



THE  
**BRIDGE**  
CAMPAIGN

MAMAWI ATOSKETAN NATIVE SCHOOL

TAKING FIRST NATIONS TEENS TO HIGHER EDUCATION

**Final Report, March 2018**

# The \$4.9 Million Bridge Campaign Completed: The Meaning of the Means

*The journey from vision to completion of the Bridge Campaign has been amazing, and unlike anything in any other conference in North America.*

BY LYNN McDOWELL, *The Bridge Campaign Manager*

**A** First Nations school operated by one conference—never mind a relatively small conference of 12,000 members—is unique; a church-run, First Nations School of 200+ is almost unheard of in post-Residential School Canada. But here we are, watching the completion of a new high school and industrial arts centre, and celebrating the attainment of the most ambitious fundraising goal in the history of the Alberta Conference less than two and a half years from its announcement in July 2015.

As I pondered this amazing journey, I looked at who had shared the vision to extend the gift of Adventist education to the children and families of Maskwacis through Mamawi Atosketan Native School (MANS). I thought about the conversations and stories I had collected along the way, and yes, the friends. There's nothing like a shared vision for good to bring out the best in people.

## New Visionary Partners

What surprised me most when I analyzed the numbers is how much support came from people and organizations that had never heard of MANS before we contacted them with the story of MANS' power to help effect change. The pie chart shows that about 23% of the money raised came from these sources, which includes private foundations and individuals. Neither federal nor pro-

vincial governments contribute to private school building projects, but these visionary people supported MANS in a major way.

Another significant source was First Nations donors, who contributed almost 27% of the total raised.

## Adventist Constituents and Organizations

Within the Alberta Conference, there were individuals who made major contribu-

tions, some of them anonymously. Others supported MANS by raising funds, sacrificial giving, prayer and encouraging words. There are so many wonderful stories—like the story of Zelma Kay, in the April *Messenger*—and I hope to hear and publish more of them. These stories inspire me and others; they are gifts in and of themselves. Adventists outside the province also contributed, bringing contributions from the “traditional” Conference source of funding to about 45% of the total raised.



Thank you

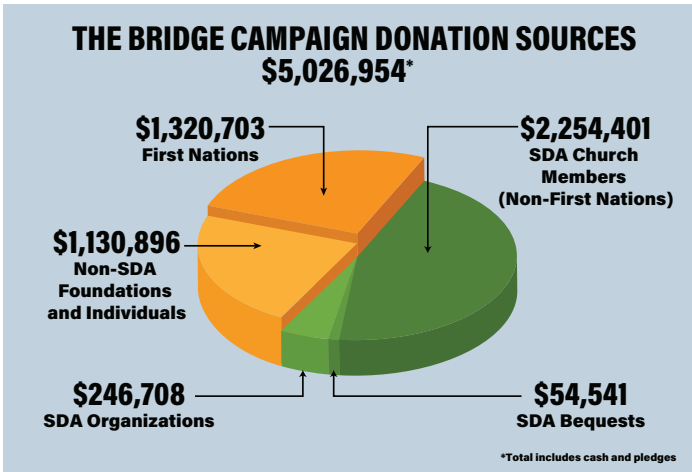
Your generous support has been instrumental in meeting our target goal of \$4.9 million. We cannot thank you enough.

Your visionary support of a new high school and an industrial arts building at Mamawi Atosketan Native School will change lives, create opportunities, and inspire young people for many years to come.

With immense gratitude,

*Lynn McDowell*

Lynn McDowell  
Campaign Manager



“It is our privilege to be partners with Christ in Maskwacis. It’s time to celebrate our partnership in His work of Reconciliation, and the miracles that have brought us here.”

We took the MANS story to Adventist organizations outside Alberta as well as A Better World, who saw the value in what is happening in Maskwacis. The North America Division places high regard on MANS, which is a uniquely Canadian model, and designated MANS as a recipient of the 2015 Investment offering; also, this June 30, the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering is designated in part for MANS—a tremendous affirmation of what is being accomplished. ASI (Adventist Laymen’s Services International) and VersaFund also contributed significantly, as did the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Canada Native Ministries. Taken together, these organizations contributed about 5% of our goal. A forthcoming book by Pacific Press

on some of the world’s most exciting outreach projects will include a chapter on MANS.

**Conference Office Support**

While the Conference Office did not take money from church coffers to contribute to the goal, it did support the campaign through salaries and by honouring the wishes of families whose loved ones had left unrestricted gifts in their wills to the Alberta Conference. These gifts by will (“bequests”) were significant, and the support for MANS demonstrated by the families is inspiring.


