The Australian
Women's Register

**Entry type:** Person
**Entry ID:** AWE1098

# Truganini

(1812 - 1876)

| | |
|---|---|
| **Born** | 18120101, Bruny Island Tasmania Australia |
| **Died** | 18760501, Hobart Tasmania Australia |
| **Occupation** | Aboriginal leader, Aboriginal spokesperson |

## Summary

Truganini was the daughter of Mangana, chief of the Bruny Island people. A survivor of The Black Wars that accompanied European settlement in Tasmania, her life epitomises the story of colonial encounters in Tasmania, the clash of two disparate cultures and the resistance and survival of indigenous Tasmanians.

After losing her mother, her sister and her prospective husband at a young age, all of them the victims of colonial violence, Truganini worked hard in the early 1830s to unify what was left of the indigenous communities of Tasmania. An intelligent, energetic and resourceful woman, she worked with white authorities to protect other survivors of The Black Wars who had been forcibly removed from their homelands. In 1830 George Augustus Robinson, a Christian missionary was hired to round up the rest of the indigenous population and he settled them on Flinders Island. Truganini and her husband, Woorrady, helped Robinson in this venture in the hope that removing them would protect them from further violence. Unfortunately, the shock of resettlement, combined with the unsanitary conditions the people were forced to live in, proved fatal and the resettlement program did not work. The result was the virtual annihilation of the one hundred or so people left – mainly due to malnutrition and illness.

Truganini went with Robinson to Port Phillip in 1839 where a similar settlement was attempted with mainland nations, again with disastrous results. This time, having learnt from the Tasmanian experience, Truganini joined with the Port Phillip people when they resisted Robinson’s plans but she was captured and sent back to Flinders Island.

In 1856 there were only a few remaining indigenous survivors left in Tasmania, Truganini among them, who were taken to Oyster Bay. By 1873, except for Truganini, all of the people taken there had died. Truganini was moved to Hobart where she died in 1876. She had no known descendants.

Even in death she was not left in peace. Her skeleton was on display in the Tasmanian Museum from 1904 to 1907. It was not until 1976 that her remains received a proper burial. Aboriginal rights workers cremated Truganini and spread her ashes on the D’Entrecasteaux Channel, close to her birthplace.

Despite being labelled as such for many years, Truganini was not the ‘last Tasmanian Aborigine’, as the population of mixed descent Aboriginal people living in Tasmania readily attests to. Nevertheless, the story of her life and death remains immensely important, not only as a symbol of the plight of indigenous Australians, but as an example of the insensitivity of museum practices.

## Published resources

**Edited Book**
The Encyclopaedia of Aboriginal Australia : Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, society and culture, Horton, David, 1994

200 Australian Women: A Redress Anthology, Radi, Heather, 1988, https://webarchive.nla.gov.au/awa/20071105022623/http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/78644/20071105-1315/www.200australianwo

**Videorecording**
Media portraits of indigenous Australians, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, 1998

**Lecture**
1997 Peter Eldershaw Memorial Lecture, Ryan, Lyndall, 1997

The Spectre of Truganini, Smith, Bernard

**Journal Article**
Re-claiming Tru-ger-nan-ner: de-colonising the symbol, Anderson, Ian, 1993

**Book**
Trucanini: queen or traitor?, Rae-Ellis, Vivienne, 1976

The last of the Tasmanians, Davies, David M., 1973

**motion picture**
The Last Tasmanian, Haydon, Tom and Jones, Rhys, 1978

**Newsletter**
Truganini Park, 1976

**Newspaper Article**
The Last Wish: Truganini's ashes scattered in the D'Entrecasteaux Channel, 1976

The last of the Tasmanian natives, Rhys, Eli, 1922

Pioneering journey home for Truganini, 2002

**Report**
Report to the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies on Truganini, Ryan, Lyndall, 1974

**Thesis**
An anthroposcopic and anthropometric study of a full-blood female Tasmanian Aborigine (Truganini), Meumann, Frank Olaf, 1971

**Resource**
Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

**Resource Section**
Trugernanner (Truganini) (1812-1876), Ryan, Lyndall, and Smith, Neil, 2006, http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A060326b.htm

## Archival resources

**AIATSIS Pictorial Collection**
Skeletal remains of Truganini

Photographs of William Lanne and Truganini taken in Tasmania

**Author Details**
Nikki Henningham and Leonarda Kovacic

**Created** 18 October 2004
**Last modified** 20 November 2018