

# **FNI Elder Stories and Profiles**

collected from various sources

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## **ELDER PROFILES: Corner Brook Indian Band**

### **Hubert Duhart (July 1, 1922-), 2005**

Mr. Duhart is one of the most highly respected and honoured elders on the Corner Brook Indian Band. Hubert was born July 1, 1922 in Corner Brook, NL to Timothy Duhart and Lucy Ellen Mitchell, the daughter of well known Aboriginal guide, Mattie Mitchell. He graduated high school in 1938 and took a position a short time later with the Bowater Paper Company, an eleven year old business in the Corner Brook area.

In 1945 Mr. Duhart changed horses in mid stream when he took a position with the Nfld Customs company which was transferred to Customs and Excise Canada. Starting in 1952 he took an appraisal course and was appointed Customs Appraiser. In 1957 Hubert participated in an office management course and became Collector of Customs in 1962. In 1968 he graduated from a course in instructional techniques and in 1971 participated in a course management development . Following this, in 1972, Hubert graduated from the Drug Enforcement course offered by the RCMP and in the same year became Area manager for Customs excise Canada on the West Coast of NL. He retired his position from that government department in 1980 with 35 years of grateful service.

Mr. Duhart is the father of six children; Brenda, Ona, Darrell, Wayne, Myra and Anthony. They are very proud of their father's accomplishments. Hubert recently celebrated his 62nd Anniversary to his beautiful wife Mary (Quann) Durhart and I hope this couple celebrate many more. I am indeed proud and honoured to call this man and his family "friends".

Submitted by Acting Chief Ed Webb, April 27, 2005

## ELDER PROFILES: Corner Brook Indian Band

### Acting-Chief Ellie Edmonds, 2003

*I have served as Acting-Chief of the Corner Brook Indian Band Council for the past year. I have met a lot of interesting people and learned a lot about our culture.*

*I grew up being very aware of my Mi'kmaq ancestry. Going fishing and hunting with my dad and uncle and learning the ways of the land. As a young child I remember being made fun of and called a savage because we were Mi'kmaq. Now people are coming out of the woodwork trying to prove their Mi'kmaq ancestry.*

From the exhibition, "The Mi'kmaw People of Newfoundland: A Celebration."

## ELDER PROFILES: Corner Brook Indian Band

### Paul Pike, 2004

Paul Pike is a Mi'kmaq man from Corner Brook, NL, who now lives in Alaska, and is carrying on the Mi'kmaq culture as a pipe carrier.

*Kwe' Nokamaq,*

*I would like to say that it was such an honor to see so many of our people joining in our cultural activities this year. I almost cried watching you dance and share your stories. Some of you came out to the Pipe Ceremony for the Unity of our people in Corner Brook in July and I had the privilege to pray with you also. Even though I am thousands of miles away in Alaska, I am always trying to stay in touch and keep up to date on what's happening with our Ktaqmkuk Mi'kmaq People.*

*I am very proud to tell our story through traditional and contemporary songs with my band Medicine Dream ([www.medicinedream.com](http://www.medicinedream.com)). Many people of many cultures around the world now know who we are on this Island and about the injustices and slanderous stories told about us by colonial governments. People know that we are a peaceful loving people.*

*This summer I had the honor of working with the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem, Massachusetts identifying Mi'kmaq artifacts in their collection and describing how they were made. I also recorded some of my own traditionally inspired songs. Just recently, Medicine Dream performed at the Kennedy Center in Washington D.C. as part of a multi-cultural celebration. We performed in front of about 34,000 people and they got to hear about our Mi'kmaq way of life on the Island.*

*Good things are happening and all of you are a part of it. My prayers go out to you all.*

*Welalioq aqq nmu'ltes app, Msit Nokamaq,*

Paul Pike (Ketupekiet Sisip - Singing Bird)

From FNI's Mi'kmaq News: Fall 2004

## ELDER PROFILES: Elmastogoeg (Benoit's Cove) Indian Band

### Chief Kevin Barnes, 2003

*It was not until recent years and through genealogy research that I have come to know with certainty my Mi'kmaq ancestry. Growing up this ancestry was not discussed openly and the subject masterfully avoided by my grandmother. Oftentimes there were comments and even accusations about the existence of Indians on my grandmother's side, but the inquisitive mind of a child was easily suppressed and fears alleviated by her frank denial.*

*Although many of us did not readily identify as having aboriginal roots, the customs and values that are documented to be part of the Mi'kmaq culture remained strong throughout the generations and make us who we are today. Hunting, fishing and gathering berries continue to be a necessary part of many families' lives. With the arrival of the Europeans, the aboriginals took on aspects of the European life style therefore diluting their own. However, that does not make the Mi'Kmaq people none the less Mi'Kmaq.*

*Today with the renewal of the Newfoundland Aboriginal culture, I am pleased and proud to say that I am part of that culture. As I research and learn more about Mi'Kmaq culture I come to the realization that this is the culture of a very unique people. Daniel N. Paul, Mi'Kmaq author, describes the pre-European Mi'kmaq culture as a well-developed society founded upon three principles: the supremacy of the Great Spirit, respect for Mother Earth and the equality of all people. The absence of hierarchical differences is one of the best indicators of the advanced Mi'Kmaq human development in which all people were accepted as equals. This is an ideal which modern society is still working toward.*

*I hope that with the heightened interest in the Mi'Kmaq culture comes a better understanding of the true values and beliefs of its people and the stereotypes that are now dominant become somewhat lessened.*

From the exhibition, "The Mi'kmaw People of Newfoundland: A Celebration."

