

The Healing Arts: Navajo Words and Images

94 Porter Street Gallery

Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts

June 2013-June 2014



Paul Joe, Star Gazer, 2012, acrylic on canvas board

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MCLA

MASSACHUSETTS COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS Sponsored by the MCLA Department of Fine and Performing Arts

The Healing Arts

In 2001, Ann and Tony Grogan visited the Navajo Nation in Arizona to teach a week-long poetry/workshopping workshop at The Little Singer Community School. Elders and their children participated. This began a relationship with the Navajo people of the Red Springs Chapter near Lupton, AZ, that has continued to the present day including three workshops and expanding connections within the Diné' community. There is a Professor of Art History and Museum Studies at Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts. Ann is a poet teacher with over twenty-five years of working with children and adults in various educational settings.

The tradition of poetry and art is deeply rooted in Navajo culture. Poetry is sung during Navajo rituals and art is expressed as sand painting. The painted sand images create a spiritual map as well as a space for healing. The dancer's words animate the body (from the north center) for spiritual renewal; the remembrance of the medicine (harmony) with all living creatures and the natural world; for the one using one (the "patient"). Spiritual healing through the arts is essential to Navajo culture.



Navajo life is diverse in many ways, but cultural traditions are still practiced with strong family (clan) ties and association with an agricultural, sheep-herding economy. Navajo arts such as weaving depend on wool, much of it from local sheep. Indigenous plants supply vegetable dyes for the yarn. Clans are headed by women who are also the weavers. Grandmother matrnachs teach weaving skills to their daughters and granddaughters. Navajo are known for fine tapestry weaving. Their rugs are works of art and usually hang on the wall. Weaving patterns are colorful and varied with symbols related to the landscape and Diné cultural practices.

The Navajo people have a strong connection to the earth. It is their mother; as the sky is their father. The earth and sky spirits (the holy peñ) teach and heal through stories and ceremonies that are filled with poetry and art. The breath in history and culture (the word) is experienced by the Diné has separated many of them from their former connection to the land. Many reside in tract housing and live or work at a distance from their Navajo homeland. Many Navajo families are divided and have experienced various levels of displacement.

Taught by Ann, the poetry has revealed a well-spring of grief for the loss of family and the land. In the safe environment of poetry writing, the participants have given voice to an inner calling for traditional healing and connection. From poems of praise for mothers, fathers, grandparents to heart wrenching descriptions of loss and pleas for connection, these poems touch the Navajo cultural/emotional core—in traditions, daily rituals and ceremonies—in a highly personal and communally significant way. The simple, unadorned style of some of the poetry reflects the fact that many of the poets are in elementary language programs, adults as well as children.



Taught by Tony, the art is compelling and at times remarkably expressive as it illustrates the words and surrounds the poetry with symbolic design reminiscent of Navajo rugs and sand paintings. Fabricated by the students, the books record their creative moments. The art and books on display are facsimiles that resemble originals no longer available.

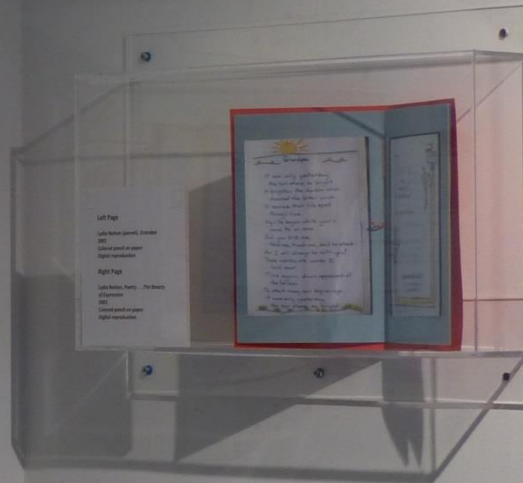
At the conclusion of each session the participants create a sacred circle for sharing, and often tears accompany spoken words as the group holds a healing space for the reader. This poetry sharing has been profound and moving as well as lasting to the memory of all those who have participated, including staff from the school and visitors from the University of Northern Arizona and as far away as Australia.

"Navajo for 'the people'"



Left Page
Leticia Nelson (12 grade), 9th Moon Farm
2002
Colored pencil on paper
Digital reproduction

Right Page
Leticia Nelson, Lower Two Moon
2002
Watercolor on paper
Digital reproduction



Left Page
Lyle Nelson (12 grade), 9th Moon Farm
2002
Colored pencil on paper
Digital reproduction

Right Page
Lyle Nelson, Lower Two Moon
2002
Colored pencil on paper
Digital reproduction

Don't Let Them Define You

Don't let them define you
All the anger will be satisfied
I can give you a shield

Don't let them define you
The fact that you are the
father or mother

Don't let them define you
The physical abuse continuously
Enduring and knowing nothing is a war in

Don't let them define you
The time that they are and feelings of love

Don't let them define you
The judgments and hatred
through of them

Don't let them define you
For you are the only person that knows
What you have through your comparison
There is no one and your heart

Don't let them define you
You are a child of God
A promise that being placed here on earth properly
I hope to see you

Don't let them define you
Becca Nelson, 10/27 teacher, 2012
Poetry and Child Education program

The Healing Arts: Navajo Words and Images

In 2001 Ann and Tony Gengarely visited the Navajo Nation in Arizona to teach a week-long, poetry/art/bookmaking workshop at The Little Singer Community School. Elders and their children participated. Thus began a relationship with the Navajo people (*Dine*) of the Bird Springs Chapter near Leupp, AZ, that has continued to the present day, including more workshops and expanding connections within the *Dine* community. Ann is a poet-teacher with over twenty-five years of working with children and adults in various educational settings. Tony is a Professor of Art History and Museum Studies at Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts.

The tradition of poetry and art is deeply rooted in Navajo culture. Poetry is sung during Navajo rituals where art is expressed as sand painting. The painted sand images create a spiritual map as well as a space for healing. The chanter's words summon the holy *yei* (from the earth's center) for spiritual renewal: the reestablishment of *Hozhone* (harmony with all living creatures and the natural world) for the *one sung over* (the "patient"). Spiritual healing through the arts is essential to Navajo culture.

Navajo life is diverse in many ways, but cultural traditions are still practiced with strong family (clan) ties and association with an agricultural, sheep-herding economy. Navajo arts such as weaving depend on wool, much of it from local sheep. Indigenous plants supply vegetable dyes for the yarn. Clans are headed by women who are also the weavers. Grandmother matriarchs teach weaving skills to their daughters and granddaughters. Navajos are known for fine tapestry weaving. Their rugs are works of art and usually hung on the wall. Weaving patterns are colorful and varied with symbols related to the landscape and *Dine* cultural practices.

The Navajo people have a strong connection to the earth. It is their mother, as the sky is their father. The earth and sky spirits (the holy *yei*) teach and heal through stories and ceremonies that are filled with poetry and art. The breach in history and culture (the *soul wound*) experienced by the *Dine* has separated many of them from their former connection to the land. Many reside in tract housing and live or work at a distance from their Navajo homeland. Many Navajo families are divided and have experienced various levels of dysfunction.

Taught by Ann, the poetry has revealed a well-spring of grief for the loss of family and the land. In the safe environment of poetry writing the participants have given voice to an inner calling for traditional healing and connection. From poems of praise for mothers, fathers, grandparents to heart wrenching descriptions of loss and pleas for connection, these poems touch the Navajo culture's emotional core—its traditions, daily rituals and ceremonies—in a highly personal and communally significant way.

Taught by Tony, the art is compelling and at times remarkably expressive as it illustrates the words and surrounds the poetry with symbolic design reminiscent of Navajo rugs and sand paintings. Fabricated by the students, the books record their creative moments. The art and books on display are facsimiles (artful combinations of copied material) that resemble originals no longer available.

At the conclusion of each session the participants create a sacred circle for sharing, and often tears accompany spoken words as the group holds a healing space for the reader. This poetry sharing has been profound and moving as well as lasting in the memories of all those who have participated, including staff from the school and visitors from the University of Northern Arizona and as far away as Australia and Vermont.

