

## Creating and renewing identity and value through the use of non-invasive archaeological methods: Mapoon unmarked graves, potential burial mounds and cemeteries project, western Cape York peninsula, Queensland

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### ABSTRACT

*In 2010, Elders from Mapoon watched “Time Team” and saw ground-penetrating radar (GPR) and other non-invasive scientific methods being used to identify cultural features on archaeological sites. This led Elders to express their desire for such techniques, particularly GPR, to be brought on country to assist with documenting and protecting cultural heritage sites. This paper explores how Mapoon families have employed these techniques in archaeological settings to reconnect and reimagine specific features in their cultural landscape, as well as to explore, create and renew narratives from their interpretations of the results from the project. We also investigate the nature of Traditional Owner interactions with these technologies in archaeological settings to understand their impact on how cultural identity and value are recreated and renewed, on “caring for country” programmes, and on modernising culturally appropriate forms of engagement with ancestors’ remains. We apply these findings to a discussion of how Mapoon people think about their cultural history, identity and connections to country, particularly in relation to mortuary practices and settlement patterns from pre-contact to the “mission time”.*

**Keywords:** ground-penetrating radar, Mapoon, burial mounds, identity, narrative, place making

### RÉSUMÉ

*En 2010, les anciens de Mapoon ont regardé ‘Time Team’, ils ont vu le radar pénétrant dans le sol (GPR), ainsi que d’autres méthodes scientifiques non envahissantes utilisées pour identifier les caractéristiques culturelles des sites archéologiques. Tout cela a permis aux anciens d’exprimer leur souhait de voir ces techniques, en particulier le GPR, être utilisée dans le pays pour aider à la documentation et à la protection de l’aspect culturel des sites du patrimoine. Les anciens et les familles de Mapoon ont par la suite collaboré avec des archéologues pour utiliser des techniques. Cet article explore la manière dont les familles Mapoon ont utilisé ces techniques dans des contextes archéologiques pour reconnecter et ré-imaginer des caractéristiques spécifiques de leur paysage culturel, ainsi que pour explorer, créer et renouveler des récits à partir de leurs interprétations. Nous avons également étudié la nature des interactions des propriétaires avec ces technologies dans le contexte archéologique. Afin de comprendre leur impact sur la manière dont l’identité et la valeur culturelles sont reconstituées et renouvelées, sur les programmes de ‘soins aux pays’ et sur la modernisation de formes d’engagement culturellement appropriées avec les ancêtres. Nous appliquerons ces résultats à une discussion sur la façon dont les Mapoon pensent leur histoire culturelle, leur identité et leurs liens avec le pays, en particulier en ce qui concerne les pratiques mortuaires et les schémas de peuplement allant du contact préalable au ‘temps de la mission’.*

**Mots-clés:** Radar à pénétration a sol, Mapoon, sépulture de terre, identité, récit, faire de place

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### INTRODUCTION

“Avow [greeting in Mapoon] . . . old people”, Granny Susie Madua called out the car window one morning as we drove past the Mapoon Mission Cemetery on the way to the site

for fieldwork. During Sutton’s initial PhD fieldwork in 2010, many times she and Granny Susie Madua would drive past the cemeteries in Mapoon, and Granny Susie Madua would talk of the importance of looking after the “old people”: the ancestors of Mapoon Elders and their families.

Looking after the old people includes looking after their graves and caring for country. It constitutes an integral part of Mapoon people's cultural Law. It was this responsibility that triggered Granny Susie Madua and her "sisters", several Elders, and other Traditional Owners, after having watched ground-penetrating radar (GPR) used on "Time Team", to ask Sutton to find a GPR specialist to help them delineate and then fence the Mapoon Mission Cemetery and other family grave sites. Elders were concerned the fence might be installed in the wrong location as the cemetery boundary was not known. Using GPR to assist in "looking after the old people" has led to great challenges and opportunities for Mapoon people, and has brought the renewal and creation of some facets of cultural identity through the identification of unmarked burials.

This paper presents a retrospective of Mapoon people's collaborations with archaeologists through the use of techniques such as GPR, magnetometry, geomorphic analysis and LiDAR data/drone surveying as culturally appropriate ways to identify and explore the nature of earth mounds, and to identify and protect unrecorded burials and cemeteries. The oral history of mortuary practices and GPR results are not presented here, as these data are published elsewhere (Conyers *et al.* 2018; Conyers *et al.* 2019; St Pierre *et al.* 2019; Sutton *et al.* 2013). Rather, it focuses on how cultural identity is recreated and renewed through these archaeological and scientific tools that have assisted with "caring for country" programmes through the provision of culturally appropriate forms of engagement with ancestors' remains. Reflecting on our GPR results, we explore archaeology's traditional role in identifying values for cultural heritage places and provide critiques of the discipline's historical role in establishing power relationships and creating colonial representations of identity (following Foucault 1991; Liebmann and Rizvi 2008; Ross *et al.* 2010). We also examine how archaeological discourse may act to maintain and renew identities, particularly through identifying new information concerning mortuary practices and burials at Mapoon. We apply these findings to a discussion of how Mapoon people think about their cultural history, identity and connections to country, particularly in relation to mortuary practices and settlement patterns from pre-contact to the "mission time". In this paper, we explore an example of how scientific methods need not necessarily be in conflict with Indigenous ways of knowing and cultural practice, as suggested in post-colonial critiques of archaeology (e.g. Shanks & Tilley 1987; Smith 2000).

