

1 A MEMORIAL

2 HONORING WES STUDI AND HIS MANY ACHIEVEMENTS.

3
4 WHEREAS, Wes Studi embodies the definition of a
5 Renaissance man; and

6 WHEREAS, among his many roles, Wes is an actor,
7 musician, activist, author, advocate of Native American
8 languages, mentor and stone carver; and

9 WHEREAS, Wes, who is of Cherokee descent, made Oscar
10 history in October 2019, when he became the first Native
11 American actor to receive an Oscar; and

12 WHEREAS, the academy of motion picture arts and sciences
13 presented the honorary award to Wes for "portraying strong
14 Native American characters with poignancy and authenticity";
15 and

16 WHEREAS, Wes's remarkable life has been a fascinating
17 journey from his Cherokee boyhood to the rarified ranks of
18 Hollywood's most respected actors; and

19 WHEREAS, the eldest son of a ranch hand, Wes was born in
20 1947 in Nofire Hollow, Oklahoma; and

21 WHEREAS, Wes spoke only his native Cherokee until he was
22 five, when he was enrolled in the Murrell home to attend
23 public school; and

24 WHEREAS, Wes later attended and graduated from the
25 Chilocco Indian boarding school in northern Oklahoma; and

1 WHEREAS, after school, Wes joined the United States army
2 and was stationed at Fort Benning, Georgia; and

3 WHEREAS, stories of returning Vietnam War veterans moved
4 Wes deeply, and with only twelve months of his six-year tour
5 of duty left, Wes volunteered to go to Vietnam, where he
6 served one tour in south Vietnam with the ninth infantry
7 division in the Mekong delta; and

8 WHEREAS, after an honorable military discharge, Wes
9 returned home and became seriously involved in challenging
10 injustices against Native Americans; and

11 WHEREAS, Wes joined the American Indian movement and
12 participated in the trail of broken treaties protest march in
13 1972 and joined hundreds of Native American activists on the
14 march to Washington, D.C.; and

15 WHEREAS, Wes also was one of the protesters who briefly
16 occupied the bureau of Indian affairs building in Washington,
17 D.C., and participated and was arrested with others while
18 occupying Wounded Knee, South Dakota; and

19 WHEREAS, Wes recognized he could channel his feelings
20 into making positive changes and he changed course; and

21 WHEREAS, Wes moved to Tahlequah, Oklahoma, where he
22 worked for the Cherokee Nation, helping to start the *Cherokee*
23 *Phoenix*, a bilingual newspaper still in publication; and

24 WHEREAS, Wes also began teaching the Cherokee language
25 in the community and later attended Northeastern state

1 university in Tahlequah, where he made further attempts to
2 positively influence other Native Americans; and

3 WHEREAS, after college, Wes ran his own horse ranch and
4 became a professional horse trainer; and

5 WHEREAS, in 1983, Wes began acting at the American
6 Indian theater company in Tulsa, where he found both the
7 adrenaline rush he craved and the cathartic release he
8 needed; and

9 WHEREAS, Wes credits his passion and multifaceted
10 background for his powerful character portrayals that
11 confronted and changed a Hollywood stereotype; and

12 WHEREAS, Wes broke new ground and brought fully
13 developed Native American characters to the screen,
14 highlighting the success of Native Americans in non-
15 traditional roles; and

16 WHEREAS, Wes's professional stage debut was in 1984 with
17 *Black Elk Speaks*; not long after, Wes moved to Los Angeles,
18 landing his first film role in *Powwow Highway* and his first
19 television debut in *Longarm*; and

20 WHEREAS, in 1990, Wes portrayed a Pawnee warrior in
21 *Dances with Wolves* and two years later landed the role of
22 Magua in *The Last of the Mohicans*, the performance that put
23 him on the map; and

24 WHEREAS, Wes went on to play the title character in the
25 film *Geronimo: An American Legend*, for which he won a

1 western heritage award; and

2 WHEREAS, in 2002, Wes brought the legendary character
3 Lieutenant Joe Leaphorn to life based on Tony Hillerman's
4 books *Skinwalkers*, *Coyote Waits* and *A Thief in Time*; and

5 WHEREAS, Wes is universally recognized and admired for
6 other unforgettable performances in *Heat*, *Deep Rising*,
7 *Mystery Men*, *The Only Good Indian* and *Bury My Heart at*
8 *Wounded Knee* and for roles in *Avatar*, *Being Flynn* and
9 *Hostiles*; and

10 WHEREAS, his television credits include *Penny Dreadful*,
11 *The Red Road*, *The Mentalist*, *Hell on Wheels* and *Kings*; and

12 WHEREAS, recognition of Wes's artistic contributions and
13 talents has followed him throughout his career; and

14 WHEREAS, in 2013, Wes was inducted into the national
15 cowboy and western heritage museum's hall of great western
16 performers; and

17 WHEREAS, in 2006, Wes received the golden boot award; in
18 2009, he received the Santa Fe film festival lifetime
19 achievement award; and, in 2019, Wes was inducted into the
20 New Mexico film and television hall of fame; and

21 WHEREAS, Wes is an honorary member of the board of
22 directors for silver bullet productions, an educational
23 filmmaking program benefiting New Mexico Native American
24 communities; and

25 WHEREAS, Wes is also an accomplished musician who plays

1 bass and guitar in the band firecat of discord with his wife,
2 singer Maura Dhu, primarily performing original music; and

3 WHEREAS, Wes has also authored two children's books, *The*
4 *Adventures of Billy Bean* and *More Adventures of Billy Bean*,
5 for the Cherokee bilingual and cross-cultural education
6 center; and

7 WHEREAS, Wes is a skilled stone carver as well, working
8 primarily in soapstone and other soft stones; and

9 WHEREAS, Wes remains a passionate activist and academic,
10 taking a national leadership role in the promotion and
11 preservation of indigenous languages, working as a language
12 consultant on films and acting as a spokesperson for the
13 indigenous language institute; and

14 WHEREAS, Wes and his wife, Maura Dhu, live in Santa Fe
15 and have one son, Kholan, and Wes also has a son, Daniel, and
16 a daughter, Leah, from a previous marriage; and

17 WHEREAS, by his artistic example and mentorship, Wes
18 encourages the next generation of filmmakers and performers;

19 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF
20 REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that Wes Studi be
21 honored as the embodiment of a changemaker whose life work
22 celebrates Native Americans as well as being an inspiration
23 to all who advocate for equality and social justice; and

24 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this memorial be
25 transmitted to Wes Studi. _____