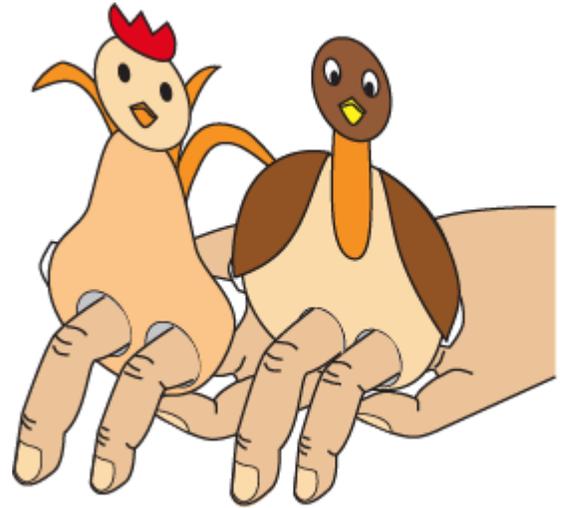


The Medicine-man

Folktale from the Aborigines of Australia



Characters

Wahn - the prankster white crow
Dinewan - emu who likes to argue
Brolga - a not so smart chicken

Scene 1

The curtain opens on Brolga's hut (gunyah) where Brolga is shouting at Dinewan.

Brolga: (*shouting*) How could you be so stupid? You take all of my family out for a walk in the bush and get lost.

Dinewan: (*shouting*) It was not my fault. All your clucking and fluttering about confused me. I couldn't even think!

Brolga: We almost died of the heat while you took us in circles. I should never have trusted you to know your way home.

Dinewan: I suppose you could have done better! You can't even find your way from one side of the camp to another.

(Brolga and Dinewan continued to argue until both were too tired to go on. Dinewan left to go home and Brolga prepared for bed.)

(Wahn comes on-stage muttering to himself.)

Wahn: How is anyone to get sleep with those two arguing? Dinewan already made fun of my new gunyah and now he keeps me awake. I must find a way to get back at him.

Wahn: (*to himself*) I've got it! I'll get Brolga to punish Dinewan for me.
(Walks towards Brolga's hut.)

Brolga: Good evening, Wahn.

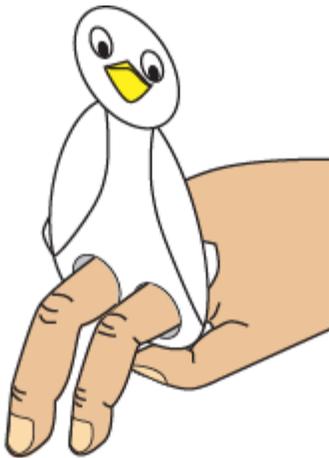
Wahn: Good evening, Brolga. I heard what Dinewan did today, and he has no shame! I'd teach him a lesson.

Brolga: How?

Wahn: Heat some red gum from the ironwood tree and put it on his head. That will give him something to think about.

Brolga: (*excited*) I'll do just that.

(Curtain drops on scene 1 as Brolga hurries off to collect some red gum.)



Scene 2

The curtain opens on Dinewan asleep in his hut.

Brolga: (*creeps towards the sleeping Dinewan*) Wahn's right. Dinewan must be punished for his bad deed. I'll put this hot gum on his head.

(Slaps gum on Dinewan's head and dashes off before Dinewan can see him.)

Dinewan: (*jumps from his bed and cries in pain*) Yikes! Ooowwww... That hurts!

(Jumps about screaming in pain.)

Dinewan: (*angry*) Who could have done this to me? I know it was Brolga, that stupid chicken! Well, two can play this game. First, I need some cool water to help get this gum off my head.

Wahn: (*off to the side laughing*) That sure was funny. I can't wait to see what happens next!

(Curtain drops on scene 2 as Dinewan goes off to find some cool water.)

Scene 3

The curtain opens the next morning on the clearing where Dinewan is heating the red gum. Brolga enters the clearing and sees Dinewan..

Brolga: *(cautiously)* Dinewan, good morning. What is it that you are doing?

Wahn: *(from the side of the clearing, to himself)* Brolga doesn't realize that Dinewan knows who put the red gum on his head.

Dinewan: *(quietly)* Heating some red gum.

Brolga: What are you going to do with it?

Dinewan: I'll show you!

(Dashes after Brolga with the hot gum in hand. Brolga and Dinewan run offstage. We hear a scream as Dinewan puts the red gum on Brolga's head. Brolga runs back on-stage jumping and yelling with the red gum on his head.)

Brolga: Ouch! Ouch! Ouch! That hurts!

(Jumps about screaming in pain.)

Wahn: *(comes over to Brolga full of innocence)* What's the matter? Why are you wearing that red cap?

Brolga: *(screams)* Take it off! Take it off!!!

Wahn: Lay down so I can use my feet to grab it.

(Pulls hard on the red gum -- most comes off.)

Brolga: *(sitting up)* Oh, that is much better. Thank you, Wahn.

Wahn: Oh, no thanks needed. Just remember to tell people who ask about your fine red cap, that your medicine-man gave it to you.

(Curtain drops. The End.)

About the Play - The Medicine-man

<http://www.AuntAnnie.com/Puppets/TwoFinger>

There are many Aboriginal tales featuring Wahn-the-Crow. His color varies from white, to brown, to black. There are also a variety of pronunciations for his name. It can be said that his name is meant to sound like the noisy call of a crow, "wah-wah-wah".

Puppets

Make the Chicken, Emu and crow puppets from the Two-Finger Puppets project at AuntAnnie.com.

Sets

You will need hut, inside hut, and clearing backdrops for this play. For the hut backdrop, draw a hut next to a clearing with a tree or two. For the inside of the hut, start with a tan sheet of construction paper and draw wood supports and a door. Decorate it with cooking items, baskets and blankets. For the clearing backdrop draw a circle with grass and trees around it.

Props

You will need red gum in various forms. Cut several shapes from red paper or cut them from the chicken puppet pattern. Use tacky putty to attach them temporarily to the puppets. Cut one piece as a cap for Dinewan's head, another piece to cover all of Brolga's head, and a small piece in the shape of a chicken comb.

Staging Tips

- This play requires at least two puppeteers.
- The puppets have no hands, so putting on and taking off the red gum needs to take place offstage. Practice making this smooth

The Story

This is a story to explain how chickens got their red combs. Many of the Wahn stories explain things of this nature -- how hawks got their talons, how man learned to use fire, how the moon came to be in the sky. In almost all the tales Wahn is a trickster without shame. Can you make a Wahn story of your own?