

The Grade 2's and 3's of MANS work together to make and take their cookie care packages to communities off the Maskwacis Reserve. "From small hearts with great love," read one note received by neighbours.



WHO IS MY NEIGHBOUR?

Mamawi Atosketan Native School Transforms Relationships with Cookie Ministry

MAMAWI ATOSKETAN NATIVE SCHOOL (MANS) receptionist Sharon Prediger is now in her 19th year at MANS. "I love every minute of it!" she says. She smiles when she looks back on the transformation she has seen in the community's attitude toward the school over the past decade, when MANS moved to its present location. The recent open house for MANS's immediate neighbours is, she agrees, a testimony to the effectiveness of a consistent witness and simple acts of kindness.

When MANS was being built 12 years ago, some neighbours protested. "They were worried about vandalism and kids leaving the school," remembers Sharon. But getting acquainted with students and what actually happens at the school—including a cookie ministry—has turned a cool reception into warm relationships.

"Mamawi Atosketan means 'working

together' in Cree," says school principal Gail Wilton. Working together to benefit and bring cheer to others is an important and regular part of the MANS experience. "We want them to know that it is important to give to the larger community as well as those within their local area," says Wilton. Thus, the MANS cookie ministry was born under the leadership of Grade 2 teacher Charissa Hawes.

Making and delivering cookies has become the hallmark of the school. Periodically, children brimming with enthusiasm deliver freshly baked cookies they have made, delighting those who answer their doors. Neighbours who were not home found not only a delicious treat but also an invitation to the neighbourhood open house.

One family that was not able to attend the open house sent candies and a thank-

you note that read, "With many thanks for the delicious cookies left at our house. We wish you the very best in your future endeavours, and thank you for being such good neighbours."

Another gentleman was moved when he saw the Bible verses painted on prominent interior walls. He left a donation.

The caring Christian attitude that pervades the school extends to the worldwide community. Students are learning to "cast their bread upon the waters" and witnessing the good that comes back. ■

Melissa Myers volunteered at the Maskwacis Reserve church as part of CUC's First Nations ministry group.

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