

# Basic Detail Report

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**Title**

Toothie shell necklace

**Date**

1998

**Primary Maker**

Muriel Maynard

**Medium**

Toothie shell, cotton/nylon

**Dimensions**

Overall: 840 x 10 mm, 0.06 kg

**Name**

Necklace

**History**

In Tasmania, Palawa (Tasmanian Aboriginal) women string shells into body adornments such as necklaces, bracelets and pendants. This form of shellwork is one of the few cultural practices to have survived the massive disruption to the Indigenous community that occurred in Tasmania over the last two centuries, especially in the devastating colonial wars. Thus contemporary Palawa shellwork is an imposing achievement. It is a women’s tradition stretching back many, many generations, and the techniques of choosing and intricately stringing the tiny shells are passed down to daughters, nieces and granddaughters. It is also a tradition that has evolved over time, with contemporary influences and artistic interpretation. The shells collected include the maireener, toothy, rice, cockle and crow shells. The wonderfully iridescent maireener is the most prized shell used in necklace making, collected only during the spring tides. It is difficult to obtain as it only grows on living seaweed and seagrass located off shore. The shells need to be collected individually within a short three-hour timeframe.