I wish to thank Miriam Dror and Etta Shirley who, with determination and skillful management, have made our experience at Little Singer School possible. Our heartfelt connection to Paul Joe and his family has been an important touchstone for our work. We also are grateful for the assistance and encouragement of many teachers and staff at Little Singer School, especially Sharon Watson, Anita Ryan, Varian Begay, and Daniel Ashkie.

Tony Gengarely, Ph.D.
Professor, Art History and Museum Studies
Fine and Performing Arts Department

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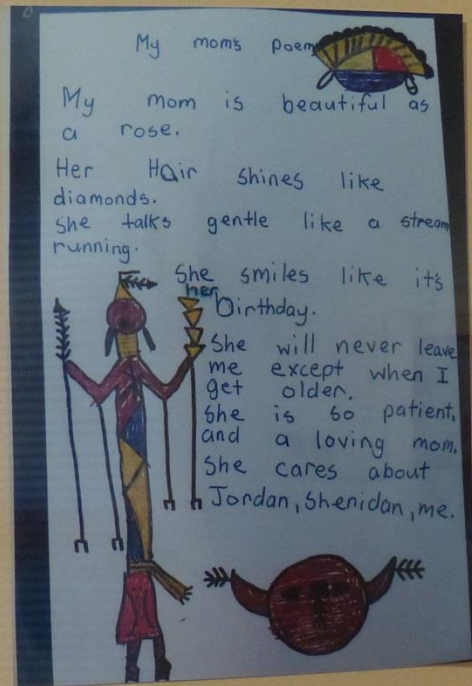
Nelson (3/4 grade), My Mom's Poem

pencil on paper
reproduction

Page

Nelson, I Love You Mom

color on paper
reproduction

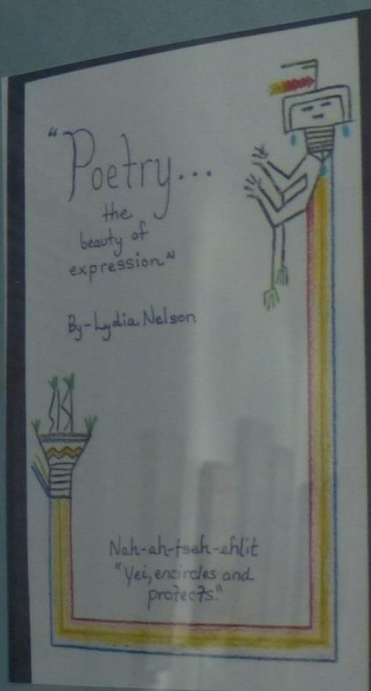
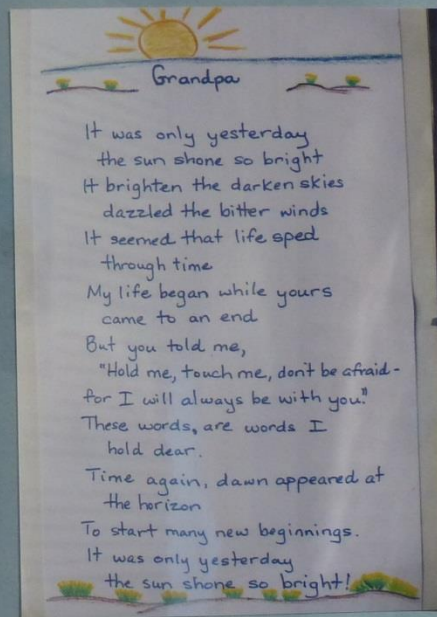


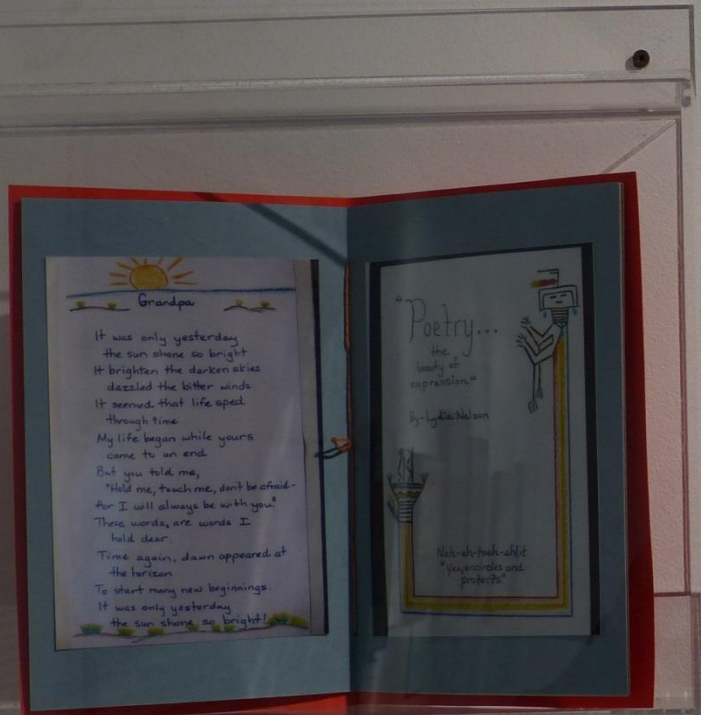
Left Page

Lydia Nelson (parent), *Grandpa*
2001
Colored pencil on paper
Digital reproduction

Right Page

Lydia Nelson, *Poetry . . . The Beauty
of Expression*
2001
Colored pencil on paper
Digital reproduction





Don't Let Them Define You

Don't let them define you
All the anger and hurts inflicted
Upon you as a child.

Don't let them define you
The bad choices of the absent
Father or mother.

Don't let them define you
The chemical demon continuously
Knocking and knocking wanting a way in.

Don't let them define you
The inner heartaches and feelings of lost.

Don't let them define you
The judgments and pointed
Fingers of blame.

Don't let them define you
For you are the only person that knows
Your love, your strength, your compassion,
Your wisdom and your beauty.

Don't let them define you
You are a child of God,
A precious holy being placed here on earth purposely
To pass on your wisdom.

Don't let them define you.
Sharon Watson, FACE* teacher, 2012
*Family and Child Education program



Sharon Watson and Mary Morris, 2012

Searching

As he flies through the village with eyes wide open
Testing and seeing the problems
Seeing if his people are believing in themselves,
Two different people are the same person with two cultures.

Being confused is all they can do
Like a string pulled tight it breaks apart:
People respecting each other
Caring for one another with their hearts and souls;
Another culture with violence pounding fear
Into our people's minds.

Teri Wagoner, Jr. high school, 2001



Teri Wagoner, 2001

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Upon you as a child.

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Teri Wagoner, Jr. high school, 2001



Teri Wagoner, 2001

Left Page

Wynona (3/4 grade), *Family Camping Trip*
2011
Gel pens on paper
Digital reproduction

Right Page

Raquel Natoni (parent), *Waterfall*
2011
Aquarelle on paper
Digital reproduction



O M

I remen

I remen
Now I c

I remen

I remen

I remen

I remen
Falling

I remen

I remen

O mot

Raquel
*Family

O Mother

I remember your light skin outside in the garden working

I remember the teaching you passed down to me
Now I can pass on to my kids

I remember the love you have shown me

I remember how your face would light up any room

I remember the day you left me

I remember the deep pain in my heart and tears
Falling down like a waterfall

I remember you always but the pain will be there

I remember your big smile, soft hands, light brown hair

O mother I will remember you.

Raquel Natoni, FACE* parent, 2011

*Family and Child Education program



Raquel Natoni, 2011

Daughter

Always keeping me busy

Always smiling, laughing, talking, very smart

Shy when you first meet her

Daughter who is very loving, very helpful, understanding

Who keeps me on my feet

A daughter keeps me strong, happy

She's very outgoing

Winnifred, my daughter always

Wants to be with me.

I give love back to her

Our love goes back and forth

Like the yarn that goes back and forth

In a weaving.

My daughter, everything you do

Reminds me of my grandmother

Winnifred, you pass on memories to me

Precious memories.

