

*YATZIE T. DEE (1951-2024)*

*CHIRICAHUA APACHE ARTIST and STORYTELLER*

Yatzie was born in July 1951 on the San Carlos Indian Reservation in Arizona, on a dirt floor, in a small and humble wooden cabin where his parents were living. He cherished his mother and grandmother who raised him according to the Apache Chiricahua tradition, teaching him many stories of his grandfather and ancestors who fought for their freedom.

Yatzie kept a lasting memory of these early years which greatly inspired his entire life and shaped the way he viewed and reacted to the world.

Yatzie was a born artist. From a very young age, drawing and painting were the ways in which he expressed himself. His artwork depicted his people, their traditional way of life, and the physical environment. He was naturally gifted at capturing details of faces and expressions, using a combination of media such as oil and chalk pastels. His favorite medium was definitely ink which he used for portraits.

Yatzie was a complete artist. He was also a turquoise jewelry designer, a flute player, but most of all a storyteller. Each of his creations captured a moment of his or his ancestors' lived experience. Yatzie loved to share the significance of each of his pieces of art with visitors and customers, allowing him and his audience to remember or learn Apache traditions. Sharing these memories also afforded him the opportunity to heal from the traumas endured by his people. Among these traumas was the physical degradation of their environment. Each of these stories and each of his pieces of art provides the observer with a sense of reconciliation with the past.

Love, resilience, and legacy are the heart of his artwork.