

## ***Buffy Sainte-Marie***

Tansi, Boozhoo, Hello. Welcome to the National Music Centre's Speak Up exhibition, celebrating the voices of Indigenous trailblazers who've brought about social change through their music.

Buffy Sainte-Marie is a living legend and a tireless advocate for Indigenous rights and freedoms. She is an innovative artist, educator and disruptor of the status quo who is always moving herself and society forward.

Thought to be born in 1941 to Cree parents on the Piapot Cree First Nation reserve in Saskatchewan, Buffy was adopted as a child by a Massachusetts family of Mi'gmaq descent. She has since spent her whole life creating while trailblazing. She played piano as a child and as a teenager took up guitar and started composing songs. After completing high school she attended the University of Massachusetts, where she studied philosophy with an Asian focus, and education. She received a Bachelor's degree in 1962.

Buffy began performing her songs in coffeehouses during her college years and after graduation, she moved to New York City and became part of the Bohemian art scene. Much praise within the New York scene led to a contract with Vanguard Records, and to the release of her first album, *It's My Way*, in 1964. Many of her lyrics from her first two albums, including *Many a Mile* from 1965, addressed the plight of Indigenous people. Particularly "Now That the Buffalo's Gone," and "My Country 'Tis of Thy People, You're Dying."

Her writing gained mainstream attention for her themes of war and justice. Buffy discovered later in her career, through released US government files, that she was blacklisted by President Lyndon B. Johnson and Richard Nixon for her music, which was deemed 'radical'. This included being blacklisted from radio play. Despite the setback, unknown at the time, Buffy moved forward. She made one of the world's first electronic vocal albums. She's become the only Indigenous person to win an Oscar, and the first woman to breastfeed on national television, and she was a pioneer of the digital art genre. She also wrote the definitive anti-war anthem of the 20th century, *Universal Soldier*, as well as pop standards sung and recorded by Elvis Presley, Barbra Streisand, Janis Joplin, Joe Cocker and Jennifer Warnes, just to name a few.

Buffy has also been a changemaker in education, by progressing awareness of the presence and vibrancy of Indigenous culture, through the Nihewan Foundation for Native American education, the Cradleboard Teaching Project, and as a cast member on Sesame Street. In recent years, Buffy released a 2018 authorized biography: *Buffy Sainte-Marie*, by Andrea Warner, which revealed the racial abuse and violations she faced as a child. These experiences led to her finding refuge in nature and reading. In 2020 she released her debut children's book, *Hey Little Rockabye*. It's an illustrated lullaby about pet adoption. This also ties into her work with the Humane Society of Canada.

Throughout the pandemic Buffy has been making music, remotely recording a song with Serena Ryder over the internet for Serena's new upcoming album. She's also collaborated on a track with Mohawk DJ and music producer, DJ Shub. Both artists are thrilled to be working with one of their musical heroes.

Her prophetic career is recognized through countless awards, including JUNOs, an Academy Award, a Golden Globe, as well as many inductions and honorary doctorates. Buffy Sainte-Marie's legacy is firmly grounded as a global music icon and trailblazer.

I'm David McLeod, thanks for visiting the National Music Centre's Speak Up exhibition.