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Give Buffy a break

BRIAN LOCKHARTFROM THE SECOND ROW

There's an old public service commercial from 1970 that a lot of people remember ? because it was really well done.

It was at a time when people had very little concern for the environment. Cities in the U.S. were filled with garbage, Lake Erie was a cesspool, and factories would belch toxic smoke into the atmosphere and dump toxic chemicals in public waterways.

In the public service commercial, a Native American is seen paddling his canoe through a lake littered with garbage.

At the end, he stands at the side of the highway. A car drives by and the passenger throws a pile of garbage out of the car window that lands in front of the Native American's moccasin covered feet.

The tagline from the commercial is ?people start pollution, people can stop it.'

In the final shot, the Native American turns to the camera, with a single tear rolling down his cheek, because of the lack of concern for nature and the natural beauty of the country.

It was a powerful commercial, and it really did bring awareness to the public about what a mess the country was in. It was a turning point in North American history where both sides of the border decided to clean things up.

The Native American actor was Iron Eyes Cody.

Good old Iron Eyes had quite the career as both a personality and as an actor ? appearing in more than 200 films as a Native American.

He sure did look the part, dressing in appropriate clothing with his long hair braided and adorned with a single feather.

Except it turns out Iron Eyes wasn't a Native American at all. His parents were Sicilian, and Iron Eyes was born and raised in Louisiana. His birth name was Espera Oscar de Corti.

This wasn't really discovered until after his death, however there was no outrage, and no call for destroying the movies he had appeared in.

Iron Eyes identified as a Native American and made a whole career of it, and when it was discovered he had pulled the wool over the public's eyes, people just smiled and thought, ?What do you know ? Iron Eyes wasn't really Native.?

Singer-songwriter, Buffy Sainte-Marie has been performing since the 1960s. She has always performed as an Indigenous Canadian.

She wrote songs about Native American culture and participated in education and social activism, particularly in regards to Indigenous issues.

She was well liked and her activism was appreciated.

It was discovered in 2023, that Buffy isn't Indigenous at all. There have been rumours of this for years, but hard evidence wasn't produced until an investigation by CBC News discovered the truth.

It turns out Buffy was born as a white girl in Massachusetts.

There has been plenty of fall-out for Buffy since then. She was stripped of her Order of Canada Award, and most recently was removed from an exhibit at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights in Winnipeg.

Why the outrage?

Over the past several years, the whole ?I identify as an (insert noun, verb, etc.)' thing has been in the news.

If a 6'8? solidly built male athlete suddenly declares he ?identifies as female', everyone applauds and congratulates him on being so brave.

Buffy identifies as Indigenous and created an entire persona and career around being an Indigenous performer.

That's show business for ya.

The entire business of being a performer or being an actor is all about deception and creating a character that will be noticed by the public.

Marilyn Monroe was not a ditzy blonde, she was actually quite intelligent.

Harpo Marx honked a horn instead of speaking and was never seen speaking in public. However, Harpo was quite capable of carrying on a normal conversation.

Dean Martin was a crooner and notorious drunk. However, that drink he always had in his hand, didn't really contain alcohol. Martin wasn't really a drinker.

Steve Martin had a career as one ?wild and wacky' guy. However, in his personal life, he is reported to actually be quite reserved.

Buffy identified as an Indigenous person and Native American groups appreciated her activism and her efforts at bringing awareness to Indigenous issues.

The question is, what harm did she do?

She did a lot more good in her on-stage role as an Indigenous person.

Maybe she wasn't truthful in her role as a performer, but so what? She's a singer/songwriter, she wasn't testifying under oath at a trial.

If creating a false image in the world of show business is a negative thing, then most of Hollywood and the music industry would be in trouble.