

Kelly Fraser was a pop singer originally from (Sani-kill-ie-wak) Sanikiluaq, Nunavut who created a unique brand of pop/dance music in both English and her Inuktitut language. Kelly wrote poetry at the age of 10 and first picked up the guitar at 11 then formed her first band four years later that covered classic Inuktitut rock songs by groups like Salluit. As a teenager Kelly gained international recognition in 2013 when her Inuktitut-language cover of Rihanna's "Diamonds" which went viral - gaining over 1.3 million views, the video included imagery of the arctic, polar bears and traditional Inuit tattoos. Let's take a listen to a segment of Kelly Fraser singing her cover of "Diamonds".

That was "Diamonds" originally released by Rihanna and covered in Inuktitut by Kelly Fraser, The video's notoriety encouraged her to continually approach her music to mix pop with Inuit traditions of storytelling, dancing, singing and throat singing. Her quickly grew into a form of activism, often utilizing heavy-hitting lyrics focused on contemporary Inuit realities and her people's resiliency.

Kelly's first album was released in June of 2014 when she was only 15 years old, it was recorded with her band mates from (Sani-kill-ie-wak) Sanikiluaq, with seven original and three cover songs. The album's title 'Isuma' means 'think', here's a segment of the title track.

Kelly's next album Sedna was released in 2017 and garnered a nomination for Indigenous Album of the Year at the 2018 Juno Awards and Best Pop Album at the 2018 Indigenous Music Awards. The title of the album refers to the story of Sedna, an Inuit goddess of the sea, which Kelly was very inspired by, she said, "The goal of the album was to help heal those suffering from the effects of colonization, including the damaging effects of residential school and forced relocations. She said quote "There is a great need for Inuit artists to directly speak to those affected from the past." unquote. The album included the song 'Fight for the Rights', released as part of the 'no' campaign in the 2016 Nunavut municipal land referendum, which asked voters whether they were willing to allow municipal lands to be sold to individuals or companies. Here's a segment of "Fight for the Rights" by Kelly Fraser.

That was a segment of "Fight for the Rights" by Kelly Fraser. Aside from land and cultural rights, she was also a vocal advocate for mental health among Inuit youth. As a motivational speaker she also shared her knowledge of song writing and how to create songs in Inuktitut. She was dedicated to strengthening Inuit culture with the youth, this resulted in Kelly won a 2019 Indspire Award for the scope of work she'd achieved. Kelly went on to be the recipient of a 2019 Indspire Award where she dramatically performed during the national telecast as Sedna.

Kelly was also invited to New York to speak at the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in April of 2019. Where she recommended that inherent rights be upheld for all Indigenous nations and recommended that Indigenous languages be recognized as national languages.

Kelly's single "Rebound Girl" achieved the number #1 position during the summer of 2019 on the Indigenous Music Countdown. The music video for "Rebound Girl" featured Los Angeles based actor/singer P.J. Vegas and dancers from the Aboriginal School of Dance based in Winnipeg.

This is Kelly Fraser with "Rebound Girl", here at the National Music Centre.

That was Kelly Fraser with "Rebound Girl", Kelly is remembered by many as Inuit activist, a singer-songwriter and a ray of hope from the north that passionately loved her culture, language and people – she had plans to enter the studio in 2020 to work on a new album to be entitled "Decolonize" to include collaborations with other leading Indigenous artists. Tragically on December 24th, 2019 she returned to her ancestors after experiencing a lengthy period of online bullying and lateral violence; Kelly had circled the sun 26 times.

Her family released a statement that she should be remembered for her "generosity, honesty, passion and love of life." It's with this statement that The Speak Up! Exhibition recognizes the important contributions of Kelly Fraser.