### THE STUDY AREA

Mapoon is located at Red Beach in western Cape York Peninsula, Queensland, approximately 90 km north of the bauxite mining town of Weipa (Figure 1). Mapoon Aboriginal Shire Council (MASC) administers Mapoon Aboriginal Lands which includes country belonging to the Tjungundji, Mpakwithi, Taepithiggi, Thaynakwith,

Warrangku and Yupungathi peoples (Crowley 1981: 149; Fletcher 2007: 14; Guivarra 2010: 1; Tindale 1974: 149).

Mapoon has had a violent and traumatic history since European invasion with noted massacres in the 1880s at the hands of the Jardine brothers, and kidnapping and abuse of Aboriginal children by pearl shell and beche-de-mer fishermen (McIntyre-Tamwoy 2000: 115-25). This violence prompted the establishment of the Mapoon Mission in 1891 by Revs James Gibson Ward and Nikolaus Hey and their twin sister wives of the Moravian Church (Sutton 2015). The mission, the first in this part of the Cape, became the "mother mission" to later satellite missions of Aurukun, Weipa and Mornington Island. The mission closed in 1963 with the forced removal of families from their homes and the well-known "burning of Mapoon" instigated by Patrick Killoran (then Director of the Queensland Department of Aboriginal and Islander Affairs) and Sabai police (Sutton 2015). Families fought to return to Mapoon and succeeded with the assistance of the Commonwealth government in 1975. Contemporary Mapoon Elders were part of these original families who fought to return to country and "resurrect Mapoon from the ashes" (Guivarra 2010).