## ELDER PROFILES: Elmastogoeg (Benoit's Cove) Indian Band

### Valmour Compagnon, 2003

*Taking our living from the land was a way of life for my family. Hunting, fishing, gathering berries and wood was a means of survival. Many of the remedies used for the treatment of ailments and injuries came from the land. Some of the traditions of our ancestors still remain today.*

*Times were hard and we all worked hard and didn't have much. But what we did have was a great respect for the land and for each other. There was a great sense of family and community and all were willing to lend a hand to a neighbor, a friend or a family member in need.*

*I would like to see the Mi'kmaq people in Newfoundland receive the recognition that has been denied them for so many years.*

From the exhibition, "The Mi'kmaq People of Newfoundland: A Celebration."

## ELDER PROFILES: Elmastogoeg (Benoit's Cove) Indian Band

**Annie M. Randall (McCarthy), 2003**

*I have been a member of the Benoit's Cove Indian Band Council since 1981. Prior to this period of time I wasn't aware of my aboriginal ancestry as many individuals in NL. One of the greatest kept secrets in Canadian History is that there are Indians in Newfoundland. The majority of my activity as a Mi'kmaq person has been through my employment as the Executive Assistant of the Federation of Newfoundland Indians. I was hired in 1988 and have worked with the organization since that time.*

*The contribution that I personally feel that I have made to the Mi'kmaq advancement in Newfoundland is actively pursuing programs and services with the executive and board of directors for our people. For each individual that the FNI has assisted in completing their education and obtaining employment has started not only an individual on the right track to a better life but an entire family; because chances are that every youth we are assisting today will someday have a family. Each time this is done "I feel great about what we as the FNI are doing."*

*This exhibition is long overdue. But its great to know that so many of our people are eager to expose themselves for who they truly are "Mi'kmaq people of Newfoundland." The injustice that was done in 1949 will no longer be a secret.*

From the exhibition, "The Mi'kmaw People of Newfoundland: A Celebration."



## **ELDER PROFILES: Elmastogoeg (Benoit's Cove) Indian Band**

### **Pat Rumbolt**

Elmastogoeg First Nations has developed much more than how to become a member, with many thanks to Pat Rumbolt we have achieved so much....Mr. Rumbolt was one of those people who tried to make more out of everything each day; he was an exceptional human being. Mr. Rumbolt travelled the country to learn the Mi'kmaq culture and to find out how other bands work. Mr. Rumbolt worked to bring housing to aboriginal persons, as well he brought programs to help people get trades and further their education. And aside from this he also made projects available to members of Elmastogoeg First Nations. Mr. Rumbolt has deceased and to honor him and his hard work and dedication, Elmastogoeg First Nations offers two scholarships in memory of him, entitled The Pat Rumbolt Memorial Scholarship. First Nations still works to accomplish what Mr. Rumbolt worked so hard for, we still offer assistance with regards to funding, projects and many other things.

Submitted to the FNI for their original website.

## **ELDER PROFILES: Elmastogoeg (Benoit's Cove) Indian Band**

### **William Sams**

Elmastogoeg First Nations was formed roughly thirty years ago by Wilson Sams. Mr. Sams was a great leader and founder, Elmastogoeg First Nations would not be what it is today without him. This band council has come a long way since then.

To become a member now, government ancestry criteria (birth certificates, census records etc) is needed; but this strengthens our band because we learn more about where we came from with these records and there are plenty of people willing to help others achieve membership status. We all work together to become a stronger band.

Submitted to the FNI for their original website.

## ELDER PROFILES: Elmastogoeg (Benoit's Cove) Indian Band

### Arthur Vincent, 2003

*To be Mi'kmaq in 2003 provides me the opportunity to be recognized as a Mi'kmaq person.*

*My great-grandfather, father and myself have about 150 years of trapping. I trapped with my father and I remember my great grandfather. My father took his living from the land and sea and so did his ancestors.*

*My hopes for the Mi'kmaq is to be recognized by the Federal and Provincial governments and for these people to give the Mi'kmaq people back their dignity as all other Mi'kmaq people in this country.*

*I knew my identity was Mi'kmaq but the Federation of Newfoundland Indians brought our culture to the forefront in lobbying with Federal Government. The work of the FNI has done a great job with lobbying the Federal Government. Also by the FNI finding genealogical funding to assist in recording our family history on paper.*

*My ancestors came to Newfoundland from Nova Scotia in canoe and landed in Sandy Point and Point Amquill.*

*I had uncles that served in World War I and cousins that served in World War II and I served in the Korean War. I have two cousins in Basneaw [Bosnia]. They joined to give us our freedom we have to day and to maintain it.*

From the exhibition, "The Mi'kmaw People of Newfoundland: A Celebration."

## ELDER PROFILES: Elmastogoeg (Benoit's Cove) Indian Band

### Donald Woods, 2003

*Being a Mi'kmaq person in Newfoundland in 2003 means being treated differently than the other Mi'kmaq throughout the rest of Canada. Although it is easily proven that there are many people with Indian background in Newfoundland we are still without our rights.*

*Many of the ways of our every day life are known to be Mi'kmaq. We still depend on the land to meet our needs. Wild game and fish help feed our families. Wild berries are gathered and done up in jams for the winter.*

*Being of Indian background is not always easy and it is good to see that work is being done to take some of the stigma away. I would like to see the native people of Newfoundland be seen as equal to other native people in Canada. This would be good for our children and grandchildren.*

From the exhibition, "The Mi'kmaw People of Newfoundland: A Celebration."

