

## **ATLANTIC POLICY CONGRESS OF FIRST NATIONS CHIEFS ELDERS PROJECT: HONOURING TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE**

### **PARTICIPATING ELDERS**

Biographies of the Elders who participated in the August 2010 Mawio'mi and/or February 2011 Elders Circle of the APCFNC Elders Project: Honouring Traditional Knowledge, are listed alphabetically. Various Elder collaborators wrote the majority of the biographies on the Elders behalf. Five of the Elders contributed their own biographies and we are honoured by their unique voices, written in the first person. Gwen Bear wrote her biography in the third person and it has been edited slightly for the purposes of this document.

### **MI'KMAW ELDERS**

#### **Josie Augustine, Elsipogtog First Nation**

Josie Augustine is a Mi'gmaq woman from Elsipogtog First Nation. She lives there with her husband Frank of four years and her family of seven. Josie and Frank have also have adopted other individuals (Native and non-Native). Josie also carries the name Eagle Woman, Kitpu-ui'skw aq paqtismewakutm. She is from the Wolf Clan.

Josie worked at the Elsipogtog Health and Wellness Center as the "Community Health Representative and Traditional Health" for 13 years, from 1998 - 2011. She incorporated the traditional, spiritual and ceremonial aspects of the Mi'gmaq culture in her work.

Josie has learned about her culture, medicines, language and the spiritual ceremonies from her Elders as well as from those whom she has crossed paths with. She is a medicine woman and is well recognized and respected by her people. Josie works and consults with the Elders as she provides health related services to them. She spends a great deal of time working with the youth as she teaches and shares her knowledge with them on issues related to the Mi'gmaq way. Besides working alongside the professional caregivers in the community, Josie also sits on a number of committees offering a traditional viewpoint in the day-to-day discussions.

Josie and Frank follow the traditional way of life and are always available to those seeking guidance. Josie's mission in life is to teach the youth about the sacred and

spiritual ways of the Mi'gmaq. Josie always says that she loves the daily teachings about her culture, language and history which she acquires as she pursues her role as a teacher and a healer.

### **Frank Augustine, Elsipogtog First Nation**

Frank Augustine is from Elsipogtog. Frank has much knowledge of traditional medicines. He works with his wife Josie doing healing work with communities. They have done much work with the late David Gehue who Frank considered a great teacher. David was a certified alcohol and drug councillor, hypnotherapist, author of *Voices of The Tent* and a traditional teacher of Native Culture, who passed in 2011.

Frank was in the residential school system for eight years, starting at the age of seven. When he left the school he went to Maine and picked potatoes. He was worried if he returned home he would be sent back to the residential school.

When Frank returned home he felt he was at an age where he had to decide what to do with his life. Frank felt something was missing and went with Josie to visit friends who were doing sweat lodge ceremonies. His first experience at the sweat lodge changed his life. At this point he took up a pipe and started praying and learning ceremonies.

Over the years, Josie and Frank have helped many people. There is a group of nine Elders in Elsipogtog, including Josie and Frank, who perform healing work together. They do ceremonies and pick medicines as well as many other activities. Many people come to them when all western, medical interventions have failed and doctors have told them that they only have a few more weeks to live. In many cases, following the Elders ceremonies, these people live for many years. The Elders also work with people experiencing drug and alcohol problems.

Frank uses his pipe and rattles and does what is called a shaking tent ceremony. These go on for two or three days. In recent years, many people have returned to the community for these ceremonies. In 2008, as part of "Gegenootatolting" or Sharing the Knowledge, 1,500 people showed up to attend a shaking tent ceremony with five shakers. "Gegenootatolting" was a traditional health and healing gathering hosted through the Elsipogtog Health and Wellness Centre (EHWC), in collaboration with the First Nations Centre (FNC) of the National Aboriginal Health Organization (NAHO). In addition to Elsipogtog, Josie and Frank travel to many Aboriginal communities to do their healing work.

### **John Henry Isaac, Listuguj First Nation**

I am from Listuguj. My parents were both Mi'gmaq and there were 15 of us sisters and brothers. Mi'gmaq was the only language spoken in our home until we attended Indian day school at the age of six years. I left home when I was thirteen to help support the family. I left for Northern Maine during the potato harvest time. I resided with a farm family for four and half years and adapted to their culture – never forgetting mine. I left there at seventeen and a half years old and worked for the Great Northern Paper Company.