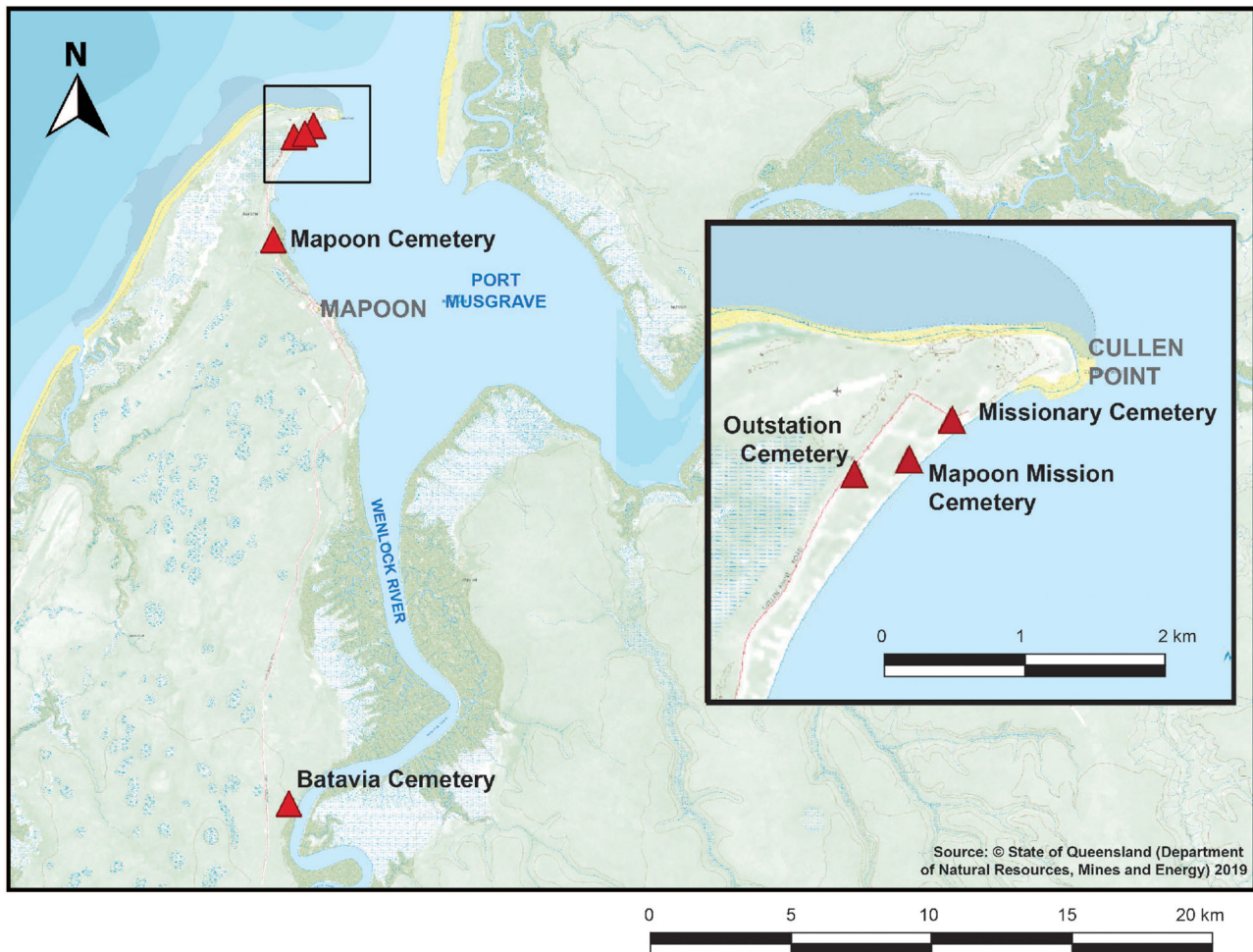
### CEMETERIES, UNMARKED GRAVES AND MORTUARY PRACTICES

Mapoon's cemeteries and potential and known burial mounds predominantly occur from Cullen Point to Red Beach; land which belongs to the Tjungundji people. The Mapoon Mission Cemetery is one of five known cemeteries in the area, the others being the Missionary Cemetery (c.1895), Outstation Cemetery (1907–1934), Batavia Cemetery (1892–1919) and Mapoon Cemetery (1890–present).

Several other areas of unmarked family Aboriginal graves have also been identified (see Sutton 2015) in areas close to mission time family homes and in the sand dunes extending from Janie Creek to Cullen Point and further south to Red Beach. These burials potentially date from pre-contact to the mission time and are where people have buried small groups of family members or individual children (Sutton 2015, app. B). These locations include two known burial mounds between Cullen Point and Red Beach, remembered in several Elders' living memories as containing burials, and additional potential burials in at least another 13 earth mounds in the same area, identified during GPR investigations and magnetometry undertaken from 2013 to 2017 (Conyers *et al.* 2018; St Pierre *et al.* 2019; Virtus Heritage 2013, 2015, 2017).

Prior to Sutton's PhD research (2015), there had been no formal oral history investigation with Mapoon Elders regarding mortuary practices, cemeteries or unmarked burial places in the region. The earliest records of mortuary practices for the Tjungundji and other Mapoon families were documented by the former Chief Protector Roth (1907), Rev. Hey (1900–1901, 1903, 1923, c.1947) and anthropologist McConnel (1936, 1937, 1957). Elders

Figure 1. Map of Mapoon (north Queensland) showing cemetery locations. [Colour figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](http://wileyonlinelibrary.com)]



remember oral history passed down by their ancestors and Sutton (2015) documented these stories and customs as part of interviews. The history of mortuary and burial practices is important to understanding Elders’ construction of cultural heritage values for the Mapoon Mission Cemetery and other burial places. This history and these values are discussed in this paper where relevant to understanding how archaeology creates value and informs the attachments Mapoon people have to place.

**HOW GPR AND OTHER SCIENTIFIC TECHNIQUES CAME TO BE USED IN MAPOON**

During fieldwork carried out between 2010 and 2013, Elders repeatedly expressed concerns about the neglect of the Mapoon Mission Cemetery and the need to fence it (Sutton 2015). The care of these cemeteries and the identification of unmarked graves constitutes “looking after our old people” (see Moran 2006). During interviews with Elders in June–July 2010 to document the cultural heritage values of the Mapoon Mission Cemetery and other Aboriginal unmarked graves, Mapoon Elders requested a

form of “geophys” – “that machine they push along that can see through the ground” – to help find the boundary of the Mapoon Mission Cemetery so that a fence could be built to protect the graves from horses (Sutton 2015).

Non-invasive techniques such as GPR, magnetometry and drones were recognised by Elders as culturally appropriate because they did not involve disturbance to the burials. Elders recognised these scientific techniques as ways in which they could practice cultural Law, demonstrate kinship responsibilities, and protect their ancestors’ graves. However, at that time, MASC and Mapoon Land and Sea Aboriginal Corporation (MLSAC) had no funding to pay for such an investigation. On behalf of Elders, Sutton contacted Conyers, an international GPR expert, who agreed to accompany Sutton to Mapoon for three days in December 2010 to conduct a GPR survey with assistance from Mapoon rangers.

The initial investigations involved the survey of transects within the 30 m × 40 m remembered boundary of the Mapoon Mission Cemetery. However, it soon became apparent that the cemetery contained a much greater number of graves over a much broader area than was remembered by Elders.