## ELDER PROFILES: Flat Bay Indian Band

### Dorman Alexander

Dorman Alexander of Flat Bay was only fourteen years old when he first ventured off into the adult world of pulp driving. "There was no such thing as welfare or baby bonus back then," stated Mr. Alexander. So at his young age he started driving pulp in the rivers and ponds in order to help make ends meet. The work was hard but the living conditions were far worse. They would strip small longers or rungs and lay them on the ground with larger logs in between. The logs would divide the sleeping quarters for each man. Small limbs would be cut and stuck between the longers to make a softer bed. Each man would have two blankets and they would use one to cover the limbs and one to cover themselves up. Each year the drives would take them to different areas but in this particular picture they were on a drive on Lady Slipper Road, five miles west of Corner Brook. "We would get the logs into the brook and drive them down to Pinchgut Lake, from there we would drive them down Pinchgut River to George's Lake where Howard's would boom it up," states Mr. Alexander. Howard's was also a loading station for pulp and they would load it up on railcars for the trip to Corner Brook. "We would take the wood from behind Corner Brook and move it further away in order to get it to the train. Water and rail were the cheapest modes of transportation then and there wasn't a lot of equipment to make roads back then either," continues Mr. Alexander. There are still a few of the men around and Mr. Alexander can still recall with detail more of the drives that he was on. "If I told you all the stories I'd keep you here for a long time," he laughed.

Submitted to the FNI for their original website.

## ELDER PROFILES: Elmastogoeg (Benoit's Cove) Indian Band

### Brendan Sheppard, 2003

*I became involved with the aboriginal movement shortly after the inception of the provincial organization, the Native Association of Newfoundland and Labrador in 1971. The provincial organization was headquartered in St. John's, NF and shortly after they were organized, representatives of the Native Association came into our community because their early researched results indicated that there was a well known population of MicMacs (Mi'Kmaq used today) living in the community of Flat Bay, near St. George's.*

*As a result of their visit, the community was encouraged to democratically set up a band council mainly for meeting the requirements to be considered by the federal government for a registration process sometime in the future, even though the community affairs was historically managed through a cultural and traditional process. I was among one of the first band councillors in the community and have since been very active in establishing and serving on the various community committees at the same time promoting and carrying out the many different projects that benefited the community. A great deal of the community projects came about as a result of our affiliation with the predecessor of the Federation of Newfoundland Indians, the Native Association of Newfoundland and Labrador.*

*At different periods of time since the formation of the Flat Bay Indian Band Council in 1972, I served as councillor, vice-chief and chief. The chief's position provided me the opportunity to serve as a director at the board table of the Federation of Newfoundland Indians (FNI). From the beginning of my involvement with the Flat Bay Indian Band Council I had the opportunity to work in several capacities with the band and as well with the FNI, in implementing and promoting programs such as recreation, housing, child care, needs assessment and education which brought me to all other band councils in areas of western Newfoundland.*

*During my involvement with the aboriginal movement I have always maintained a high regard for our culture and traditions and have endeavored to bring others to a realization of their ancestral roots. I am well respected by my colleagues and partners for my strong commitment toward outstanding accountability and fair / equitable treatment for all Mi'Kmaq people of Newfoundland. I strongly believe that my involvement in the past as well as present was and still is instrumental in assisting the organization move closer to it's goals and objectives in securing Federal recognition for it's Mi'Kmaq people.*

*I personally would like to see an agreement in principle signed between the Federation of Newfoundland Indians and the federal department of Indian Affairs which would provide the much needed programs and services, especially economic development which would aid in keeping our most valuable resource, "our young people" in our own territory.*

From the exhibition, "The Mi'kmaw People of Newfoundland: A Celebration."

## **ELDER PROFILES: Elmastogoeg (Benoit's Cove) Indian Band**

### **Mary Webb (1881 - 1978)**

Mary Webb (née Francis) was born in the Codroy Valley, where a small band of Mi'kmaq had traditionally occupied the area that was granted to the Roman Catholic Church in the early 1880s. She later moved to the Mi'kmaq community in Flat Bay, where she married Tom Webb and raised a family of nine children as well as five of her grand-children. Mary Webb was a midwife who assisted with the births of more than seven hundred babies, often traveling by horse and sled, dog-team or on snowshoes to reach expecting mothers. A hunter, trapper and gatherer of wild foods, she was also knowledgeable in the traditional medicinal uses of plants. In addition to speaking Mi'kmaq, Mary Webb was fluent in Gaelic, English and French. As one of her friends said: "Mary was a kind, gentle lady, highly respected and will remain a legendary person in Flat Bay."

From the website: [www.nlmikmaq.com](http://www.nlmikmaq.com)



## **ELDER PROFILES: Elmastogoeg (Benoit's Cove) Indian Band**

### **Danny White**

Danny White is a Mi'kmaq man who has carried on his grandfather's talent of making spruce root baskets. It is a Mi'kmaq tradition that goes back to our ancestors who used the baskets to gather berries or food. Danny has managed to keep his grandfather, and his father's memory alive in the passing on of this Mi'kmaq craft. Since the passing on of his father, Danny is one of the only known people in Newfoundland to make baskets of this type. Danny has been teaching his nephew to carry on the basket making, and provided the youth with a demonstration of his work.

Submitted to FNI by the youth director

## **ELDER PROFILES: Glenwood Mi'Kmaq First Nations**

### **Chief Larry Jeddore (1922 - 1998)**

Chief Larry Jeddore was the Chief of the Glenwood Indian Band Council and a member of the board of directors of the Federation of Newfoundland Indians (FNI) for more than twenty-five years. During these years, he worked tirelessly to obtain federal government recognition of his people as status Indians under the terms of Canada's Indian Act. Chief Jeddore could have been recognized as a status Indian after 1984; however, due to his dedication to the Federation of Newfoundland Indians and its membership, Chief Jeddore held back in the hope that all the Federation's members would be recognized. As a result of his efforts on behalf of the members of the Glenwood Indian Band Council, most of the band's members are now recognized as Aboriginal people.

Even when his health was failing him, Chief Larry Jeddore always attended the Federation of Newfoundland Indians board meetings and annual assemblies where his presence and prayers for his brothers and sisters were always uplifting. Throughout his life, Chief Jeddore retained his language and his Mi'kmaq culture; he was a highly respected role model for Aboriginal people. His memory serves as an inspiration to all Newfoundland Mi'kmaq people.

