

(Our State Years 11- 12)



Title: Young Aboriginal women with their babies and small children, Mapoon, 1914

Location: Mapoon, Queensland

Date: 1914

Creator: Unknown

Contributor: Queensland. Chief Protector of Aboriginals

Description:

According to the Mapoon Mission Visitor's Book (held by the Cape York Collection, Weipa), the Queensland Home Secretary and Secretary for Mines, John George Appel (1859 - 1929), visited Mapoon on 28 May 1914. He visited with a large group including his wife Ruth, James Allan MLA and his wife, J. W. Bleakley (Chief Protector of Aboriginals), John A. Crockett, J. W. and Louisa Davidson, William, Irene and Louise Gall, W. M. Lee-Bryce, Mrs J. May, J. Mulcahy, Yves and Jean Tolmie.

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Origin:Copied and digitised from an image appearing in: *Annual Report of the Chief Protector of Aboriginals for 1913*; *Queensland Parliamentary Papers*, v. 3, 1914, pp. 1032, 1033

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Assimilation – They Stole the Children

**Amber Tearle (Year 12)
Woodridge State High School**

Maria had been separated from the rest of her family in the Northern Territory just a few months ago; she was transferred to a mission in Queensland called Mapoon. She felt quite out of place here, her skin was slightly darker and her speech was tainted with the many different dialects she spoke. She wasn't completely alone, though, she had her five-year-old son Luke with her; they had both been given European names at the old mission. She had trouble settling in to her lonely life in the mission but began to make friends shortly after her arrival. At night they would comfort her as she grieved for her lost family, but they could never replace her family back at the other mission.

Maria saw a few of the other mothers around the mission begging at the foot of a very well dressed white man. She didn't understand at first, but then realised he had taken their children. She ran to the school and took Luke home and cradled him in her arms until dark, soothing his dark skinned forehead and tangling his curly locks between her fingers. The hours spent rocking her precious son to sleep gave Maria's insecurities and paranoia the opportunity to dominate her mind as she formulated a plan that would save her son from the fate other children had suffered. Maria decided she would keep Luke near her at all times.

Two days later Maria was dragged out of her hut as she was making breakfast for Luke and questioned by a white government official about her son's strange absence from school and lack of interaction with other children. In white society, this was referred to as neglect, as education and social skills were priorities in any civilised society. The official declared that Luke was to be taken out of her care and placed in a white family. Maria cried out as she envisioned her life without her most precious possession. She could not control the anger that boiled inside her; she reached out and struck the official on the cheek, cracking her knuckles at the same time. The official seized her by the neck of her mandatory frilly European dress and spat in her face. He told her he would have his revenge. He picked her up and carried her to her hut and threw her on the floor; she lay there until Luke woke her up later that night.

The next day, as Maria made Luke breakfast, there was a loud thud and the door to their hut came crashing to the ground. The culprit was the official from yesterday; he had two more officials with him. As he came towards Maria and Luke and put the gun to Maria's temple, as she trembled with fear, he blew a puff of his cigarette straight into her mouth. She instinctively reached toward Luke but the officials were faster; one seized Maria and the other grabbed Luke, and led him out the door and to a car parked only a few meters away. One official let go of Maria but the fierce official from the day before continued to hold the gun to her face; he dismissed the other official and told Maria they had unfinished business; He forced Maria to the ground and hit her over the head with his gun, knocking her unconscious. He found it easier to deal with the black scum when they were barely alive. He ripped her dress to shreds and forced himself on top of her, he then proceeded to repeatedly hit her and burn her with his cigarette. When he was tired of this, he raped her and stuffed her naked body in the boot of the car outside, with the son inside. As the boy screamed out for his mother the officer turned around and slapped the boy across the face, sending his head into the side of the car door.

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The car started and drove to the outskirts of the mission, where it stopped and the officials dumped Maria on the side of the road, where once again the official had his way with her whilst Luke covered his face in fright.

When Maria awoke, it took a while for her to comprehend what she had been through and the loss of her son started to sink in; she was sore all over her body and she ached where her skin had been seared by the burns. As she attempted to stand, she fell to the ground again and decided to crawl back to the mission to get help from the manager. After the journey back to the mission all she could think about was her son and reuniting with him. Once she had enough strength, she ran to the manager's quarters and told him what had happened, although she wasn't quite sure herself.

The manager laughed and told her she was black scum and did not deserve a child; as he said this Maria's world fell apart. She ran back to the house and grabbed Luke's favourite toy and curled into a ball and wished to die.

When her friend Peter returned from work later that night, she told him what had happened as she broke down; her life was over. There was nothing for her to live for, she had no family left on the mission and the most important thing in the world to her had been savagely stolen. Peter vowed to get Luke back for her but she knew it was impossible.

She realised the only way to end the pain she felt was to end her life. Maria ran to the manager's quarters and grabbed the closest gun she could; before the manager had time to react she had pressed the gun to her temple and fired. Her last thought was of her son Luke and how she had failed as his mother.