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## Ma Mawi gives hope to native people

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By Erin Madden

WHEN Grace Amos became a new mother, she didn't hold out much hope for herself.

"I had a baby when I was 16 years old and I thought that's it, my life is over," she says.

A few years passed and things didn't get much better. Unhappy with her job situation, she pictured herself being stuck on welfare.

"I felt like I wasn't getting anywhere because it wasn't something I wanted to do for the rest of my life."

Her outlook has since changed dramatically. Now 20, Amos not only has a family, but also huge goals.

Last October, Amos joined the Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre's volunteer program. As she became more and more involved with the organization, she was able to turn her volunteer position into a full-time job that she loves and is a source of inspiration.

"I'd never volunteered before," she says. "I didn't know what I wanted to do, what I liked. I didn't know anything about myself."

A United Way-funded agency, Ma Mawi operates out of six locations and provides close to 30 different programs and services to the aboriginal community.

As a youth leader, Amos administers programs to help young people deal with life's challenges and teach them they have a lot to offer their community. She has plans to start a girls' group where young women can discuss pregnancy and other problems they may face.

"Life is not over just because you get pregnant," she says. "It's just something you have to deal with."

And it's that attitude that has won her the praise of other staff members who say Amos is what Ma Mawi is all about.

"She came on as a volunteer and she's honed her skills, developed her knowledge and now she's giving back to the community," says Michelle Boivin, Ma Mawi's communications director. "When that happens, it just replicates itself and you build that momentum and before you know it you've created a strong community."

The United Way is hoping this year's fundraising campaign will raise \$14.5 million to help organizations like Ma Mawi. To date \$7, 823, 941 has been raised, which is 54 per cent of the campaign goal.

If you would like to donate to the United Way's *Because We Live Here* campaign, call 477-UWAY, visit the website [www.unitedwaywinnipeg.mb.ca](http://www.unitedwaywinnipeg.mb.ca) or mail donations to the United Way, 3rd Floor -- 5 Donald St., Winnipeg, Mb, R3L 2T4.

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