

## a trip to Zimbabwe BUILDING A SCHOOL

Never doubt the power and capabilities of a group of parents, students and teachers when they set out to do something GREAT!

**A**nd accomplish something GREAT, they did. With a mission to build a new school in Zimbabwe and a goal to raise \$10,000, Langley Fundamental Elementary School (LFES) set to work. And in just six days they raised over \$18,000.





When the Zimbabweans heard what the Canadians had raised, they realized that their dream for a new school could actually become a reality. The Zimbabweans challenged each family to do their part by making 2000 bricks each and before long the building of the school began.

Additional fundraisers by LFES allowed the purchase of books and desks, as well as the completion of a second classroom. As the summer of 2012 became the start of the school year, word reached Langley that two classroom blocks (four classrooms) and the library had been completed and that plans were underway to celebrate, not only the completion of a brand new school, but the partnership between the two schools, two peoples and two countries.

On Friday, November 16th, 2012, Ginny Sawatsky who initiated the fundraising efforts in Langley travelled to Zimbabwe to participate in the celebration with Gandidzanwa Primary School.

“It was an amazing five-hour event, with over 1,200 people in attendance, including local and government officials, dignitaries, community members, families, the builders, publishers, business owners from the capital city and people from miles away,” said Ginny. “There was singing, dancing, speeches and lunch served to everyone. It was a day I will never forget. As the headmaster said, the feeling at the school and in the community is *electric*.

The letter that Ms. Sawatsky received from the headmaster sums up the feelings of renewed hope in the Zimbabwean community.

“Gandidzanwa Primary and its community are grateful for your being our partners in education. Before our friendship, life was very difficult for us. We had no classrooms and furniture and our academic standards were very low. Children used to write while lying on the ground, hence the shapes of letters and figures were deplorable.”

The headmaster defined classroom situations as very poor with lessons being done under trees and in sheds. “Learning was hard and absenteeism rampant,” he explained.

“The more the community tried to establish something called a school, the more they failed though the will was there...”

The headmaster went on to say that the whole attitude within the community has changed with the building of the new school. At the Gandidzanwa Primary School, the hope of education is now framed in these words:

*Like the sun we shall give light*

*Working together, changing lives* ❖

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**Bottom left:** Zimbabwean students showing off I’m Spelling Now books donated by the Langley School District Foundation.

**Top left:** Before shot showing a school with no desks, books, washrooms or structure.

**Top right:** The new school is equipped with new classrooms, library, washrooms, desks and books.