), Blue Gap Boy'z (2008), More Than Frybread (2011)*
, and his latest movie,
Legends from the Sky,
the filmmaker jokingly says he's still trying to learn how to make movies. He spoke about the idea of a hero mentality in reference to his 2011 film,
More Than Frybread
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More Than Frybread is a comedy about the First Annual Arizona Frybread Championship, when all 22 tribes in Arizona sent one person to compete against each other on the frybread stand. According to his bio. His introduction to Native Americans came through Hollywood, watching movies and reading books, his interest was also sparked by being on a missionary trip and coming to the Southwest at a younger age.

"I love great stories that bounce around, cultural stories," he said. "Like myself, I'm sure others had questions that needed answers about Native Americans than what we saw on the Hollywood screen. Did all natives live in tipis, and such, I wanted to express that to others. I realized that everyone is connected, whether the color of your skin, each has struggles and ups and downs."

Hamilton said he returned to Idaho and found himself coming back to the "rez" more often than he anticipated.

"It definitely was the frybread (laughing), I found a place in Mesa, Ariz., and it's been home ever since. When I made the film *Turquoise Rose,* I wanted people to see what Navajo land is all about."

Hamilton says he's working on another film that reflects more of the Navajo culture. He likes to write good human stories, the similarities, the human element. He says those are good stories to write about. Hamilton says he also writes stories about Africa and other areas that identify with the human element.

Library Director Tammi Moe was thrilled to have Hamilton as part of the Author's Festival, as one author that could fully understand and fit in perfectly with the area.

"We were so excited that Gallup was special enough to attract such talent here," she said. "Hamilton really made a difference."

Moe says the words spoken by Hamilton were meaningful and fit within the context of the festival. She and the staff were appreciative of Hamilton taking time out to enrich the lives of those who attended. Hamilton's films are relevant for this area, Moe said.

"He reflects societal stereotypes of what happens on the reservation, and what it means exactly to be indigenous," she said. "We've enjoyed his films and they're very popular and good showing; his bridges two cultures."

Living the hard life

Another famous acclaimed author who was part of the Authors Festival was Jimmy Santiago Baca. Growing up as a disadvantaged child, Baca's life was filled with nothing but crime which eventually led him to prison. Upon entering prison Baca did not know how to read or write. But today he holds a Bachelor of Arts. in English and an honorary Ph.D. in literature from the University of New Mexico. He has received numerous awards and in 2004 launched *Cedar Tree* , a literary nonprofit designed to provide writing workshops, training, and outreach programs for at-risk youth, prisoners and ex-prisoners, and disadvantaged communities.

"The love of my life is from the love of language," he said. "At an early age my life was rough growing up, I didn't know how to read or write and of all places I learned was while I was in prison. I like to experiment with language and life and thus putting the two together."

His unique stories are what makes Baca who he is, as well as it hinders him at times. He says he faces opposition because of his past. He says his stories and poems are drawn from his imagination, and of course lived experience.

“Oh, you hit walls because you’re brown in a white society,” He said. “You hit walls all the time.”

Known for his edgy film *Blood In Blood Out* Baca tells it like it is in a world that is there sometimes masked behind cultural walls. With over 2 million followers of the film, it’s evident that his writing is sought after. Baca said that the works of Part II for
Blood In Blood Out
are in the works.

“Oh yeah brother I’m writing it, I’m writing it,” he said.

By Dee Velasco
For the Sun