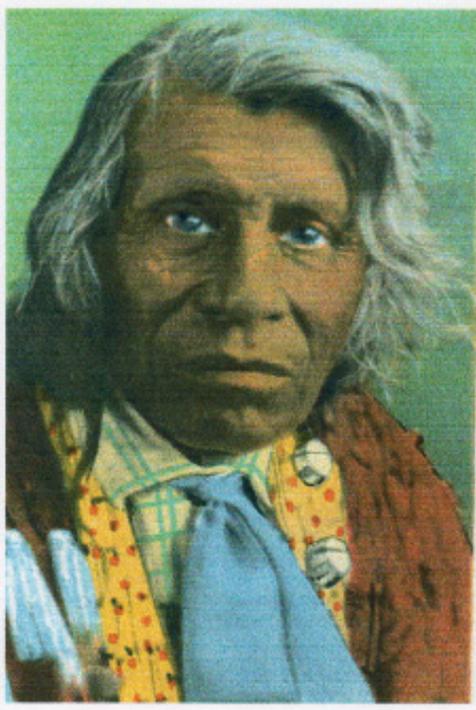
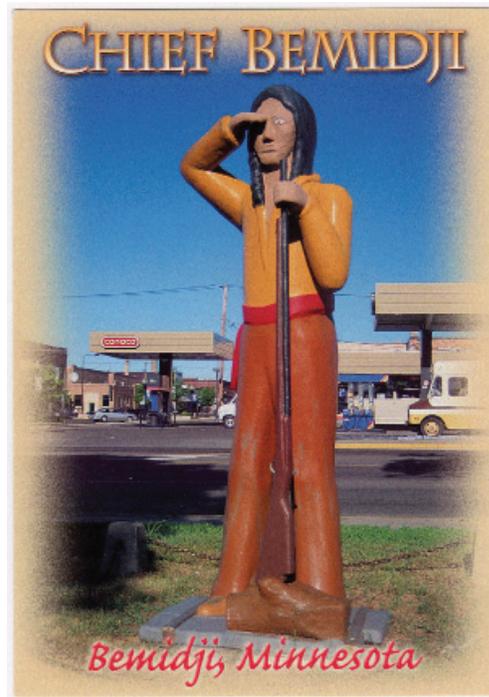


CHIEF BEMIDJI STATUE PROJECT



Photograph of Chief Bemidji,
circa 1890.



Postcard showing the existing folk art statue of
Chief Bemidji.

Chief Bemidji was also known as Shaynowishkung (shay-now-ish-kung). In Ojibwe this means “rattler or one who makes a jingling sound”. He took his name from the lake, known as Lac Traverse in French and as Bimijigamaag (bee-mee-gee-ga-mahg) in Ojibwe, which means “water running sideways through the lake” or “lake with crosswise water.”.

Project Mission:

The Chief Bemidji Statue Project committee is interested in commissioning a new statue of Chief Bemidji. This new representation would depict him in a dignified and respectful way, honoring the man and his legacy.

Project Goals:

1. Engage the community in a discussion about the value of creating a new statue, and about perceptions surrounding the existing statue in Librabry Park.
2. Commission a life-sized or larger realistic bronze sculpture. This will allow a detailed representation of Chief Bemidji, in a material traditionally chosen for its beauty, quality, and durability.
3. Select a location that is highly accessible and visible by the public, one that will allow for greater interaction with and understanding of Chief Bemidji and his role in our City’s founding.
4. Develop an educational exhibit at the Beltrami County Historical Society, or other venue, that tells the story of Chief Bemidji and the statues and memorials that have been created in his honor.
5. Consider relocating the current wood/fiberglass statue of Chief Bemidji to the Beltrami County Historical Society.

Timeline of the Statues:

- 1901** Danish lumberjack Gustaf Hinche, a harness-maker, painter and naturalist, carved the first statue of Chief Bemidji out of boards nailed together. The statue was moved to various locations over the years.
- 1904** The town mourned Shaynowishkung's death and erected a large monument in his name (which still stands) in Greenwood Cemetery.
- 1927** Bemidji's Park Commission placed Hinche's Chief Bemidji statue in Library Park to overlook the flowage of the Mississippi River through Lake Bemidji.
- 1952** The original statue, which had deteriorated, was replaced by a wood and fiberglass replica, carved by a retired lumberjack named Eric Boe. It was gifted to the Beltrami County Historical Society.
- 1983** A plaque was donated by Joyce Bedeson Skelton and placed near the existing statue.
- 2009** A coalition of diverse local interest groups form a committee to explore the preservation of the existing statue and the creation of a new one that better reflects our community's values.

Committee Members:

Mary Auger, Member, City of Bemidji Parks and Trails Commission

Kathryn Beaulieu, Secretary, Red Lake Tribal Council

Al Belleveau, Artist; Sculpture Walk Committee Chair

Mitch Blessing, Artist; Sculpture Walk Committee

Wanda Hoyum, Director, Beltrami County Historical Society

Carolyn Jacobs, Chair, Shared Vision

Sandy Kaul, Artist; Public Art Consultant

Marcia Larson, Director, City of Bemidji Parks and Recreation

Bernice Mitchell, Member, Anishinabe Arts Initiative Council

Paul Richards, Architect, Widseth Smith Nolting

Mary Ringhand, Administrative Asst., Red Lake Tribal Council

Kevin Waldhausen, Councilor, Bemidji City Council

