

Panel will examine sovereignty

By Derek Lippincott

Staff writer

Native nations' rights and struggles with sovereignty – the belief of superiority above others – will be examined today in a panel discussion.

Sovereignty has an effect on everybody, including indigenous groups, said John Snowden, a University of Nebraska law professor.

Today at noon in the NU College of Law auditorium, three representatives, including Louise Hardy, a member of the Canadian Parliament, will discuss issues of sovereignty among American Indians and Canadians.

The discussion is sponsored by the Conservation Alliance of the Great Plains.

"Sovereignty from native nations has existed here forever," Snowden said.

"It is something constantly struggled with every day. The same thing is going on with Canada to our north."

The discussion will cover the nature of native sovereign powers in the United States and Canada, native rights protected by treaty, statute and the U.S. Constitution, as well as the implementation of those powers.

Hardy, a representative of Canada's Yukon Territory and member of the New Democratic Party and Aboriginal Affairs Committee, will be accompanied at the discussion by Frank Lamere of the Winnebago tribe and Ken VanPola, Winnebago tribal court judge.

"Our organization is pleased to help sponsor this panel," said Tyler Sutton, president of the Conservation Alliance of the Great Plains, in a press release.

"We are particularly pleased Hardy will be joining the panel because she has not only been an advocate for native rights, but also for the protection of the land and wildlife."

Lamere will discuss sovereignty from the American-Indian perspective, and VanPola will discuss the exercise of sovereignty in Winnebago tribal courts.

"I expect people who are interested in the sovereignty of indigenous nations to show up," said Snowden, who will also be a panel member.

"It is for the enjoyment and benefit of students or the general public. It is not focused for just lawyers or law students."

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John Snowden
law professor

Students aid efforts in park renovation

Lincoln Southeast High students raise nearly \$150,000 for Antelope Park.

By Matthew Beermann

Staff writer

Antelope Park will soon be getting a facelift, thanks to the efforts of local youth.

Students at Lincoln Southeast High School have raised nearly \$150,000 to renovate the playground and make it fully accessible to disabled children.

"I've worked on a lot of projects, and this one has more energy than I've ever seen," said Jim Morgan, parks and recreation director.

The playground was originally constructed in two sections, one accessible and one not. But the equipment is old and decaying, and the city wanted to create a unified area. That's where Southeast came in.

"When the kids brought the idea to me last June, I thought it was rather ambitious," said Southeast's student council adviser Brent Toalson. "But here we are. The students are excited about the project and anxious to get started."

Southeast has raised \$20,000 toward the project and has secured grants and in-kind donations from private sources.

In addition, students participated in the design process and will help install the equipment this spring.

"The students are building a place where all of Lincoln's children can play together," Toalson said.

"Through this process they are learning some valuable lessons about the importance of community sources."

The project is still \$50,000 short of its goal, and Toalson said they need to raise the rest by March 1. Construction will begin in March and will be completed by May.

Morgan and Toalson both encouraged the community to help out.

"I'm going to ask all of my friends to contribute," Morgan said. "They have done a miracle here."

Contributions should be sent to the Lincoln Parks and Recreation Foundation, 2740 A St., P.O. Box 204.

There will also be a meeting for the public to view the plans and comment on the project at 7 p.m. Tuesday at Lincoln Southeast High School, room H103.

Six more weeks of winter to go

PUNXSUTAWNEY, Pa. (AP) – Groundhog Punxsutawney Phil – weather prophet without peer – saw his shadow shortly after sunrise Wednesday, predicting six more weeks of winter.

With 11-degree temperatures and wind blowing over fresh snow, even a groundhog could see that winter wasn't departing right away.

Forget that there was little sunlight in the overcast skies to cast a shadow. Phil was greeted with a chant of "Bring out the rat."

"It doesn't matter what we want. It doesn't matter what Phil wants. It's what he reads in the skies," said Bill Cooper, president of the Punxsutawney Groundhog Club Inner Circle, who is charged with interpreting Phil's predictions.

The crowd for this year's Groundhog Day on Gobbler's Knob in Punxsutawney was smaller than in recent years. Inner Circle members estimated that the mixture of families and college students hit the predicted 15,000, but the Punxsutawney Chamber of Commerce said it was closer to 12,000.

The Groundhog Day tradition is based on a German superstition that an animal casting its shadow on Feb. 2 – the Christian holiday of Candlemas – means another six weeks of winter is coming. Otherwise, it suggests an early spring.

In this central Pennsylvania town of 6,700 people, Phil sees his shadow most years. Wednesday was the 90th time Phil has seen his shadow in the past 114 years.



Melanie Falk/DN

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Mice aid HIV-dementia research

By John Hejkal

Staff writer

Research at the University of Nebraska Medical Center is gaining ground in the fight against HIV, and mice are helping out.

University of Nebraska Medical Center researcher Jenae Limoges conducted the study, which involved implanting infected human cells into the brains of mice.

Each mouse was injected with one of five drugs being tested.

The study focused on finding out how effective different drugs were at crossing the blood-brain barrier and destroying HIV in the brain.

Limoges, principle investigator of the study and assistant professor in the Department of Internal Medicine-Infectious Diseases, said research is needed to discover what drugs can reach possible HIV reservoirs in the brain and other areas.

HIV in the brain can cause HIV-dementia.

Larry Bierce, educational director at the Nebraska AIDS Project, said HIV-dementia can cause severe handicaps for people who are otherwise physically healthy.

HIV-dementia resembles Alzheimer's disease, he said. It can affect memory and motor movement.

"Dementia is one of the most insidious complications of HIV diseases in that it is one that we've had some of the most difficulty in treating," he said. "It can be quite debilitating."

Limoges voiced a similar concern. "We've gotten all these new drugs that treat HIV very well in the blood, but we don't know how well they work in the brain," she said.

The blood-brain barrier is a natural defense mechanism of the brain. Some drugs do not cross the barrier well, resulting in a lower exposure to anti-HIV drugs for the virus in the brain.

Exposure to low levels of the drugs can allow HIV to form into mutant viruses that are not responsive to the drugs, Limoges said.

Another danger of the reservoirs is the possibility that the virus can hide until the drug treatment is stopped and then reemerge into the body.

Two of the drugs tested, abacavir and lamivudine, also known as 3TC, were most effective. They reduced viral levels in the brain by 80 to 95 percent.

The results of the study were published in the January issue of Neurology.

All five drugs were nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitors, which work by halting the viruses' reproduction.

Twenty percent of adults and 50 percent of children with HIV develop HIV-dementia.

Limoges said the study was innovative because of the mouse model used. Mice are cheap, and research can be done quickly, she said.

"We could get information very quickly, within seven to 14 days, as opposed to human studies, which might take years," she said.

Another benefit of the model was

"It's one of the first studies we know of that's actually been tested on intact tissue."

Jenae Limoges
UNMC researcher

that tests could be done on tissue. Tissue tests of human brains must be done either on a dead patient or through a brain biopsy, Limoges said.

Brain biopsies are risky because of high possibilities of a stroke, and they may not be accurate in testing for HIV levels because the virus exists only in some areas of the brain, she said.

For these reasons, the effects of HIV on the brain are usually measured through neuropsychological tests, Limoges said.

"It's one of the first studies we know of that's actually been tested on intact tissue," she said.

Limoges stressed that the differences between mice and humans do not allow the results of the study to be applied directly to human treatments. But she said the performance of drugs such as 3TC was encouraging.

"It's nice to know that that's probably going to be a very effective drug in the neural system," she said.

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