

## The Birch Tree

### **I. Curricular Areas:**

Social Studies/History  
Science  
Art

### **II. Learner Goals:**

Students will be able to identify a paper birch tree and discuss its importance to Ojibwe people.

### **III. Learner Outcomes:**

1. Students will be able to identify a paper birch tree by its distinctive bark and the shape of its leaves.
2. Students will state early summer as the time to harvest birch bark.
3. Students will be able to make a list of the uses of birchbark by Ojibwe people.

### **IV. Background Information:**

The Ojibwe consider the paper birch tree or wigwasa'tig ( wig- wah- sah- tig)one of the most important trees. Many years ago it was gathered by family members working together. Although the time for harvesting birch bark varied depending on where you lived, it was usually done in June . At this time the bark could be removed in such a way as not to harm the tree. Before actual peeling the bark from the trees, a ceremony was held for the trees. One of the elders offered a prayer and tobacco to the trees to thank them for their gift of bark.

Birch bark has many qualities that made it useful to Ojibwe people. It was waterproof, light weigh but durable and it comes in many layers.

The many uses of birch bark included :

Birchbark canoes  
Coverings for winter homes  
Birch bark containers used in storage, cooking and food preparation  
Folded sheets of birch bark became suitcases for traveling  
In rolled form, bark torches helped men spear fish at night  
Birch bark formed splints for fractures arms and legs  
Birch Bark was used for paper to make charts, maps and picture symbols.  
The inner bark mixed with other barks made a red dye

### **V. Student Activity:**

One type of container made with birchbark is a winnowing basket. It was used to "winnow" wild rice. Winnowing means to throw the rice into the air so that the loose shells of the rice will blow away and the rice will fall back into the basket.

Material Needed:

8 1/2x 11 card stock printed to look like birchbark  
colored posterboard strip 22 inches by 1/2 inch  
rafi or yarn  
scissors  
paper clips  
stapler  
plastic large eyed needle

Step 1 - Cut 3 inch slit diagonally in each corner of paper

Step 2 - Fold sides together to form a basket and staple ends to form corners

Step 3 - Wrap framing posterboard around basket and paper clip in place

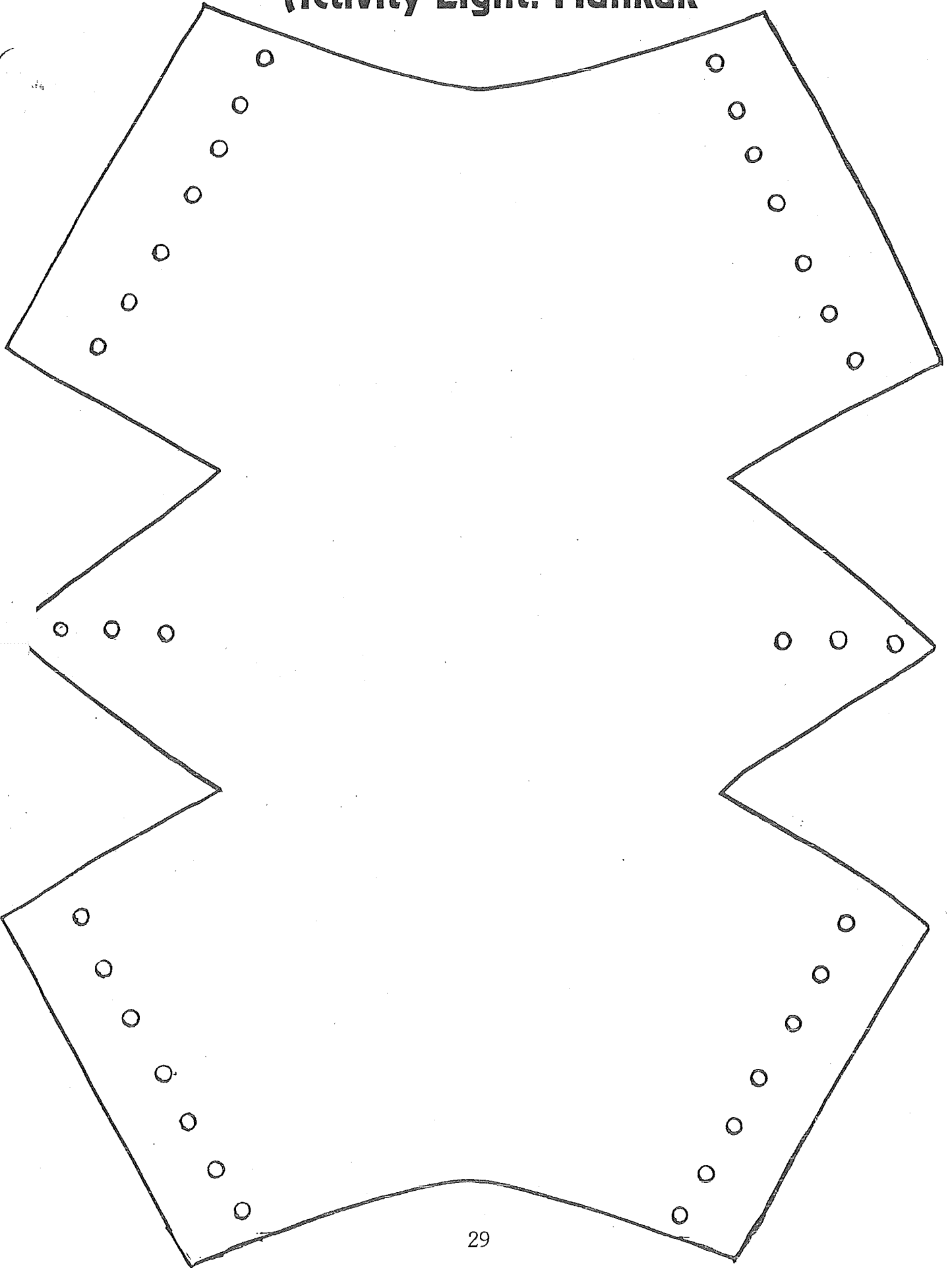
Step 4 - Staple framing posterboard to basket (remove paper clips)

