These two Colleges have played a crucial role in training both lay and ordained leadership in the Indigenous churches for the partner Churches of the Colleges. The years foundational Biblical and theological training at Certificate level has extended to Diploma level and more graduates are now planning to go on to Bachelor level studies.

The hundreds of graduates have strengthened local church leadership (often providing valuable community leadership as well) and provided many ordained leaders. I report that the Lockhart River community where I served in the 1970s now has its own local Aboriginal priest.

It must be said too that many of these Indigenous churches struggle with old patterns of church life and the social issues of community life. Leaders have a tough challenge. It is exciting to see that graduates and students of Wontulp-Bi-Buya College gain so much from their studies together that they are encouraging other church members to attend studies also. This shows that another stage of leadership development is underway.

During 2005, the College faced a number of challenges – a potential cut back in government funding, an audit visit by the Qld Registration office for our renewal of registration as a training organisation, a very tight office for our renewal of registration audit visit by the Qld Registration Board of Missions for my position without which the College would not exist, and the additional support provided so graciously by Tear Australia.

In November, we invited representatives of our four partner Churches to visit the College for a Quality Review of what we do for them. We were heartened by the positive reports we received. These are a few comments –

“Firstly, I would say that what I found and experienced during the morning far exceeded my expectations. What I saw was a very professional organisation delivering a high quality product and filling a real need for Indigenous congregations and communities.

You don’t have to be in the College long before you are aware of an obvious joy and enthusiasm in both lecturers and students. Talking to the students they all felt that their time in W.B.B. equipped them well for personal growth as well as for their various ministries back in their home community.” (Pastor T Janke)

Certificate III in Theology students (pictured above) displaying their MU Australia presented study books, MU Australia member, Maureen Musson (centre), presented the books. Students representing Anglican, Lutheran and Churches of Christ Churches make up this Certificate group.

“Wontulp-Bi-Buya College is responding well to a genuine need to provide theological training for Indigenous students, however it would obviously benefit the College if increased funding could be made available.

Also, while the existing premises are adequate, and workable, a move to a more suitable premises would be desirable.” (Fr R Greenup)

We would love to have the means to establish proper infrastructure for the College but we step forward into 2006 as we are confident that we are blessed in what we do and, most importantly, knowing the Indigenous Churches are blessed by what they receive from us.

David Thompson
Assistant Principal / Academic Coordinator

2005 Certificate III in Theology students’ comments:

Studying at Wontulp has helped me and when I go back home I share with others and with my kids and other young people – Sana Billy, Warrebar Island.

Wontulp has helped me to understand more, to work with my families and my community. It is great to be here and to know more about God so, when I go back home I will share with families and other people – Lorraine Clarmont, Lockhart River.

Wontulp has helped me very much, love my church community and family more, my wife, my children and grandchildren and my brother and sister and other relations – John Kennell Snr, Mackay.

It has helped me a lot in understanding both the physical and spiritual sides of life and how to approach a situation, whether good or bad, and build up broken relationships, whether marriage or in home life. I thank the good Lord for Wontulp – Paul Tomansa, Yorke Island.

Studying at Wontulp has given me the opportunity to share with others what I’ve learnt and their feedback has been one of excitement. People are keen to attend a bible college themselves. Moreover, I’ve begun implementing some of the lessons taught both in the ministry of the church and family which has helped me immensely – Coleen Saveka, St. Paul’s Community, Moa Island.

2005 Diploma of Theology students commented:

It has helped me in my Bible study, helping in the church and also, I am more aware of the social issues that go on in our community, e.g. health, justice, children’s welfare and education. I can see there is a need for Christians to have their say in the running of our communities – Mary Kyle, Yarrabah.

2005 Diploma of Theology: Studying at Wontulp helped me a lot at home and in my community. It has given me more experience in seeking requirement for learning and actually doing more – Rev. Charles Loban, Thursday Island.

It helps me at home with my family. In the community it helps me at community gatherings on health issues and drug and alcohol discussions – Maria Gebadi, Barambah.

I am cheery-er – Shirley-Ann Rowley, Cairns.

The impact of study at WBB

How Kangaroo Found His Tail – follow the story of kangaroo who had a tail but did not know what to do with it or where to wear it. $16.95 (incl. postage) from WBB College Office
From the Principal

Congratulations to The Rev David Thompson, the Assistant Principal/Academic Coordinator for his faithfulness to God’s calling and especially his fifteen years with Wontulp-Bi-Buya College. Being taught by David on the concept of Indigenous Contextual Theology was one of the (if not the) most mind-blowing experiences of my Theology Studies in the College. Many other students have expressed the same sentiments. David was part of a team from Nungalinya College that taught that God had revealed Himself in all cultures, and eventually another team was formed in Queensland from WBB College to put together a Resource Book on the subject.

When the idea was first put to me, David and I had some real humdinger arguments. Later on, I realised that I was more of an Englishman than an Aborigine when it came to understanding God’s Word.

I was the product of early Church of England teachings, where to be a Christian meant you had to accept the gospel wrapped in European culture. Indigenous Contextual Theology, simply put, arises out of the belief that God walked among our Indigenous people long before the first European Christians brought the gospel to these shores. God’s revelations of Himself in our culture become apparent today when we study our Indigenous Spirituality. This results in Indigenous Christian Spirituality.

As David (in this newsletter) pointed out, this College would not exist without the ongoing financial commitments of the Anglican Board of Missions and Tear Australia, but we also acknowledge the faithful assistance of the four Churches, the Anglican, Lutheran, Roman Catholic and Uniting Churches. Last, but definitely not least, the commitment many individuals and small organisations that contribute to this College believing that we are making a difference in our communities. A big thank you and the Lord’s blessings continue to be with you all.

Jesus is Lord
The Rev. Mick Connolly

Right: Diploma of Theology student Rev. Leslie Baird has extensive experience in Community Development at Yarrabah, having established a number of services and programs. Rev. Baird will be the new Coordinator for Certificate III in Community Organising and Development Course in 2006.

New Coordinator

Quality on a Tight Lead

This year ends my 15th year with Wontulp-Bi-Buya College following 10 years at Nungalinya College, Darwin. (Before that 3 years in ministry in Fiji after 8 years at Lockhart River, CYP) It is interesting to reflect on developments over this length of time. At any one time, it may seem that nothing changes, but with some perspective, both subtle and dramatic changes are apparent. I write here particularly of my experience of Aboriginal communities in north Queensland.

In the 1970s, Aboriginal communities in Qld were controlled by white managers and under the pressure of assimilationist policies while very few Aboriginal people had any secondary school experience. In the following decades gradual improvements in education were achieved and local leadership strengthened through policies of self-management and self-determination. Today a younger generation of better educated and more confident leaders are engaged in local community government. Social and health problems may still seem ever present (orsolidly entrenched) but there is hope in efforts to bring deeper levels of change (e.g. through alcohol management plans and other community development).

Pictured below are recently ordained Priests & Deacons into the Anglican Church of Australia, From left - Priest Rev. Azzie Noah (Pormpuraaw), Deacons Rev. Val Connolly, Rev. Valmai Connolly (all Diploma of Theology graduates) & Deacon Rev. Edward Murphga and (far right) Priest Rev. John Noah (Certificate III in Theology graduates). Priest Rev. James Salle was also ordained (Not pictured)

Student Activities

Students presenting a play depicting what they had learnt in their studies and the changes needed in their lives.

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