



# Red River Current Newsletter

A Fort McKay First Nation Publication

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## Nicole Bourque-Bouchier named to the Order of Canada in 2024



Fort McKay First Nation Chief and Council would like to congratulate Nicole Bourque-Bouchier, who in a recent announcement from Ottawa, joined the list of high impact Canadians to be named to the Order of Canada. Bourque-Bouchier is a proud member of the Mikisew Cree First Nation and is being recognized for her advancement of women in business and her work leading Indigenous economic development in Alberta.

"The Order of Canada is a significant recognition to receive — one I never would have imagined," says Bourque-Bouchier. "When I began my career, I was often the only person who looked like me in a boardroom. It's one reason why I have focused much of my career to empowering and uplifting others, to show what

is possible when you bring diverse voices to the table."

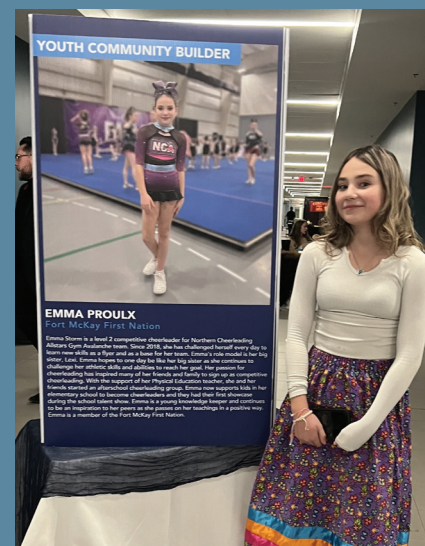
The announcement from Governor-General Mary Simon honours 88 new appointments to the Order of Canada. The Order of Canada is the highest honour the country bestows on civilians.

Other honourees in the latest announcement include Indigenous rights advocate David Tuccaro, holocaust survivor Pinchas Gutter, author Maureen Jennings and actor Ryan Reynolds.

"Members of the Order of Canada are builders of hope for a better future," the Governor-General said in a news release. "Each in their own way, they broaden the realm of possibilities and inspire others to continue pushing its boundaries."

Congratulations Nicole.

## CONGRATULATIONS TO EMMA PROULX!



Fort McKay First Nation congratulates you on being recognized as a Community Builder in the recent Indigenous Sports Gallery Induction Ceremony.

Emma is a level 2 competitive cheerleader for Northern Cheerleading Allstars Gym Avalanche team. Since 2018, she has challenged herself every day to learn new skills as a flyer and as a base for her team.

Emma's role model is her big sister, Lexi. Emma hopes to one day be like her big sister as she continues to challenge her athletic skills and abilities to reach her goal.

Her passion for cheerleading has inspired many of her friends and family to sign up as competitive cheerleaders. With the support of her Physical Education teacher,

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## FMFN LEADERSHIP TEAM

Raymond Powder, Chief  
David Bouchier, Councillor  
Crystal McDonald, Councillor  
Bobby Shott, Councillor  
Melinda Stewart, Councillor

Alvaro Pinto, CEO Oilsands  
Development and Sustainability

### ADMINISTRATION DEPT.

Dorothy McDonald Business  
Centre, General Delivery,  
Fort McKay, AB T0P 1C0

Phone: 780-828-2430

### Hours of Operation:

Monday - Thursday:  
8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.  
Friday: 8:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.  
Closed daily: 12 - 1 p.m.

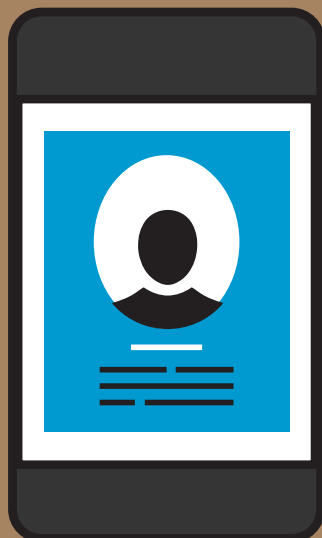
### SUBMISSIONS

If you have any photos, stories or  
ideas for the Red River Current,  
please contact us via email at:  
[communications@fortmckay.com](mailto:communications@fortmckay.com)

## Sign up for the FMFN App Today!

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community news and get  
important community  
notifications simply by  
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First Nation App on your  
iPhone, iPad, and iPod touch.

