

# Sculpture headed for D.C.

3/3/05



**Works of art:** Ben Victor stands among a few of his sculptures while he holds a small version of his statue of Sarah Winnemucca on Wednesday in his studio in Aberdeen.

By Russ Keen

American News Writer

**S**culptor Ben Victor of Aberdeen hops on a jet today for Washington, D.C., where his bronze statue of an American Indian woman will be dedicated next week in the U.S. Capitol Rotunda.

"I bought a suit," Victor said Wednesday. "This is the first time I've gone to D.C."

His statue of Sarah Winnemucca, the first American Indian woman to write a book in English, is the first original sculpture of an American Indian woman to be commissioned for the National Statuary Hall in the U.S. Capitol.

Victor, 26, is the youngest artist to have a sculpture in the hall. His 6-foot 4-inch statue will be on display in the rotunda for about six months before moving to its permanent home in Statuary Hall.

About a year ago, the state of Nevada awarded Victor the commission to sculpt Winnemucca. About 20 people competed for the job.

## Dedication will air on C-SPAN

dedication ceremonies, but the broadcast may or may not be live, said Sara Jones of the Nevada Department of Cultural Affairs. She expects a definite answer well in advance of dedication ceremonies, which are 3 p.m. CDT Wednesday.

Winnemucca, who lived from 1844 to 1891, belonged to the Paiute tribe of Nevada. She advocated for education and human rights.

Each state is allowed two sculptures in National Statuary Hall. Until now, Nevada has had one, that of the late U.S. Sen. Patrick McCarren. The only other American Indian woman in Statuary Hall is Sacagawea, representing North Dakota. Unlike Victor's work, the Sacagawea statue was not commissioned specifically for the national hall.

Victor received \$85,000 to create the statue bound for D.C. and \$72,000 for another statue of Winnemucca for the rotunda of the Nevada capitol

That's not net income, though, Victor said, because all the expenses of creating sculptures come out of the commissions. He also receives a share of the revenue from the sale of half-size and quarter-size renditions of the Winnemucca statue, which sell for \$14,000 and \$5,500 respectively.

Victor said his wife, Julie, and their children Caleb, 3, and Audrey, 1 will accompany him to D.C. Lots of relatives plan to witness the dedication, too, Victor said. NSU student Jerome Wild also will attend to shoot video for a documentary the state of Nevada is creating on the statue.

Jones of Nevada has coordinated the project ever since the Nevada Legislature authorized the statue in 2001. Jones said Wednesday she is impressed with the way Victor thoroughly researched Winnemucca's life before creating the statue. "Even for the

Ben checked with historical botanists."

Winnemucca's name means shell flower, one of which she holds in her uplifted right hand in the statue, reminiscent of the Statue of Liberty. And like Lady Liberty, Winnemucca's left hand holds a book.

"Unlike Lady Liberty, Sarah Winnemucca was a real person," Victor wrote in an analysis of his work. "So it would not be appropriate to link her too closely to the classically idealized 'Liberty.' The link is subtle, almost subconscious, but it is there."

Unlike the Statue of Liberty, the statue of Winnemucca portrays her walking. "She makes literal strides that the idealized foundations of our nation stand for," Victor wrote. She brings to life the ideal."

Victor, a California native, is a graduate of Northern State University, where he currently serves as an artist-in-residence. The city of Aberdeen also commissioned Victor to sculpt three statues for the War Memorial at Aberdeen