

Prehistoric paintings get laser study

COMSTOCK, Texas (AP) – A complex colorful mural painted on canyon walls some 4,000 years ago in West Texas is getting modern laser treatment as researchers try to unlock its mysteries and protect it from the unintended consequences of a nearby reservoir.

Panther Cave, among the best known of several hundred prehistoric pictograph sites that dot the rugged canyons along the US-Mexico border, is being scanned with lasers to produce a high-resolution 3-D image in efforts to gauge the mural's deterioration and detect images long ago erased by Mother Nature. They hope the project will help them preserve and decipher one of the oldest stories in North America.

"They are ancient texts, not just drawing on walls," says Carolyn Boyd, head of the Shumla School, an archeological research center working with state and federal agencies on the project. "We have knowledge now that these paintings are far more than graffiti. And with knowledge comes responsibility – a responsibility to take care of it."

Carbon dating shows the Panther Cave paintings – a combined 150 feet wide and 13 feet high – were made by prehistoric Native Americans at the same time the Egyptians were constructing the pyramids. Some images have human characteristics, some are unknown and some are animal figures, including the cave's unmistakable signature 12-foot-long leaping red

panther. The animal guards the hollowed out cavern overlooking the Rio Grande about 50 miles west of Del Rio.

The two-week scanning process, extending into early June, will eventually give researchers a precise base line to track what appears to be accelerated deterioration due to increased moisture from the Amistad Reservoir and insects building nests or burrowing into the porous limestone walls.

A camera about the size of a microwave oven passes over a 6- to 10-inch square per scan, collecting images accurate to 1mm. Color photographs are then overlaid on the images to give researchers a clear picture of how the site has changed over the centuries. Other images taken with color-sensitive photo equipment show parts of the paintings no longer visible.

"It's a powerful tool to see how the site has changed," said Christopher Goodmaster, an archaeologist and laser scanning specialist.

Goodmaster connects his equipment to a car battery for power and collects the individual images on a laptop computer. Like building a puzzle, he said he "mosaics it together to make sure we're getting it all."

The project is expected to help researchers determine how increased populations of wasps and environmental effects are changing the paintings over the years. Photos from earlier decades don't show the wasp infiltration, and some researchers

speculate that the creation of the nearby Amistad Reservoir has made it easier for the insects to get their mud and make their nests here. The gigantic reservoir was created in 1969 when damming of the Rio Grande began flooding the steep canyons.

"If you have one under your house, you take a pressure washer and whack it off," said Jack Johnson, a park archaeologist for the Amistad National Recreation Area. "You can't do that here."

One wasp, known as a mud dauber, builds pipe-like nests of mud that attach to the surface of the painted walls and harden like concrete. If and when the nests fall, they can take the paint with it. The second, called a blue dauber, infiltrates the natural holes in the limestone – smaller than the circumference of a drinking straw – for its nest and then seals the hole with its plaster-like mud. When its offspring emerges, it breaks through the plaster that also takes with it the limestone surface – and the paint – around the edge of the hole.

"I just wish they'd go somewhere else," Johnson said.

Before Amistad was built, the floor of Seminole Canyon was about 300 feet below Panther Cave. Now the water is close. Although visitors only can reach the area by boat, they need to only climb a couple steel staircases attached to a dock to see it. The cave itself is corralled by a tall chain link fence topped

by curled razor wire to deter vandals or souvenir seekers.

The increased moisture from the reservoir also contributes to spalling, the weakening of the cave surface that causes it to flake off.

Boyd believes the prehistoric paint was made of mineral pigments that gave it color and deer or bison fat held it together. It also may contain juice from yucca plants. The paint was applied with brushes of animal hair, feathers or fingers. Some of the images are extremely precise, indicating sophisticated measuring devices were employed.

Given the height of the cave and size of some of the paintings, a form of scaffolding must have been used to reach the upper levels, like the area of "the big fat guy," as Boyd laughingly identified one human-like image to some of her archaeology students involved in the project.

"This one's huge," she exclaimed. "Look at him!"

For data collection purposes, the figure depicted is now known as Anthropomorph 0083-A064. He's 12 feet tall and 16 feet wide from the atlatl – a spear thrower – in his right hand to a power bundle of spears and a kind of boomerang in his left hand. He has adornments on his elbow and wrist and what looks like feathers at his hip.

