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# KWA'NU'TE'

**KWA'NU'TE'** is a peace chant that invokes the power of creation, a way of bringing back and honouring those spirits that share their visions of healing in a wounded world.

The eight Maliseet and Micmacs artists from New Brunswick and Nova Scotia who are portrayed in this film all share this spiritual consciousness in varying degrees.

In the opening sequence at her home on the Tobique reserve in New Brunswick, painter Shirley Bear speaks about the virtues of fasting, the importance of the grandmothers and the inspiration of the rock art petroglyphs. And as we meet the other artists and listen to them describe their work, it becomes clear that this remarkable woman/mentor has identified some of the major influences on a whole new generation.

As in any film that celebrates the creative process the works of art here are respectfully presented. Throughout the film interviews with the artists at work are dissolved into beautifully-lit images of their creations: It might be the perfect moose of Leonard Paul, a precise line of quill-work from Louise Martin, or the haunting expressions in the carved and fired masks of Ned Bear and Luke Simon, to name just a few.

Already recognized as successful, this group of Maritime native artists provides an impressive role model for aspiring youth. Now they will be presented to a much wider audience across Canada and beyond.

*Produced by the National Film Board, Atlantic Centre, with the participation of the Nova Scotia Department of Education.*

*Directed by: Catherine Martin and Kimberlee McTaggart*

*Produced by: Kent Nason*

*Executive Producers: Germaine Ying Gee Wong and Fareed (Sami) Ahmed*

Running Time: 41 min. .08 sec.



Suitable for the deaf and hard of hearing. Closed captioned. A decoder is required.



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Film Board  
of Canada

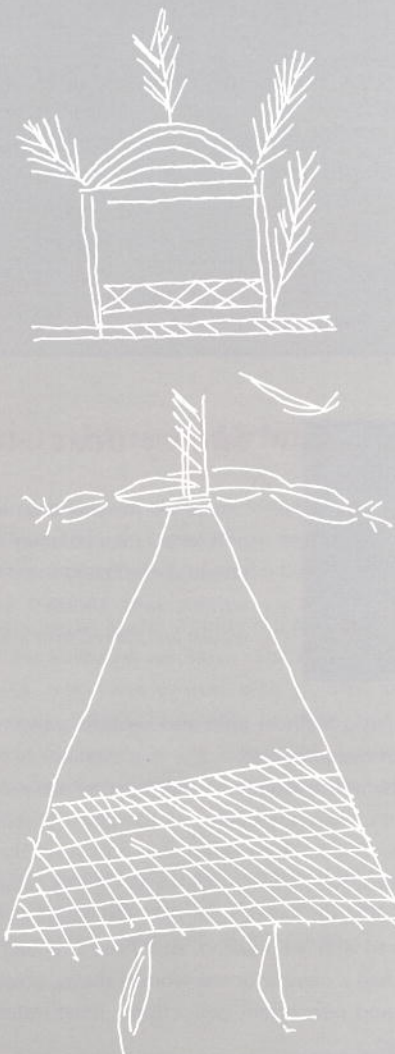
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# KWA'NU'TE'

Micmac and Maliseet Artists

## KWA'NU'TE'

Micmac and Maliseet Artists



**KWA'NU'TE'** is a chant that carries the power of creation. It is a vehicle to the spirit world. Its purpose is to bring back visions of healing. When **KWA'NU'TE'** is sung, it honours and thanks those spirits that have shared their visions and dreams.

This film celebrates Micmac and Maliseet artists who have transformed those dreams and visions into reality.

