BEMIDJI STATE UNIVERSITY

A CENTURY IN THE PINES
Be midji State University’s first 100 years are marked by tremendous growth — in our size, in our purpose and in our mission to serve the people of Minnesota and beyond.

When we opened our doors in 1919 as Bemidji Normal School, the sixth Normal School for teacher education in the state of Minnesota, few couldn’t have imagined what we would become. Our first four-year degree offering came in 1921, and we renamed ourselves Bemidji Teachers College. In 1957, we became Bemidji State College. Then, in 1975, our journey took its next step when we became Bemidji State University — a name recognizing our role as a multi-purpose institution with regional importance.

Taking full advantage of our once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to recognize a 100-year milestone, our observance of A Bemidji State Century lasted for nearly 18 months. An April 2018 kickoff celebration — held nearly 100 years to the day from the groundbreaking ceremony for our first building on campus — featured music, dance and artifacts from our past. It was an energetic and exciting celebration of the events, people and achievements that are now interwoven into the history of this timeless institution.

That celebration continued into 2019, coinciding with the 100th anniversary of our first fall semester, which began on Sept. 2, 1919, when 38 students registered for classes. The recognition of our Centennial included celebrations of the 50th anniversary of the Hobson Memorial Union, the 50th anniversary of varsity intercollegiate women’s athletics and the 10th anniversary of our Sustainability Office.

The students who first rushed to the shores of Lake Bemidji to pursue their dreams of becoming teachers could not have known that theirs were the first steps in what has become our 100-year journey. It is because of their dreams, and the dreams of those who believed that this institution could only belong in Bemidji, that BSU endures to this day.

From all of us at Bemidji State University, please enjoy some highlights from this rich story through the people who lived it, then and now.
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In June 2019, Bemidji State University’s Office of Communications and Marketing won a Circle of Excellence award for a poster design from the Council of Advancement and Support of Education. This poster was illustrated by 2017 BSU alumnus Hope Wall.
Starting in April 2018, Bemidji State University began a celebration of a truly historic milestone — recognition of its 100th birthday.

Bemidji’s quest to win the right to host Minnesota’s sixth normal school can be traced back to 1906, when Bemidji Schools Superintendent A. P. Ritchie first conceived the idea. Over the next seven years, Bemidji, Cass Lake and Thief River Falls waged a lobbying battle with the state legislature, each trying to make its case as the new school’s home. Cass Lake seemed poised to win the battle in 1909, when the legislature passed a bill awarding the school to Cass Lake. The Cass Lake Times celebrated the decision, running a headline reading “Cass Lake Bill Wins ‘Against the Field.’”

Minnesota Governor John A. Johnson vetoed the bill in full, however, saying in his veto message “in my judgment there is no pressing need for the establishment of an additional normal school at this time.”

The battle continued for another four years, with Bemidji finally prevailing and winning the right to host the school in 1913.

Five years later, in June 1919, Bemidji Normal School opened its doors to its first group of students.

Nearly 100 years to the day from when ground was broken for construction of the school’s first building — “The Main,” as it was known, which today still stands as Deputy Hall — Bemidji State University threw a raucous kickoff celebration of its centennial year in the Bangsberg Fine Arts Complex. This issue of Bemidji State University magazine officially brings that celebration to a close.

As we have celebrated this historic and monumental milestone in our history, we’ve also found opportunity to recognize many other significant milestones in this university’s storied history — including the 50th anniversaries of the Hobson Memorial Union, our since-retired holiday Madrigal Dinners production and organized varsity intercollegiate athletics for women. We also acknowledged the 10th anniversary the BSU Sustainability Office.

Photos on the next several pages capture just a few of the many high points from our celebration.
Homage to the Past with an Eye on the Future

Bemidji State University formally launched an 18-month celebration of its 100th anniversary on April 12, 2018, with a full day of activities and special events on campus. The recognition began with a morning history walk reception on the concourse outside the Bangsberg Fine Arts Complex Main Theatre, featuring historical artifacts from the university archives and banners recapping key moments in Bemidji State’s century-long story. A multimedia extravaganza followed, with BSU students performing era-appropriate song and dance routines during intermissions of a video documentary on the university’s history. A luncheon followed at the American Indian Resource Center and an afternoon ceremony renamed the courtyard between the Hobson Memorial Union buildings as “Centennial Plaza.”

