

Summary for School Children

The First People of St Albans: A Story of Land and Culture

Long before there were shops, roads, or schools in St Albans, this land was home to the **First People**. They have lived in Australia for a very long time, maybe 80,000 years!

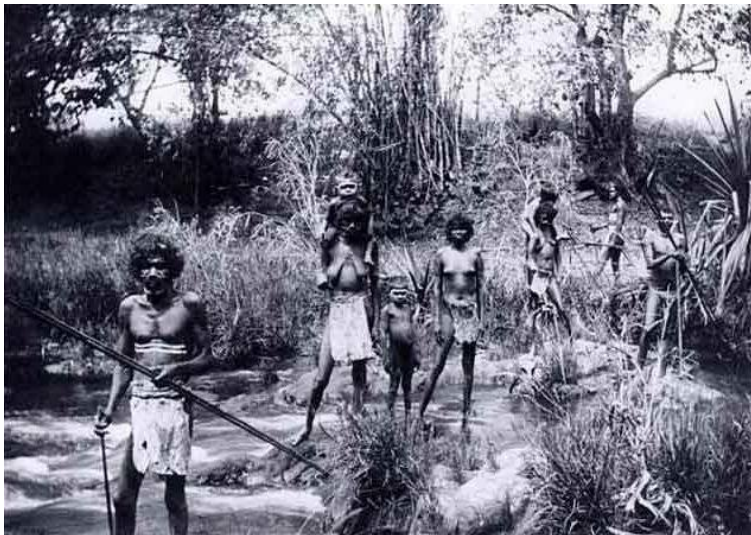
Who are the Traditional Owners?

The people who cared for the land around St Albans and Brimbank for over 40,000 years are the **Wurundjeri people**. They are part of a big group called the **Kulin Nation**.

How They Lived

The Wurundjeri people were expert explorers and engineers. They didn't have maps made of paper; instead, they used **Songlines**. By singing special songs, they could remember the way to travel long distances to find food or visit friends.

- **Food and Fishing:** They caught fish and eels using clever traps made of stones and woven plants in the Maribyrnong River. They also gathered a tasty root called the **yam daisy**.
- **Nature's Tools:** They used bark from trees to make canoes, shields, and even temporary homes. You can still see "scarred trees" today where the bark was carefully taken away.
- **Celebrations:** They held **Corroborees**, which were big gatherings with dancing, singing, and music made by thumping opossum-skin drums.



Walking across the river



At a Corroboree

When Everything Changed

In the 1830s, people from Europe began to arrive. This was a very difficult time for the Wurundjeri people. They brought massive changes that sadly caused many Aboriginal people to lose their lives.

The biggest cause was new diseases like smallpox and the flu; because the First People had never been around these germs before, their bodies couldn't fight them off, and many became very sick. At the same time, the settlers took over the land to build farms and towns, which meant Aboriginal families were pushed away from their traditional homes and could no longer find their usual food and water. This led to many sad fights and wars over the land, where the settlers used powerful weapons to win.

Because of the sickness, the loss of land, and the fighting, the Aboriginal population became much, much smaller in a very short amount of time.

Amazing Leaders to Remember

Even though times were tough, there were many brave leaders:



Billibellary: A wise leader who used talking and "diplomacy" to try and protect his people. [Read more...](#)



William Barak: A famous artist and leader who fought for his people's rights and land. [Read more...](#)



Derrimut: He is remembered for saving the lives of early settlers by warning them of danger. [Read more...](#)



Truganini: Was a survivor from Tasmania who became an enduring figure in First Nations history mistakenly remembered as the "last" of her people in Tasmania. [Read more...](#)



Louisa Briggs: Was a brave and clever Bunurong leader who, after being kidnapped as a child, returned to Victoria to become a matron and a hero who fought for the rights and homes of her people. [Read more...](#)

Did You Know?

Archaeologists have found tools and items in the local area that are over **30,000 years old!** This shows just how long the First People have been connected to this special place.

Today, we remember and respect the Wurundjeri people as the original caretakers of the land where we live, play, and learn.



A painting by William Barak