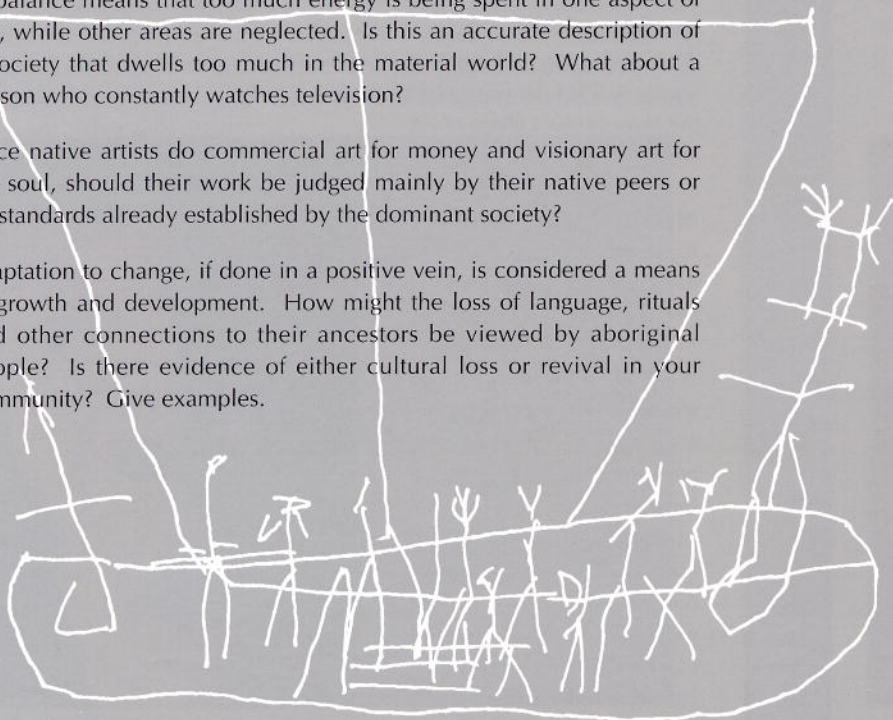
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# Questions for Discussion

Gwen Orehchia

1. If ceremonies such as fasting or meditating guide native artists in their work, would these practices help artists from other cultures? Would such rituals help in other important areas, such as politics, education, business or sports?
2. Spirituality is defined by native elders as a sacred way of life which incorporates caring, sharing, honesty and respect. How does this differ from the traditional religious practices of the mainstream culture?
3. Imbalance means that too much energy is being spent in one aspect of life, while other areas are neglected. Is this an accurate description of a society that dwells too much in the material world? What about a person who constantly watches television?
4. Since native artists do commercial art for money and visionary art for the soul, should their work be judged mainly by their native peers or by standards already established by the dominant society?
5. Adaptation to change, if done in a positive vein, is considered a means of growth and development. How might the loss of language, rituals and other connections to their ancestors be viewed by aboriginal people? Is there evidence of either cultural loss or revival in your community? Give examples.



## CREDITS

### Direction

Catherine Martin  
Kimberlee McTaggart

### Cinematography:

Kent Nason

### Sound Recording:

Arthur McKay

### Camera Assistants:

Peter Adema  
Simon Leblanc

### Editor:

Kimberlee McTaggart

### Commentary:

Barry Cowling

### Narrator:

Rocky Paul Wiseman

### Additional Sound Recording:

Alex Salter  
Michael Those

### Sound Editor:

Jane Porter

### Re-recording:

Hans Peter Strobl  
Adrian Croll

### Original Music:

Steve Tittle

### Flute:

Don Palmer  
Ned Bear

### Music Editor:

Claire Henry

### Technical:

Wayne Cormier

### Co-ordinators:

Bryan Innes

### Centre Administrator:

Jane Boyle

### Traditional Wapna'ki Songs:

Kua'nu'te'	Peace Chant
Wey-wey-na-gi-na-gi	Lullaby
He-ga, he-ga-ne-a	Greeting Song
Wey-ha-wey-ha	Healing Song
Ya-ne ya-ne ya	Trading Song
Kua'nu'te	Welcome Song

Performed by Rocky Paul Wiseman  
and Catherine Martin

Gepemtetemetnetg Honour Song

Written by: George Paul

Performed by: Eskasoni Kitpu,  
Singers & Drummers: Joel ("BEE'S")  
Denny,  
Jonathon ("JJ") Denny,  
Joel Jr. ("Chico") Denny,  
James ("Jau") Denny

