



Being Indigenous



Who is Indigenous?

- Before we start looking at Art we need to understand who is Indigenous to North America....
- First Nations
- Inuit
- Métis
- FNMI Ancestry



Who is Aboriginal?

- In Canada, there are four legal definitions of Aboriginal people. These are government definitions of who we are. We also have our own way of saying who we are when we meet others. The government made these definitions in 1876 to try and split up native people and force us to give up our traditions and culture. So when we learn about the definitions keep in mind they were not created by us but by politicians.



First Nations

- There are over 630 First Nations in what is now called Canada. There are nations whose traditional territory is huge. For example the Cree nation has a territory that goes from Northern Quebec through Northern Ontario right out to the prairies. Our school is on un-ceded Algonquin territory. There are over 50 First Nations languages still spoken in Canada and those that are most likely to survive to another generation are Ojibwe, and Cree. All of the others are in danger of being lost.



First Nations...

- A First Nations person is called “Indian” by the government. The government has two categories of First Nations people: Status and Non-status. Many people had their status taken away because they married a non-native man (women) or they joined the military, went to University, bought land or were professionals such as doctors or lawyers. When a person lost his status his wife and children also lost theirs. People also lost status because they were adopted or taken into foster care. In some cases whole nations became non-status when they refused to leave their land and move onto reserves. Sometimes whole communities hid in the bush so they would not be forced to leave. They may still be non-status today.



INUIT

- The Inuit are an Arctic people. They live in the Arctic regions of Canada, Greenland, Alaska and Russia. The Inuit in Canada live in four regions:
- Nunavut which is a territory.
- Inuvialuit which is in part of the NWT
- Nunavik which is in the far north of Quebec above the Cree territory.
- Nunatsiavut which is in the north of Labrador above the Innu Mun territory.



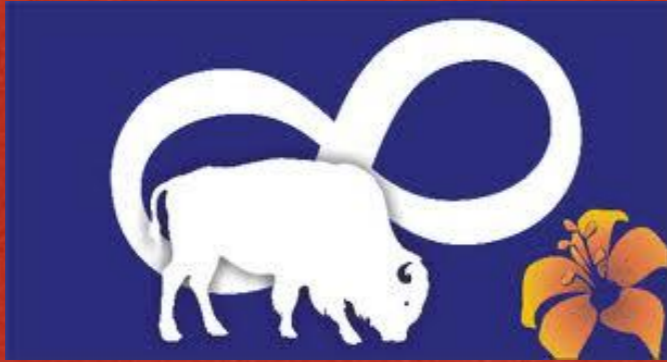
Inuit

- Inuit people are not First Nations. They are a completely different race of people. Their ancestors lived off the land in the Arctic where there are no trees and very different animals than in the south. All Inuit communities except Baker Lake are on the sea. Inuit people have a common language Inuktitut but it has some different words in different regions. Ottawa has the largest population of Inuit outside the north. Inuktitut is the third Aboriginal language that is still commonly used.



Metis

- The Métis are a people of mixed ancestry. They may be Ojibwe and Scottish for example. The Métis were originally from Quebec and Ontario. There are still many Métis in these areas and also in the Maritimes and Labrador. The Métis in the east were forced off their land and moved west. Also as the trappers moved west and then later the farmers, Métis communities sprung up in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and then Alberta.



Metis

- There is no single legal definitions of who is or isn't Métis. For example the Métis nation of Ontario does not recognize mixed racial people from East of Ontario as being Metis. In Quebec there are many regional Métis organization. This means that each region knows the families or communities that were and are Métis... so it is complicated. Métis people have some of the same rights as First Nations and Inuit persons but not all of them.