Alvita Yazzie, FACE* parent, 2012

*Family and Child Education program



Alvita Yazzie and Ann Gengarely, 2012

Shima

You gave me life on this earth
I remember you were happy
Always laughing and always joking

Shima

You were always teaching
How to cook
How to weave traditional rugs
How to sew pretty blankets square to square.

You taught me life is hard
You told me many stories
Summer stories and winter stories of our people
A long time ago.

I love you Shima.
Shima you were my strength
We traveled many miles together.

I miss you Shima
It is lonely without you
It hurts me because you are gone
I miss being with you Shima.

Mary Morris, FACE* parent, 2012
*Family and Child Education program



Mary Morris, 2012

Left Page

Wilmer Hijoe (parent), *She Was There for Me*
2012
Colored pencil and ink on paper
Digital reproduction

Right Page

La Tanya Lee (parent), *My Mom*
2012
Colored pencil on paper
Digital reproduction



My Mom

You gave me ideas
I never knew before—
Hair buns worn for certain ceremonies,
Navajo jewelry made of turquoise and silver
That shines like hundreds of stars.

You gave me kindness.
When I was fifteen I remember the Navajo dress
You made me, taking fourteen days
That seemed as long as windy days.
You talked to me in a voice as gentle
As a bird's song.

La Tanya Lee, FACE* parent, 2012
*Family and Child Education program



La Tanya Lee, 2012

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Wilmer Hijoe (parent), *She Was There for Me*
2012
Colored pencil and ink on paper
Digital reproduction

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La Tanya Lee (parent), *My Mom*
2012
Colored pencil on paper
Digital reproduction



She was there for me,
worked three jobs,
one full time,
two part time.

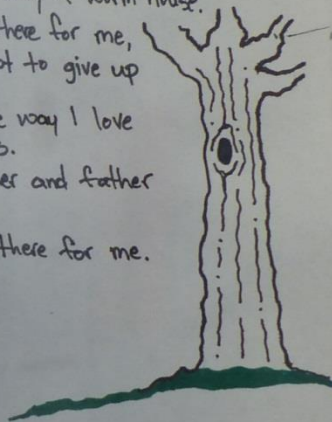
She was there for me,
made sure I ate,
made sure I had clothes,
most importantly a worm house.

She was there for me,
taught me not to give up
on life.

love me the way I love
my kids.

both mother and father
to me.

She was there for me.





She was there for me,
worked three jobs,
one full time,
two part time.

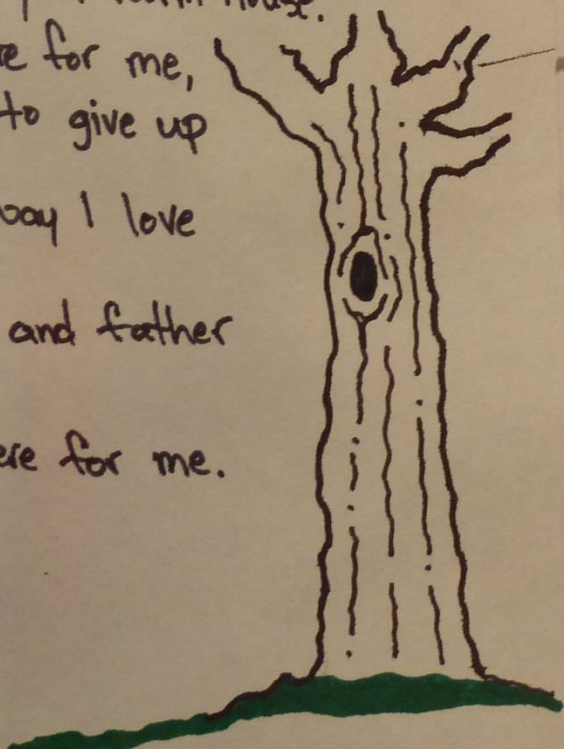
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Always laughing and always joking*

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How to cook
How to weave traditional rugs
How to sew pretty blankets square to square.*

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I miss being with you Shima.*

Mary Morris, FACE* parent, 2012

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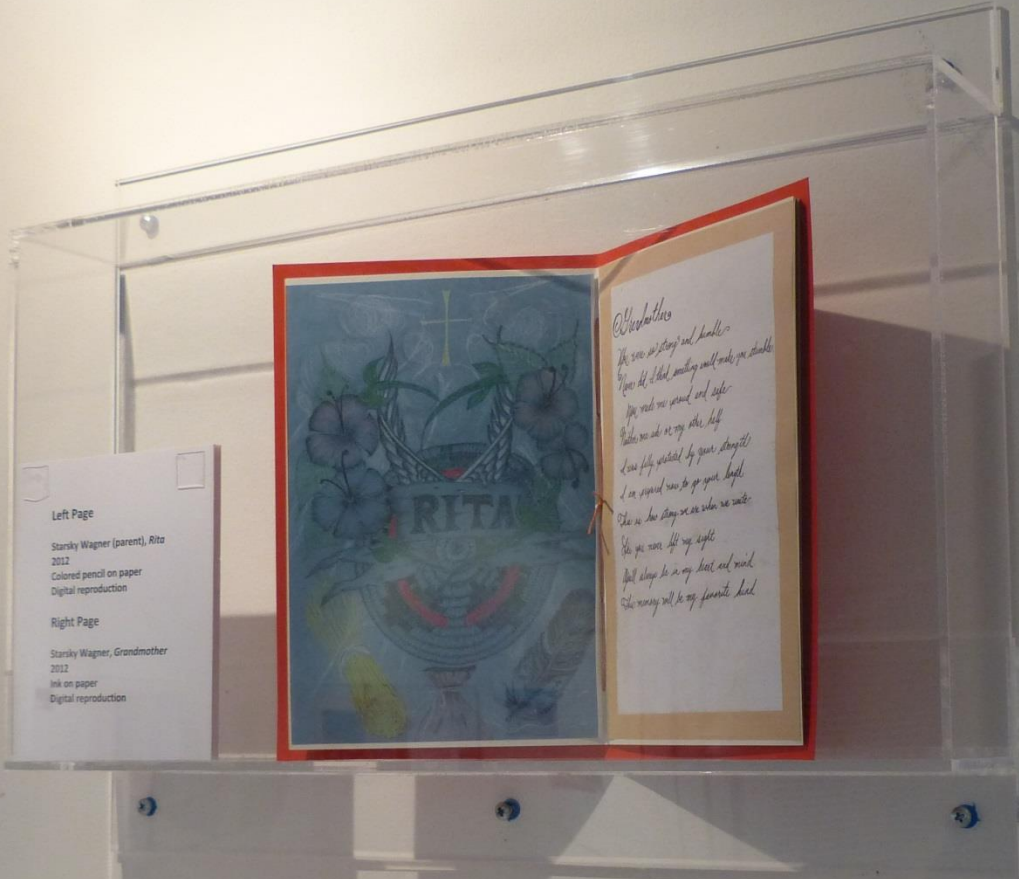
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La Tanya Lee, FACE* parent, 2012



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Left Page

Starsky Wagner (parent), Rita
2012
Colored pencil on paper
Digital reproduction

Right Page

Starsky Wagner, Grandmother
2012
Ink on paper
Digital reproduction

Chickadees

*The more we sing and dance
The more we sing and dance
The more we sing and dance
The more we sing and dance
The more we sing and dance
The more we sing and dance
The more we sing and dance
The more we sing and dance
The more we sing and dance
The more we sing and dance*

Spiritual People

Spiritual people, we are here waiting
Spiritual people, we're above you like
Spiritual people, learn your ancestors
Remember those ways.
Spiritual people, be prepared
Know your culture, your language.
Spiritual people, be strong, be patient
Spiritual people, they're waiting for

