



### **Marilyn Simon Ingram, Elsipogtog First Nation**

My name is Marilyn Simon Ingram, and I am the daughter of Stephen John Simon and Jane Alice Dedam of Elsipogtog, New Brunswick. I am a survivor of the Shubenacadie Indian Residential School (IRS). I have a large extended family, include five siblings, who are also Indian Residential School Survivors. I attended the IRS from 1963 to 1965. I remember everything that happened to me in the Ressie, but I do not wish to dwell on the past or share that story of my life here. I do not want to relive the blinding hate that once robbed me of my enjoyment in life. I decided to forgive and heal so that I can move on in life.

I have two daughters, Victoria Irene Warner and Debbie Marie Hilliard Cyr. My children have been absent from my life for many years, a devastating result of the impacts of the residential school. Today, my daughters and grandchildren are coming home to me and we are reconnecting and building relationships and beginning to heal. I am so thankful and blessed to have been given a second chance to be a mother and a grandmother and a great-grandmother to my great-granddaughter, Savannah. I pray for reconciliation for my family.

To compensate for my losses, I chose to work to educate the children and youth in my community. I always tell the children how much they mean to me and do a lot for them because I missed being with my own children as they were growing up. I embraced our cultural teachings and learned about our Mi'kmaw history from my Mom and my Elders. The Elders trusted me with their stories and I promised to remember them when I shared their teachings.

I have worked at Kouchibouguac National Park as a Park Interpreter for 15 years. I created an Aboriginal Day Camp program to teach the history of the Mi'kmaq. I am mentoring a young man to lead the day camps when I retire.

My most rewarding work has been as a volunteer Survivors Advocate with the Mi'kmaq Maliseet Healing Networking Centre (MMHNC). In 2012-2013, we worked with survivors from Tobique, Elsipogtog and Esgenooetitj to produce the documentary film, "We Carry Each Other's Memories." We worked with survivors and students on the Project of the Heart to create the Wampum Belt sculpture, which is currently on display in the University of New Brunswick in Fredericton. In 2014, I wrote a book called, *Trails of Hope and Light*, with Allison Green, documenting the survivors working with students in Project of Heart. We are currently selling copies of this book to raise funds to develop and implement healing and support programs for our IRS descendants.

I am an author of children's books and a columnist for the Elsipogtogewey – Heart of the People publication. I am an Indigenous presenter educating on many topics, including Mi'kmaw history and legends, speaking in universities, schools and community organizations. As a motivational speaker for the youth, I tell them to embrace their spirituality, whether their beliefs are traditional or religious, to help them to live a good life.