From the website: [www.nlmikmaq.com](http://www.nlmikmaq.com)

## ELDER PROFILES: Glenwood Mi'Kmaq First Nations

### Chief Tony John, 2003

*To be living as a Mi'kmaq person in Newfoundland in 2003, gives me mixed feelings about the subject. It's not that I am not proud of being who I am, I am very proud of my aboriginal heritage. It's the non-recognition by Newfoundland and Canada that get my hair up. How convenient it would have been if we were exterminated like our brothers and sisters the Beothuck. Then of course, we would get all kinds of recognition, dead recognition. The Government of Canada just recently announced the rights and recognition of the Gay and Lesbian couples to be married as couples, as you can see my point is that gay couples have been given more recognition than the Newfoundland Mi'kmaq.*

*As a small boy, I remember families of Mi'kmaq departing the train station in Glenwood. These Mi'kmaq families were from Cape Breton, Nova Scotia. They were basket makers and sellers. They would stay at grandparents James and Helen John. They would come to sell their baskets to American and European tourist who came here to fish and hunt. These families of the Mi'kmaq spoke fluently in Mi'kmaq and carried on many conversations in Mi'kmaq with my grandparents.*

*I spend a considerable amount of time or as much time as I can hunting and fishing and gathering food for my family.*

*The hopes that I have for the Mi'kmaq of Newfoundland is that they will finally be recognized and granted all the rights and privileges to which they are accorded.*

*Our Mi'kmaq identity was apparent and nurtured.*

*I was always told my grandparents and parents that the Mi'kmaq were here long before the Beothucks and surely before the arrival of any Europeans.*

*My father Gregory John spent four (4) years and 264 days in France, Belgium, Germany and Holland during World War II. He volunteered, it was his duty.*

From the exhibition, "The Mi'kmaw People of Newfoundland: A Celebration."

## ELDER PROFILES: Glenwood Mi'kmaq First Nations

### Marie Vaters, 2003

*The first meeting of the Native Association of Newfoundland and Labrador now known as the Federation of Newfoundland Indians took place at Hotel Gander, Newfoundland on February 2-4, 1973. I can look back and see where history has repeated itself, because my uncle, Greg John, helped to get this organization started and today 2003, his son Tony John, Chief of the Glenwood Mi'kmaq First Nations along with nine other Mi'kmaq bands represented by the Federation of Newfoundland Indians still continue to advocate for federal recognition as Indian Act Bands or equivalency to Indian Act bands. Even our goals and objectives are the same, which is to preserve, promote and advance the culture, health, economic, educational and social well-being of our people including our language. Being a Mi'kmaq in 1973 wasn't as acceptable as it is today. This was just the beginning because prior to this, no one was as vocal in demanding our rights as aboriginal people, as we are today. We went from being "the savage people" by Richard Whitbourne to being called Indians, then natives and now referred to as aboriginal or Mi'kmaq. Today some of the members of the Glenwood Mi'kmaq First Nations who have direct relatives living in Conne River have gained their Indian Status. Through this we have access to Non-Insured Health Programs, and Post Secondary Education. Even though we have access to those programs, we still have no political gains in terms of other programs and services for our communities and recognition for our other non-status Mi'kmaq listed with our band, but progress is being made and we are being heard. The end result will be something that we as Mi'kmaq people will be proud off, and at the end of the day we will not be afraid to say who we are and what we stand for.*

*My memories consist of my grandparent's James and Helen John, both of who walked from Conne River to Glenwood where they settled and raised their families. My biggest memories were of listening to my grandfather telling stories about hunting and fishing. He would try to get me to say sugar, milk and butter in Mi'kmaq but me as a child had no interest. My grandfather was a well-known man who worked guiding on the Gander River and hunted on the Northwest Gander between Glenwood and Conne River. Many books still exist today with stories written about him. My involvement with the Glenwood Mi'kmaq First Nations for the last twenty-five years gave me lots of memories after working with the Late Chief Larry Jeddore. Chief Jeddore was fluent in Mi'kmaq and every word he spoke made me proud to stand by him at all functions and gatherings over the years. No one was more dedicated to the Mi'kmaq gaining recognition than Chief Jeddore.*

*My hopes are that we will all be treated as equal.*

*My identity was always part of my awareness. My grandparents were always referred to as Indians. You never really acknowledged your identity when I was growing up, even though you knew, because you were looked down on. I was always aware of my aboriginal ancestry because when I was growing up the people of Conne River were working here and many of them lived with my grandparents and my parents, and we always had visitors from Nova Scotia that came every year selling baskets who would stay at their home. We always knew these people were Mi'kmaq people like ourselves.*

*The only thing I remember my grandparents saying about our ancestors was that they were from Conne River. There was never any mention of coming from anywhere other than Conne and how they got here, meaning Glenwood. The only other information came from reading books.*

*My Uncle Greg John fought in World War II. I'm not sure why he joined up. My mother only talked about his leaving to go to war and his return.*

From the exhibition, "The Mi'kmaw People of Newfoundland: A Celebration."

## ELDER PROFILES: Other

### Frank Russell

Mi'kmaq poet Frank Russell has been writing seriously for almost ten years. Frank's poems have a Mi'kmaq or Newfoundland theme. As an activist on environmental issues, he often speaks on his specific concerns for Newfoundland and the world at large.

As a gifted aboriginal poet, Frank has had offers to have his poems recorded by song companies such as Columine Record Corporation USA and Country Music USA. Frank's poem, Honey, was selected for publication by Quill Books of Harlington, Texas. The book of poetry entitled "Silent Serenade-Volume 1", was created to promote and recognize novice poets. Closer to home, Frank's poems are often seen in the DownHomer, the Newfoundland Herald, and the Georgian.

In 2003, he was awarded the title "Mother Earth Guardian" by chiefs of the Bay St. George Band for his demonstrated genuine concern for the earth.

