

## **William Barak**

Lydia

William Barak was a proud Wurundjuri artist. He was born in 1824 and died on the 15<sup>th</sup> of August 1903. His exact birthday is unknown. He was from Melbourne and began art from 1882 until his death. Barak lived during the time when Europe invaded Australia. When he was a child he was a determined survivor of the stolen generation.

As a child, Europe invaded his land. Melbourne was just established and the Gold Rush was just announced. He lived through massacres, diseases and misery. His mother Tooterrie, came from Nourailum bulluk, Murchison, Victoria and his father Bebejern was an important member of the Wurundjuri clan. He also had a sister called Borate. He eventually attended Yarra Mission School from 1837-1839. Originally named Beruk Barak, he joined police and adopted the name William. He was police trooper No.19.

Barak was a survivor of the Australian colonisation.

As a boy, he saw the infamous agreement between Wurundjuri elders and John Batman, a pioneer settler. Batman was to purchase 2000000 hectares of land. It cost forty blankets, thirty axes, one hundred knives, fifty scissors, thirty

mirrors, two hundred handkerchiefs, six shirts and forty five kilograms of flour. Barak's uncle Billibellary was one of the people who signed the agreement and was an influencer.

Barak became the full-blood survivor of his tribe when he married a girl called Kurnai. He had three children, two of who died of infancy. When his child and wife died in 1882 because of consumption, he got inspired in art. Barak does traditional ngurungaeta art. He died in Coranderrk Park and is buried at the Coranderrk cemetery.

Barak was an influential spokesperson of Aboriginal justice, diplomat, prominent leader, cultural ambassador, advocate for Aboriginal rights and artist for indigenous Australia. He was a highly respected leader. In his clan Simon Wonga was the leader. When Wonga died, Barak became the leader. He was known as King of Yarra. He was a ngurungaeta artist.

William Barak was an inspiring artist. He was a great prominent leader and a determined survivor. His artworks are amazing and he is inspiring. Now there is a bridge called William Barak Bridge.