A complete look back at the kickoff of “A Bemidji State Century” may be found as the cover story to the Spring/Summer 2018 edition of Bemidji State University magazine. That story, along with the rest of the issue, is available on our website.

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BSU’s women’s soccer program, under the direction of head coach Jim Stone, assembled an undefeated 2018 regular season (17-0-1 overall, 14-0-1 Northern Sun Intercollegiate Conference) and won an NCAA Tournament game for the first time in its history.

Colleen Deel, assistant professor of library & library services, delivered BSU’s final Honors Council lecture of the Spring 2019 semester with a look into the university archives. Deel’s lecture illustrated ways in which the items found in the archives could be used to reconstruct a narrative of the university’s history.

Bemidji State’s Department of Music staged its 50th annual—and final—Madrigal Dinners at Bemidji’s Concordia Language Villages between Nov. 30–Dec. 9, 2018. The production re-staged the original 1969 masque written by BSU professor emeritus of music and Madrigal Dinners founder Dr. Paul Brandvik.

BSU began a new Homecoming tradition in 2019 by lighting the lakeside fireplace on Thursday evening and keeping it lit through the conclusion of the Carl O. Thompson Memorial Concert, BSU’s traditional final event of Homecoming week, on Sunday afternoon.

More than 70 faculty, staff and community members gathered outside Hagg-Sauer Hall to remember, honor and retire the nearly 50-year-old building. Pastor Ron Gladen, who as a BSU undergraduate took classes taught by both of the building’s namesakes — Dr. Harold T. Hagg and Dr. Philip R. Sauer — spoke at the ceremony and recalled their influences on him.

Former and current BSU women’s athletes, coaches, supporters and family packed the American Indian Resource Center’s Gathering Room for an Oct. 6, 2018, social to launch a recognition of the 50th anniversary of varsity intercollegiate athletics for women at Bemidji State. The social, emceed by BSU alumna and retired North Dakota State University Director of Women’s Athletics Lynn Dorn ‘72, also recognized four remarkable women for their roles in creating BSU’s women’s intercollegiate athletics program. Dr. Marjory Beck, Dr. Ruth Howe and Betsy McDowell were recognized as founders of women’s athletics, while long-time BSU faculty member and coach Dr. Pat Rosenbrock was celebrated as the program’s historian for her tireless effort to document the history of women’s athletics at the university.

Bemidji State’s journey to the modern, competitive NCAA Division II women’s athletics program it enjoys today began with four sports — basketball, volleyball, field hockey and swimming — in an era when prevailing conventional wisdom dictated that while athletic competition was considered healthy for men, it was “harmful and inappropriate” for women.

BSU also recalled its history as a founding member of the Minn-Kota Conference, one of the first in the nation for women’s athletics, in 1969, its national leadership as a founding member of the Association of Intercollegiate Athletics for Women in 1971, and its eventual moves to the Northern Sun Conference and the NCAA.

The celebration culminated in a weekend of activities in August 2019.

Mardy Beck, who was unable to attend the kickoff ceremony, received her founder’s certificate during a special Oct. 19 visit from President Hensrud (right).
One of BSU’s last formal events during its Bemidji State University’s Bemidji State University’s Bemidji State University’s Bemidji State University’s 100th anniversary celebration came in September 2019, when it planted a time capsule intended to be opened by future caretakers of Bemidji State University.

President Hensrud greets a full house at BSU’s annual Honors Gala in October.

The BSU Wind Ensemble played “Ningabitiinose,” a fanfare composed especially for BSU’s centennial celebration, at the October Honors Gala.

The family of Hobson Memorial Union namesake C.V. Hobson was on hand to help commemorate the union’s 50th anniversary.