This film was made with the participation  
of:

The Department of Indian and Northern  
Affairs, Canada  
The Maritime Provinces Education  
Foundation

### Producer:

Kent Nason

### Executive Producers:

Germaine Y. G. Wong  
Fareed (Sami) Ahmed



# The Micmac Petroglyphs of Kejimikujik National Park

*Rob Ferguson, Project Archaeologist,  
Canadian Parks Service, Environment Canada*



One of the most significant galleries of native art in Atlantic Canada is the shore of Kejimikujik Lake in Nova Scotia, an area which provided food and shelter for aboriginal people for at least 4000 years. Here, nineteenth-century Micmac artists incised over 500 images on beds of slate along the water's edge. Such carvings on exposed rock in its natural setting are known as petroglyphs.

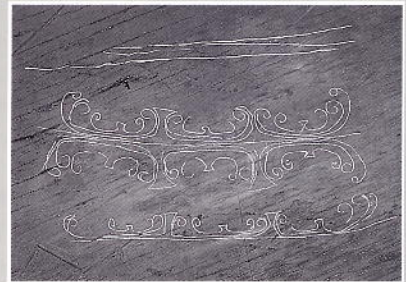
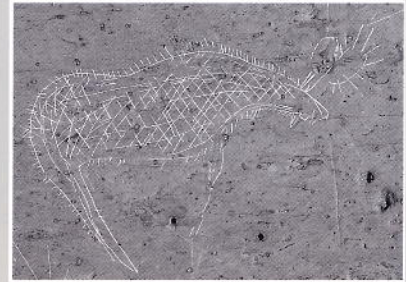
The petroglyph sites at Kejimikujik form one of the largest concentrations of rock art in North America. The slate outcrops are covered with images from everyday life: figures of men and women; canoes and sailing ships; porpoise and moose hunts; houses, churches and altars; hand and footprints, names and dates.

We do not know why the petroglyphs were carved. The images suggest both sacred and secular themes by male and female artists. Animal forms and hunting scenes may derive from customs in which the men sought to influence the hunt through power over the images. Petroglyphs of clothing show details of appliqué and beadwork design, the traditional art form of women in Micmac society. The appearance of mythical creatures such as the horned serpent, as well as symbols of the Catholic faith, shows a blending of old and new religious beliefs. Carving one's name may also have provided personal gratification as in other cultures.

The early French in Nova Scotia recorded that Micmacs covered their clothing with pictures of animals and geometric figures. Today we have no known examples of this early graphic art. While the petroglyphs of Kejimikujik show strong influences in style and subject matter from long contact with European cultures, they also contain elements deeply rooted in an earlier time. This tradition continues today as contemporary native artists integrate the older motifs into new forms of expression. The petroglyphs thus provide an important key to understanding the artistic development of native culture in Atlantic Canada.

Rock art sites are frequently threatened by erosion and vandalism. Fortunately, the petroglyphs at Kejimikujik National Park are protected by the Canadian Parks Service. Part of this protection has included the complete recording of all images on the rocks to provide a permanent record for future generations.

Visitors may see the petroglyphs on regularly scheduled guided walks provided by part interpreters.





# ***The Importance of the Spiritual Influence***

Gwen Orehia

**W**hen spiritual influences are allowed to guide one's work or art, unforeseen results may occur. For most people, the effects are surprising, unsettling. For native artists those results are expected.

The reason for the difference is cultural. Micmacs and Maliseets, like other native peoples, have an innate knowledge of natural and supernatural forces. This film presents eight artists at various stages of personal development, many of whom have tapped the source of knowledge through dreams, meditation, and ceremonies in very much the same way the ancient peoples did. Glimpses into their art work reveal the cultural rebirth which is presently occurring in all native communities. The healing process has affected these artists and it is reflected in the art.

The act of creation is a gift shared by the Creator with few people. It is given to those who are willing to accept the responsibility of maintaining, preserving and passing on culture; of keeping sacred the memories and visions of their people for future generations.

