

Memories of the Ile-a-la-Crosse Flood

As told by Gerald to Nolan Roy

I remember the flood that hit Ile a la Crosse in the mid 70's. The water steadily rose up to about 7 feet. The village had to fill thousands of sand bags to keep the water back and eventually dump trucks and other heavy equipment had to be brought in to build the dykes that are now around parts of the town. At that time the community had local names to identify certain areas of the community, some of the names were, Ala-bee, Chinatown, kus-ski-ew and Snobhill. Ala-bee and Chinatown were the two areas most affected by the floods. I think it was around 1973 or 1975.

I remember riding with the drivers of the dump trucks and filling sand bags at the DNR compound. I also remember an army helicopter landing in town; it was a Chinook, one of the largest helicopters in the Canadian army. I think it had dropped off supplies to battle the flood. It landed in front of my house; we used to live across from what is now Flashpoint Video. I remember an old lady by the name of Surree, who used to be my neighbor. Surree always had cookies and bannock for some of the kids in the neighborhood. The flood-waters had come up close to the back of her house and the same happened for Ahtwin (Tony) Kyplain and Gabe Kyplain's homes. I thought it was so cool when the water was so close to our houses as we would build rafts and paddle around in the bushes. I also remember some people using air-boats and skiffs

where they were able to drive right up to the dykes right behind Ahtwin Kyplains house. We used to borrow someone's canoe which we would find on the shore of the dyke to go look for duck eggs and other birds nests, or just to try and hunt with slingshots and our home made bow and arrows. We never did kill anything but it was an adventure just to paddle around in the bushes.

The waters had not receded very much when winter came. When the water froze and before the snow built up too much, we were able to skate anywhere in the bush behind Ahtwins house. We would be out all day playing cops and robbers on skates and in the bush. We would also play tag or not it on skates. There were many times that my brothers and I would go home hungry, wet and covered in some prickly little plants, we used to call them hitchhikers because they would not come off of your clothes, even after washing them. Mom used to be really upset, especially when all we used to wear was nylon clothes back then.

Those days were filled with worry free, fun filled days, but I don't think it was the same for the people who almost lost their property to the flood, and of course the town had to deal with all of the worry and hardship that the flood brought, but I think that the flood brought the community closer together and instilled a sense of cooperation and moving the community forward.

Those memories will always be with me.