



## The Insider, Feb. 2

Find out what's new at the RMWB on Feb. 2, 2026.

### Pick your top three winter photos!



After reviewing all the incredible submissions, we've selected the top 10 photos that truly captured the spirit of the season.

Now it's **your turn** to help decide the winners — vote for your top three favourites [online](#). The three photos with the most votes will be crowned our winners, so take a look and cast your vote!

### Census 2025 team delivers findings across the finish line!

On Jan. 27, Planning and Development's **Amanda Owens**, director and **Kodjo Efu**, manager presented the Census 2025 findings to Council, officially closing out a very successful municipal census campaign.

Census 2025 marks an important milestone for our region, recording the first population growth in a decade. Fort McMurray Wood Buffalo's population is now 107,740 — a **1.6% increase from**

**2021.** While modest, this growth is meaningful and reflects people choosing to stay, return, and build their lives here, drawn by opportunity, community, and a strong sense of place.

Thank you to the Census 2025 team for supporting this important work.

Departments across the RMWB will find this data valuable as we plan operations, programs, and service levels for 2026 and beyond. These insights will help guide informed decision-making to support this growing region.

For more information and to explore the Census 2025 data, visit [rmwb.ca/census](http://rmwb.ca/census).

## February is Black History Month

Each February, **Black History Month** honours the experiences, achievements, and contributions of Black communities in Canada, while deepening the understanding of their impact on Canadian society.

This year marks 30 years of Black History Month in Canada, with the national theme: **“Honouring Black Brilliance Across Generations - From Nation Builders to Tomorrow’s Visionaries.”** The theme recognizes three decades of Black History Month in Canada and celebrates the leadership, creativity, innovation, and resilience of Black Canadians - those who helped build this country, those shaping our present, and those whose visions will define our future.

Black History Month is also a time to reflect on Canada’s painful history and to recognize how systemic barriers and anti-Black racism continue to create and maintain inequalities today. Learning about both contributions and challenges is essential to building inclusive workplaces and communities.

As part of this commitment, employees are invited to **complete the Anti-Racism Training** available via [LEARN](#), which includes learning modules that recognize the contributions of Black Canadians and explore how anti-racism applies to our roles as municipal employees.

### Local history spotlight: Black brilliance in Wood Buffalo

During the Second World War, Fort McMurray served as a staging point for the U.S. Army’s Canadian Oil (CANOL) Project, a massive infrastructure effort that accelerated development in the region and reinforced its long-standing role in energy production and national defense.

Black soldiers from the southern United States served and contributed to this strategic project with their expertise and labour, helping to shape the region’s strategic importance while they navigated the racial inequities of their time, an often-overlooked chapter of our region’s history.

Many soldiers served in segregated units under the U.S. military Jim Crow System, a series of states and local statutes abolished in the 1960s that existed to enforce racial segregation and disenfranchise African Americans.

Leonard “Len” Williams born in 1885 in Mississippi, left the United States during an era of deep racial segregation and racial violence in search of safety and opportunity in Canada.

He joined the Northern Alberta Railway in 1910, becoming a well-known and respected presence on the *Muskeg Special* (the train route between Waterways and Edmonton), earning his status as a rail conductor in 1925.

His legacy lives on through his children and has been recognized through **Williams Drive** and a **heritage plaque** that honours his contributions to our community.

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*These stories remind us that Black brilliance spans generations and has long played a vital role in shaping our local and national story.*

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

Check out how Olivia Noseworthy, programmer, Rural Relations, spends her free time outside the office:

"In literally *all* of my spare time, I spend it at the Clearwater Horse club with my two horses Peach and Chinook! I am at the horse club twice a day every day to look after and spend time with them.

Chinook and I had a long competition career before his retirement (He is 25 years old!), and I am hopeful that Peach will continue on our competition streak some day!"

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

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

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## Dive into The Insider Archives

In last month's staff survey about The Insider, one of the suggestions was to create an archive of past editions in a central location.

We're happy to share that, based on your feedback, an archive of past editions is now available on [My RMWB](#)!

This new space makes it easy to access and revisit The Insider anytime. Dive in!

## Proposed 2026 Municipal Budget: What to know

The RMWB has released its proposed **2026 budget totaling \$661 million**.

The plan is focused on **sustainable management of municipal assets, strengthening partnerships**, and **building meaningful connections** with Indigenous communities, local businesses, and non-profits while positioning the region for emerging opportunities.

Council will review and deliberate the proposed budget from **Feb. 3 - 5 in Council Chambers** starting at **9 a.m.** each day. The meetings can be streamed [online](#).

- **Feb. 3:** Operating Budget, including Community Investment Program.
- **Feb. 4:** Operating Budget deliberations to continue, if required. Capital Budget deliberations are expected to begin.
- **Feb. 5:** Capital Budget to continue, if required.
- **Feb. 6:** Additional budget meeting day, if required.

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***Learn more:** A full suite of budget resources including the [2026 Budget Primer](#), the [Proposed Budget & Financial Plan](#), agenda packages and more are available at [rmwb.ca/budget](#).*

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## Staff snapshots: Where we are & what we're up to

### Staff come together to support Andrea Collis

As many of you are aware, one of our team members from Planning and Development, **Andrea Collis**, has recently been diagnosed with cancer and is currently undergoing treatment. To support Andrea and her family, Planning and Development organized a bake sale and raffle basket fundraiser.

Thanks to the incredible generosity of staff — from those who donated gift baskets and baked treats to everyone who contributed — a total of **\$2,045** was raised in support of Andrea and her family.

Congratulations to the raffle basket winners: Amy Acton, Melanie Kinakin, Nicole Power, Val Skinner, Suzy Kay, Melanie Collins, Greg Bennett, and Deanna Coles.

### **DEM to DEM in Fort McKay**

Last week, members of the RMWB Emergency Management team met with regional Directors of Emergency Management (DEM) from across the region in Fort McKay. This was important planning and relationship-building opportunity for emergency management planners.

Regrets were received from DEM Calvin Waquan, Mikisew Cree First Nation (MCFN) and Bobby Janvier, Chipewyan Prairie First Nation (CPFN).

Indigenous and Rural Relations members **Lauren Golosky** and **Feather Bourque-Jenner** were both in attendance as well but had to leave early to return to Fort McMurray for another meeting.

### **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).