

## Biographical Note

Born in 1940, Camil Guy received his M.A. in Anthropology from the University of Montreal in 1965, and in 1967-68 spent a year at University College, London, England, working toward his doctorate. His work experience has taken him from Labrador (1963, for the Centre d'études nordiques), to Aubrac, France (1964, for the Centre national de la recherche scientifique, and the University of Montreal), and among the Indians of St-Maurice, Quebec (1965 and 1966, for the National Museums of Canada).

Since 1968 he has been working with the Ministère des Affaires culturelles in Quebec, at first with the Amerindian ethnology division of the Institut national de la civilisation. From December 1970 to February 1973, he was acting director of the archaeology and ethnology division, where he instituted programs of inventory and conservation of the archaeological sites of Quebec, and set up a documentation centre for Quebec archaeology and ethnology. Since February 1973, he has been responsible for research in Amerindian ethnology.

He has had articles published in *Ethnologie contemporaine* (Paris), *Recherches amérindiennes au Québec*, and *Culture vivante*. In 1970 the National Museums of Canada published his *Le canot d'écorce à Weymontaching*.

## **Avant-propos**

L'étude de la structure sociale des Indiens de Weymontaching, au cours de l'été 1966, nous a permis d'observer la construction d'un canot d'écorce destiné aux collections des Musées nationaux du Canada. Ce rapport présente les résultats de cette courte enquête socio-technique.

Les lignes admirables de cette embarcation et ses performances sur les cours d'eau de la forêt subarctique ont déjà suscité maints commentaires élogieux. Nous n'insisterons pas sur ces aspects. Il nous suffit de rappeler que le canot a été adopté d'emblée par la culture euro-canadienne. Nous nous efforcerons plutôt de montrer la perfection technique de cette chaîne d'opérations que constituent les diverses phases de la fabrication d'un canot d'écorce. Nous espérons que le lecteur sera sensible à cette connaissance intime qu'a l'Indien du milieu dans lequel il vit, à l'imagination dont il a fait preuve pour développer des techniques efficaces de transformation des matières avec un outillage limité, et au contrôle étroit qu'il exerce sur ces techniques. Nous signalerons au passage certains faits sociaux se rapportant à la construction du canot, sans toutefois traiter à fond cet aspect socio-économique.

Nous avons entrepris ce travail à la suggestion de M. A. D. DeBlois, à qui nous exprimons notre gratitude. Nous désirons aussi remercier MM. Gordon Day et Eugene Y. Arima, dont l'aide nous fut précieuse dans les domaines respectifs de la traduction phonétique et de la représentation graphique.

## **Preface**

During my study of the social structure of the Indians of Weymontaching in the summer of 1966, I had the opportunity to observe the construction of a birchbark canoe being made for the collection of the National Museums of Canada. This short paper contains the observations I made that summer.

Much has been said in praise of the birchbark canoe—its pleasing lines, its excellent performance on the vast waterways of the subarctic, and its adoption with little modification by the Euro-Canadians. I have not enlarged upon these aspects here; rather I have tried to demonstrate the process involved in the building of a birchbark canoe. I hope that the reader will gain an appreciation of the Indian's familiarity with his environment, his ingenuity in developing efficient techniques for processing the raw material with a limited number of tools, and his skilled control of those techniques. While this report makes some comments on social aspects relevant to the building of the canoe, it does not explore them in depth.

I wish to express my gratitude to Dr. A. D. DeBlois, who suggested this study; to Dr. Gordon Day for his assistance in phonetic translation; and to Dr. Eugene Y. Arima for his assistance with the illustrations.



Albert Birote, the builder