

Towards an Australian Ochre Charter: Australian Indigenous Community Archaeologies from Within

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Abstract:

Australian community archaeology has a history that goes back decades (e.g. McBryde 1971; Colley 2002; Harrison and Williamson 2002; Smith and Wobst 2005; Skitmore et al. 2019; Wright 2011). It has been demonstrated that this approach provides a grounding about Australian history that incorporates Indigenous perspectives and involves their Elders. This frequently brings to light research projects that are focused on Indigenous communities' heritage management priorities, native title research, cultural tourism and education and training purposes– basically those that meet the needs of particular communities. This may be very different to research projects that prioritise European aims which may focus on the oldest sites., But what is less common for these studies, is who undertakes the research. More often than not, community archaeology is conducted by researchers with European heritage. The obvious next direction is community archaeology by and with Indigenous communities.

In this thesis I will be working with a number of my longer term Indigenous Community Partners and Mentors. These Community partners are: the Gkuthaarn and Kukatj (Normanton, Qld, Gulf of Carpentaria); the Mittakoodi (Cloncurry, Western Queensland); the Boonwurrung (Melbourne, Port Philip Bay) and the South Coast Aboriginal Elders Corporation / The Walbunga (NSW south coast from Berry to Victoria border). Each community has different aspiration that may involve archaeology or heritage site mapping. For example, the Gkuthaarn, community are keen to map significant sites on country following a successful native title claim. In Mittakoodi country, the Elders are keen to complete specific heritage projects and mapping of their significant sites. The Walbunga (NSW South Coast Elders Corporation) and I shall be preparing (through local site mapping) a NSW Indigenous Sites Officer Training Program that we will deliver, on Walbunga Country, in the future and as a possible pathway to university for our youth. Finally, in partnership with the Boonwurrung, we shall be mapping sites and country with the community for use in their Native Title application.

The PhD project and partnership case studies will be filmed to produce short educative and training documentaries, highlighting examples of community prioritized archaeological research projects.

Towards an Ochre Charter, is an Indigenous Archaeologist's guide to understanding and carrying out ethical and Indigenous culturally competent archaeological practice in Australia.