

A Community Lost

Gerald Nadeau, Transcript

[Elizabeth: How did the residents know that they were losing their land?] “They were visited by a person that represented the purchasing people, and they were told by them that the land was being looked at as a potential site for development of some sort. Few people knew what it was for, but they vaguely thought that it had something to do with the war, because at that point in time the war was not going favorable. So they came and told the people that there was a chance that that land would be purchased and they would have to move. Then it created a division. The older people did not want to move. The younger, who were not attached as much to the land, they looked on that area as one that didn’t furnish any opportunity. An opportunity to make a living was very limited. But then the older people could not, were too old to work, so they had no gains by the Government buying their property. So that divided the people in their thinking. The old people did not want to leave the [Ottawa] River. It was the River they were gonna miss. Because some knew that they’d never get back to that river again. It’s not a big thing but it’s an important thing when that’s all a person has. It was sadness, really. Sadness. The water smell, it’s hard to explain. But the smell of the River was one of the most nicest things I remember about it. Why, I can’t tell you. Strange, eh, that something like that can stand out as being important? When you don’t have too much, the little things mean more. And the smell of water even today, I like it because I can almost recall that same thing again.

The memories and history of neighbours and things that you had to leave behind, that was the saddest and the most noticeable loss. Not the value of the land that was left, so much as the breaking up of the groups of people that lived by the River. It was as if a glass was shattered into many pieces because no one could ever regroup again. You had to go your separate ways because there was not available places for you so that the numbers of people could ever live close together again. And that was one of the losses that was the most severe, I would say.”