



Indigenous Culture in the Upper Murray

Tools Questions

For thousands of years, our Indigenous people had to use the landscapes around them for food, water, shelter and to make fire. Today, we can go to stores and buy the tools we need. Aboriginal people had to use the elements and make the tools they needed.

1. What type of material was primarily used by the Aboriginal people to make tools?
2. Did the Aboriginal tool-maker prefer soft coarse-grained stone or hard fine-grained stone?
3. What objects were used in this video to assist in making these tools?
4. Shane showed that natural water-worn pebbles could be chipped or "napped" into the desired end shape by using a hammer stone. What other process for shaping tools did Shane demonstrate?

Extension Question

5. What other natural materials do you think the Aboriginal people used to make tools?



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Tools Answers

1. Stone – either natural water worn pebbles but also 'quarried stone' found *in situ* or in its natural location. Remember that many other tools (and weapons) such as boomerangs, shields, woomeras, throwing sticks, nulla nullas and women's yam sticks were made from various types of wood, while other tools such as spears were either wholly or partially made of wood.
2. The choice of stone depended very much on the end purpose. To make tools that needed to be durable a hard fine-grained stone was used (eg. Diorite). For other purposes such as milling grass seeds to make bush flour, or using stone as a wood rasp, a softer stone (eg. Sandstone) was used.
3. Hammer stones for shaping other stones and water rat or wombat teeth for pressure flaking finer stone tools such as points, burins (drills) and spear heads. Fire was also used as an agent for hardening wooden tools.
4. Grinding – many axes and chisels were finished or enhanced by grinding on a softer stone using water and quartz sand as an abrasive agent.
5. Bone was often employed. For example, the fibula bone (the smaller bone of the lower leg) of a wallaby or kangaroo could be ground or sharpened into a fine needle for piercing other materials such as possum skins so they could be stitched together to form blankets or cloaks. Shane showed that stone flakes could act as knives but fresh water mussel shells were also utilised as cutting blades. The outer lip of the shell could be honed to a razor-sharp edge by rubbing and polishing it against a piece of hard wood.

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