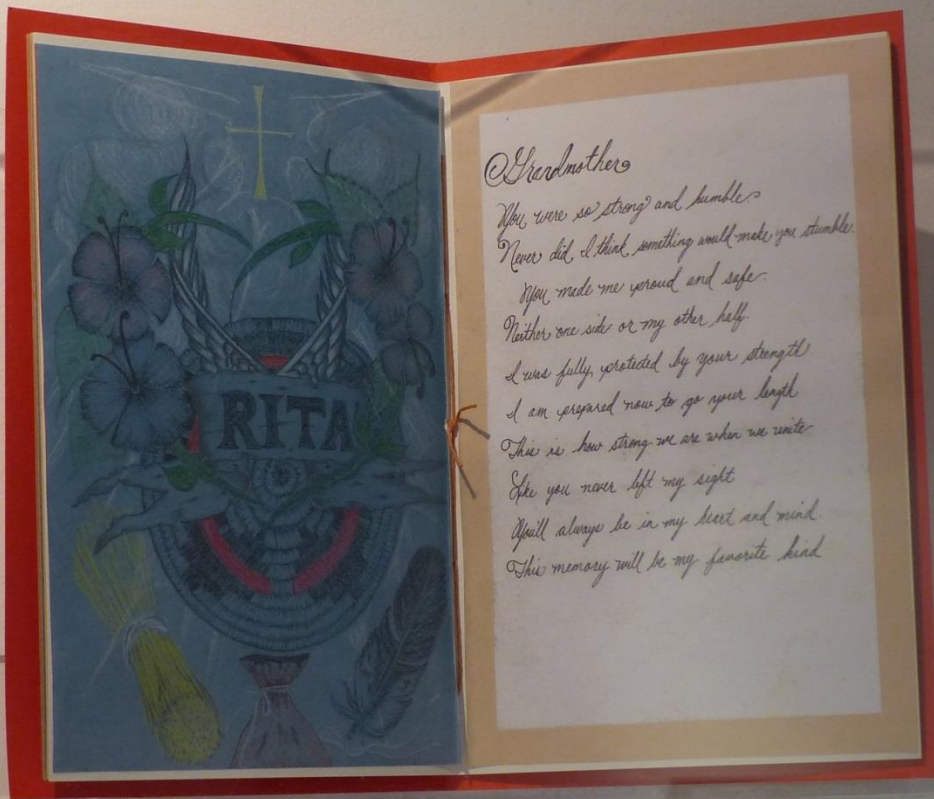
Starsky Wagner, FACE* parent, 2012
*Family and Child Education program

Left Page

Starsky Wagner (parent), *Rita*
2012
Colored pencil on paper
Digital reproduction

Right Page

Starsky Wagner, *Grandmother*
2012
Ink on paper
Digital reproduction



Grandmother

You were so strong and humble
Never did I think something would make you stumble
You made me proud and safe
Neither one side or my other half
I was fully protected by your strength
I am prepared now to go your length
This is how strong we are when we unite
You never left my sight
You'll always be in my heart and mind
This memory will be my favorite kind

Spiri

Spiritu

Spiritu

Spiritu

Remen

Spiritu

Know

Spirit

Spirit

Starsky

*Famili



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I am prepared now to go your length.

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Like you never left my sight.

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Spiritual People

Spiritual people, we are here waiting for your prayers
Spiritual people, we're above you like an eagle that soars
Spiritual people, learn your ancestors' ways
Remember those ways.
Spiritual people, be prepared
Know your culture, your language.
Spiritual people, be strong, be patient, be wise.
Spiritual people, they're waiting for our prayers.

Starsky Wagner, FACE* parent, 2012
*Family and Child Education program



Starsky Wagner, 2012

Left Page

Starsky Wagner (parent), *Struggle between
Good and Evil* (detail)
ca. 2012
Acrylic on cloth
Digital reproduction

Right Page

Starsky Wagner, *Struggle between
Good and Evil* (detail)
Ca. 2012
Acrylic on cloth
Digital reproduction





Left Page

Starky Wagner (parent), *Struggle between Good and Evil* (detail)
ca. 2012
Acrylic on cloth
Digital reproduction

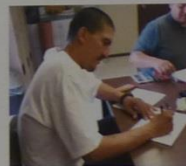
Right Page

Starky Wagner, *Struggle between Good and Evil* (detail)
Ca. 2012
Acrylic on cloth
Digital reproduction



Fathers are like oak trees
The older we get the stronger they become.
Our children are our leaves,
Blossoming in the wild winds
Becoming our shade from the heated sun.
There are not enough fathers
Who can say they are as strong as an oak tree.
My children are my leaves
The more I have, the safer
And happier I become.

David Escarpita, FACE* parent, 2012
*Family and Child Education program



David Escarpita, 2012

Father

My father, you did not teach me my culture.
My father, I never got to know you.
My father, you never tried to communicate with me.
My father, you never left room in your heart for me.
My father, I feel scared, angry, betrayed and lost.
Father, I never got to call you "Daddy."
My father, though you left me with nothing,
I survived.

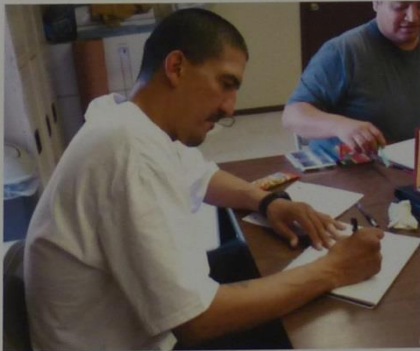
Lou Johnson, bi-lingual teacher, 2001



Lou Johnson, 2001

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Father, I never got to call you "Daddy."
My father, though you left me with nothing,
I survived.

Lou Johnson, bi-lingual teacher, 2001



Lou Johnson, 2001

When my grandmother comes through the door
It closes quietly.
It is whispered shut by the breath of god
Who acts as a doorman for one of his good
And faithful servants.

When my brother and I go out the door,
It closes like a clap of thunder.
We are always in a hurry to be somewhere.

Jacob C., 5/6th grade, 2011



Display of 5/6 grade art and poetry, 2011

Left Page

Anita Ryan (parent), *Butterflies*
2001
Colored pencil on paper
Digital reproduction

Right Page

Roberta Martinez (parent), *My Children*
2011
Collage on paper
Digital reproduction



My Children

They remind me of BUTTERFLIES...
The colors, shapes, how fast they learn.
How they start to fly and flutter their wings.
How beautiful they are when they are out and blooming.
How they spread their wings and show their colors.
I AM SO PROUD
How beautiful my children are.

Roberta Martinez, "MAY" parent, 2011
*Family and Child Education program



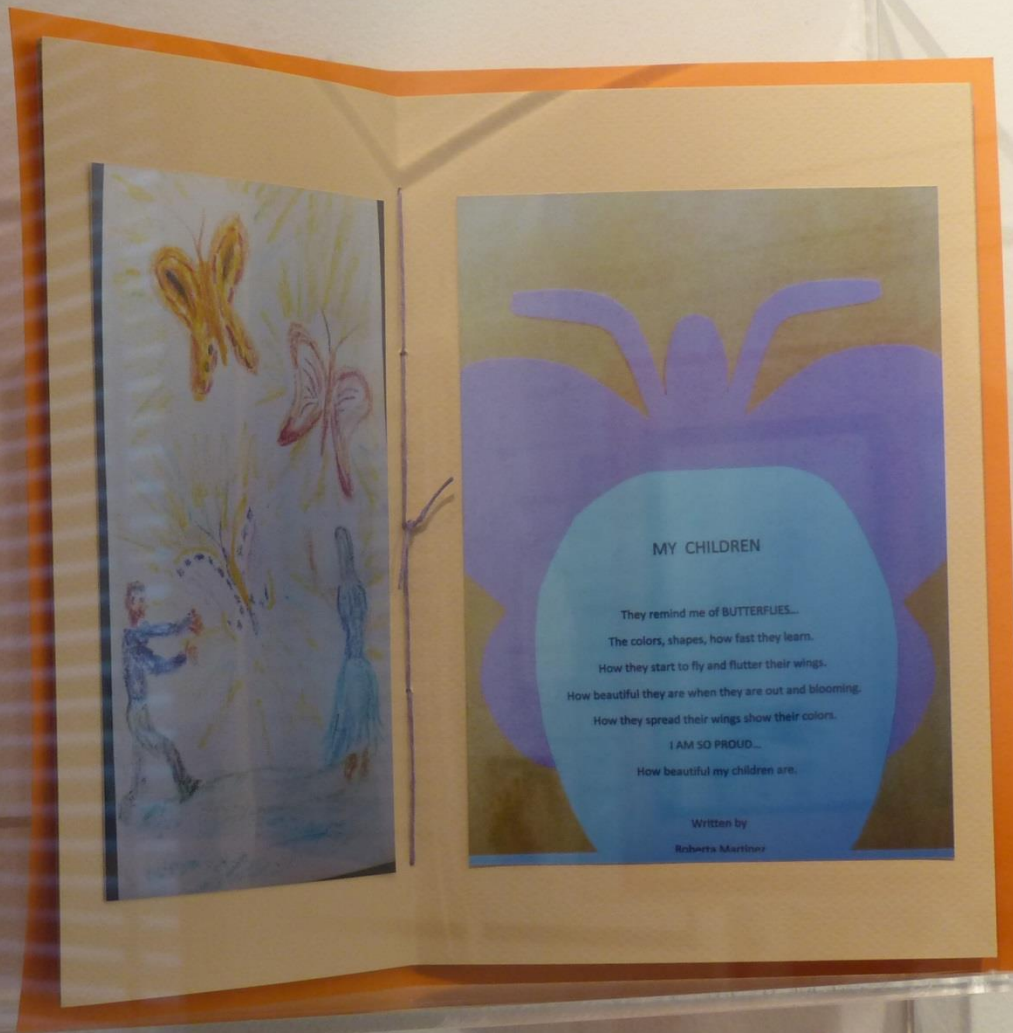
Display of Family and Child Education program

