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Chief Standing Bear Courage Prize Announces National Search

Dateline: May 12, 2021, Lincoln, Nebraska — The Chief Standing Bear Prize for Courage Committee announces the establishment of the Chief Standing Bear Prize for Courage. This new award, which will be presented at a public event in Lincoln, Nebraska on October 10, 2021, was created by the Committee to honor Native Americans who exemplify courage in the spirit of Ponca Chief Standing Bear.

The recipient of the Prize will receive a monetary prize of \$5,000 and a statuette of Chief Standing Bear created by renowned artist Benjamin Victor, the sculptor of the iconic Statuary Hall Chief Standing Bear sculpture.

“The Committee is excited to announce this newly established Prize so that we may recognize trailblazing courageous Native American leaders who are following in the footsteps of Chief Standing Bear. We look forward to selecting the first recipient this Fall and are committed to continuing to honor the legacy of Chief Standing Bear through additional Prize recipients well into the future,” said Committee Member Katie Brossy, Senior Counsel in the American Indian Law and Policy practice at Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld, LLP in Washington, D.C.

From his birth on the banks of the Niobrara River in Nebraska until his death in 1908, Chief Standing Bear spent his life in a constant struggle to gain equality and justice for our nation’s Native

Americans. Chief Standing Bear and the Ponca Tribe were forced in 1877 by federal treaty to leave their homeland in Nebraska for Indian Territory in what is now Oklahoma.

The hardship of travel, illness, and the conditions of Indian Territory caused many members of the tribe to perish, including Chief Standing Bear's son. Determined to bury his son in his homeland, Chief Standing Bear led thirty members of his tribe back to their home in Nebraska. As a result, Chief Standing Bear became the first Native American to be recognized as a person in a federal court decision rendered in Omaha at the trial following his return.

Chief Standing Bear exhibited immense courage throughout his life, as a father, tribal leader and Native American, acting against powerful societal forces which, although clearly wrong, were accepted by the culture of his day. Today, the Chief Standing Bear Prize for Courage is established in his honor to recognize Native Americans that exemplify courage in the spirit of Chief Standing Bear.

The Prize celebrates Native Americans who do what is right, rather than what is expedient and who have exhibited contemporary acts of political or societal courage in their lifetime. Recipients of this Prize will be selected because they represent the many courageous people upon whom our country depends and not because they are considered the most courageous person in the country.

The Committee will begin accepting nominations for the award on May 12, 2021. The nominations, which can be submitted via web based application form at www.chiefstandingbear.org, must describe how the nominee exhibits the ideals and philosophies of Chief Standing Bear through their acts of political or societal courage.

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