

Fall 2022

John Gritts

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INDIGENOUS APPALACHIA

ARTIST SPOTLIGHT

John Gritts
Cherokee

“My work is a subtle statement about unfinished promises with unfinished work in my drawings, along with Native American mascots.

As an artist I want viewers to study my work closely to find my messages.”

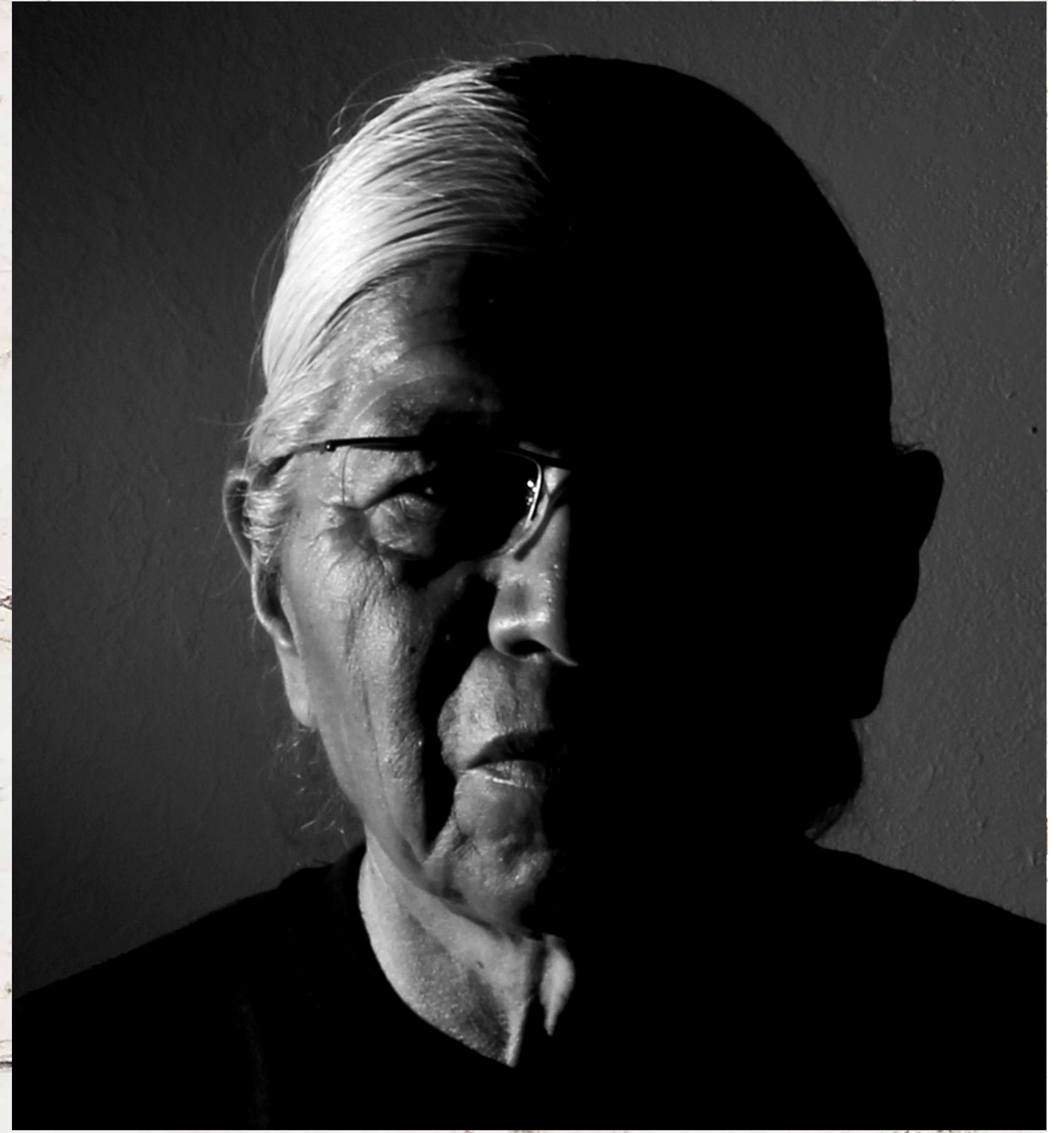
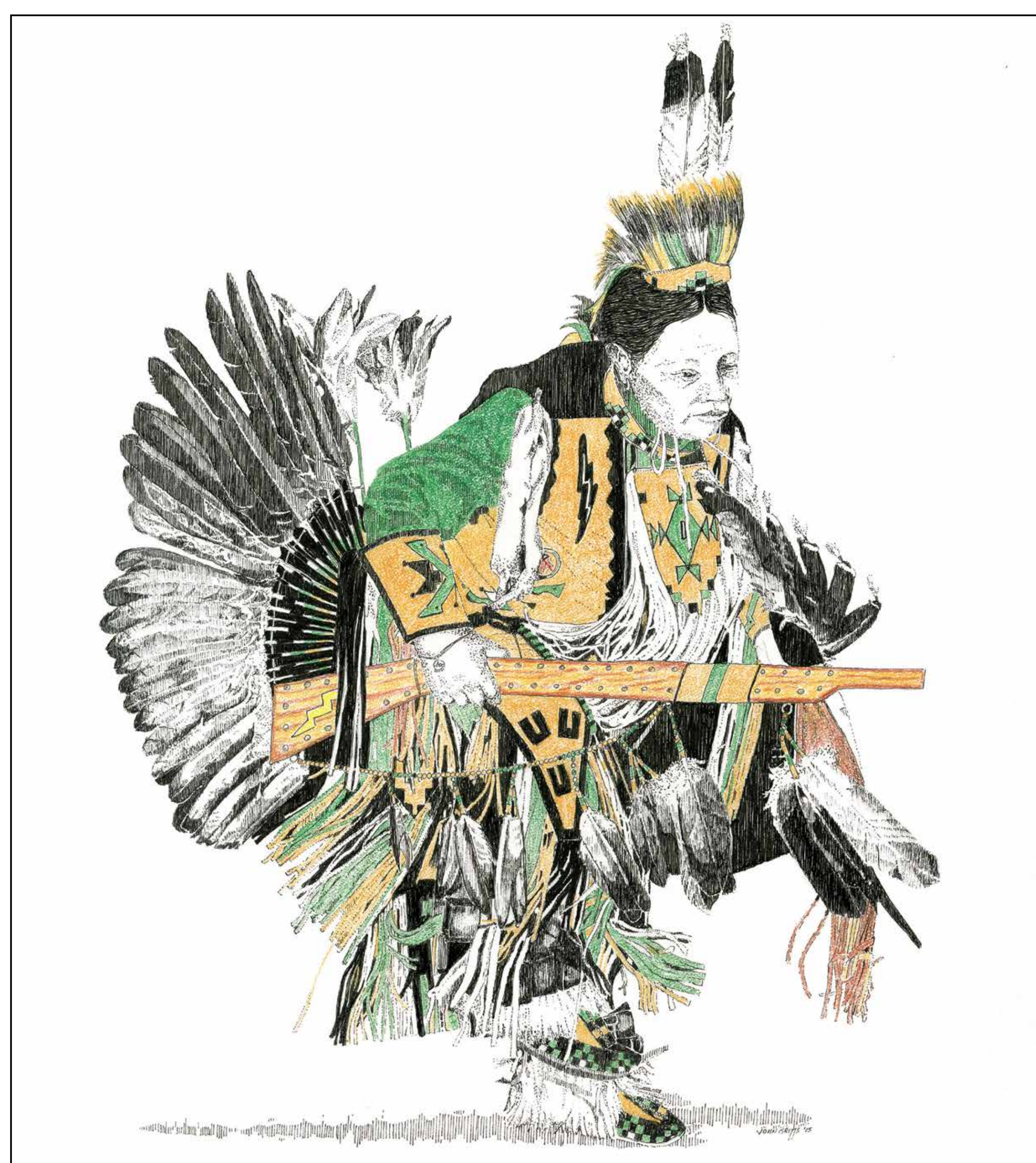


