

Chief Standing Bear Prize for Courage

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For Immediate Release

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Chief Standing Bear Courage Prize Committee Announces Wes Studi as Inaugural Prize Recipient

Dateline: September 7, 2022 Lincoln, Nebraska — The Chief Standing Bear Prize for Courage Project announces the selection of actor Wes Studi as its inaugural Chief Standing Bear Prize for Courage recipient.

The Chief Standing Bear Project, Inc., a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation, was created in 2022 to promote the life and civil rights legacy of Ponca Chief Standing Bear by presenting public discussion groups, forums, lectures and other event on a national level. The initial kick-off program of the Project is the presentation of the Standing Bear Prize for Courage, awarded to those Native Americans who exemplify courage in the spirit of Standing Bear in doing what is right, rather than what is expedient.

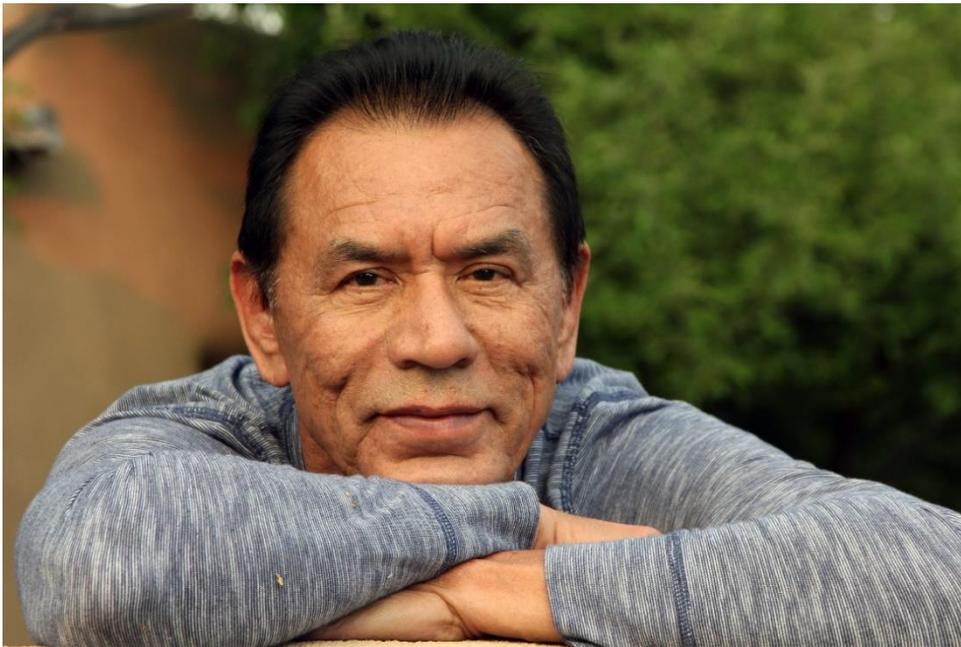
Katie Brossy, board president of the Chief Standing Bear Project a 501 (c)(3) non-profit corporation stated that Studi was selected for the prize on the basis of his acting career. “Mr. Studi has exhibited real courage in bringing his unique presence in each of his roles that has allowed the broader audience to see beyond Native American stereotypes and caricatures and instead see Native people as human. That is truly what Chief Standing Bear stood for in federal district court in 1879 when he persuaded a federal judge to recognize Native Americans as “persons” within the meaning of the law” said Brossy. “During his lifetime, not only through his acting roles, but in his dedication and passionate activism in the promotion and preservation of indigenous languages, Mr. Studi has shown great courage in the spirit of Chief Standing Bear. It is particularly meaningful that Mr. Studi’s acting career began with his role in the 1988 PBS production of The Trial of Standing Bear.”

As the recipient of the prize, Mr. Studi will be presented with his award at an event held at the Lied Center for Performing Arts in Lincoln, Nebraska on Indigenous Peoples Day, Monday, October 10, 2022. He will receive a statuette of Chief Standing Bear created by renowned artist Benjamin Victor, the sculptor of the iconic Statuary Hall Chief Standing Bear sculpture, as well as a cash honorarium.

More information about the prize and the award event will be released shortly and will be posted at www.chieftandingbear.org

Full Wes Studi bio and headshot below.

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Wes Studi Bio:

From small-town Oklahoma native to internationally acclaimed actor and musician, Wes Studi credits his passion and multi-faceted background for his powerful character portrayals that forever changed a Hollywood stereotype.

Drawing from his rich life experience, Wes moved audiences with unforgettable performances in “[Dances with Wolves](#),” “[The Last of the Mohicans](#),” “[Geronimo: An American Legend](#),” and “[Heat](#),” as well as James Cameron’s “[Avatar](#),” Paul Weitz’s “[Being Flynn](#)” and Scott Coopers “[Hostiles](#).” Breaking new ground, he brought fully-developed Native American characters to the screen, and then took his craft a step further highlighting the success of Native Americans in non-traditional roles.

In 2019, Wes received the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences' Governors Award, an honorary Oscar statuette, given to honor extraordinary distinction in lifetime achievement.

Acting was never a goal in Wes’ youth. The eldest son of a ranch hand, Wes was born in Nofire Hollow, in Northeastern Oklahoma. He spoke only his native Cherokee until he was 5, which he continues to speak it today. He joined the U.S. Army after high school and while stationed at Fort Benning, Georgia, he volunteered to serve one tour in Vietnam.

After an honorable military discharge, Wes returned home with a fire in the belly, and became seriously involved with Native American politics. He joined the American Indian Movement (AIM) and participated in the Trail of Broken Treaties protest march in 1972, where hundreds of Native American activists marched on Washington. He was also one of the protesters who briefly occupied the Bureau of Indian Affairs Building there.

Not long after, Wes channeled his feelings toward positive change. Shortly after Wounded Knee, Wes moved to the Tahlequah, Oklahoma, where he worked for the Cherokee Nation and later attended Northeastern University.

After college, Wes shifted his attention to running his own horse ranch and became a professional horse trainer. It was during this era that he began acting at The American Indian Theatre Company in Tulsa in 1983 as an outlet for pent up feelings. Wes first took the professional stage in 1984 with “Black Elk Speaks” and was hooked.