He joins at least four panthers in the cave, painted with shades of red, brown, yellow and black.

Widow sues over suicide in Utah tribal artifacts case

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) – The widow of a Blanding doctor who killed himself after his arrest in a Utah ancient artifacts theft case has filed a wrongful death lawsuit against two federal agencies.

The lawsuit, which Jeanne Redd filed Friday in U.S. District Court in Salt Lake City, claims the Bureau of Land Management and the FBI pushed her husband, James Redd, to suicide through "excessive, overreaching and abusive treatment" of him, the Deseret News of Salt Lake City reported.

Armed federal agents arrested the Redds along with 22 others on June 10, 2009, after a two-year undercover operation in the Four Corners area of southern Utah. James Redd was charged with one felony count of theft of Indian tribal property, specifically an effigy bird pendant worth \$1,000.

Redd, 60, asphyxiated himself by connecting a hose to the exhaust pipe of his car the day after his arrest. Another defendant, Steven Shrader, also committed suicide in 2009. An undercover informant for the government, Ted Gardiner, later took his own life.

The FBI declined to comment on the lawsuit. Calls to the BLM were not returned.

Jeanne Redd's lawsuit claims that agents "mishandled" her husband and in-

terrogated him for hours at their home, and that their "physical and psychological assault" focused on his family, religion, profession and community.

"His final words connected his death to the defendants' egregious actions," the complaint contends.

Redd, a father of five, was described in the complaint as a religious man and a linchpin in Blanding. He was well-liked in the Mormon and American Indian communities, according to the lawsuit.

The complaint, which also brands the federal undercover operation as overkill, seeks an unspecified amount for emotional and punitive damages.

Of the 24 people arrested in the raid, 18 have been placed on probation after reaching plea agreements.

A federal judge last month terminated the remaining 18 months of probation for Jeanne Redd and the remaining six months of probation for her daughter, Jerica Redd. Both have paid fines in full and complied with all conditions of their probation, according to court records.

Shortly after the arrests, U.S. Sens. Orrin Hatch and Bob Bennett accused agents of going overboard in their show of force in the raid.

Utah's top two federal law enforcement officials at the time said agents acted professionally in executing search

Haskell Indian Nations president to be announced

LAWRENCE, Kan. (AP) – An official says that the new president of Haskell Indian Nations University in Lawrence is expected to be announced soon.

Larry Echo Hawk, the U.S. Interior Department's assistant secretary for Indian affairs, said that he has completed interviews for the Haskell post and will "soon" make an appoint-

ment. Haskell is the nation's only four-year, federally run American Indian college. It has about 1,000 students.

The Kansas City Star reports that the school's last president was Linda Warner, who held the job two years until September 2009, when she was sent to posts in Arizona and Oklahoma. Five interim presidents have run the school since.

N.D. tribe says flooding caused reservation disaster

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) – The Three Affiliated Tribes chairman says winter snowfall and heavy spring rainfall has caused severe flooding on the million-acre Fort Berthold Reservation in western North Dakota.

Tex Hall issued an executive order last Friday declaring a state of disaster on the reser-

vation. Hall says flooding has damaged homes and other buildings on the reservation, which incorporates six counties. He says flooding also has caused highways to erode and has swamped farmland.

The disaster declaration is aimed at getting federal aid to repair damage from flooding.

Hawaii experts testify at Native language hearing

HONOLULU (AP) – Three educators from Hawaii are testifying about Native language at a U.S. Senate committee hearing on native language and culture-based education.

Sen. Daniel Akaka's office said Thursday Namaka Rawlins of the University of Hawaii at Hilo College of Hawaiian Language, Alvin Parker of a Waianae charter school and Shawn Kanaiaupuni of Kamehameha Schools traveled to Washington, D.C. to speak

before the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs.

The hearing is to explore trends and achievements in native language and culture-based education including barriers and strategies in meeting educational needs of students from native communities.

Akaka says that out of more than 300 native languages once spoken in the country only 175 remain and many are at risk of being lost.

