

THE COMMUNITY BRIDGE CAMPAIGN

Building Connections That Affirm

"I have been waiting a long time for this centre. It will make a big difference to have this kind of gathering place in our community."

—Carmelia Soosay
Frontline worker,
Wetaskiwin Hospital
Mother
MANS Alumna

Capital Goal:

**\$1.85
Million**



The Mamawi Atosketan Centre* in Maskwacis

After decades of building trust and positive relationships, with encouragement from Chief Vernon Saddleback, a much-needed building is in progress near the Band Administration Office of Samson Cree Nation. This building will extend the work of a longstanding partner in private education for Maskwacis youth: The Alberta Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Purpose:

To provide space for positive connections within the Maskwacis community, and to provide a base for the Adventist Church to extend its positive work at Mamawi Atosketan Native School to the residential areas of Maskwacis.

Outcomes:

This building and base for outreach will:

1. Provide a bridge for MANS students and graduates to continue their connection with Adventists
2. Provide education, training and support for healthy lifestyle choices and associations
3. Create a Conference-owned and -managed venue for community building and ongoing, sustainable community programs
4. Support innate individual and collective power within the Maskwacis community for health, wholeness and positive impact, and
5. Foster more healthy, respectful relationships between non-Indigenous individuals and the people of Maskwacis

* Translation: Working Together



"I'll give you a blanket for every weekend you stay sober."

Spirit, Mission, Impact: Place Matters

People with spirit have an impact. Take Hope Crier, a 20-Something in Maskwacis who's taking initiative in her community.

Hope knows what it's like to have an alcohol problem from the age of 12. She knows what it's like to brush with the law as a teenager and have her high school principal stand beside her in the Restorative Justice hearing. She knows what it's like to have a classmate say, "I'll give you a blanket for every weekend you stay sober."

Hope knows what it's like to have teachers pitch in and see a school wide effort to make her vision of blankets for all who needed them in Maskwacis a reality—so many blankets that Hope and her Grade 11 classmates at Mamawi Atosketan Native School (MANS) were able to distribute blankets on another reserve. The phenomenon—which she dubbed "Hope's Mission"—was the highlight of Hope's young life. As Hope and her classmates

giddily amassed blankets, she vowed to continue Hope's Mission in some form even after the blankets were gone.

Then Hope left MANS. The spiral began, and Hope became homeless.

As a student at MANS, Hope had day to day support. Without that, her life seemed crushing at times, and old habits offered relief. But through the four spiraling years, Hope never forgot the MANS community or the joy of being addiction-free. She contacted a former teacher, who took her to rehab.

Hope came alive again, and Hope's Mission was reborn—this time, to aid the homeless she'd come to know living on the street, including young mothers in Maskwacis who couch surf with their toddlers. Hope's former teacher and the MANS chaplain helped Hope fill backpacks with essential items, including a blanket. When Maskwacis was covered, Hope took her mission—now called Finding Hope—to the streets of Wetaskiwin.

The teacher, who has lent her living room as headquarter

for the project, wants Hope to stay purposeful and make a difference in her community. But the teacher needs her living room back.

Where does Hope take her mission from here?

A Permanent Base for Community Dialogue

As Hope's Mission demonstrates and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission reiterates, a permanent, land based home matters. It provides continuity and roots for the young. It provides a centre where wisdom, identity, and love can pass from one generation to another—a place for healing, planning, and implementation.

Extraordinary Opportunity Initiated by The Conference

The long history that Maskwacis residents have with MANS laid the basis for an extraordinary opportunity. In a Conference-initiated meeting with the chief of Samson Cree Nation in 2019, Chief Saddleback identified a 300-person capacity meeting place as a pressing community need.

That was the beginning of an ongoing dialogue to build on a Conference owned site.

Another Step Toward Reconciliation

Long Term Commitment and Relationships

The Residential School System devastated the Maskwacis

community for generations. Senator Murray Sinclair, head of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, is an advocate of education to effect change. The approach has been embraced by many Maskwacis families.

Mamawi Atosketan Native School**, the K-12 Conference school that opened its doors in 2003, built trust through longterm relationships with Maskwacis families that extend beyond the classroom.

Extending Community Interaction

Besides operating MANS, the Conference interacts with members of the Maskwacis community as rented facilities on reserve can be accessed. It also sponsors a **Summer Youth Team** composed of local youth and students from Burman University. The Summer Youth Team builds leadership and other skills as team members volunteer in local classrooms and offices, and on other reserves.

