

## ***Blankets for Warmth!***

Quoting the words of Heather Wolf '*kindness is like a warm blanket of snow, softly covering and gently touching the heart*', we are grateful to Cécile Bérard and her team from Saints-Martyrs-Canadiens Parish for donating blankets for the kids in the Northern Manitoba Communities where we work.



By **SISTER MONICA KATCHANG**

These beautiful hand-made cozy blankets are undoubtedly made with love and utter dedication. This love and affection are felt by the kids and their parents immediately when they receive these gifts.

Cecile Bérard and her husband Renel are parishioners of Saints-Martyrs-Canadiens, a parish of the Archdiocese of Saint Boniface located in Windsor Park in Winnipeg. In late 2015, Cécile had an inspiration to begin the blankets project after the emotional story of Alan Kurdi, the little Syrian boy whose lifeless body was found ashore after drowning on September 2<sup>nd</sup> of that year.

Inspired by shocking picture of Alan's body washed ashore, she then attended Mass where she heard this famous passage from the Gospel of Saint Matthew. « When I was hungry you gave me food, when I was naked you gave me clothes... »

Also inspirational was a Christmas song, *Les Enfants de la rue*: « They are cold, they are hungry, they are naked, but they are the children of God. »

After these signs, and the encouragement of her husband Renel and her sister Anita, Cécile was driven to forge ahead and act.



So far more than 1400 blankets have been distributed to Syrian children and refugees as a welcome gesture, to sick children and other children in need to give them warmth and love. Blankets were also given to the children from the North who were victims of forest fires.

Through Cécile's generosity also, we were able to give out blankets as baptism and first communion gifts. With the help of generous volunteers and donors, she has since made hundreds of blankets that have extended the love and warmth of God to many children across Canada and beyond.



We the Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus who are involved in First Nation Ministry (1) remain appreciative of the sacrifices and kindness of this generous woman and her team. We are equally grateful to God Almighty for rousing in Cécile this inspiration and opening her eyes and heart to see and feel the need to provide warmth to these kids.

*A resounding "Kitchi Miigwetch" to Gizhe Manitoo!*



In the course of our tour of different communities, we have distributed these blankets to kids and together with their families they remain very appreciative of the donors and especially of the presence of the Church in their midst.

We the Sisters have always felt welcomed and appreciated in all the First Nation Communities that we work in: Berens River, Poplar River, Little Grand Rapids, Bloodvein, Hollow Water, Manigotagan and Sagkeeng.

This is part of a bigger picture of reconciliation with the Indigenous Peoples.

The Love of God leads, and we follow.

We wish to use this medium to also ask for support for Cécile and her team. She needs donations and support to continue this great work that she has started.

(1) Sister Monica Katchang and Sister Calista Ebe are Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus involved in Pastoral Ministry in seven First Nation Communities of the Archdiocese of Saint Boniface.