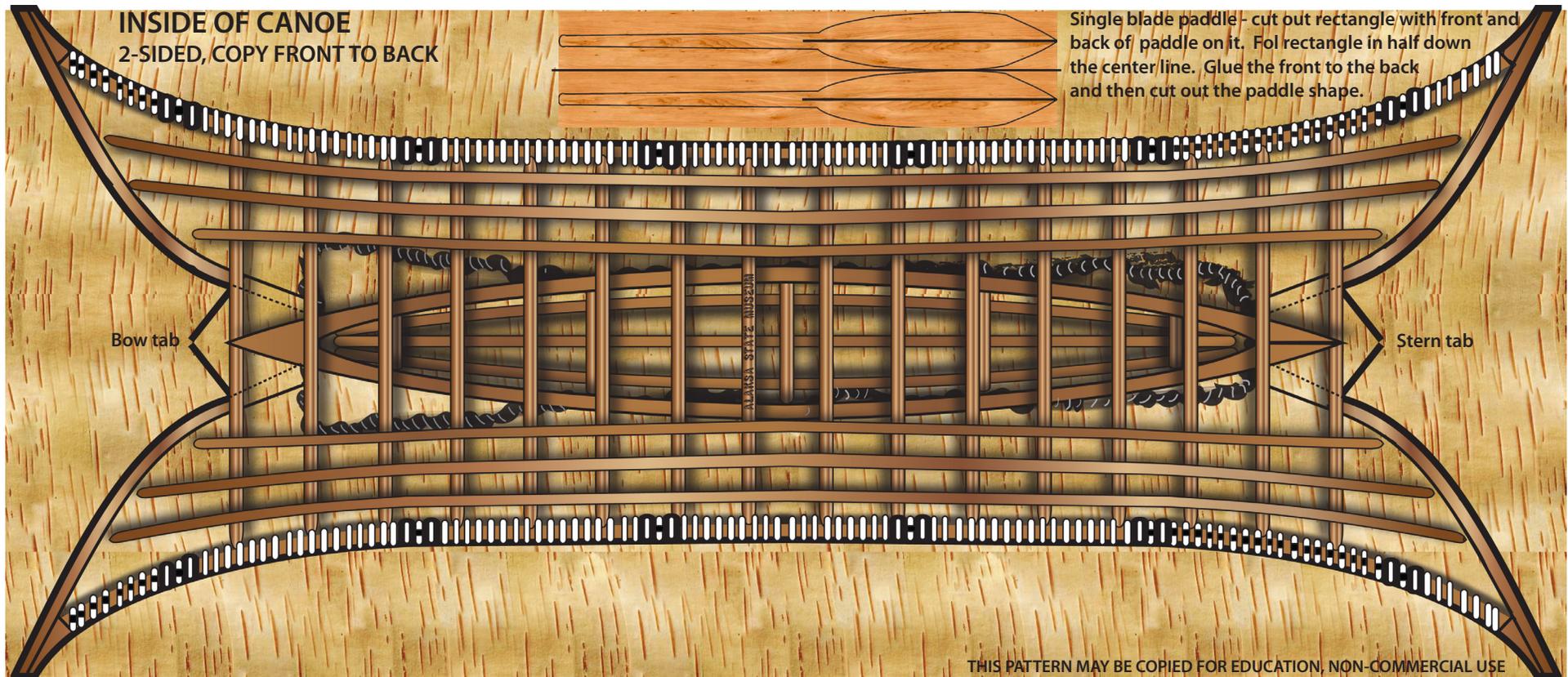
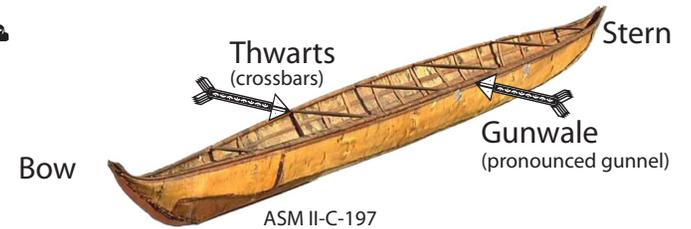


ATHABASCAN BIRCH BARK CANOE

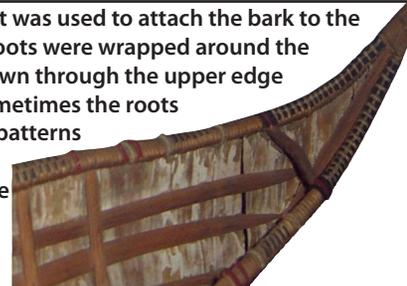
1. Color the gunwale and outside of the canoe.
2. Cut along the solid line around the whole canoe frame and cut the slits along the dotted lines to make tabs.
3. Gently crease along the curved edges of the bottom frame to shape the sides and bottom of the canoe.
4. Tape or staple the curved bow and stern from the tip down to the pointed tab.
5. Wrap the tabs around the sides of the bow and stern and tape to the bottom of canoe.



6. Cut out the material below and use to make 6 thwarts. Evenly space the thwarts across the top of the canoe and tape or glue to the outside of the gunwales.



Split spruce root was used to attach the bark to the gunwale. The roots were wrapped around the gunwale and sewn through the upper edge of the bark. Sometimes the roots were dyed and patterns were created giving the canoe a decorative rim.