From various sources including FNI's Mi'kmaq News: Spring 2003.

## ELDER PROFILES: Port au Port Indian Band

### Chief Laetitia "Litty" MacDonald, 2003

*Today I am proud to say that I am Mi'Kmaq. It wasn't always the case. Growing up if you mentioned the word Indian you were laughed at so you soon learned not to talk about it. Even, at times you might find yourself denying it.*

*If this was the case in my lifetime imagine what it was like for our ancestors. My grandparents have told about the times they were pelted with rocks and called savages, not for anything they had done but because of who they were.*

*My family have always hunted fished, picked berries and used some traditional remedies. They lived off the land as much as their surroundings allowed. Unfortunately my great-grandmother who used to go out behind the house to chant and pray never passed any customs on to her family. It would seem she was afraid to publicly say who she was.*

*Thank God today, because of the relentless efforts of many people, there is a new awareness of what it means to be Mi'kmaq and a pride in being one. I have been a part of the Mi'Kmaq movement in Newfoundland for the past twenty years. During that time I have worked to promote the Mi'kmaq culture and way of life. I have also worked with others in the hopes of one day gaining the recognition that has been given to our brothers elsewhere. Currently I serve as Chief of the Port au Port Band and show by example that we can be proud of whom we are.*

From the exhibition, "The Mi'kmaw People of Newfoundland: A Celebration."

## ELDER PROFILES: Sple'tk (Exploits) Indian Band

### Gerald Beaton, 2003

*My name is Gerald Beaton, the son of Roland Beaton and the grandson of Mary Paul Beaton. I was born and raised in Wigwam Point. This is a well-known documented Micmac hunting and fishing place. There is a Micmac gravesite on this land. I recently donated this historic property and its deed dated October 6, 1868, to the Sple'tk First Nations Band where they are going to put an Interpretation Centre focusing on the Mi'kmaq, Beothuck and European peoples. I have lived my life promoting this site and telling of my Micmac heritage. My dream is to see this centre completed and bring back all the people who used to come here years ago.*

From the exhibition, "The Mi'kmaw People of Newfoundland: A Celebration."



## ELDER PROFILES: Sple'tk (Exploits) Indian Band

### Margaret Hopfel, 2003

*My name is Margaret (John) Hopfel. I am a 76 year old elder with the Exploit's Indian Band in Grand Falls, Newfoundland. I am the daughter of Peter W. John, born in Conne River on December 17, 1901. My father could recall stories of when his father, Louis John, was growing up, about his father Peter John having contact with the now extinct Beothuck Indians. My father, Peter John could recall how his grandfather and his relatives made moccasins, baskets, and snowshoes. As a young boy my father traveled with his father, grandfather and uncle, Billy John by canoe and camped in wigwams. My father, Peter used to say he remembered how his grandfather stood very tall and he was a fine specimen of what the Indian once was belonging to the old type, and proud of the traditions and his race. My grandfather, Louis John, and his brother Billy, and his father, Peter John were experienced guides. Most Aboriginal people have enjoyed picking partidgeberries, raspberries, wild strawberries, blueberries and bakeapples from natures bountiful gardens over the years and will continue to do so.*

*I remember one time in particular my father went moose hunting and no trace of a moose and the very next day a moose walked through the neighbor's yard next door. I like to think that there are still some parts of Newfoundland that are untrodden and maybe streams on which a canoe has never floated, and mountains ranges that have never sent back the echo of a gun. Could there still be vast unmapped land over which the herds of caribou could still roam unmolested?*

From the exhibition, "The Mi'kmaw People of Newfoundland: A Celebration."

## ELDER PROFILES: Sple'tk (Exploits) Indian Band

### Kathleen Humber, 2003

*I was born Kathleen John, August 22, 1926 here in Grand Falls, Newfoundland. I am the daughter of Louis John, son of Peter John from Conne River. I grew up in Grand Falls and lived here all my life. I am very proud of my father, Louie John, who was a well-known guide, trapper, hunter and storyteller. He never believed in hunting for more than you could eat. He would never let any of his people he took in the woods kill an animal unless they would agree that if they didn't want the meat, he could give it to a needy family. My father was also known for making medicine from the trees, roots and berries. The town of Grand Falls-Windsor has named a Nature Preserve in his honour. I am the youngest and sole survivor of fourteen children. I have passed on many stories of my past to my six children, thirteen grandchildren and my thirteen great-grandchildren.*

*I have shared my knowledge with my fellow band members and participate in all band activities. I believe that you should share what you know about your past, as this is how our heritage and culture will survive.*

From the exhibition, "The Mi'kmaw People of Newfoundland: A Celebration."

## ELDER PROFILES: Sple'tk (Exploits) Indian Band

### Terry Mills

#### BOTWOOD MAN RECEIVES AQUACULTURE AWARD

Terry Mills Has been fish farming for almost 19 years now, but the former well-experienced commercial diver had a few hurdles to get over before he got the recognition he deserved.

He got the idea for fish farming while he was diving. He decided to start with scallops but soon realized that he needed another source of income in order to run the day to day business. The growth cycle for scallops was 3-4 years while mussels only had a growth cycle of 18 months. So while he waited for scallops to mature he started with mussels.

Of course bad times are all a part of starting up a business and Mr. Mills was no exception. At one point he lost 2 million scallops over night. The Arctic ice also caused damage, this was trying as he had put all his life savings into the business. At a point when most people would have given up, Mr.Mills hung on. His love of living in Newfoundland kept him persevering and he was always optimistic about fish farming to help rural Newfoundlanders.

His commitment to the industry was rewarded when he was presented with the first aquaculturist of the year award at the Newfoundland and Labrador Aquaculture Industry Association's annual general meeting.

Now Mr. Mills operates two well established businesses on the Island, Thimble Bay farms and Black Gold Incorporated. His farm employs six people with plans to expand to eleven.

