

New online resources offer Ojibwe, English translations  
<<http://www.bemidjipioneer.com/event/article/id/100024903/>>  
Anne Williams - 01/05/2011

Shared Vision member Michael Meuers is "absolutely psyched" about what was unveiled Monday. Ojibwe translations for nearly 100 English phrases common to Northern Minnesota are now available online and on campus at Bemidji State University and Northwest Technical College. The multimedia materials, which include paper form and audio clips, are part of a collaborative effort between Shared Vision and BSU. Shared Vision is an organization dedicated to improving relations between American Indians and non-Indians in the community. A poster designed by BSU's Office of Communications and Marketing provides a list of English words and their Ojibwe equivalents in nine categories such as "Expressions," "Trees" and "North Country." Ojibwe scholar Anton Treuer, BSU professor of languages and ethnic studies, created audio clips that correctly pronounce the words and phrases, first in Ojibwe and then in English. He also offers his views on the importance of the Ojibwe language and on the Shared Vision initiative. The audio resources and poster can be viewed online at the BSU's American Indian Resource Center's website, [www.bemidjistate.edu/airc/shared\\_vision/](http://www.bemidjistate.edu/airc/shared_vision/). Meuers has also compiled a list of "everyday words" in English, translated to Ojibwe, with the help of Treuer. Words and phrases such as "Sure! You bet!" "wood tick," "mosquitoes (there are many)" and "Let's go!" are included on the list. This list can be viewed and downloaded free at [sharedvisionbemidji.com](http://sharedvisionbemidji.com). In July 2008, Shared Vision contracted with the Wilder Research Foundation to assess Bemidji area residents' perceptions of community race relations, racial discrimination and personal and community life. The survey reached out to Red Lake, Leech Lake and White Earth reservations, as well as to the native and non-native residents in the Bemidji area, with the intent to learn more about race relations and racism in the Bemidji area. Shared Vision's first initiative was started last year and headed by Meuers and Rachelle Houle. They encouraged local businesses and organizations to install bilingual signage in their buildings to expand awareness of the Ojibwe language in the community. Meuers said he was shocked at the response he received. "Our original goal was 20 businesses," Meuers said. "We now have 112 sites participating." BSU has participated in the Shared Vision initiative for more than one year, with bi-lingual signs installed in a variety of locations across campus. Meuers said he hopes to see at least 200 businesses participate in 2011. One of the concerns that Meuers said he has heard from businesses and organizations, however, is some people not being able to pronounce the Ojibwe words. "Now we have Tony (Anton Treuer) demonstrating to people exactly how to pronounce these words," Meuers said. Meuers also said the poster and list of words will also help to keep the spelling of Ojibwe words consistent. "There's been a problem with consistently spelling words in the past," he said. "This is a big deal as far as saving the language and allowing fluent speakers to be able to read it." Treuer said the added audio clips will help people say the word they are reading. "The purpose of any writing system is not necessarily for people who already know the language, but it's for people trying to learn it," Treuer said. "Having those recorded materials will aid those making a fledgling effort to learn the language." Meuers said the public can expect to see

more initiatives from Shared Vision in the future, specifically focusing on employment and education. After all, he said, "this is Indian country before we came here." Meuers said some people have forgotten that Ojibwe is the indigenous language of Minnesota. He said he has been asked why more emphasis has not been placed on Norwegian and German languages. "Ojibwe is the indigenous language of northern Minnesota," he said. "Norwegian and German are imported languages. I want to help preserve the language. When you lose a language, you lose culture. When you lose culture, who knows what you lose." Treuer said he is supportive of Shared Vision's latest initiative. "It's broadening the base of people who care or are interested in interacting with another language and culture and helps make all of Bemidji, not just BSU, a better place to live," Treuer said. "I'm just psyched because this is a major step in making the Ojibwe language a part of the Bemidji community," Meuers added.