

Mamawi Atosketan Native School graduates first Grade 12 class

Mamawi Atosketan Native School (MANS), located just north of Ponoka, graduated its first Grade 12 class on Thursday, May 28. Frederick Crier-Jamerson and Coralie Nepoose are MANS' first high school graduates. Together, they were awarded more than \$26,000 in scholarships to continue their educations at university or other post-secondary institutions.

Crier-Jamerson and Nepoose, who successfully completed the January diploma exams, look forward to continuing their educations.

Nepoose, the valedictorian, plans to attend Burman University to study social work. Crier-Jamerson will be entering the Junior Forest Rangers, a program of Alberta Forestry and Agriculture, in July.

The families of the graduates attended in support of their success and aspirations.

"I didn't believe you three years ago when you told me my daughter would graduate from high school and go on to university," Nepoose's father, Levi Nepoose, told MANS principal Gail Wilton. "Because of this school and the scholarships, we can see it's actually going to happen."

Crier-Jamerson and Nepoose, who have attended school together since kindergarten, are "happy and excited" to be graduating as part of the school's newest milestone. When asked what advice he would give to younger students about staying in school, Crier-Jamerson said, "It's always better to have an education."

The graduates and their families are glad MANS added the high school classes that allowed the class of 2015 to fulfill university and trade school entrance requirements.

MANS began adding high school classes one grade at a time in the 2012-13 year even though that meant admitting fewer students due to space limitations.

Wilton explained the reason for expanding MANS, which serves the First Nations students of Maskwacis exclusively, but is located off the Reserve. "By carrying students from Kindergarten through to the completion of Grade 12, the school can also provide direction to students for university and other higher education opportunities."

The current high school completion rate among First Nations youth across Canada is 39 per cent of those who register for high school. MANS supporters believe that by extending the unique learning environment that has allowed students to score above average on Alberta Standardized tests, MANS students will far exceed national graduation rates. This year's 100 per cent completion rate is a good start, and the Crier-Jamerson and Nepoose families couldn't be happier.

The first principal of MANS fore-runner which was located on reserve land, Sandra Kiehlbach Toms, visited MANS in April. She is amazed at the school's transformation from a one-room school with 17 students to a complete K-12 school that is bursting at the seams.

"You do your little bit, and wonder whether you make any difference — like tossing a marble into a pond, but when many people toss in their marble, look what it can become!"

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First class

Supplied photo

Frederick Crier-Jamerson and Coralie Nepoose are Mamawi Atosketan Native School's (MANS), first high school graduates, convocating together May 28. Together, they were awarded more than \$26,000 in scholarships.

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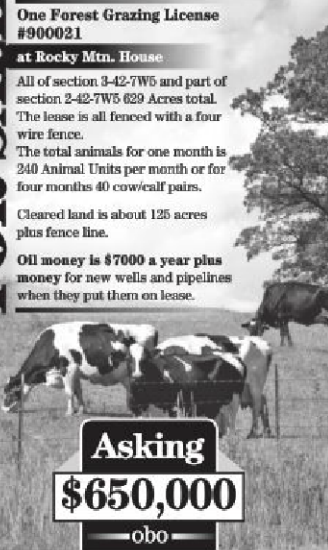
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