



The Minneapolis friend, meanwhile, tipped off police, telling them to look for a black Plymouth coupe with a missing hubcap.

Police recognized the car in Sioux City, Iowa. On October 3, 1949 they seized the two women, and returned them to Shakopee. Their eight months of freedom were over.

Edna Larrabee and Beulah Brunelle escaped together one final time late in 1949 but were found and returned to prison within days.

They made no further attempts.

By 1952 they were both paroled and starting new lives apart—Larrabee in Washington, Brunelle in Minnesota as the wife of a man named George Venne.

Shakopee case files contain one final record of their relationship: A note stating that in 1953, Beulah Brunelle left her husband in St. Paul and drove for more than 1,600 miles to Seattle, where she and Edna Larrabee reunited!



The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is a hotline for individuals in crisis or for those looking to help someone else. To speak with a certified listener, call 1-800-273-8255. You can also contact the Crisis Text Line by texting HELLO to 741741. Trans Lifeline (1-877-565-8860) and the Trevor Project (1-866-488-7386) offer hotlines specifically for queer and trans people.



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Beulah Brunelle

In Shakopee 1946-1952



Beulah Brunelle was a twenty-one-year-old Ojibwe woman. She was serving time at the Women's Reformatory in Shakopee in April 1946. She was serving a sentence for grand larceny (in her case, stealing clothes, shoes, and a ring).

Beulah was one of several American Indians who were at the Shakopee State Reformatory for Women in Shakopee. Today, 22% of the inmates are American Indian or Alaskan Native people.

Beulah grew up at the Turtle Mountain Indian Reservation in Belcourt, North Dakota. A population of 5,815 reside on the main reservation and another 2,516 reside on off-reservation trust land (as of the 2000 census). The Ojibwe people spoke *Mikinaakwajiw-ininiwag*. The people there were a tribe of Ojibwa and Métis peoples.

In April 29, 1946, Beulah met Edna Larrabee in the prison. She had been there for serving time for committing grand larceny in the second degree (writing bad checks). Edna was twenty-five years old. It was not her first time in the prison. She had a separate larceny charge between 1940 and 1942. Edna had attracted scrutiny for her "boyish mannerisms" and sexual relationships with other prisoners.

The two became a couple. The two of them escaped together three times over the next two years.



Beulah Brunelle grew up at the Turtle Mountain Indian Reservation in North Dakota.

Beulah ended up at the Minnesota Correctional Institution for Women in Shakopee from 1946 until 1952.



After the failure of the third escape on November 22, 1948, Edna Larrabee attempted suicide but survived.

The next morning, she tried again. She then turned her frustration on the institution that was confining her, flooding Edna's cell with water from her toilet and using a mattress spring to break a window.

Staff responded swiftly by transferring Edna to St. Peter State Hospital. She had electroconvulsive therapy (ECT, also known as shock therapy).

Edna Larrabee's time at St. Peter led her and Beulah Brunelle to escape again.

The two of them worked at the farm at the Women's Reformatory. They decided to disguised themselves with overalls and farm jackets. They sneaked into the basement of Sanford Cottage on February 2, 1949, broke open a nailed-shut window, and fled. They hitchhiked west looking for jobs, introducing themselves as a married couple named Mr. and Mrs. Patrick Farrell.

Shakopee superintendent Clara Thune wrote to four California sheriffs and police chiefs, asking them to look out for the fugitives.

She stated that Edna Larrabee was "acquainted with the colony of homo sexuals [sic] in Los Angeles" and likely to show up in that city, according to an article by Lizzie Ehrenhalt called "Escape from Shakopee State Reformatory for Women, 1949" from the *MNopedia* in the Minnesota Historical Society.

Instead, the two went to Sacramento, where Edna Larrabee's sister Vida took them in.

After three months they hitchhiked to Seattle, Washington, and visited Edna Larrabee's parents; William Larrabee gave his daughter a black 1936 Plymouth coupe.

The women then made moves to settle down, renting an apartment and opening a bank account together.

To pay their rent, Larrabee ran a gas station and Brunelle sewed for a dress shop.

By the late summer they were traveling again to a friend in Minneapolis.

Afterward, Beulah Brunelle brought Edna Larrabee to meet her mother on the Turtle Mountain Indian Reservation in North Dakota.