

# MANS Principal Receives Top SDACC Award

*Principal Gail Wilton has been named "2016 Top School Administrator" by the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Canada. It's an Excellence in Education Award that Gail considers a recognition of the extraordinary team at Mamawi Atosketan (MANS).*

The Mamawi Atosketan Native School (MANS) family can't imagine the school without their dedicated principal, Gail Wilton, and the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Canada's (SDACC) top school administrator can't imagine not being there. She has been with Mamawi Atosketan from the beginning, having joined as a teacher in 2004. Now serving as principal, Gail has a top priority of making comprehensive K-12 Adventist education possible for students of the Maskwacis Reserve in Alberta.

Gail's hard work and dedication have not gone unnoticed. Awarded an Excellence in Education Award by the SDACC Office of Education, Gail was named as Top School Administrator in Canada. The award, which is part of the church's annual recognition of demonstrated excellence in teaching ministry to Canada's best teachers, was presented by SDACC president Mark Johnson and Alberta Conference education superintendent Janet Griffith at Alberta Campmeeting in July.

To what does she attribute her success as top administrator in Canada? Gail's answer focuses immediately on the strengths of her school: "To have a cohesive staff and be able to lead with that kind of staff."

Indeed, what staff and students achieve together at Mamawi Atosketan on a daily basis is extraordinary, particularly given the violence present in many students' personal lives. It is the challenges that her students face on a daily basis that motivate Gail to devote herself to the school. "You can give one-on-one care that you can't give in [other settings]."

Her dedication to Adventist schools reflects her strong belief in the transformative ministry of education. A graduate of Canadian University College (now Burman University), Gail has taught for 12 years in the Adventist system at both College Heights Christian School and MANS.

MANS remains close to Gail's heart. The school is blooming with the addition of Grades 10 through 12 and increasing number of high school graduates. With an enrolment of 200 students, MANS is the largest school in the Alberta Conference and is in the top five largest K-12 SDA schools in Canada. But Gail knows that the impact of the school goes far beyond academics or successful enrolment.



**Alberta Conference education superintendent Janet Griffith congratulating Principal Gail Wilton on her SDACC Top School Administrator award.**

"You have to be safe to learn," says Gail, speaking from experience. To be able to be here and in MANS's safe environment is, for many students, more important than the education they receive.

MANS's supportive environment is changing the direction and confidence of youth in Maskwacis. It is the dedication and commitment of top teachers such as Gail Wilton who are spearheading the "the MANS difference" that is creating such waves and tangibly changing lives. ■

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



Read more about Mamawi Atosketan Native School and meet our students at [MANS1.ca](http://MANS1.ca). Details on how The Bridge Campaign is taking First Nations youth to high education can also be found online.

# What's it Mean to You?

*"I know what happens when we choose children, sacrifice for, and educate them."*

Larry Wilkins, Honorary Chair of the Bridge Campaign

Owner & CEO External  
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It seems as though my involvement with Mamawi Atosketan was simply inevitable. When I was one-year old and my brother a little older, the court awarded us in a custody battle to my paternal grandmother. Nan was Mohawk, born on the Tyendinaga Reserve, living in Toronto and married to my Poppa, an Ojibway Indian. She sacrificed a full pension to stay home and mother us. Together, they taught me about love, family and sacrifice, but mostly about love. She chose us.

I spent my teenage years going to school and flying back and forth to the Arctic to work in construction. My father saw that I was lost and told me he would send me to any university in the world if I would go. Beach Boys were cool back then so I chose California, and he chose Pacific Union College, an Adventist university.

The Canadian dollar was at an all-time low. My dad had to move into a tiny little rental to keep up with tuition. Knowing his sacrifice so that I could be the first in my clan to attend a school of higher learning, I worked hard and graduated near the top of my class. I was so impressed with the Adventist School System that when my son was of age, I sent him to a Canadian Adventist university. He is at the moment flying across Canada, interviewing for a residency in emergency medicine.

My life has taught me a few rules that I have written in stone:

- Love the children—all children—even when doing so requires sacrifice.
- We give everything we can to our kids, but sometimes it's not all good; sometimes they need additional help. For me and my son, the Adventist School system was that help.
- From those to whom much is given, much is expected.

I have extremely high expectations for the children of MANS. I believe in them. I know them. I know what happens when we choose children, sacrifice for, and educate them. I know who they will become. They will lead the next generation and teach them their own life lessons. Gratitude will guide their lives.

Watch for Larry's inspiring story of faith and God's faithfulness in the February issue of *The Messenger*.



MAMAWI ATOSKETAN  
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