In much the same way that the 1918 time capsule contents provided a priceless look at Bemidji State’s history, the 2019 capsule and its contents will provide a future generation with a look at early 21st century life on campus and in the Bemidji community.

President Hensrud and members of the BSU Building & Grounds team opened a time capsule left in the cornerstone of Deputy Hall in 1918. Artifacts from the time capsule were publicly unveiled in an exhibit at the university’s Ramsey Gallery in September 2019. A complete story on the 1918 time capsule opening begins on Page 12.
On a cloudy October afternoon, about 100 campus and community members gathered on the Hobson Memorial Union lawn, where dozens of items were left for future generations to explore in Bemidji State University’s centennial time capsule.

A dedication ceremony, led by BSU President Faith C. Hensrud, Colleen Deel, assistant professor of library services, and Al Nohner, a BSU alumnus and director emeritus of its Office of News & Publications, marked the conclusion of Bemidji State’s 18-month centennial celebration.

Hensrud welcomed attendees and acknowledged the historic nature of the occasion.

“Today, we are creating an opportunity for a future generation to travel back in time to October of 2019,” she said. “For in 100 years — in the year 2119 — we expect that a future Bemidji State University students, faculty and staff will again come together with members of the Bemidji community at this very spot so they might discover what we are leaving for them today.”

The centennial time capsule includes a wide selection of items, including branded merchandise such as t-shirts, hats and note pads, a current campus map, a copy of BSU’s 2018-2023 Strategic Plan, a hockey puck, a current academic course catalog, a diploma cover given to graduates at commencement, a red pine tree core sample collected by Landscape Ecology students and more.

Al Nohner, a BSU alumnus and director emeritus of its Office of News & Publications, reflecting on his nearly 50-year association with Bemidji State — looked to the future with optimism.
"While on campus and for 12 years in retirement, I wrote articles for the BSU magazine," he said. "I talked to thousands of alumni. Universally, they were excited to talk about BSU. It was evident they still had strong and positive feelings for BSU. The historical strength of our student population and the active interest of alumni are among the reasons I believe BSU will still be educating people 100 years from now."

In closing, Hensrud thanked everyone who had contributed items to the 2019 centennial time capsule and shared her thoughts about what the citizens of Bemidji in 2119 may think of its contents.

"These objects have come from many sources, and whether large or small they each have a story tell," Hensrud said. "Put them together, and we leave for future generations a glimpse into life in 2019 at Bemidji State University."
For more information about the contents of the 2019 BSU time capsule, visit our website at www.bemidjistate.edu/100.
Bemidji State Reveals Contents of 1918 Time Capsule

A footnote found on page 47 of Dr. Art Lee’s book, “University in the Pines,” reads, in part: “…it took a large container to accommodate all the memorabilia that went into it. As the (Bemidji) Sentinel article of August 16, 1918, read: ‘Records of practically all the proceedings connected with the development ... were placed within the casket that is now covered by the cornerstone.’”

After this reminder of the existence of a 100-year-old time capsule on campus, and finding no records that it was ever recovered or retrieved, Bemidji State’s grounds crew removed the Deputy Hall cornerstone on Sept. 9, 2019, and located the capsule.

The entire Bemidji State University community owes a debt of gratitude to the founders of this great and enduring institution, not only for the years-long campaign they waged to win the right to host Bemidji Normal School, but also for having the foresight to leave for us this priceless gift of a time capsule.
Letters and Stationary

War Department Local Board
Beltrami County, Bemidji, Minn.

Printed on Persian Bond paper.

President Hensrud and Colleen Deel examine the capsule's contents.

Brett Steinmetz from the BSU facilities staff uses a powered saw to cut open the time capsule.

Brian Ingalls, Brent Steinmetz and Mitch Bannor pose with the Deputy Hall cornerstone after locating the time capsule.
While the numerous newspapers of the day shared within — issues of the Bemidji Pioneer, Bemidji Sentinel, and other newspapers from around the state — speak prominently of the Great War being waged in Europe at the time, the message found in the time capsule is instead one of hope and pride.

