

The Highway Brewing Co.

Chief Ogemaw IPA

West Branch, MI
highwaybrewingco.com

 **HIGHWAY**
THE BREWING CO.

West Branch, MI received its name in 1875 when authorities from the Central Michigan Railroad declared it to be a vital location for the developing Northern Michigan timber industry. It's a bit of a surprise that the town wasn't named "Ogemaw" as nearly everything else in the region now bears the namesake of one of Michigan's greatest Native American leaders: Chief Ogemaw of the Ojibwe (Chippewa) Indians. Visitors to Ogemaw County can find Ogemaw Township, Ogemaw Lake, Ogemaw State Forest, Ogemaw Springs, Ogemaw Heights High School, a variety of businesses that use the Ogemaw name and, of course, a nice, cold Chief Ogemaw IPA at The Highway Brewing Co., located just a stone's throw away from Ogemaw Creek.

Born around 1794, Chief Ogemaw was originally given the name Little Elk. "Chief Ogemaw" is actually a very anglicized twist on the word *ogimaa* which means "chief" in the Anishinaabemowin language, the traditional dialect of the Ojibwe. Therefore, "Chief Ogemaw" actually translates to "chief chief". Unlike most Ojibwe chiefs, Ogemaw did not ascend to the position of honor through his bloodline but was instead chosen to represent his tribe due to his impressive skills as a warrior, a lecturer and an intellectual. In 1815, his tribespeople gave him the name Ogemakeketo (or Ogemawkegato) which translates to "chief speaker".

Ogemaw is probably the most highly regarded Indian in the history of Northern Michigan and this is likely because of his remarkable ability to work as a bridge between the indigenous people of his community and the white settlers who were quickly developing the Michigan Territory. (The Michigan Territory frequently altered its borders but at one time included all of what is now Michigan, Wisconsin, Iowa, Minnesota and parts of the Dakotas.) His promotion to "chief speaker" by

his tribe was a direct response to President James Madison's request to have more intimate communication with the Ojibwe Indians.

Ogemaw spoke eloquently and could keep both Indian and white audiences captivated for hours. He was chosen to preside over the Treaty of 1819 which ultimately saw the Ojibwe cede about six million acres to the U.S. Government even though he defiantly argued to keep the land under Ojibwe control. During the discussions, Ogemaw offered this insight:

"You do not know our wishes. Our people wonder what has brought you so far from your homes. Your young men have invited us to come and light the Council fire. We are here to smoke the pipe of peace, but not to sell our lands. Our American Father wants them. Our English Father treats us better. He has never asked for them. Your people trespass upon our hunting grounds. You flock to our shores. Our waters grow warm. Our land melts like a cake of ice.

Our possessions grow smaller and smaller. The warm wave of the white man rolls in upon us and melts us away. Our women reproach us. Our children want homes. Shall we sell from under them the spot where they spread their blankets? We have not called you here; we smoke with you the pipe of peace."

The response he received from General Lewis Cass of the U.S. Army explained that the land already belonged to the U.S. due to the treaties laid out between the U.S. and Great Britain following the War of 1812 and that the negotiations were essentially just a formality. In the end, the Ojibwe received little more than \$1000 per year for the land.

In 1837, a year after the Ojibwe had ceded the rest of their land in what is now Northern Michigan and in the middle of negotiations that eventually saw the Ojibwe cede millions more acres in what is now Wisconsin, Ogemaw was called to speak before the U.S. Congress. Transcripts of his speech seem to be lost to time but his oration was so impressive that he was awarded a medal by President Martin Van Buren. Ogemaw wore both an American Revolution era colonel's uniform and Van Buren's medal when he was buried in Bay City, MI in 1840.

At the young age of 25, Chief Ogemaw was elected head chief of the Ojibwe Indians, an almost unprecedented achievement for someone who did not have a direct bloodline to previous chiefs, and he ruled over the many different Ojibwe bands until his death. His likeness has been adopted by Ogemaw County both in their official insignia and county flag and the great chief's legacy is now cast throughout the region he once called home.



This painting and the statue of Chief Ogemaw (below) are located at, and courtesy of, the Ogemaw County Courthouse. Both were created by Millie Miller.



*From the Brewer: A session IPA with earth, pine, and citrus characteristics. Dry hopped with Columbus, and Cascade hops. Ogemaw County takes its name from Ogemaw Ke-Ke-To, now known as Chief Ogemaw. Born in 1794, he was elected Chief in 1815, spoke before congress in 1837, and ruled the Chippewas until his death in 1840. ABV 5%, IBU 60
Ethan & Erin Resteiner - Owners*