

## Elder Peter G. Migwans



1938–  
Anishinaabe (Ojibwe) Artist  
M'Chigeeng First Nation  
Manitoulin Island

Elder Peter G. Migwans, a distinguished Ojibwe artist and cultural custodian, was born in 1938 in M'Chigeeng on Manitoulin Island, Ontario. Raised within his First Nation community, where his father,

Dominic Migwans, served as Chief, Peter was immersed from a young age in the teachings, stories, and traditions of his family and Elders. These early influences instilled in him a lifelong dedication to preserving and celebrating Ojibwe culture through his art.

From childhood, Peter demonstrated a natural inclination toward creativity. Often daydreaming and sketching instead of focusing on conventional schoolwork, he discovered early on that art was his calling. Although he completed a few formal art courses, he was primarily self-taught, developing his distinctive voice within the Woodland style. This movement, pioneered by artists such as Norval Morrisseau, deeply resonated with Peter and shaped the foundation of his artistic journey.

Working in oil and acrylic, Peter's paintings brought forward the interconnected relationships between humans, animals, spirits, and the natural world. Bears, eagles, fish, and flowing spirit lines appeared frequently in his work, symbolizing the sacred balance and unity of all living things. His art was not only visually striking but spiritually grounded, reflecting the stories, teachings, and worldview of the Anishinaabe people.

Family life remained central to Peter's creative process. He often drew inspiration from the energy of an active household — children's laughter, music, and shared moments — channeling these experiences into works that honoured community, tradition, and generational knowledge.

For over 25 years, Elder Peter Migwans dedicated himself to advancing the visibility and appreciation of North American Indigenous art, earning recognition for his powerful contributions to the Woodland tradition. Beyond his role as an artist, he was a respected mentor and educator, generously sharing his knowledge with Anishinaabe students across Ontario and Michigan. Later residing in Sault Ste. Marie, he remained deeply engaged in community outreach, encouraging younger generations to embrace their heritage and cultural identity.

As an Elder, Peter Migwans was celebrated not only for his artistic achievements but also for his steadfast role as a cultural guardian. Through his paintings and teachings, he ensured that the spirit, traditions, and stories of the Ojibwe people would endure for generations to come. His legacy lives on through his art, his students, and the many lives he touched.