I got married when I was 23 and was blessed with four daughters, two granddaughters, one grandson and three great grandchildren. I worked for the Great Northern Paper for 40 years. During all those years I never forgot my culture or who I am. I returned to my home and my roots to live my remaining years in peace. I am involved in my community on issues concerning senior citizens, youth and Mi'gmaq culture.

### **Doug Knockwood, Shubenacadie (Indian Brook) First Nation**

A respected Elder from Shubenacadie First Nation, Doug has worn many hats throughout his life. He has served in the Canadian Arm Special Forces and has also worked as a chef, drug and alcohol counsellor and teacher for the promotion of Aboriginal culture. He received the Senior Elder Award in 2004 at the Government House in Halifax. Doug has a wealth of life experiences and is knowledgeable in many areas. He serves as a board member for the Public Service Alliance of Canada and the Atlantic Aboriginal Health Research Program (AAHRP).

### **Jeffery Levi, Metepenagiag First Nation**

Jeffrey lives in Metepenagiag First Nation, New Brunswick with his wife Mary Ann. He works in construction and goes fishing for snow crab. He is a strong believer in the work of Elders and in the benefits of Traditional Medicine. He had a rare lung disease 19 years ago, bronchiolitis obliterans disease and doctors told him he was going to be disabled the rest of his life. He sought help from Elders, including his wife Mary Ann's mother Lillian and beat the disease. He is very thankful for his recovery with the help of Elders and their knowledge of traditional medicines.

**Murdena Marshall, Eskasoni First Nation, Honorary Doctorate - Cape Breton University, Mi'kmawey Debert Elders' Advisory Council**

Murdena Marshall, M.Ed, is a Mi'kmaw Elder from Eskasoni First Nation in Unama'ki (Cape Breton), Nova Scotia. She is retired from her position as Associate Professor of Mi'kmaw Studies at Cape Breton University but continues to be highly active in projects locally, regionally, and nationally.

Murdena is a fluent speaker, reader, and writer of the Mi'kmaw language and a highly respected holder of considerable understandings with respect to Mi'kmaw Traditional Knowledge. She has devoted her life to encouraging Mi'kmaw young people to explore their culture and the nature around them. Through storytelling, she shares the wisdom, love, and understandings of the Mi'kmaw people for the lands and waters, plants and animals, and peoples that make up the world around us. Murdena and her husband Albert were awarded Honorary Doctors of Letters by Cape Breton University in 2009 for their work towards preservation, understanding, and promotion of cultural beliefs and practices among all Mi'kmaw communities.

**Albert Marshall, Eskasoni First Nation, Honorary Doctorate - Cape Breton University**

Albert Marshall is a Mi'kmaw Elder from Eskasoni First Nation in Unama'ki (Cape Breton), Nova Scotia. He is a passionate advocate of cross-cultural understandings and healing and of our human responsibilities to care for all creatures and our Earth Mother. He is the “designated voice” for the Mi'kmaw Elders of Unama'ki with respect to environmental issues. He sits on various committees that guide collaborative initiatives in natural resource management or that serve First Nations' governance issues, or that otherwise work towards ethical environmental, social and economic practices. Albert has brought forward Etuaptmumk/Two-Eyed Seeing as a Guiding Principle for this work. In 2009, Albert and his wife Murdena were awarded Honorary Doctorates of Letters by Cape Breton University for their work, which seeks the preservation, understanding, and promotion of cultural beliefs and practices among all Mi'kmaw communities, and encourages a strong future for the Mi'kmaw Nation and its peoples.

**Lillian Marshall, Potlotek (Chapel Island) First Nation**

Lillian Marshall is a well-known and much loved Mi'kmaw Elder from Cape Breton, Nova Scotia. She has worked for her home community of Chapel Island (Potlotek) for over 33 years in different aspects of Aboriginal education. Furthermore, her interests in education have seen Lillian become involved with many other Aboriginal communities as a member on various committees working towards the preservation and promotion of Mi'kmaw history, customs, values, language, and culture. Lillian has written several books, developed language CDs, and created children's stories and games. She is also the person who revived and renewed the Mi'kmaw Mid-Winter Feast in Chapel Island over 20 years ago. This Feast is celebrated shortly after the first new moon of Punamujuiku's (January) and is a thanksgiving to all spirits, especially to the Great Spirit, for the blessings of life, health, and sustenance and the privileges of community life. Celebrations are not as elaborate as those of the ancestors but people in Chapel Island are, to this day, the only Mi'kmaq that celebrate this most important traditional ceremony of the year.