At a ceremony to dedicate BSU’s 2019 time capsule, after which the contents of this capsule were publicly unveiled for the first time, President Hensrud spoke to that message of hope.

“While the contents of this time capsule show us that much has changed in Bemidji over the last 100 years, the pride we feel today for our university and for the city we call home continues — as strong as it has ever been.”

In total, the brass box — sealed by local tinsmith F.G. Schadegg on August 10, 1918, as stated on the enclosed handwritten receipt — contained more than two dozen artifacts. Included were copies of the bill establishing Bemidji as the site of Minnesota’s sixth normal school; a record of all legislators who voted in favor of the bill’s passage; a document called “History of Establishment” which recapped the legislative battle between Bemidji, Cass Lake and Thief River Falls for the right to host the school; and various photos, postcards and directories that provided a glimpse into the 1918 version of Bemidji.

Contents of this time capsule were included in BSU’s Centennial history display in the Ramsey Gallery of the Bangsberg Fine Arts Complex, and also were on display at the 2019 Honors Gala at Bemidji’s Sanford Center.
HISTORY OF ESTABLISHMENT

This document, called “History of Establishment,” was one of the many historical documents found in the 1918 time capsule left by Bemidji Normal School’s founders in the Deputy Hall cornerstone. It is presented here precisely as it was typed more than 100 years ago, in the spring of 1918. On the list included in the time capsule, “Contents of Box,” this document is Number 5, “History of establishment of Normal School.”

The Idea of the Bemidji Normal School was first conceived in the summer of 1906, by A. P. Ritchie, who was at that time, city Supt. of the Bemidji Public Schools. During the Winter and Fall of the same year the idea spread, and during the session of the Minnesota State Educational Association it took tangible form. Little attention was paid to the idea, however, in Bemidji until the State Legislature met in January, 1907. Cass Lake was the first to present a Bill in the Legislature and not until that time did the majority of Citizens of Bemidji wake up to the occasion. The Cass Lake Bill was fathered by P. H. McGeary of Walker. Soon a bill was introduced in the House by J. J. Opsahl, and Senator Honson presented two bills in the Senate. One for Bemidji and one for Thief River Falls. These were followed by Bills for Park Rapids, Warren and Wadena. After some time all the contending parties except Cass Lake fathered a General Bill which provided that a Normal School should be established in Northern Minnesota north of the Northern Pacific Railroad, extending from Duluth to Moorhead. The site to be selected by the Normal School Board. This Bill was pushed by Bemidji and Thief River Falls assisted by Warren. The Bill creating the school did not carry with it any appropriation. During the session of 1916, the Legislature appropriated the sum of $25,000 to begin the construction and erection of a building. This amount was cut by Governor J. A. A. Burnquist to $75,000.00. With this amount the Board of Control, at the suggestion of the Normal School Board, began the construction of the main building in May, 1918.

When session of 1917 opened the same fight was on. The backers of the General Bill however, asking for a commission of five men to be selected by the Governor, Lieutenant Governor and Speaker of the house, whose duty it should be to visit all contending localities and select Ole Sageng of Dalton, Hon. W. W. Brown of St. James, Hon. Samuel Wilson of Mankato and Rev. James Ferguson of Duluth. During the following summer of 1913, the commission visited the several proposed locations and after due deliberation finally selected Bemidji as the location. The City of Bemidji granting to the State of Minnesota the site which is estimated at not less than $30,000.00.

This put a damper on the fight during the session of 1911 and but little was done during this session more than to create a sentiment for the additional Normal School.
State of Minnesota House of Representatives 40th session motion by L.G. Pendergast to include Bemidji in the name of the HF1275 bill.

Sealed Envelope - Carlson Variety Store

“Return in 5 days to Carlson Variety Store Bemidji, Minnesota.”

Handwritten Note On Back

“We boost for the Normal School and every other good thing for our city.” 8-10-1918, Carlson Variety Store, A.T. Carlson

Genuine Photography Post cards from Netzer’s Pharmacy. Bemidji, Minn

Cook Montgomery Co. Post Cards, Minneapolis.

