

Basic Detail Report



Bolton Indigenous Canoe

Vessel number

HV000526

Date

c 1900

Description

The canoe is constructed from a single piece of bark that has been heated to curve the edges up, and has both ends of the canoe raised up. The forward end is shaped like the end of a leaf, curling up in a pointed end. This is a feature seen on other extant examples of this type, and recorded illustrations from early European colonisers. The other end of the canoe has a more rounded point. The Bolton Indigenous bark canoe illustrates the style of canoes used in the Murray River region of Victoria called a yuki in some of the community languages. The specific type of bark used to build this canoe has not been identified. The preferred bark was from the red gum tree, that grew on the banks of the local rivers, however the temporary use of other similar barks have been recorded, but not extensively. Whenever possible the bark was selected from a tree with a bend in the trunk that created the shape required. If this was not possible then considerable work was required, the bark was heated over a fire to then help form the desired shape of the canoe. It is recorded that it took ten to fifteen days to properly build a canoe of this style. The shaping of the canoe involved the use of stretchers and weights. Clay was applied to the inside of the canoe and the bark was left to season in the sun. The life of the canoe was about two years. A long pole was used to guide the canoe along. This rounded pole was approximately three and half metres long and six centimetres diameter. At one end there were three small blades attached to the pole. Two were made of wood that had been hardened in the fire and the centre one was made from bone. When the canoe reached deep water the pole was held in the middle and dipped in from side to side to move the canoe along. The end of the pole with the blades was also used to spear fish with. The canoe is in relatively good condition. There appears to be evidence of charcoal on the inner surface of the centre of the bottom of the canoe. There is a crack on the left hand side of the back half of the canoe with two main splits in the tail. A small piece that has split off the canoe has been mended by stitching it to the main piece of the canoe. No information was recorded about who made the canoe and when it was made. It was donated to the museum by F. T. Holt and registered in 1924 as X029907 in the collection, but is believed to date back to about 1900. Early collectors acquired objects such as this canoe because it was believed at the time that Aboriginal people were 'a dying race'. This belief and the growing interest in ethnography created a strong trade in Aboriginal objects from the early 19th century onwards. Prepared from research by Museum Victoria.

Dimensions

Vessel Dimensions: 4.52 m x 0.62 m (14.81 ft x 2.03 ft)