



PBS

STANDING BEAR'S FOOTSTEPS

Monday, October 15, 2012

10:00-11:00 p.m. ET on PBS

– Documentary Chronicles a Civil Rights Struggle Unique in American History –



Chief Standing Bear

STANDING BEAR'S FOOTSTEPS, airing **Monday, October 15, 2012, 10:00-11:00 p.m. ET on PBS**, recounts the remarkable journey of legendary warrior Chief Standing Bear of the Ponca Nation, who fought injustice not with guns and arrows — but with words.

STANDING BEAR'S FOOTSTEPS tells the story of the Ponca Nation's exile from Nebraska to the malaria-infested plains of Indian Territory in present-day Oklahoma. To honor his dying son's last wish — to be buried in his homeland — Chief Standing Bear and his small clan set off on a frigid, 600-mile journey back to their former Nebraska home. En route, they were arrested and imprisoned at Fort Omaha for leaving the reservation. Standing Bear and his starving band were about to be sent back to “death country” when a remarkable series of events unfolded.

A reporter from the *Omaha Daily Herald* broke the story, and Standing Bear was suddenly at the center of a controversy. Though he spoke no English, the chief's eloquence attracted powerful allies — including the army general who had arrested him. If he could prove he was a “person” in the eyes of the law, Standing Bear could return to his Nebraska home. In May of 1879, Standing Bear sued the U.S. government for his freedom. His courtroom trial ended with a plea directly to the judge: “My hand is not the same color as yours. If I pierce it, I shall feel pain. If you pierce your hand, you too will feel pain. The blood that flows will be the same color. I am a man. The same God made us both.”

The trial of Standing Bear sparked a national debate. Who were the Indians? Were they savages or human beings? Did they have the same rights as any immigrant? “This story turns the classic western upside down,” said Joe Starita, author of *I Am a Man: Chief Standing Bear's Journey for Justice*. “This is a man who personifies courage, perseverance, fortitude, love of family and love of homeland. The irony is, not only was he not considered an American, he wasn't even considered a person.”

STANDING BEAR'S FOOTSTEPS weaves storytelling, re-creations and present-day scenes to explore a little-known chapter in American history. “The film has much to say about present-day issues of human rights and what it means to be an American,” says producer Christine Lesiak. “I was amazed to learn that the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution granted citizenship to anyone born in the United States —

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except the Indians. And it wasn't until 1924 that Native Americans were actually granted citizenship. This whole debate started with a father who wanted only to keep a promise.”

Underwriters: Union Pacific Railroad, National Endowment for the Humanities, Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community, Jane L. Johnson Family and Corporation for Public Broadcasting

Producer: Nebraska Educational Telecommunications (NET) for NAPT

Producer/director/writer: Christine Lesiak

Principal consultant: Judi gaiashkibos (Ponca)

Associate producer: Princella Parker (Omaha)

Narrator: Joseph Marshall III (Lakota)

About NAPT

Native American Public Telecommunications, Inc. (NAPT), a nonprofit 501(c)(3) that receives major funding from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, shares Native stories with the world through support of the creation, promotion and distribution of Native media. Founded in 1977, NAPT, through various media — public television, public radio and the Internet — brings awareness of Indian and Alaska Native issues. NAPT operates VisionMaker, the premier source for quality Native American educational and home videos. NAPT, located at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, offers student employment, internships and fellowships. Reaching the general public and the global market is the ultimate goal for the dissemination of Native-produced media.

About NET

NET Television is part of Nebraska Educational Telecommunications (NET), which also includes NET Radio, NET Learning Services and NET Technology Services.

About PBS

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