Never miss an update and  
download the app now!



## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Bouchier Group recognized with International Award



Councillor David Bouchier was on hand at the ExxonMobil worldwide supplier recognition event when his wife Nicole Bourque-Bouchier accepted the 2024 Diverse Supplier Award on behalf of the Bouchier Group.

The couple are co-owners of the company, and the award pays tribute to their commitment to inclusion, skills development and Indigenous employment across Canada as well as their exceptional safety reputation, positioning them as a model for excellence in Canada and across ExxonMobil's suppliers and business partners.

"Supplier performance is fundamental to ExxonMobil's and Imperial's success. This prestigious award recognizes Bouchier's performance, competitiveness and high standards to meet ExxonMobil's business needs," said Rebecca Vest, Vice President, Procurement, Global Business Solutions, ExxonMobil.

"This award is a testament to the impact the Bouchier team makes every day," said CEO Nicole. "As an Indigenous woman leading the company, my goal has always been to grow the business while creating pathways for shared prosperity and meaningful change for future generations. To be recognized by ExxonMobil for our work is rewarding and reinforces the value of the services we provide".



Bouchier's CEO has been recognized multiple times for her financial and operational management of the company. This prestigious award affirms Bouchier's impact, not only locally but

in the energy and industrial sectors around the world.

Congratulations to Nicole, David, and the entire Bouchier Group.



# FORT MCKAY MEMBERS NEWS



Danny Hodgson pictured presenting Emma with her award which is shown in the inset picture top right.

**Continued from page 1**

she and her friends started an afterschool cheerleading group. Emma now supports kids in her elementary school to become cheerleaders and they had their first showcase during the school talent show. Emma is a young knowledge keeper and continues to be an

inspiration to her peers as she passes on her teachings in a positive way. Danny Hodgson a former NHL hockey player for the Toronto Maple Leafs and the Vancouver Canucks who played 114 NHL games presented Emma with her award. Way to go Emma!

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## FORT MCKAY HEALTH CENTRE

**Clinic Dates:**  
Dr O'Connor - Jan 6th - 10th  
Dr Taiwo - Jan 28th - 30th  
PCN Nurse - Every Mon & Wed  
Please call in advance if you need to make an appointment with Dr. O'Connor or Charlene.

**Immunizations:**  
Contact the Health Centre to make an appointment with the Public Health Nurse.  
For more information on other services offered at the Health Centre, please contact the centre at **780.828.2450.**

## FORT MCKAY EMPLOYMENT & TRAINING

The Employment and Training Centre is there to help you with creating/ updating resumes, searching for and applying for jobs, and offering support for employment and training.  
For more information or to make an appointment, please contact the office at **780.828.2478.**

## FORT MCKAY 106.3 FM



STAY up to date with the latest music and news!!  
Listening to Fort McKay's community radio station!  
[www.fortmckayfm.com](http://www.fortmckayfm.com)

# Constable Burke, here to serve

Constable Gerry Burke has a ready smile on his face, like someone who enjoys his work and his life. “I do,” he says. “Joining the RCMP and getting to work in a community like Fort McKay is why I became a policeman.”

He’s very patriotic, proud to be a member of the most famous police force in the world, proud to be Canadian, and in that uniform, the famous Red Serge, he is prouder to be so Canadian that the force he serves is seen as a symbol of the country. All of which is made more interesting by the fact that Constable Burke is also Irish.

His accent is still noticeable, but that’s about the only mark of his past life. It has been an interesting journey to the point where he is now, serving as the RCMP representative in the Fort McKay First Nation. He was born and grew up in Galway on the west coast of Ireland, the youngest of three boys. Galway is a community similar in size, population-wise anyway, to Fort McMurray. But that’s where the similarity ends. It traces its history back a thousand years and more to the Kingdom of Connaught and has been a centre of trade, arts and literature since the 15th Century. It is a harbour city with castles, ancient monuments, stone churches and a municipal charter signed in 1484.

