In order to hunt, gather and cook the plentiful food found within their country, Gumbaynggirr people made weapons, tools and utensils from natural materials. Much of this tool-making was highly innovative, often using parts of animals and plants harvested for food.

Shell, stone and bone artefacts are commonly found in middens. Stone artefacts are the longest lasting and can be found all over the landscape. Animal products such as shell, bone, skin, sinew and hair can also be preserved in middens, but are more often found in rock-shelters where they have been kept dry. Charcoal, or niigi (from campfires), is usually the only plant product found in middens, but wood, seeds and fibres can also be well represented in deposits in rock-shelters.

Stone Artefacts

Many tools, such as axes, grinding stones and cutting knives were made from stone. Stones with sharp edges were highly sought after. These were usually made using a process called knapping, whereby small chips and flakes are broken off the edge of a rock; this not only produces small cutting stones but also axes (wagaarr). Wagaarr were commonly used to cut wood and also as hunting weapons. The cutting edge of an axe is sharpened by grinding it smooth using a coarse sandstone grindstone.

Wooden Artefacts

Spear shafts for hunting and fishing were made from trees and plants such as the grass tree and cottonwood hibiscus. Tree branches were cut using stone axes, and the outer bark was stripped away. In some cases, parts of the outer and inner bark were separated to make string. The inner branch was often hard, and only the straightest branches were selected to

Did you know?

In 2008, a small stone artefact with a hole in it (probably a sinker) was collected from the beach at Red Rock. Not long after the object was removed, members of the family who collected it fell ill. Garby Elders suggested that the illness resulted from taking and keeping the artefact, and so it was returned to the original site.
make perfect spears. If a hard, strong timber was selected, the end of the spear (*gamay*) was sharpened into a point. Bark panels for making *nguura* (huts) were taken from the large swamp mahogany trees (*bulurrga*) in the area. Trees that were culturally modified in this way are protected as Aboriginal Sites.

### Shell and Bone Artefacts

After a big feast of *gugumbal* (turban shells), the Garby Elders broke up the left-over shells and used the fragments to make utensils such as needles and fishing hooks (*garran*). The desired shapes were made by grinding the fragments on stones. Small, thin fish and animal bones were also used to fashion fishing hooks.

We can find out about perishable Gumbaynggirr cultural items and materials through oral histories (collecting stories from Elders and knowledge holders), museum collections, written records, language and photographs. An example of the latter is the series of photographs of Gumbaynggirr people, posed in front of painted landscape backdrops, taken by John William Lindt between 1870 and 1873 in his Grafton studio.

**Please note** that disturbance or removal of Aboriginal artefacts is not permitted under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*.

*Photos (excluding Lindt image): Margie Mohring; Dee Murphy; Steve Smith. Lindt photo: No. 16 *Old bearded man with a scarified chest*. Image supplied by Grafton Regional Gallery.*

### Lingo

- *bulurrga*: swamp mahogany
- *gamay*: spear
- *garran*: fishing hooks
- *nguura*: camp/hut
- *niigi*: charcoal
- *waagarr*: axe

“*Gugumbal* shells were roasted and ground into powder and used in sand painting for a pearly effect.” *Uncle Keith Lardner*

**Photo**

Although the Lindt photos were posed, many cultural items, such as the net, hut and animal skin shown here, can be seen with the respected Elders.

**Photo**

A fishing hook, or *garran*, made from a turban shell.

**Photo**

Spears, such as this one in front of Ricky Cain, are still used in the Arrawarra fish traps today.