## ***Ancient Teachings***

According to ancient teachings, the four races of man were created and given original instructions on how to live in harmony with each other and with nature. These instructions were to care, to share, to be honest, and to be respectful. Each race was to contribute to the unity by taking responsibility for an element and sharing the unique gifts bestowed upon them by the Creator.

The red race took care of earth. They were given the ability to meet cultural needs. The black race took care of water. They were given the ability to meet social needs. The yellow race took care of air. They were given the ability to meet physical needs. The white race took care of fire. They were given the ability to meet political needs.

When all four races work toward unity and share knowledge, balance is achieved.

## ***The Importance of the Past***

For native peoples in North America, prophecies had foretold the coming of the white race. If they remembered the "original instructions", interaction would lead to positive change; if not, negative consequences would occur.

Five hundred years ago with the arrival of Europeans, the struggle to maintain balance became difficult. Not only did the white race lack the essential qualities of caring, sharing, honesty and respect, they also abused their element of fire, using it to achieve dominance over native peoples. The four aspects of native life disintegrated as their responsibility to the earth was taken away. As a result their cultural strengths deteriorated although they were not destroyed.

Native leaders, elders and faith keepers knew that adaptation to change would ensure the survival of the red race. The prophecies also forecast a time when their knowledge and abilities would be needed for the survival of the earth. The rituals, ceremonies, and teachings were kept secret until the time of rebirth began.

## ***The Importance of the Present***

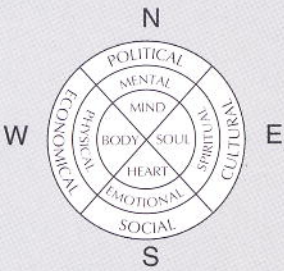
According to traditional beliefs, after things come apart they come together again and healing begins.

At the present time, many native people are part of the cultural revival now occurring across the continent. They are reconnecting with the teachings, rituals and ceremonies while taking back responsibility for the earth and re-learning the "original instructions". And as they are healing, they are sharing their experiences with the other three races—sharing, but not imposing. Native traditional teachings are now being incorporated into all four areas of life.



# The Artist of Native Ancestry

Gwen Orehchia, Studio Head, Native Arts Study  
New Brunswick College of Craft and Design



Art is the enactment of visions.  
The created form is its voice.  
The artist of the past used the  
materials of nature—stone, wood,  
clay, hides, bone, etc.—as the  
sources of transformation, the  
links between two worlds.

The ability of the red race to meet cultural needs came from their rituals and ceremonies. The purification ceremonies kept an individual's heart, mind, body and soul balanced. Visions provided community members with their spiritual purpose. Gifts from each of the four directions were bestowed by the Creator. When all worked together, the community was balanced and in a state of harmony.



## Shirley Bear

"Artists are the prophets, sages, and the real recorders of history. I am painfully aware that I am not the first person or the last to voice this truth. But it needs to be written, said, shouted, sung, danced and painted, woven and carved over and over again."

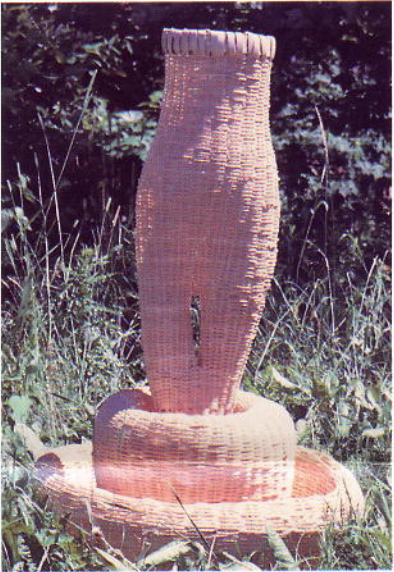
Shirley Bear is a Maliseet artist and political activist who follows the traditional teachings of her ancestors. She is a member of Tobique Band, near Perth-Andover, New Brunswick. At the age of nineteen she moved to Lowell, Massachusetts where she studied oil painting, silk screening and photography. In 1969 she received a Ford Fellowship and spent the year travelling in Florida, North Carolina, New Mexico, Alaska and British Columbia studying the native art and culture of North America. In 1972 she returned to New Brunswick where she has since lived with her husband, artist Peter Clair and their daughter Ramona. Shirley has had a number of one-woman shows, group exhibitions and has works in private and permanent collections, most notably the Museum of Man's permanent collection and the New Brunswick Art Bank.



