

## *Sister Mary Jeanne Davidson, SSND - 60 Year Jubilee!*



### **Native Ministry, Peace River, A.B. Canada Reflection:**

No words can adequately describe the utter joy rising in my heart each morning as I awaken to pour out my life responding to the needs of native people, in the Peace region of northern, Alberta, Canada; in the archdiocese, Grouard McLennan!

In 2002, when Sisters Louise Vanderploeg, Eileen Pautler and myself arrived in Peace River, we were 11 SSNDs spread out in the North - Sister Connie Harkin and Sister Edna Hood in Dawson Creek, B.C.; Sister Loria Seifried in Fort St. John; Sister Doreen Swift in Chetwin; and Sister Joan and Sister Pauline in Fort Good Hope!

I'll never forget the flame igniting my heart when Sister Delia, our Provincial, asked me, "Where is the Spirit calling you, Mary Jeanne?" I responded immediately, "Are there indigenous people in the Peace region? God literally lifted me up and set me down in Peace River! Although I did not know the future that would unfold, I was content to wait on God and let Him lead me.

I was led to three Native communities: Duncan First Nation, Cadotte Lake and Little Buffalo, making pastoral visits to families, attending the sick and imprisoned, and celebrating Eucharist in Duncan and Cadotte Lake. In 2012, several persons from our parish in Cadotte Lake made a

*"Wherever divine providence calls us,  
there we must be ready to go."*

*(Blessed Theresa Gerhardinger,  
Trust and Dare Words for Each Day Feb. 10)*

pilgrimage to Rome for the Beatification of Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha. The Mass began with the chanting of the Litany of the Saints. I cannot describe the inner joy I experienced of immense, gratuitous love, poured out upon the Church and the whole world! We felt Jesus tangibly present in the Eucharist and in the sea of Christians who had come to worship. And we prayed for all Native families in Canada and in the world....for justice to flow like a river, that the love for the Eucharist would grow among our people, and that there would one day come an end to harming Mother Earth and prejudice in our world.

Today, I am seeing the mission among Native people, finding expression in a broadened outreach. The mission is building on the foundation of the gospel, through presence, and praying with parents, with children. Just before taking the picture above, the children had prayed, asking Jesus for snow because they wanted to skate on the pond and slide down the hill outside their house! The oldest boy had asked Jesus to end the COVID virus. And the youngest prayed because he wanted to talk to his mother who was in Heaven. The children learned we could talk to our loved one in Heaven and I was deeply

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moved seeing them for a few minutes close their eyes and pray with such earnestness. There are movements growing to stop the Keystone Pipeline. And five reserves have developed their kee-tas-kee-now cultural education curriculum. They believe that education of children is the key to the future and lifting the next generation out of poverty.

In closing, I cannot keep from singing, praising and thanking God for our SSND international community and the charism of Blessed Theresa. I am thanking God for the gift of community, especially my Sisters in Peru, who led me to personal conversion and the real meaning of discipleship if I seriously desired to follow Christ in the poor. I am still learning! And believing that God who began this work of love and supernatural faith in us will see it to completion in God's time.