Step 5 - Poke holes along framing posterboard with plastic need then sew with yarn attaching posterboard to basket (optional)

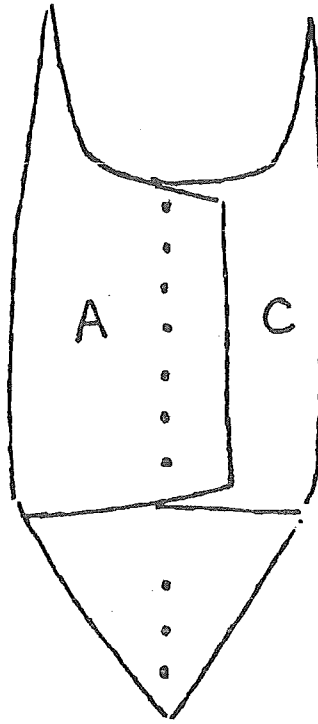
Student may decorate their basket with crayons/markers to simulate various patterns. (See attached)

Secondary students can make Birchbark Mukuks. Patterns attached.

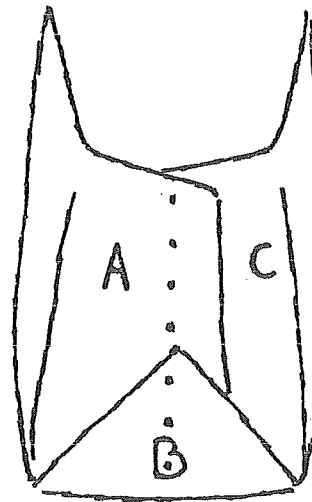
# Activity Eight: Muhkuk



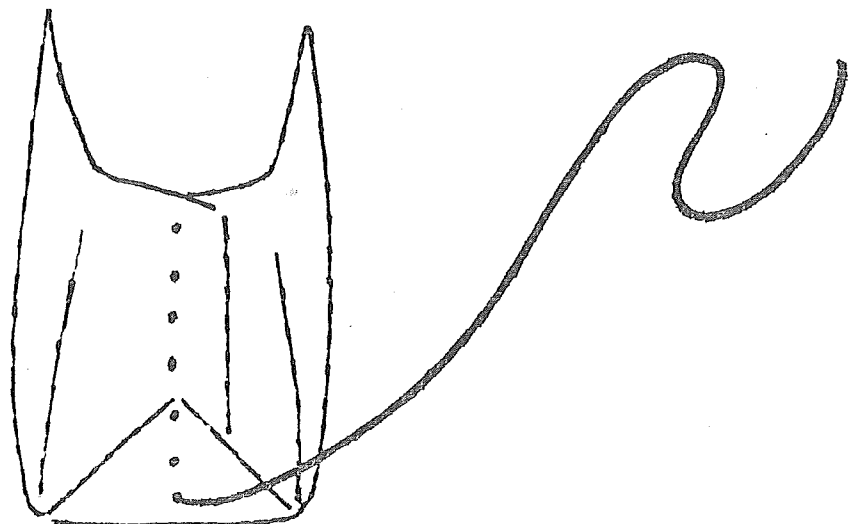
5. Fold flaps A and C together and match the corresponding holes.

