

Leah Volkmann

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: December 27, 2021 12:28 PM
To: CRD Mailbox
Subject: Heritage Steering Committee: Call for Volunteers
Attachments: The Other Billie_BC History_Winter_Issue.pdf; BC History 54.2 Summer - TS-Dixon-Warren.pdf

Good afternoon and a very merry Christmas, Happy solstice and many Winter Blessings. I am responding to the Call for Volunteers for the Heritage Steering Committee.

We have lived in North Cariboo (Bouchie Lake) since April, 2002 (20 years) and am actively involved in our community. We own and operate a farm (Moose Meadows Farm) and own the local Country Store down the way. In addition to that I work fulltime for BC Timber Sales as the Indigenous Team Lead and am an active volunteer with several local and regionally based organisations. I was also the Director for Area B two Directors back.

I have an active interest in our local history which is why I am expressing interest in joining the Heritage Committee for the CRD. I am particularly interested in rural history with a focus on the community in which I live.

I have had 2 articles published in BC History Magazine in recent times. They are attached. I am planning to write a book on the people and places of Bouchie Lake.

Thank you for your consideration. Cheers, Heloise

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Heloise & Ted

Heloise Dixon-Warren, BSc, RPF
Ted Traer, BSF, RPF
Moose Meadows Farm

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**** Heloise is:**
Vice-Chair of FARMED (www.farmed.ca),
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Director with the Bouchie Lake Watershed Stewardship Society.

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"We acknowledge, with respect the Lhtako Dene traditional territory on which we live, farm, and play".

THE ARMSTRONGS

Bouchie Lake's First "Century Family"

By Heloise Dixon-Warren

The year 2020 marked the celebration of Bouchie Lake's first "Century Family." It was 1920 when George Wesley Victor Percival Armstrong (b. March 10, 1874) and Jeannie Bell (Johnston) Armstrong (b. June 19, 1894) travelled from Vancouver to the Cariboo and settled in the Bouchie District¹ on the shores of Bouchie Lake (sometimes called Six-Mile Lake). Richard George Robert Armstrong, George and Jean's grandson, who has lived his whole life on Bouchie Lake, isn't sure what motivated his grandparents to move to the "bush." Richard wonders if the move was also driven by George's knowledge of the Spanish Flu pandemic, which killed between 20 and 100 million people between 1918 and 1919, including approximately 50,000 Canadians.

George Armstrong was a newspaper editor and worked for several papers in BC, including the *Vancouver Province*, the *Salmon Arm Observer*, and the *Cariboo Observer*. George and Jeannie, both originally from Ontario, met in Silver Creek (near Armstrong, BC) where they married on November 27, 1901 and pre-empted land to farm. After more than a decade there, they sold the farm and went to Vancouver where George worked for the *Province* newspaper.

In the summer of 1920, however, George and Jeannie packed up their five children, Arthur (Wesley), (George) Lewis, Irene May, Thomas (Brazier), and Richard's father, Wilfred Reginal, known as Slim, eight years old at the time, and travelled north.

Jeannie's sister, Kari May Johnston, lived in Bouchie Lake. She had married an American by the name of Floyd Vernon and settled at Six Mile Corner a few kilometres from Bouchie Lake. They resided in a road-house; the building exists today and is located at the junction of the Blackwater and Nazko Roads. George and Jeannie had learned from Floyd and Kari May that the last piece of property on Bouchie Lake was available.

The roads that access this property today are the Bouchie Lake Road and Jeanney [sic] Bell Road. It was around the beginning of July in 1920 when the Armstrongs settled on the southeast Quarter of Lot 4503.

In those days, homesteaders typically wanted land



George and Jeannie Armstrong, 1940s.

Photo: Courtesy of Armstrong family

that included meadows, which were valued for farming. The lot that the Armstrongs pre-empted had no meadows; rather, it was forested with Douglas fir and spruce trees, species found in natural climax forests that existed before industrial harvesting and development. The family was resourceful, at first living off the land by gathering berries and hunting. In time, their land became a productive family farm after they felled the trees and pulled and burned the stumps. Richard says that his grandparents "built a farm out of the bush."

