

# HERO OF MINNESOTA

by Tarena Ubel (Grade 6)

Once upon a time in 1909 there was a quaint, little town called Baudette. It had dense, green woods and a gigantic fresh water lake called Lake of the Woods. In this lake was a fish, the tiniest fingerling 'ya ever saw. His name was Willie Walleye. He was a lonesome fella, shunned by his school of snobby fish. They never realized what a hero of Minnesota he would be.

One day when Willie swam to his favorite spot, he saw a human. Willie was scared of her at first. She looked at Willie and said, "Ya look sadder than a dog without his bone."

Willie said, "Is it that obvious?"

"Don't worry 'bout it, I won't tell anybody," she said.

"Okay... what's your name? Mine's Willie Walleye," he said.

"My name is Macy Bloomer," she said.

Well, each day after they met Willie grew and grew. Soon he was the biggest fish in the lake, with a mouth as big as a barn. People and fish started to call him "Gentle Giant".

A year later, in 1910, something felt different and smelled different. Willie went to check it out. When he popped his head out of the water there was a huge fire, licking trees and, like a dragon, blowing fire. The fire said, "I will burn this town down no matter what!"

Willie whispered to Macy, "I...I can't do anything. The fire will take down this town."

“Come on Willie, you can do something,” she shouted. “Willie, Willie, Willie!”

Then all the fish and humans kept chanting Willie’s name. Willie finally got the nerve, heart, and guts – and he took a huge mouth of water (bigger than the town’s water tower) and then “bhshshhh”! He spit out the water like Niagara Falls and it covered the town.

The fire hissed and yelped, “No! No! You have defeated me!”

Willie smelled the black charcoal left by the wild fire that he defeated. Willie felt like he was someone now and wanted to help more towns with fire trouble. So, he did. He went all over Minnesota. And with the water that was left in his mouth, he would find a spot to make a lake – then spit out the water and make a hole in the ground which turned into a lake. These lakes were a gift from Willie, so if they needed water in the future they would have it.

The people of Baudette loved him so much that they built a replica of him and put it in the middle of the town so everyone could see. They were glad to have this fire fighting fish that was born in their very own lake. And because of him, Minnesota has over 10,000 lakes!