



**SHELTER HOUSE**  
T H U N D E R B A Y

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## **Roy Thomas 1949 - 2004**

Roy Thomas was an Ahnisnabae-born Ojibwa artist who resided in Thunder Bay, Ontario. He was born in a small Northwestern Ontario community of Long Lac, on December 29, 1949.

Roy devoted a great deal of time learning about the ways of his people, their teachings and the ways of nature. While he was basically a self-taught artist, Roy was guided by the memories of his grandparents who taught him what to paint. At an early age Roy can see the stories his grandparents told him. His grandparents recognized his talent and encouraged him to draw what he seen through their stories.

The first time he drew, Roy used his pointing finger and drew on his grandmother's back as she told him stories. Eventually, Roy used a stick on the ground, on the beaches, on the snow banks and in the dark with the end lit. Roy would tell his grandparents at the time that these drawings would disappear. His grandparents told him *"One day my grandson, these drawings will come back to you, what is yours is never gone away forever."* This was the beginning of Roy Thomas the Ahnisnabae artist.

Roy was a painter in the Ojibwa Woodland style. This style uses symbolisms and imagery inspired by the pictographs that Roy also seen as a child. The presence of the pictographs and other artist also inspired Roy. The spirit of art and his elders also taught him what to paint. He painted the visions of the teachings of his people, for his family, for the community and for his nation.

During his years of painting, Roy has presented his art in numerous one-man shows in Canada, United States and Europe. He participated in a number of group shows nationally and internationally. His work is found in many national and international collections including: The Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Ontario; Esso Resources, Edmonton, Alberta; Foreign Affairs and International Trade (Canada); McMichael Canadian Collection, Kleinburg, Ontario; The Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, Ontario; The National Museum of Man, Ottawa, Ontario; Thunder Bay Art Gallery, Thunder Bay, Ontario; Inuit Gallery, Mannheim, Germany; and the National Gallery of Ethnology, Osaka, Japan.