Barking up the Right Tree: Understanding Birch Bark Artifacts from the Canadian Plateau, British Columbia

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Abstract

Several birch bark containers and other birch bark artifacts made by prehistoric First Nations have been encountered during archaeological excavations on the Canadian Plateau of British Columbia. From these discoveries, it is apparent that birch bark technologies were of major importance to First Nations, yet little attention has been paid to them as a category of artifacts. Ethnographic records from the Canadian Plateau indicate that birch bark basketry was consistently made by women. Thus, birch bark baskets provide a tool with which to make women and their work visible in the archaeological record. Birch bark baskets were important for food collection and storage, and appear in burials and girls puberty rituals. Here we describe two Late Period birch bark baskets and their contents (approximately dating to the Plateau Horizon 2400–1200 BP) from sites near Lillooet, BC and illustrate how birch bark was closely associated with women, both economically and spiritually.

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Network. Bark up the Right Tree is a quest received by speaking to a powerful tree named Nericon that is guarding the way into the Crow’s Nest. Nericon kills anyone who attempts to pass, human or otherwise. Approach the Champion Casca in Mardaneus Plaza near the city gates. One of his men Bubo will go headlong through the barricade towards Crow’s Nest and get struck down by conjured lightning. When approached, the tree speaks in a strange tongue that you don’t understand. Behrlihn, appalled by the Dragon.