FROM ST ALIPIUS:

The Aboriginal flag flew proudly at the front of St Alipius Parish School, Ballarat East throughout the last week of May as we celebrated Aboriginal Reconciliation Week. At St Alipius we are called to make the face of Jesus visible to the world – to be a people who see God’s presence in all humanity. For us, celebrating Aboriginal Reconciliation is central to our Catholic mission.

The theme for National Reconciliation Week this year was ‘Let’s Talk Recognition’ providing an opportunity for all Australians to celebrate the contributions, cultures and history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and reflect their place in our nation. At St Alipius we celebrated through prayer and action. Our Whole School Prayer-time recognised God’s invitation to be inclusive of all people and to celebrate that we are all members of God’s family; all made in the image of God. During our prayer we promised to commit ourselves to reconciliation with the following words:

- We promise to open our eyes to see that differences are good and should be celebrated – and to look for things that unite us.
- We promise to open our ears to hear the story of the Dreaming. To make this story part of who we are and to listen for the stories of Aboriginal heroes in our world.
- We promise to open our hearts to build relationships that enable others.
- We promise to open our minds to imagine a world where saying sorry is a sign of strength – where the dream of reconciliation becomes a reality.
- We place our hands across our hearts as a sign that we make these promises with love.

Journey to Recognition: On Friday, May 31st our Year 6 students and teachers joined the ‘Journey to Recognition’ campaign when the community of Ballarat was invited to walk around Lake Wendouree. The students decorated umbrellas with words that they felt were appropriate for the day. Words like Justice, Freedom, Harmony and Right & Just. They created a splash of colour and a talking point for this special day.

When they arrived in Ballarat, recognition campaigners and high-profile Australians were 100km into their journey to travel the length of Australia. The first leg of the journey is from Melbourne to Adelaide and then through the centre to Nhulunbuy in the Northern Territory to arrive at the Garma Festival on 9th August 2013. The contingent will stop at cities and towns along the way to expand the support base of this continually growing movement.

Recognition is an important element of reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other Australians and this movement asks us to look more closely at our constitution. Our Constitution was drafted and adopted over a century ago by a narrow cross-section of Australian society, whose thinking reflected the dominant historical, economic, social and political aspirations of the day. As a part of this:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were not asked to help write the constitution.
- The Constitution does not recognize Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the first Australian people and it does not recognize their existence in Australian society today.
The Constitution does not acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories or laws.

This was an important opportunity for all of us to learn more about Australia's constitution and the concept of democracy—something closely related to the history of Ballarat. It was an opportunity for us to take part in (hopefully) making a change to our Constitution – a history making event. But most importantly, it was an opportunity for us to stand in solidarity with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait members of our school community, and all Aboriginal Australians, and say 'We recognize you as the First Australians!', 'We recognize that Australian history is overwhelmingly the history of your people', 'We believe our Constitution should acknowledge you'.

Eileen Rice – Principal, St Alipius Parish School

FROM LORETO COLLEGE:

Loreto College Ballarat gathered together for a liturgy during Reconciliation week to raise for the very first time their Aboriginal Flag, they also took this occasion to focus on Mothers and the 2013 Loreto Year of Justice. Peter Rix reflects on this occasion:

Aboriginal people are the first Australians and you can go anywhere around the world and you will never see the Aboriginal culture, it is uniquely Australian. "So when we celebrate all that it means to be Australian we celebrate 50 000 years of Aboriginal culture. When we raise the flag we are demonstrating our recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. We fly this flag to promote a sense of community and demonstrate our commitment towards closing the gap. May this flag symbolise our desire for reconciliation. May it be our symbol of the journey to recognition of the Aboriginal people who have gone before and who will come after. Two of our indigenous students, Indya Hayes and Keeley Haseloff had the honour of raising the flag for the first time.

This May Liturgy also had an emphasis on Mothers and we used the opportunity to remember Sorry Day which occurred on Sunday, 26 May. We wanted to use the gathering to focus on the stolen children and the grief that was inflicted on many mothers throughout Australia. The drama performed by our Year 10 students provided a focus for us all as did the songs sung by the choir. We had a chance to think of the women who lost their children and the hopes that they had that their children would be returned to them. Like all mothers everywhere they have never given up hope that life will one day turn out better for themselves and for their children.

