

Exploding Chippewas



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A collection of poems exploring a continuing struggle with identity. Everything this poet touches upon is volatile -- the poet himself, the people and world around him, ideas and mythologies, the ghosts of memory and the dreams of possible futures, all seem to burst into fragments. Mark Turcotte uses poetry to gather up the pieces -- the shards of joy and grief, peace and doubt, strength and temptation, questions and answers -- as he tries to define and rediscover what is lost when everyday life becomes explosive. The first part of the book is a series of lyrical poems that all begin with the phrase "Back when I used to be Indian," a self-contradictory concept that strikes at the heart of Turcotte's identity. His absent father and his own experience of fatherhood are the subjects of a second group of poems, leading him to explore the legacy that burdened his father and, in turn, the different kind of legacy that now burdens him. In a third and final group, Turcotte's imagination reaches again into the many flames of his experience, leading toward the title poem, where even the most dangerous of fires become a guiding light.

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