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Display of 5/6 grade art and poetry, 2011

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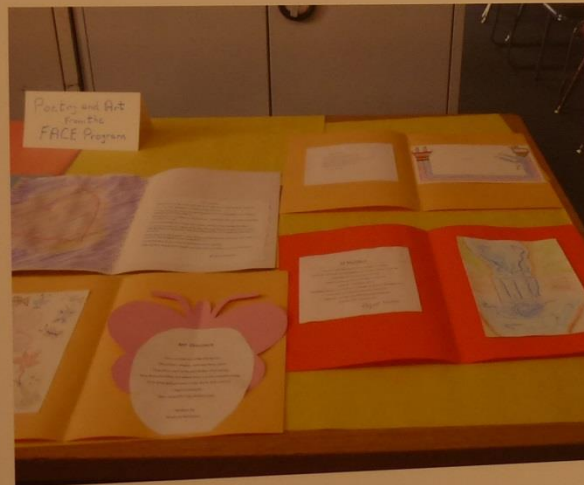
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How they start to fly and flutter their wings.
How beautiful they are when they are out and blooming.
How they spread their wings and show their colors.

I AM SO PROUD

How beautiful my children are.

Roberta Martinez, FACE* parent, 2011

*Family and Child Education program



Display of Poetry and Art, 2011

My Quiet Walk Through the Forest

As I look at the blue cold river rushing
Through the tall green forest,
As I feel the cool spring breeze push
Against my face,
As I walk with my thin moccasins,
I walk on top of hard sharp rocks,
I try to find my way through the forest
Heading back to my village.

As I am walking I hear birds singing
For the beginning of spring.
As I walk I see a forest eating.
I respect her, love her alone.
Because to respect Mother Earth
You must respect all living things.

Osay Shirley, 10th grade, 2001



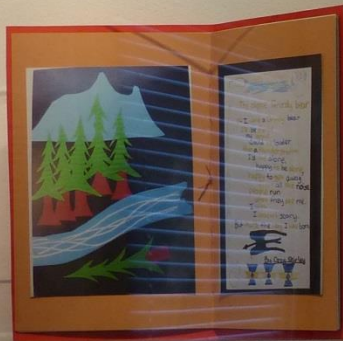
Osay Shirley, 2001

Left Page

Osay Shirley (10th grade), *The Woods*
2001
Collage on paper
Digital reproduction

Right Page

Osay Shirley, *The Alone Grizzly Bear*
2001
Colored pencil and pen on paper
Digital reproduction



I Forgive You

I forgive you grandma that you weren't here
When I was born.
Struggling every day of my life.
I wish you were here to teach me our culture and language.

They say, I've never seen you,
But when I sleep I dream the most beautiful dreams.
I see your beautiful black hair.
Long, never ending, hanging down your back.

My dad would tell me how everyone
Came together like a flock of birds
Staying close to one another.

Now you have passed, you left all your precious treasures
All the way down to teaching.
You left your rug room, hoping it will be useful again
For your next generation.

I feel like a different person, but deep inside
Of me, I'm a part of you!

Teri Wagener, Jr. high school, 2001



Teri Wagener, 2001

My Elderly Grandma

My elderly grandma you're the spirit of my soul.
My elderly grandma you run
Through my heart like a crash
Of waves running through the ocean.
You and my spirit run free as a horse
Galloping in the ocean sea bank
Having the wind flying through your face and mine.
My elderly grandma you taught me
How to be strong and to have my spirit
Be free like an eagle crying for freedom.
My elderly grandma you make my traditional dress
Made of wool sheared from your sheep.
My elderly grandma you taught me
Lots of things that mattered to you.
My elderly grandma someday, when
You are gone, I will pass the things
You taught me to my sisters, brothers
To show your spirit still lives inside me forever.

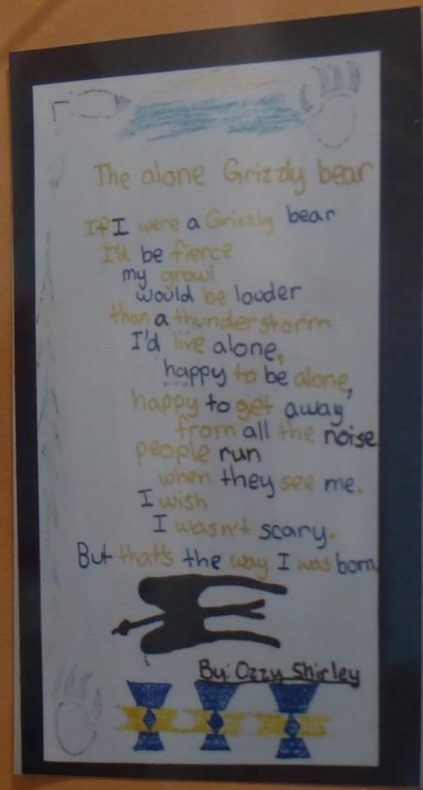
Keanna Chero, Flagstaff High School, 2003

Left Page

Ozzy Shirley (5/6 grade), *The Woods*
2001
Collage on paper
Digital reproduction

Right Page

Ozzy Shirley, *The Alone Grizzly Bear*
2001
Colored pencil and pen on paper
Digital reproduction



My Quiet Walk Through the Forest

As I look at the blue cold river rushing
Through the tall green forest,
As I feel the cool spring breeze push
Against my face,
As I walk with my thin moccasins,
I walk on top of hard sharp rocks,
I try to find my way through the forest
Heading back to my village.

As I am walking I hear birds singing
For the beginning of spring,
As I walk I see a fawn eating.
I respect her, leave her alone,
Because to respect Mother Earth
You must respect all living things.

Ozzy Shirley, 5th grade, 2001



Ozzy Shirley and Ann Gengarely, 2001



Ozzy Shirley, 2001

Left Page

Ozzy Shirley (5/6 grade), *The W*
2001
Collage on paper
Digital reproduction

Right Page

Ozzy Shirley, *The Alone Grizzly*
2001
Colored pencil and pen on paper
Digital reproduction

I Forgive You

I forgive you grandma that you weren't here
When I was born.
Struggling every day of my life,
I wish you were here to teach me our culture and language.

They say, I've never seen you,
But when I sleep I dream the most beautiful dreams.
I see your beautiful black hair,
Long, never ending, hanging down your back.

My dad would tell me how everyone
Came together like a flock of birds
Staying close to one another.

Now you have passed, you left all your precious treasures
All the way down to teaching.
You left your rug loom, hoping it will be useful again
For your next generation.

I feel like a different person, but deep inside
Of me, I'm a part of you!

