



Indigenous Culture in the Upper Murray

Coolamon Ngarigo-Walgaloo Questions

For thousands of years, our Indigenous people used the landscapes around them for food, water and shelter. Today, we can see trees with scars on them. These trees were used by Aboriginal people to make coolamons and canoes.

1. What is the primary purpose of a coolamon – (large and small)?
2. On the Upper Murray and Murrumbidgee what type of natural materials were usually used to make coolamons?
3. Would an Aboriginal person choose a smooth-barked gum or a rough barked gum?
4. If a large wooden burl removed from a gum tree - like that on display at the Tumbarumba Historical Society Museum - was used to make a coolamon, how was it usually hollowed out?

Extension Question

5. In the video you will notice that Shane cut a coolamon from a straight part of an upright branch which resulted in a flat container. If you wanted to make a more 'bowl-shaped' coolamon, how would you go about it?



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Coolamon Ngarigo-Walgaloo Answers

1. It is a container to store or allow food, water, seeds or other small objects to be carried from one location to another. They were also used to transport smouldering embers so as to readily rekindle a fire at the next camp site.
2. The outer bark or sap wood using the natural curvature of the branch or trunk to advantage. Wooden burls, typically found on the trunks of mature gums were also used for larger containers.
3. Usually a smooth barked gum as the bark from a rough barked gum is often brittle and harder to work.
4. It was hollowed out by the controlled use of fire. A small fire was lit on the inside surface of the burl and the wood below it allowed to carbonise or turn to charcoal. The fire was then removed and the charcoal scraped out. This process was repeated again and again until the desired cavity was achieved. The final finish was achieved by polishing the inner surface with a rough piece of stone.
5. By removing the bark from the outside of a natural bend in a branch.

*This question sheet is the same for both Coolamon clips.

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