

MACPHAIL FAMILY ABORIGINAL PRIDE PROGRAM

SUCCESS STORY

Keith and Kathy MacPhail have been long time supporters of United Way, generously giving to the annual campaign for over 15 years. In 2006, they increased their support and involvement by partnering with United Way as champions of our Aboriginal Youth and Education Strategy's Aboriginal Pride Program. With their Special Gift, the Pride program grew significantly – ultimately expanding from two to seven schools within both school districts.

For Keith and Kathy MacPhail, who believe that Aboriginal children deserve the same opportunities as non-Aboriginal children and who recognize that education plays a key role in creating better lives, the program was a perfect fit for their philanthropic vision: "What most appealed to us about the Pride program is that it provides Aboriginal children and youth with the same kinds of opportunities that non-Aboriginal children have. Graduating from high school opens many doors and as individuals grow and prosper, so does the Aboriginal community."

The *MacPhail Family Aboriginal Pride Program* takes the unique approach of connecting students to their heritage through a blend of traditional teachings, cultural activities and academic supports. This serves to strengthen the students' self-esteem and cultural pride, qualities that act as the foundation for positive and lasting social change.

The results have been inspiring and rewarding. In general, the schools have become more welcoming places for Aboriginal students. School attendance has dramatically increased and the students in the program are achieving better grades. Parents are more involved in their child's education and are participating in school activities like Pow Wows and Feasts. Of great significance is the number of Aboriginal students completing high school. Many of these students, as reported by their teachers, would not have graduated, if it weren't for the support received through the Pride program.

"Talking with the students and Pride Program Coordinators at one of the afterschool events really reinforced how important this work is and the difference it is making – it was so rewarding. Once we saw the huge impact made by adding an Aboriginal Pride Coordinator into a school we were compelled to provide funding for additional coordinators in other high need schools. Giving Aboriginal children someone to provide daily support within the school seems to be a substantial factor in their success."

– Kathy MacPhail

Over the course of the five-year demonstration project, hundreds of Aboriginal students were supported to achieve greater academic and personal success. The program has also left a legacy of learning and best practices for Calgary's school districts in their plans to continue supporting Aboriginal youth. Thanks to the MacPhail's tremendous gift, the future is much brighter for Aboriginal youth and young adults. Both in the short-term, as individual lives improve, and also in the long-term as the effects evolve, grow and are passed on to the generations to come.