



## The Legend of the Birch Tree

Long ago and not far away, a boy was born into a respected family. Before he could walk, a naming ceremony was held in his honor. He was given the name Wiigwaas. Wiigwaas was given many gifts from the Creator. One of those gifts was to help others in a good way. Wiigwaas not only helped his father hunt and fish, but he also helped his mother pick wild berries and tend the garden. He helped the elderly in his village and in other villages nearby. He helped the people make canoes and build their homes.

One day, when he became a young man, Wiigwaas had to go to battle. In this battle, he lost his life. His brothers brought him home. He was wrapped in pure white buckskin and buried on a hill just beyond his village. After the burial, they held a farewell ceremony. The following spring, his people noticed that a little tree had begun to grow at the site of his grave. As this tree grew taller, a dream came to the father of Wiigwaas. In this dream, Wiigwaas told his father that he was still able to help his people. The dream showed the father how to use the birch tree.

“In the springtime, you can take the sweet sap from the tree and distribute it among your people to use as they do the sap from maple trees. The people can peel the bark from the tree and use it. The women may use it to create bowls and baskets for keeping food. The men can use the bark for building lodges and canoes. From the strong wood inside the tree, you can make sleighs and lodge poles. All people can use its wood to make fires.” Today, Wiigwaas’ words are remembered and he is still helping his people this way, even in death.