

Artist wins statue contest

NSU student will sculpt key figure in Nevada's history

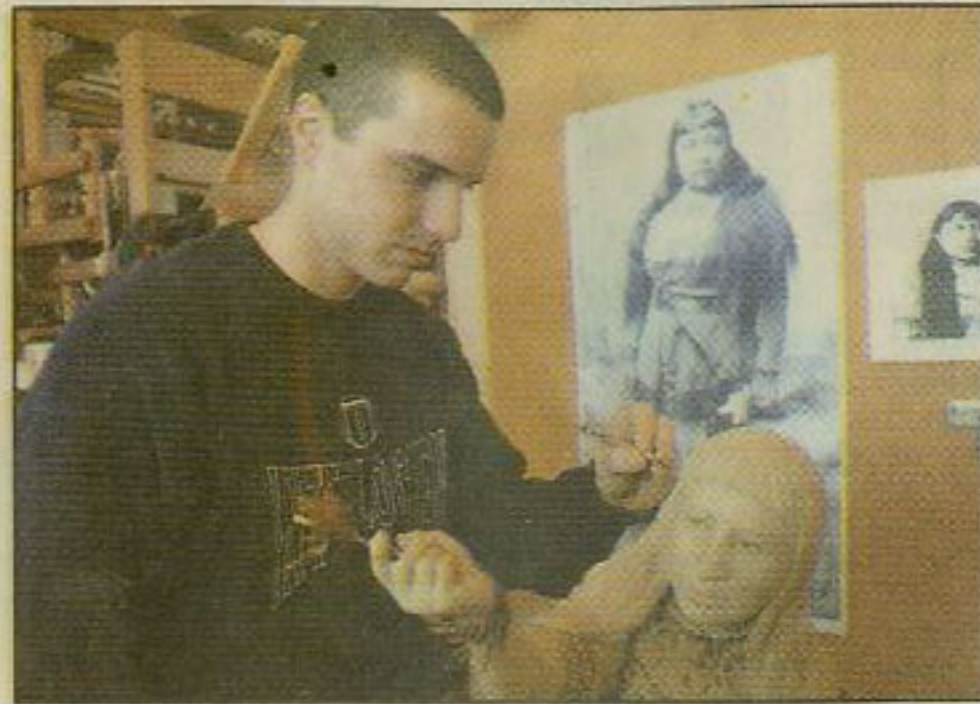
By Elissa Grossell
American News Writer

Ben Victor has done it again. Victor, 24, a Northern State University art student, beat out three other finalists and was named the winner of a contest Wednesday to create an official statue for Nevada, according to published reports.

Victor must now create a bronze sculpture of Sarah Winnemucca by spring 2005 to be placed in the U.S. Capitol.

Winnemucca, who was born in 1844 and died in 1891 of tuberculosis, was a Nevada Indian activist and daughter and granddaughter of Paiute chiefs. She wrote extensively about the federal government's treatment of Indians.

Each state is allowed two statues in the Capitol's



American News Photo by Dawn Dietrich

Skilled hands: Northern State University senior Ben Victor works on the hair of his sculpture of Nevada Indian activist Sarah Winnemucca in the sculpture studio at NSU in Aberdeen.

National Statuary Hall. Nevada has only one, of the late U.S. Sen. Patrick McCarran. In 2001, the Nevada Legislature passed a bill designating

Winnemucca for the state's second statue. The Nevada Women's History Project has raised half of the \$150,000. See **ARTIST**, Page 9A

Artist: Elaborate sculpture shows proud princess

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needed for the project, the Reno Gazette-Journal reported.

Some of those funds will go toward Victor creating the final bronze figure, which will stand somewhere between 7 and 9 feet in height. But the money also pays for the small-scale versions and travel expenses for Victor and the other three finalists — Sara Sweetwater of Elko, Nev.; Ed Dwight of Denver; and Gareth Curtiss of Olympia, Wash.

Victor took his 3-foot-tall clay replica of Winnemucca to Nevada this week to present to a selection committee, which announced its decision Wednesday, the Reno article stated.

Victor's elaborate sculpture is of a proud princess, her long hair and fringed dress blowing behind her. The details are amazingly intricate, including miniature clay stringed beads on her dress and about 4,000 tiny holes poked in the skirt to represent burlap fabric.

Winnemucca is holding up a shellflower, her Paiute name.

Victor was also commissioned by the city of Aberdeen to sculpt three statues for Aberdeen Regional Airport's War Memorial project. The first, the 7 1/2-foot bronze Victory Soldier, made its debut at the airport last fall.

Zach Hilpert, interim director of university relations at NSU, said the university is "extremely proud" of Victor.

"Ben is a stellar student and gifted artist, and it is our

humbling honor to claim him as one of our own," Hilpert said in a statement. "In the past few years we have enjoyed helping Ben grow into a successful artist, both locally and nationally. His growing list of commissions and accomplishments is a tribute to the skill and dedication he has exhibited since first taking up the art of sculpture three years ago on our campus."

Hilpert continued, "His instructors and friends at Northern look forward to watching

what we believe will be a long and increasingly accomplished career."

The full-time NSU art student will graduate in May and is considering graduate school studies at the University of South Dakota in Vermillion. He and his wife, Julie, have two children: Caleb, 2, and Audrey Lynn, 4 months.

Victor could not be reached for comment Thursday.

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