In 2007 Lillian was awarded the Grand Chief Donald Marshall Senior Memorial Elder Award by the Premier of Nova Scotia Rodney MacDonald. Lillian's dedication to the preservation and promotion of Mi'kmaw heritage is deeply rooted, strongly developed and passionate. She attributes much of this to the wonderful upbringing she received from her parents. She comes from hereditary leaders on both sides of her family. Her father was a community leader and always listened carefully to her questions before offering his understandings. Moreover, he shared with her the stories he had learned – stories that had been carried generation to generation. To all of this, her mother could be depended on to add the sparkle of laughter and humour.

Lillian further attributes her strong love and knowledge of her Mi'kmaw heritage to the fact that she never experienced the trauma of Canada's residential school system. Instead, she was able to attend Indian Day School in her home community of Chapel Island although Grade 6 was the highest level offered and Lillian felt stuck not being able to go further with her formal education at the time. After a period of work in the United States she returned home, trained as a key punch operator, and found work as a clerk on the reserve. She quickly moved into a position with the Union of Nova Scotia Indians, directing her to the rewarding job of interviewing Elders in Mi'kmaw communities throughout Nova Scotia, and followed by work in education in her community.

In conjunction with her work in education that has continued over many years in the community, Lillian has also been a student. In 1991, she obtained a Diploma in Counselling from Acadia University. Later, she graduated from the Froebel Institute in

Truro in Early Childhood Education and she took most of the Native Teacher Education Program offered by McGill University. In 2003, she completed the Native Language Immersion Teaching program at St. Thomas University. In 2007, Lillian graduated with a Bachelor of Arts Community Studies degree from Cape Breton University. Through her work and her life examples, Lillian constantly encourages children to understand the importance of education; moreover, she also encourages people of all ages to realize that it is never too late to go back to school.

### **Madeline Martin, Millbrook First Nation**

Madeline was born in Truro in 1929 to Louise Julien and Chief Joseph Julien. She was married to Fred Martin for 49 years, until his passing in 1993. She and Fred had seven children, five boys and two girls. Madeline has 20 grandchildren and 34 great grandchildren and one great – great grandchild. Madeline is also the proud owner of beloved Samoyed husky named Waspu. Madeline is a member of her community prayer group and participates in the annual Sainte- Anne de Beaupre pilgrimage.

### **Isaac Metallic, Listuguj First Nation**

My name is Isaac (Ike) Metallic and I was born in Listuguj Mi'gmaq First Nation. I am the youngest of four sisters and one brother. My parents were Madeleine Swasson and Alexander Metallic both from Listuguj. I was nine years old when we lost our father and I had to start working at a young age to help support my mother and so I did not have a much of a chance to pursue my education. I worked in the woods cutting wood for the woodstove. In my later teens I went to Maine to work on a farm. In my mid- twenties, I worked as an iron worker mostly in the U.S. for a period of 40 years.

During my working days I've always made time to practice my fishing rights. I have fished salmon for as long as I can remember. I'm now retired from construction but started fishing other species like lobster and rock crab. I do this with my sons Fred Metallic and Laurence Metallic. I have three other children – Christine, Milfred and Lisa.

I am proud to be a Mi'gmaq and a strong believer in my culture and mother tongue. Today I'm involved with the Elder's Council dealing with community issues such as our needs and the youth to name a few. I firmly believe by sharing our stories, our ideas and

beliefs based on Mi'gmaq culture and spirituality we can become a strong Mi'gmaq Nation.

**John Joe Sark, Lennox Island First Nation, Keptin of the Mi'kmaq Grand Council, Honourary Doctorate University of Prince Edward Island**

John Joe Sark was born on the Lennox Island Reserve in 1945. He dropped out of school when he was sixteen years old. He travelled to Boston, Massachusetts and worked there for about eight years. He then returned home and continued his education. He attended Summerside High School completing grades 10, 11, and 12.

