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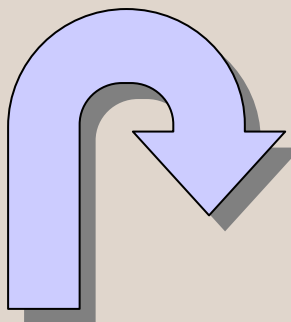


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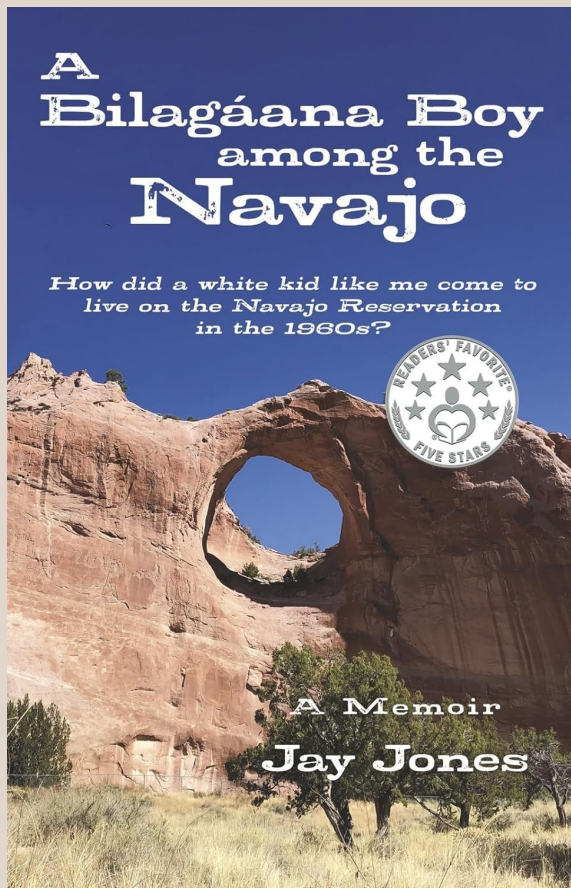
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Jay Jones

A Bilagáana Boy among the Navajo



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How did a white kid like me come to live on the Navajo Reservation in the 1960s?

In 1965, six-year-old Jay is witness to his mother's affair and mental breakdown after his father's lengthy military deployment. After his parents' divorce, Jay must unwillingly live with his mother and new stepfather, a Bureau of Indian Affairs employee, on the Navajo Nation Reservation in Arizona.

From 1967 to 1971, Jay is a "bilagáana," the Navajo term for white boy, to his new friends and bullies alike on the reservation. While trying to avoid his stepfather's abuse and pending adoption he dreams of moving back to live with his father, he escapes to the hills around Window Rock and joins the Boy Scouts and a Navajo Little League baseball team. His neighbors, the Begay's, welcome and immerse him in Navajo culture and visits to their elders at their remote Hogan, while the Jackson family teaches Jay to become a real cowboy on a Navajo ranch. As he searches for a purpose and attempts to find a path back to his father, Jay knows that he will have to grow up fast on the reservation.

This memoir follows Jay's misadventures as he navigates being a privileged outsider in a group of both Navajo and white kids who are struggling to understand their place in a world shaped by racism, poverty, and 100 years of federal Indian policy. Decades later, he has come to grips with how those four years there transformed his life.