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(Neb.)-Author To Present On Standing Bear At CSC



By: Chris Fankhauser Posted at: 09/24/2012 11:03 AM

(Chadron)-Joe Starita's 2009 book, "I Am a Man -- Chief Standing Bear's Journey for Justice," is the focus of the Pilster Great Plains Lecture on Thursday, Sept. 27, 7 p.m. in Memorial Hall at Chadron State College.

The lecture, sponsored by the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society, is free to the public. The book highlights the court battle of the Ponca chief, Standing Bear, to gain equality for his people under the law. Starita will discuss how this 1879 landmark legal victory established for the first time that a Native American must be considered a "person" under the law and entitled to many of the same rights and privileges as the white race.

"I Am a Man" is the 2012 One Book, One Nebraska selection. Now in its third printing, it is the focus of an upcoming PBS documentary. Also, the book is being used as a teaching tool in classrooms across the nation, as well as in Nebraska high schools and colleges. In 2011, Starita received the Leo Reano Award, a national civil rights award, from the National Education Association for his work with the Native American community.

His latest work in progress is the true story, another Nebraska historical biography, of Susan La Flesche, an Omaha Indian woman. She was the younger sister of Susette La Flesche -- also known as Bright Eyes, who had a prominent role in Standing Bear's story as an interpreter. Susan, the younger sister, was born in the waning years of the Civil War in a buffalo hide tipi in a remote corner of the Great Plains. Then 24 years later, she graduated as the valedictorian of her medical school class in Philadelphia and became the nation's first female Native physician.

Additionally, he is the author of the 1995 publication: “The Dull Knives of Pine Ridge - A Lakota Odyssey,” which received many awards and was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize.

As an endowed chair in the University of Nebraska-Lincoln’s College of Journalism and Mass Communications, Starita led a yearlong, depth reporting class project to extensively examine the role that Native American women traditionally have played.

The result of the project became Native Daughters, a 147-page full-color magazine, a 30-minute documentary, an interactive Web site and also an educational and curriculum tool.

In addition to his books, Starita has led an exciting life. He was born in Lincoln, Neb. but after graduating from the University of Nebraska, he joined The Miami Herald in January 1979 and eventually moved to the city desk in Miami, where he also served as South Florida correspondent for The Guardian of London.

From 1983 to 1987, he served as The Herald's New York Bureau Chief, covering many of the stories of that era from the Bernhard Goetz subway shooting, the Space Shuttle Challenger explosion, the Wall Street Crash, John Gotti and the downfall of presidential candidate Gary Hart. Starita received more than two dozen state, regional and national awards -- including the national Investigative Reporters and Editors Award and a Pulitzer Prize finalist in local reporting.

He returned to Lincoln to begin a master's degree program and in December 1997, Starita was appointed city editor of the Lincoln Journal Star. Later, he was awarded an endowed chair in the University of Nebraska-Lincoln’s College of Journalism and Mass Communications.

(Story courtesy of CSC Information Office)