Benalla P-12 College Annual Kokoda Trek

A group of Year Eleven students and teachers from Benalla P-12 College recently returned from the annual Kokoda Trek.

Principal, Barbara O’Brien said” Benalla P-12 College uses the trek each year as an extra-curricular activity aimed to diversify the cultural experiences for Year Eleven students. The focus of the trek for the school is to develop an understanding of World War II and immerse students in Australian history, as well as introducing students to the to the harsh terrain in a developing country. Students develop resilience and leadership qualities and are able to explore their potential.”

Kokoda Coordinator and Teacher, James Carboon said “On arrival in Port Moresby the change in climate was evident and students immediately understood how the weather in Papua New Guinea had a huge effect on our soldiers during the Battle of Kokoda. The group discussed the 39th Battalion’s involvement in the conflict and the reality that the average age in this Battalion was only 18 ½ years old, just older than the majority of the group. On route from Deneki to Alola, we held a memorial service at Isurava. We paid tribute to the soldiers at Isurava and learnt about the battle at Isurava. Bruce Kingsbury of the 2/14th Battalion earned the first Victoria Cross recipient on Australian soil at Isurava. He earned the VC by advancing on the enemy while firing his Bren gun from his hip, this cleared a path through the enemy and was about to inflict several casualties. A Japanese soldier later recalled the incident and he believed that there were hundreds of Australians firing on the Japanese. Bruce then passed away during the Battle of Isurava. “

During the trek students experienced heavy rains, and reflected on how hard and tough it would have been for the soldiers during the Battle of the Kokoda.

A highlight of the trek was being met by local people who welcomed the group to the village with singing and being able to hand over educational supplied to the locals in appreciation for the warm welcome.

James Carboon said “Overall the trek provided many ups and downs for all involved, it created many physical and mental challenges. Everyone was able to overcome these difficulties and encompass the values of courage, endurance, mateship and sacrifice. “

Benalla P-12 College would like to thank local organisations and community clubs who assisted in sponsorship for this worthy event.