As it was not possible to determine the boundaries of the cemetery in December 2010, MASC and Elders subsequently obtained funding from the Western Cape Communities Trust (WCCT) to continue the investigations. This allowed a second intensive GPR programme with additional techniques not previously used in Mapoon Lands, including high-resolution low-amplitude photos, magnetometry and laser-theodolite total station GPS surveying within a grid of approximately 150 m × 130 m (Conyers 2013: 3). This second investigation was undertaken with an interdisciplinary team in August 2013. Aerial mapping using a remote-control kite with a special camera attached allowed for highly accurate mapping of individual graves and other survey data during these investigations (Conyers 2013: 9).

## RESULTS

Collectively, the 2010 and 2013 studies identified 95 burials in 10 clusters of graves in an area of approximately 120 m × 90 m (Conyers 2013: 3; Sutton *et al.* 2013). It was also determined that there may be many more burials present which “may be very old and deteriorated”; but these graves were not interpreted as “known” unless Conyers was “very sure of their location and extent” (Conyers 2013: 3). As we have argued elsewhere, these burials may reveal a variety of mortuary practices including Christian burials using blankets and tea-tree bark wrappings (possibly from 1900 to 1920s) and the use of locally made wooden caskets with lead or cement casing or coverings (1920s–1945) (Conyers 2013; Sutton 2015; Sutton *et al.* 2013).

Conyers and his team also found evidence of burials and mortuary practices that did not demonstrate Christian burial characteristics and thus could be considered traditional Aboriginal burials from either the pre-contact period or the very early mission period between 1891 and 1899. These burials may have included partially dismembered and interred remains, which are mortuary practices described in Roth (1907), McConnel (1936, 1937), Conyers (2013) and Sutton *et al.* (2013).

Approximately 20% of the total number of graves identified “appear to be traditional interments, some of which may pre-date the mission’s founding” but may alternatively represent people who continued to be buried in traditional ways after the mission was established (Conyers 2013: 44). Pre-contact burials are concentrated in the middle of the investigated area and are probably of some antiquity,<sup>1</sup> potentially dating between 1891 and 1899, after which time the missionaries began to enforce Christian burials, but could possibly be much earlier than 1891. These pre-contact burials are likely to be the remains of Tjungundji people, the recognised Traditional Owners of Mapoon (Flinders *et al.* 2010; Sutton *et al.* 2013). Such burials within the Mapoon Mission Cemetery were not remembered by Mapoon Elders, which indicates that this cemetery was used prior to the mission time and before living memory (Sutton *et al.* 2013).

Other Aboriginal people buried in the cemetery are probably from the other neighbouring lands, Mpakwithi, Taepithiggi, Thaynakwith, Warrangku and Yupungathi clans and may also belong to other language groups across north Queensland and may even include Samoan and Solomon Islanders (De Jersey *et al.* 2010a, 2010b; Flinders and Day 2010; Flinders *et al.* 2010). Consultation with the Presbyterian Church, Brisbane, a review of state and church historical records, and further research into the memories of surviving Elders and missionary families do not indicate that former missionaries and staff were buried in the Mapoon Mission Cemetery (Sutton 2015; Sutton *et al.* 2013; Virtus Heritage 2013).

Ethnohistorical investigations also indicated that other areas with loose sandy soil or within the sand dunes along the coast (e.g. heading north from the Mapoon Mission Cemetery to Cullen Point, from Cullen Point leading down to Red Beach and from Cullen Point to Janie Creek), which were easy to dig by hand and stick, had the potential to contain pre-mission and mission time unmarked Aboriginal burials (Sutton *et al.* 2013). This was supported by oral history testimony and in some locations through spot checks with the GPR in 2010 (De Jersey *et al.* 2010a, 2010b; Flinders and Day 2010; Flinders *et al.* 2010; Sutton *et al.* 2013). The latter indicated that, in many of these locations, more than three to four times the number of burials existed than remembered by Elders.

A third round of funding was secured from the WCCT in 2015 to undertake GPR and drone survey of unmarked family graves at 11 locations, including two earth mounds remembered to contain burials, and to determine the appropriate location for fence construction at each location (Conyers 2015; Virtus Heritage 2015). The 2015 investigations led to a determination that there may be up to 44 burials within one earth mound (traditional and mission time interments) (Conyers 2015; Virtus Heritage 2015). Surrounding mounds at two separate locations in the sand dunes between Cullen Point and Red Beach were identified as containing numerous potential graves in adjacent earth mounds and surrounds.

Preliminary analysis of LiDAR maps (provided by Rio Tinto Alcan) of an approximate 60 km stretch of coast from Cullen Point to Batavia raised new concerns regarding hundreds more similar features within the landscape. In 2016 additional funds were obtained through the WCCT to undertake another round of GPR, magnetometry and drone surveying. As part of this work, community members and environmental consultants GHD were engaged to develop a cultural heritage management strategy to map potentially sensitive landscapes for burials and to undertake a detailed cultural heritage management plan (CHMP) for identified graves, burial mounds, cemeteries and cultural places interconnected in this landscape (GHD and Virtus Heritage 2018a, 2018b). The CHMP and strategy were developed collaboratively with Mapoon Elders, Corporations, Rangers and families, with primary aims to manage these important places and to honour Granny Susie Madua and other Elders by younger generations, who continue to “look after the old

people". GPR and magnetometry undertaken in 2017 revealed an additional 11 earth mounds with the potential to contain numerous human interments; some of these mounds have cultural features that include evidence for possible cremations or heated surfaces (perhaps funeral pyres), while others show ceremonial or camping surfaces that can be seen in mound construction layers (Conyers *et al.* 2018, 2019; St Pierre *et al.* 2019; Virtus Heritage 2017). The consequences of these results on Mapoon families' values and connections to these places were substantial.

