Woman**:** Alright, it’s party time! Gotta get Sheila and the girls to like me. Now’s my chance. Okay, hair’s done, clothes are awesome. Now, time for my makeup. Wait, where’s my makeup? Oh, no! I brought the wrong makeup bag. I guess I could use Cousin Carrie’s. Let’s see… gosh… what’s in this? So much chemicals… I guess it can’t be that bad…

Lee Francis IV: It can…

Woman**:** Uncle Host, what are you doing here?

Lee Francis IV: I’ve been down that road before. There are better ways, older ways…

Woman: But I have to get to that party!

Lee Francis IV: Not like this…not like this…

You know…Indigenous People have been creating cosmetics and natural body remedies for thousands of years. Through trial and error, they have blended science and a deep understanding of human biology to connect with the world around them in very personal ways. And you’ll learn all about that here on Indigi-Genius!

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Lee Francis IV: “Natural” beauty products have been all the rage these days, but Native and Indigenous communities have been using the natural properties of the world around them for skin, hair, and body care and “adornment” for a very long time. And these weren’t just for women, as the way cosmetics are marketed today. Instead, these natural body care recipes were used by men and women alike as Indigenous people the world over recognized the importance of cleanliness, beauty, and body health.

But what is Cosmetology and why is it important? By definition, cosmetology is the skill and practice of beautifying the hair, face and skin. How did Native and Indigenous understandings of plants and medicines come to shape the cosmetics industry? Well, to see the impact of Indigenous knowledge and understandings of cosmetology, we need look no farther than the Indigenous Peoples of Australia. For thousands of years, Indigenous women used emu oil as a natural sunscreen. This is because they understood what science has come to prove, that the fatty acids in the oil can soothe the skin and help prevent inflammation. Further, the use of yarrow extract has been shown to help eliminate stretch marks after pregnancy, a natural remedy Australian Indigenous women had been using for centuries. Local minerals and clay were also used to protect the skin and hair in the dry arid climates and moss, kelp, and seaweed were used to protect and maintain face and skin care along the coastal regions.

Today, we see many cosmetic companies turning to the same ingredients that Indigenous peoples have been utilizing for millennia. Indigenous peoples have always maintained good personal hygiene and understood its necessity for good health. From yucca to aloe vera to natural clay, Indigenous people had already cornered the market on natural cosmetics long before Europeans arrived.

Years ago, I worked in the theater. And after each performance, I had to remove my makeup. But, over the years, I realized how damaging it was to my skin. I would be both oily and dry, all at the same time. I never really reflected on the importance of good skin care and personal health, until years later. Now, I take suntan lotion and body lotion wherever I go. And whenever I look at the ingredients, I am always reminded of that natural experimentation that Indigenous people have done and all those understandings that came from that. And those understandings are here, on display, each and every day… on Indigi-Genius!

Woman: I’ll always remember my skin from now on!

Lee Francis IV: How long do we have to stay like this? Dries… I don’t want to crack!