Teri Wagoner, Jr. high school, 2001



Teri Wagoner, 2001

My Elderly Grandma

My elderly grandma you're the spirit of my soul.
My elderly grandma you run
Through my heart like a crash
Of waves running through the ocean.
You and my spirit run free as a horse
Gallop in the ocean sea bank
Having the wind flying through your face and mine.
My elderly grandma you taught me
How to be strong and to have my spirit
Be free like an eagle crying for freedom.
My elderly grandma you make my traditional dress
Made of wool sheared from your sheep.
My elderly grandma you taught me
Lots of things that mattered to you.
My elderly grandma someday, when
You are gone, I will pass the things
You taught me to my sisters, brothers
To show your spirit still lives inside me forever.

Kevina Chato, Flagstaff High School, 2003

Paul Joe: Icons for Healing

Paul Joe is a medicine man artist who worked as a facilities maintenance technician at Little Singer School. Ann and Tony first met him in March 2001 and subsequently have become close friends with Paul Joe and his family.

Paul Joe's art is a special blend of naturalistic forms and spiritual symbolism. His pictures are set in the natural world of *Dine'eh* ("the land of The People"). Traditional homesteads and landscapes charged with brilliant stars and pulsating sunsets are the spiritual backdrop for his figures of sacred animals and birds, holy men and women who represent the spiritual powers of the earth. Paul Joe's pictures are meant to be icons for healing. They communicate energy, invite reflection and represent connection with the living earth; with all the life on, above and under its natural beauty.

Paul Joe's art has been a focus of contemplation and inspiration for many of Ann's poetry classes on the Navajo Nation and for her classes in Vermont. His work continues to be a source of learning about Navajo folkways and healing practices at both ends of the continent.



Paul Joe, *The Medicine Man*, 2011, 2011, ink and watercolor on paper



Paul Joe, *The Calling of the Spirit*, 2011, watercolor on paper



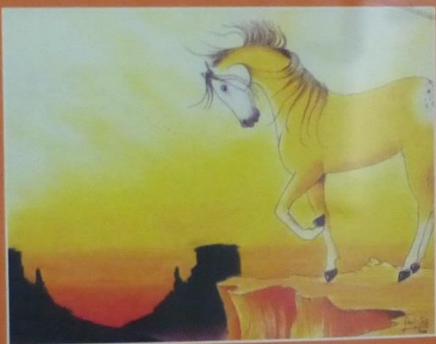
Paul Joe, *Star Gazer*, 2012, acrylic on canvas board



Paul Joe ("Navajo Healing Artist"), *Star Gazer*, 2012, Acrylic on canvas board

Over the past ten years Paul Joe has become a remarkable spiritual warrior. He is on his own "heroic journey" that includes apprenticeships in Navajo shaman and participation with both Navajo rituals and those of the Native American Church. Paul is also an "intuitive teacher" who brings his gained wisdom and enlightened energy to the aid of people who are psychologically or physically ill, in Navajo terminology, are out of harmony with the underlying powers ("restoring peace") of the natural world. (from "Paul Joe: Medicine Man Artist," Jack Art Messenger, 2013)





Navajo Sunset, ca. 2001-05, colored pencil and watercolor on paper

Paul Joe: Medicine Man Artist

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHS
BY TONY GENGARELLI

Poised on the canyon rim, a yellow horse looms before a sky that radiates yellow, orange and red. Black outcrops in the background, already beyond the sun's reach, signal the end of day. This compelling picture of a visionary moment in nature (Navajo Shaman is the work of Navajo medicine man artist Paul Joe.

But, as in much of Paul Joe's art, the picture invites a deeper reflection. The absolute-colored mare is, according to Navajo myth, a divine animal associated with the sacred mountains of the West, the San Francisco Peaks near Flagstaff, Ariz. Here, on the western point of the Navajo compass, day and, metaphorically, life come to an end, and the night of dreams and transformation begins.

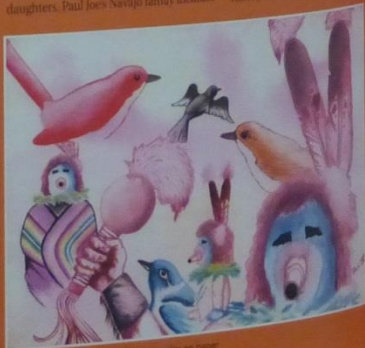
The healing intent of the artist is also present. The sacred animal and brilliant sky connect the viewer to the



Paul Joe, 2011

spiritual power of the natural world. In this way, the beautiful and tranquil scene becomes a sacred space for healing.

Paul Joe (born 1978) lives in Winslow, Ariz., with his wife Alvina and four daughters. Paul Joe's Navajo family includes



Calling the Ye-bi-chee, 2011, watercolor on paper

the Holy Mountain he makes use of the first seven peaks. Paul Joe's Navajo name, *Honishgháshón*, derives from *hón* (see) which means *protection* and *hóshón* (see) which means *protection*. This is as he tells it, was created by his grandfather, blessed by his older than grand-Navajo name along with a protection that he would become a great leader.

Until recently Paul Joe was a teacher maintenance technician at Little Singer Community School, where my wife Ann and I first met him in March 2001. The school is located near our home in Ariz., along the Little Colorado river basin. In the southwestern portion of the Navajo Nation, this section—the Leupp Extension—was added to the reservation by Theodore Roosevelt at the beginning of the 20th century. During an initial meeting, Paul Joe spoke of his ambition to become a medicine man. He also showed us *Calling the Ye-bi-chee*, the first of many paintings we would be privileged to see over the next few years.

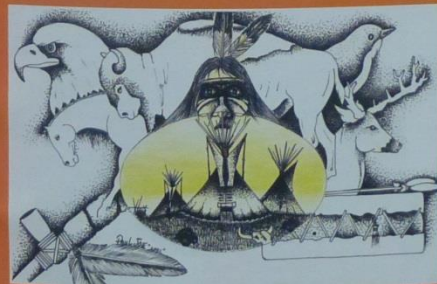
This early watercolor features what appears to be a group of animals before the middle of mountain peaks. Paul Joe gently told us that the animal *ye-bi-chee*, man who takes on the power of the holy one, the Navajo medicine man. These *ye-bi-chee* are also dancers and

part of a Night Way ceremony. A nine-day event, the Night Way is a powerful healing and transformative ritual, and the *ye-bi-chee* are calling the spiritual world and Navajo community to join together during its final hours. He also explained that the holy figures are turning into birds so that the "five-fingered" white man, should he penetrate the sacred circle uninvited, would not be able to witness the ceremony's power-filled conclusion.

Paul Joe's imaginative twist in his portrayal of the Night Way is telling. Unlike some Navajo painters, he does not use traditional sand painting images to punctuate latent spiritual messages, not does he, like some memory painters, provide a visual reenactment. Rather, his naturalistic pictures embrace a symbolic dimension that requires some patient contemplation and prior knowledge of native customs to decipher. So it is with what we have titled *Calling the Ye-bi-chee*, where sacred dancers are turning into birds. Here, too, is another connection Paul Joe makes in much of his art: the union of spirit and nature. Animals and birds also showed us *Calling the Ye-bi-chee*, the first of many paintings we would be privileged to see over the next few years. These early watercolor features what appears to be a group of animals before the middle of mountain peaks. Paul Joe gently told us that the animal *ye-bi-chee*, man who takes on the power of the holy one, the Navajo medicine man. These *ye-bi-chee* are also dancers and

The healing intent of the artist is also present. The sacred animal and brilliant sky connect the viewer to the spiritual power of the natural world. In this way, the beautiful and tranquil scene becomes a sacred space for healing.

Over the past ten years Paul Joe has become a remarkable spiritual warrior. He is on his own "holy journey" that passed on, from one generation to another, and participation with both Navajo rituals and those of the Native American Church.



The Medicine Man, ca. 2001-05, ink and watercolor on paper

Paul Joe is also an "invincible teacher" who brings his gained wisdom and enlightened energy to the aid of people who are psychologically or physically ill, or, in Navajo terminology, are out of harmony with the underlying powers ("instanding ones") of the natural world.

