

Ground-Breaking 2016: From Spark to Spade



Alberta Conference secretary, Larry Hall (left), and president Ken Wiebe (right) break ground for the new high school and Industrial Arts Centre.

Some thought the brief interlude of brilliant sunshine in what was otherwise a grey and rainy week a sign from heaven. There was an air of excitement and “Mamawi Atosketan” (Cree for “working together”) as donors, conference leaders, dignitaries, students, and teachers past and present picked up shovels to break ground for an Adventist high school that is a beacon of hope for aboriginal young people and their families.

“I’m so grateful for what this school has done for my children,” says Levi Nepoose, whose children wouldn’t think of going anywhere else. Nepoose worked tirelessly to organize the powwow feature for the day, using his personal connections as a well-known powwow dancer to bring in an internationally-known aboriginal drum group, Northern Cree. “I don’t have much money,” continues Nepoose, who earns his livelihood as a traditional craftsman, “but this is something I can do to give back.”

Special music by Mamawi Atosketan Native School (MANS) parent and gospel singer Ruby Cutknife and prayers in English (by MANS chaplain, Dan Guiboche) and Cree (former Samson Band counsellor and elder, Rose Saddleback) invoked the presence of the Creator before spades went into the ground. Michael Willing, vice-principal for the high school, acknowledged special guests and dignitaries from the County of Ponoka, the Association of Independent Schools and Colleges of Alberta, and the mayor of St. Albert, who also spoke about the importance of the event. Campaign manager Lynn McDowell introduced Andrew Bartlett of the Canadian Welding Association Foundation, which is donating the equipment for the welding component of the school’s Industrial Arts Centre.

“We’ve looked forward to this day for a long time,” said President Ken Wiebe. “This is God’s project. It’s humbling to watch how He has led.”

The architect’s drawings, by architect Zayda Steinke, a member of the Alberta Conference, can be viewed at www.mans1.ca. ■

Myken McDowell is the communications assistant for The Bridge Campaign, which will fund the high school building at Mamawi Atosketan Native School.



Founding donor and honorary campaign chair Larry Wilkins breaks ground for the new high school and Industrial Arts Centre alongside fellow founding donor Danny Chase (Chase Interiors, Vancouver).



Levi Nepoose, the MANS parent who organized the powwow feature, dances in traditional Cree regalia he made himself.