

Statement from the Piapot Family

Our names are Debra Piapot, and Ntawnis Piapot. We are direct descendants of Chief Piapot, and we are just two of the many people of the Piapot First Nation who call Buffy Sainte-Marie our relative. She is our Auntie, our relative, and a beloved member of the Piapot family and community.

The accusations which are about to be made of our Auntie Buffy are hurtful, ignorant, colonial – and racist.

No one, including Canada and its governments, the Indian Act, institutions, media or any person anywhere can deny our family's inherent right to determine who is a member of our family and community.

Nimosom (our grandfather), Emile Piapot, son of Chief Piapot (Treaty 4 Adhesion signatory) and nohkom (our grandmother) Clara Starblanket, daughter of Chief Starblanket (Treaty 4 signatory) adopted Buffy before we were even born or when we were small children. The adoption was conducted in the Nehiyawpwatak - Cree - way and she was given her spirit name according to our ways. Our ways are so beautiful and profoundly inclusive. Our grandparents filled the holes in their hearts by adopting Buffy after losing several children to illness and disease, some as a result of the Indian Act pass system that denied requests for medical help in Regina.

We spent our entire lives together with Buffy as a family, decades together, and we will continue to love and support one another. She has been committed to our family and community and has worked tirelessly to inspire, support, uplift our family, and share our community knowledge and ways and those of other Indigenous Peoples all over the world.

We grew up knowing that Buffy and our grandparents adopted each other and how deeply committed and loving they were to one another. We heard from older family about how my grandmother cried when she had to leave after an extended family visit on our homelands or after the pow-wow.

Buffy is our family. We chose her and she chose us. We claim her as a member of our family and all of our family members are from the Piapot First Nation. To us, that holds far more weight than any paper documentation or colonial record keeping ever could.

We are a sovereign nation, a sovereign people – Canada does not get to determine who we claim as family, and neither does the media.

It is up to us to determine who is a member of our community and our family.

Every understanding of our spiritual practices, the history our grandparents shared with us, and the traditions of the Cree refute your suggestion that our Auntie Buffy, is not Indigenous, or a member of our community.

The Creator will recognize her for who she is by the name we gave her as a member of our family. Join us in protecting our right to uphold who we claim as family through our traditions and natural laws.

Respectfully,

Debra & Ntawnis Piapot