

116 DAVID THOMPSON'S NARRATIVE

for this purpose the Native ties a strong leather cord to the great toes of his feet, leaving a space between them of about one foot, and having a strong square headed knife, very sharp at the point, in his belt, he ascends the tree to as high as the Rind is good, then raising a small strip from around the tree, in a straight line downwards cuts quite through the rind, which readily leaves the bark, and while the sap is rising comes off so freely that two persons with light poles keep it to the tree until it can be carefully taken down ; it is then warmed and it's circular form made flat, laid on the ground, and kept so, by light logs of wood ; and thus [it] becomes fit for use. The common length from one tree is from nine to fifteen feet, with a breadth of twenty four to thirty inches, very few trees yield a greater breadth, in this climate. As the Birch Rind is impervious to water ; Canoes are made of it of all sizes to thirty feet in length, by four to five feet in breadth on the middle bar ; this large size is made use of by the Traders, for the conveyance of furs and goods, and is so light, it is carried by two men, when turned up. On shore, it affords good shelter to the Men, against Rain and the night. The canoes of the Natives are from ten to sixteen feet in length, and breadth in proportion, during the open season, they are almost constantly in them ; hunting ; removing from place to place, the Rivers and numerous Lakes giving free access through the whole country. Their dishes and domestic utensils are mostly of Birch Rind, which are made of various sizes, and pack up with [each] other and being light, with a smooth, firm, surface are easily kept clean. This Rind is inflammable, and makes bright torches. For coverings to their tents and lodges, the Rind is sewed together so as to take the form required ; and being water proof, make a light comfortable tent in all weathers, and when the rain is over, the Natives can directly remove ; whereas a leather tent when soaked with rain, requires a day's time and fire to dry it. Unfortunately the cold of winter renders it brittle