

St. Paul's Bramalea reaches out to Native Canadian Centre

The expression "What they lack in size they make up in . . ." certainly applies to the tiny Sunday school of St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in Bramalea. With enthusiasm and generosity they raised \$1,400 for the Native Canadian Centre of Toronto (NCCT).

Each year this amazing group of children and teachers with the encouragement and support of the entire congregation manages to raise well over \$1000 for a mission project. Alternating annually from international to national, 2009 brought them to a national project and the Aboriginal community in Toronto became the focus. In January, through Lori Ransom of The Presbyterian Church in Canada at Wynford Dr., Toronto, they got in touch with NCCT and the brainstorming began. As conversations continued over the winter, awareness of the needs of the Aboriginal community in Toronto evolved and a specific direction was agreed upon.

The first fund raising event was a BBQ that took place in the parking lot of the Balmoral Dr. church. Next, on May 10, 2009, the Sunday preceding Healing and Reconciliation Sunday, the congregation was made aware of the Sunday school's project and the specific forms the fund raising would take. On May 29, 2009, with the aid of Rosary Spence from NCCT and her daughter, who amazed us all with her dancing, accompanied by a band of drummers/singers, the Sunday school hosted a **Native Canadian Fun Night**. Moneys from the ticket sales for that event went into the Mission Project coffers. Next was added the money raised May 31, 2009 at the after-service coffee time where cookies supplied by Samantha Moss and Shana-Kay Ellis, two Junior High Sunday school students, were served, along with fruit breads supplied by the teachers. The congregation enjoyed being served by the Sunday school children and were impressed by their enthusiastic ownership of the event. While the last week-end of May was the "big push," donations were made every Sunday throughout the months of May and June. These donations came in weekly . . . in collection bags of pennies, nickels and dimes, loonies and toonies, along with "folding money" and cheques in church envelopes that were designated offerings.

During that period, the Sunday school often took the *Children's Time* of the Worship service to tell Aboriginal stories with a biblical parallel; to educate about Native Canadian customs and history and to



Native Canadian Centre of Toronto Performers

bring the congregation up to date on the amounts raised using the visual of medicine wheels each representing \$100. Sunday school class time also had a distinct Aboriginal flavour with medicine wheels and totem poles, stories from "Meeting First Nation Friends" and the film "Catching the Dream" (both available through the Presbyterian Book Room), all bringing to the forefront the history and customs of Native peoples while expounding on the overriding message of God's love and our response to that love.

On June 21, 2009, National Aboriginal Sunday, Cindilee Ecker-Flagg from Native Canadian Centre of Toronto was our guest for the Children's Day worship service. She was presented with a cheque for \$1400 as well as gifts and prayers to take back to the Centre from a much more knowledgeable congregation.

We have always felt that while giving money to a cause is extremely beneficial, that benefit sometimes is short lived. While putting a face on a need, especially at an early age, sows the seed of understanding for generations. This project has, in my opinion, done both.

Written by Lee Janoschak, Coordinator, St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, Bramalea, Ontario

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Celebrating Aboriginal Day on June 21st with the congregation at St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in Bramalea was a heartfelt experience.

To see the teaching medicine wheels around the workshop area, which indicated the many hours of work from the community to raise monies to contribute toward the food fund here at the Native Canadian Centre of Toronto was humbling.

Thank you on behalf of the Native Canadian Centre of Toronto.

Cindilee Ecker-Flagg (Centre Staff)