John Joe's role as a spiritual leader for the Mi'kmaq peoples has built a lasting bridge of understanding between cultures. He was awarded the National Aboriginal Achievement Award in 2005 for Heritage and Spirituality. Also in May 14, 2005 he was awarded a honorary Doctor of Law Degree from the University of Prince Edward Island (PEI).

John Joe obtained his Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science from the University of PEI. In 1985, he was honoured by being nominated by the late Grand Chief of the Mi'kmaq Nation, and elected unanimously by Keptins of the Mi'kmaq Nation with a lifetime nomination as Keptin by the Mi'kmaq Grand Council. In his role as guardian of the spiritual and cultural integrity of the Mi'kmaq people, he has fought to have offensive stereotypes removed from schools and institutions in Prince Edward Island. As a representative of the Mi'kmaq Council, John Joe Sark has lobbied for rights and recognition internationally, including audiences with the Pope regarding residential schools. He was involved in the drafting of the United Nations' Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; was Co-Producer, Executive Director as well as Artistic Director of the film - *Spirit World - The Story of the Mi'kmaqs*; and wrote a book on the history of the Mi'kmaq people.

He continues to use his expertise to encourage accurate portrayals of Mi'kmaq history. Sark has been appointed to the following organizations: Mi'kmaq Ambassador to the Vatican (1994), the United Nations Human Rights Commission in Geneva (1994), the Acadian National Society in New Orleans (1999) and the Acadian National Society in France (2002). Sark has encouraged traditional practices and basket-making with the Minigoo Arts and Craft Corporation, as well as community programs to mine peat moss, harvest mussel mud and farm oysters. John Joe Sark currently lives in Charlottetown, PEI.

## **Gilbert Sewell, Pabineau First Nation**

Gilbert Sewell is a Mi'gmaq Elder, oral historian, folklorist, storyteller, guide, woodcarver, and Mi'gmaq language instructor from Pabineau First Nation, New Brunswick. His spirit name is Nemi'tegei, which means "I see." Gilbert is the recipient of several awards including the New Brunswick Human Rights Award, the New Brunswick Eco Award, Orono Maine Museum Award, and the Canadian Merit Award - all attributed to his tireless dedication for sharing, expressing, and teaching others about his Mi'gmaq heritage.

Gilbert has had audiences with Pope John Paul II, Prince Charles, Lady Diana, and the Consul of France; and has been featured in countless publications and media including CBC TV/Radio, APTN, and the Discovery Channel. He has also provided the core content for a CD-ROM encompassing Mi'gmaq language, traditions, and medicines entitled: Exploring an Ancient Civilization: the Mi'gmaq.

Gilbert has worked with archeologists Pat Allen and Chris Turnbull on the excavation site of Youghall Beach in Bathurst, New Brunswick. He assisted in viewing and examining pre-European contact Native campsites and settlements.

Gilbert is also a known expert witness in many Native court cases involving Native rights, most recently, a Supreme Court Canada landmark case of Darrell Gray and his right to harvest Birdseye maple. Gilbert's knowledge of the ways of the Mi'gmaq people today and in the past ensured a winning case. In Gilbert's efforts to share his culture, he has enlightened many multi-cultural associations, universities, communities, day-cares, schools, and tour groups from as far as Japan, France, and Germany.

In March 2004, Gilbert received the Queen's Jubilee Medal from the Lieutenant-Governor of the province of New Brunswick. He is also the narrator of *Maq and the Spirit of the Woods*, an animated Mi'gmaq children's tale, produced by the National Film Board of Canada, 2006. Gilbert also enjoyed writing a bi-weekly column for the Northern Light in Bathurst and the Miramichi Leader in Miramichi, New Brunswick. He is also the host of "N'nu E'gati – Native Place with Gilbert Sewell", a series of 10 vignettes about Mi'gmaq culture on Rogers Television. Gilbert is involved in collecting and reviewing traditional information on campsites and burial site for the Caribou Wind Park Project, Suez Renewable Energy North America. He also served on the advisory board for the

Order of New Brunswick with the Office of Protocol 2006-2009, and currently serves on the New Brunswick Arts Board as advisor and Elder (2011).

