

New high school opens for Maskwacis students

Mamawi Atosketan Native School officially K-12 facility

By **Jordie Dwyer**
PONOKA NEWS

A second campus for a private school north of Ponoka means more opportunities for First Nations students.

Mamawi Atosketan Native School (MANS) serves students from Maskwacis and celebrated the opening of two new buildings that offers full Kindergarten to Grade 12 education, plus trades education, for up to 320 students.

The building, which cost around \$4.9 million and broke ground three years ago, was constructed through private donations. The school is designated as an Alberta Education accredited, non-funded private school, making it ineligible for government capital funding.

"This began six years ago when we starting talking about adding a high school and fortunately, there were brave individuals that stood up and said this was possible," explained Larry Wilkins, the honorary chair of the fundraising campaign, plus a major contributor as owner and CEO of External Affairs Medical Spas.

"We closed our eyes six years ago and imagined what this would be like. Today, we open them and are able to touch and feel it. This is far greater than what could ever have been imagined."

Several dignitaries were on hand for the official ceremonies including Wetaskiwin-Camrose NDP MLA Bruce Hinkley speaking on behalf of the provincial government, Samson Cree Nation Chief Vernon Saddleback as well as many executive members of Seventh-day Adventist Church from Alberta and Canada.

Gary Hodder, President of the Alberta Conference (SDA) Church, had a good feeling about the project's success.

"There was a great passion and desire to see the ministry for these young First Nations people," he stated

"Lots of people came forward with big donations and tons with small donations. And you know what, a miracle happened."

The project was completed debt free.

The first two words in the school's name, Mamawi Atosketan, means 'working together' in Cree. The school is closely linked to the four First Nations of Maskwacis and for Saddleback, the ceremony was important for two reasons — the school's primary population comes from Samson and his son is among the school's alumni.

"Number one in life is God, number two is to be the best husband and father I can be and number

three is being chief of Samson Cree Nation," he said, adding he chose the school ceremony over being at a western Canada's largest powwow that day.

"The dad in me said to come here. My son came here and it was good for him. And what I want you all to know is that, for the children of Maskwacis, you do make a difference."

New facility

Aside from the main junior/senior high building with a modern gymnasium, kitchen, band room, classrooms, library and the Ptarmigan Cree Cultural Centre — named for major donor, the Ptarmigan Foundation — there is a unique addition to the new school building.

The Leon Ingraham Industrial Arts Centre — named in honour of the deceased educator who grew up nearby and founded industrial arts programs in Calgary — will house skilled trades education programs.

This includes welding — courtesy of the financial support from the CWB Welding Foundation, a charity that supports the industry in Canada and assists in addressing the skilled trades shortage across the country — and construction through the donation from Bird Construction, Canada's oldest publicly traded construction firm.

MANS is part of the Seventh-day Adventist school network around the globe, with the philosophy of a Christ-filled environment and education.



Samson Cree Nation Chief Vernon Saddleback speaks to attendees on Friday at the expansion of the Mamawi Atosketan Native School (MANS), which has now become a K to Grade 12 school. MANS used to be a K to Grade 9 school and has been working on the expansion for several years.



Mamawi Atosketan Native School (MANS) celebrated its expansion from a K to Grade 9 school to a K to Grade 12 school on Friday afternoon just north of Ponoka. The expansion has been in the works for several years with the junior and senior high school located just south of the primary school.

Photos by Jordie Dwyer

Truck stolen while being fuelled up

By **Jeffrey Heyden-Kaye**
PONOKA NEWS

Sunday proved to be a busy day for Ponoka RCMP with three separate incidences.

Events began at 4 p.m. when police received reports that a railroad maintenance truck was stolen from a Ponoka gas station while it was fuelling up. The situation occurred so quickly that the hose was ripped out of the gas station pump, say police.

"The truck ripped the gas hose from the pump and sped away almost hitting two vehicles," state Ponoka RCMP in a release.

Four minutes later police received a call from a rural resident north of town that the same vehicle had driven on their property and had become stuck. A woman had exited the vehicle.

At the time, the roads were muddy due to melting snow.

"The female got out of the truck and attempted to stab the property owner with a screwdriver but was unsuccessful and she fled the property on foot," allege police.

"As the RCMP members were arriving on scene, they observed the female leaving in a truck that she had stolen from the neighbouring property."

Ponoka RCMP then received help from the Ponoka and Wetaskiwin Integrated Traffic Units, Wetaskiwin Dog Services and RCMP while they pursued and searched for the woman and the truck.

Police had certain roads and intersections on the gravel roads north of town marked while they searched.

"A short time later, the female lost control of the truck and fled from the vehicle on foot. Wetaskiwin Police Dog Services attended the area and was able to successfully locate the female trying to hide up a tree," say police.

The 30-year-old woman, Amanda Rau, was remanded in custody and her next court appearance is set for Oct. 19.

She has been charged with two counts of theft of a truck, assault with a weapon, dangerous operation of a vehicle, impaired operation of a vehicle by drugs, flight from police, driving while disqualified, mischief and failing to comply with a physical coordination demand.

The day just got busier as after midnight police received a call that a man was assaulting the occupants of a home.

Police arrived to find a 40-year-old man who allegedly attempted to fight officers during the arrest. RCMP used a Taser to arrest the man.

He is charged with assault, uttering threats and assaulting a police officer and has been remanded in custody until his Sept. 28 court appearance.

"Investigation by police revealed that a 38-year-old female in the residence had also assaulted an occupant and this led to her arrest as well," states the release, adding that she was released with a promise to appear in court, Nov. 9.

About one hour later police received a call that a Honda Accord was southbound in Ponoka driving erratically.

It, "was swerving all over the road, driving on the curbs, not stopping for Stop Signs, and driving with no lights on," state police.

"While police were on their way to this they received another call saying that the vehicle had stopped and the female driver opened the door and fell to the ground."

Ponoka RCMP arrived at the location and picked her up where she was subsequently charged with impaired driving and refusing to provide a breath sample.

The 36-year-old Airdrie woman was released with a promise to appear in Ponoka court Nov. 9.

"Although there are days like these, the Ponoka detachment advises that data shows that the RCMP Crime Reduction Strategy is working," state police.

"From January to July of this year, property crimes in all RCMP detachments is down nine percent compared to the same period last year. In rural detachments, it is down 11 percent. That means, as of July this year, 648 fewer cars have been stolen and 366 fewer homes have been broken into."



Ponoka RCMP have charged a 30-year-old woman with the alleged theft of this rail maintenance truck while it was still being fuelled up on Sept. 23. The hose was ripped off the pump and remained on the truck where it was located north of Ponoka. RCMP photo

PONOKA/RIMBEY GOLD RUSH SEPTEMBER WINNER



Cindy Reguly, (Left) Admin. Asst. with BB/BS presents Jody Dickau with a cheque for \$2160.00. Jody was the lucky winner of the Ponoka/Rimbey Gold Rush Monthly Lottery for the month of September. You too could be a lucky winner! October's draw will be Wednesday, Oct. 31st. Contact Big Brothers Big Sisters for more information, 403-783-3112.