Lauri Schleicher-Prospectus

The fraudulent tale of Tommy Nothing Fancy peaked my interest due to the apparently realistic depiction of life as a Navajo, along with its regard towards problems that are relevant to the tribe. The story, *The Blood Runs Like a River Through My Dreams*, is written by Nasdijj, who attempted to deceive the audience that he was Navajo. The story reflects on the relationship between himself and his late son Tommy Nothing Fancy. The audience would consist of anyone interested in learning about fetal alcohol syndrome in Native American societies as well as those interested in the Navajo tribes and Navajo stereotypes. Nasdijj appeals to the interested crowd of readers by telling a story about the close relationship that he and his son experienced before his son’s death. It incorporates scientific references to a serious illness that affects many children across America.

*The Blood Runs Like a River Through My Dreams*proceeds chronologically, beginning as Tommy Nothing Fancy (Nasdijj’s “son”) is being admired by Nasdijj. As the tale builds, Tommy’s struggle with fetal alcohol syndrome worsens, though Nasdijj never sees imperfection in Tommy Nothing Fancy. Nasdijj refers to Tommy as his son in the story which results in the story presenting Nasdijj as a Native American. The father-son relationship is illustrated through the duo fishing together, as that is what keeps the “demons” far from Tommy’s head so that his illness is unable to haunt him. Eventually though, Tommy’s life ends while he’s fishing, but Nasdijj believes Tommy's soul is at rest because he died while partaking in his favorite activity, and not in a hospital as Tommy dreaded.

The tale appealed to me as I could imagine a father-son relationship in my mind, and saw Tommy Nothing Fancy growing up during this story. It also incorporated the influences of science; a twist not common in most tribal tales. At points throughout the story, it is referenced that Tommy was in the hospital a lot of the time, which he hated, but his mother, the contributor of Tommy's FAS, thought that was how he would receive the best care. The Navajo nation does not have strict rules against alcohol, and generally promotes it as a part of their cultural ceremonies. It was interesting to read about how such a prevalent issue (women drinking while pregnant) goes unnoticed by the Navajo society, despite the relatively high percentages of children born with FAS. There is no cure for FAS, and the mortality rate is high at a young age, as many children die before the age of six.

The hoax aspect of this tale is relevant because Nasdijj is not actually Navajo. That being said, it is difficult to know if the information portrayed about FAS and its relevance to the Navajo societies is accurate. It is important to consider the stereotypes of Navajos that Nasdijj has written in the tale.

The question I’d like to address throughout my paper is, “how accurately does this ‘hoax’ address Navajo stereotypes and the struggles of the Native American population in regards to alcohol and how society sees the Navajo nation". In order to answer this question, I plan on using research on general Native American alcohol consumption, and primarily the way that Navajo Indian tribes view alcohol substance abuse.

The stereotypes of different Native American groups are prevalent because Nasdijj is not Navajo as he claims. In the story, he may have included some information based on false pretenses, which could include Navajo opinions on hospitals and how willing they are to accept help from proper medical facilities. Those pretenses could extend to the idea of spirituality and serenity as a cure. Questions such as these were not initially relevant to my interpretation of the story, as I had not understood that Nasdijj was only posing as a Navajo father. Without this information, it can be seen as a story of a grieving father. It is easy to see how the scientific concerns regarding FAS and its general relation to Native Americans can be used as a disguise to distract from the story’s falsity.