



# News Release

*Contact:*  
**Jason Parent**  
Development and  
College Relations Office  
33 Edgemont Drive  
Presque Isle, ME 04769  
Phone: (207) 768-2808  
Fax: (207) 768-2813  
jparent@nmcc.edu

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## **94-year-old Ernest Charette of Fort Kent to be inducted into Northern Maine Construction Hall of Fame at NMCC ceremony October 21**

**Aroostook County** - A well-known and highly-respected 94-year-old St. John Valley master craftsman, who worked more than seven decades in the building materials trade, has been named the 2010 inductee into the Northern Maine Construction Hall of Fame.

Ernest Charette of Fort Kent will be honored during a ceremony and reception on Thursday, October 21, at 5:00 p.m. in the Mailman Trades Building at Northern Maine Community College. Established in the fall of 2007 on the NMCC campus, the Northern Maine Construction Hall of Fame was created to recognize key individuals who have contributed both to the profession and have served as mentors to others entering the profession.

“Ernest Charette is an exceptional individual, respected businessman and most impressive master woodworking craftsman. He is a legendary figure in the St. John Valley, who embodies our region’s celebrated work ethic. Known both for his extraordinary talent in working with wood and for his success as a business owner, Mr. Charette is an excellent choice to join the distinguished individuals who have been inducted into the Northern Maine Construction Hall of Fame,” said Jason Parent, NMCC director of development and college relations and a former Fort Kent resident.

Charette was born in Fort Kent in 1916, the 13<sup>th</sup> of 17 children of Pea and Catherine Charette. In 1935, Charette began working for M.J. Pelletier, a building material and funeral business. He started in the wood working shop where he made door and window frames and caskets. After four years, he recalls being paid \$23 for a 60 hour work week.

In 1946, after working for eleven years for M.J. Pelletier, he started Charette Building, Inc., a working shop and building materials store. A year later, he was married to the former Eglie Voisine, and the couple spent the next three decades running the business and raising five children, all of whom remain in the St. John Valley.

Ernest Charette is credited with building a number of homes in the St. John Valley, as well as the bridge over Michaud Brook in Soldier Pond. He also designed and built the first and only private water system in Fort Kent that gravity fed water to a number of homes on Highland Avenue in Fort Kent.

In addition to his professional accomplishments, Charette is heavily invested in his local community. He, along with others, donated time and materials toward the creation of the community's skating rink, and he later taught two generations of area residents how to ice skate, a sport he enjoyed with a great deal of passion until the age of 78. A true renaissance man, he was a graceful ballroom dancer, as well as a harmonica and violin player.

Charette was active in community organizations. He served as part of the organizing committee for the group that formed Maine School Administrative District 27 in the western St. John Valley and as a board member and chairman for the Fort Kent Federal Credit Union advisory committee. He has been a longtime member of the Catholic Order of Foresters and a lifetime member of the Knights of Columbus.

However, Ernest Charette is best known as an outstanding craftsman. He spent more than six decades in what his family calls "a small, cluttered, dusty woodworking shop crammed with bits and pieces of wood, saws and other equipment."

"This was the go-to man for problems or questions about wood that would leave a regular man scratching his head. Ernest would simply take a small spiral notebook from his well-worn shirt, take his pencil from the top of his ear and quickly figure the solution to any question," wrote his daughter-in-law Paula Carson-Charette on the Construction Hall of Fame application form. "He spent his lifetime working with wood and always cared about the quality of his work. Ernest took the same pride in his work if he was replacing a cracked piece from a floor or bureau, to the ash gunnels for 21 foot Old Town canoes to the beautiful custom made ash, maple and oak spiral staircases in the finest homes from Fort Kent to Connecticut."

The wall of honor that will be graced by Charette's photo is located inside the main entrance of the Mailman Trades Building in the corridor that students, faculty, staff and visitors use to enter and exit the building daily. According to Trade and Technical Occupations Department Chair Brian McDougal, the space is ideal, because students and prospective students of the college regularly have the opportunity to see the faces and learn the stories of some of the "legends" in the construction trades, and in turn better understand that similar career success is possible for them.

The inductees honored to date represent prominent construction business owners and industry leaders, as well as alumni and retired faculty of NMCC and its forerunner Northern Maine Vocational Technical Institute.

They include 2007 honorees Stanley "Bub" Anderson of New Sweden, co-founder and an owner of County Electric; Hollis Burgess, a former long-time instructor in the residential construction program at NMCC, who was honored posthumously; Tim Doak of Caribou, co-owner and president of B.R. Smith Associates, Inc. Surveying and Engineering in Presque Isle; Rick St. Peter of Caribou, owner of Patrick St. Peter and Sons; and Richard "Dick" West of Holden, first a sheet metal (present-day welding and metal fabrication) faculty member and then chairperson for the trade and technical occupations department at NMCC. In 2008, Richard Nadeau, Jr., president and treasurer of Presque Isle-based A & L Construction Inc., and Raymond and Timothy Todd, treasurer and president respectively of R. L. Todd & Son, Inc. of Caribou, had their photos unveiled. Last year, Donald F. Collins, the fourth generation member of his family to operate the S.W. Collins Company and a well-known and highly respected County leader and businessman, was inducted.

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*Ernest Charette*