The house and all of the outbuildings were constructed from logs taken off the property. The big house that the family lived in became known as Fir Point Ranch. Richard recalls there being two large barns for the cows and horses. Many of the buildings were constructed by Richard's father, Wilfred, as he became an expert log home builder. The Armstrongs developed a farm on which they grew potatoes, turnips, and carrots for the market. They also had a large garden and ran a dairy and grain farm. From 1921 to 1924, George's dad, John Wesley Armstrong, also lived at the homestead with the family.

George and Jeannie's lakeshore property became one of the popular gathering places for many events. People from Baker Creek to Kersley would gather on the property for picnics, ball games, swimming lessons, and boating on the lake. Docks on the lake and a gazebo with a kitchen were constructed in addition to a square dance floor and several picnic tables. The very popular community picnics hosted by the Farmer's Institutes and sewing circles were also held at the Armstrong's; the first local picnic and sewing circle took place there

in 1922 and 1923 respectively. The picnics consisted of races for the children while the men played horseshoes and often a baseball game.

Through a cooperative effort by both the men and women of the community, in 1929 the West Quesnel Farmer's Institute Hall was constructed at Six Mile Corner on donated land. Socials and dances were held at the hall at least once a month. In 1947 another hall was constructed adjacent to the original one where the parking lot of Bouchie Lake Elementary School is located today. Construction of the hall was a community affair; some of the lumber was provided by H. J. Gardner & Sons Ltd. Sawmill (which commenced operations in 1943 on the western shore of Bouchie Lake) and A. L. Patchett & Sons. Over the years, the WQFI Hall was used for many theatrical musical productions. The hall had a beautiful hardwood dance floor, and every Saturday night a dance was held with the Women's Institute operating the concession. The entrance fee covered the payment for the live band and security was someone at the door with a baseball bat.

In 1940, Slim, now 28 years old, married Emily May "Mayme" Johnston. Mayme wanted her own property and home, separate from the rest of the Armstrongs, so she and Slim subdivided two acres from the original homestead and constructed their home. Here, Slim and Mayme raised their family of three children, Lew, Molly, and Richard. Mayme Armstrong died in 1985, and Slim passed away in 1995. This property is still in the family today.

On July 25, 1946, the women of Bouchie Lake gathered at the Armstrong's home to establish the Bouchie Lake Women's Institute. The first regular meeting of the Institute was held in the Hall on August 26, 1946, with Jeannie Bell Armstrong as the Chair. Over the years, the Bouchie Lake Women's Institute was an integral part of the community.

Following the Second World War, Brazier Armstrong returned to Bouchie Lake. Under the Veteran's Land Act (VLA) of 1942, he and his wife, Louise, purchased land across from the Farmer's Institute Hall and opened the Bouchie Lake Store. The store was the site of the Bouchie Lake Post Office from September 19, 1950 to May 31, 1962.² The property was eventually purchased by the Ministry of Highways, and the store was burned down to allow the Blackwater Road to be upgraded to a highway in 1985.

Jeannie died in Vancouver in 1967, and a year later George died at the family's home in Bouchie Lake.

Richard married Linda Gronlund at the Bouchie Lake Hall in 1970. They lived in Jean and George's house at Six Mile Corner until 1975 when they moved



Mayme, Lew, Richard, and Molly Armstrong, 1950s.

Photo: Courtesy of Armstrong family

to the family property on Bouchie Lake. Richard and Linda have two children, both raised on the family property.

In 1972, the two original Farmer's Institute halls burned down and a new hall was located on a site across the road.

Today, the community of Bouchie Lake is a predominantly residential area with a school, the hall, a volunteer fire department, a pub, two retail businesses, and many farms and home-based businesses. Although its postal address is now Quesnel, it has its own identity, with a strong sense of autonomy and pride. Volunteerism continues to be key to the social fabric of the community. The community has grown to include Milburn Lake and is sometimes referred to as Bouchie-Milburn. Many of the roads are named after the early settler families, including Armstrong Crescent, Norwood, Vernon, Barker, and Rawlings Roads.

In 2019, Richard and Linda moved to Quesnel, but Richard still considers Bouchie Lake his home. Today his son and daughter-in-law, Graeme and Trine, and their five children, make their home on the same property where Richard's great-grandfather, grandfather, and father lived. 📍

Endnotes

1. Named after William Walker Boucher ("Billie Bouchie") and Lizette Allard Boucher who were the first people to pre-empt land in 1902 with the formation of L729.
2. BC Geographical Names: <http://apps.gov.bc.ca/pub/bcgnws/names/409.html>.



