

WILLIE WALLEYE'S HOMECOMING

by Jenessa Laine

Willie was an odd fish. He lived in a small pond with a school of sunfish, which adopted him. His peers made fun of him because he wasn't the same and they wouldn't let him participate in any of their games. He spent his time with Loreen, an aged and wise old fish, and learned about his family and the great lakes where his ancestors lived. She told him how to return to his home but warned that it was a dangerous journey to undergo.

Willie cared for Loreen until she passed away and on that day he packed his bags. The sunfish told him he wouldn't make it and told him not to go, but he had already made up his mind and said he was going home.

He swam for a short time until he reached the north end of the pond. He had reached the most terrifying part of his journey. He had to hop up on dry land and hope to make it to the next pond, where he would be able to reach the Rainy River. After a short delay, he became brave enough to go and his panicked hops brought him safely across. He didn't know what to expect, but he marveled at what he could see. He saw fish of all kinds and seaweed for the first time.

He asked a nearby fish which way to go to get to Lake of the Woods and was surprised to find himself talking to someone who looked like himself. He was addressing a middle aged walleye that told him the way, but warned him of hooks and other things that would distract him.

Willie found himself swimming in a world totally new to him. He had to swim against currents he had never encountered before and learned that some fish were bigger than him and would actually try to eat him! He didn't know how to find food in such an area and although he knew that the hooks were bad, he thought he could outsmart them! He was sadly mistaken and had to fight for his life to get off, but a net had already caught him.

A young fisherman looked him over and an amazing thing happened when he looked him in the eye. Willie told the young boy his story and the boy said that he could help. He put Willie in a bucket and brought him safely to his house. He carried the bucket three blocks through town until he came to a very large hill and released him in the bay. Willie glided into the water and was greeted by his kind and could sense that relatives were around. He swam frantically to them and they swam quickly to him. They threw a party for his return and welcomed him home again.

The young boy watched it all happen and walked away singing about a place he now called Willie Walleye Hill.