*Information for this story taken with permission of optipress publishing.*

From FNI's MI'kmaq News: Spring 2003

## ELDER PROFILES: Sple'tk (Exploits) Indian Band

### Ignatius "Nish" Paul, 2003

*My name is Ignatius Paul, son of Frank Paul and the grandson of John Paul, who were both trappers in the Badger area. I have lived in Badger all my life and I am now 65 years of age. When I was younger I trapped and fished with my father, Frank and I continue to do the things that he taught me. Also, I am still walking in his trails along the banks of the Exploits River where I built a hunting and fishing lodge known as Eagle's Haven Lodge.*

*I pass on my skills to anyone who asks and I am willing to share my heritage with others. Being from Badger, my father and myself worked on the Badger Drive in the 1960's as boatmen. We also did a regeneration of trees on the Exploit's River. That experience alone is worth passing on to everyone.*

From the exhibition, "The Mi'kmaw People of Newfoundland: A Celebration."

## ELDER PROFILES: Sple'tk (Exploits) Indian Band

### Chief Nellie Power, 2003

*My Name is Nellie Power and I was born in Glenwood, Newfoundland. I am the granddaughter of James and Ellen (Benoit) John, both members of the Mi'kmaq Nation, who migrated to Glenwood from Conne River in the early 1900's. I remember as a young girl accompanying my grandparents, parents as well as aunts and uncles as they hunted, trapped and fished the Gander River area and its watershed. They also took me on trips into the forest to harvest wild berries and to point out various types of vegetation, which could be used for medicinal purposes. These outings instilled in me a strong love of nature, which continues to be an important part of my life.*

*Presently I am the Chief of the Sple'tk First Nations, a position I have held since 1989. I am very proud of my Mi'kmaq heritage and was instrumental in establishing this Band Council. Through the council I have strived to help preserve our culture and traditions and to provide an opportunity for our younger generation to learn from our elders. My main goal is to ensure that our traditions and culture will continue to be a vibrant part of a modern society.*

From the exhibition, "The Mi'kmaw People of Newfoundland: A Celebration."

## ELDER PROFILES: St George's Indian Band

### Anselm Benoit

Anselm Benoit is originally from the Port au Port Peninsula but is now living in St. George's and is part of the St. George's Indian Band. Anselm has always been artistry inclined, during winter, since he moved to St. George's, the local people get to see some of his artistry in snow sculptures that he creates with his son Cameron. During his time as a night watchman for a company called LoadStone he took up carving while he worked, he carved out of gypsum, which was plentiful at Turf Point, where his night watchman job was. He gave away most of his finished carvings to co-workers who admired his work. He didn't do any more carving after that experience until 2003 when he decided to try to bring his talents in sculpting to a new avenue, and began with a new medium, which was moose and caribou antler carving. He found that this was something that he excelled at. Another successful carver, Scott Butt, taught Anselm the proper tools that were used for this type of carving. Once Anselm started carving from moose and caribou antlers he set up a shop to focus on this type of carving. His first carvings had little detail, but now he has begun to carve with much more detail and he is becoming a very accomplished artist in his own right. Anselm has carved over 200 pieces and has been successful in selling several pieces recently. Look for Anselm to become a very successful carver and be proud that he can be called one of our own Aboriginal Artists.

From FNI's MI'kmaq News: Spring 2005

## ELDER PROFILES: St George's Indian Band

### Chief Violet Benoit-Dawson, 2003

*Kwe,*

*My name is Violet Benoit-Dawson, Chief of the St. George's Indian Band. I was born January 13th, 1955 in the historical village of "Seal Rocks". I first got involved with the St. George's Indian Band by assisting Chief Victor James Muise Jr. with the group known as the "Quimo Traditional Dancers and Drummers". I travelled with this group throughout the island of Newfoundland and beyond, promoting our Mi'kmaq culture and identity. This was the role I played for several years until the summer of 2001 when I decided to offer myself as a candidate of the position of Chief. The band was going through a crisis and several band members requested my assistance. I was elected Chief of the St. George's Indian Band in November 2001. Since then with the support of my excellent board of directors, band members and the Federation of Newfoundland Indians, the crisis has been resolved. As Chief, I continue to support the programs that have been implemented by the Federation of Newfoundland Indians and I also continue to do what has always been my first passion that being to promote cultural awareness and a sense of pride in our Mi'kmaq Heritage.*

*Growing up in the small village of "Seal Rocks", I was always aware of my "Indian" ancestry. My Uncle Nolan and my grandmother, Rose Blanche would often speak of it. I was much older before I learned I was Mi'kmaq. Everyone used the term "Indian". My Uncle Nolan would tell the boys how to ask a girl out in "Indian". Sometimes a certain behavior on someone's part would evoke the comment, "not hard to tell you're an Indian". If you forgot something, they would say, "You're as bad as Antigish". If you had an infected cut and made up a poultice to go over it, they would say, "You'll soon be as good as Joe Paul". Joe Paul was a medicine man who lived in Barachois Brook. My grandmother would say to me and my friends when we'd be making a noise, "Oh you Kwajus." I still don't know what she meant. I can only assume from the context in which she used it that the work "kwajus" translated to rascals.*

*I was told that my people came from Nova Scotia and when the "Basket Women" from Nova Scotia would come to my grandmother's in the summer time, they didn't come to sell baskets. When they came in they put their baskets down in the entry way and had tea, a lunch and a chat with my grandmother. They spoke in a language I didn't understand, something that I was all too familiar with as a child. We had to speak English if we were to do well in school. A second language was only spoken by the adults. When I was a teenager I assumed that my elders spoke another*

*language because they didn't want us to know what they were talking about. But that probably wasn't it at all, they were most likely speaking the language that was more familiar to them.*