It sounds like an ideal place to live, but a downturn in the economy at the beginning of the 21st century made times hard. Constable Burke came to Canada like so many others, for the opportunity and the work. He has a business degree, and when he found himself working part time in a shop behind a counter, the Prairies seemed like an opportunity not to be missed.

Originally headed to Saskatchewan, he ended up working in the oil and gas sector for a few years in Calgary. But it was when he became a Canadian citizen that he realized he wanted more than what the business world offered. A chance meeting with an old acquaintance who had joined the Calgary Police Service set him thinking, and a change in RCMP recruiting meant that there were possibilities open to him he had never imagined. He’d always liked the idea of serving his community, but he thought his chance had gone. Police recruits were young, weren’t they?



Constable Burke pictured on Orange Shirt Day.

Not necessarily. The RCMP were actively recruiting people with life experience. Gerry signed up. “I love being Canadian and I wanted my life to reflect that. Joining the Mounties was the fulfillment of a dream.”

Growing up, family was always important to him, a feeling he brought with him to Canada where he is now married with two children of his own, daughters aged 4 and 9. “As a parent, you want to set a good example for your children, to open their eyes to the opportunities they have. For me, being a member of the RCMP is my way of showing them that you can do and be anything you want.”

It’s an attitude he takes everywhere with him, especially his job. One of Constable Burke’s main goals while working in Fort McKay is to be an example to the youth of the community. In a perfect world, he’d love to take them to the RCMP training depot in Saskatchewan to let them see what the world of the Mountie is like. “I want to inspire the youth to think of a career in the RCMP. What could be better than a member of the community serving their own community as a Police officer?”

While some may feel such a goal unlikely, Constable Burke dares to think it’s possible. “No one was more unlikely than me to be a serving member of the Mounties,” he said, “yet here I am. Anything is possible if you want it. Look at me. If I can do it, anyone can.”

Constable Burke asked himself what was the best thing he could do as a new Canadian, and it led him to becoming a policeman. Now he’s asking the youth of Fort McKay to consider the same career path. And why not?



# Ribbon Skirt Day zooms by again



**R**ibbon Skirt Day is celebrated on January 4th. And every year it is mostly missed by the community. The Nation's offices are typically still closed that early in January, and the date itself is so close to Christmas and the New Year that it suffers from celebration fatigue. It's hard to memorialize anything so soon after the festive season.

It would be hard to change the date though, given its significance. When Isabella Kulak, then in Grade 5, was told on December 18, 2020 that her ribbon skirt was inappropriate attire for the school event she was attending, reaction was swift and supportive of her. On January 4, her first day back to school after the Christmas break, a public rally of support marched with Isabella to school in solidarity. Even though the date has only been celebrated for five years, it is already become a focal point for celebrating Aboriginal and Metis women.

"The ribbon skirt was originally worn only as a ceremonial clothing piece," said FMFN cultural advisor Audrey Redcrow, "a connection to womanhood and Mother Earth. Now, it also represents resilience amongst the indigenous women across Turtle Island as we empower each other through the ways of our ancestors."

The History of ribbon skirts is diverse. The skirt itself was the typical clothing of the European women of the mid 19th century. During this time, to express Indigenous women's pride and cultural identity, many First Nations and Metis women started adding the brightly coloured silk ribbons, traded by the settlers, to the skirts. They became a symbol of pride and resilience.

The resulting Indian Act of 1876 prevented many ceremonial items and practices, including the wearing of ribbon skirts. The ban imprisoned many Indigenous Peoples, and settlers confiscated these precious ceremonial items.

The Ban was lifted in 1951, but generations of Indigenous Peoples still grew up deprived of cultural knowledge. Thousands of irreplaceable ceremonial masks, robes, blankets and other potlatch items were lost forever. The resurgence of the wearing of ribbon skirts is a reclamation of that cultural pride.

Ribbon Skirts are more than garments; they embody a rich tapestry of cultural heritage and artistic expression. Worn and created with care, they serve as living symbols of identity and resilience, bridging the past with the present and representing the beauty and strength of Indigenous cultures.

For many people, wearing a Ribbon Skirt is a spiritual practice, especially during cultural ceremonies, Pow Wows, and gatherings. It fosters a deep connection to ancestors and the spirit world while serving as an expression of resistance against colonial narratives, reclaiming Indigenous identity and challenging stereotypes.

