

# Thomas David Petite

by Caitlyn Meagher



The electrical grid is what we use when we flip a light switch or turn on the TV. Petite's technology could help power a Smart Grid in the future.

*image by Analogicus from Pixabay*

Inventors think outside the box. Many of them spend lots of time using their imagination to come up with new ideas. Thomas David Petite is one of these out-of-the-box thinkers. He is a successful inventor with over 50 U.S. patents, which are licenses for inventions.

Petite was born in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1956, and began inventing at a young age. For his first invention, he turned a hair dryer into a leaf blower and sold it to Walmart. It was a big hit! That was just the beginning of his inventing career.

One of Petite's most important inventions is wireless mesh technology. This technology helps all mobile phones work today. This technology also paves the way for the future creation of the "Smart Grid." The "grid" in Smart Grid refers to the electric grid. The electric grid provides electricity to homes or businesses. It is what you use when you flip on a light switch or turn on the television. Although it's not yet available to everyone, the Smart Grid would allow people to have more control over how much energy their homes or businesses are using. People could see how much energy they are using, when they are using it, and what it costs. Then, they could save money and help the environment by not wasting electricity. Petite and other

inventors think that the Smart Grid could be in every home in the near future.

When Petite is not thinking up new inventions, he is working with his nonprofit organization. His nonprofit provides resources to Native Americans to build their inventions and start their own businesses. Petite is a Native American and a proud member of the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa tribe. He is the son of a Chippewa chief from Wisconsin. The Chippewa people are also called Ojibwe or Anishinaabe.

Petite also goes around to schools to speak to young students about how they can use their creative talents. He gives them simple objects, like a box, tacks, rubber bands, and a pencil, and tells them to create something with these materials. The students invent all sorts of things! They use their imagination to make something new and useful. Thomas David Petite believes all young people have creative skills. They can develop these skills to achieve their dreams.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What is Thomas David Petite's profession?

- A. doctor
- B. chemist
- C. inventor
- D. lawyer

2. What is one possible future result of Petite's wireless mesh technology?

- A. the Smart Grid
- B. the mobile phone
- C. the smart TV
- D. the Apple Watch

3. Read these sentences from the text.

"People could see how much energy they are using, when they are using it, and what it costs. Then, they could save money and help the environment by not wasting electricity. Petite and other inventors think that the Smart Grid could be in every home in the near future."

What can you conclude based on this information?

- A. Petite's invention is not very popular with other inventors.
- B. Petite worked hard on the Smart Grid but eventually gave up.
- C. Petite's invention is more important than any other invention in history.
- D. Petite's invention could make it easier for people to help the environment.

4. Based on Petite's nonprofit and education work, how does Petite probably think about inventing?

- A. as not a big deal
- B. as an inspiring and important act
- C. as a boring and frustrating act
- D. as a desperate and sad act

**5. What is the main idea of this text?**

- A. Thomas David Petite, a successful Native American inventor, has created important products like wireless mesh technology, and he encourages other people to make their own inventions.
- B. Thomas David Petite, a successful inventor, first made an invention as a kid, when he made a leaf blower out of a hair dryer and sold it at Walmart.
- C. The "grid" in Smart Grid is the electric grid, which is the system that provides power to people's homes or businesses.
- D. Although Thomas David Petite is a famous inventor, he has always been jealous of the inventor who made the telephone.