



SISTER OF CHARITY RECEIVES NATIONAL HONOUR

VICTORIA, B.C. – Longtime northern Canadian missionary Sister Fay Trombley received the prestigious Polar Medal from Governor General Julie Payette at Government House here March 21. The Sister of Charity of the Immaculate Conception (SCIC) has ministered in Tuktoyaktuk, N.W.T. since late 2005 among mainly Inuvialuit Indigenous people.

The Polar Medal celebrates Canada's northern heritage and those who render extraordinary service in Canada's North. It recognizes those who promote a greater understanding of Canada's northern communities and peoples.

"This award has made me so aware of the layer upon layer of persons who make projects possible in Canada's Arctic," Sister Fay said in a recent telephone interview.

Sister Fay serves with the Society of St. Vincent de Paul to help ensure emergency food and affordable clothing in the community. In 2017, repairs were completed on the building housing the thrift store.

A news release from the Governor General's office notes Sister Fay "collaborated with local community leaders and built a partnership" with the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. "By reinvigorating the food and clothing distribution centre, she demonstrated remarkable determination and leadership. The success of this partnership has become a blueprint for multiple northern communities similarly struggling with food insecurity."

Originally from Powell River, B.C., Sister Fay entered her community in Saint John, N.B. in 1956 and taught school in both eastern and western Canada. She then became the first Canadian woman to receive a doctorate in theology from the Catholic University of Louvain in Belgium.

From 1983 to 2005, she taught spirituality and church history at Newman Theological College in Edmonton, Alberta and also served as a spiritual director. After retiring from teaching, she followed a call to serve in the high western Canadian Arctic.

In the Diocese of Mackenzie-Fort Smith, she is pastoral administrator at Our Lady of Grace mission in "Tuk" on the shores of the Arctic Ocean. The community witnesses midnight sun in summer and northern lights in winter.

Sister Fay also undertook a major project to repair the Catholic church building completed in 2014. She is now hoping to refurbish a 40-foot sea container to be used for a small carpentry workshop in the community.

In 2010, Sister Fay received a Wise Woman award from the Status of Women Council of the Northwest Territories. She was chosen for her outstanding contribution to the community in her region.

At the recent west coast ceremony, Sister Fay was joined by three guests: Jean Gruben, an Inuvialuit elder and leader from Tuktoyaktuk; Tom Orysiuk of Edmonton, a friend and supporter of projects in the northern community and Sister Monica Guest, SCIC of Vancouver, B.C.

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