**Stories about Mission**

None of this would have happened

without a vision for good. A story related by MANS Grade 1 teacher Suzanne Self shows what happens when this vision is lived out day after day, year after year even in the most difficult of circumstances:

A grandfather who’s a Residential School survivor brought his grandson to school on field trip day. MANS families are asked to help with field trip expenses, and the grandfather had come to pay the family portion. He was one of thousands of documented cases where children were forcibly taken from their families and abused in residential schools—sometimes to death—by the teachers and staff of these church-run schools. Suzanne watched as the grandfather pulled out the government envelope that contained his “School Money”, as the token recognition of this injustice is known on the Reserve. Suzanne watched him count out the bills that spoke of his betrayal by Christian teachers—money the residential school survivor now presented to Suzanne for his grandson’s Adventist education.

Can you imagine leaving your most valued possession—your little grandson—with a Christian teacher after what that grandfather had been through? That’s trust. That’s faith. That’s the beginning of Reconciliation.

“For Christ was in the world,” Paul tells us, “reconciling the world to himself.” It is our privilege to be partners with Christ in Maskwacis. It’s time to celebrate our partnership in His work of Reconciliation, and the miracles that have brought us here. 



Lynn McDowell, LLB & Certified Specialist in Planned Giving  
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**GOT A STORY TO SHARE?**

The Bridge Campaign may be over, but the good things that happened continue to inspire. What drew you to support The Bridge Campaign financially or in other ways? Please write or call and let us know. We want to keep the stories alive and thank you, because the stories themselves, too, are a gift.

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Jenny Nickel x 224  
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# Bridge Campaign Donors!

The people and organizations whose names appear on these pages contributed funds to The Bridge Campaign and helped make the new high school buildings and campus a reality. Due to the limitations of old computer programs, we may have missed some names. Please let us know if you donated to the campaign and do not see your name by contacting Jenny at (403) 342-5044 x 233 [jnickel@albertaadventist.ca](mailto:jnickel@albertaadventist.ca).

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The names on this wall represent those who generously contributed monetarily to making this building possible. Many more individuals and Alberta businesses contributed in important and meaningful ways. All who have had a hand in making this dream a reality contributed goodwill and faith in the ability of Mamawi Atosketan students

To achieve academically

To become wise and compassionate agents for change and

To emerge as leaders and helpers who draw strength from the Creator and their Cree heritage.

We believe in and ask the Creator to bless the youth who choose to study and learn here. As we work for a better world, may we never forget the importance of mutual respect and the meaning of Mamawi Atosketan: *Working Together.*

## Organizations

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 1718731 Alberta Ltd</li> <li>2. A Better World</li> <li>3. Adventist Laymen's Services and Industries</li> <li>4. Alma Bencivenga Professional Corp.</li> <li>5. BIRD Industrial Group Limited</li> <li>6. Breakfast for Learning</li> <li>7. C.J. Grundling Professional Corp.</li> <li>8. Calgary Foundation</li> <li>9. Canadian Welding Association</li> <li>10. Chase Office Interiors Inc</li> <li>11. Darren's Truck Repair (976683 Alberta Ltd O/A)</li> <li>12. Easy Save Appliance</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>13. Edmonton Community Foundation</li> <li>14. F. K. Morrow Foundation</li> <li>15. Hecla Contracting Ltd</li> <li>16. Henry I Quaye Professional Corporation</li> <li>17. HRJ Consulting</li> <li>18. Joseph Oyeyemi Professional</li> <li>19. Les Immeubles Jean-Robert Grenier Inc.</li> <li>20. Letniak Farms</li> <li>21. Letniak Land and Cattle Ltd.</li> <li>22. Little Gem Ranches Ltd.</li> <li>23. Masosio Services Inc</li> <li>24. Pepsico Foundation</li> <li>25. Performance Excellence Global Ltd.</li> <li>26. Poplar Beaver General Contracting Inc</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>27. Ptarmigan Charitable Foundation</li> <li>28. Riverton Construction Ltd</li> <li>29. Rotary Club of St. Albert</li> <li>30. SDA Church in Canada - Native Ministries</li> <li>31. Spyder Controls</li> <li>32. Sunrise Constructors Inc.</li> <li>33. T4 Tax Inc</li> <li>34. The Good Water Company</li> <li>35. The Greene Family Charitable Foundation</li> <li>36. The Siemsen Family Trust</li> <li>37. TNT Global Accounting Corp.</li> <li>38. Versacare, Inc</li> </ul> |
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# A Message from Dr. Richard Bird

