



B.C. First Nations Head Start **Cottonwood Canoe**

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LAST NOVEMBER, THE SPLATSIN CHILD CARE SOCIETY BUILT A TRADITIONAL COTTONWOOD DUG-OUT CANOE AT THEIR CENTRE as a cultural project. Master canoe builder Gordon Marchand brought a length of cottonwood tree to the backyard of the centre, and began to hollow out the inside of the canoe.

The children were able to spend time each day watching Gordon as he chipped and shaped the canoe, and some of the older children got to try their hand at chipping. Teachers took bigger chips and used them for a craft project.

In December, the cultural program used cottonwood chips for smoking deer jerky on a home-made meat smoker/dryer.

Since Gordon finished the canoe and paddles in January, the canoe has been permanently mounted on the preschool playground for the children to use daily. The canoe will lend itself to many unique teaching and learning experiences. Other local crafters are helping the project by building small dip-nets, harpoons, play salmon and other types of fish, fishing nets, and fishing poles for the children to use with the canoe.

"The Splantsin people were formerly known as being river people and for their use of Cottonwood dug-out canoes on the Shuswap River for transportation, canoe races and fishing. We felt it was important for children to regain that part of their identity, so that's why we wanted Gordon to come and do a hands-on canoe project with the children."

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