Heloise Dixon-Warren has lived in the Bouchie Lake since 2002. She and her husband, Ted, live on a farm and own the local "country store" down the road. Her article "The Other Billie" was published in our Winter 2019 issue. Heloise is Vice-Chair of FARMED (www.farmed.ca), Secretary of the Friends of Bouchie-Milburn Society, a Director with Growing North Cariboo Society, and a Director with the Bouchie Lake Watershed Stewardship Society.

After the First World War

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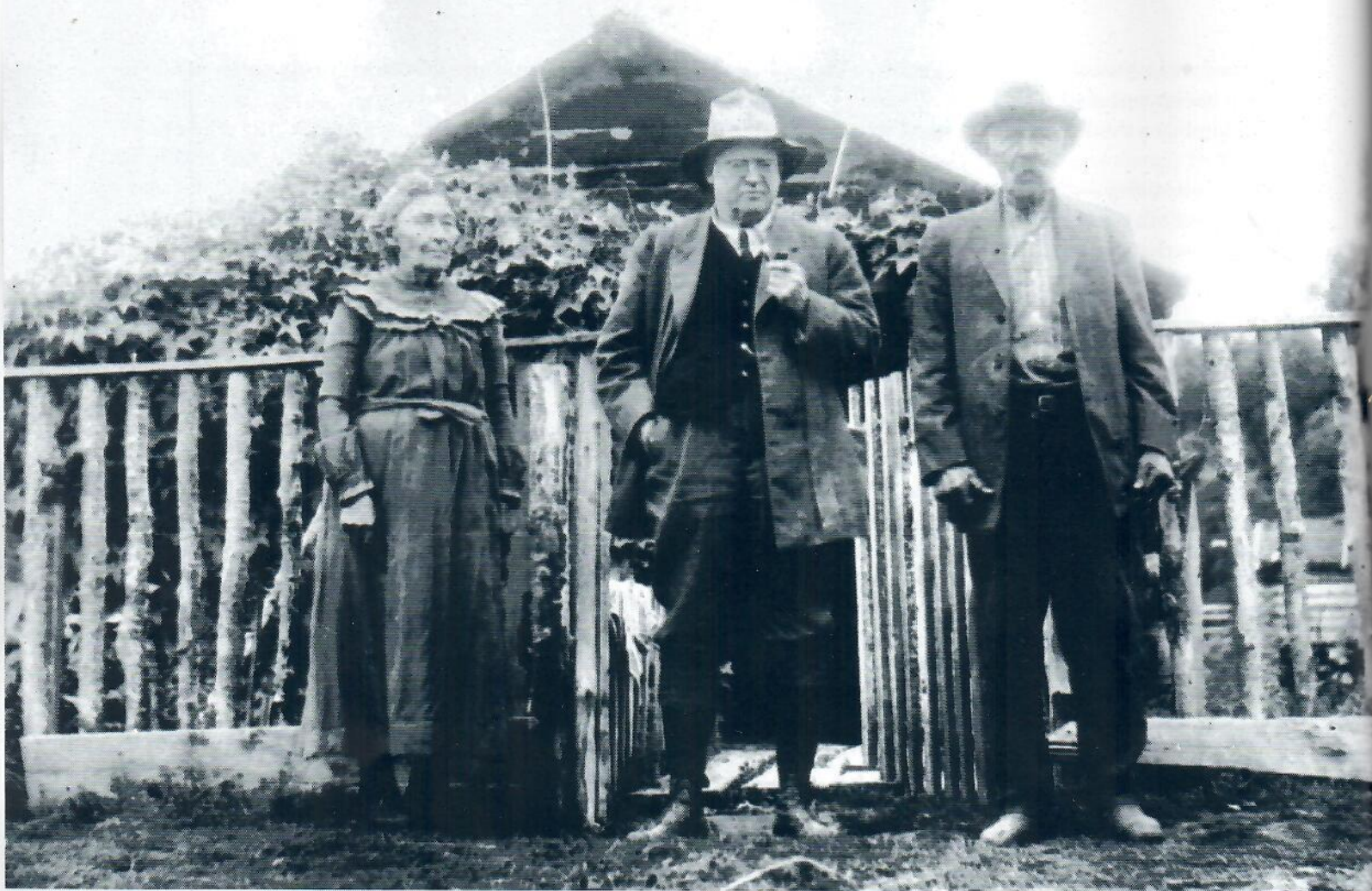


Craigdarroch Military Hospital: A Canadian War Story

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Lizette Allard Bouchie, an unidentified man, and Billie Boucher outside the Bouchie's home on the west side of the Fraser River, circa 1890.