## Peter J. Clair

"It's a good feeling once I do complete a basket because I feel I've done something that creation may have told me to do in a way that's not environmentally disastrous to me, to my family, to the other people on the planet."

Peter Clair is a Micmac and a member of the Big Cove Band and lives in Tobique with his wife Shirley Bear and daughter Ramona. He combines the traditional fine skills of basket weaving to create contemporary art works of sculptural weavings. His exceptional technical skills and innovative ideas merge to produce beautiful, original and sometimes humorous baskets. He has exhibited in numerous group shows and has examples of his work in the Museum of Civilization's permanent collection.



## Alan Syliboy

"I think artists could play a big role in instilling pride in our people. That's a real link with the past because the traditional role for an artist was to convey the symbols of the past."

Alan Syliboy is a Micmac from the Millbrook Band in Truro, NS. He combines his artistry and a flair for business in his company, Red Crane Enterprises, which reproduces both his own work and that of other native artists.

Alan has been greatly influenced by Shirley Bear with whom he worked in a program called T.R.I.B.E. during 1969. This program brought together aspiring native artists and trained them in a variety of disciplines after which they returned to their communities to organize workshops for youth. Subsequently, Alan attended the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design. Traditional designs from his ancestors, legends and stories from the past, are often incorporated into his paintings.

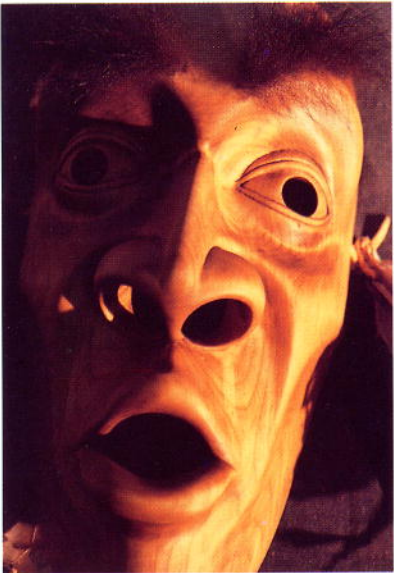


## Ned Bear

"Well, what I first do is to go out in the woods and get the wood. Just before I actually cut the tree down, I make an offering to the earth, mother earth, of tobacco and I bury it just below the place where the roots of the tree are. After that's done, I cut the tree down, the tree is giving up its life, its spirit. I want to keep the spirit within the wood to keep it alive."

Ned Bear is a sculptor and member of the St. Mary's Band near Fredericton, N.B. After graduating with honours from the New Brunswick College of Craft and Design in 1984, he continued his studies at both the University of Regina, and at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design. For the past three years, while studying for an education degree at UNB, he has been teaching a course in native art to native students at Fredericton High School.

Working with the natural elements of wood and stone, his first love is carving masks, but he also creates ceremonial canes and clubs, huge wooden panels displaying Micmac and Maliseet legends, and nude figures. Ned feels that "the natural forms of wood grain can be best displayed in the subtle forms of the human body."





Native artists of the past discovered the true nature of their talents and responsibilities through visions from the same spiritual/cultural source as that of the faith keepers and healers. With the help and cooperation of the spirit world, they acquired the power of transformation. Ceremonies instructed and guided them. When the artist was pure of body and soul, when he or she achieved discipline through sweats, fasts and prayer, visions came. They could come from ancestors, future generations or totems, because the spirit world is timeless.

