



National Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander
Ecumenical Commission

May 2009

Munguddor Bi Buya

Munguddor Bi Buya is an initiative of NATSIEC which supports and encourages Indigenous Theology.

The name Munguddor Bi Buya is a combination of three words each meaning "light": Munguddor from the Bunjalung Aboriginal language; Bi and Buya from the two languages of the Torres Strait.

Prayer for Reconciliation and Christian Unity

Creator God, may the power of your grace transform us;

Christ, give us courage and hope to manifest the unity we have in you, and to share our life with each other and the world;

Holy Spirit empower us to work for justice for people and the earth.

God, in your grace, transform the world. Amen



An occasional paper from Munguddor Bi Buya

Illuminations

Week of Prayer for Reconciliation 26th May – 3rd June 2009

The Week of Prayer for Reconciliation, and National Sorry Day which occurs during the same week, remind us of unfinished business concerning the needs of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of Australia. Christ calls us to actively work for reconciliation and forgiveness, and to address the hardships and injustices experienced by our Indigenous sisters and brothers.

This week is a time for us to reflect on what comes next; what still needs to be achieved more than a year after the Prime Minister said Sorry. Has that Apology helped to heal the pain of the Stolen Generations? Has the Government done what it promised to do in that powerful and moving speech on February 13th 2008? Have we opened our hearts and minds to our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander brothers and sisters?

Rev. Sealin Garlett, a Uniting Church Minister and NATSIEC commissioner considers the story of the Lord appearing to Samuel and relates it to his experience of being in Canberra for the Apology, and what saying Sorry meant to him and to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Rev. Garlett's reflection was recorded on the first anniversary of the apology at the Munguddor Bi Buya retreat in Ballina, NSW. This is an edited transcript of his address. The full version is available in MP3 format from our website.

This reflection is also in a collection of writings on healing to be published shortly by NATSIEC.

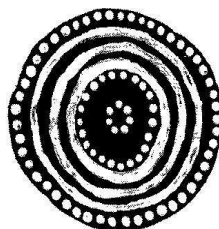
Accompanying resources available for Week of Prayer for Reconciliation.

- Prayer Booklet with prayers, readings and reflections for each day of the week of prayer.
- An order of service.
- An MP3 recording of Rev Sealin Garlett's address.

These resources are available from NATSIEC's

website:

www.ncca.org.au/natsiec



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The Lord appears to Samuel

Samuel 1 Chp. 3:1-10

In those days, when the boy Samuel was serving the Lord under the direction of Eli, there were very few messages from the Lord, and visions from him were quite rare. One night Eli, who was now almost blind, was sleeping in his own room; Samuel was sleeping in the sanctuary, where the sacred Covenant Box was. Before dawn, while the lamp was still burning, the Lord called Samuel. He answered, "Yes sir!" and ran to Eli and said, "You called me, and here I am."

But Eli answered, "I didn't call you; go back to bed." So Samuel went back to bed.

The Lord called Samuel again. The boy did not know that it was the Lord, because the Lord had never spoken to him before. So he got up and went to Eli, and said, "You called me and here I am."

But Eli answered, "My son, I didn't call you; go back to bed."

The Lord called Samuel a third time; he got up, went to Eli, and said, "You called me and here I am."

Then Eli realised that it was the Lord who was calling the boy, so he said to him, "Go back to bed; and if he calls you again, say 'Speak, Lord, Your servant is listening'" So Samuel went back to bed.

The Lord came and stood there, and called as he had before "Samuel! Samuel!"

Samuel answered "Speak; your servant is listening."



Rev. Sealin Garlett

Rev. Sealin Garlett is a Uniting Church Minister and member of United Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC). Rev Garlett is also a NATSIEC Commissioner.

**"Speak; your
servant is
listening"**

Reflection by Rev. Sealin Garlett

In the year of 2009, on January on Australia Day the Prime Minister of Australia, Kevin Rudd, said at an opening ceremony in Canberra, he said, "Aren't we proud as Australians to live in this land and to live with a people whose history, whose culture is the oldest living culture in the world". And I thought about those words and I thought about the context of this passage of scripture and how the link with Samuel's God Yahweh with our God and Creator. Of how God was beginning to reveal to me that just like this boy Samuel who was called to get up from his bed, who was called to arise and to hear the voice of Yahweh speaking was one that reminded us that we as Indigenous people need to arise within our land and be able to listen.