Should we be doing more next year? One suggestion has been to celebrate it early, before the Christmas break, maybe using December 18 instead of January 4.

If you have an opinion, please drop a line to **culture@fortmckay.com**. We'd love to hear from you.



## FORT MCKAY MEMBERS NEWS

### Pool Team going from strength to strength



Fresh off their success down in Cold Lake, The Fort McKay pool teams took part in the local end of year Champions tournament in Fort McMurray, held at the Legion in December. In the Gold Division, the Fort McKay Northern Warriors had some good individual performances, but the team (Roy McDonald, Gilbert Estes, Maurice and Curtis McDonald) finished out of the medals as they just weren't able to string enough wins together at the right time. Better luck next time guys.

It was a different story, however in the Silver Division. The Fort McKay Chalk 'em Up squad consisting of mentor Roy McDonald, Rick and Angela Bouchier, Calvin Kennedy and Joshua Dela Rosa, won the title with some clever play and a great team effort. Congratulations to both our teams.

The success of the local players

and the facilities available in the Recreation Room at the hockey arena have seen a surge in pool players and interest in the game. Roy as been helping the newer players aim towards getting official ratings, the handicap system that allows entry into tournaments. In addition, there is talk in Fort McMurray of a third division being launched in 2025, and our local pool players are eager to take part. This will also help with ratings as the league is played under the rules of the IMPACT Billiards Association of Alberta, the local governing body. Let's hope the Bronze division is created in the region this year. More competition means more and better players from the community, and there is always that elusive world series in Las Vegas every year that is worth aiming for.

There is also some talk of a junior league in the future. Fort McKay is ready but the



Final Tournament Standings		Prize Money
1st	Fort McKay Chalk Em Up	\$1,360
2nd	ERO Speedwagon	\$980
3rd	Crazy 8's	\$760
4th	On Cue	\$520
5th	Zang!!!	\$320
6th	Rack Em' Up	\$320
7th	The Outcasts	\$250
8th	Canadian Cue Kings	\$250
9th	Breakers	\$200

larger community has not yet been able to keep up with the sport's development like our community. Pool tables in Fort McMurray are often to be found either in adult only venues or in the basements of some homes, and schools are for the moment reluctant to support the sport. But Roy has hope. "Our youth play together in the Youth Centre. I've been coaching some of them and there is some talent coming through. We could have some good players in a year or two.

Maybe we'll see some of them aging up in a few years and challenging for places on the current Fort McKay adult teams.

Congratulations to all the players, and to all the work the pool club does to foster this sport and social activity in the community.



# NOTICES

North Zone Travel Team

Wood Buffalo  
Addiction and  
Mental Health  
Services:  
Travel Team



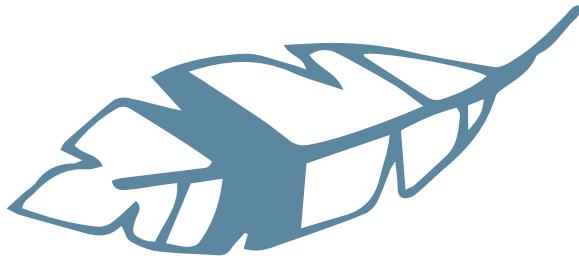
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FIRST NATION

Travel Team Addiction and Mental Health services supports individuals across the lifespan dealing with symptoms of mental illness and/or concerns with addiction.

Clinicians will support clients to develop goals and make changes a client may be seeking in their lives.

Every Monday 11am - 4:30pm and  
Friday 11:30am - 2:00pm at the  
Family Support Building.

Drop-ins welcome or call Leah at  
780-828-4048 to make an appointment.



