

INDIGENOUS ARTWORK IN COUNCIL CHAMBERS



Thank you to members of the Circle of
Knowledge and Artistic Expression.
Your willingness to share your personal stories
and wisdom is forever honoured as artwork in
Council Chambers.

Alice Martin, Mikisew Cree First Nation
Christina Simpson, Mikisew Cree First Nation
Frederick McDonald, Fort McKay First Nation
Lena McInroy, Fort Chipewyan Métis Association
Mary McKenzie, Willow Lake Métis Nation
Shirley Arthurs, Fort McMurray 468 First Nation
Theresa Donovan, Fort McKay Métis Nation

marsi cho, kinanaskomitinawaw, merci, thank you



Indigenous Artwork Journey

As part of the ongoing commitment to truth and reconciliation, Mayor and Council motioned to commission art for Council Chambers. Ensuring the voices and perspectives of local Indigenous Peoples were included at the forefront, the Circle of Knowledge and Artistic Expression was formed.

The journey began with Elder Alice Martin creating a safe and sacred space to share stories and honour the Indigenous way of knowing. Métis artist and Visual Arts Professor, David Garneau, was invited to facilitate initial discussions and support artist selection. The Circle of Knowledge and Artistic Expression selected Fort McKay First Nation artist, Frederick R. McDonald, to create a series of artworks that reflected their discussions.

As residential and day school survivors, the members of the Circle of Knowledge and Artistic Expression shared stories about how their experiences shaped their individual journeys. The Seven Sacred Teachings present as a common thread throughout the final artworks and are said to foster a sense of responsibility and belonging to ensure the survival of a community.

A member of the Circle of Knowledge and Artistic Expression, Elder Shirley Arthurs, created a Talking Stick; a spiritual tool used to support healthy communication during the sharing circle process. Located in the front of the presenters bench, the Talking Stick remains accessible for anyone to hold when in discussions in Council Chambers.

The Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo is honoured to have walked alongside the Circle of Knowledge and Artistic Expression to bring such meaningful artwork to Council Chambers. May it stand as a lasting visual testament to the journey of Indigenous peoples and guide us forward on the path of truth and reconciliation.

HEAR THE DRUM, THE HEARTBEAT OF OUR PEOPLE!



True North

ACRYLIC ON CANVAS, 120" X 50", 2022

Elders drum while three generations of women dance. The animals in the sky represent the seven sacred teachings: love (Eagle), honesty (Raven), humility (Wolf), courage (Bear), wisdom (Beaver), truth (Turtle), and respect (Bison). The symbols in the ground are a visual narrative of the past - how communities lived in harmony with the land and animals. Then, along came the institutions of governments and churches, displacing families, and eventually leading to today: a search for self and rediscover of who we are as a people.

With the help of spirituality, today Indigenous Peoples live strong and celebrate old traditions, along with newly adapted cultural experiences. - *F.R.McDonald*

The ideas presented in these paintings symbolize connection to the land and the water, culture and traditions. Connected to the past and the future while living in the present. The negative impact of the residential school institutions is passed on, touching all in some manner. In spite of the many ways that the institutions tried to make Indigenous people assimilate, their stories are very much alive today and grow stronger. These paintings are meant to start discussions along the path of Truth and Reconciliation.



Teachings

ACRYLIC ON CANVAS, 72" X 24", 2022

Youth learn about their culture through modern methods like searching the World Wide Web, while Elders continue to teach through proven methods of the drum and stories that accompany their songs. The girl reads about the residential school while a picture of a train hangs beside her, a modern reference to how some people accessed their traplines. A canoe in the river references past modes of transportation. All these elements speak to shared histories. The Thunderbird connects to the spirit world, painted stylistically with a red dress in recognition of missing and murdered women and girls. In spite of it all and generations of colonial pressures, Indigenous peoples are still strong - growing stronger through reflecting on history, embracing the present, and being hopeful for future generations! - *F.R.McDonald*





Spirits Having Flown | Series 1, 2 & 3

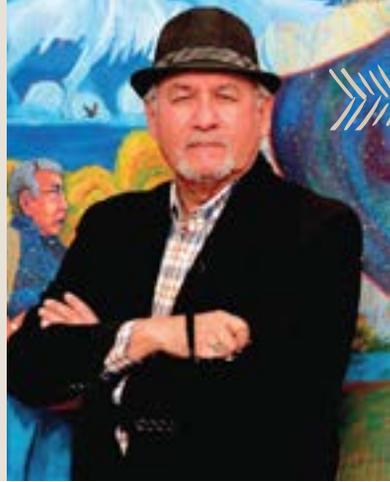
ACRYLIC ON CANVAS, 12" X 60", 2022

As people enter Council Chambers, they pass through a threshold framed by paintings adorned with the symbols of the Seven Sacred Teachings. At either base, symbols of the Sacred Pipe and Sage rest upon the Four Directions, expressed in both Dene and Cree colours. The Pipe is left unlit to honour what was lost, yet the Sage burns, marking the journey forward into healing.

Reconciliation is not just an Indigenous thing; we all have to do this together, no matter what walk of life you come from. Reconciliation is about all of us! - *F.R.McDonald*

About the Artist

Frederick R. McDonald is an artist and member of the Fort McKay First Nation. Frederick obtained his Masters of Fine Arts from the University of Calgary in 2001. While in University, he was president of the First Nations Student Association, and participated on the Rainforest Action Group and Committee Against Racism, giving him insights into different ways of thinking.



Frederick was born in Fort McMurray and raised in the along the Athabasca River in the traditional hunting and trapping lifestyle of his parents. A way of life that still lives inside him.

Despite being a world traveller, Fred's heart remains with his community. In his past he found personal satisfaction as the coordinator of Fort McKay Treaty Days and as director of the Athabasca Tribal Council Regional Gathering. A born leader, Fred served as President of the Northern Alberta Aboriginal Business Association and held many other board appointments, including the Fort McMurray United Way.

In 2008 he established the position as the CEO of the Fort McKay Group of Companies and during his four years he saw firsthand how the dynamics of the corporate environment work. This added another level of thinking when it came to his artistic perspectives.

Frederick has returned to his artistic practice, a place his heart has always belonged. He has exhibited widely across Canada, and his works are held in private, corporate, and institutional collections around the world, including the Glenbow Museum, the Alberta Foundation for the Arts, and the Government of Canada.

Fred's love of painting has expanded to include poetry and photography, each practiced with the same devotion. He believes that being an artist means engaging in an esoteric conversation with the cosmos—but ultimately, for him, art is life!





REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY
OF **WOOD BUFFALO**