Map of Victoria showing location of goldfields.

Map adapted from Spatial Vision (2001).
The ‘Commissioner’s tent, Ballarat’ clearly depicts the central role the native police corps had on the Victorian goldfields.


‘Bush mailman’ or ‘bush postman’ shows the critical role Aboriginal people performed in frontier communications during the gold period.

Edwin Stocqueler like many goldfields artists ‘travelled widely’ in the 1850s depicting Victorian Aboriginal ceremonial life during the gold period.


Non-Indigenous miners frequently commented upon the regular occurrence of corroborees being performed during the gold rush period in Victoria. Note the non-Indigenous spectators in the foreground who may have been summoned to view this corroboree.

Maintaining law and order on the Victorian goldfields was largely achieved by policing the illegal sale of alcohol. Note the mounted Aboriginal trooper[s] in the background to the right.

'Sly grog selling at the "diggins" effectually stopped', Gill, Samuel Thomas, (ca 1853), pen and ink drawing. Rex Nan Kivell Collection, NK6869, National Library of Australia, an6617940.

Two Wathawurrung people, one of them heavily laden with goods walk along what is now Main Road Ballarat, not far from Golden Point, presumably not long after the 1854 Eureka rebellion. The Red Coat soldier’s camp can be seen in the background.

'Ballarat, Victoria, ca. 1854', Gill, Samuel Thomas, (1850), watercolour. Rex Nan Kivell Collection, NK166, National Library of Australia, an6618003.
Djadjawurrung/Jaara people were a very visible presence on the goldfields of Mt Alexander. Newspaper reports and miner’s letters attest to their active participation in the rush for gold.


Goldfields’ artist George Rowe noted that he had many interactions with the Aboriginal people (Jaara/Djadjawurrung) including buying gold from them and being safely guided through the bush. In this picture Rowe depicts the multi-cultural nature of goldfields’ society, including a Jarra/Djadjawurrung man on the far right.

Many miners wrote of how they profited from joining with Aboriginal people on the Victorian goldfields, as reflected in this illustration where Aboriginal people are depicted with a plentiful supply of fresh food, a rare commodity on the goldfields.


Alcohol abuse on the Victorian goldfields was considered to be at epidemic levels and had particularly severe consequences on Aboriginal communities already reeling from the effects of dispossession of their lands.

The policing of the sale of illicit alcohol to Aboriginal people was difficult to enforce in towns and cities but was virtually impossible on the bush diggings such as depicted in this picture.


The cooperative relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal miners who were keen to secure traditional Aboriginal foods is a frequent theme which goldfields’ artist ST Gill recorded in his artwork.

Gold was very much a great equaliser. Small groups of miners, often just pairs as depicted in this picture shared much adversity in their quest for gold. Miners from very different backgrounds sometimes formed strong bonds of friendship and co-dependency.

Visitors to the goldfields were often struck by the multi-cultural nature of the population on the Victorian goldfields. The exotic attraction of each other was often portrayed by goldfield artists.