



Indigenous Culture in the Upper Murray

Burls Questions

For thousands of years, our Indigenous people had to use the landscapes around them for food, water, shelter and to make fire. On the sides of trees, we sometimes see large bumps. These bumps are very valuable to Aboriginal people and provided many uses.

1. What is the lump on the side of the tree?
2. The Indigenous people and early settlers could turn the burl into a coolamon. How did they do this?
3. How did the Indigenous people get the burl off the tree?
4. How did the Indigenous people get steel axes?
5. How was the burl hollowed out?
6. Once made into a coolamon, what was it used for?



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Burls Answers

1. A burl, it is like a wart on a tree.
2. By using stone tools and steel axes.
3. Either the burl rotted and fell off the tree or they used a steel axe to cut it down.
4. White settlers from around 1824 onwards (when Hume and Hovell travelled through the Upper Murray) would have traded and sold the axes to the indigenous people.
5. They would light a fire in the middle of the burl, scrape out the ashes and light another fire until the burl was hollowed out and in the shape of a coolamon. They may have used steel axes as well.
6. The two main uses of the coolamon would have been as a baby minder and a water carrier.

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These sheets and accompanying clips were supported by Murray Local Land Services through funding from the
Australian Government's National Landcare Programme and Catchment Action NSW.



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