Meet the Artist

Harrison Begay was born around the year 1917 in the Navajo Nation near Whitecone, Arizona. He is a well known Diné (Navajo) artist, and his art includes paintings, illustrations, and prints. Find out more about Harrison Begay's life by following these links:

- Explore more about Harrison Begay's life and artwork!
- Learn about the land where Harrison Begay was born.

Learn More About Sand Painting

Sand paintings are an art form that are especially important to the Diné. They are a type of sacred art. A sand painting is made as part of a healing ceremony, and is destroyed after the ceremony is over. It is not usual for a sand painting to be made permanent. Because of their sacredness, sand paintings made during ceremonies are not photographed, and those made as artworks to be sold are purposefully changed so that they are not sacred.

What Can You See in Harrison Begay's Sand Painting?

Because this sand painting was made as an artwork to be sold, it has been changed so that it is not sacred like a ceremonial sand painting. The symbols and images in sand paintings are important parts of Diné culture. Can you find a symbol that looks like a coyote? What about an eagle? Click to learn more about these symbols:

- Learn about eagle symbolism.
- Learn about coyote symbolism.

Diné Stories

Harrison Begay's sand painting tells a story, and sand paintings made during ceremonies can tell many, many different stories. Other types of Diné art, like basket weaving, can also tell stories. These stories carry important parts of Diné culture with them as they are shared from generation, to generation. Listen to two of these stories told by Wally Brown, a Navajo historian:

- Listen to one of the Winter Stories.
- Listen to the Story of the Stars.

Linked websites: Navajo Artists | Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian | Natural History Museum of Utah | Arizona State Museum Youtube | Navajo Traditional Teaching Youtube