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THE LATE FREDERICK GEORGE FORD

Statement by:
The Honourable Patricia Bovey

Thursday, October 6, 2022

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Hon. Patricia Bovey: Honourable senators, you know how important the Arctic is to me and the many concerns I have about the interconnected issues Arctic inhabitants face: security, climate change, food security, health and culture, to name but a few. Inuit art and artists have been part of my life since my childhood, and my respect is huge for those who have heralded Inuit culture and life and for those who have expanded that awareness and knowledge into the South.

The North lost a quiet, impassioned and staunch voice and supporter this past August when Fred Ford passed away in Winnipeg. Born in St. Catharines, Ontario, in November 1949, Fred — after he completed high school and was backpacking through Europe — began his quest to know his roots. In December 1980, Fred moved his young family to Baker Lake, Nunavut, to learn more about his Inuit culture and family connections. He lived in Baker Lake until moving to Winnipeg in 2003. In Baker Lake, he managed the Iglu Hotel, served as executive director of the Kivilliq Inuit Association, opened the Qamanittuq Fine Arts Gallery, taught in the school and lectured at Arctic College.

Embracing all aspects of his culture while in the North, he continued to support it in Winnipeg. I met Fred soon after he

moved to Winnipeg. I can attest to his substantial work for the Winnipeg Art Gallery and its collections — through hosting visiting Inuit artists, translating for them when needed and, as a board member, his tireless work towards the building and opening of Qaumajug, the gallery's new Inuit art centre.

Music was important to him, too. He served on the board of Camerata Nova, which is now called Dead of Winter, and assisted in inviting Inuit throat singers to this program.

Fred was a founding board member — in 2012 — as well as the president and board chair of the Manitoba Inuit Association. It was an honour for me to attend the very special opening of their new space in 2019, in which many aspects of Inuit culture were presented. Fred's pride in his culture and heritage was palpable, as was his love of sharing Inuit history and culture whenever he could. It was wonderful to see the dance in his face when he talked of what he loved most: his family, as well as Inuit art, artists and their creative expression.

I will miss his depth of knowledge and his dedication to this important part of Canada.

My condolences go to Gela, his children and beloved grandchildren. Rest in peace, dear friend.

Thank you.