Image I-60830 courtesy of the Royal BC Museum and Archives

The Other Billie

By Heloise Dixon-Warren

When one thinks of the Cariboo, William ("Billy") Barker and the discovery of gold in August 1862 quickly comes to mind. Today, much of the emphasis on the Cariboo's history is focused on the historic town of Barkerville and the opening up of the province through the Gold Rush. While the Gold Rush had an impressive impact on western Canada, the Cariboo was also opened up by voyageurs and farmers, by establishing communication lines, and by more than one William. Understanding our history brings communities together and gives people a reason to celebrate.

In the North Cariboo, 10 kilometres west of Quesnel lies the rural community of Bouchie Lake. Together with Milburn Lake, this unincorporated area known to some as Bouchie-Milburn is home to an estimated 2,000 to 2,500 people. Although the majority of the people live rurally on small-to-large acreages, the community has a village centre composed of a hall and recreation grounds, an elementary school, a volunteer fire department, three commercial businesses, and many home-based businesses. The majority of the current commercial structures replaced older structures that were built in the early 1900s. Some of the earlier

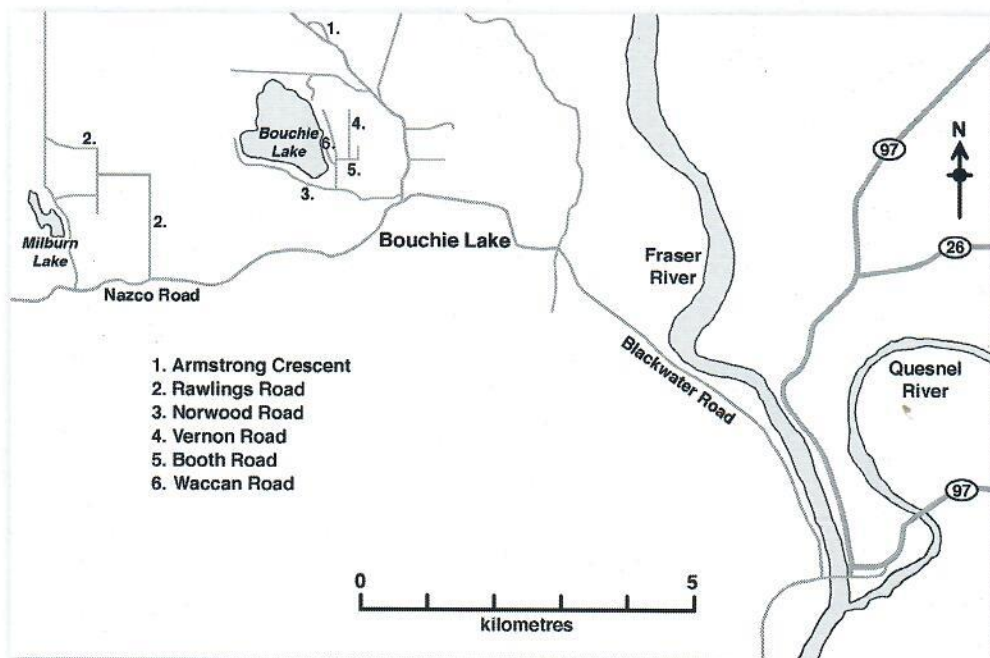
buildings succumbed to fire or were simply dismantled for other reasons. Some were relocated. Today, access to the community is via the Blackwater Road – a provincial highway that was straightened and upgraded in 1985. The speed on the Blackwater Road is 80 km an hour. It is likely fair to say that when most people drive through Bouchie Lake they give little thought as to why it is where it is, what was here before, or the people who were the original settlers.

Bouchie Lake is in the traditional territory of the Lhtako Dené First Nation people. The area was used by local First Nations people for traditional activities such as hunting, camping, and berry picking years before the voyageurs and/or early settlers travelled into the area. Long before there were highways, telephone lines, or telegraph trails, travel into the area of “Bouchie-Milburn” would have been via traditional First Nation trails. It is known that these original trails became the corridors that we travel on today. On the lake now known as Bouchie Lake, it is said that there were at least two First Nation campsites on the lakeshore. These were used by the local First Nations people travelling between the Blackwater Valley, Nazko, and Quesnel.