## HOW ARCHAEOLOGY CREATES VALUE

As noted above, the results of the initial 2010 and later 2013 GPR investigations showed that the Mapoon Mission Cemetery contained traditional Aboriginal burials that pre-date the mission and a larger number of burials within a much greater area than remembered by Elders. The 2015 and 2017 investigations identified similar results for family graves and earth mounds elsewhere in the region (Conyers 2015; Virtus Heritage 2015, 2017). The interpretation of the GPR results indicated that some interments were shallow (less than 5 cm of sandy deposits) and therefore susceptible to imminent risk of erosion. These burials required urgent protective measures. The results led to heightened concerns by Elders, rangers and some members of Council to protect the cemetery, find the boundary of these burial places, mark the graves, and implement additional protective and interpretative measures. In 2011, MASC, with the support of Elders, had applied for a grant from the WCCT that included funds to construct grave markers, a fence and a monument at the Mapoon Mission Cemetery. The monument was proposed due to Elders and MASC's heightened appreciation of the potential age of the burials within the cemetery, as well as their expressions of interest in looking after their old people. After the initial results of the GPR investigation, the Elders of families that lived close to the cemetery and to other areas of unmarked graves reported more frequent visitations by the spirits of the old people who were buried in these places, further stressing the need for their protection. As part of MASC's and Elders' attempts to obtain funding, highlighting the need to protect the burial places and the collaborative nature of this project, rangers and Elders have co-presented with the other team members at Australian Archaeological Association Conferences and other venues over the past eight years.

The high cultural value to Mapoon people of the Mapoon Mission Cemetery and other grave sites is demonstrated through the united efforts to carry out investigations and works to protect and conserve these places. The GPR survey brought together Mapoon people with the common aspiration to protect and identify the resting places of their "old people". These cultural heritage places contain the remains of not only Tjungundji people, but other Indigenous Traditional Owner groups from the Mapoon Lands as well as "historical" Indigenous families. Many Mapoon families today believe they have ancestors buried

in these places. The GPR survey saw rangers coming out to the site on their lunch breaks and before the start of their work day to assist in the project. Subsequently a role was developed in the ranger program solely devoted to cultural heritage management. Elders sat at the grave sites with the GPR team members, telling stories of the mission time and of cultural practice. MyPathway workers and volunteers from the Mapoon Men's Group, involved in the recording project since the 2015 works, have also continued to assist with GPR investigations and to maintain these burial places.

Aunty Diane Nicholls, Peter Guivarra, Ricky Guivarra, other Mapoon Councillors and other Elders followed through with the aspiration to continue the GPR investigations at the Mapoon Mission Cemetery (and other unmarked graves) and obtained substantial funding from the WCCT to protect the resting places of their "old people". The receipt of the WCCT funding in 2012, 2015 and lobbying in 2016 required collaborative efforts from Tjungundji people, other Indigenous Traditional Owner groups from the Mapoon Lands, the historical Indigenous families<sup>2</sup>, MLSAC, MASC and archaeologists over the last eight years. Despite changes in local politics and Council membership, leading to different levels of participation from different entities over time, the same core individuals and families from these entities of the Mapoon community, assisted by archaeologists, still drove the project over this period. Their motivations are often stated in terms of the cultural Law to "care for our old people", to protect the graves, and respect the resting places of the dead, all of which are interrelated with the future health and wellbeing of the community as a whole (Sutton 2015).

Involvement and participation by members of the Mapoon community grew with the 2013 investigation and increased in subsequent years. Younger members of the Mapoon community, including the great grandchildren, grandchildren and children of Elders, cleared cemeteries and burial places of vegetation to assist with later stages of GPR investigations. They also assisted voluntarily with the GPR surveys, marking out grid lines, undertaking photography, flying the remote-control kite (that held an aerial camera), and recording headstones and grave markers on their weekends. These same children visited with their classmates during open days at the cemetery for the local school and were actively involved in the presentation of the GPR works, talking about the use of the different archaeological machinery and explaining the techniques being used. As part of 2017–2018 works, educational tool kits relating the results of investigations were also presented (Figure 2). During the GPR survey days, Elders visited the Mapoon Mission Cemetery and assisted in identifying unmarked graves. Elders actively engaged media and the local mining companies to advertise the GPR survey and the importance of the Mapoon Mission Cemetery and other burial places. Media stories on the project – many involving younger generations – continued in 2017, with radio interviews and the development of press releases and magazine publications.



