

# **Trees of Different Names Stand Side by Side**

## **Chief Walking Buffalo**

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*"The forest is mankind and the hill is the world... Trees of different names stand side by side. The trees fall and die and help the young grow. Even the crooked sticks help build the world. And all the nations have to build that forest."*

*-Chief Walking Buffalo*

Chief Walking Buffalo is not a man to be overlooked when discussing Alberta's history and heritage. As a First Nations leader, his great wisdom and compassion made him an exemplary leader and spokesperson, mainly for the respect of their culture and way of life. Despite turbulent relations, Chief Walking Buffalo was committed to bridging the gap between Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals. He recognized that cooperation was essential in building a better future for all Canadians. Emerging in a pivotal time for Alberta, his endeavor for peace and acceptance made his voice heard throughout the province and the world.

Chief Walking Buffalo was born under the name of Tatanga Mani in March of 1871, in the Bow River Valley. Mani was young when his mother died, and was adopted at the age of seven by a Methodist missionary named George Maclean, who renamed George Maclean. In 1877, Mani personally witnessed the signing of Treaty 7 at Blackfoot Crossing. He attended the Morley orphanage school until the age of sixteen, whereupon he was transferred to Red Deer Industrial School. Later on, Mani continued his studies at St. John's College in Winnipeg for several years.

Tatanga Mani worked briefly as a scout for the Mounted Police in Calgary, then as a blacksmith. Upon the insistence of his native foster father, Chief Jacob Bearspaw, Mani returned to the reserve where he became an interpreter for the Stoney Council. He was perceived as an

esteemed member and medicine man whose philosophy went hand in hand with First Nations spirituality and traditional life. In 1920, the Stoney people elected Mani as their Chief. In his lifetime, he witnessed the disappearance of the bison, the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway and the conversion of tribal lands into provinces.

Walking Buffalo became renowned for his efforts in the domain of human accord and partnership, as well as in the preservation of First Nations traditional life and values. In 1958, he and group of First Nations visited twenty-seven countries, spreading the philosophy of peace and cultural harmony. The Chief of the Stoney whole-heartedly believed in the upholding of old First Nations tradition through ceremonies, song and dance. Their ancient beliefs and way of life should not be surrendered, regardless of what others thought- First Nations should be accepted for who they are. Walking Buffalo recognized the lack of union between Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals, and championed the notion of coexisting in awareness and understanding. Chief Walking Buffalo knew much about the natural world and wished to share his wisdom with others, but not many outside of the Aboriginal community were willing to listen.

Chief Walking Buffalo understood the significance of cooperation and mutual acceptance between all people. He has inspired me to acknowledge the importance of diversity in our country's cultural fabric. I believe our differences should not be seen as barriers, but instead as something that will allow our society to evolve. It is essential to Canada's future that each individual is regarded as an equal, and that their culture, ethnicity, religion and traditions be respected. His outlook has helped me to speak out against social injustice where it exists and support oppressed or marginalized groups. To do this, I can write letters to the government about certain problematics, raise awareness within my school and neighbourhood, as well as inform others through social media. Bringing attention to these issues is fundamental in achieving

social, political and economic equity. If you have something to say, then say it proudly. After all, Chief Walking Buffalo's life is proof that if you make your voice heard, it will never be forgotten.

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