

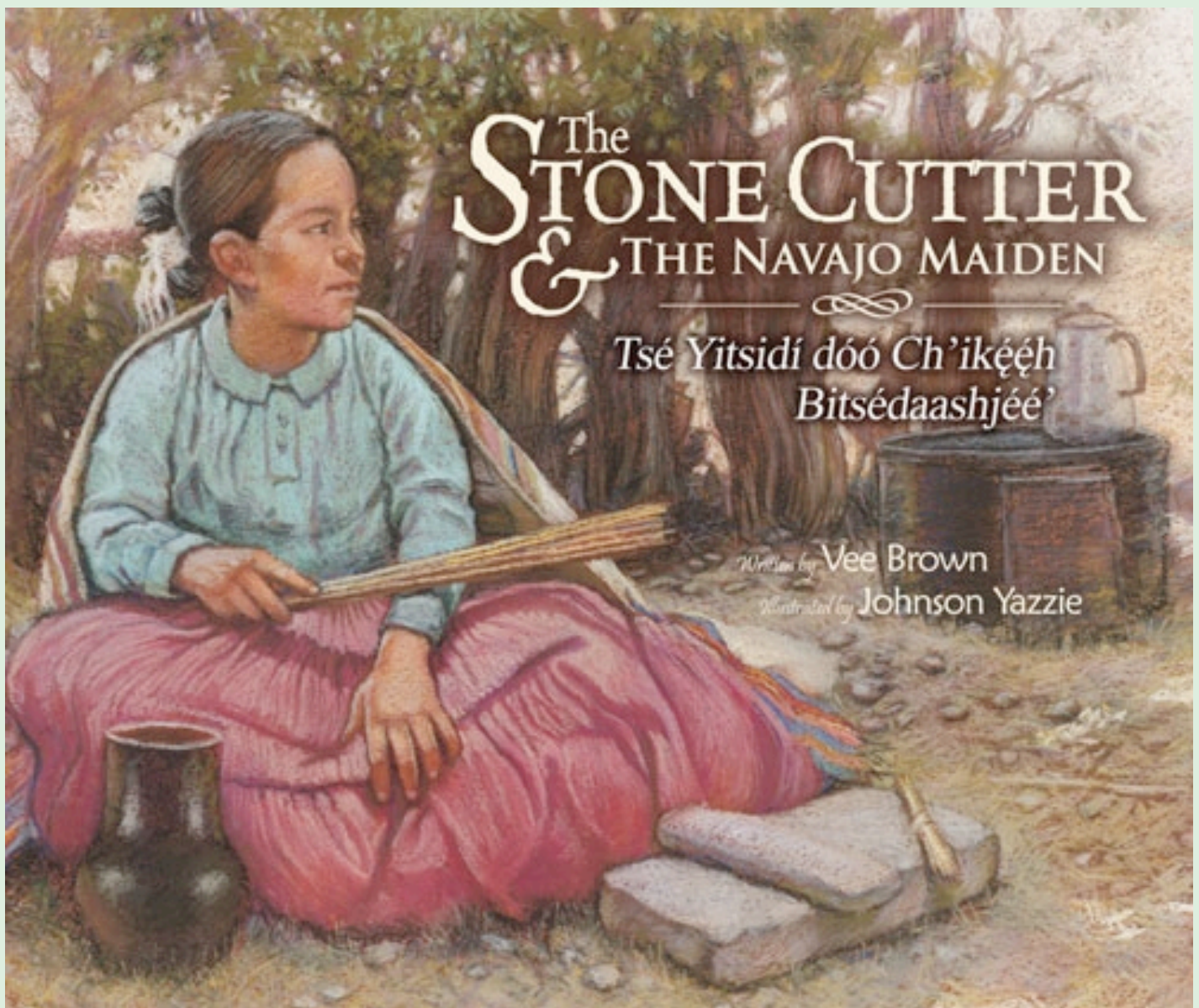
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Johnson Yazzie Exhibits Original Art From His Book Titled
The Stone Cutter & The Navajo Maiden At The Arizona Fine Art EXPO

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The sun softly sets behind the Flagstaff landscape. The relaxing colors of yellow, orange, red and blue fill the sky as Johnson Yazzie begins to talk about the illustrations he created for *The Stone Cutter & The Navajo Maiden* written by Vee F. Browne. This is the first book Johnson illustrated for and said he would like to continue doing illustrations for future books.

While working on the illustrations, Johnson said he had to envision the story in reality, "You have to make it effective and you have to put emotion into the character's face and body." While creating the drawings, Johnson had in mind different landscapes across the Navajo reservation that would serve as inspiration for the different landscapes seen in the book.

Johnson admitted the project served as a history lesson because he, the editor and art director researched the time period in which the book took place. Clothing, housing, art, rug weaving, transportation and the animals were researched to add authenticity to the story. "It was a refresher course. It was a history lesson for me," said Johnson.

Yazzie said he could relate to the story because he grew up on the reservation in Pinon, Ariz. and his mother and grandmother utilized the metate. He said the metate is "part of the culture and tradition" of the Navajo people. Johnson explains how the stone is important to the Navajo way of life and it was essential to survive because of the food it made as well as its other uses.

As the book makes its way through the Navajo Nation and the state, Johnson hopes the children grasp the importance of the Navajo language and understand that language can build a foundation, "I hope they understand that they have a powerful language because it has history," said Johnson as he begins to give an example of the Navajo Code Talkers utilizing the Navajo language which resulted in a victory for the United States in World War II. Johnson said the greatest satisfaction would be to see a young Navajo child read the book aloud in Navajo, "I would feel honored. I made this effort with the illustrations and now children are reading about it in Navajo."

The story, written in Navajo and English, follows the journey of Cinnibah, a young Navajo maiden who lives in the deep Dinétah. She looks after her widowed father, and every day she grinds corn into flour to make their bread. To do so, she uses a metate—an ancient grinding stone that has been passed down in her family for generations. When Cinnibah accidentally shatters the metate, she sets out on a journey to find someone who can help her mend the stone. Her quest brings her to a Moccasin Maker, a Potter, and, finally, the mysterious Stone Cutter. Will he be willing to help her? A story about loss and recovery, with strong ties to family and community, *The Stone Cutter and the Navajo Maiden* is an excellent early reader for both Navajo children and school children in need of learning more about Navajo culture.

Vee F. Browne is from Cottonwood/Tselani, Arizona, and is a member of the Navajo Nation, belonging to the Bitter Water and Water Flows Together clans. She obtained her master's in arts from Western New Mexico University in 1990. A journalist, educator, and fiction writer, Ms. Browne is also an *Arizona Interscholastic Athletic Association* volleyball and basketball referee. As an award-winning author, she has received much acclaim for her children's books, including *Monster Slayer* and *Monster Birds*.