

Larry Wilkins, pictured with Alberta's Lieutenant Governor, was honoured for his volunteer leadership over six years as a member of the Steering Committee, Building Committee, and Honorary Campaign Chair of The Bridge Campaign to build a high school at MANS. Larry volunteered countless hours and was also among the campaign's top financial donors.

By Larry Wilkins



The Meaning of MANS High School

In a November 9, 2019 ceremony at Government House in Edmonton, First Nations businessman Larry Wilkins* received The Sovereign's Medal for Volunteers.

The Sovereign's Medal recognizes the extraordinary dedication of a select few Canadians to causes that makes Canada a better place. Larry's CBC Radio interview before the award ceremony aired across Canada.

November 9 was a very important day to me. I'm a proud Canadian, but this recognition by the Queen's representative was important not because I was personally honoured; I accepted the award on behalf of all the volunteers and donors that gave selflessly to make the MANS High school project a reality. The main reason that this national recognition is so important is that it symbolizes a landmark snapshot in time in Canadian history.

Led by the God-given bravery of the leadership of the Alberta Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, a line has been drawn in the sand, a line that cannot be erased. The prejudices that formerly defined an oppressed people in Canada now has a glimmer of hope of being totally obliterated. The people of The Alberta Conference have

spoken, and the leaders were joined by church members, and Canadian citizens and business leaders across the country. In effect, MANS and this Sovereign's Medal amplify a new way of thinking and acting in Canada.

The message is this: The status quo for our First Nations babies, brothers and sisters is no longer tolerable. We will no longer stand by idly and passively while time marches on. Our government's hands seem to be tied helplessly and hopelessly, but thank God, ours are not.

Faith and bravery are for me synonymous terms. There

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are times when the faithful are called to action. That time is now.

We cannot change the past. The skeletons of residential schools, segregation, disease, child poverty and government

sponsored ethnic cleansing programs will remain a part of this great nation's history, but we have drawn a line. By our actions at MANS, we choose to break with old attitudes and patterns. We collectively have made a decisive choice for change, and we need to continue to press for a Canada that is much better.

The children of Maskwacis designed their school logo. “Mamawi Atosketan” means

“working together.” The logo encapsulates a handshake. It is, in essence, a plea to all Canadians. Whether your families have been here on these lands for hundreds of years or hundreds of days, if you consider yourself a Canadian, you will be held partially responsible for shaping the future of our magnificent country. Today's thoughts, prayers, and actions will become tomorrow's reality.

In the ongoing Great Controversy involving First Nations, Canadians make choices for one side or the other. This medal confirms an important shift. With MANS, we have drawn a line that is marked by Heaven. We have done His bidding. We have prayed for His will to be done, and it will be done.

Of that, we can be sure.

*Larry Wilkins is owner and CEO of External Affairs Medical Spas in St. Albert and Edmonton. Listen to his CBC Radio interview on “Daybreak Alberta” with Russell Bowers - Nov. 8, 2019: [cbc.ca/listen/live-radio/1-95-daybreak-alberta/clip/15745785-larry-wilkins-volunteers-to-change-lives](https://www.cbc.ca/listen/live-radio/1-95-daybreak-alberta/clip/15745785-larry-wilkins-volunteers-to-change-lives). His reflection on the meaning of MANS was first published in the January 2020 issue of *Messenger*.