

**Indigeneity: Ancestry or Cultural Integration?**

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### **Indigeneity: Ancestry or Integration?**

In “Indigenous or Pretender?” (27 October 2021), author Geoff Leo assesses the controversy surrounding celebrated Indigenous health expert, Carrie Bourassa, regarding her identification as an Indigenous person. Geoff explores the underhanded nature of confirmations that Carrie Bourassa uses, including the background story of her family’s struggle as an Indigenous family relative to claims of her European ancestry and identity. In his article, Geoff relies on evidence on Bourassa’s genealogy and accounts from family members and influences my opinion of the article’s approach as successful in questioning whether Bourassa’s Indigeneity is ancestral or from cultural integration.

Geoff’s article aims to establish an account of the claims and counterclaims regarding Bourassa’s indigeneity. Leo writes: “In addition to claiming Metis and Anishinaabe heritage, Bourassa has also asserted that she’s a descendant of the Tlingit” (para 11). Therefore, the article provides evidence regarding the criteria that Bourassa uses to establish her identity as an Indigenous person belonging to the three tribes. Geoff successfully presents both accounts of the controversy facing Bourassa, influencing my agreement with his approach as evidence-based and transparent.

Geoff relies on evidence from Bourassa genealogy, accounts from family members, and family history to identify whether the latter has Indigenous identity. Geoff reveals: “Bourassa’s shifting ancestry claims made her and other colleagues suspicious. They also recently learned that Bourassa’s sister had stopped claiming to be Métis after she examined her genealogy” (para 26). The evidence allows Geoff to point to the controversial nature of Bourassa’s identity claims, indicating the possibility of cultural integration rather than ancestry as the influence on Bourassa’s Indigeneity. Similarly, Leo presents an account from Bourassa’s side, indicating that “While Bourassa has declined an interview, CBC has learned

that behind the scenes she has been preparing for a potential story for months” (para 93). The evidence adds a further layer of controversy to the influence of Bourassa’s Indigeneity claims.

Geoff’s editorial on *CBC News* reflects based on his assessment of the evidence. Geoff acknowledges the problematic nature of false claims of Indigeneity, expressing concerns by Bourassa’s colleagues that “Bourassa’s story is built on a fundamental falsehood.” Thus, the support of the major claim on Bourassa’s identity as controversial using evidence allows Geoff’s article to engage and enlighten me as a reader.

In conclusion, Geoff Leo successfully uses the article to explain how Bourassa’s Indigeneity claim controversy is based on ancestry versus cultural integration differences. Through evidence from family members and genealogy accounts, Geoff increases my intrigue in the matter and appreciation of the effort behind his findings.

### Reference

Leo, G. (2021, October 27). *Indigenous or pretender?* CBC News.

<https://www.cbc.ca/newsinteractives/features/carrie-bourassa-indigenous>