

# Elder Dr. Albert Marshall



Elders in our Midst

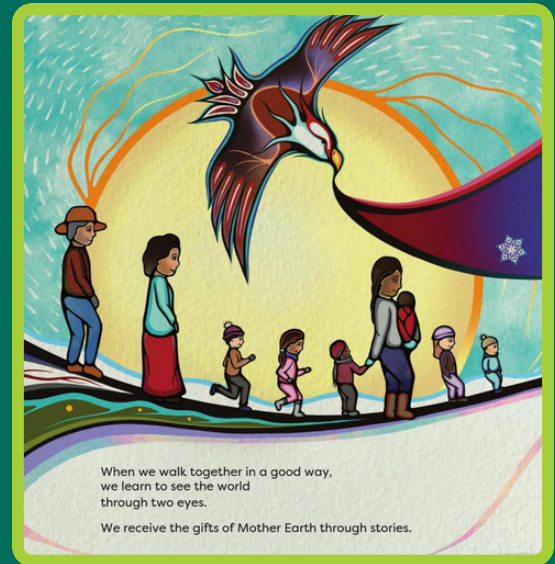
## Tell us about your work

As an Elder advisor with Cape Breton's Unama'ki Institute of Natural Resources, I promote sustainable practices to protect Mi'kmaq lands and waters. In 2011 my dedication to protecting these lands for generations motivated me to help secure UNESCO biosphere status for Bras d'Or Lake Bras d'Or Lake, conserving its unique ecological and cultural significance. This is one of my proudest achievements. My work is rooted in a lifelong commitment to preserving Mi'kmaq culture and advocating for our natural environment.



I'm also passionate about revitalizing the Mi'kmaq language and cultural traditions. Over the years, I have mentored youth and led workshops, sharing traditional knowledge to ensure it continues. I also support the Institute for Integrative Science and Health at Cape Breton University, bringing Indigenous and Western knowledge together in a unique, holistic approach to learning.

Recently, I wrote *Walking Together*, a children's book that introduces young readers to Two-Eyed Seeing, a framework that combines Indigenous and Western perspectives.



## How did you get into this work?

In the 1970s, my family experienced severe health issues from exposure to Agent Orange, a toxic herbicide sprayed in Nova Scotia. This experience collided with my deep respect for the Mi'kmaq concept of Netukulimk, which emphasizes using the Creator's gifts wisely and with moderation.



I sold my business and dedicated my life to raising awareness about harmful chemicals and environmental issues. My role as a leader has grown naturally from my commitment to the land and my culture. I see the awards and honorary doctorates I have received as acknowledgments of the importance of our collective mission.

## What makes your work hard?



It is hard to continuously confront both the environmental harm caused by human activity and the widespread indifference to it. Real change requires everyone's participation—not just policymakers. Encouraging people to shift their attitudes and habits around sustainability is a slow process that takes patience and persistence.

## What gives you hope?

I have great hope in the younger generation. When my young grandson expressed concern about picking dandelions because they're important for bees I was reminded that children often have an innate wisdom, and it's our responsibility to nurture it. There's nothing more powerful than seeing shared understanding take root in the younger generation which has so much potential to create a sustainable future.

For me, a good day is when people genuinely listen to each other, and when young people show an eagerness to protect the environment. Their awareness and willingness to address environmental issues make me believe in a better future.



## What keeps you awake at night?

What troubles me most is society's silence and inaction in the face of environmental crises. It feels like acceptance of ecological harm. I worry about the strain human activity has placed on the planet's ability to recover. Without a major shift in our actions, I fear the damage could become irreversible. As I often say, "The forest is our pantries, our medicine chests, our thermometers, and our classrooms. If she isn't healthy, we cannot be healthy."



## What do you see if we get this right?



I see a world where people live in harmony with nature, honouring cultural and ecological diversity. Embracing Two-Eyed Seeing allows us to truly value our natural and cultural heritage. This vision is essential for the well-being of future generations. We must think about the impact of every decision we make to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past.

## What would you like to say to younger readers?

To young readers, I want to say: you have the power to create change. Keep pushing for a sustainable world. Know that you're not alone; there are many elders like me who are here to support you. We know your voices and actions are critical in shaping a meaningful future.

## What about older readers?

Be guides and advocates for the younger generation. Take responsibility for the impact we've had. Speak out against injustices. Remember, our silence has often been taken as acceptance of what's happening. By speaking up and actively working for a better future, we can help build a legacy of positive change, paving the way for the next generation to live in a healthier, more just world.



*“Love and compassion are what keep us alive and keep us who we are as human beings.  
If you love something, you will take care of it.”*



## Final Reflections

Elder Dr. Albert Marshall's life and work exemplify the power of integrating Indigenous and Western knowledge systems to create a more harmonious and sustainable world. His advocacy for Two-Eyed Seeing goes beyond environmental stewardship—it is about fostering cross-cultural understanding and reconciliation. Through his wisdom, compassion, and unwavering dedication, Elder Dr. Marshall continues to inspire and lead by example, showing us that the path to a sustainable future must be walked together with both eyes wide open.



**SPEC Elders Circle**  
Legacy-making as Elder-making

## About Elders in Our Midst

The Elders in Our Midst project celebrates seniors across British Columbia and Canada who have contributed meaningfully to climate action in their communities. Through youth-led interviews and Joy Hanser's hand-painted portraits, it highlights their unique efforts and inspires all generations to foster community-driven climate action.

### **Learn More and Connect**

Elders in Our Midst: [spec.bc.ca/eldersinourmidst](https://spec.bc.ca/eldersinourmidst)

Elders Circle: [spec.bc.ca/eldercircle](https://spec.bc.ca/eldercircle)

Connect: [info@spec.bc.ca](mailto:info@spec.bc.ca)