



INDIGENOUS MINISTRIES

Doug's special outback student


Doug and Sue Heckathorn, serving among Indigenous residents of Alice Springs.

About a year ago, a boy was removed from his bush community by a court order, following a history of petrol sniffing and general unruliness.

When the lad was brought into the school, Doug Heckathorn, who works with Global Interaction in Alice Springs, thought the boy would soon die. He was very gaunt and mentally unresponsive.

But now, twelve months later, he comes to school consistently and is very responsive. He finished year 9 Maths and English. He is the only student who comes in the door saying, "Hey Doug, let's do some work. Come on, what are you waiting for?"

Most of Doug's students have shown some improvement in their education, but this one shows the most dramatic change. Doug says, "This reinforces the need for a long-term view when working with Indigenous people. Relationships are not built quickly and change only occurs over a long period of time."





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Blessings at Lajamanu

Global Interaction staff members have worked at Lajamanu for decades. Word was received recently of a mini-revival sweeping the area.

During 2005, the Warlpiri in Lajamanu celebrated their Jarda-warnpa ceremony as a feature of their cultural festival called Milpirri. It was discovered that there are many parallels between this ceremony and the Jewish ceremony of the Day of Atonement, as described in Leviticus 23: 26-32. This has led to many discussions with some of the men about the allusions to Jesus Christ in many aspects of Warlpiri culture. In response to these discussions, towards the latter part of 2006, a growing number of men started to attend the weekly men's Bible Study that is held each Tuesday night. As a result of this Bible Study, some of the men have started to attend services of a Sunday morning. For the month of December, the men took on the role of leading the Sunday morning service.

As part of the 2006 Christmas celebration, Jerry Jangala organised a presentation of the Christmas Purlapa. The purlapa had not been presented for quite a few years in Lajamanu. However, after the usual Warlpiri long wait, it happened, and everyone who participated had a fantastic time. Old Jangala was extremely pleased. Whilst watching the video that was made of the purlapa, Jerry started planning how to make the 2007 presentation so much better.

New Year's Eve, and the Lajamanu Community was celebrating the coming of the New Year. At the height of the celebration, Napangardi Lynnette and Napaljarri Robyn gave a challenge to the community to follow the Lord into the New Year. Jerry Jangala also preached a challenging message. As a response to the challenge, 38 people came forward at the altar call.

Napangardi and Napaljarri then attended Bible Study classes to brush up on their understanding of baptism. The ladies then invited the respondees to attend baptism classes in the following week. Two men and eight boys attended a men's Bible Study, and around 30 ladies attended a women's Bible Study. At the end of the Bible Study week, on Sunday 14 January 2007, 18 people were baptised in the Lajamanu Creek, which the Lord miraculously filled the day before the baptisms were due to be held, in response to the prayers of a small number of the baptismal candidates. Napangardi and Napaljarri baptised 13 ladies, and Jerry Jangala and Peter Jangala (Jigili) baptised three men and two young boys. Subsequent to the Sunday baptism, witnessed by a large number of the non-church-attending community





members, a steady trickle of people have asked if they also can attend baptism class and be baptised. As at the time of the writing of this report [January 2007] there are four men attending classes, a couple of young boys making arrangements to attend class, and some women also seeking instruction in preparation for baptism.

There is a growing hunger in the hearts of the Christians in Lajamanu for God's Word, and a sincere desire to break away from the sectarian divisions that have plagued other Warlpiri communities. God is truly doing a wonderful work amongst the Warlpiri in Lajamanu. Old Jangala, who has been very weary through carrying the load of the church on his own for a long time, is now walking with a spring in his step and a smile on his face. He is so pleased that the Lord has at last rewarded many years of faithfulness.

The Lord's hand continued to move, and on Sunday 21 January a further 19 people were baptised in Lajamanu Creek. What is really exciting is that some of the old ladies were baptised. If more of the old people come to the Lord then it will make a really big difference to the community. The church was packed to capacity that evening, and there was such a good feeling in the meeting. Who would want to be anywhere else on the planet at this time? Not me. As with every move of God, Satan launches a counter attack. New believers are experiencing intense spiritual warfare. There has been opposition from family members of some who were baptised (as they have lost their drinking partners). Police have been coming down very hard on locals. Some white staff are talking of leaving because of hard times with locals. Church leaders have family problems. Please pray to the Lord on our behalf for the grace to keep pressing forward in the midst of the opposition and the social upheaval.

On the other hand, some of the folk who were baptised have been experiencing dreams and visitations of the Lord that have been very encouraging to them. God is at work, but we cannot sit back in idleness and let the enemy of our souls rob the spoils of spiritual war. But conversions seem to be very solid, and there is a longing to know the Lord and a hunger for Bible Studies. We have a lot of work ahead of us all, but praise God.

Please pray for the Church in Lajamanu and for the Church leaders who have faithfully presented God's good news to their community for many years.

Report prepared by Lance Box, a schoolteacher and faithful servant of the Lord in Lajamanu.

