

Native American music icon Jim Boyd dead at 60

Written by By Bernie Dotson Sun Correspondent
Friday, 22 July 2016 03:36



Cause of death not released

Nearly a month after the iconic Native American musician Jim Boyd passed away, folks who knew him are still in shock. Boyd was a Native American singer, songwriter, actor, and member of the Jim Boyd Band, which was based out of the Colville Indian Reservation in northeastern Washington State.

Boyd sang four songs with lyrics written by Sherman Alexie for the soundtrack of film *Smoke Signals*, a 1998 breakthrough feature directed, written, acted, and produced by Native Americans. He also appeared in Alexie's *The Business of Fancydancing*.

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Boyd, 60, died June 22 in Washington. The cause of death is unknown.

“It was a total shock to hear about this,” Chris Eyre, the director and producer of *Smoke Signals*, said. The film garnered a Sundance Film Festival Grand Jury Award in 1998 and put Eyre on the map as a director and producer.

“I heard about it from a friend of mine. He was a fantastic musician and an even better person,” Eyre said.

Boyd performed several times over the years at Gallup’s El Morro Theatre, where he drew large audiences. His songs ranged from blues to folk, country to rock.

“He was an incredible musician,” Knifewing Segura, a member of the Chiricahua Apache Tribe and a former volunteer production coordinator at the El Morro, said. “If you are Native American, then you definitely know who Jim Boyd is. The theatre was packed whenever he performed there.”

The death of Boyd spread to Native circles everywhere. Irene Bedard, an Alaska native who is of Inupiat, Yupik, Cree, Inuit, and Métis ancestry, performed alongside Boyd a couple times in Gallup. Bedard is part of Segura’s Gallup-based NativeStars talent agency. She played Pocahontas in the 1995 film of the same name.

“I was just shocked, and I still can’t believe it,” Bedard said. “He was an incredible musician. I remember the songs he sang went across very well with audiences. Gallup liked him.”

Boyd’s music career spanned four decades. At the time of his death, Boyd was serving his second term as chairman of the Colville Business Council. Boyd’s *AlterNatives* won Record of the Year in 2001 at the Native American Music Awards. Over the years, he’s worked and performed with artists like Bonnie Raitt, Joe Cocker, and the Indigo Girls.

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