Ponca Students Explore Media Production at NET Workshop

For some, the word “home” conjures images of a childhood house or town. For others, “home” might mean the place they live now, a set of family traditions or perhaps even an imagined vision.

This summer a dozen Native American students explored “the meaning of home” in a video production workshop presented by NET in association with the locally produced documentary *Standing Bear’s Footsteps*, which debuts nationally October 15, on PBS.

Students from the Northern (Nebraska) and Southern (Oklahoma) Ponca Tribe learned filmmaking and video storytelling techniques as part of the project. All of the dozen Northern Ponca students who attended the workshops at NET are direct descendants of Standing Bear, a Ponca chief whose 1879 court case established Native Americans as human beings in the eyes of U.S. law.

“The goal was to introduce Ponca children to media careers and expose them to media production,” said *Standing Bear’s Footsteps* associate producer Princella Parker, who taught the Northern Ponca workshop in Lincoln. “My hope was to open them to college and the idea of media careers and get actual video experience under their belt.”

Five of the Lincoln students’ videos about the “meaning of home” are posted on the PBS *Standing Bear’s Footsteps* website. While the course offered the participants real experience in digital storytelling, Parker noted that the wider goal is to enrich the culture of Nebraska by exposing all students to the various peoples who comprise the history of our state.

“The class encouraged the students to shake up their own ideas of what it means to be Native, what it means to be a Ponca tribal member in Nebraska and how that is a different experience from being a Ponca tribal member in Oklahoma,” Parker said. “This class provided an opportunity for the students to look at themselves and how they want to present themselves to the world.”

Funded by a variety of grants, the project also allowed the purchase of digital media equipment and training so instructors can continue the program. *Standing Bear’s Footsteps* will premiere nationally on PBS on Monday, October 15 at 9 p.m. CT on NET1/HD. Visit PBS.org and follow the links to *Standing Bear’s Footsteps* for more information and additional resources, including the students’ videos.