

## **The Exeter and The Not-So-Mighty North Saskatchewan**

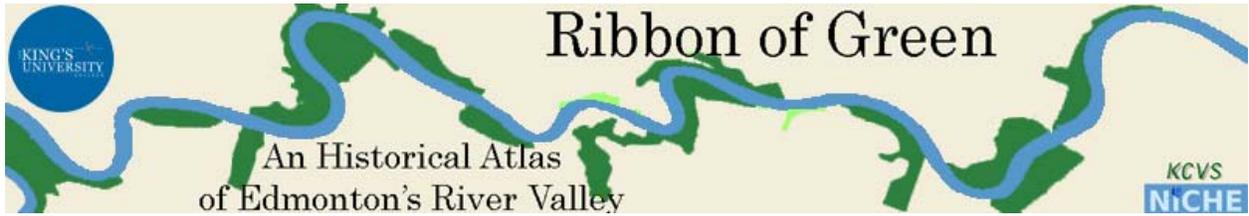
Written by Katie Wallbaum

When one thinks of problems navigating the North Saskatchewan, it is often the strong current or sand bars which pervade the conversation. However, in the case of the Exeter, a Navy cadet ship out of Lac La Biche, the problem of the river was that there was not enough of it. The journey of the Exeter from Edmonton, Alberta to Prince Albert, Saskatchewan was cut short because of the lowest water levels which the North Saskatchewan had seen in fifty years.<sup>1</sup> After removing themselves from the gravel bar which they encountered on the first day, the Exeter's captain and crew continued down the river without much incident until 12:30 p.m. when the river lacked the depth to carry the ship any further. The Exeter needed at least three feet of water in order to keep the journey going but just outside of Fort Saskatchewan the river's level dropped to just over eighteen inches and the Exeter ran aground yet again.<sup>2</sup> This time, however, the Exeter would not be rescued from its beached position, the ship was stuck and the orders were given for the crew to abandon ship. McGrane stayed behind in order to keep the dinghies from being overweight but was eventually taken ashore when cadets from H.M.C.S. Nonsuch arrived to help in the rescue efforts. The Lac La Biche crew's aspirations to journey to Prince Albert via the North Saskatchewan were dashed by the not-so-mighty river's low water levels and the trip had to be altered from river voyage to road trip. The North Saskatchewan is a unpredictable river and on

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<sup>1</sup> J.E. McGrane, Lieut., R.C.S.C., *The Exeter and the North Saskatchewan*, (Lac La Biche: The Exeter Sea Cadet Corps, 1950), 54.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.



that fateful day in 1949 its low levels defeated the Exeter leaving the captain and crew to finish

their Saskatchewan journey by Jeep.