Following the cross-Canada expedition of Alexander MacKenzie with the North West Company (NWC) in 1793, the NWC gave Simon Fraser the task of exploring and further opening up the land for fur trading. After constructing Fort McLeod in 1805 (the first fort west of the Rocky Mountains), Fraser established Fort St. James and Fort Fraser both in 1806, and Fort George in 1807. These are communities that exist today and are known well by many people in North Central BC.

On May 22, 1808, Simon Fraser departed from Fort George with a crew of 23 people and four canoes to explore the river that was named after him. Travelling with Fraser was John Stuart (name-sake for Stuart Lake), Jules Maurice Quesnel, and Jean-Baptiste Boucher. It was Simon Fraser who later named the land New Caledonia and the river entering the Fraser River from the East in what is now Quesnel, the Quesnel River.

Jean-Baptiste Boucher is of particular interest when



Map of the Cariboo and location of Bouchie-Milburn.

Erica Williams

discussing the history of Bouchie Lake. Jean-Baptiste was Métis. He was born in 1789 in the Métis Homeland, known as Rupert's Land — territory that included all or parts of present-day Northwest-Nunavut Territory, Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia. His father was French-Canadian and his mother Cree.¹ It is said he spoke both the languages of his parents, along with Carrier, and several others. He was a valued voyageur, interpreter, guide, and courier for the North West Company, and then the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) after the companies merged in 1821. One of Boucher's duties was that of a policeman, and it is believed that his nickname "Waccan" is a derivative of watchman. Jean-Baptiste married the daughter of a Carrier chief in 1811 but that marriage did not last. His second marriage was to Nancy McDougall. Nancy had been born in Fort McLeod (1806) and was also Métis. She was the daughter of North West Company clerk James McDougall and an Athabaskan Sekani First Nations woman.

Waccan and Nancy had 17 children, some of whom also worked for the HBC. Boucher's name was shortened and often spelled Bouche, Bouchie, or Buschie. Waccan died in 1849 and Nancy died sometime after 1871. Both are buried at Fort St. James. Waccan was the last surviving member of the Simon Fraser Expedition.

By 1821, the HBC had established Fort Alexandria to the south of Quesnel. Travelling north of Quesnel to the more northern forts, the route included the hills north and west of the Fraser River. Six miles out on the trail, the pack trains are said to have rested on a grassy



First school at Bouchie Lake on Blackwater Road. The teacher was Miss E. Bruneau, and she had 17 pupils, 9 boys and 8 girls, 1922.

Image B-06870 courtesy of the Royal BC Museum and Archives

meadowland with a stream flowing nearby. This creek was later named Bouchie Creek and the lake that it flowed out of, Bouchie Lake.

In 1864–65, the Collins Overland Telegraph Trail was being constructed with the aim to connect North America with Europe via a telegraph. By the summer of 1865, and under the direction of Mr. Perry Collins, the telegraph crew had completed a line as far as Quesnel and had cleared a right of way west of Quesnel, likely following First Nation trails, to Fort Fraser. In the spring of 1866, telegraph wire was strung out from Quesnel northwest to the confluence of the Bulkley and Skeena Rivers. From this time onwards, travel through what became Bouchie Lake was via the Telegraph Trail.

Fast forward to the early 1900s when William Boucher, one of the younger sons of Jean-Baptiste Boucher, and his wife Lizette Allard Boucher decided they wanted more land. William “Billie” was born in Fort Alexandria in 1828.² As a young man, he was employed by the Hudson’s Bay Company at Fort Alexandria and later as a courier, travelling between Fort St. James and Steveston (on the coast) on the Telegraph Trail and wagon roads.

Lizette was born in 1842 at the coast. Her father was Joseph Allard, a Hudson’s Bay Company middleman who spent most of his career in New Caledonia. Her mother was Marie, an Indigenous woman from the Fort George area.³ Billie and Lizette Allard were married



The May 26, 2018 Billie Bouchie Day Celebrations.

