

OUR NATIVE DAUGHTER



Models of Sarah Winnemucca statues are displayed in the North Hall of the Governor's Mansion on Wednesday. From left, they were created by Gareth Curtis, Benjamin Victor, Sarah Sweetwater and Ed Dwight. Victor's design won the competition. Below, Sweetwater, of Elko, moves her model into position for judging.

Statue of Sarah Winnemucca chosen for Capitol

BY SUSIE VASQUEZ
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A symbol of history was created at the Governor's Mansion on Wednesday when artist Benjamin Victor's depiction of Sarah Winnemucca was chosen to represent Nevada in the U.S. Capitol's National Statuary Hall in Washington, D.C.

Bob Harmon, spokesman for the state Department of Cultural Affairs, said the six committee members who made the decision returned to the four figures being considered many times, but in the end they believed the windswept motion depicted in Victor's figure captured a sense of her spirit.

"Wind is an icon for change," Victor told the committee during his presentation. "And Sarah lived in the midst of change."

Born in 1844, Winnemucca was a Paiute activist, lecturer and author. She worked to improve communication between her people and the whites, and to defend tribal rights.

In Victor's interpretation, Winnemucca holds a book in her left hand, representing education and the high moral values of American Indians.

"This typifies Sarah's mission to make white people understand that Indians are not savages," Victor said. "The flower



in her right hand is a gesture of peace and harmony."

Churchill County Assemblywoman Marcia De Braga, one of the authors of the legislation that facilitated the project, lauded Winnemucca.

"She was chosen not because she was an Indian, but because she was the first public woman in Nevada," De Braga said. "That she was an Indian is a plus."

The 2001 Legislature unanimously passed a bill designating Winnemucca as Nevada's second statue. The idea was ini-

tiated by the Nevada Women's Project, De Braga said.

"When we submitted the bill, it asked for \$150,000 to fund the project. But because of Nevada's financial crisis, we took the request for money out. Otherwise, it wouldn't have passed," she said. "We left acquisition of the money to members of the Women's History Project, and they've done a phenomenal job."

About \$110,000 in private funding has been collected and more is expected soon, De Braga said.

Dorothy Ely, a grand-niece of Sarah Winnemucca, watched the process from the back of the room. She carefully studied the statues as they were presented.

She said having a statue of Winnemucca in Washington is a little overwhelming.

"I think this is great, but I'm not sure it's sunk in yet," she said.

Victor, 25, is a senior art major at Northern State University in Aberdeen, S.D. An artist all his life, he has created several larger-than-life figures, including depictions of the biblical Sampson and Delilah and three soldiers, and two life-size busts.

The National Statuary Hall Collection in the Capitol is comprised of statues donated by individual states to honor notable historic figures. Sen. Patrick A. McCarran was Nevada's first contribution.

The statue should be in the collection by the spring of 2005, De Braga said.

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