

## Tribes fighting cancer through art

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Specialists in Native American health are turning to art to correct a problem in medicine.

The problem is cancer, the leading cause of death among all South Dakotans and a greater menace to Indians in particular.

A project called Circle of Life will take root this fall as an attempt to close that gap in cancer care. Sponsors will use Native art, stories from survivors and lessons on nutrition, exercise and screenings as online tool kits to encourage healthier living among tribes. The larger society has been saturated with anti-cancer messages since the 1960s, but the voices in this project are new and exclusively Native American.

"This is cancer education for Native Americans by Native Americans," said Charlotte Hofer, spokeswoman for the American Cancer Society, which is sponsoring the project.

The curriculum will be available at cancer.org as a resource for what Hofer calls "a positive, holistic message based on common tribal values of spirituality and respect

for the natural world." She expects community leaders and school teachers to use it in seminars and classrooms and for individuals to do the same online.

The effort rises out of a knotty health challenge. Half of South Dakota's Indians smoke, a rate three times worse than the full population and a leading indicator of cancer. Indians are more obese, eat less nutritiously, get less exercise and see doctors less often, all factors in causing cancer or failing to catch it before it grows out of control. They develop the disease more often, and they have a death rate, at 252 per 100,000, that is 37 percent higher than cancer mortality for whites. On top of that, they've had to deal with a reluctance to face the problem in their own tribes and external challenges that keep rural Indians at a medical disadvantage.

"We do less cancer screening because we're underfunded, and the result is we do not have the services that are considered standard for others. When you diagnose it later, people die," said Dr. Donald Warne, a senior policy

adviser to the Great Plains Tribal Chairmen's Health Board and a consultant to Sanford Health.

Cancer is becoming a more visible problem, ironically, at a time tribes are seeing a gain in life expectancy. Average lifespan moved from 78 to 80 overall for South Dakota in a decade ending in 2007, and tribal people specifically jumped from the 50s to the mid-60s. Efforts to cut drinking on reservations had a hand in that, as did progress in reducing deaths to pneumonia and influenza.

But living longer has its side effects, and one of them is cancer.

"One of the biggest risk factors for cancer is getting older. Decades back, Native folks never lived long enough to get cancer," said Kris Rhodes, executive director of the American Indian Cancer Foundation in Minneapolis.

The power of imaging is central to the Circle of Life, with the color illustrations, photography and text from and for Indians. It is to be a work of art with personal impact, no small matter for minorities often left at the

margins of health messages.

"If you're from the majority society, and people all look like you, you don't even think about that," said Warne a South Dakota native and member of the Oglala Lakota tribe. "But if you're not from the majority society, you start to wonder if this is for me. Health messaging is more effective when it's culturally tailored and culturally appropriate and when the messenger is from the same cultural group as the person receiving the messages."

Success in this case will require a shift of opinion on smoking, a greater openness to health screening and a willingness to get past a barrier to acknowledge a problem. Roberta Cahill, director of community partnerships for the American Cancer Society in Pierre and a Yankton Sioux member in her 60s, said tribal people for years have had trouble owning the problem.

"People did not talk about cancer much," Cahill said. "A lot of time people were unaware of others who had survived cancer. In other instances, there's a belief if you talk about something it's going to happen."

## Indian Affairs post filled by Oklahoma Cherokee

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) — An enrolled member of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma has been named the director of the Indian Affairs Office of Budget Management in Washington D.C.

Thomas Thompson was selected for the post by acting Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs Donald Laverdure.

Thompson is currently the senior advisor to the area di-

rector of the Indian Health Service in Phoenix.

Laverdure said in a statement that Thompson will help find efficient and cost-effective ways to provide services in Indian Country.

Thompson has also worked for the US Department of Agriculture, the Cherokee Nation and owned an accounting firm in Stilwell.

## Native Americans to celebrate white bison

GOSHEN, Conn. (AP) — The birth of a white bison is bringing Native Americans who consider it a sacred event to celebrate at a farm in northwestern Connecticut.

Hundreds of people, including tribal elders from South Dakota, are expected to attend naming ceremonies later this month at the Goshen farm where the animal was born on June 16.

White bison figure promi-

nently in the lore of many tribes who see them as symbols of hope and unity.

Experts say they are as rare as one in 10 million.

The bull calf is off-white—not an albino—and farmer Peter Fay says he is certain the bloodlines are pure, although he has sent its DNA to be tested to confirm there was no intermingling with cattle.

## Idaho leader sentenced on theft charges

BOISE, Idaho (AP) — The former chairman of an American Indian tribe in Idaho and Nevada will spend nearly a year under the supervision of the federal Bureau of Prisons after pleading guilty to theft.

A federal judge has recommended 38-year-old Kyle Prior of Caldwell serve his time at a residential re-entry center in southwestern Idaho.

Prior, a former chairman of the Shoshone-Paiute Tribes in southern Idaho and northern Nevada, was also ordered to pay nearly \$36,500 in restitution at his sentencing Tuesday.