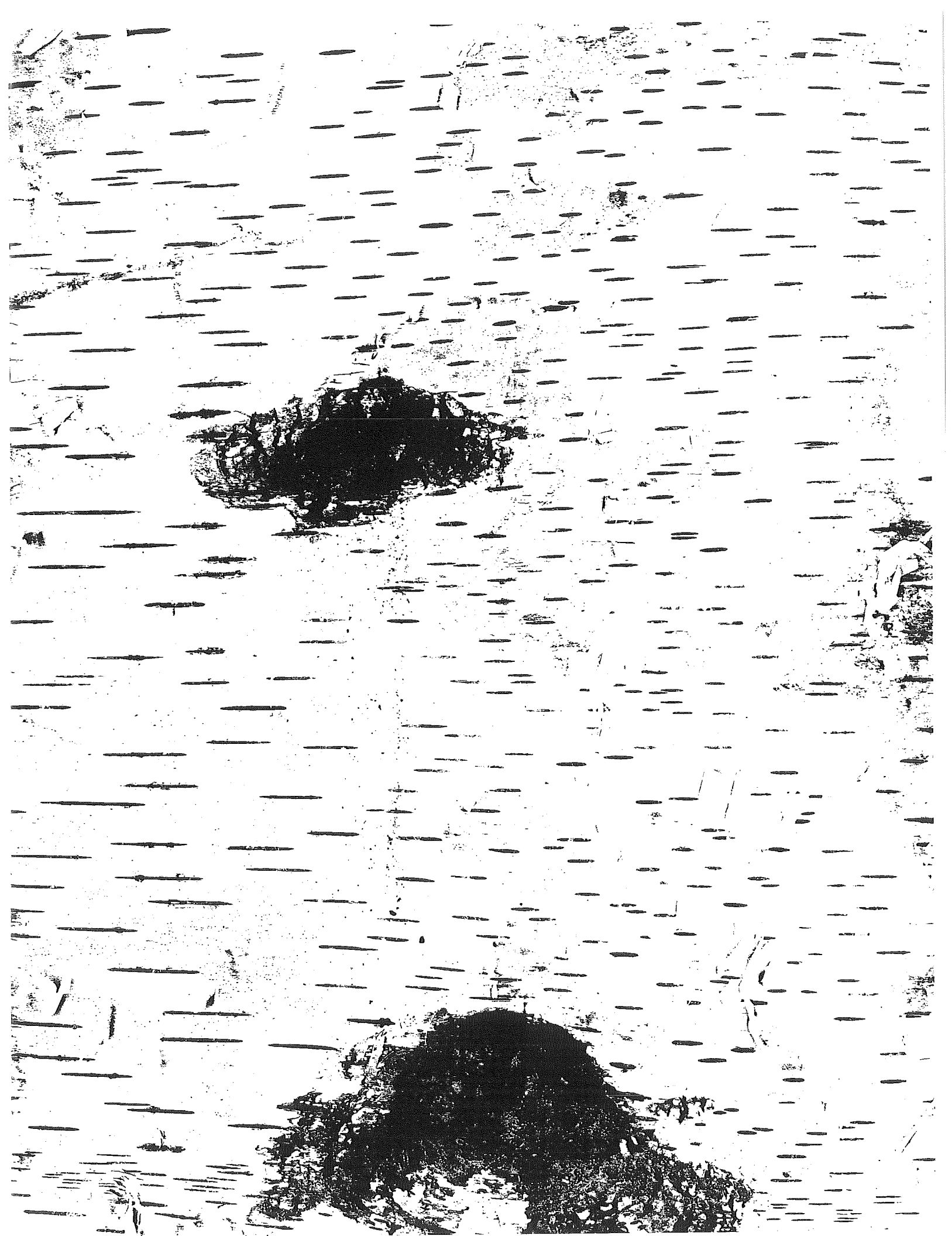


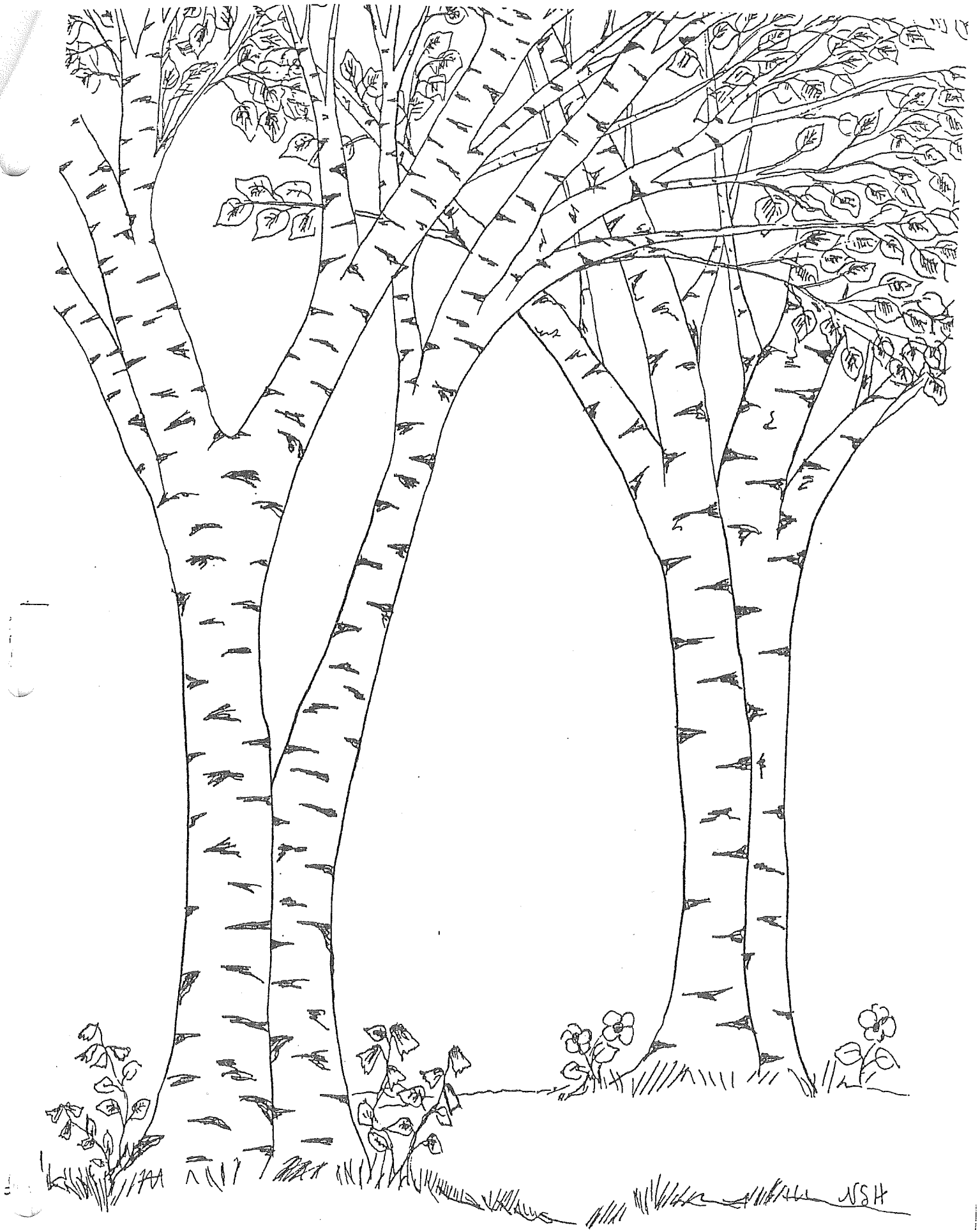
6. Flap B will be on the outside of flaps A and C. Match it with the corresponding holes of flaps A and C.



7. Starting from the inside of the mukuk, lace the yarn through the bottom corresponding holes.







CAN YOU NAME THE FOLLOWING TREES ?

