

Industrial Arts Creates Buzz



Mechanics students at MANS are chomping at the bit to learn about motors and get skills that will help them be self-sufficient. The school minibus could become a class project!

The excitement for industrial arts at Mamawi Atosketan Native School (MANS) started with the Canadian Welding Association (CWA) welding camp this summer. Five students, their teachers, and the head of the CWA Foundation returned from “Mind Over Metal” camp determined to keep the interest in welding and industrial arts at MANS in high gear.

A new partnership with the CWA Foundation is the cornerstone of a full-fledged industrial arts program being planned at MANS. This spring, as ground is broken for the new, separate high school building and Industrial Arts Centre, the first course was underway in April: Mechanics.

Even without dedicated space and the new high school facilities, there is a collective sense of curiosity, suspense, and excitement about the new mechanics program. This is serious business: students wanted to know in advance what skills they would acquire and what they’ll be working on, and both male and female students were anxious to dive into their first high school industrial arts class.

What they are getting is an introduction to the world of engine maintenance, basic functions, tool usage, and vehicle care and maintenance. While shop space is currently lacking, forward-thinking instruction, based on lab work that will be performed on and off campus, engages students and prepares them for work in a real mechanics shop space in the new school.

“Being able to take apart an engine and put it back together is just cool!” responded one Grade 12 student, when asked what he thought of a mechanics course.

Mechanics teacher Mike Willing smiles broadly at student response. “I like that this class allows for some basic understanding of a complicated machine,” he says. “Most know their cars by the fact that it gets you from point A to point B. I know my car by how it turns over, the unique noises it makes, and how difficult it is to maintain. Bringing a base understanding of that to my students will be well worth the effort.”

The primary goal of the course, says Willing, is to introduce students to the trade, and he harbours every teacher’s hope that the experience will sow the seed for long-term interest. Being a mechanic can provide a lifelong career that offers variety and chances for career advancement. “We all drive cars,” observes Willing, who has learned many practical skills growing up in a farm family, “but without the steady hands of a mechanic under the hood, life would be a whole lot more troublesome.” ■

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