

# NEWS RELEASE

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**For immediate release**

**July 13, 2021**

## **Mary Burlie Day honors Edmonton activist and advocate: “Black Angel of Boyle Street”**

The legacy of an exemplary advocate and activist will be celebrated as the City of Edmonton officially proclaims Mary Burlie Day at an event on Tuesday, July 13, 2021. The proposal for the city to honour Mrs. Burlie with an official day of recognition was a joint initiative between community partners Boyle Street Community Services and MacEwan University.

Mary Burlie was a frontline worker at Boyle Street for 26 years. Born in Arkansas under Jim Crow to a black family of thirteen, she experienced racism, discrimination and poverty. Mary married a Canadian, John Burlie, and moved to Edmonton in 1969. She raised six children of her own, along with several foster children.

Seeing parallels between her own experiences with racism and poverty and the communities served by Boyle Street, Burlie offered to volunteer with the organization, and was quickly hired as a full-time outreach worker.

Burlie was particularly devoted to the urban Indigenous population and was passionate about reuniting families. She was loved by Boyle Street clients and was tireless in her dedication to her work, at times effectively managing 17 cases at once, when staff typically worked on six. She continued to work at Boyle Street up until she died of lung cancer in 1996 at the age of 61.

"Mary Burlie embodies the best of Boyle Street," says Jordan Reiniger, executive director, Boyle Street Community Services. "She was beloved by the community and committed to fighting racism and discrimination in her own life and for the people we serve. We are excited to host this event with our partners at MacEwan University to honor Mary Burlie's contributions to our community and Edmonton as a whole."

Burlie was awarded MacEwan University's Distinguished Citizen Award in 1992 in recognition of her work in the community and her fight against racism, discrimination and poverty. The university also has awarded the Mary Burlie Bursary to a student enrolled in its Social Work program, every year since 1996.

"We are pleased to work with our long-time community partner to honour Mary Burlie and to shine a light on her extraordinary legacy of fighting racism and poverty in our community," says Dr. Annette Trimbee, president of MacEwan University. "She worked tirelessly to build a stronger and more compassionate community, and we are inspired to build on her efforts."

Burlie was also the President of the Alberta Black Women's Association and Change for Children.

## **Event details**

### *Agenda*

11 a.m.-1 p.m. – Remarks by:

- Dr. Annette Trimbee, President, MacEwan University
- Jordan Reiniger, Executive Director, Boyle Street Community Services
- James Cumming, MP for Edmonton Centre
- David Shepherd, MLA for Edmonton-Centre
- Proclamation of Mary Burlie Day by Scott McKeen, Edmonton City Councillor for Ward 6
- Acceptance speech by member of the Burlie Family

12:15 -12:40 p.m. – Media availability

Opening and closing performances by Shima Aisha Robinson, artistic producer of the Edmonton Poetry Festival.

*Location:* MacEwan University City Centre Campus  
West Lawn - between Robbins Health Learning Centre and Allard Hall

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## **About Boyle Street Community Services**

About Boyle Street Community Services: Boyle Street Community Services has been working in the inner city of Edmonton since 1971 to serve, support, and empower people to take control of their lives and escape the cycle of poverty and homelessness. In 1976, the organization became a registered charity under the name Boyle Street Service Society. The mission of Boyle Street Community Services is to build and provide community supports for vulnerable populations who face multiple barriers to inclusion.

## **About MacEwan University**

MacEwan University, Edmonton's downtown university, inspires students with a powerful combination of academic excellence and personal learning experiences. The university's six faculties and schools offer more than 65 programs in areas including business, communications, community studies, continuing education, fine arts, healthcare, liberal arts and sciences.

## **For more information**

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