### **Grand Chief Ben Sylliboy, We'koqma'q First Nation**

Humble, compassionate and understanding are words that describe Grand Chief Benjamin Sylliboy. For the Mi'kmaq these are important qualities for our leaders of the Grand Council. To understand the Leadership of the Mi'kmaq Grand Council or Sante Mawiomi one must understand that there is no hierarchy within the Mi'kmaq Grand Council meaning that with the role of Grand Chief or Keptin comes no great reward or prestige, rather it means a life of service to the Mi'kmaq Nation without monetary compensation. Through his lifelong commitment to his community and the Mi'kmaq, Grand Chief Ben Sylliboy has become a respected Elder and Statesmen for the Mi'kmaq community.

Grand Chief Ben Sylliboy was born in the Mi'kmaq Community of We'koqma'q in Nova Scotia on March 2, 1941. His parents were William and Nancy Sylliboy who lived in We'koqma'q most of their lives and had 4 children Mary Ellen, Theresa, Benjamin and Margret. Ben grew up in a modest household, as many Mi'kmaq at the time, which lived with modest means of supporting themselves. At the age of six Ben was sent to the Indian Residential School in Shubenacadie, where his parents believed he would receive a good education because of the nuns and priests who taught there. As many Mi'kmaq who attended the residential schools, Ben's time there was filled with hardships but he is thankful that he was only there for four years.

After the residential school, Grand Chief Sylliboy moved back to his home community and within months was infected with tuberculosis. This sickness would last 18 months where he was in and out of hospitals. It was when he was finally healthy that Ben attended the Indian Day school for four years until he received a job clear cutting for power lines. He worked a variety of jobs during his lifetime but remembers travelling to Ottawa in 1965 where he took part in what was considered training and upgrading courses for Indians that was created by Department of Indian Affairs. In 1968, the Grand Chief married Catherine Marie Sylliboy and has two daughters Michelle and Christina.

Grand Chief Sylliboy was first selected as Keptin by his community in 1968, because of his continued engagement with the community and always being one who was known for being willing to help out community members and the church. A Keptin is a lifelong

position of great honour often referred to as a hereditary or life Chief in other parts of Canada.

In 1970 he was elected as an Indian Act Band Councilor. He served nine terms as councilor for his community. In 1992 the Putus of the Grand Council Charlie Herney informed him that then Grand Chief Donald Marshall who was very ill had asked that Ben take on the role of interim Grand Chief. Grand Chief Ben Sylliboy continues to be the Grand Chief today for the Mi'kmaq Grand Council. Throughout the years Ben has seen the Mi'kmaq Grand Council continue to promote the culture and spirituality of the Mi'kmaq. He also has been a part of the renewal of the Mi'kmaq Grand Council role as governing body within the Mi'kmaq that focuses on the recognition and implementation of Aboriginal and Treaty rights. Over the years the Grand Chief Sylliboy has consulted with many Elders who have continued to guide him, he is a firm believer that Mi'kmaq leadership need to be educated; however he also states that education of the Mi'kmaq ways must be taught alongside mainstream education especially the history of the Mi'kmaq.

Grand Chief Sylliboy continues to be a part of meetings with other leaders today and believes unity will help the Mi'kmaq in the future. He holds strong to the vision that the Mi'kmaq should one day determine for themselves, rather than the Canadian government, who is a Mi'kmaq and community member. Grand Chief Sylliboy continues his role today with great humility and understanding of the Mi'kmaq people. He continues to live in We'koqma'q First Nation with his wife and has two grandchildren. Despite ongoing health problems Grand Chief Sylliboy continues to attend as many functions as he can and continues to be a respected leader within the Mi'kmaq community.

## **WOLASTOQIYIK (MALISEET) ELDERS**

**Gwen Bear, Nekutkuk (Tobique) First Nation, Elder-in-Residence and M.Ed. Candidate, UNB (1948 – 2012)**

Gwen Bear was a gifted teacher, healer, scholar, Grandmother and spiritual teacher. We are fortunate to have so many of her teachings documented to help guide us into the future. She will be deeply missed.

Gwen was born on the Tobique First Nation or “Nekutkuk” to her because she grew up in her Wolastoqi (Maliseet) language, a gift that still keeps giving. The Native perspective became so much more important to Gwen as she grew older. As a teacher, it gave her the skills to share the knowledge of holistic ways.

