

## *Moshquashies - Medicine Man*

*Story told by Steward Daigneault*

In the old days there used to be very powerful medicine people. This is a story of Moshquashies, the most powerful medicine man in I'le a la Crosse.

Moshquashies was a very old man. People say he was over 250 years old when this story took place. Apparently, he became more powerful when he died, and then he would come back with stronger medicine. He looked like a small, crippled up old man. Physically, he looked like a very weak man, but even the strongest man in I'le a la Crosse wouldn't cross his path.

One day these traders came to the post. They were complaining of an old lady at Stanley Mission who would charge the canoes a toll for coming through her waterway from Hudson Bay. She would demand that the men pay her a fee, and if they did not have money, she would demand that they give her some of their trade goods -- flour, lard, or other things the traders carried.

If the traders refused to pay, she would bring bad luck to the trading party. Her reputation was well known. She had once sunk some canoes by causing a storm, which sank all of the canoes with the men in it who hadn't paid her a tribute.

When Moshquashies heard the story, he was angry. He said take me to this woman. I will teach her a lesson. The men

agreed, although they were nervous travelling back to Stanley Mission.

When they got to Stanley Mission, sure enough the woman came out of her cabin and demanded a fee from the travellers. Moshquasis was furious. This was not how people acted in the north. He got out of the canoe, picked up a willow, and gave the old woman a beating. He said, "No more fees will be paid to you." He told the men to jump in the canoe and leave.

When they were on the large lake, a large cloud of insects came to attack the canoes. Moshquashies leaned back, took a large breath, and then blew through his medicine bag towards the pests. The insects flew away. The men decided they better make camp, so they pulled ashore on an island.

The next day they got an early start. When they were on the middle of the lake, these dark menacing clouds came out of nowhere. It looked like a storm of terrible proportions was going to swamp the canoes. Again Mosquashies, leaned back, took a large breath, and blew though his medicine bag towards the storm clouds. As quickly as they appeared, they disappeared.

That afternoon, Moshquashies told the people in the canoe, if I start to shake and fall down dead do not worry. You will wrap me in this canvas, roll me up tight, and tie me up with this rope. Then you will throw me over board. When you do that, you will change your course slightly, and you will paddle over to the point. That's where I will meet you.

Sure enough, within a half hour, Moshquashies started to shake, fell in the canoe, and was dead. The men did as Moshquashies requested - rolled him up in the canvas, tied him up, and threw him overboard. Then they started paddling to the point. When they got there in the evening, they saw Moshquashies standing there. He said, "I had some unfinished business left to do this day." Later that year they heard that the old lady at Stanley Mission had died, the same day Moshquashies had been thrown overboard.