

Kaurareg Timeline (Part 1)

More than
9,000 years
ago:

Indigenous peoples were living in the region that is known today as the Torres Strait. The Kaurareg's traditional island homelands are in the southern part of this region and are known today as the inner islands.

1844:

Kaurareg people rescued a European shipwreck survivor near their traditional island of Muralug. The survivor, Barbara Thompson, was the young wife of the ship's captain. She was taken in and cared for by the Kaurareg.

1848–1849:

The crew of HMS *Rattlesnake* encountered a group of Kaurareg at Muralug in October 1848. During the crew's visits there were friendly exchanges of conversations and gifts with the Kaurareg.

Late 1849:

Barbara Thompson decided to return to European society. She left Muralug with the crew of the *Rattlesnake*.

1864:

Europeans began to settle in Somerset (see map on page 11) on Cape York Peninsula, Queensland. It marked the beginning of violence between the new European arrivals and Aboriginal people.

1869:

Kaurareg were wrongly blamed for an attack on a visiting ship near Kirriri, which resulted in the deaths of 28 crew members. Europeans led two **punitive expeditions** to Muralug and many Kaurareg people lost their lives.

1879:

The Torres Strait region officially became part of Queensland.

The Kaurareg experienced contact with European travellers on passing ships well before Europeans settled on the mainland. These early interactions between Kaurareg and visitors were mostly friendly and based on mutual respect and cooperation.

The 1864 European settlement of Somerset on Cape York Peninsula brought rapid changes to the lives of Aboriginal people. This included threats to their personal safety and the loss of the right to control their own lives. By the 1870s, Kaurareg people were well aware of the **frontier** violence that threatened their lives and those of their neighbours on the mainland. The Kaurareg were intent on protecting their way of life and they fiercely guarded their islands from the government administration in Somerset.



Today, traditional foods continue to represent culture and a way of life for Kaurareg people. These small clamshells, called akul, are found in the mangroves on Kaurareg lands.

On 25 October 1872, Frank Jardine, the police magistrate at Somerset, informed the Colonial Secretary in Brisbane about the people on Muralug. He said:

'The Natives are evidently averse to the formation of a settlement on any of the Prince of Wales Islands, and exert every ruse and means in their power to prevent the discovery of water.'