Figure 2. Mapoon school children with Aunty Diane Nicholls, Mary-Jean Sutton and Simon Pearce and their educational tool kits wearing Junior Archaeologist T shirts (photograph by S. Pearce). [Colour figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](http://wileyonlinelibrary.com)]



Since the initial 2010 GPR survey, Elders, Sutton and Conyers have collaborated on a number of research publications (e.g. Conyers *et al.* 2018, 2019; St Pierre *et al.* 2019; Sutton *et al.* 2013). As part of this process, Elders' interests in mortuary practices in other cultures, and discussions about these other practices, have grown, leading to a "clearing of the air" and redress for past racist and prejudicial descriptions of their ancestors as being "primitive" in their treatment of the dead (Sutton 2015). During a discussion for the development of a paper with two Elders, Sutton read through some early descriptions by "ethnographers" McConnel (1936–1937), Roth (1907) and Hey (1900–1901) on the treatment of human remains, in particular, interment and the display of human remains by Indigenous people in the region of Mapoon. On hearing one description, one Elder looked at Sutton shyly and agreed that this was the same story related to her by her family and

she was ashamed of these practices, because they were told by the Queensland State Government and the missionaries that these practices were not "civilised" (Sutton 2015).

Sutton went on to discuss some of the many ways Europeans have dealt with and continue in some cases to deal with the deceased. For example, Sutton talked about how in Russia and in the Czech Republic there are famous churches where the skulls and remains of people are interred and displayed, and Neolithic archaeological sites in England and the Orkney Islands (e.g. Skara Brae), where people lived with human remains under their floor boards and in their roofs. The Elders laughed and looked incredulous as Sutton explained that some of the missionaries who had told their families that their burial practices were "primitive" and had instilled that sense of shame, actually came from cultures with very similar (if not more culturally biased and judged "gruesome") mortuary

practices. During the development of the draft paper and these discussions of mortuary practices, Elders appeared more comfortable about their past, and proud to be documenting the mortuary practices of their families, wanting copies of the final paper to distribute to family and other interested parties. Elders openly discussed mortuary practices with archaeologists and other visitors to Mapoon after the initial 2010 survey and in later years requested further presentations of this information, and actively pursued co-authorship.

The development of the CHMP (GHD and Virtus Heritage 2018a, 2018b) has also led to active engagement of different generations and organisations in Mapoon and created expressions of value. Many younger members of Mapoon Traditional Owner and historical families, along with rangers and MyPathway workers have recognised the cultural value of their efforts to help look after “the old people” and their resting places. These younger generations have created a Graves Committee to implement the CHMP and to meet bi-annually to revisit protocols and mitigation measures to protect unmarked graves and Cemeteries. These younger generations are also employed by MASC as Rangers and MyPathway workers and overtly express cultural connections to the burials by regularly visiting and maintaining graves and adding new grave sites and records into the CHMP mapping. New cultural protocols, such as reburying eroding human remains by identified younger males or females in certain families, creation of new ceremonial practices to manage spirits in new housing near grave sites and the development of educational information for school children were all included as part of the CHMP to respect and care for culture (GHD and Virtus Heritage 2018a, 2018b).

## HOW ARCHAEOLOGY CREATES IDENTITY

Since 2010, and during several return trips in 2011 and 2013, Tjungundji Elders and younger generations have used the examples of pre-contact burials at the Mapoon Mission Cemetery and other burial places to assert their continued connection and attachments to Cullen Point and areas within the Mapoon Lands. As discussed earlier, the potential pre-contact burials were not known to Tjungundji people and other Elders before the archaeological investigations. The burial identification project is an example of how archaeology has created new values as well as emphasised Mapoon people’s existing values for this place. Tjungundji people have long asserted that their connection to Cullen Point is substantially longer than indicated in the historical and anthropological record; the GPR results support their claims. GPR results and interpretations have also indicated that Tjungundji people’s mission time homes were potentially laid out in relation to pre-mission burial sites and camping areas, demonstrating a deep connection to country not interrupted by the mission period until forcible removal from country in 1963. Housing rebuilt from 1975 onwards followed the original mission

time layout of housing, until recent times where changes due to fears of flood levels disrupted this pattern in 2015.

Claims for connection to country have also raised conflicts, particularly in relation to Native Title, and misconceptions that the burial mounds will halt development, thereby limiting employment and housing opportunities. Some Mapoon people stated during fieldwork that connection to burial places had been raised by Traditional Owner families during Native Title meetings and mine meetings to assert their connection and the antiquity of this attachment to country. Tjungundji families continue to express their desire to undertake additional GPR surveys in other locations in Mapoon to identify further unmarked graves. Tensions between historical Indigenous families, family members who have married into the Mapoon community or who have recently moved to Mapoon have sometimes heightened in some Traditional Owner families due to the misconception that identification of more graves jeopardises community development or rights to live or have a home in certain parts of Mapoon.

