

Teammates,

Last week, I joined Governor Ricketts and other State leaders and Ponca Tribe members for a [ceremony to dedicate](#) the former Executive Building in honor of Chief Standing Bear, renaming the building as the [Chief Standing Bear Justice Administration Building](#). New aspects of the building include a bust of Chief Standing Bear sculpted by Benjamin Victor and a mural by Sarah Harris depicting the life of Chief Standing Bear. Near the bust, we also [buried a time capsule](#) that included a number of items that represent current day.

For those that don’t know the story of Chief Standing Bear yet, his story is one that deserves recognition as one of Nebraska’s earliest civil rights leaders:

In the late 1870’s, the Ponca Tribe of Nebraska was forced to relocate to Oklahoma by the United States federal government in what is known as the Ponca Trail of Tears. On their journey, Chief Standing Bear’s eldest son, Bear Shield, had fallen ill and requested to be buried in his homeland in Nebraska near the Niobrara River. When Chief Standing Bear returned to Nebraska to bury his son, he was arrested and thrown in prison. In the following years, Chief Standing Bear sued the federal government for wrongful detainment. During the landmark case, Chief Standing Bear famously raised his hand, saying the following, “That hand is not the color of yours, but if I prick it, the blood will flow, and I shall feel pain... The blood is of the same color as yours. God made me, and I am a Man.” Omaha District Judge Elmer S. Dundy ruled that “an Indian is a person within the meaning of the law” and is therefore entitled to its rights and protections.

As Nebraskans, we have an amazing opportunity to share Chief Standing Bear’s story within our community and the Nation. His legacy is an enduring example for everyone and it was an incredible experience to play a role in honoring him and ensuring his story is more widely known for generations to come. I’d like to thank

the people and teams that helped make this dedication a reality. First, Michelle Potts and our State Building Division team was responsible for overseeing the renovations of the building, including the concrete and paving work for the bust, while also doing a great job with the set up and take down for the event. I'd also like to thank Jean Salisbury who helped organize the reception afterwards and make sure the event ran smoothly.

I encourage all of our teammates to stop by and check out the mural and the bust at the Chief Standing Bear Justice Administration Building. He's a Nebraska hero, and I am honored to have DAS play a role in recognizing his contributions to the State through this dedication.

Regards,

Jason Jackson

Director, Department of Administrative Services