

# A TALL TALE OF WILLIE WALLEYE

*by Bonnie Schuh*

Once upon a time in the great north land there lived a big, big fish by the name of Willie Walleye. Willie lived in the Lake of the Woods, located in northern Minnesota, USA and Ontario and Manitoba, Canada. He grew up swimming the 68 mile long by 59 mile wide lake, feeding on shiner and grub minnows, Perch, Smelt, Crayfish and May Flies. In so doing Willie grew to be a vast size of 40 feet long, 21 feet in girth, and weighed 2½ tons. His favorite pastime was to swim to the surface of the water at night and watch the beautiful kaleidoscope of colors dance on the water from the Northern Lights that would light up the sky.

Willie was good friends with a big Sturgeon fish by the name of Caviar. Often Willie and Caviar would swim together exploring the waters surrounding the 65,000 miles of shoreline located in the Lake of the Woods. In so doing they got acquainted with the many Piping Plover birds and the great American White Pelicans and Bald Eagles that lived on and near the 14,552 islands located on the lake. Willie and Caviar would often hide out, where the lake was the deepest (210 feet). They knew they were perfectly safe there.

One night, as Willie and Caviar surfaced near the top of the water, they were surprised to discover a terrific storm brewing. Willie could see a little boat in distress. As they swam closer they realized there were two Ojibwa Indian men that had lost the use of their boat motor and were trying to row the boat with a pair of oars. A big wave bore down on top of the boat and the oars were swept away. The two men were praying to the Great Spirit to help them. Willie called out to his friends the Plovers, Pelicans and Eagles to fly above and guide them to a resort on Oak Island as he and Caviar swam on each side of the boat and nudged the boat through the huge waves of water. Instructions from the birds as to where to navigate soon had the boat resting in shallow water near Oak Island with the two men praying thanksgiving to the Great Spirit for their rescue. Willie flipped his big tail thanking his friends for their help.

Willie and Caviar were very tired and bruised from the beating of the waves and boat, so they decided to swim to the mouth of the Rainy River just beyond the big lake to rest. As they lay near the top of the water letting the sun that was rising in the east warm their sores, a man saw them lying there and hurried to get a gun. He wanted to get those two big trophy fish! As the gun fired twice and the bullets bounced against the water, Willie cried out to Caviar, "These warnings we must heed, so we can live to do good deeds. To our safe home we'll swim with great speed; follow me, for I'll lead." So, they left behind the man to tell the story of how he almost had the Loch Ness Monsters.