Traditional Nyungar Living

Bibul Boorn

Paper bark (bibul boorn), had several uses for Nyungar; one was as a type of floor covering in the Nyungar mia-mia, another was as goona (toilet) paper and for wiping your nose. Nyungars also used it for cooking fish. They would collect the paper bark, wet it with water and wrap the unscaled, ungutted fish, and then place it into hot coals to cook. The leaves of the paper bark could also be placed onto hot coals of a fire and the smoke inhaled as a medicine.

Mia Mia

The Worlie (semi round mia) were built using tea-tree branches as the frame and were curved in a semi circle and bound together with grass, vines or sinew from a kangaroo tail.

Once the framework was in place and whilst the men were preparing the frame, women and children were collecting branches from the tea-tree, gum trees and Bibul boorn (paper bark) to weave and thatch into the frame of the mia.

This Mia was typically covered with Bibul boorn from the bottom up, weaving paper bark between the sticks and building upwards so that when the rain came it would run down to the ground without leaking.

Nih

When the Nyungar man was traveling through his country and came across a rock overhang or cave he would register his visit by grinding Wilgie (ochre) putting it into his mouth, adding water to the wilgie he would then place his hand on the rock and spray the moist wilgie over his hand print, leaving his mark or signature (nih) on the rock.

Balga Leaves

Balga (grass tree) leaves were then placed onto the ground inside of the mia and used as a mattress. Paper bark placed over this as it is water proof and prevents contact with the wet soil.

Kangaroo Skins

A kangaroo skin would then be placed over the paper bark as a sheet and over the top as a blanket, called a wogga.

If it was cold a couple of their dogs would sleep over or near them to keep warm with a fire at the mouth of the Mia Mia.

Western Australian Gould League

Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre

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