

INSIGHTS INTO STONE

Approaching Artefact Biographies from Jiigurru, Northern GBR (Lizard Island Group)

Walmbaar Aboriginal Corporation RNTCB, Nguurruumungu Indigenous Corporation, Annie Ross, Ariana Lambrides, Rebekah Kurpiel, Ian McNiven, Sean Ulm

*What makes a story so epic?
How do feelings of Country inform the way we tell a story?
How does this influence the stories and narratives we co-create & co-interpret?*

In 2009, Dingaal Traditional Owners worked with archaeologists to unveil pottery sherds, contact artefacts[1], and three Ground Stone Ancestors lying in wait, beneath the surface at Mangrove Beach, on Lizard Island. This was the beginning of something epic...



Elder, Grandfather Johnny Charlie with dredge, Mangrove Beach, 2009.

In 2017, Dingaal returned to their home and found even more ceramic sherds, to unveil the incredible feat of design, in what is one of the first examples of Aboriginal pottery manufacture in Australia – this research would go on to be published about in QSR...

In 2022 & 2023, a handful of students travelled to Jiigurru and began building their own relationships, strengthened by their supervisor's mentorship. This time, stone arrangements in the shape of turtles, dugongs, and many other marine totems were mapped – a midden matrix was excavated on Jiigurru too.

In 2025, my story aims to highlight the journey of these Ground Stone Ancestors from deposition to the point when they entered my hands. By employing an object biography, I have chosen to weave story telling into the technical archaeological components of this research.

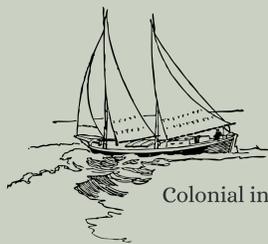
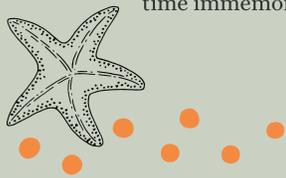
However, in fusing an object biography with portable X-Ray Fluorescence (pXRF) and 3D scanning, I have gone on a journey with these Ground Stone Ancestors. In my research journey I have learnt new ways of generating knowledge in direct co-creation with Sea Country alongside elemental and technical analyses.

Through the specific use of Indigenous narrative creation and my archaeological skillset, I have sought to provide agency to the artefacts, the source community, and the researcher. This reflexive and heart-centred approach, I believe, allows for Indigenous student-led archaeological research to further embody what we hope may reflect *best practice* and *co-design principles* in future student-led research.



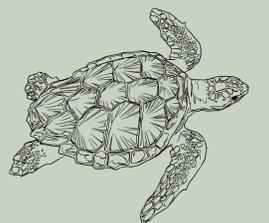
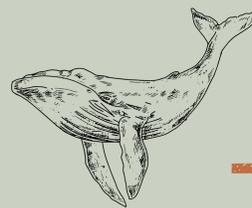
Bruker 5i Tracer Analysing Ground Stone Ancestor, La Trobe, 2025.

Dingaal People were connected across the Coral Sea and to the mainland since time immemorial



Colonial intrusion dislocated Dingaal from their Sea Country

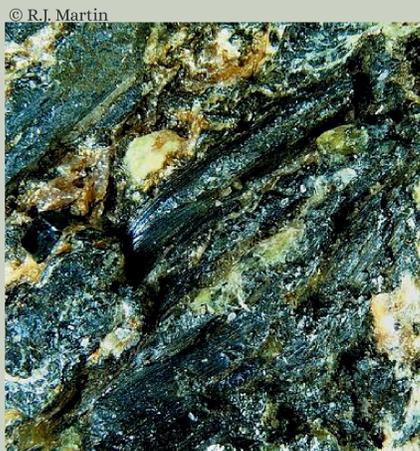
Dingaal work with archaeologists to (re)awaken deep connections with Sea Country



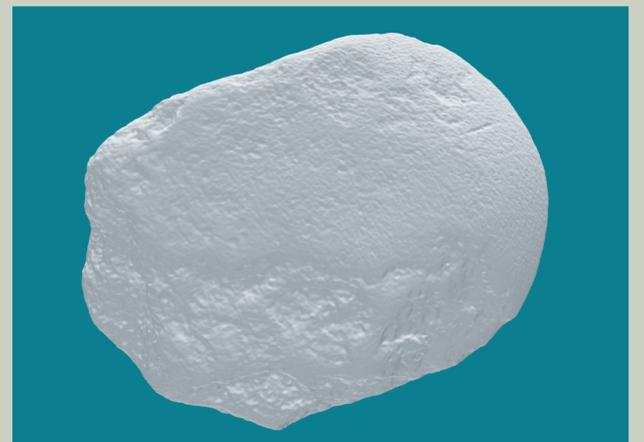
Archaeological partnerships and student led research incorporate meaningful co-design principles



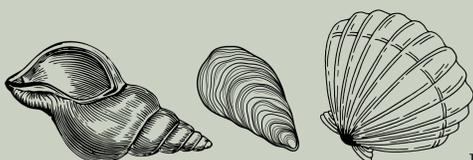
Ground Stone Ancestor, 71. Magnified on stereoscope at 1000µm. Image JCU, 2025.



Serpentinite specimen ID: H18-UYR, 2025.



3D Spider scan of Ground Stone Ancestor 71. Credit, La Trobe, 2025.



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Kayla Turner
Kalkadoon Woman
Indigenous Student Scholar