*Indians make the best guides, "know the country like the back of my hand", "don't need no map or compass". My great-great-grandfather, Maxim Benoit piloted (term meaning cut a trail or blazed a trail) for the Newfoundland Railway. My great-great-great uncle Francois Benoit Jr. was captain of the schooner known as the "Jane". A schooner that was built by the Mi'kmaq people of "Seal Rocks" in 1822. My brother often speaks of my grandfather's skill as a hunter and guide, having had the opportunity to observe him at his best in the woods. Senses alert, head quickly moving from side to side detecting the slightest sound or movement in the forest around him. His tall lean form disappearing into the woods for a moment or two only to reappear this time perhaps behind my brother, eyes darting left, finger to his lips letting his grandson know to remain very still. A moose or caribou was close by.*

*"She's so good with her hands", "Just look at the wrong side of her embroidery work, it's as good as the right", Her stitches are so small, How strong she is, as good as any man". My grandmother, Rose Blanche Benoit taught me how to knit, crochet, embroider, clean fish, mend nets, hook rugs, skin a rabbit, play cards, cook, clean and sing an Indian song, "Kutchee honnad nay yah". We spent countless hours on the land together picking blueberries and bake apples, gathering seashells, or simply walking and talking. She and I would visit the homes of our neighbors every day. Times were hard but everyone shared what they had with each other back then. My grandmother would bring food and comfort to any one who was ill or living alone. She knew every one and everyone knew her. She loved and cared for her family, her people and the land. She taught me an appreciation for the earth and all the creatures who dwell on her by always pointing out things to me like the beauty of a sunset, the wildflowers, the ocean, the clouds, sea shells, dragonflies, an eagle in flight, grey jays or "whiskey jacks", the moon, the stars and rainbows. She would get me to observe the crows with her and she would say, "Crows are the smartest of all the birds, they are survivors, but remember this anytime you see only one Crow you must cross it out or it will be the death of someone if you don't." I would say, Grandmother, I thought the eagles were the smartest birds, and her reply was, "Eagles don't have to be smart they just have to be eagles". Spending time on the land is something I still love to do whenever I can. One of my favorite special places is 'Steel Mountain". I use to hike up there all the time, now I only go once a year on Aboriginal Day as part of our celebration. The view from the top of Steel Mountain is breathtaking. Through the years I have gone there alone many times to meditate, reflect and seek direction.*



*To be a Mi'kmaq person in Newfoundland in 2003 means to be proud of who I am and where I came from. I'm blessed to be living in a time when I don't have to feel compelled to try to hide my identity as my grandparents did. It is an exciting time of renewal, of coming together of our people, of nation building. It is a time of respect and acceptance of our culture and identity by others. A time when our people can openly share our stories, poems, paintings, carvings, customs and dreams that have been hidden for too long. I give thanks to the Creator for having granted me the privilege of being alive in a time when I can witness my people coming out of the shadows and into the light.*

*What do I want for the future for my people? Simply put, I want them to be the best that they can be. I want to see a return to traditional values, respect for ourselves, each other, our elders, mother earth and all the Creator have given us. I want to look into the faces of our youth and see the return of the pride that was stolen from our ancestors. I want to see my people raised up and given the recognition and status they deserve as the nation's first people.*

*Nogamah*

*Wellolin*

*Taho*

From the exhibition, "The Mi'kmaw People of Newfoundland: A Celebration."

## ELDER PROFILES: St George's Indian Band

### Victor James Muise Jr., 2003

*The greatest reward I received in life is knowing that when I stand in society (I can identify myself as a Mi'kmaq Indian) I know who I am and that means a lot to me. English words has no meaning of being Mi'kmaq Indian.*

*My ancestors who knew the land spent their lives living the spirit of the land. Their memories lie in the forest, streams and fields. I have traveled the land, sometimes doing ancient ceremonies, prospecting and leisure contentment. My ancestors' memories are the land, mountains, streams and the sea that we are grateful for.*

*I hope all Mi'kmaq people will unite and receive in our generation a rightful place in Canada, that our youth be strong, gentle and kind so they may be recognized as people who are proud and noble, and people of the light. For we are the first people of this land that we call Canada. I hope that we remain to be wise in order to maintain our Indian identity.*

*Since I've been a young man everyone called me Jimmy two feathers. Now I stand in society wearing two eagle feathers as a recognized Spiritual Leader. My identity was given to me by my name James (in Mi'kmaq, Sage).*

*From the elders I heard a lot of stories, not how they came to Newfoundland, but how they were born and lived for the land and off the land. I heard from a ninety two year old Mi'kmaq elder who did not want to be recognized because he was afraid.*

*My grandfather had a fox ranch and while I visited him he would tell me stories of a great white moose and his trapping life. These stories were very exciting.*

*An elder by the name of Joe Paul gave me a pipe and told me how sacred the smoke and pipe meant to him. He would speak a language that is almost forgotten. Now I'm somewhat ashamed that I don't know my language.*

*Many of the elders told me that many changes in the world are coming. It is only now I can see what the elder people meant. The elder people told me the Indian people received hard times from the government when they first came in contact with the Europeans.*

From the exhibition, "The Mi'kmaw People of Newfoundland: A Celebration."

## **ELDER PROFILES: St George's Indian Band**

### **Howard Skinner**

Howard Skinner, a member of the St. George's Indian band has recently tried his hand at spruce root basket weaving, an almost forgotten Mi'kmaq craft in this area. Skinner first became interested in this craft after watching a video of Anthony White and his son Danny on how to make a spruce root basket. Although the video was good, Skinner soon realized there was a great deal of work associated with the making of a basket. Type of tree had to be figured out for the rim and handle, young maple saplings are his favorite. How to properly gather the spruce roots, peeling and splitting the roots, building a mold, plus so much more had to be done. In all Mr. Skinner estimates the whole process takes forty hours, from gathering to weaving. Only three roots per tree are taken, making this process environmentally friendly. To date he has made three baskets, all of which he has given away as gifts.