Examples of place making in Mapoon through the interpretation of the GPR results and management of graves are also expressions of identity and values. As part of the development of a design for a monument at the Mapoon Mission Cemetery, both Elders from Traditional Owners and historical Indigenous families have worked together to care for country and to create new values and connections to the place and renew existing values. The monument’s proposed design included a reflection garden area with an avenue of coconut trees (to be undertaken in the future), a fenced boundary and an archway entry (Figure 3). Two plaques on each pillar of the entry are inscribed with Indigenous artwork and Moravian symbols. The first plaque pays homage to the “the first resting place of our old people” and acknowledges the Tjungundji people as Traditional Owners of Cullen Point and the cemetery, with their belonging to this place possibly dating back to pre-mission times. It also acknowledges stolen generations and the different families from South Sea Islands who lived in Mapoon during the mission time. The missionary families and the establishment of the mission are also acknowledged on this plaque with recognition of their belonging to this cemetery too. The second plaque discusses the “symbolism and artwork which recognises the historical, cultural and spiritual values of the Mapoon Cemetery” used within the proposed monument. The wording for the second plaque discusses the use of Moravian symbols such as the archway and Advent Star to acknowledge the missionary presence at Mapoon and the connection of the Mission to this cemetery. The second plaque also acknowledges the Traditional Owners and other families of Mapoon that are buried in the cemetery through Indigenous artwork and symbols and discussion of traditional mortuary practices and GPR results. The names of all Mapoon family members, the archaeologists and other participants (such as MLSAC and MASC) in the cemetery project are acknowledged on this second plaque. The recognition of the archaeologists in the second plaque



Figure 3. Aunty Lottie Luff outside her designed monument for the Mapoon Mission Cemetery (photograph by M. Sutton). [Colour figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](http://wileyonlinelibrary.com)]



indicates that archaeology has created new value to this place for Mapoon families.

Elders were collectively involved in determining the wording of these plaques and in designing a monument that recognises both the Tjungundji ownership of the cemetery, the presence and adoption of the historical Indigenous families by the Tjungundji people, and the connection of missionaries to the place. The words of the monument recognise all these different families and groups as their own separate entities, but also as one collective identity, with “our old people” and the cemetery as a place that belongs to this collective as their “final resting place”. During the design of the monument, Elders wanted the results of the GPR investigations integrated into the plaques, and a third sign that documented the investigative process was prepared. Monument making and signage depicting and enshrining important cultural and historical events in Mapoon (there is a monument of first contact with the Dutch, World War II/Anzac monument and interpretative mission memorial monuments and signage as well as other modern signs and murals) is prominent visually in Mapoon and encapsulates the important expressions of identity and creation of place by Mapoon families (Sutton 2015). Creation by Mapoon families of a monument at the cemetery that also enshrines and memorialises the archaeological investigations is an

important expression of how archaeology has shaped the creation of the values of this place to date and into the future.

## DISCUSSION

The investigations of Mapoon burial places have shown that archaeology can not only find but also create value, providing new information about the cemeteries and potential burial mounds not previously known. This new information, specifically the presence of large numbers of graves and different forms of mortuary practices, led to new values and attachments being created at these places. Archaeological discourse has assisted people asserting their attachments to Mapoon and their identity, by providing new light on the physical evidence, connecting Tjungundji and other Indigenous families to Mapoon over the course of its history. Archaeological practice and techniques have assisted in creating and renewing values. This has been discussed by other researchers in other places, for example Harrison’s (2011) review of the experiences of Muruwari people during archaeological survey of the abandoned Dennawan Reserve pastoral station; McDonald’s analysis of rock art social systems and production by the Martu people (2013: 66); Thomas and Ross’ (2013, 2018) research into



the Indigenous maintenance of the Gummingurru stone arrangement site and Byrne and Nugent's observations (2004) during survey and oral history of the Biripi and historical Indigenous families of the Manning Valley and their connections to post-contact heritage places.

Archaeological evidence may also assist Traditional Owner families in Mapoon to assert their pre-mission connection to Mapoon in Native Title determinations and current disputes over mining and land ownership by showing a continued connection to country. As noted by Meskell (2009) and in Harrison and Breithoff (2017), interpretations of archaeological evidence from the past and how they are valued are interrelated to the social and political circumstances of the present.

Involvement by Elders, rangers and their families, including school children, in the investigations at Mapoon has created new memories and attachments to these cultural places (Figures 2 and 3). The GPR investigations have empowered Elders and other Mapoon people to assert their connections to country (particularly, the potential length of time of these connections) by using the potential evidence for pre-contact burials as evidence for their presence and attachment to country and their identity as Traditional Owners. Oral history interviews and historical research into mortuary practices has also helped Elders confront some of the historical legacies of the missionary attitudes and has potentially alleviated stress caused by past prejudice. Archaeological discourse has been criticised in the past (and, in some cases continues to be critiqued) for its promotion of colonial representations of identity (Foucault 1994; Liebmann 2008; Liebmann and Rizvi 2008; Shanks and Tilley 1987) and imbalances of power between Indigenous communities and researchers (Schmidt 2010; Smith 1996, 2000, 2006; Smith 2012). In this case study, however, archaeological discourse has deconstructed colonial representations of primitivism in mortuary practices and assisted in healing some past hurts caused by these representations.