My wife and I have returned nearly every year since 2001 to Little Singer School, where we offer workshops on poetry and art. Ann is a poet in the schools and has her own studio where classes are offered at our home in Marlboro, Vt. As an art historian who incorporates book design into my college curriculum, I have participated in some of her work, especially at Little Singer School. With every return to the school we look forward to a visit with Paul Joe and his family. Their welcoming hospitality and the mutual affection between us are experiences we greatly cherish.

Through the years, Paul Joe has been

Honishgháshón were blessed by the Navajo goddess Changing Woman. She gave them a sacred case (*igish*) made of turquoise which helped the Honishgháshón "become medicine men and women." Changing Woman also gave



Portrait, ca. 2001-05, graphite on paper

them the mountain lion (*naishóhóhóhó*) as "their symbol of protection and healing." The mountain lion is able to "see evil in the darkness." This attribute may explain Paul Joe's crystal gazing ability that enables him to diagnose negative energy and recommend the appropriate action or healing ceremony. Paul Joe has been especially influenced by his grandmother, Max Chase, who has taught him a great deal about the healing arts of his clan.

In an early graphite drawing (Portrait, ca. 2001-03) Paul Joe pays tribute to his Navajo healers and mentors. He beautifully models a kind, benevolent figure, his

eyes projecting wisdom and courage. The medicine man's attributes include a ceremonial "fan" of eagle feathers and a medicine pouch containing herbs gathered from each of the four sacred mountains that surround the Navajo Nation.

Another medicine man portrait (The Medicine Man) dating from the same period, places a fierce, man-like head in the midst of sacred birds and animals. The oval in the center frames ropes that serve as gathering places for the rituals of the Native American Church. The NAC is a religious movement embracing many Native American traditions as well as those of other faiths such as Christianity. The tobacco pipe and drum displayed here represent aspects of the church's peyote ceremony, where ritual smoking and rhythmic music converge. In a way, this image might also be a self-portrait, since Paul Joe has helped facilitate services for the Native American Church.

One of the more significant drawings representing Paul Joe's spiritual quest is *The Eagle* (ca. 2001-03). The sacred bird and heavenly messenger is presented in three

Paul Joe: Icons for Healing

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Paul Joe's art is a special blend of naturalistic forms and spiritual symbolism. His pictures are set in the natural world of *Dinetah* ("the land of The People"). Traditional homesteads and landscapes charged with brilliant stars and pulsating sunsets are the spiritual backdrop for his figures of sacred animals and birds, holy men and women who represent the spiritual powers of the earth. Paul Joe's pictures are meant to be icons for healing. They communicate energy, invite reflection and represent connection with the living earth; with all the life on, above and under its natural beauty.

Paul Joe's art has been a focus of contemplation and inspiration for many of Ann's poetry classes on the Navajo Nation and for her classes in Vermont. His work continues to be a source of learning about Navajo folkways and healing practices at both ends of the continent.



Paul Joe, *The Medicine Man*, 2001-2005, ink and watercolor on paper



Paul Joe, *The Calling of the Yei-bi-Chai*, 2001, watercolor on paper



Paul Joe, *Star Gazer*, 2012, acrylic on canvas board



**Paul Jón, Hestur
ca. 2000 (oil)**
Courtesy artist and artist's estate

My father, the artist, Paul Jón, has been blind since his childhood, when he was just 10. He learned to paint by touch, using his hands and feet to feel the brushstrokes and colors. He is a self-taught artist, and his work is a testament to his incredible talent and perseverance. The painting "Hestur" (Horse) is a vibrant and expressive work, featuring a yellow horse in a landscape with a sunset and a blue sky. The use of color and light is masterful, and the overall composition is balanced and harmonious.



**Paul Jón, Gullingurinn
2001**
Courtesy artist and artist's estate

This painting, "Gullingurinn" (The Gull), is a colorful and expressive work. It features a bird, a hand, and a face, all rendered in a vibrant and expressive style. The use of color and light is masterful, and the overall composition is balanced and harmonious.

Colors of the World
Colors of the world are found everywhere
In the sky, in the water, in the earth,
In the colors of the people,
In the colors of the mountains,
In the colors of the trees and flowers,
In the colors of the sky and sea,
In the colors of the birds and fish,
In the colors of the land and sea,
In the colors of the mountains and valleys,
In the colors of the fields and meadows,
In the colors of the forests and woods,
In the colors of the rivers and streams,
In the colors of the lakes and ponds,
In the colors of the oceans and seas,
In the colors of the sky and earth,
In the colors of the world.



**Paul Jón, Hestur
ca. 2000 (oil)**
Courtesy artist and artist's estate



**Paul Jón, Hestur
ca. 2000 (oil)**
Courtesy artist and artist's estate



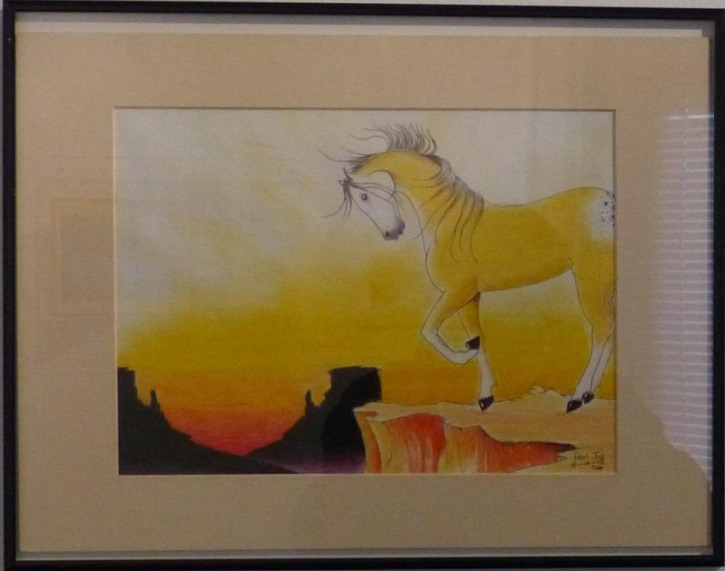
**Paul Jón, Hestur
ca. 2000 (oil)**
Courtesy artist and artist's estate

The Colors of the World
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In the sky, in the water, in the earth,
In the colors of the people,
In the colors of the mountains,
In the colors of the trees and flowers,
In the colors of the sky and sea,
In the colors of the birds and fish,
In the colors of the land and sea,
In the colors of the mountains and valleys,
In the colors of the fields and meadows,
In the colors of the forests and woods,
In the colors of the rivers and streams,
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In the colors of the sky and earth,
In the colors of the world.



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In the colors of the sky and earth,
In the colors of the world.



Paul Joe, *Navajo Sunset*
ca. 2001-2005
Colored pencil and watercolor on paper

Posed on the canyon rim, a yellow horse bows before a sky that radiates yellow, orange and red. Rock outcrops in the background, already beyond the sun's reach, signal the end of day.

But, as in much of Paul Joe's art, the picture invites a deeper reflection. The absolute colored scene is, according to Navajo myth, a divine animal associated with the sacred mountains of the west, the San Francisco Peaks near Flagstaff, Arizona. Here, on the western point of the Navajo compass, day and metaphorically life come to an end, and the night of dreams and transformation begins.

*The healing intent of the artist is also present. The sacred animal and brilliant sky connect the viewer to the spiritual power of the natural world. In this way the beautiful and tranquil scene becomes a sacred space for healing. (From "Paul Joe: Medicine Man Artist," *Folk Art Messenger*, 2011)*



Paul Joe, *Calling the Yei-bi-chei*
2001
Watercolor on paper

*This early watercolor features what appears to be a group of masked figures in the midst of multicolored birds. Paul gently told us that the masked figures are yei-bi-chei, men who take on the power of the holy yet, the Navajo tutelary deities. These yei-bi-chei are also dancers and part of a Night Way ceremony. A nine day event, the Night Way is a powerful healing and transformative ritual, and the yei-bi-chei are calling the spiritual world and Navajo community to join together during its final hours. He also explained that the holy figures are turning into birds so that the "Jee-fingreed" white men, should he penetrate the sacred circle uninvited, would not be able to witness the ceremony's power-filled conclusion. (From "Paul Joe: Medicine Man Artist," *Folk Art Messenger*, 2011)*

Colors of the

(Inspired by Paul Joe's painting)

Colors of the life can
Direction,
From the colors of the
And the colors from
Colors can be seen fr
From the colors of pe
Feathers and blanket
Oh so much comfort
From the eyes that h
There are red, blue an
Orange and yellow c
Everywhere,
Colors of rattles shak
Colors are everywher
Colors of the world.

