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# Program lives up to expectations

THE Cape York Institute's Higher Expectations Program, funded by the Macquarie Group Foundation, has reached a significant milestone, with the first group of students graduating from Year 12.

The Higher Expectations Program was established in 2005 to enable the region's top indigenous students to attend Queensland's leading boarding schools. Currently, only six percent of students from Cape York complete Year 12.

Having completed Year 12 at Lourdes Hill College and Rockhampton Girls Grammar School this year, Higher Expectations graduates Ramana Walker, Marijke Bassani, Margaret Bond and Valencia Gilbert all plan to continue to tertiary education.

Last year's sole graduate, Leona Yunkaporta, is now working for Rio Tinto in Brisbane.

John Wenitong, national indigenous education development officer for the Cape York Institute, said Higher Expectations had provided a setting in which the Cape's indigenous students

could excel. "Higher Expectations gives students opportunities they would never have in their local community and they have risen to the challenge," he said.

"The students have had to overcome many cultural and educational hurdles along the way, but the program is structured to ensure they have support from their families, communities, schools and the program staff."

The Higher Expectations Program has an almost 100pc retention rate, which demonstrates the commitment the students make to their education when they are given the opportunity.

Julie White, head of the Macquarie Group Foundation, said the four graduating students were great ambassadors for the Higher Expectations program.

"The foundation has been involved since the 2005 pilot program, and I have personally witnessed the development of many of the students involved," she said.