Photo: Courtesy of John Gritts



Top to Bottom:
Abstract, Painting, 1968. Courtesy, John Gritts
National Museum of the American Indian,
Smithsonian Institution, Catalog 26/2045

Black Hills State University Dancer. Drawing with Colored Pencils, 2019. This was a request from Black Hills State University for permanent display in their library collection. “The colors symbolize the Institution. If you look close enough you will see I have always had an Indian Mascot with a slash through it, meaning we are not mascots. I tend to make it hard to find. I leave something undone in the drawing. That is a statement of broken treaties/promises made to Native Tribes and people”. Courtesy, John Gritts

John Gritts has been drawing since he was in elementary school. He says, “I drew only at nights and on weekends” as an adult. His full-time job was in higher education working in Indian education for nearly 40 years. Born in Sullwell, Oklahoma, John attended the Institute of American Indian Arts, Santa Fe, NM, in 1966 studying under Fritz Scholder. He then attended then Bacone College, Muskogee, OK, studying under Dr. Richard West, and continued to complete his Bachelor of Arts in Education from Sioux Falls College, South Dakota.

Deeply committed to Indian education and tribal colleges, he has worked at colleges and universities, the American Indian College Fund, and is finishing his work career with the United States Department of Education’s office of Federal Student Aid.

Now, he specializes in pen and ink. His home art studio is filled with gifts, artwork, and awards recognizing his work as an artist and an educator. One of his highlights was personally presenting one of his drawings to President Jimmy Carter in the White House Oval Office on behalf of the State of South Dakota so the President would remember Indian Education.



LEARN MORE! Snap this QR code to read about the artist.