Teashaw Waggoner, *Spirit of*



Paul Joe, *Calling the Yei-bi-chei*
2001
Watercolor on paper

This early watercolor features what appears to be a group of masked figures in the midst of multicolored birds. Paul gently told us that the masked figures are yei-bi-chei, men who take on the power of the holy yei, the Navajo tutelary deities. These yei-bi-chei are also dancers and part of a Night Way ceremony.

Colors of the World

(inspired by Paul Joe's painting)

Colors of the life can be seen from every
Direction.

From the colors of the people
And the colors from the birds.
Colors can be seen from anywhere—
From the colors of paint and brushes,
Feathers and blankets.

Oh so much comfort
From the eyes that help see
There are red, blue and black,
Orange and yellow colors
Everywhere.

Colors of rattles shaking with sound,
Colors are everywhere.
Colors of the world.

Treshawn Wagoner, 5/6th grade, 2011



Paul Joe, *Calling the Yei-bi-chei*, 2001,
watercolor on paper

Colors of the World

(inspired by Paul Joe's painting)

Colors of life can be seen from every

Direction.

From the colors of the people

And the colors from the birds.

Colors can be seen from anywhere—

From the colors of paint and brushes,

Feathers and blankets.

Oh so much comfort

From the eyes that help see

There are red, blue and black,

Orange and yellow colors

Everywhere.

Colors of rattles shaking with sound,

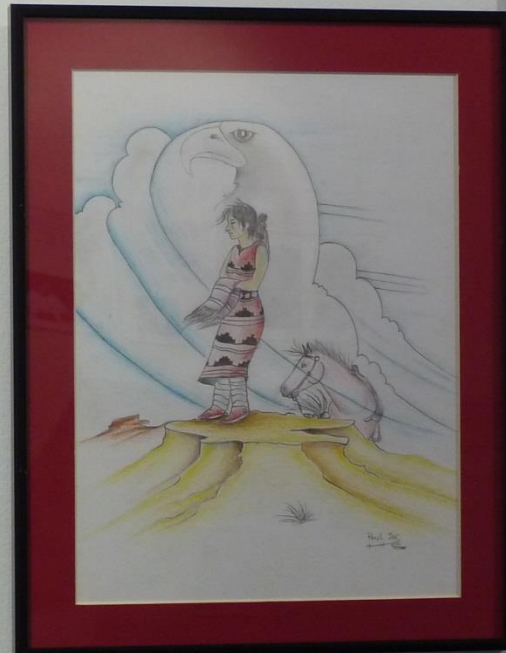
Colors are everywhere.

Colors of the world.

Treshawn Wagoner, 5/6th grade, 2011

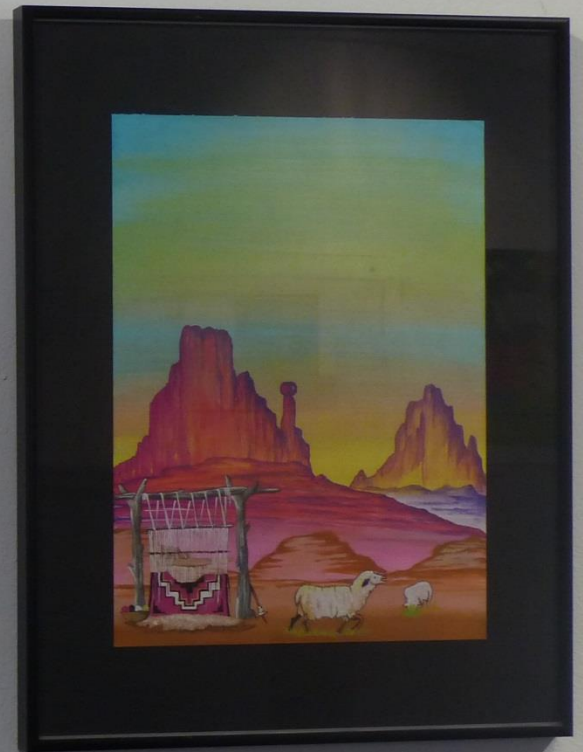


Paul Joe, Calling the Yei-ti-ehi, 2001, watercolor on paper



Paul Joe, Western Horizon
ca. 2001-2005
Colored pencil on paper

Paul Joe's colored pencil drawing *Western Horizon* . . . features a woman standing on a rock formation wearing a Navajo blanket dress. Its banded pattern dates from the classical period of Navajo weaving, circa 1860. The woman has left her horse, now standing behind her, and looks out on a barren landscape. The wind and clouds appear ominous, but her eagle spirit is strong. Is Paul Joe recounting a time just before the Long Walk—the Navajo relocation during the 1860s? Is he perhaps indicating as well that, in the face of such an historical trauma, the Navajo and their culture will endure? (From "Paul Joe: Medicine Man Artist," *Folk Art Messenger*, 2011)



Paul Joe, Unfinished Weaving
2011
Acrylic on paper

Here we have the traditional Navajo weaving culture revived. The upright loom holds a half-completed rug. Its emerging cloud pattern recalls the design on the woman's blanket dress in *Western Horizon*. The vegetation is sparse, but sufficient to feed the churning breed of sheep grazing in the foreground. Having been virtually wiped out during the Long Walk period, these resilient animals have made a comeback. Their long, non-greasy wool is ideal for carding and spinning. The natural dyes featured in contemporary style rugs are also suggested in the play of color between the red tones found in the background landscape and those in the balls of yarn waiting to be taken up by the weaver. (From "Paul Joe: Medicine Man Artist," *Folk Art Messenger*, 2011)



Paul Joe, *The Medicine Man*
ca. 2001-2005
Ink and watercolor on paper

This medicine man portrait places a fierce, mask-like head in the midst of sacred birds and animals. The oval in the center frames tepees that serve as gathering places for the rituals of the Native American Church. The NAC is a religious movement embracing many Native American traditions as well as those of other faiths such as Christianity. The tobacco pipe and drum displayed here represent aspects of the church's peyote ceremony, where ritual smoking and rhythmic music are present. (From "Paul Joe: Medicine Man Artist," Folk Art Messenger, 2011)

The Warrior

(inspired by Paul Joe's *Medicine Man*)

A man was sad because his son was acting like
The white people.

The man didn't like it. The boy had white
Friends and went to school.

The man got mad. He put on his warrior clothes.
He got his friends. He was gathering a lot of men to
Fight
The whites.

The man asks them to leave. The whites refuse.
He pays them a lot of gold to make them leave.

He goes to the court for business.
He says he wants no war.
The whites leave the village.

The man was happy. The village
Was back to normal.
The children play their native games.

Ryan, 5/6th grade, 2011



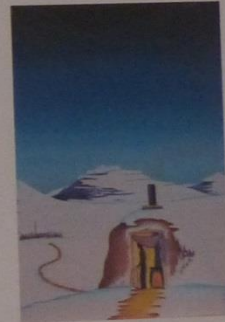
Paul Joe, *The Medicine Man*, 2001-05,
ink and watercolor on paper



Paul Joe's Painting
(Nurturing the Night Way, ca. 2001-2005)

The sky is many colors
Like the morning
Of a peyote meeting.
The snow is as beautiful
As a polar bear slowly walking
Across the icy land.
My dad is standing around a fire
Inside a Hogan,
Warm and comfortable,
Happy that he is home.

Tyronne, 5/6th grade, 2011





Paul Joe, *Star Gazer*, 2012, acrylic on canvas board

The Healing Arts: Navajo Words and Images

94 Porter Street Gallery
Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts
June 2013 – June 2014

MCLA

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