



# **Sonny James MacDonald**

**May 26, 1939 - April 20, 2021**

Sonny James MacDonald passed away quietly April 20, 2021 at his home in Okotoks, Alberta from health complications. He was surrounded by family and love. Sonny is survived by his wife of nearly 56 years, Helen Hudson MacDonald, by his three children, James (Toko) MacDonald, Thomas James (TJ) MacDonald, Marcy Blayne DeMond (nee MacDonald).

Sonny was born May 26, 1939, in Fort Chipewyan, Alberta, and grew up in a large family, the son of Germain and Harriet MacDonald. Sonny had six siblings: Ted, Helen, Danny, Rita, Anita, Freddie (who is now the last surviving sibling). Family and friends were the cornerstone of Sonny's life. He leaves 3 children, 7 grandchildren, and 5 great-grandchildren (all sons), many cousins, nieces and nephews, in-laws. And many, many friends, and friends that were as close as family. Too many to list.

**\*\*Due to COVID-19 restrictions, a celebration of life will occur in the future in Fort Smith (date has not yet been set).\*\***

Born and raised in Fort Chipewyan, Sonny moved around Saskatchewan and the NWT over his lifetime (Uranium City, Inuvik, Rae-Edzo, Prince Albert, Hinton, Fort Simpson, Hay River, and Fort Smith). He travelled the world with his art, from Japan to Germany and France, the US and of course, Canada.

Sonny's art is world-renown having met many dignitaries receiving his art as gifts: Queen Elizabeth II, Prince Phillip, the Duke of Edinburgh, Pope Jean-Paul II, Pierre Trudeau, John Diefenbaker, Stephen Harper, Jean Chretien, to name a few. Sonny was also the president of the NWT Arts Council for 10 years, and served on the Canadian National Arts Council. A significant life accomplishment for Sonny was being a signatory for the Salt River First Nation's Land Claim Settlement with the federal government in 2001, under Treaty 8.

Earlier in Sonny's life, his work helped bring the electrical grid to all points of the NWT. He was so committed he even kept working after he survived a helicopter crash in 1971. Fond family stories include surviving a bear attack while camping. Or recalling the time Sonny was chasing a porcupine with the butt end of a rifle in his underwear. Sonny could be found for many years working in his carving shop at his and Helen's house in Fort Smith.

His greatest joys were his family and friends, his children, and his grandchildren. And his art, camping, hunting, cooking, fishing, bonfires. And laughter.. There was always lots of laughter. Sonny was honoured and received the inaugural Order of the NWT from his lifelong friend and NWT Commissioner, George Tuccaro.

In Lieu of flowers the family had asked that donations be made to the Kidney Foundation of Canada.

To email condolences, please visit [www.snodgrassfuneralhomes.com](http://www.snodgrassfuneralhomes.com)  
Arrangements in care of Snodgrass Funeral Home (Okotoks) Ltd. 403-938-3111.