The project has also provided multiple opportunities for Mapoon people to perform culture in place through embodied performance. Embodied performance is defined here as the actions of looking after graves and performing culture, experienced through the archaeological investigations as extensions of these cultural practices. Examples of these performances included involvement in the GPR investigation, clearing, surveying and mapping as ways to care for country and look after the old people through documenting and managing these places and speaking narratives of the 'before time' and mission time. In this way, cultural knowledge of the mission time is transferred from the Elders to the younger generations. Elders, rangers, MyPathway workers and school children were all involved in the GPR investigations, CHMP and strategy. Different generations of Mapoon families connected to the cemetery and with their ancestors interred within it as a result of the collaborative research undertaken. Through the project, they were honouring and looking after their old people. Families were continuing

their cultural practices and obligations of kinship by performing these practices. Archaeology is critiqued historically with the promotion of stereotypes of divisions between cultural groups and colonial representations of power structures of "civilisation" and primitivism, as shown in Mapoon in the early collections and records of material culture made by Rev. Hey and Queensland Protector Walter E. Roth, which include Mapoon Lands. However, as described, Mapoon people have used and appropriated archaeological discourse in this project for their own aspirations, employing the archaeological techniques to assist with respecting cultural law and kinship. Similar examples of embodied performance are noted elsewhere in Australia, particularly in rock art research and analysis such as Dibden's research of the Woronora Plateau (2019: 187) and McDonald's and Veth's (2013) work with the Martu.

Elders' requests to include the results of the archaeological investigations and the names of the archaeologists in the plaques for the monument, and an explanation of the GPR investigations in signage near the Mapoon Mission Cemetery also indicates the importance of archaeological practice in contemporary place making by Elders. In Elders' design, the archaeologists as well as the missionaries are recognised in the final recreated place. The design of the plaques and the recognition of past families in the wording, and the proposed Indigenous and Moravian art friezes for the monument are also examples of Elders consciously inscribing the past into the present, representing their history for memorial by future generations. Therefore, archaeological practice has created new cultural heritage values for Elders, Mapoon families and missionary families for this cultural heritage place as well as emphasised existing values held by Elders.

## CONCLUSION

Since Mapoon Mission was one of Queensland's largest removal centres for Aboriginal children during the first 30 years of its establishment, its cemetery contains the remains of Aboriginal people from many different language groups. The burial mounds at Mapoon illustrate a nationally significant cultural landscape interconnected to cultural places and an important monumental and mortuary landscape. Elders chose and actively lobbied for geophysical investigations, a scientific method, which they deemed culturally appropriate, to be carried out at these burial places. Elders' choice of method is an example of how scientific methods can be valued by Indigenous communities and are not always in conflict with Indigenous knowledge and cultural heritage values as suggested in some post-processual and post-colonial critiques of archaeology (e.g. Shanks and Tilley 1987; Smith 2000).

The results of the archaeological investigations reported here indicate that the Mapoon Mission Cemetery and burial mounds have evidence of traditional Aboriginal burials and mission time Christian burials and hints that the use of these burial places was of greater antiquity than the mission time.

This result is being used by Traditional Owner families to assert their connection and their identity to Mapoon in Native Title and mining meetings. The Mapoon Mission Cemetery monument that pays tribute to their ancestors but also to the GPR investigations undertaken, indicates the renewal and creation of cultural heritage values through archaeology. The investigations have also brought Mapoon people together to continue cultural practices relating to kinship and culture, to take care of country (transferring this knowledge to younger generations) and to protect the resting places of their old people. Elders' desires to fence their cemetery has led to a broad cultural renewal and revival of a mortuary landscape, with a community-driven project to identify and manage hundreds of burials, and the development of a formalised CHMP and strategy for Mapoon people to continue to look after their old people. This case study is an example of where Liebmann (2008: 6) has argued that archaeology has the potential to deconstruct colonial representations of identity. Through the collaboration of Mapoon Elders and researchers, new understandings of mortuary practices have developed and protection of an important cultural landscape with unique national heritage values is closer to being achieved.

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#### NOTES

1. Based on the review of historical records and oral testimony (Audio #VN680010 cited in Flinders *et al.* 2010; Hey 1900–1901: 10; Sutton 2015; Sutton *et al.* 2013; Ward 1908: 121–22).
2. “Historical Indigenous families” refers to families who are associated with Mapoon from the mission time – 1890s onwards – or post-mission times. These are people who came to Mapoon, often as children – due to forced removals. Historical Indigenous families are not Traditional Owners.

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