

GENERATIONS

Painting and story by Garry Purchase.

Have you ever thought about it?

All of the customs, bush survival and management, the songs, dance and stories that are known today still exist purely because the generation before has kept it alive and passed it down. The generation before did the same thing and the generation before them and so on and so forth.

The fact it has lasted without a written language for thousands upon thousands of years is truly remarkable and a testament to the resilience of our people.

Whether it be the creation stories of the Rainbow Serpent, Biami, the emu in the sky or any of the plethora of others, these survive and are still being told across Australia.

I am the son of Dorothy Purchase (née Timbery), the great great great great grandson of Timbery (or Timberé) who was the leader of the Dharawal people. He was bestowed the title of King Of the five islands by governor Macquarie. My great great grandmother was "Queen" Emma Timbery, a great matriarch and along with Esme Timbery, they are both internationally renowned for their shell work. My great uncle Joe Timbery was a world champion boomerang thrower and presented Queen Elizabeth II with one in 1954. My mums cousin Laddie Timbery carries on his boomerang crafting and throwing skills. For me, art is the avenue I took.

I'm lucky to have been raised in a very, very strong, prominent and culturally proud family.

Although it definitely hasn't been easy either.

Dharawal country runs from Botany Bay down to the South Coast of New South Wales. It is said that members of my family were present when Cook landed.

Our people were among the first that directly wore the brunt of the first fleet and withstood the best efforts to wipe us and our culture from history, yet we are still here...

As a matter of fact I'm writing this sitting at the waters edge of Botany Bay.

It may now be the 21st century and the world has dramatically changed, but we still stand proud as part of the oldest surviving culture in the world. As far as I'm concerned, as long as the emu is still making its journey in the night sky it will go on. It is inside us all and I've got my own kids to teach.