Although native art of today may be more abstract than that of the past its message remains basically the same. Its purpose, as an integral part of the healing process, has not changed. Art may be considered an emotional response to the issues and concerns of today, but it also transmits a message of hope. In a larger sense it is meant to displace despair and spiritual emptiness with an ancient and very rich tradition. Ultimately it points the way to balance which is how visionary art contributes to the universal ideal.



**Leonard Paul**

*"I don't think there is a real easy answer to what is Indian Art. You're the product of your environment. In my case, I was raised in a white society. I am native, but I paint in a realist fashion. I think if I was living in Greenwich Village, I'd be painting abstract."*

Leonard Paul is a Micmac and a member of the Pictou Landing Band, Nova Scotia. He was born in 1953, raised in Halifax and now lives in Avonport near Wolfville. A graduate of Acadia University with a major in Art History, he also attended the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design.

An avid sports enthusiast, runner, cyclist and squash player, he views rigorous activity as one means of preparing himself for his art. Leonard's love of nature, wildlife and people are evident in his meticulously detailed work.

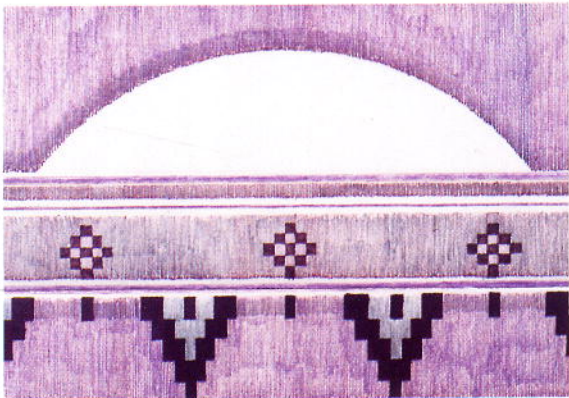


**Mary Louise Martin**

*"I really believe my art is bringing me closer to my culture and also closer to my soul and that's what is really important, that my soul is contented in it."*

Mary Louise Martin (Louise) is a Micmac and member of the Millbrook NS Band. She is an artist, poet and writer who loves to work with children to bring out their natural creative abilities. Born in Florida in 1956 and raised in Massachusetts, she moved to Nova Scotia in the 70's where she studied early childhood development at the Teachers College and art education at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design.

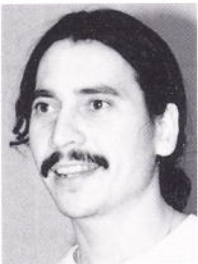
Louise often works with pen and ink and pencil and is inspired by early Micmac designs, petroglyph drawings and legends. To her, visual art is also a language and one means of preserving some unique elements of her culture.



**Luke Simon**

*"Actually, I would like to have my feet in both places. I have a studio in New Mexico and one here in New Brunswick, but I don't think I would ever decide to choose one or the other. I'd rather have both."*

Painter, sculptor and storyteller, Luke Simon is a Micmac from Big Cove, New Brunswick. After attending George Brown College in Toronto, he was accepted into the Institute of American Indian Art in Santa Fe, New Mexico in 1980. There he was exposed to many indigenous artists from the United States, South America and Canada and was the recipient of several awards for his work. After graduation in 1983 with a BFA, Luke remained in Santa Fe for five more years where he established a successful career. In 1990, he returned to Big Cove where he continues work as a full-time artist.



**Lance Belanger**

*"As my grandmother will say, Columbus floated to the shores. People have different interpretations of how he got here. Basically it was a geographical error, which is an interesting concept."*

Lance Belanger is Maliseet and a member of the Tobique Band in New Brunswick. He is presently living in Ottawa where he established OM NIIAK Arts Group, a non-profit charitable organization dedicated to the professional development of Indian artists through the creation of art projects in Canada and abroad.

Lance curated the *Decelebration* exhibition at the Saw Gallery in Ottawa in 1989. Featuring works by Shirley Bear, Peter Clair and himself among others, it decried the 500 years of cultural and environmental destruction since the arrival of Columbus.

