

# Top tips: Salvaging water-damaged tukutuku

Following these steps will minimise the loss of flood-damaged tukutuku, preventing further damage.

Mould can develop within 72 hours, but with quick deliberate action you can increase the chance of a successful recovery.

## 1. Prioritise, then proceed

Tukutuku are constructed of more than one plant material. Older taonga may include kākaho, rimu, totara, harakeke, pingao, kiekie, as well as other plant materials. More contemporary works may include raffia, leather and timber slats. Plant fibres and wood swell and shrink at differing rates, resulting in possible deformation or physical damage. When tukutuku are wet, the fine, twined elements may rupture under pressure of other swelling materials. Water damage can include mould growth, splitting and deformation of wooden components, staining of painted finishes and running of water-soluble dyes.



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## 2. Assess, document, photograph

Assess your tukutuku. Note down any damage and document its condition by taking photographs of damaged areas. Continue to document the process as it progresses. Document any supplies, equipment, planned treatments and activities undertaken during the treatment of your tukutuku. This information can help if further conservation treatment is needed.

## 3. Remove any dirt or mud

Dirt and mud can accelerate damage to plant materials and should be removed as soon as possible. Once deinstalled, wet tukutuku panels can be gently rinsed of any mud with water poured across the surface or with a gentle hose spray. Use large, soft bristle brushes to assist in the removal of debris. If necessary, repeat the process carefully dabbing surfaces with a very soft cloth. Excess water can be removed using a clean, soft bristled brush and a wet vacuum, if required. Gently pat surfaces dry with absorbent materials, like cotton towels or butcher's paper.

## 4. Create a drying area

Air-drying should be done in a slow, controlled manner to prevent further damage occurring. To aid the drying process, elevate the tukutuku panels on a flat surface to increase the air-flow. Open windows and position fans around the piece to further improve the drying process, rotating fans when necessary. If you have access to air conditioning consider using it on a cool setting.

Dehumidifiers can be used in closed rooms to remove moisture while tukutuku are drying. Remember to empty the container regularly. Monitor regularly for signs of mould growth, distortion, and physical damage.

## Call a conservator if:

- Your taonga are badly damaged and require extra help. This also applies to any taonga accidentally damaged during the salvage and drying process.
- You find mould on your taonga and need further advice and assistance.
- You are unsure about any of the steps given here.