

Building Maori Primary School in Maori Village, Zimbabwe



make for a very challenging (and unsafe) learning environment for both students and teachers.

Most of the families in the area are small-scale farmers. The community is united in its desire to have their children attend school in an adequate facility. The closest primary school is 11 kilometres away, too far for these young children to walk to and from each day. They have secured land from the government to build their own school and have an approved site plan. But they have been told there is no government money for the school's construction.

In February 2011 community leaders made a formal presentation to Fran Fearnley and Biggie Chikodzi, asking for their assistance in raising funds in Canada for their new school. The community undertook to provide sweat equity by clearing land, digging trenches and toilet pits, and moulding some of the bricks.

The goal for 2011 was to raise funds to build the first classroom block, comprised of two classrooms and two storage rooms. Thanks to the generosity of donors, particularly Stuart and Victoria Lazier, and many clients' participation in ZimArt's fundraising efforts, this goal was accomplished. The first classroom block reached roof level in March 2012. Not having water on site was a complicating factor and cost in the construction, so the Laziers once again stepped in to fund

In 2004 Manyara Mutekani, a community activist, initiated the God Knows project in her rural community 100 kilometres north of the capitol, Harare, in Mashonaland Central province. God Knows provides support to 80 vulnerable children and youth (and their caregivers) living in Maori and five nearby villages. The main focus of the project is to help fund education for the children and skill development for the youth.

God Knows already has Canadian well wishers. Carol McKey, owner of Milkweed Preschool in Peterborough, Ontario, initiated a Children Helping Children project in 2008. This wonderful grassroots initiative involves the children in Zimbabwe and the children in Canada, who produce art work which is screened onto T-shirts, laptop bags and other products. All net proceeds from sales go to God Knows to cover school fees, uniforms and educational resources. The children regularly send letters and pictures to each other.

In January 2011, ZimArt-in-Trust went to Maori Village to deliver letters, pictures and money raised by Milkweed Preschool. There we met with Manyara Mutekani and discovered that she is also chair of the local school development committee, representing 134 families and 350 primary school children. All of these children currently attend school in a 'satellite facility' – a cluster of old, abandoned, structurally unsound farm buildings with leaking roofs and homemade windows, which

a 40-metre drilled well and hand pump on the school site, installed in March 2012.

In June 2012 the Canadian Southern African Network held a gala fundraising event at the Evergreen Brickworks in Toronto with the Maori school being the major beneficiary. Their donated funds have paid for approximately 50% of the cost of constructing teacher accommodation. Construction of the second classroom block also started in 2012 and preparatory work was done for the students' toilets.

As of November 2013 the student toilets are complete the second classroom block is at roof level and the teacher accommodation is partially roofed. Our current goal is to complete the construction of these two buildings before the new school year starts in mid-January 2014. This will allow the students to start using the facility, as we raise funds for furniture, the third block, solar panels etc. We are working with the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture to meet all the requirements for the school to be formally registered.

We need to raise \$22,600 US to meet this current goal.

Check out videos of progress at www.zimart.ca



(top) Students from Maori look forward to moving into the new school.

(bottom) The first classroom block was completed in 2012.