Alaska State Museum
 395 Whittier St., Juneau, AK 99801
 Ph: (907) 465-2901
www.museums.state.ak.us

ATHABASCAN BIRCH BARK CANOE



Alaska State Museum

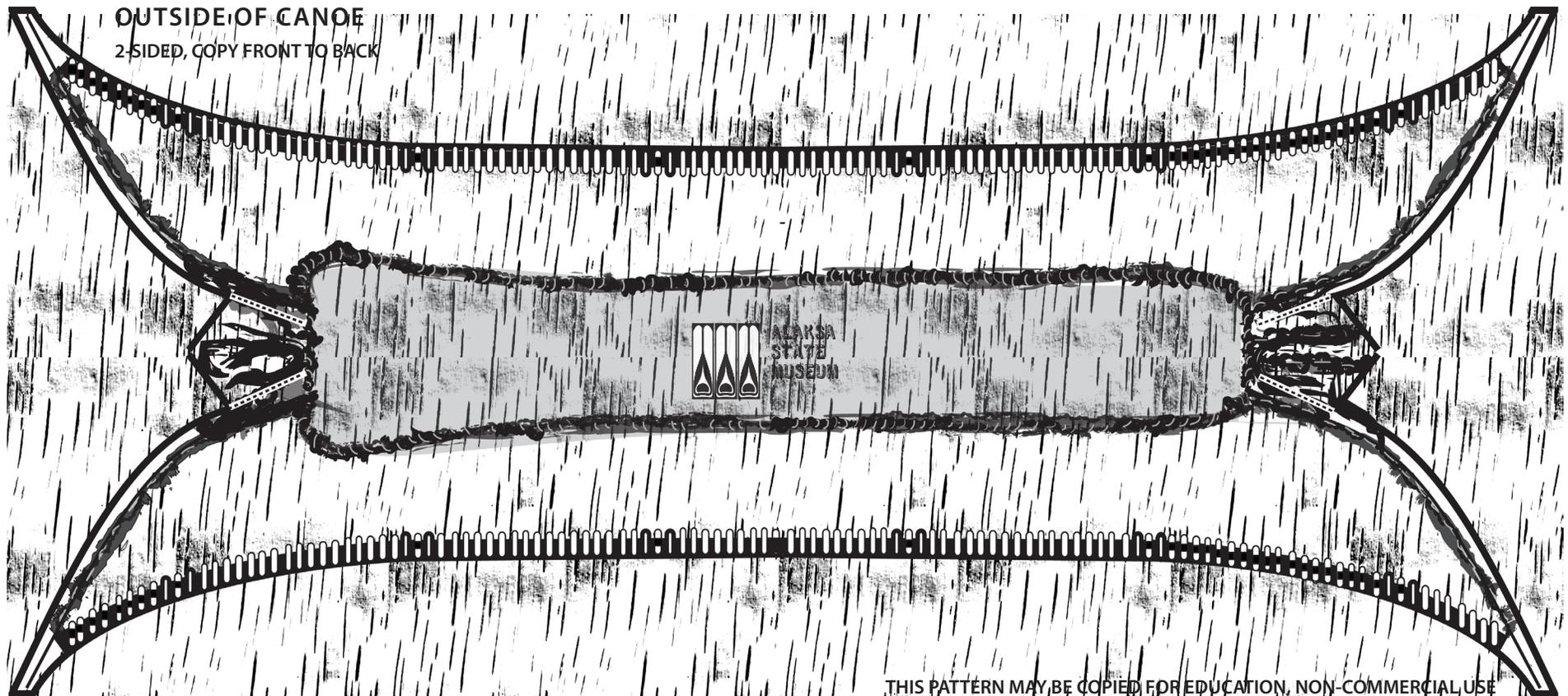
395 Whittier St., Juneau, AK 99801

Ph: (907) 465-2901

www.museums.state.ak.us

Birch bark canoes were made for hundreds of years by Native people across North America in northern boreal forests regions where birch trees grow. This type of boat is tough, turns easily with a single blade paddle, and can be repaired in the woods with pitch collected from nearby trees. The size and shape of canoes

varied to create boats for different uses. Larger cargo canoes that were 25 to 35 feet long were designed to haul supplies and families. Although modern canoes are made of different materials, the old bark canoe designs are still used by companies to manufacture canoes for recreation, hunting and fishing.



This model canoe pattern is based on a real boat you can see at the Alaska State Museum. The actual boat is an Athabascan birch bark canoe built around 1850 and from an old village near Iliamna, 200 miles southwest of Anchorage. It is 16 feet long but only weighs about 40 pounds making it easy for one hunter to paddle and carry overland between lakes and rivers. The Athabascan people from the interior region of Alaska are the primary makers of birch bark canoes in the state. The design of the canoe is also known as a kayak-form canoe as it shares

a kayak's long sleek form, has a rigid bottom frame, pointed bow and stern, a multi-chined rounded hull, and rides low in the water. Three pieces of birch bark are sewn together and tied to the frame using split spruce root lashing to make the outer covering. Hot pitch from spruce trees is used to seal the seams and make the boat watertight. Some canoes had decking of birch bark that covered the bow and stern. The spruce roots were sometimes dyed and colors such as red and black were woven over the gunwale providing it with a decorative rim.