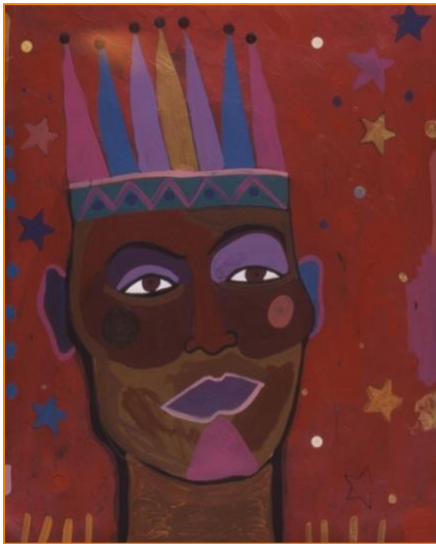


Selected Paintings and Text from *This Land is My Land*

by George Littlechild

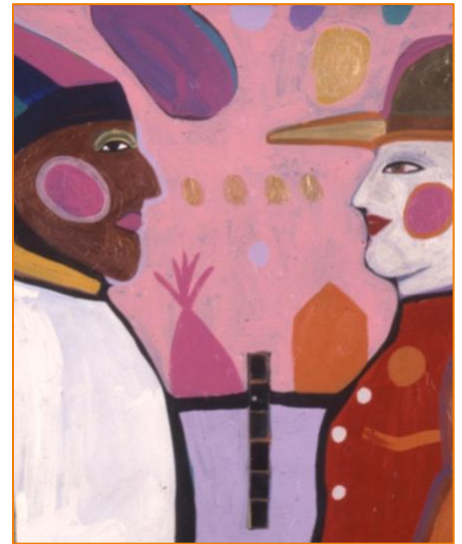
Through his own words and paintings, acclaimed Native artist George Littlechild takes us back in time to the first meeting between his Plains Cree ancestors and the first European settlers in North America. The following are selected paintings from his book. Click on each painting to read the artist's statement.



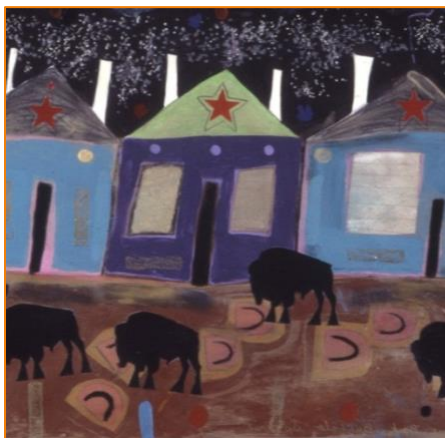
Columbus First Saw



Dot the "I" in North American Indian



Mountie and the Indian Chief



Four Buffalo Spirits



This Land is My Land

Paintings reprinted with permission from George Littlechild, *This Land is My Land* (San Francisco: Children's Book Press, 1993).

Columbus First Saw



Artist's Statement

When Columbus came to the Americas 500 years ago, he looked at the people he saw and called us "Indians" because he was on the way to India. The man in my painting is looking at Columbus and he is totally surprised. I, too, would have been surprised if I had been there. "Who are these men whose skin is so pale? Have they come from the Spirit World to guide us? What do they want, these men who are not like us?"

I remember hearing about Columbus at school when I was a boy. The teacher said he was a great man because he had discovered America. Even then I wondered how Columbus could have discovered America when my people were already here.

Since Columbus came to the Americas, my people have lost most of our land and we have suffered much. Knowing what I do now about our history, I would have offered Columbus a meal and a place to stay and treated him as a guest, but I would not have allowed him to take away our land.

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Dot the “I” in North American Indian



Artist's Statement

When I was a boy the teacher always made us dot the “i.” She would smack the chalk against the board and a cloud of chalk dust would fly up. From that time on I knew you had to have respect for the letter “i.” The word “Indian” has two “I”s. At the bottom of the painting, there are *lots* of “I”s.

The arrow in the night sky points to the railroad that brought the white people westward. The white men wanted to own the land they lived on, which meant that we could not share it. Indians never owned the land. Nothing belonged to us. Everything we had, we shared. So when the white men came we found their ways very unusual.

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Mountie and the Indian Chief



Artist's Statement

This picture brings you face to face with two different cultures. The Mountie is a Royal Canadian Mounted Policeman sent by the Queen of England and the Government of Canada to enforce the law of the Europeans. The chief is a leader of the Plains Cree. He is protecting our people and our way of life.

But our way of life was being destroyed. The white men were taking more and more of our land. They put us onto reserves, which were just little pieces of the territory we used to have; and we couldn't come or go without their permission. My ancestors must have cried much as they became prisoners of their own land.

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Four Buffalo Spirits



Artist's Statement

The mighty buffalo fed and clothed my ancestors. Millions of these magnificent animals once roamed the plains. By the end of the 1800s they were almost extinct - killed for money by the white men. The extermination was devastating to my ancestors who depended upon the buffalo for their very survival.

I painted four buffalo because four is a sacred number. These four represent the millions who have died. Four is also a healing number. It appears in all my work. There are four directions, four seasons, four elements, and four kinds of animals (those who walk, those who fly, those who swim, and those who crawl.)

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This Land is My Land



Artist's Statement

When I was a boy I was taught the song "This land is your land, this land is my land." When I got older I thought it was very strange to be singing about the ownership of land. Whose land was this? Did it belong to anyone? The first people in this land were the Indians. We prefer to be called First Nations or First Peoples, because this was our homeland first.

North America is a very large continent. Add Central America and South America and together they make up the whole Western Hemisphere. This painting reminds us that all this land was once Indian land.

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