

## Lenape Canoes



**The Dugout Canoe** — Canoe travel on rivers, lakes and possibly the ocean provided the principal means of transportation. There were no beasts of burden in North America and it is not certain if the Lenape people used their dogs to carry things as some tribes did. What had to be transported was carried on people's backs or in canoes. Canoes were made from the trunks of trees such as tulip tree, elm, oak, or chestnut. In fact the Lenape name for the tulip tree is Muxulhemenshi, "Tree from which canoes are made."



*Birch bark canoes were not used in the Lenape homeland because the type of birch growing there is not suitable for canoe making. In this illustration, a tree is being felled by means of fire set against the base of the trunk. Wet deerskin has been wrapped around the trunk to keep the fire from spreading upwards. From time to time the fire will be doused and the charred portions adzed away. By repeating this process the tree is finally burned through and falls for lack of support. In making a dugout canoe, a suitable tree trunk is selected and one side is adzed flat. Small fires are set to burn into the trunk, thus helping to hollow it. Charred parts are adzed or gouged out and the hull is finally planed smooth.*

*Illustration courtesy of Herbert C. and John T. Kraft*