



Marie Therese Blondin

April 12, 1918 – March 29, 2008



Life is Beautiful

Marie Therese Blondin was born in the Mackenzie Mountains near Ross River along the Yukon/NWT border. She was a proud Shuhtagot'ine. Her ancestors were the Bets'ahchu and Dachik'ewe families.

She loved her people and land. Marie was born to Johnny and Christine (Bets'ahchu) Tatti on April 12, 1918. Marie had one brother (Bets'ahchu) and three sisters Rose (deceased), Mary Elizabeth, and Cecilia. Her father passed away when she was very young and her brother Francis helped his mother to raise his sisters, through many hardships.

Eventually Marie Therese, Rose and Cecilia went to the residential school in Fort Providence, where their widowed mother did seam stressing and other light duties for the convent to support herself. Francis and her other sister Mary Elizabeth remained in the Sahtu hunting, trapping and learning the ways of the Shuhtagot'ine. Marie Therese and her two sisters remained in residential school till they were in their teens. During their stay in residential school their mother Christine took sick and suddenly passed away. It was a devastating setback for Marie Therese and her siblings, since Cecilia was just a young child and that made it all the more heartbreaking. The loss of their mother had a devastating impact on them. Marie and her sibling shared a close relationship by living closely to one another and always keeping in touch.

Marie Therese met Joseph Benwell Zaul Blondin, a charming and musically talented young man, who was also a superb hunter and trapper. They fell in love and married, and had 4 children of their own George (deceased at 14 years of age) Elsie, Walter and Charlie (deceased at 40) and they adopted Betty (Jonas), Ethel (Leon), Melvin and Chucky (deceased) and raised them as their own.

Marie was a kind, loving, and considerate person who never refused anyone. She provided shelter for many nieces and nephews. She took in Jane, MaryRose, Rosa and Georgina Cleary when their mom passed on; they remained very close from then on. Marie was very close to all her in-laws. She provided guidance and support through hard times. When her sister-in-law Lucy Tatti was sick, she took Christine and Mary to live with her. She also did the same for Lucy and Isadore Yukon, and stayed in Deline to look after their children, while Lucy recovered from TB in Inuvik. She provided a home for Wilfred, Dan-

ny and Helen McDonald; they loved to live with her in Sucker Creek travelling, hunting, fishing and trapping on the land.

Marie was very skilled at traditional sewing, she was an exceptional cook and a skilled gardener. She played an active role in clothing and feeding her family.

Marie enjoyed her husband's fiddle music and she loved to dance. She enjoyed hunting chickens and setting snares. She raised her own dog team. It was not unusual to see her driving her dog team to get a load of firewood and hauling ice for water. She harvested moose and caribou meat and her sinew, babiche and moosehide was done to perfection. She hunted muskrats, and beaver and checked her net three times daily with a rat canoe.

Marie and Joe spent many years on the land hunting and trapping near Jackfish Lake, Birch Creek and Sucker Creek. They even summered in Fort Good Hope and lived near the Ramparts for a whole season. They lived in Norman Wells, Tulita and spent quite a few years in Deline, caribou hunting out on the barrenlands. Marie Therese cooked for the guides in the summer and cared for children who went to the hostel in Deline. She was known as a very compassionate caregiver. Marie Therese eventually moved to Bennet Field for the summer fishing and snaring while Joe worked for NTCL during the summer. They then resettled in Norman Wells and continued to live on their traditional lands.

As the years progressed Marie Therese's health failed and she was moved to Yellowknife's Aven Manor, where she became the in-resident Granny, Ama and a friend to all. She never complained and was always grateful. Her husband Joe was taken ill with cancer and passed away in 1999. Marie spent the rest of her days with the staff and residents of Aven Manor. It was home away from home and they became a big part of her life.

She was missed by many in the Sahtu region but her return was not meant to be. She left this world with grace and dignity surrounded by her children, her nieces, nephews, grandchildren and friends. Marie Therese has left an empty space only to be filled by the positive memories, the inspiration and love she gave so effortlessly. She was strong in her faith and Father Felix Labat attended to her in her final days; it was spiritual and both sweet and sad. She had lived a full and beautiful life and the world is a much better place for her having been here and we are blessed to be better people for having been cared for and loved by her.

Our mother Marie Therese will be the beautiful memory that captivates you when you greet the spring and you hear the return of the geese and the birds singing sweetly in the woods. Life is beautiful.