

# MANS Pillars Honoured as New School Walls Delivered

As construction on the new high school building gets underway, Mamawi Atosketan Native School (MANS) took time to reflect on the past and the pillars who have made this ministry possible through decades of changes and expansion.

In a special reception hosted during the annual MANS Open House on November 10, 2016, MANS and the Alberta Conference honoured the vision, hard work, and commitment of those who initiated the first school on the Samson Reserve decades ago and have supported the ministry's growth. These MANS "pillars" include former principals, dedicated board members, and individuals who have been with the school and its ministry from the beginning.

"Without people in the field doing this work, we can't realize this project," Keith Richter, Alberta Conference treasurer, said addressing the guests assembled in the high school portable that will soon be replaced by new, permanent classrooms. "We are grateful for people who are participating and building the ministry up."

The pillars who were honoured were early years' principals Grace and Paul Dara; teacher's aides and later principals Linda Calderbank and Linda Nawalkowski; long-term board chair Ian Hartley; past principal and current Bible worker Bob Spratt and artist Jeanie Spratt; and past principals Juanita Neal and Julie Hodder. These individuals have been integral to the mission of MANS to provide Adventist education among First Nations in Maskwacis. Their contributions not only developed the mission as a whole but also kept the school growing.

"I feel God has abundantly blessed the school," said Grace Dara, who served as the principal of the school in 1984. Since

then she has watched enrolment at the school multiply and community support intensify. "Parents are bringing students to the school because they can see the difference in the behaviours and the character of their children." To Grace and many of the other pillars honoured at the event, the awesome achievements at MANS clearly demonstrate that God is hard at work in the Maskwacis Reserve.

MANS has always been made possible through the collaboration of committed individuals, teachers, staff, and family members—the very name Mamawi Atosketan in Cree means working together. "The reason we can continue at the school is because of what all of you have contributed," current MANS principal, Gail Wilton, said in her thank-you address to the guests. MANS could not stand on its own, she acknowledged, without any of the singular pillars who formed it.

As MANS honoured the past, they also looked to the future: The pillars got the first glimpse of walls for the new high school building. General contractor Willian Piersanti described the new building as every bit "God's plan, not ours" as he updated guests on how the new high school has expanded far beyond any of the original founder's conceptions. With the continued support of MANS long-term pillars and the surrounding community, there is only more to grow in this plan!

Stay tuned for next month's story on the MANS 2016 Open House and see inside the school for yourself! ■

*Alison Bottomley is the communications assistant for The Bridge Campaign for Mamawi Atosketan Native School.*

Read more about Mamawi Atosketan Native School and how The Bridge Campaign is funding a new high school for First Nations youth at [www.MANS1.ca](http://www.MANS1.ca).



Paul and Grace Dara, Irma and Ian Hartley, Jeanie Spratt, Julie Hodder, Bob Spratt, and Linda Nawalkowski honoured as pillars of the MANS project. Each was given a unique beaded artwork from Maskwacis artists to celebrate their contribution and connection to the community.