



## The Insider, Feb. 23

Find out what's new at the RMWB on Feb. 23, 2026.

### Show us your WinterPLAY!

While the weather was not on our side, many braved the cold this weekend to attend WinterPLAY - a celebration of northern culture, winter spirit, and the vibrant community we're proud to be part of!

We're inviting staff to share their favourite WinterPLAY moments for a feature in next week's edition of The Insider.

Whether it's a snapshot of the ice sculptures, a bundled-up family photo, a stunning winter landscape, or a candid moment with colleagues — we want to celebrate the experience through your lens.

We'll draw one lucky staff member to win a branded mug, candle, or Yeti tumbler! Submit your photos to [TheInsider@rmwb.ca](mailto:TheInsider@rmwb.ca) or at [rmwb.ca/staff](https://rmwb.ca/staff).

### Pink Shirt Day is Wednesday

Pink Shirt Day is Wednesday, Feb. 25, and this year's theme is *Sprinkle Kindness!*

How you can participate:

- Wear pink!
- Upload the Pink Shirt Day [screensaver](#) to your computer.
- Nominate a co-worker for "Cheers for Peers!"
- Complete a Kindness Card and post on your area bulletin board. Details will be shared by Admins in your area.

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*Share how your team recognized Pink Shirt Day with The Insider by submitting your photos to [TheInsider@rmwb.ca](mailto:TheInsider@rmwb.ca).*

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## **Submit your outstanding 2025 HSA claims by March 31**

Your health spending account (HSA) provides you with a fixed allowance to spend on eligible health expenses— offering personalized employee health benefits with the flexibility to choose how to spend your benefit dollars.

Your HSA is a tax-free benefit for health services you access, whether that's dental, vision, professional services, or other eligible expenses granted by the CRA.

Make sure to submit your 2025 claims by March 31!

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*Learn more about myHSA and what's covered on [My RMWB](#).*

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## **Continuing the conversation: Black History Month**

As we wrap up Black History Month, we want to take a moment to continue the conversation we began at the start of February.

While this month offers a meaningful opportunity to reflect, learn, and celebrate, the stories, contributions, and experiences of Black communities are an important part of our shared history year-round.

### **The Story of the Blackburns**

This week, we're sharing a short video from **Historica Canada** highlighting the story of Thornton and Lucie Blackburn.

After escaping slavery in the United States in the 1830s, the Blackburns made their way to Canada and eventually settled in Toronto. Despite facing significant adversity, they built successful lives and went on to establish Toronto's first taxi service. Their story is one of courage, resilience, entrepreneurship, and community impact — and an important chapter in Canadian history that is not always widely known.

We encourage you to take a few minutes to watch and reflect on their legacy.



### Supporting reflection and well-being with the Calm app

Black employees offer a vital perspective within the workplace—and face unique challenges both at work and in broader society.

To help address the needs of Black colleagues, we're pleased to share a selection of culturally relevant content on Calm designed to help employees and family members practice emotional well-being, build resilience, and get better sleep.

- [Black Self-Worth at Work with Dr. Rheedra](#) (mental health support): Learn strategies to thrive in the face of microaggressions, exclusion, and other forms of racism.
- [Minding Your Black Mind with Dr. Rheedra](#) (mental health support): Get insights and strategies to help you handle daily challenges and assaults on your humanity with grace.
- [The Artist: Basquiat in New York](#) (sleep story): Transport to 1980s New York to learn about Jean-Michel Basquiat, one of the most important American artists in the 20th century.
- [Celebrating Black Creators](#) (wisdom, sleep stories, music): From Cynthia Erivo and Idris Elba to LeBron James and Tabitha Brown, explore the many Black voices featured in Calm Sleep Stories (for adults and kids), Wisdom programs, music, and more.

### Additional resources

- [Heritage Minutes: Viola Desmond](#)
- [CBC Books: The Skin We're In by Desmond Cole](#)

- [The Canadian Encyclopedia — Black History in Canada Timeline](#)
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*As Black History Month comes to a close, we encourage everyone to continue learning, listening, and engaging — not just in February, but throughout the year. Small moments of awareness and education can help foster greater understanding, empathy, and connection across our teams.*

*What is one action you can take to honour Black history through meaningful, year-round change?*

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## Highlight on People Changes

We've been keeping our eye on the [People Changes tab](#) on the intranet.

Check out some of the highlights we spotted in the last week!

### **Benita Koochicum heads to B.C. for exciting new role**

**Benita Koochicum** has moved on to milder weather and new horizons after spending the past year supporting reconciliation at the RMWB as a **reconciliation advisor** in Indigenous & Rural Relations.

Benita's contributions include her work on the 2025 Truth and Reconciliation Challenge, National Indigenous Peoples Day, It's Time to Read Book Club events, and many other initiatives.