Gwen married in 1970 and moved to Massachusetts where she lived for ten years. When she returned to Tobique, an Elder advised her to go to Fredericton and attend university. Despite the hardships of being the single parent of three children, she achieved two degrees from Saint Thomas University (STU); a Bachelor of Arts in Native Studies and English, and a B.Ed.

Shortly after graduation, Gwen was elected President of New Brunswick Native Women’s Council, opening up a new world and many opportunities with the Native Women’s Association of Canada. At the same time, Gwen taught the Native Art Study program at the New Brunswick College of Craft & Design (NBCCD), and also taught the Wolastoqi language at STU part time. When something had to give, she gave up the women's organizations. In 2006, she retired from the NBCCD after eighteen rewarding years. By then seven grandchildren were in her life and any ideas of returning home were given up. Three great-grandchildren also kept her in Fredericton.

Gwen was the Elder-in-Residence at the University of New Brunswick from 2009 - 2011. She was the first Elder-in-Residence in an Atlantic Canadian university. She was also enrolled in the Master’s program in the Faculty of Education pursuing work on the Grandmother’s Stories. Gwen also volunteered on many committees and participated in as many cultural events as possible. She was a Board member of the New Brunswick Museum.

Gwen carried three pipes and was a spiritual leader who performed ceremonies, healings, and fasts.

**Christine Gabriel, Sitansiskew (St. Mary’s First) Nation**

Christine is from Sitanisikew First Nation. She is the mother of four children, grandmother of five and has one great-grandson. She is the Elder representative for Union of New Brunswick Indians, Under One Sky Headstart, the Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nations Chiefs and the AAEDIRP. She is also an active member of “Nuhkomossok”, the Grandmother’s Drummers from Sitanisikew First Nation. As a language carrier, she volunteers in community language and cultural events. Her hobbies include basket making, beading, and cooking.

### **Larry Perley, Tobique First Nation**

Larry is the oldest of 15 siblings, but there were many large families in Neb-gootcook back in the day. He lived with his grandparents until they both passed on. Being a part of an extended family that spoke the language, cooked traditional food and lived the life of an Indian in the late forties and early fifties grounded him. When his grandparents passed on he was sent to live with his maternal uncle, Abner Paul. Abner was better known as Rambling Sam and later Chief Sam Goose who had a craft shop. He learned how to bend a bush to make a living and he had to rely on what he was taught many times. After a couple of years with his uncle his mother needed his help at home. So he went home to help get the wood for the wood stove, carry water and help with the ever-growing family. This also meant working outside of the house for extra money to help support the family.

Next Larry worked pounding ash and working in the potato houses in Fort Fairfield, Maine, USA, but it wasn’t a career. So he joined the American Army and went to Vietnam in 1969. He did two tours before coming back home to start a family. He and Loretta Barlow married in 1973. They had two sons in 1974 and 1976. In 1985 they adopted Spirit Hawk.

Larry was elected into the Tobique Band Council twice. He was instrumental in bringing salmon fishing and hunting back as a way of life. With this endeavors, he had to fight the local band government who thought they no longer had fishing or hunting rights; as well as the provincial government. This was not an easy task, nor a popular one. It took many years of fighting in the courts, demonstrating and actually exercising his rights and justifying it all to whoever would listen. He did the same with forestry, being the Director for Forestry for a number of years. Under Larry, forestry thrived, but like everything else, politics got in the way.

Larry Perley is now back to bending a bush to make a living. He makes birch bark canoes and Maliseet long bows etc. He teaches his sons everything he does so it will be passed on.

Larry helps his wife Loretta gather Native medicine and is now talking to young men about hunting and fishing protocols. He is a translator of the Maliseet language and enjoys comparing Mi'kmaq and Maliseet words with others. He and Loretta have six grandchildren, three boys and three girls. The youngest are twin girls.

### **Loretta Perley, Tobique First Nation**

I am originally from Indian Island, New Brunswick. My maiden name is Barlow. I have been married and living in Maliseet territory for the last 36 years. I felt I was brought up in very rich Native-oriented culture, from the language to traditional food and ways of interacting with others.

