

## **Émilienne Basque Receives New Brunswick Human Rights Award**

Émilienne Basque of Tracadie-Sheila is the recipient of the 2011 New Brunswick Human Rights Award. The award was presented to her by Lt.-Gov. Graydon Nicholas at Government House in Fredericton on September 15, 2011, which is New Brunswick Human Rights Day.

“I am really proud that the Human Rights Commission has recognized the human rights work of Émilienne Basque,” said Human Rights Commission chairperson Randy Dickinson. “She has worked hard over 40 years to improve the lives of people who are poor, disabled, receiving income assistance or otherwise disadvantaged. Her social justice activities range from practical self-help projects to setting up and heading various organizations.”

Mrs. Basque started a food counter in her own home in 1970, as well as a community garden in the Tracadie area. She was a founder and later the president of the *Union des assistés sociaux* (union of social assistance recipients), a group she established in 1973 to inform Tracadie area residents of their rights with respect to income assistance.

During the seventies and eighties, she was also a recruitment officer and information officer for the National Anti-Poverty Association, where she sought to ease the eligibility requirements to receive public funding for home improvements. She also volunteered for *Projet Habitat*, which provided funding and practical advice to build or renovate homes in the Acadian Peninsula.

Mrs. Basque improved the opportunities available to people who are intellectually challenged or have mental health problems through a variety of initiatives.

She helped to establish a chapter of the Association for Community Living in Tracadie, and raised funds for the local and provincial Association for Community Living. She also volunteered at an activity centre in Shippagan and helped set up the *L'Échange* activity centre in Tracadie. The centers organize outings and events for people in special care homes.

Since 2003, she has been a member, and sometime secretary, of the *Comité du Regroupement des bénéficiaires en foyer de soins spéciaux de la Péninsule acadienne Type 1 et 2* (committee of special care home clients types 1 & 2 of the Acadian Peninsula).

Mrs. Basque has also been the president of the Tracadie chapter of the New Brunswick Mental Health Consumer Network.

She has been an active member and president of a drug, alcohol and cigarette abstinence club for youths in the Tracadie area. She was also on the management committee of MIC (*Modèle Intervention Combinée*: combined intervention model), which advocated for clients with mental health problems.

In addition, Mrs Basque is a member of the *Comité des 12 pour la justice sociale* (committee of 12 for social justice), which advocates for the poor and for social justice generally.

“I am deeply honoured by this award,” said Mrs. Basque. “I have always worked so that those who are most destitute have the basic necessities to be able to live a decent life. It is so gratifying to have my work recognized. The contributions of poor people and the hardships they face are so often overlooked.”

The Human Rights Commission established the New Brunswick Human Rights Award in 1988. It is presented annually to recognize outstanding effort, achievement and leadership in the promotion of human rights and equality in New Brunswick.