Please join us in wishing Benita well as she takes on a new role in land management with the Cowichan Tribes on Vancouver Island!

### **Ray Shaw looks forward to next chapter after retirement**

On Feb. 18, the WWTP team came together to celebrate the retirement of **Ray Shaw**, equipment operator.

Ray has been a dedicated employee of the RMWB for the past 10 years. His career began in Anzac in 2015, followed by two years with Solid Waste and another two years with the Roads department. In 2020, he joined the WWTP team, where he spent the last five years contributing his skills and experience.

Ray will be heading back home to beautiful Vancouver Island, settling in Courtenay with his family and two dogs. He's already looking forward to the hunting and fishing that will keep him busy in his next chapter.

We wish Ray all the best in his well-earned retirement.

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*Got a staffing update to share? Submit it to [People Changes!](#)*

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## You do WHAT!? Beyond the desk at the RMWB

Learn how **Niall Condon**, advisor, Policy, unwinds from a day of work and kid-wrangling:

"My hobby is Warhammer, a tabletop wargame. I started with friends in junior high and high school but went on a long hiatus when we all left for university. I got back into it after my kids were born and I needed a hobby to do after they were in bed.

Fort McMurray has a great community for it, and I try and get out for the occasional game or tournament. My main focus is painting models, and I've managed to win a couple trophies for best painted army at local events.

It's a relaxing way to spend a couple hours and very satisfying to see how I've improved over the years."

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*Do you have an interesting hobby, passion, or skill outside of your work hours?*

*Share with [The Insider](#) and we'll highlight you in a future You do WHAT!? story!*

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## Cheers for Peers: celebrating our impact

Over the past few months, we've received some incredible submissions for Cheers for Peers.

From stepping in to help meet tight deadlines, to offering mentorship and support, to simply showing kindness during a busy week, these notes remind us that our culture is built on collaboration, respect, and care for one another.

For those who may be new to the program, Cheers for Peers is an opportunity to recognize a colleague who has gone above and beyond. Both the person who submits the recognition and the colleague being recognized are entered into a draw for tickets to see the **Fort McMurray Oil Barons** in action — a small way to celebrate the big impact our people make every day.

While our next ticket draw is just around the corner, we wanted to take a moment to share some of the kind words that have been submitted recently. These messages reflect the teamwork, dedication, and positivity that make our workplace such a strong community.

Take a moment to read through and celebrate your peers!

### **Cheers for Chris Casila, IT**

I would like to nominate my best friend and colleague Chris Casila for the Cheers for Peers contest. Not only is he an absolute blast to work with but he also has a wealth of knowledge and skills to learn from.

He is also a wonderful human being and a great husband and father to his boys. He continuously goes above and beyond when it comes to his work and always gives a helping hand.

- **Robert Abel**, IT

### **Cheers for Emily Smith, Strategic Communications**

Big thanks to Emily for her insightful communications support the past few weeks. Emily has been incredibly generous with guidance and feedback, and has been a huge support in steering key messaging and media inquiries for our team.

We are very appreciative of your intuition and encouragement in areas of your expertise!

Thank you Emily 😊

**Cait Kimball**, Community Services

### **Cheers to all the Roads staff!**

I would really like to give a cheer for a peer, but I actually don't know who the operator is, so please send this out to all winter road maintenance staff.

Earlier this month, I was at my house looking out the window at a grader operator (who did a fabulous job on clearing the roads of snow and ice) masterfully maneuver the grader this way and that, sometimes getting bucked around in his seat but continued to go at it until he completed the task – opening up the road and taking away all of the ice built up by the curb.

I also noticed that some of the equipment had broken down when I went for a drive later on, with the RMWB service truck helping out the roads crew get their equipment back into service.

When looking at the job these people have to do and the dedication that they show – while working over the weekend, getting bucked around in their seat, having to deal with

breakdowns, and reading angry residents comments to boot – these people are awesome and deserve a big shout out for all of their hard work and excellent service.

I hope they keep up their great work, and keep Fort McMurray trucking along!

- **Sam Bosgra**, Assessment

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*The next Cheers for Peers draw is Tuesday, Feb. 24 for the March 1 Fort McMurray Oil Barons home game.*

*Submit a photo or kind message celebrating a colleague by tomorrow at noon. We'll draw one name in the afternoon.*

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## Contact us

For questions and concerns, contact [TheInsider@rmwb.ca](mailto:TheInsider@rmwb.ca).

For previous editions of The Insider, visit the archive on [rmwb.ca/staff](http://rmwb.ca/staff).



**The Insider**

*Let's keep the conversation going!*

Have a story idea? Fun photo? Feedback?  
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