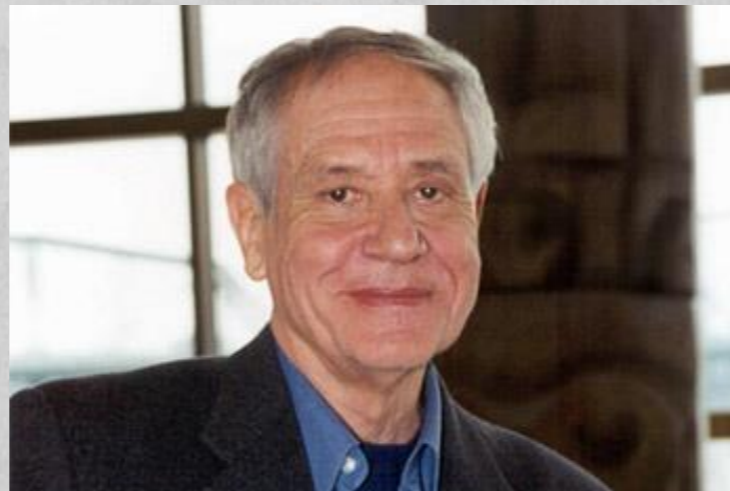
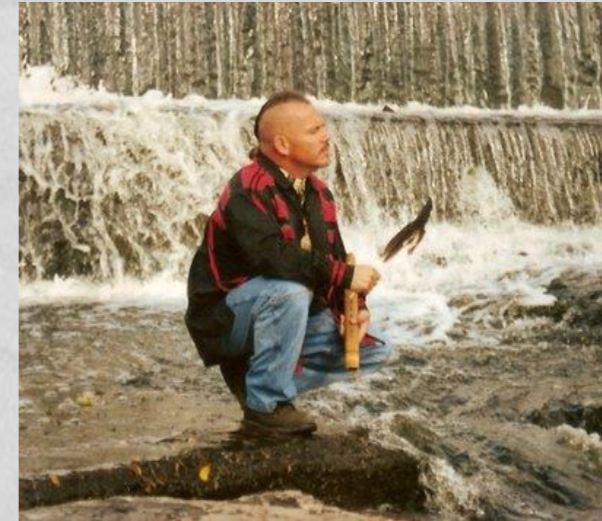
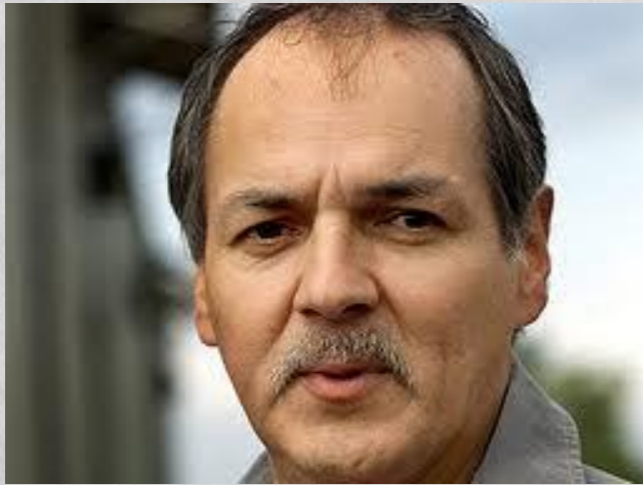
Indigenous Ancestry

- There are many people who have Indigenous ancestry in Canada. It is estimated that in Ontario alone there are 275,000 Aboriginal people. Being Indigenous does not always mean that your skin is brown and your hair is dark. There are status First Nations people who have blond or red hair and there are Métis people who look darker than status ones. This is because the categories were made by government not the people. In most nations we are taught to honour our ancestors... all of them. We do not choose to honour only our native ancestors or only our Chinese, German or other ancestors.. we honour them all.

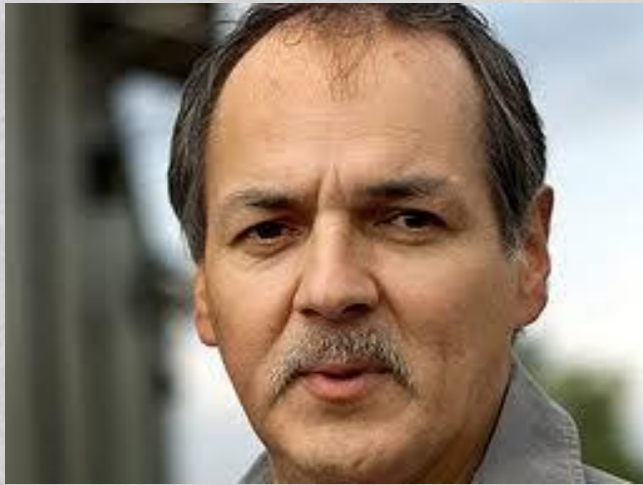
Indigenous Ancestors

- Some people stereotype native people and think that every native person knows how to drum or goes to powwows - or that every Inuk knows how to carve soapstone. Some people think that every native person hunts or fishes. Because for over one hundred years, the government tried to destroy our cultures, traditions, land and communities; many Aboriginal people don't know the language and teachings of their native ancestors. Also with the influence of television, movies, English in school, and other factors many kids have not learned anything about the beautiful and special culture of their ancestors.

