

Sarah Winnemucca statue replica to grace state Capitol

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A full-size replica of Nevada's Sarah Winnemucca statue in Washington, D.C.'s National Statuary Hall will have a place in Carson City.

The bronze statue honors Winnemucca, a 19th-century Paiute teacher and activist who pioneered a shift in opinion toward better treatment of her people.

The artist, sculptor Benjamin Victor, 26, of South Dakota said it was crucial that he capture motion in his work.

"The drawing I entered for the competition is quite a bit different from how it actually turned out," Victor said.

He said his vision for the piece changed after he read "Sarah Winnemucca" by Sally Zanjani, and Winnemucca's own book, "Life Among the Paiutes: Their Wrongs and Claims."

"I was really inspired with her character and realized she needed to be shown as dynamic, in motion. She was an activist, always working for better treatment of her people and

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BENJAMIN VICTOR ■ Sculptor

for humanity," Victor said.

"I knew the statue couldn't be static. It had to be in motion," he said.

The original statue was unveiled and dedicated March 9 in the National Statuary Hall in Washington, D.C. The Nevada Women's History Project lobbied to have it placed there.

The newest statue, which was installed Monday in the lobby of the Nevada state Capitol, will be dedicated Wednesday.

From her position on a stone pedestal there, the Sarah Winnemucca statue faces west through the Capitol's main glass entry doors.

In her left hand she clasps a book. In the other outstretched hand, she holds a shellflower.

"She was the first Native American to write a book, so this is a good icon for Sarah," Victor explained.

He said that her Paiute name, Thocmetony, translates to shellflower.

"In art work, the flower is a symbol for peace, which was the goal of her life, so it fits, and the wind is a good icon for change. These things relate on a number of levels and they fit together well aesthetically," Victor said.

Bob Harmon, Nevada State Museum spokesman, called the statue a wonderful addition to the Capitol.

"We've got something very special here. The buildings and grounds people gingerly carried her in here, and we've got about

IF YOU GO

WHAT: Sarah Winnemucca statue dedication.

WHEN: 5:30 p.m. Wednesday.

WHERE: Nevada Capitol.

DETAILS: Bob Harmon, 687-8323.

ON RGJ.COM

Log on to RGJ.com for the following links:

■ Past RGJ stories about Sarah Winnemucca.

■ A photo gallery of artist Benjamin Victor's work.

■ Sarah Winnemucca quotes, biography and more.

■ Information about the Nevada Women's History Project.

1,250 RSVPs already. This is going to be quite a shindig," Harmon said.

Plans for the dedication ceremony include Native American blessings and performances by Paiute drummers and dancers. A public reception also is planned in the lobby of the Nevada State Library and Archives



Artist Benjamin Victor, 26, covers up a replica of the statue he crafted of Sarah Winnemucca after it was installed Monday in the lobby of the Nevada state Capitol. The original statue was dedicated April 9 in Washington, D.C. Nevada's statue will be unveiled at 5:30 p.m. Wednesday. Plans for the dedication ceremony include Native American blessings and performances.

LISA J. TOLDA
RENO GAZETTE-
JOURNAL

Building that evening.

Funding for the Sarah Winnemucca Statue Project came from government entities

throughout the state, numerous organizations, businesses and schools and more than 500 families and individuals.