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Birchbark Canoe: Living Among the Algonquins

David Gidmark

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Discover the dying art of birchbark canoe building as seen through the eyes of someone who is passionate about it. In this book David Gidmark tells the story of the building of a traditional birchbark canoe and his apprenticeship learning the skills and the language of the Algonquin of western Quebec.

Through learning how to *do* (how to strip the bark from the tree, fashion gunwales from the cedar logs, carve the ribs with a crooked knife and sew the huge sheets of bark onto the frame with spruce root) David Gidmark learns how to see the wilderness and relate to it in Algonquin ways that are very different from ours. As his knowledge increases, so does his respect for the culture and wisdom of native peoples.

Part way through this odyssey, he meets his future wife, Ernestine, a young Ojibway woman who was taken at the age of five from her family and placed in a residential school. As she and David made a life together in the woods, she was able to begin relearning her language and culture.

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