

# Palmer River ATTACKS

by Andrew Einspruch

**On 29 June 1873, gold was found on the Palmer River in northern Queensland. News spread quickly and people flooded into the area looking for this precious metal.**

The local Indigenous peoples, including the Guugu-Yimidhirr, used the river for food and water. They also treasured the Palmer River's numerous sacred places. The people defended their land against the miners as they arrived in their hundreds.

Late in October 1873, **Native Police** escorted around 130 miners from Cooktown toward the Palmer River goldfields. On 5 November, the Guugu-Yimidhirr attacked the group, but their weapons were no match for rifles. The attack failed, and many were killed.

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The natives wholly ignorant of the terrible firepower of fire-arms, and confiding [trusting] in their numbers, showed a ferocity and daring wholly unexpected and unsurpassed. Grasping the very muzzles of the rifles they attempted to wrest [grab] them from the hands of the whites, standing to be shot down, rather than yield an inch ...

*Cooktown Herald*  
8 December 1875

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It was one of many fights between miners and Indigenous peoples in the Cooktown and Palmer area. Between 1872 and 1896, probably 100 miners and more than 1000 Indigenous people died fighting over the land.

*Indigenous peoples fought for their traditional lands on the Palmer River, near Cooktown in northern Queensland.*