From FNI's Mi'kmaq News: Fall 2003

## ELDER PROFILES: St George's Indian Band

### Josephine Spicer., 2003

*Father Clarence d'Entremont, a distant cousin and great historian confirmed my Mi'kmaq heritage when he wrote my nephew in 1967. He was preparing a book on the Acadian Families and wanted information on Mose Muise who settled in Newfoundland. This Mose Muise was my grandfather who came to Newfoundland in 1895 from Cheticamp, Nova Scotia. He traveled with his wife Lucy McNeil and their eight children along with Bishop Neil McNeil. Mose was only to come for a short time but loved the community of St. George's, Newfoundland and decided it was a nice place to raise his children and made St. George's his home. Mose was a Blacksmith and helped with the building of the church.*

*I corresponded with Father Clarence d'Entremont for many years, he visited me many times and we became great friends. I can thank him for much of the knowledge I have today on my ancestry.*

*I was born Feb. 14th, 1931 in St. George's, Newfoundland. My parents were John Muise and Mary Frances Renaud. We were fourteen in family. John was the son of Mose.*

*My father always told us we had Mi'Kmaq ancestry but never stressed it, and after talking with Father Clarence I wanted to know more. I loved history and spent many years doing family research. I was always proud to have Mi'Kmaq ancestry and longed for Mi'Kmaq culture revival and over the years I became much involved with the affiliation of the first Indian Band Council in St. George's, Newfoundland in the year 1985. I was recognized as an elder with the band until I could no longer attend the meetings due to illness.*

*As a family we worked the land. We planted our own vegetables and stored them for the cold winter days. My brothers hunted for wild animals and fish. We also gathered berries for jams for the winter. We really lived as Mi'Kmaq people.*

*We were always taught to respect people, to help anyone in need, to respect ourselves and be proud of who we were.*

*Today in 2003 we can continue to be proud of all our Ancestors and we can now identify that we are Mi'Kmaq peoples and stand proud and pass our stories on to our children and grandchildren so they can continue to pass this great culture on from generation to generation.*

*My Uncle Mose Muise (my father's brother) fought for this great land in World War I. In World War II my brother Peter Muise fought in the navy and another brother Walter Muise who fought and died there in 1941 in Scotland.*

*Lets continue to fight for this great land with its many cultures.*

From the exhibition, "The Mi'kmaw People of Newfoundland: A Celebration."

## ELDER PROFILES: Miawpukek First Nation, Conne River, Newfoundland

### Marilyn John, 2003

*To be Mi'Kmaq in Newfoundland in 2003 makes me proud because unlike 1949 our people are better informed about what is taking place around them. Children can be proud of their culture without being forced to feel shame and the opportunities for them are endless.*

*My memories of my ancestors are when I was still a small child listening to our elders speak in their native tongue. Sometimes if we did something wrong, they would grump at us in Mi'kmaq. I remember some of the traditions during wakes and funerals. Listening to stories by my grandfather about the "little people". Listening to stories by my dad about his first hunting and trapping trips as a boy, listening to my grandfather tell how we came to be part "Beothuck", listening to the elders talk about various medicines, sitting at my upstairs bedroom window on a bright winter moonlights night listening as my dad and his trapping partner rode the dog drawn sled piled high with furs and fresh meat down the country trail to our house.*

*I spent many summers picking berries with my family on the high barren country. During this time we also hunted ducks and geese. Sometimes while we picked berries my dad hunted beavers in the ponds. We had to pick enough berries to last the winter. We sometimes went with my dad to check his traps. I spent some time with my cousin and her dad on his trapline. We spent our early summers on the river catching and preserving salmon for the winter. I still do a little berry picking and some hunting.*

*My hopes of the Mi'kmaq of my homeland is that they will strengthen their cultural awareness and use their culture and traditions through dance and songs to bring its richness to other people.*

*I would hope to live long enough to once again hear the language spoken in our homes. I would like our children to be very proud of their culture. That our children can also be educated and competitive outside their culture is also part of my dream. Sharing and respect was one of the biggest teachings of our people and I would like to see that continue to be taught.*

*My Mi'kmaq identity was always a part of my awareness. I am very dark skinned and have distinct aboriginal features. It was impossible not to be aware of it. The language was still spoken around us. Our problem was not being proud of who we were because being Indian or Micmac had a bad stigmatism attached to it. Being a Micmac or Indian back when I was a child meant you were a dirty, greasy, Micmac and not something to be proud off. We were made to feel inferior.*

*I never really heard anything about my ancestors coming to Newfoundland. According to my grandparents their ancestors were always here. Some other Mi'kmaq people came from Cape Breton to visit. Some of them stayed and some of our people went there to live but this was always our homeland. The elders spoke often of the numerous trips they made on foot and by caribou hide canoe to many other parts of the island.*

*I am very concerned about the intermarriage among our children and children of non-native cultures. I see our people fast disappearing in this way. I believe in freedom of choice for partners as long as we're aware of the impact it will have on us as a people. We need not worry about the governments forcing us to integrate and assimilate because we are doing this to ourselves. Silent assimilation is our worst enemy. I believe that silent assimilation will be the end of our culture, as we know it.*

From the exhibition, "The Mi'kmaw People of Newfoundland: A Celebration."

## ELDER PROFILES: Other

### **Mattie Mitchell (1846 - 1921)**

Matthew "Mattie" Mitchell made an exceptional contribution to the exploration and mapping of the Northern Peninsula of Newfoundland. A renowned Mi'kmaq hunter, in 1904 he guided a party of up the peninsula, where his extensive knowledge of waterways and other geographical features led to the drawing of the first map of the region. His discovery in 1905 of valuable ore deposits in Buchans resulted in the further development of the island's mining industry in the twentieth century.

Compiled from various sources: [nlmikmaq.com](http://nlmikmaq.com)