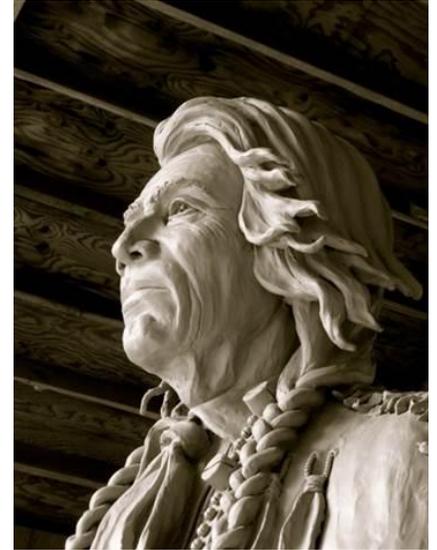


A Shared History...A Shared Home

The Vision

The Carnegie Library is not only an historic building, but resides within an historic site on the banks of Lake Bemidji, near the Mississippi River inlet, a site of human habitation for 3000 years. As we restore the interior of the Carnegie, we intend to create an ongoing exhibit of regional Native American history and culture to celebrate this long and rich story, significant to the Ojibwe as well as those who settled here later.

An exhibit will expand on the life of Shaynowishkung (Chief Bemidji) but also reflect on the pre-contact and post-contact life of the Ojibwe of Red Lake, White Earth, Leech Lake, and Bemidji. Lastly it will document the history of the Carnegie Library itself and its importance to the community.



The new monument in Bemidji's Library Park will honor Shaynowishkung and the Anishinaabe people, and encourage the healing of all peoples. Through his words and actions Shaynowishkung exemplified the traditional values of the Anishinaabe. He was known as a leader and peacemaker.



Why Are We Doing This?

First and foremost, this is for our children. The restored Carnegie will be a legacy for future generations. What better way to enrich that legacy than to educate them on its full history, not just of the building but of all that came before it?

The exhibit will draw residents, visitors, tourists and students, from our own community, from neighboring reservations, and beyond. This ongoing exhibition project, ideally in partnership with the Beltrami County Historical Society, would be an attraction to enhance Bemidji's offering to residents and visitors alike.

An Historic Building on an Historic Site

It is important that the Carnegie be open to all, just as it was when Andrew Carnegie first endowed it.

And More...

Results of the 2009 local Shared Vision Initiative survey indicate that the majority of participants, both Native American and white, say they would like to know more about each other. An exhibit at the Carnegie will help fill this need, and can act as a bridge to connect the past and the present. This gives the building a “mission” beyond our goal to make it available for community use and tenant space, and will encourage many more visitors. This will be a unique exhibition of Ojibwe history and culture specific to the Bemidji region, in combination with the history of the site itself.

The exhibit at the Carnegie will attract visitors who come to see the new Chief Bemidji statue and who want to learn more about Shaynowishkung and local history. In the downtown area visitors can experience the statue of Shaynowishkung; Niimi, the monumental sculpture of a powwow dancer; the contemporary Ojibwe art gallery at Watermark Art Center; the Morrison Collection at the History Center, and the ongoing Carnegie exhibit of Ojibwe history and culture.



Beltrami County Historical Society – Great Northern Depot

Partnerships

We hope to partner with other local organizations to share materials, publicity and support. Potential partners include the Beltrami County Historical Society, Leech Lake Tribal College, the BSU-American Indian Resource Center, the Watermark Art Center, VisitBemidji, and the City of Bemidji. We also intend to seek grant funding from a variety of new sources that might be interested in supporting this future vision for the Carnegie.

The Exhibit

Possible content could include:

- Findings and documents from past and recent archeological excavations of the site
- Expanded information on Shaynowishkung’s life and times. Much excellent material is available from the results of research done for the new statue project
- Pre- and post-contact historical and cultural information on Native American life, focused specifically on the Ojibwe of Red Lake, White Earth, Leech Lake, and Bemidji. Many local sources are interested in contributing
- A history of the Carnegie Library from its construction to the present. Background on Andrew Carnegie’s philanthropy and on Bemidji community at the time of the founding of the library
- Timelines, photographs, oral histories, permanent and temporary pieces or displays