You see when this came to me in a story it reminded me of certain events that are beginning to happen to our Indigenous People. Of when, on February 13th 2009, the Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd stood up on the national scene and he said "Sorry" to the people of the Stolen Generations. All of this has captivated the heart of the millions of Australians around our land. And it began to filter, and it began to saturate into the core lives of those who were involved.

I was one of those lucky ones who was able to be in the Great Hall on that particular day. And to be in the midst of a group of people who brought scars to that particular arena; who knew the scars of loneliness; who knew the scars of being without and who knew the journey of tomorrow was going to be long and hard. But these words that echoed over the hall and over the room that particular day were the words that

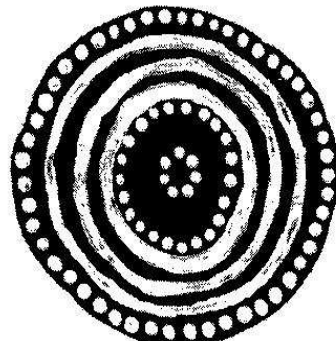
our people were longing to hear for many many years.

It was once said that you could be in a room of over one hundred, over five hundred people and in the silence you could hear a pin drop. Well, that day in the Great Hall of Parliament, in that particular Hall as those words came across; in that particular room you could hear the tear drops that fell upon the floor. The tear drops that came and fell from the eyes; and the tear drops that flowed from the heart. The tears that represented the here and now. The tear drops that represented those

who would never hear these words and yet they belonged. It was a story like this story of Samuel. Of where it was saying that these people need to arise; it was time to listen. There was a message being said for the people to stand up within our land and to walk forward. A time to

know that the wrongs of yesterday were going to be put right; and that when you can right the wrongs of yesterday you can move towards a tomorrow with hope.

And I believe that just like the story in this old Book; that this boy's family came out of a time of hurt, came out of oppression, came out of a lot of sadness. We too can sympathise and his people can sympathise with our journey. It was a similar circumstance. Unless the people rose; unless the people got up from the mat - their mat of life, their mat of being comfortable- to rise and to walk to the journey of tomorrow. I believe that with the awakening that's going to take place the awakening of our land, the awakening of our nation, and the awakening of our



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**"That's that
Call. That's that
belonging.
That's the
identity that no
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peoples we will begin to see the journey of tomorrow.

In our country, where Canberra tells us that 60% of our Indigenous population is 25 years and younger, it reminds me as a leader to be able to show forth leadership to our young people. To be able to stand up and raise a hand and to be able to say "here I am". To be able to raise the bar of yesterday; and to be able to have our young people go forth and grab the reigns of tomorrow. To be able to walk upon a stage with heads that are held high, with a pride that holds them in the here and now and a pride that will hold us for tomorrow.

I believe today that we have got to really captivate the way that God wants for our world. It's not a matter of being able to hold on to the White Man's Christianity. It is not a matter of being able to hold on to White ways and to know that their God is sufficient. We need to know the sustenance power that kept our people alive for so many years; the pride of our tongues that we hold and that link us to an old yesterday and can point us to the future of tomorrow.

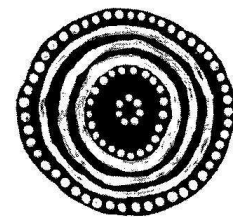
That's that Call. That's that belonging. That's the identity that no human factor can put upon this face of this earth for us. And I believe that it was God who has been able to destine the lives of our people. And it's like this young boy in this Book that we have got to arise. Like this young boy in this Book. That we arise and we hold on to the torch that is fit for us and that is made ready for us to journey for tomorrow.

KERKER

Kerker (it's time), the first publication of Munguddor Bi Buya is a collection of essays by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People. These essays are one more step in the long journey which Indigenous Australians are making in rediscovering the light which shines through their traditional cultures, which gives strength and purpose in the face of continuing racism and oppression and which leads onto a brighter world for all.

Time is at the heart of these reflections: The Dreaming, the time before European 'contact' (BC- before Cook), the time since 'contact' (AD- after destruction), biblical time, prophetic time, the time of the birth of Jesus, the time of the fulfilment and beginning of Jesus' ministry, the time that is the present, the time of challenge, the time of hope.

Kerker is available for purchase from NATSIEC



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