



CHEROKEE NATION

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Mr. Edward R. Johnson, Dean of Libraries
Oklahoma State University Library
The University Library
Stillwater, Oklahoma 74076-0375

Dear Dean Johnson:

Thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts about how libraries change lives.

Reading has been important to me almost all of my life. Until I was eleven years old I lived in a home with many books and few other amenities. We had no television or electricity, no indoor plumbing or no paved road near our home. So we entertained ourselves with games like Chinese Checkers, dominoes, regular checkers and a lot of reading.

Reading introduced me to a world beyond my small rural Oklahoma community. By reading I learned about all kinds of people and places. I was able to learn that people with very different lifestyles had similar concerns and sometimes similar hopes for the future.

Several books have had a profound effect but none more than a 1978 reading of Paolo Freire's "Pedagogy of the Oppressed." Freire's clear description of oppressed peoples' view of themselves and the world around them dramatically altered the way I view community development work.

Today I live only a few hundred yards from my childhood home. Reading is still important to me. Fortunately I have a small library in my home. It has good light, big comfortable chairs and lots and lots of books. Books by great philosophers, by feminists and by Pulitzer Prize winners, like Scott Momaday. Two of my favorite books include a signed copy of Alex Haley's "Roots" and a signed copy of Alice Walker's "The Temple of My Familiar."

I am very, very busy these days but I still continue to try to read when I can. The last book I read is Cherokee writer Robert Conley's "The Way of the Priests." The book I am currently reading is "Almanac of the Dead" by Pueblo writer Leslie Silko.

Libraries can and do encourage people of all ages to broaden their education and enrich their lives.

Sincerely,

Wilma P. Mankiller
Principal Chief