US attorney in New Mexico hiring tribal prosecutor

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (AP) – The statistics are staggering, but far from new: Three-fifths of Native women have been assaulted by their spouses or intimate partners and one-third of Indian women will be raped during their lifetimes.

In some tribal areas, Native American women are murdered at a rate more than 10 times the national average, according to figures from Justice Department's Office of Violence Against Women.

But after years of what some Indian women's rights activists say has largely been a lack of inaction by the authorities, U.S. Attorney Ken Gonzales is set to announce the hiring of a tribal prosecutor as special assistant U.S. attorney focused almost exclusively on domestic and sexual assaults on tribal lands in New Mexico.

It's part of a pilot program by the Office of Violence Against

Woman, Gonzales' office said, that will give funding for the new prosecutors to a handful of U.S. attorneys around the country.

"I think a lot of people will be pleased to see this," said Corrine Sanchez of Tewa Women United, an intertribal group that was started as support group for women concerned about issues that include the high rates of domestic and sexual crimes. "There is still such a huge lack of prosecution on the U.S. attorney's side on sexual assaults."

Likewise, she said, there is a lack of tribal resources to deal with the crimes, mistrust among victims and the complications all victims face when they are assaulted or abused by a family member or loved one.

"It's a multi-layered issue," she said. "Because there has been this lack of response there is still a mistrust to report. People feel nothing is being done."

In an interview last week, Gonzales said that the funding is still being finalized but he plans to announce next month the hiring of David Adams, the tribal prosecutor for the Laguna Pueblo west of Albuquerque.

Adams, he said, will work with tribal authorities as well social service groups to improve law enforcement's response to domestic crimes and to try and change the culture of how such crimes have been treated.

"We are talking about a long history of this kind of violence and an unwillingness of victims to report it," Gonzales said.

Adams will retain his title as a tribal prosecutor, but he will be deputized as a special U.S. district attorney with all the powers that accompany that position.

Although funded at the national level, Adam's hiring fits with a broader focus by Gonzales – who was appointed

to the top federal law enforcement job in New Mexico just over a year ago – to "empower communities" to fight crime, whether it be rampant heroin use in Espanola or drugs, cash and gun smuggling across the border.

Gonzales says that in addition to being more aggressive in battling domestic and sexual crimes on tribal lands, he has tasked his prosecutors to work more closely with local enforcement agencies to use federal laws against gang leaders and other dangerous criminals when federal law has the potential to bring more serious penalties in a case.

"We have much more meaningful consequences on the federal side than states have," he said. "It's not what we have in mind for every gang banger out there ... but when you can take one or two (gang leaders) out of a small community it can have a big impact."

Alaska Native remains from museum blessed, repatriated

FAIRBANKS, Alaska (AP) – The remains of hundreds of Alaska Natives stored at a museum were be blessed at a ceremony last weekend, drawing attention to the repatriation process.

The ceremony was held Saturday at a park across from the

University of Alaska Museum of the North.

Jim Whitney, manager of the UA museum archaeology collection, said remains began arriving at the museum in the 1920s, largely through private donations and discoveries during excavations.

He said the Fairbanks museum has been working with tribes to return the remains but none had been returned since 2008.

Event organizer Candyce Childers said the ceremony was meant to draw attention to the 340 sets of human remains still

in the museum's possession.

Childers said she also hopes the ceremony can spur repatriation at various museums in the state. The repatriation process has slowed in recent years, which she attributes to a combination of bureaucracy and lack of information.

Adam Walsh Child Protection Act registration

By provision of the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act, the Confederated Tribes are also publishing the sex offender registration list.

A person is required to register with the administrator if the person has been convicted of a sex crime,

and resides or works in the community, or visits here on a monthly basis. This applies to tribal and non-tribal members.

The sex offender registration office phone number is 541-553-2214.

The administrator's office is located at 2146 Warm Springs Street, Warm Springs (up-

stairs in the tribal Court building).

The following names are added to the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs list of registered offenders under the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act (name followed by date of birth):

Lei Walker Calica, date of

birth 7/20/1980;
Buster Ray Isadore, date of birth 4/8/1980;
Richard Ray Wesley, date of birth 7/16/1971.

The sex offender registry of the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs can be viewed at the website: www.warmsprings.nspw.gov/