## Moose and Buffalo Lake Cabin Booking 2025

Registration opens February 1st to March 30th 2025

*Please book 1 week in advance*

Packages available for pickup at the  
Fort McKay Sustainability Office

For more information & registration contact  
Lakeisha Black at 780-828-2480 or email  
[mooselake@fortmckay.com](mailto:mooselake@fortmckay.com)



FORT MCKAY  
FIRST NATION

## FORT MCKAY CULTURAL PROGRAMS AND SPECIAL EVENTS

### DANCER AND DRUMMER PERFORMANCES

- Traditional Healing Assistance
- Round Dance / Dene Dance
- Cultural Workshops
- Moose/Buffalo Lake Summer Retreat
- Moose Lake Camps & Events
- Employment Opportunities
- Community & Special Events

### CREE & DENE CLASSES

Every Tuesday Cree class  
on Zoom.

Every Wednesday Dene class  
on Zoom.

To register, contact  
[culture@fortmckay.com](mailto:culture@fortmckay.com)

### DRUM PRACTICE

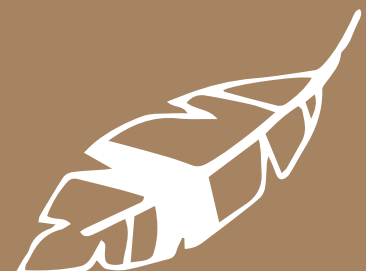
Every Wednesday at 6 pm  
in the Band Hall.

All males welcome. Drop In,  
no registration required!

If you would like to be a  
volunteer or be a Resource  
Worker for some of our  
programs or events, please  
submit an email, please include  
what events you are interested  
in, or what skill sets you can  
provide. First priority will be  
given to community members.

For more information about  
our upcoming programs,  
please contact:

**Audrey Redcrow**  
Cultural and Special Events Lead  
**780-215-2384**  
[Aredcrow@fortmckay.com](mailto:Aredcrow@fortmckay.com)



## UPCOMING EVENTS

Day	Date	Event	Details
Mon & Fri	Jan 6 to Jan 31	Health Centre: Mental Health Travel Team. 10am - 4pm	Appointments and Walk-ins. Contact The Health Centre at 780-828-2450.
Every Tues	Jan 7 to Jan 28	AA Support Group, every Tuesday at the Family Support Centre	8:30pm - 10pm, Doors Open at 8pm
Every Tues	Jan 7 to Jan 28	Cree Online Classes, 6pm - 7:30pm, Instructor Edith Orr	Register through Audrey at culture@fortmckay.com
Every Tues	Jan 7 to Jan 28	Youth Sports, 5:30pm - 7pm at Elsie Fabian School	Contact Katara, 780-972-9810
Every Wed	Jan 1 to Jan 29	Dene Online Classes, 6pm - 7:30pm, Instructor Janette Flett-Jones	Register through Audrey at culture@fortmckay.com
Every Wed	Jan 1 to Jan 29	Light Exercise Program - Rest, Stretch and Relax, 1pm	Transport Provided. Call Trinda 780-215-0478
Mon & Wed	Jan 1 to Jan 29	Drop in Workout at the Youth Centre 4:30pm - 9pm	Ages 12-18. Contact Dylan at 780-799-2406
Every Thur	Jan 2 to Jan 30	Open Gym at the School Gym - Enter through the Side Door	7:15pm - 9:15pm Contact Number is 780-215-5276
Mon & Wed	Jan 1 to Jan 29	Influenza and Covid Vaccines in the Health Centre	Call 780-828-4229 for information
Every Fri	Jan 3 to Jan 31	NA Support Group, every Friday at the Family Support Centre	8pm - 9pm, Doors Open at 7:30pm
Every Thurs	Jan 9 to Jan 30	Volleyball Clinics 5pm - 6:30pm	Elsie Fabian School, contact Seth at 780-215-5276
Mon	Jan 20	Q4 Elders QGM Meeting - Band Hall	10:00am - 1:00pm. In Person Only
Mon	Jan 20	Q4 QGM Meeting - Band Hall	6:00pm - 9:00pm. In Person Only
Tues	Jan 21	Power Yoga Class - Ages 16+ years	4:45pm - 5:45pm. Contact Stefany at 780-714-7094. Limited spaces
Tues	Jan 21	Safety & Security for the Elderly	9:00am - 1:00pm. Contact Erin at 780-215-6723. Transport available
Wed	Jan 22	Evermore Kookie Workshop for Adults	Band Hall - 5:30pm - 7:30pm, contact Stefany at 780-714-7094