

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Major Vanessa Fulford, Fort McMurray Local who Became Canada's Astronaut Finalist, to Headline (EM)POWER: Women of Inspiration Celebration 2024 Presented by Bouchier

Fort McMurray, AB (November 17, 2023) -- Major Vanessa Fulford, Canada's Top 17 Astronaut Candidate from Fort McMurray, Aerospace Engineer in the Royal Canadian Air Force, will headline (EM)POWER: Women of Inspiration Celebration 2024 at MacDonald Island on March 9, 2024, presented by Bouchier, in support of Girls Inc. of Northern Alberta (Girls Inc.).

Major Fulford is a Fort McMurray local who became Canada's Astronaut Candidate in 2017. She was promoted to her current rank in 2019 and selected for the F-35 Joint Program Office (JPO) Canadian Introduction to Service Lead, in Arlington Virginia USA. While working at the JPO, Major Fulford fulfilled the role of Deputy Director of the Logistics Capability team, assisting US Services and Partner nations to receive the F-35 Aircraft.

Posted back to 4 Wing/Canadian Forces Base Cold Lake in 2022 – the busiest fighter base in Canada, Major Fulford has been preparing the Canadian Fighter Force to transition from legacy CF-18s to the F-35 aircraft. At 4 Wing, she currently holds the role of Defence Women's Advisory Organization Military Co-Chairperson and is the Champion for the 4 Wing Health and Wellness Committee's Balance Strategy Working Group.

The sense of 'empowerment' is at core of Major Fulford's lived experience in navigating through male dominated work environments in the Military Aviation Industry and STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) career pathways. Major Fulford unpacks the concept of 'power' and highlights how 'power' can be leveraged to achieve 'empowerment' of women and girls towards a more diverse, equitable and inclusive world.

"At Bouchier, we believe in the power of women to inspire, lead and create change. This is why we're thrilled to present the (EM)POWER: Women of Inspiration Celebration 2024, a celebration of the exceptional women in Wood Buffalo who have broken barriers and driven positive change for women and girls. We're excited to have Major Vanessa Fulford as our headline speaker, whose journey to become Canada's Top 17 Astronaut Candidate exemplifies what it means to empower women to achieve their dreams. We hope that this event will continue to inspire and ignite conversations about the ways in which we can all use our power for good," says Nicole Bourque-Bouchier, CEO of Bouchier.

(EM)POWER: Women of Inspiration Celebration 2024 presented by Bouchier is dedicated to recognizing and honouring five outstanding women of the Wood Buffalo region. These are local role models who break gender stereotypes, drive positive change and advocate for rights and opportunities of women and girls. They represent what it means to be strong, smart and bold — you can't be, what you can't see.

"In 2020, we 'SHATTERed' the (in)visible barriers surrounding the everyday life of girls and women. In 2021, we brought those shattered pieces together to celebrate the rich 'MOSAIC' they created. In

2022, we amplified one another's 'VOICES' represented in the mosaic. In 2023, we came 'TOGETHER' to strengthen and empower such voices.

This year, we would like to encourage everyone to pause and reflect on the word '(EM)POWER'.

This event marks the 5th year anniversary of partnering with Bouchier in creating these inspirational narratives, which Girls Inc. of Northern Alberta is extremely grateful for. At Girls Inc., we believe empowerment begins with education and is a state of being able to make one's own decisions and have control over them. On this milestone, join us in asking ourselves – what is 'empowerment' to you, how can 'power' be (ab)used, and what kinds of 'power' do each of us have to ignite, impact, and inspire one another?", says Nanase Tonda, Executive Director of Girls Inc. of Northern Alberta.

The evening will highlight and honour how each of the five Women of Inspiration 2023-2024 have empowered girls and women by breaking barriers and taking positive risks in our local community. Coupled with an interactive keynote presentation by Major Fulford, guests will enjoy a series of beverages, delicious meals, auctions, and various lineups of empowering activities.

(EM)POWER: Women of Inspiration Celebration 2024 will kick off on International Women's Day (Friday, March 8, 2023) with a girls' empowerment mini-gala, at UniFOR Local 707-A. The event is designed for girls ages 9-18 to get inspired through various interactive and educational activities in a very much similar environment as the main event, including a headliner speech by Major Fulford. Registration opens in January 2024.

See some of Major Fulford's work here:

<https://www.asc-csa.gc.ca/eng/astronauts/recruitment/profiles.asp?fulford-vanessa>

Tickets for (EM)POWER: Women of Inspiration Celebration 2024 are now on sale (early bird sale ends on January 15,

2024):<https://girlsincofnorthernalberta.ejoinme.org/MyEvents/EMPOWERWomenofInspiration2024/ta/bid/1400356/Default.aspx>

- Early Bird individual tickets: \$166.32
- Regular individual tickets after January 16: \$191.27
- Early Bird table of eight (8): \$1,164.24
- Regular table of eight (8) after January 16: \$1,338.88

Tickets are transferable, but not refundable unless the event is canceled. Age 18+.

Sponsorship opportunities are currently being reviewed by the first right of refusal holders. Confirmed partners to date include: Bouchier, Balsom Communications, CEDA, Nicole Maclean Photography, Interpipeline, Fort McMurray International Airport and Pembina.

Sponsorship and Media Opportunities

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About Girls Inc. of Northern Alberta

Girls Inc. of Northern Alberta (Girls Inc.) inspires all girls to be strong, smart, and bold through direct service and advocacy. Our holistic approach to girl development equips them to surmount gender, economic, and societal challenges, fostering their growth into healthy, educated, and independent individuals. Since our establishment in 2004, Girls Inc. has been steadily expanding its impact in the Wood Buffalo region. In 2022 alone, Girls Inc. inspired over 1,900 girls throughout the region—an exceptional growth from 310 girls in 2016. This year, we aspire to welcome many more girls through our doors, nurturing their journey to become strong, smart, and bold, thereby enriching the Wood Buffalo region as an even greater place to thrive. For more information, please visit www.girlsincofnorthernalberta.org.

About Bouchier

Bouchier is a leading Canadian integrated site services company based in Fort McKay, Alberta. The company specializes in Civil Contracting and Facilities Maintenance. Bouchier began operations in 1998 and is 100 per-cent Indigenous owned. The company employs approximately 1,100 people and prides itself on building its diverse workforce, including an Indigenous employee representation of 43 per cent. Bouchier is committed to lasting economic and social impact ranging from hiring Indigenous and local suppliers to supporting Indigenous independence, culture and community, female empowerment and youth and recreation. The company has been recognized numerous times for its leadership, quality and safety excellence.