CATHY FREEMAN

(1973-)

Cathy Freeman grew up in Queensland with her sister and three brothers. She started athletics training with her stepfather when she was very young and by her early teens had won an impressive collection of regional and national titles in both track and field events.

She always showed fierce determination and focus on the track. At 16 Cathy competed in her first major international event, the Commonwealth Games in New Zealand. Soon after, she moved to Melbourne, where she continued to build her career with the help of professional trainer Peter Fortune.

Cathy is perhaps best remembered today as the athlete chosen to light the flame at the 2000 Olympics in Sydney, and for her stunning win in the 400 metres. Have you ever jumped from your seat in sheer exhilaration as someone not only rises to a challenge but completely nails it? Australia did that day. Flying against convention, Cathy proudly carried both the Aboriginal and Australian flags in her lap of honour, staying true to herself as always.

Today, Cathy works tirelessly for the foundation she established, which helps kids in four remote Indigenous communities attend school and get the best out of their education.

Cathy, in your superwoman suit, you didn't need a cape to show us that skill, training and hard work are as essential as talent in gaining fantastic results. You have taught us that being a leader is as much about community and roots as success.

We'll always cheer you on!

ILLUSTRATION BY TORI-JAY MORSEY

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