

McDougall Stoney Mission Society Update

This past summer has been exceptionally busy at the McDougall Stoney Mission Society site, despite the Covid-19 pandemic. The restoration of the church building started in May and continued through the summer months. While we had to cancel our planned cross-cultural events and activities, we were fortunately able to continue to regularly meet with small groups of elders and community members, outdoors of course, to continue discussions towards reconciliation and the future.



The reconstruction of the church has been truly remarkable and was possible through funding from our generous donors and the amazing efforts of the crew from Chalmers Heritage Conservation (“CHC”)



working steadily throughout the summer. The early stages of the project saw the timbers salvaged from the fire put into place and then the clay chinking pressed into place to create a seal. The roof and walls were next, and we were finally able to see the building in place on the horizon. In early August work began on the bell tower and the

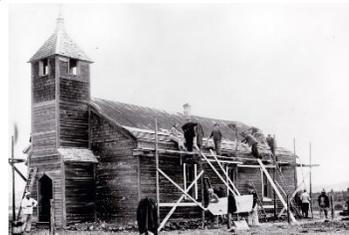


multiple layers of siding were added, as they had been over the years of the original building. By fall, the roof had its cedar shakes, and the exterior was painted in its historic white and green colours. On a chilly day in October, we had a smudge ceremony performed by Stoney Nakoda elders, and then raised the new bell, a CPR bell from 1875



donated by the Thornsteinsson family, into the bell tower. Hearing the beautiful sound of the bell ringing for the first time in three and half years was wonderful!

The doors, windows and shutters are now in place and the CHC crew continues to work on the interior.



We are very much

looking forward to a day next June where we can welcome everyone to the site to officially re-open the McDougall Memorial United Church.



Now that the restoration is nearing completion, we are extremely excited to start work on an even bigger project, the development of a comprehensive Enhanced Interpretive Program at the site. The need for this project was identified through discussions between the Society and the Stoney Nakoda people during gatherings, meetings and sharing circles over the past three years. About a year ago, we

started to meet with a group of Stoney Nakoda elders, youth, community members and families to discuss the project, its direction, and opportunities for engagement. These meetings continued through this past summer, gathering in small groups at the site.

The Enhanced Interpretive Program will interpret the history of the area “Through the Eyes of the Stoney” and will be presented in the Țyǎǎhé Nakoda language, with translations to English and French. We have been fortunate to receive grant funding from a federal government program that supports the reclamation, revitalization, maintenance and strengthening of Indigenous languages. This funding will allow us to work on the first phase of the Interpretive Program through this coming winter where we will capture



several Stoney Nakoda elders telling their stories on video, in their language. Their involvement in this project is extremely important to ensure that the full history of the site is told in a way that respects the oral tradition of the Stoney, as well as ensuring that the language and history is preserved in a way it is recollected by the Stoney Nakoda people. These video resources will be made available through our website to be used by both the Stoney youth to learn their history in their own language, which in turn will increase the use and proficiency of the Țyǎǎhé Nakoda language. They will also be used by non-Indigenous Canadians to educate them about the First Nations values, traditions and stories embedded in the site.

As we move forward, the Enhanced Interpretive Program will also include the development of new interpretive walk throughout the full 44-acre site, with panels highlighting the stories and historical facts from both the Stoney Nakoda and the mission/settler perspectives and the production of a 20-minute AV presentation detailing the history of the Morleyville Settlement and the Stoney Nakoda people to be shown to people while visiting the site. We anticipate the involvement of the Stoney Nakoda community, McDougall family descendants, and other relevant historical and area people and information. Ultimately, we would like to have guides available through the summer months at the site to share the story of this unique site with our visitors.



Our relationship with the Stoney Nakoda people dates to the establishment of the Morleyville Settlement by Rev. George McDougall in 1873, the building of the first Methodist Church in southern Alberta in 1875, and the signing of Treaty 7 in 1877. We have worked hard over the past three and half years since the fire to reconnect with the Stoney Nakoda people; to start rebuilding and reconciling the relationship that had deteriorated over the years. This work has resulted in stronger bonds between the descendants of both the McDougall family and the Stoney families that signed Treaty 7. We look forward to the summer of 2021 where we can once again host cross-cultural events at the site to help us continue our efforts to re-establish



community linkages and provide teaching opportunities to forge a new future together in the original spirit of the Treaty relationship which was based on trust and mutual respect.

We wish to acknowledge and extend our sincere thanks to our generous donors, including several McDougall family descendants, interested Society members, the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation, the Calgary Foundation, the Department of Canadian Heritage, the MD of Bighorn, and the United Church Justice and Reconciliation Fund for their support of the Society and our projects.

For more information about the Society, or to make a donation, please see our website at mcdougallstoneymission.com