God’s justice is always linked to compassion to bring about a more humane and caring world based on right relationships. This is the justice Mary Ward wanted. She knew God loved her and her response was love. 2013 is the Loreto Year of Justice. The student leaders at Loreto, the Senate, have been striving to both nurture and better understand the value of Justice. Part of guiding the school under an agenda of Justice includes making a daily effort to reflect on how we as individuals and also as a group embody and demonstrate this virtue.

It was decided that a visual symbol was the best way to convey the importance and accessibility of this value and to reach all students to show that it is the whole school that upholds the responsibility of carrying out that value, both to one another and to others outside this group. We wanted everyone to have a physical reminder of the fact that Justice is not out of reach, that it is something all of us are capable of, and while it is a responsibility, it is also a gift. To symbolize this, the school will give each student a gift in return; a brand new badge of the image of Loreto Justice for this year.
FROM DAMASCUS COLLEGE:

The Journey to Recognition, is a people movement aimed at creating awareness and support for Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander peoples to be recognised in the constitution. People representing this movement have gathered together to walk across Australia raising awareness everywhere they go.

On Friday 31st May the ‘Recognise’ team arrived in Ballarat. A crowd gathered at Lake Wendouree to show their support for this important issue, along with students from Damascus College Ballarat. The day started with the crowd being addressed by keynote speakers both from local Ballarat and the National Recognise team. Everyone then joined together in walking around the Lake while discussing the questions that surround this event.

Questions such as ‘what does the constitution currently say? What changes should be made? Why hasn’t this been done sooner?’ The questions and discussion continued and it was inspiring to see young, old and a cross section of the community coming together to share ideas and support this event. Damascus College year 10 students (pictured) reflected on the experience as an exciting and valuable day to be a part of. Some remarking that when the referendum occurs they will likely be voting and they are looking forward to using their vote in a powerful way to support our Indigenous brothers and sisters.

Casey McLoughlan

FROM ST MALACHY’S

As part of Reconciliation Week, students from St Malachy’s School, Edenhope, were involved in an Indigenous Awareness Day. Staff from Australian Catholic University, led by Cara Vanzini and Aunty Jeanette Turpie-Johnstone, involved students from St Malachy’s in art and music activities for the younger students. Older students were treated to an information session about bush tucker foods and then ‘treated’ again as they were able to taste test a variety of foods including kangaroo, lemon myrtle, limes and bush tomatoes and scones with berry jam and quandong cream to top off a feast.

Later in the day, students from Edenhope College, Apsley Primary School, Goroke P-12 and St Malachy’s, met at Edenhope College to hear Aunty Jeanette’s welcome to country and a Creation Story about how the eagle, Bunjol, got its colours and the importance of sharing. Students enjoyed a shared lunch and were then totally engaged as two Indigenous musicians taught students how to do a number of Indigenous dances. They learnt the finer points involved in making and playing the didgeridoo and how to use the different sounds to tell a story. Aunty Jeanette concluded the day with another story about using your voice to say good things and your hands do good deeds.

Listening to the didgeridoo
It was a wonderful day for everyone. Many thanks to Cara Vanzini, Equity Pathways Officer from Australian Catholic University for helping to make the day possible. Thanks also to the three ACU students (Catherine, Taryn and Jacob), Aunty Jeanette and Sonny and Eddie, two very talented Indigenous musicians. We would certainly love to host a similar day again.

Angela Kealy – Principal

*A student’s perspective:*

St Malachy’s School learnt about Indigenous Culture. The F/1/2/3 learnt about Aboriginal dance and got to paint boomerangs with some ACU students. The 4/5/6 students learnt about the food that Aboriginal people ate with Aunty Jeanette. Aunty Jeanette told us how the food was healthier than everyday food because it is not processed. There were lots of foods to try, which were really tasty and healthy. My favourite was the native limes which were sour, but tasty.

After trying the Aboriginal foods, St Malachy’s School walked over to Edenhope College Stadium. Aunty Jeanette told us a Dreamtime story about Bunjol and how he told people to share things with others. We then walked over to the Primary School, enjoyed lunch which was really nice and a run around.

Eddie and Sunny came and taught us some Aboriginal dances. After the dances Eddie told us how Aboriginal people made didgeridoos and also showed us how to play them. Eddie also used his didgeridoo to tell us a story about a hunter and his lucky boomerang. Eddie was very good at telling the story through the didgeridoo. The Aboriginal Education Day was really fun and I learnt lots about Indigenous Culture.

Henry Hawkins

Anyone interested in gaining more information about the ‘Journey to Recognition’ should go to: http://www.recognise.org.au/thejourney where you can also register your support via an online petition.