Prior was executive director of the Upper Snake River Tribes Foundation from September 2008 and July 2009.

## School Groundbreaking



Blessing of flutes was part of the ground-breaking of the Warm Springs k-8 school site.

## Sen. wants hearings on reservation abuse

GRAND FORKS, N.D. (AP) — Republican North Dakota Sen. John Hoeven is pushing the Senate Indian Affairs Committee to hold hearings about child abuse and neglect on American Indian reservations, according to his deputy chief of staff.

Hearings would be held in Washington, D.C., because more senators could attend and the discussion would draw national exposure, Ryan Bernstein said.

"We're working with the chairman, and we hope we can get that scheduled soon," Bernstein said. "We're hoping this summer, but if not, right after the August recess."

Both Hoeven and Democratic Sen. Kent Conrad of North Dakota are members of the panel.

A Bureau of Indian Affairs review earlier this year

detailed problems in tribal social services programs on the state's Spirit Lake Indian Reservation.

Thomas Sullivan, regional administrator in Denver for the U.S. Administration for Children and Families, called for suspending all state and federal funding to the tribe until it put qualified officials in place to run programs to ensure children are not subjected to physical, sexual or emotional abuse.

Tribal Chairman Roger Yankton has cited staff turnover, high caseloads and inadequate federal funding as problems. Tribal leaders who took office a year ago insist they are making strides, for example offering new training to social services personnel and increasing collaboration between tribal and county social service providers.

## Eastern Shoshone claim closer ties to land

CHEYENNE, Wyo. (AP) — A dispute over the Northern Arapaho Tribe's push for a federal permit to kill bald eagles for religious purposes has prompted the Eastern Shoshone Tribe to assert that it has older, deeper ties to the central Wyoming reservation the two tribes share and that its opposition should prevent killing the birds there.

The Eastern Shoshone Tribe filed a written argument in federal court in Cheyenne last week, objecting to the Northern Arapaho Tribe's plan to kill eagles on the Wind River Indian Reservation. The Shoshone were already on the reservation when the federal government settled the Arapaho there in 1878.

The dispute highlights the difficulty of having two separate tribal governments on a single reservation. While other reservations in the country are home to more than one tribe, officials have said the Wind River Indian Reservation is the only case where two tribes with separate governments share common ground.

"The Eastern Shoshone Tribe is the only tribe with aboriginal ties to this region, including all areas within the Wind River Indian Reservation," wrote Kimberly Varilek, attorney general for the Eastern Shoshone Tribe and a member of the tribe.

"And the Northern Arapaho Tribe can neither demonstrate that same inter-

est, nor any other reason why their permit can only be satisfied on the Wind River Indian Reservation in complete disregard of the Eastern Shoshone Tribe's interests, beliefs, traditions and practices," Varilek wrote in the brief she filed Friday in federal court in Cheyenne.

Varilek said that the Arapaho could seek permission from the state of Wyoming to kill eagles outside the reservation.

Although the Shoshone use eagle feathers in their own ceremonies, Varilek said, "There's not a process in the Shoshone beliefs to kill eagles." She said the Shoshones traditionally captured live eagles, took some feathers, and then released

the birds.

William C'Hair, a Northern Arapaho elder, said Monday that his response to the Eastern Shoshone Tribe's argument that it has deeper ties to the Wind River Reservation is that the Shoshone received full payment long ago from the federal government for the one-half interest in the reservation that went to the Northern Arapaho Tribe.

C'Hair said the federal government also docked payments it made to the Northern Arapaho Tribe for the loss of ancestral lands to recoup the cost of payments to the Eastern Shoshone Tribe.

"So actually, we bought and we own the reservation. Bought and paid for," he said.

## Lawmakers bar changes on Mass. tribal casino deal

BOSTON (AP) — Lawmakers moved to block any changes from being made to an agreement signed by Gov. Deval Patrick and the Mashpee Wampanoag Indian tribe to pave the way for a tribal casino in Taunton. Orders barring amendments to the casino compact were approved by the House and Senate, dealing a blow to efforts by southeastern Massachusetts legislators to add a two-year deadline for the tribe to win federal approval for taking into trust the land on which it hopes to build the casino.

The Legislature will now be limited to voting up or down vote on the compact, with debate expected later in the week.

State Rep. Joseph Wagner, a Chicopee Democrat who was one

of the chief architects of the landmark casino law signed by Patrick last year, admitted it was unusual to preclude amendments to a measure before the Legislature. But he argued that any change made in the compact would necessitate a re-opening of negotiations with the tribe and likely scuttle an agreement.

"I can tell you with absolute certainty that the compact would not survive an amendment by this Legislature," Wagner said.

The gambling law, which allows for up to three resort casinos in the state, gives exclusive rights to a federally-recognized Indian tribe to develop a casino in southeastern Massachusetts if a compact is signed by the state and ratified by the Legislature by July 31.