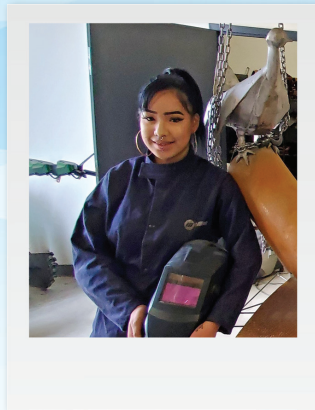


MANS Story from Weld Magazine

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MANS Welding Students Create Commissioned Sculpture for City of Lacombe

This summer while most high school students were looking for jobs, two Mamawi Atosketan Native School (MANS) students took the initiative to apply to create a sculpture for Lacombe's turn-a-bout at the intersection of Calgary & Edmonton Trail, and College Avenue. Tessa Potts, who graduated from MANS in June, and Eileen Firingstone, a current grade 11 student, spent approximately 150 hours with their welding teacher, MANS high school vice-principal Mike Willing, to create Miweyihotwin. Firingstone and Potts donated a significant part of their earnings to help cover MANS' COVID-19-related expenses.



Photos: Eileen Firingstone, philanthropist and Grade 11 student at MANS, is co-creator of Miweyihotwin, and subject of Eileen's Gift, a video that can be viewed at www.mans1.ca. (Photo: Pattie Reasor).

Tessa Potts, philanthropist and one of the co-creators of Miweyihotwin, graduated from MANS in June 2020. Tessa talks about her experience with MANS and welding ambitions in *The First in My House*, a video that can be viewed at www.mans1.ca. (Photo: Pattie Reasor).

The welded metal sculpture of two sharp-tailed grouse was commissioned by the City of Lacombe as part of its public art program. The Cree name of the sculpture, which can be translated as "Affinity for One Another," was chosen initially to represent friendship and connection between the Plains Cree people and the people of Lacombe. It has, however, taken on a very personal meaning for Firingstone and Potts.

For Firingstone, a MANS student since Grade 7, and Potts, a student since kindergarten, "Affinity for One Another" sums up their relationship to the MANS community, but it especially sums up their summer experience in the CWB Welding Foundation Welding Shop in the Leon Ingraham Career and Technology Studies (CTS) Building at MANS. Both studied welding there before becoming entrepreneurs, paying for the material and space they used as well as Willing's supervisory time from commission funds. Potts and Firingstone worked intensely together, designing and welding six hours a day, two days a week in July, and kept an even more rigorous schedule in August.

As if in synch, the two girls can finish each other's sentences. "We [Mr. Willing, Eileen and I] spent the whole summer together," begins Potts, and Firingstone adds, "It's brought the three of us together—like homies!"


The girls were also of one mind when, as they were finishing the sculpture, COVID-19 safety protocols were being announced by Alberta Education, and it became clear that the measures exceeded MANS' budget for the coming year. With opening day just a few weeks away, Potts and Firingstone chose to donate \$750 for an electrostatic cleaner to help keep future students safe.

"I have some pretty important people in my life," said Firingstone, including a twin brother who also attends MANS. "I don't want to risk losing them."

The two philanthropists unveiled Miweyihotwin at a special ceremony on September 26, 2020, marking two years since the CWB Welding Foundation Welding Shop in the CTS building at MANS was officially opened. It was in this welding shop that Firingstone and Potts developed their skills. The new shop was made possible by donations from First Nations individuals, corporate partners, and not-for-profit organizations, including the CWB Welding Foundation.

"The CTS building has been a major project that has created so many opportunities for youth in Ponoka and surrounding areas and will encourage Indigenous youth to further their trades training through education," said Michael Willing, Vice Principal, Junior and Senior High School, MANS.

The CWB Welding Foundation continues to work with MANS to encourage youth to explore opportunities and further their education in welding. For instance, in the spring of 2019, the CWB Welding Foundation in partnership with TransCanada introduced students ages 12-15 to the trade through a Mind Over Metal welding camp for Indigenous youth.

"These camps are specifically designed to provide youth with a hands-on introduction to welding and inspire them to pursue a career in welding. Students build confidence and have fun while being supervised by professionals in a safe environment," said Susan Crowley, executive director, CWB Welding Foundation. "Through experiential learning opportunities like the Mind Over Metal welding camps, their newly sparked interest in welding may lead to further education and employment." 

► **Lynn McDowell**, Director of Planned Giving/Philanthropy for the Alberta Conference
Maria Hypponen, Communications Specialist, CWB Welding Foundation.

"Through the over 450 hours that we spent building this project, we can attest that working well together is not simplistic, facile or easy. It takes work to understand each other. It takes time to understand each other. But the one thing that has kept coming back to our minds is how this represents the challenges that we face as humans. We want this sculpture to speak to the necessity of not giving up, of continuing in face of hardship and stress, and most of all coming to the end without losing what makes us human."

Michael Willing, Vice Principal, Junior and Senior High School, Mamawi Atosketan Native School (MANS)



Miweyihotwin, a public art sculpture commissioned by the City of Lacombe, was designed by Eileen Firingstone and Tessa Potts. The welded steel sculpture with stainless steel highlights took shape in MANS' Leon Ingraham CTS Building, The CWB Welding Foundation Shop in July and August. (Photo 1: Mike Willing, MANS. Photo 2: Todd Vaughan, City of Lacombe.)