Though positively received, **Conference activities on the reserve during the academic**

year are limited to weekend food delivery and childcare, spiritual services, and occasional health and food related events. Limited access to existing facilities has hampered longer term planning and partnerships.

Keeping MANS Grads In Touch and On Track

This second Conference-administered facility will be broader in its scope than MANS can be. The new permanent, easily accessible location will extend a continuum of positive connection and learning opportunities as MANS grads and other community members interact with local resource people and external volunteers.

Learning and Respect Exchange

The **permanent base** will provide **more opportunities** for positive interactions within the Makwacis community and with external volunteers. Past external volunteers routinely gained new perspectives and appreciation of the community, with learning and respect becoming a two-way street.

"I look forward to leading the Summer Youth Team once again this year. We have a trip to Yellowknife coming up; it's exciting to be traveling again."

-Aiyana Potts, age 22, Maskwacis Resident Team Member since 2012

Naming Opportunities

- **\$250,000** Grand Meeting Hall
- **\$120,000** Kitchen
- **\$100,000** Foyer, Childcare Room
- **\$75,000** Cultural Display Hall section (4)
- **\$50,000** Classrooms (2)
- **\$25,000** Small Meeting Rooms (4)
- **\$2,000** Name on Donor Wall

Vital Statistics

Aside from administrative space, 100% of the community centre will be available for community group use.

Building Capacity:

300 people

Uses*:

- Base for local groups and partners for meetings, projects, activities
- Funerals, events
- Community services and education
- Youth and afterschool activities
- Family and Elder events and programs as identified by the community

Administrator/ Title Holder:

Alberta Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church

Ground Breaking:

Spring 2023

Projected Opening:

Fall 2023

* Based on ongoing dialogue with community members.

** See MANS1.CA for information on the school.



Preferred Builder

Greater Health and Connection

When the chief of Samson Cree Nation discussed the building proposed by the Conference, he cited health issues as a priority.

"We want this community centre. The social events and small groups put on by the Conference are enjoyed by my family. They support our mental health and growth."

- Rhiannon Buffalo, Mother and Community Enthusiast

Statistically, diabetes, cancer, and suicide are significant threats to personal wholeness and community wellbeing. A large kitchen for requested healthy meal prep classes and communal meals will be accessible from the 300-person capacity hall. This will provide space to address the identified core community needs of health education and improvement and space to grieve communally.

The "no steps" barrier-free design and dedicated childcare space make the centre intergenerational and available to people of all ages and levels of physical ability.

DID YOU KNOW

The Cree word for child has been translated as "On loan from the Creator."

Spirituality is inherent in the teachings of traditional Cree culture and language. The concepts of Wahkohtowin — the interconnectedness of all things — and the Creator are at the centre of the language and influence its grammar.

Phase 1 Programming: A Youth Focus with Elder Connection

From summer sports camps run by Conference employees in Maskwacis, it's clear that youth activities engage community members of all ages and bring them together. This inter-generational connection is highly prized. It's a natural way to cultivate connection and healing support from within the Maskwacis community.

Below is a list of potential youth-focused activities suggested by Maskwacis youth and young adults:

- Athletics, sports camps
- Parenting classes
- Conflict resolution training
- Support for youth looking to recover from trauma and addiction
- Gift exploration, education planning, and bridge year support for high school graduates
- Cooking experiences and classes
- Leadership training
- Support and mentoring for youth in practical skills and identity, including cultural components
- Organization of youth to assist and promote healing within their own and other communities (ex.: Hope's Mission).



Designed for an Evolving Community

In addition to accommodating identified youth/young adult interests and essential funerals, the centre is designed to grow along with the community.

Centre activities and education opportunities will reflect input from a range of community members, such as young parents and Elders. The footprint of the new centre is positioned to leave room on the property for an addition.

DID YOU KNOW

Many MANS students maintain a connection with the school and participate in on-reserve Conference-sponsored activities as they arise.

Carmelia Soosay, a young Maskwacis mother who attended MANS (pictured on cover), works in the Wetaskiwin hospital and has attended many Conference-sponsored activities on reserve.

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ONE VISION



**The Maskwacis
Congregation
& Mamawi Atosketan
Native School**

**THE COMMUNITY
BRIDGE
CAMPAIGN** Building Connections That Affirm

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