Photographer, Dave Sutton

The Crown Grant Papers can be viewed online through the Province of British Columbia Government Access Tool for Online Retrieval (GATOR): a100.gov.bc.ca/pub/gator/crowngrantdetail.do?grantId=029269

at St. Joseph's Mission in Williams Lake in 1864. The young Bouchers lived in Quesnelle Mouth where they pre-empted land on the flats on the west bank of the Fraser River (West Quesnel) to farm. Billie not only developed a productive farm but was also the ferry man transporting people and freight across the Fraser River. Billie and Lizette had seven children. When they reached school age, Billie would ferry them across the Fraser River to attend the school in Quesnel.

On May 27, 1902, William (a.k.a. Billie) Bouchie and Lizette pre-empted 320 acres in Bouchie Lake. They paid \$1.00 an acre for land that was surveyed and by doing so, became Bouchie Lake's first permanent settlers. On the Crown Grant Papers, their land, known as L729 is transected from southeast to northwest by the Telegraph Trail. L729 exists today, although it has been subdivided in areas. What is of interest is that the location of the Telegraph Trail is exactly where the Blackwater Road is today. Bouchie Creek, which flows behind the Bouchie Lake Elementary School, is also shown on the map.

Billie and Lizette resided on the farm in Bouchie Lake until 1914. Billie died on July 29, 1921 at the age of 90 and Lizette died in February 1938 at the age of 95.⁴ Both are buried in the Pioneer Cemetery in Quesnel.

Other families moved into the area after Billie and Lizette. Stores, schools and halls were constructed — the majority of them by residents of the community. Many of the roads in Bouchie-Milburn reflect the presence of these pioneer families — e.g., Rawlings Road, Sanford Road, Armstrong Crescent, Norwood Road, Vernon Road, and Booth Road. It was not until recently that the significance of Waccan Road on Bouchie Lake was understood by some of us. Some of these pioneering families still have relatives who live in the area, while others have moved on to make their homes elsewhere.

Until recently, the history of Bouchie Lake as a community was not well known by many. On May 25 and 26, 2018, the Billie Bouchie Day Celebrations, hosted by the Friends of Bouchie-Milburn Society, endeavoured to change the community's understanding of itself. This event was a Celebration of our Community and Heritage. It focused on the contribution that the Métis, First Nations, and early settlers made to the community and region as a whole. To understand where we are



The May 26, 2018 Billie Bouchie Day Celebrations.

Photographer, Lizzy Hay

going and our opportunities, we must know where we have come from.

The Friends of Bouchie-Milburn Society now look forward to "Billie Bouchie Day Celebrations" in 2019 and how, again, a celebration can be planned that will raise the profile of our community's history amongst its own residents. ■



Heloise Dixon-Warren is a resident of Bouchie-Milburn and has been for the last 16 years. When she moved to the North Cariboo in 2002 she thought she was moving to Quesnel as that is the postal address used by Canada Post. Over the years, Heloise has learned that she lives in a community outside of Quesnel — a community with its own identity, history and flavour. Heloise and her husband, Ted, own Moose Meadows Farm and a local Country Store in addition

to being both Registered Professional Foresters and employed by the Province of BC. Heloise is actively engaged in her community as a volunteer and is a passionate advocate for it. She is Secretary with the Friends of Bouchie-Milburn and looks forward to the group taking on more projects that celebrate the community and its heritage.

Endnotes

1. "Jean-Baptiste Boucher Biography," Quesnel & District Museum & Archives, <http://www.quesnelmuseum.ca/RiverofMemory/Fraser-Expedition/Waccan/boucher.html>.
2. The 1828 date is from *Pioneers of Bouchie Lake*, Bouchie Lake Women's Institute, 1975; the 1833 date is from *A Tribute to the Past — Quesnel & Area, 1808–1928*, Old Age Pensioner's Organization, Branch #77, Quesnel, BC, 1985.
3. Bruce McIntyre Watson, "Allard, Joseph (b) (c. 1820 - c. 1873) (Canadian: French)," *Lived West of the Divide: A Biographical Dictionary of Fur Traders Working West of the Rockies, 1793-1858*, 166. Second source: *Sixth Census of Canada, 1921*. Ottawa, Ontario, Canada: Library and Archives Canada, 2013. Series RG31. Statistics Canada Fonds: father listed as Alair, born in Manitoba, her origin as French.
4. "British Columbia Death Registrations, 1872-1986; 1992-1993," William Walker Bouchie, 1924. "British Columbia Death Registrations, 1872-1986; 1992-1993," Elizabeth Bouchie, 1938.