

SANTEE SIOUX TRIBE

Dear Mr. Rustad,

January, 2, 2008

On behalf of the tribal members and children of the Santee Sioux Nation of Nebraska, we would like to extend our appreciation and Thanks to the Diversity Foundation, the volunteers, yourself along with the gracious people of the City of Winona and the surrounding southeastern Minnesota communities that helped with the "Toys for Tots" Drive of 2007. "Thank You"

Your unselfishness was witnessed by many, many families. Please except our appreciation of your lavishness, with open hearts. Your kindness will be remembered throughout the year.

We unpacked all of the toys and bagged them according to households. There was enough toys to make sure each child in every household received a toy, 3-4 books, and 2-3 stuffed animals. Each package was labeled with the family name, the family was then notified by announcements and by word of mouth to come pick up their sack.

I apologize from the bottom of my heart, that I neglected to get pictures of the children's smiling faces and the excitement of innocence as each parent received their package as their children followed them out of the Oyate Oyanke Community Center with their Christmas toys in tow. It would of made your heart swell as it did mine.

I saw some of the parents on and off after Christmas and they expressed their thanks for the toys to me. They told me of Christmas eve and how their children screamed with delight at opening a brand new gift. They told me of the hours afterward spent playing with their new toys and with the puzzle books they received.

Every toy, every book and every puzzle book was distributed that day. The books that were left over after the gift disbursement, were donated to each district for their Christmas district parties. These donations were also accepted with appreciation.

Being a child or adolescent growing up on a reservation can sometimes be difficult. Your organization and community involvement has definitely made a positive impact on our children and their families. For this, our thanks is also extended, the values of self-sufficiency and hard work, responsibility to our village, humor, honesty, fairness, sharing, respect for land and nature, Native traditions, ancestors and spirituality.... By practicing traditions, future generations can become strong leaders, possessing great power and by working together to the betterment of our communities, past and present with acts of kindness such as we have been shown in the last 3 weeks from your volunteers and communities.

The Diversity Foundation, Inc. has proven over and over to many tribes their commitment to bridging the gaps between the peoples of our diverse cultures. The toy drive is a positive tool for us to use to recognize as a meaningful act of improving relations & "Bridging the Gap" and continuing Reconciliation between the people of our tribe and the communities of Minnesota.

Pidamaya ("Thank You") from our homes to yours.

Sincerely,
Lila Mechaley and Tribal Members of The Santee Sioux Nation.

Lila Mechaley