

# INDIGENOUS INNOVATION

First Nations Australia:  
60,000+ years of ingenuity and innovation

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Across the country, people used different techniques for starting fire, depending on what resources were available to them.

The two most common methods used were the fire drill and fire saw.  
The fire plough and percussion methods are also used.

Do you know  
what fire  
actually is?



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# FIRE IS USED IN HUNTING, COOKING, KEEPING WARM AND MANAGING THE LANDSCAPE

A fire drill is a hard, straight stick rotated rapidly between the hands and at the same time, pressed into a small socket of a flat piece of wood.

Do you know what a "cool burn" is?

Friction between the two sticks transforms kinetic energy to heat; a side notch in the socket allows sawdust (from the abrasion) to collect, resulting in an ember which ignites tinder that is placed at the bottom of the stick.

The fire saw method uses a sawing motion to generate heat.

The base can be a split branch with the slit held open by thin wedges.

Tinder is placed under this slit and a sharp piece of hardwood (e.g. a boomerang or woomera) is 'sawn' in a notch at right angles to the slit, resulting in a hot ember.

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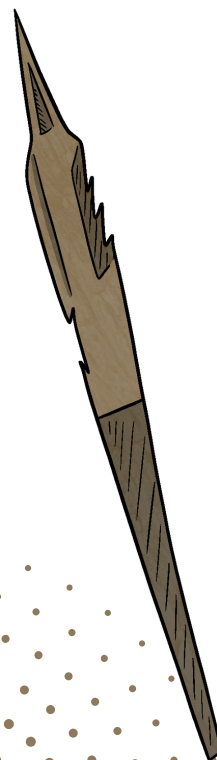
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First Nations peoples are experts about the Australian landscape and the many different forms it take. Tool-making is a great example of Aboriginal innovation and connection to Country.

People used what was available to them in the environment.

They also often combined different timbers in making things.

Do you know what spinifex resin was used for?



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# DIFFERENT PLANT SPECIES ARE CHOSEN TO USE IN TOOL-MAKING DEPENDING ON THEIR SPECIFIC PROPERTIES

River red gums, which produce a hard timber, could be used for carving, and in some areas, the bark was used for canoe-making.

The batwing coral tree for example, is found in the northern desert and subtropical regions of Australia, and produces timber which is soft and lightweight; a material which could be easily carved. It was used to make large softwood shields by some nations.

Can you name some other Aboriginal tools?



Bulrushes, a species of water reeds, were used as a fibre to make different types of cords that were used as lines and nets for hunting and fishing.





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First Nations people have survived and thrived across Australia, developing deep understandings of the natural world around them, including bush foods.

The type of bush foods utilised by Aboriginal people varies greatly across the country, depending on what is locally and seasonally available or could be traded.

Knowledge of bush foods is closely linked to seasonal calendars



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# BEING ABLE TO RECOGNISE, SOURCE, HUNT, GATHER, AND GROW FOODS IS A SKILL PASSED DOWN THROUGH GENERATIONS

There is also a rich and diverse variation of food collection and food production techniques employed by different nations to collect and harvest these bush foods.

What are some bush foods local to you?

In addition to the nutritional value of bush foods, they also play an important role in cultural, spiritual and community life.

Traditional ecological knowledge has a significant role to play in the contemporary management of Australia's environment, and First Nation knowledge of bush foods has important relevance to issues like threatened species management and managing biodiversity.