Who in these picture is an person Indigenous to North American ?



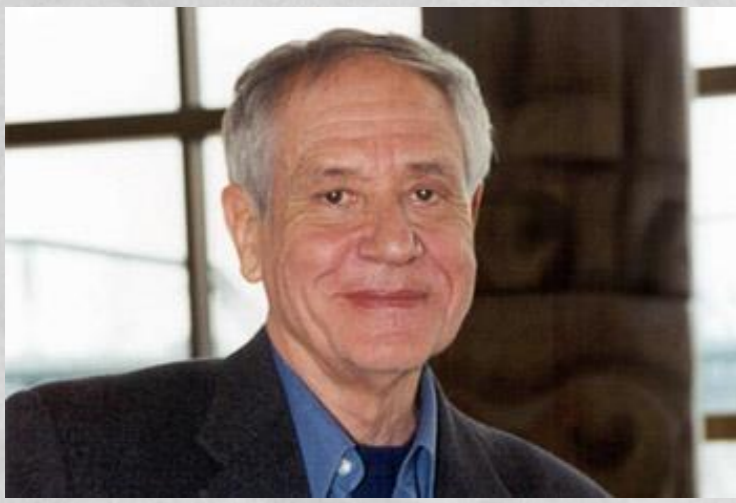
And the answer is... All of them.



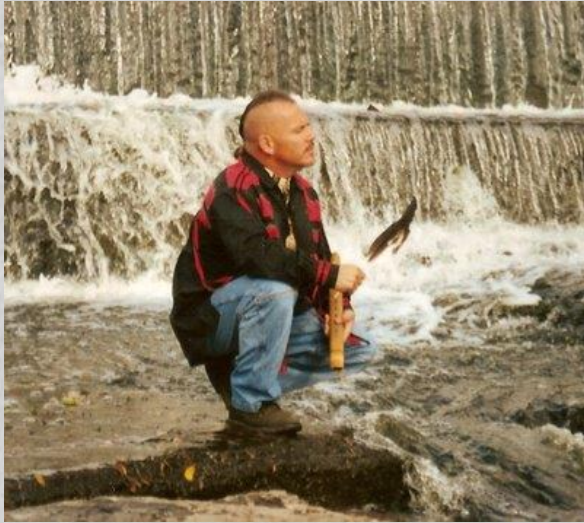
Donald Marshall Jr. was a Mi'gmaq man from Membertou First Nation in Nova Scotia. He became famous as he was put in prison for 11 years although he was innocent. Racism is part of why he was arrested and jailed for a crime he did not commit. He is also famous for standing up for fishing rights of the Mi'gmaq and took the government to court when they took the eel he had fished away from him. He won his court case.



Cree Summer is a singer and actress whose ancestry is African American, caucasian and Swampy Cree. She grew up on the Red Pheasant reserve in Saskatchewan.



Douglas Cardinal is a famous architect of Métis and Blackfoot ancestry. He has designed buildings and reserves in Canada, and the U.S. including the new Wabano Center.



David Maracle is a member of the Tyendinaga First Nation which is Haudenasaunee. He is a well known singer, drummer and flute player.



Mary Adams was a respected Inuit elder who taught people about Inuit traditional medicines and fought for the rights of the Nunatsiavut nation.



Leona Aglukkaq is the first Inuk to be a member of the cabinet in the Federal Government



Branson Pelletier is an actor who is of Plains Cree and Métis descent. He is best known for the Twilight movies.



Maria Tallchief was a world famous ballerina. She danced with the Ballet Russe in Europe and lived in New York for most of her adult life. Her father was chief of the Osage nation and her mother was Scottish-Irish.

All of these women and men are First Nations, Métis or Inuit!