

Fun at home activity

Make a woven family tree figure

Make your own woven tree figure, inspired by your connections with family friends and nature, and based on one of the artworks from the [Songlines: Tracking the Seven Sisters](#) exhibition at the National Museum of Australia.

For thousands of years Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have expressed their cultural identity through stories, people and the stars.

In their [Minyma Punu Kungkarangkalpa](#) artwork, the Tjanpi Desert Weavers show the Seven Sisters turned into trees by the mischievous Wati Nyiru. Artist Ilawanti Ken explains, *'The land inspires us to make things ... Because the Seven Sisters came from the land itself, we decided that we wanted them to [be] tree-like women.'*

Can you think of a place that's important to you and your family? Imagine a tree from that place was one of your ancestors. What would it look like?

Time

30 minutes to one hour

What you need

Indigenous artists use old and new materials in their artworks, sometimes using methods handed down through many generations. Have a look around your house or garden to see what you can find. We used:

- pipe cleaners
- straws
- wire
- sticks
- wool
- raffia
- string
- grass
- feathers
- beads



Use scissors to cut material to size (remember scissors are sharp so ask an adult for help).

Steps

Remember to start with an idea about your family or friends. How will you show them as a tree in your woven artwork?

1. Create your frame by twisting your base materials together. We used pipe cleaners.
2. Bend the frame into a tree shape, with roots at the bottom to help it stand up.
3. Wind your weaving materials around the frame, starting at the bottom and working your way up. We used raffia to attach the grass to the frame. Wind the material tighly and close together, tying knots to keep everything in place.

Tip: Layering the material in one spot will fill out the shape. If you need help don't forget to ask.

4. Add decorations as you go. We used blue wool to help make the face, and wove in emu feathers for arms.
5. Tie knots to keep your materials in place.
6. Cut off any loose ends.
7. Experiment with materials and make your whole family in trees!



Here's a few different trees we made. Thomas made the one on the left, based on a willow tree that grew near a pond in his front yard. It reminded him of escaping the summer sun while playing, dreaming and talking away the day.



Share your creation with us by sending a photo or video to: schoolholidays@nma.gov.au and check out more fun at home activities, videos and games at nma.gov.au/families.