Miscellaneous Business Cards

Bemidji area businesses.
ACTION BY THE COMMISSION

This memo on State of Minnesota Department of Education letterhead, marked “COPY” and dated July 18, 1913, officially established Bemidji as the site of Minnesota’s sixth Normal School. It read:

ACTION BY THE COMMISSION IN CONNECTION WITH THE SITE FOR THE NORMAL SCHOOL AT BEMIDJI.

"On motion of Mr. Wilson, it was Voted, that Bemidji be finally designated as the location for the sixth normal school, upon meeting the following conditions:

1. Acquire title to all of the site known as Diamond Point, there being about thirty-seven acres, and convey to the state a tract of twenty-five acres or such part of twenty-five acres as this commission shall designate.

2. Agree to park the balance of the tract.

3. Agree to extend the city sewerage and pavement up to the site.

4. Agree to open and improve Dowd Avenue as it runs along said site."

While the contents of this time capsule show us that much has changed in Bemidji over the last 100 years, the pride we feel today for our university and for the city we call home continues — as strong as it has ever been."

-BSU PRESIDENT FAITH C. HENSRUD
Students enjoy a winter snowfall.

The cornerstone is laid for "The Main," Bemidji Normal School's first building.
Bemidji citizens gather in 1915 on the donated ground where Bemidji Normal School will be constructed.

“The Main” in 1920, which remains today as Deputy Hall.

Class of 1920.

Manfred Deputy, BSU’s first president.

“State Normal School” above the front entrance to “The Main”.

Class of 1920.
Bemidji State Teachers College started playing competitive hockey in the 1950s.

Students enjoy a winter snowfall.

Students in a Science Lab, 1938.

Homecoming royalty, 1938.

Students enjoy Lake Bemidji.

Dedication of the outdoor fireplace on June 6, 1932.
Groundbreaking for Memorial Hall.

The BSU Gymnasium, in what is now called Memorial Hall.

Bemidji State Teachers College women athletes, 1936.

BSTC President Charles Sattgast.
Students protest the Vietnam War with a march through downtown Bemidji.

Examiner beadwork in an early Ojibwe course at Bemidji State.

Students on campus watch television, 1960s.

“Grass Roots” band perform on campus, 1960s.

Studying in Birch Hall, 1951.

Students protest the Vietnam War with a march through downtown Bemidji.
Legendary hockey coach R.H. “Bob” Peters celebrates BSU’s 1984 national championship to cap an undefeated season.

1970-1989

Bemidji State College became Bemidji State University in 1975.

Homecoming royalty, 1970s.

Freshman beanies on display by Lake Bemidji, 1970s.
Enjoying a sunny fall afternoon on campus.

Bucky the Beaver.

Socializing outside the Anishinaabe Family Center.

Dorm Life, 1970s.

Students use an Apple II computer, 1980s.


Oak Hall, 1970s
President Quistgaard and others dedicate the American Indian Resource Center in 2003.

Dedicating the BSU Alumni Arch outside Deputy Hall in 1990.

Student parade at the Festival of Nations celebration, 1990s.

Hands Across Campus, 1990s.

A student and his family celebrate graduation, late 1990s.

Technology Smart Room, 1990s.

Landscaping between Memorial Hall and the library.

BSU President Les Duly.
President Richard Hanson (center) celebrates the successful conclusion of BSU’s Imagine Tomorrow fundraising campaign.

BSU was named a Green Ribbon School for sustainability by the U.S. Department of Education in 2017.

A student views the 2018 solar eclipse.

Dr. Dwight Jilek (left) welcomed Dr. Paul Brandvik (center) home to conduct an alumni performance at the Bemidji Choir’s 80th anniversary celebration in 2017.
Bucky leads a dance party on campus.

Beaver Soccer celebrates its first-ever NSIC Championship in 2018.

Installing artificial turf at Chet Anderson Stadium.

A ring-dancing demonstration in the American Indian Resource Center.

Sculptor Curtis Ingvoldstad at the unveiling of BSU’s shoreline wildlife sculpture in 2014.

BSU President Faith Hensrud.