When I moved to Maliseet territory my culture came with me and I embraced the Maliseet culture, language and traditional food. I found many similarities and was of course, fascinated by the differences. I felt right at home and made many friends as young people do.

I didn't focus a lot on traditional medicines at that time, but I'd been 'briefed' throughout my childhood and had gone on many outings with my mother, aunts and grandmother. Everyone still relied heavily on doctors, health nurses, etc., as there were so many viruses back then and tuberculosis was still plaguing our people. I think our medicine people were just tired and willing to let the doctors and nurses pick-up the slack. However, living in such isolated conditions as Indian Island, back in the 1950's, they had to continue to heal family and friends. We all learned about certain roots and leaves, as well as barks and berries, that when used properly would aide in healing colds and wounds.

Therefore, when I started my family and couldn't run to the doctor in Perth-Andover every other day, I started using what I knew. Unfortunately, I had not paid a whole lot of attention so I didn't know a lot about how dangerous these medicines could be when not properly picked and prepared. Years later when I had worked at the Tobique Addictions Rehab for a year or so, there was an Indian medicine group put on by Shirley Bear Clair. It was supposed to be for two weeks, but ended up being for like two years.

We formed an informal medicine group, travelled around our region seeking out knowledge all over New Brunswick and the state of Maine. This took place all the while I was working with the Rehab program. Presently, all my spare time is taken up for this purpose. Now, I occasionally do workshops, nature walks and demonstrations on how to prepare some medicines. I display my medicine on occasion. I work at the newly built Wolastoqewiyik Healing Lodge but traditional medicine is my passion and this is the direction I see my life taking in the future. I am proud to say I am now a grandmother of six, three boys and three girls. They don't realize it yet but they are being briefed already to have the knowledge.

## **INNU ELDERS**

### **Sam Nui, Sheshatshiu First Nation**

Sam Nui is from Sheshatshiu, First Nation, Labrador. When he was a child, he and his family used to live in a tent. His father is from Fort Chimo and he was born in Davis Inlet. The new name for this area is Natuashish. It became a reserve four years ago and is registered under the Indian Act. Sam attended school at North West River which was a residential school. At the time people didn't recognize what it was. When Sam was eight or nine, his family moved to Sheshatshiu in 1959.

Sam is a hunter. His father taught him to hunt. When he was 21 he quit school and started working. Sam has been on the Band Council and is involved in Elders committees. He has a very strong commitment to Elders being involved in community activities and decision making.

### **Elizabeth Penashue, Honourary Doctorate, Memorial University and Francis (Frank) Penashue, Sheshatshui First Nation, Labrador**

Elizabeth and Francis Penashue have spent much of their lives defending the Innu way of life. Elizabeth's activism on behalf of her people included standing up for hunting rights in Montreal, the occupation of Dutch F-18s at the Goose Bay Airport in 1993, and subsequent peaceful occupation of the Dutch and British consulates in Toronto. Her

efforts have brought attention to the Innu people's fight for their land rights with the federal government. Elizabeth was awarded the Woman of Achievement Award in 2002, and an honorary doctor of laws degree from Memorial University in 2005. Her motivations stem from her passion to do the right thing for the environment and in turn the Innu people.

In her own words: I am an Innu woman living in Sheshatshui, Labrador. For many years I have committed my life to protecting the environment for my children and grandchildren. For over 13 years, I have led a canoe trip and spring snowshoe walk for my people. Even when it's hard, I go. Nothing stops me because "nutshimit" (the bush/country) is very important for our culture. Before I'm gone I want to see some change, I want to help my people and teach the children. I don't want to see my children lose everything. I know we can't go back to how things were, but I don't want my children to lose their Innu identity, culture and life.

## **INUIT ELDERS**

### **Jean Crane**

Jean, 84 is a speaker of Inuktitut and an Elder from Nunatsiavut, Labrador. She is the mother of six children, 15 grandchildren, and 22 great grandchildren. Jean has served on a number of committees including the Memorial University (MUN) Board of Regents and the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAOW), both for six years. She also served on MUN's Art Gallery Board. Before retiring, Jean was the administrator for the Libra House, a shelter for abused women and children in Labrador.