*The Ptarmigan Charitable Foundation and Bird Construction, for which the Cree Cultural Centre and construction shop are named, are new friends of Mamawi Atosketan Native School who were introduced to MANS through the Bridge Campaign.*

*The comments of Dr. Richard Bird, prepared for the September opening event, provide insight into the hearts of thoughtful people who have observed and believe in the power of the education provided at Mamawi Atosketan—the meaning of the means they have invested.*

**G**ood afternoon from Ptarmigan Charitable Foundation and Bird Construction Company, both affiliated with the Bird family of Calgary. I wish I could be present to share in today's opening event for the new Mamawi Atosketan Native School facilities and associated programs.

First, congratulations to the students, parents, staff, Board and all supporters for the remarkable achievement of funding and constructing the new high school and supporting facilities. I think they will make a strong contribution to MANS' continued progress in providing a high-quality education to its students. Of course, this wouldn't have been possible without a tremendous effort from all, but I want to especially note

the contribution of the current students and their families to the development of these facilities, not just for their own immediate benefit, but also for the benefit of their fellow students for many years to come. I would certainly not have been nearly so encouraged to support the project were it not for the positive testimonials from the students about their experience at MANS and their plans for their lives, and the positive environment I observed on my visit to the school. I believe that all students can rightly feel that they "own" these new facilities as much as anyone does, and that they will care for both the facilities and MANS' underlying values in the years to come, as owners do.





Cree culture and traditional knowledge has value to the broader society, including both natural science and art.”

### Why Education?

I have been asked to comment on why I feel that a rejuvenation of the Cree Culture needs to be an important part of the educational experience at MANS.

It starts with my belief in the importance of education itself. There is so much to learn and know about the universe that we all live within and about the development of humanity in all its variations within that small corner of the universe that we occupy, for now. There is the opportunity for personal joy just from the learning of a new thing and for resulting enrichment of one's life that everyone should have the benefit of, even if there were no other practical benefits. But of course, there are immense practical benefits from education and increased knowledge. Education opens up life choice options that otherwise wouldn't exist or would be very difficult to access. Regardless of what choices each one of us makes, it is better to have more



choices available than fewer, or none at all. Education provides a broader perspective from which to make those choices and a better chance to make the choice that is best for each one of us. And education increases the likelihood of enjoying a successful, creative and fulfilling life within what ever choices we do make.

As to the Cree culture, on the one hand, I think there is a much better understanding now of the importance of language and culture to individual personal identity,

to who we are. That was the terrible failure of the residential school system above and beyond the forced removal of children from their families, and an abysmal governance system that permitted widespread abuses. The forced stripping of language and culture from those generations of children was also stripping away a large part of their personal identities, their very selves. For most the gain in educational benefits was not worth the resulting loss of self.

That's on the one hand—the First Nations people were themselves deprived of the benefits of being grounded in their own culture and were obviously the primary victims. But all of humanity itself has lost something as well. Cree culture and traditional knowledge is part of the diverse development of the overall human experience and has value to the broader society, including though not limited to, both natural science and art. This too we

## MEANS & MEANING

all stand to lose if language and culture education is not paired with other forms of education. However, there is no reason why it must be one or the other. It can and should be both, and that is the purpose behind the Ptarmigan Cree Cultural Centre, which we are pleased to have been given the opportunity to support.

I have also been asked to comment on how the Bird Construction Building Technologies Shop fits with getting a good education. Of course, this bit of the educational panorama is focussed on the very practical career opportunity side of



Dr. Richard Bird  
Canada's CFO of  
the Year 2010.



The Ptarmigan Cree Cultural Centre.

things, and a very specific type of career opportunity. It certainly won't be for everyone, but how will you know that it is or isn't for you unless you have the opportunity try it out in high school, at least a little? And I don't mean just the young men among the MANS student body, there is no reason why young women cannot enjoy well paid employment in construction as well. On that note, Construction is an industry where there is a strong demand for trained employees, with good wages and lots of opportunity, and there always should be, so it's a good option to have in your pocket.

I'll close by saying once again, congratulations to you all for what's been accomplished. Make the best of it! And thank you for the opportunity to be involved.

—Richard Bird, PhD, MBA

*“Dr. Bird’s message is uplifting and humbling at the same time. I have nothing else to add.”*

Lynn McDowell

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