Currently, Jean climbs mountains, hikes, camps, picks berries, paints, and plays the drum. She is on a committee for community healing with Nunatsiavut and is a proud member of the United Church Women in the Happy Valley Goose Bay.

### **Richard Rich, Nunatsiavut, Labrador**

Elder Richard Rich hails from Labrador where his parents, who have both since passed, were from as well. Richard relocated to the town of Rigolet in 1967, where he has spent

his life. He went to school until grade nine, when he decided to leave and join the labour force. He has worked as a fisherman, a trapper and continues to work as a contractor for the community.

Richard is very dedicated to his community as he has been a Community Council volunteer for over 30 years. He spends a lot of his time helping out with everything from community boards, the schools, his church and the Elders committee where he enjoys playing cards and square-dancing with other Elders.

Richard married his wife Marie in 1981. She is a retired school teacher, who is now employed with SafeHouse. They have raised four daughters, one of which resides in Ireland, and they now have four grandchildren, and one great-grandchild.

### **Alex Saunders, Nunatsiavut, Labrador**

I am 72 years old, born in the Innu community of Davis Inlet. My mother was full Inuit. My father was raised with the Innu, and we came from a small place, so small that when the Innu went into the country we were the only family there.

Our family came to Goose Bay when I was six. We had no school, no roads, nothing, just 24 huts. I have seen the town grow from that to what it is today - a beautiful community with approximately 9000 people, many schools, lots of streets, a big regional hospital, a huge airfield, a large college, many stores, and a mixed population including Natives, Innu, Inuit, Métis and white people from all over the world. It is a very active and progressive town.

I graduated from high school in 1958, worked on the airbase for a little while, joined the Canadian Navy and went away to sea at the age of 18. I saw lots of the world: England, France, Portugal, Gibraltar, Azores Islands, the Caribbean, Puerto Rico, Bermuda and the Virgin Islands, Florida, South Carolina, Rhode Island, New York etc. In later years, I travelled all over the north on fishing boats, to Greenland, Iceland, the Faroe Islands, Scotland, Denmark and crossed the Atlantic Ocean seven times. I went to trade school; got a two year accounting course; went to university for a couple of years; had a teacher's licence and taught school for a few years. I worked as an aircraft dispatcher for a few years handling bush plane operations; helped to start a fisherman's co-operative; was the founding president and first general manager of Torngat Co-op and was a founding board member of the Labrador Credit Union.

I raised a family of three in the traditional way and two other children and have a sponsored child in Africa. I work with youth on addictions and go into the correctional centre to hold talking circles. I belong to a Native group of people that are handling their own addictions through what we call "Honouring Abstinence".

I presently sit on five different boards, am the chairperson of three and am very active within our own government, "Nunatsiavut".

I have just written a little book "*Aullak*" - *A Labrador Experience*. The word "Aullak" means out on the land doing things traditionally. It is about a trip out on the land, hunting caribou in the traditional way; travelling by dog team, hunting on foot and sleeping in an Igloo. The Labrador School Board published it and is using it in schools all over Labrador. The department of education is interested in the material and will probably use it all over the province.

I am a health nut and have been sober for 36 years, don't smoke, don't gamble and I watch what I eat.

## **ELDER COLLABORATOR**

### **Cheryl Bartlett, Canada Research Chair in Integrative Science & Professor of Biology, Cape Breton University**

Cheryl Bartlett, Ph.D., is a Professor of Biology and Canada Research Chair in Integrative Science at Cape Breton University in Sydney, Nova Scotia. She works collaboratively with Mi'kmaw Elders in Unama'ki (Cape Breton) and elsewhere within "Integrative Science", an initiative to bring together Indigenous and mainstream (Western) scientific knowledges and ways of knowing. Areas of co-exploration have included science education, ecosystem stewardship, natural resources management, children's stories, and holistic health. Cheryl, who is non-Aboriginal, grew up in southern Alberta (in the Traditional Territory of the Blackfoot Confederacy) and she was hired at Cape Breton University in 1989. Her original area of specialty in science is the parasites and diseases of wild animals. Her switch into Integrative Science occurred in the 1990s and her work in this regard has been guided closely by Mi'kmaw Elders Murdena and Albert Marshall from Eskasoni First Nation. Together, they have presented on Two-Eyed Seeing locally, regionally, and nationally.