

Grad students learn from Ojibwe tribe

By Eddie Lau
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Two Penn State graduate students say they can't wait to apply what they learned spending three weeks with the Ojibwe Native American tribe to their future teaching careers.

Graduate students Kevin and Julie Slivka recently returned from a three-week, fully immersive Native American course — "Exploring the Indigenous Ways of Knowing of the Ojibwe" — offered through the College of Education and the College of Agriculture each year.

Led by Bruce D. Martin, an instructor in the College of Education, the Slivkas and about 20 other Penn State students spent three weeks from May 16 to June 4 on the three largest Ojibwe reservations in North America — the Red Lake, Leech Lake and White Earth nations. There, they learned history, geography, the indigenous people's way of life, culture and worldview of the Ojibwe.

"I grew up in the bush country of the Northwest Angle, Lake of the Woods, Minnesota, between

Manitoba and Ontario," Martin said. "I went to school with Ojibwe children and our friends were Ojibwe."

Martin said his upbringing lets him appreciate the Ojibwe culture.

"I created this course because the Ojibwe and all indigenous peoples and cultures have a wealth of knowledge and understanding of the natural and spiritual world that could contribute to sustainable living, the health of the planet and the survival of the human race," Martin said.

Martin said he realized much of what was called "cross-cultural" offered no real exposure to the culture studied or an encounter with the people of the culture.

"Most Americans are stuck in the 19th century mindset of the 'vanishing Indian' because they never see or encounter native people or their communities," he said.

The Slivkas said they decided to take the course together because they both wanted an opportunity to engage with another culture.

"I didn't know anything — we had no preconception," Julie Slivka (graduate curriculum and instruction) said.

The Slivkas said they met with Ojibwe educators and traditional elders, from which they gained first-hand experience about the Ojibwe daily living and worldview.

"They told us they plan seven generations ahead. They think about all their children in the future ... I really like that," Julie Slivka said.

Kevin Slivka (graduate-art education) said the trip helps him understand the conflict between Anglo-Americans and the Ojibwe.

He said recently there have been issues of separating Ojibwe land from state land, which the Ojibwe have begun hunting, fishing, and gathering upon.

"These activities are guaranteed by 1837 and 1855 treaties with the U.S. government and are recognized as enacted between sovereign nations," he said.

The indigenous peoples are currently pushing and reaffirming those treaty rights — the sovereign right to hunt, fish and gather on ceded lands, Kevin Slivka said.

Being doctoral candidates and teaching courses at Penn State, the couple said they will incorporate what they learned to help stu-



Ojibwe tribe members dance at Leech Lake Reservation.

Courtesy of Kevin Slivka

dents understand diversity and culture.

"It changed my life ... how I shop, how I pray, how we are going to plan our family," Julie Slivka said.

The Slivkas said they've contacted the Centre Learning Community Charter School in State College and will possibly help develop some collaborative

curricula that would allow local students to learn more about the indigenous worldview.

"I think the general population of America has a lot to learn from indigenous population," Kevin Slivka said. "I mean their spirituality ... the connection between each other."

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York drug sentences could change

By the Associated Press

YORK — A state panel is recommending that lawmakers repeal the mandatory minimum sentences imposed for drug offenses in school zones, letting judges determine the sentence based on existing guidelines.

The Pennsylvania Commission on Sentencing says mandatory sentences are used inconsistently across the state. Executive director Mark Bergstrom says some district attorneys invoke them every time, while others rarely use them.

In addition, he said, there is no required link between drug deals and the school zone, which extends 1,000 feet from the edge of school property, so it includes people living blocks away.

Current law does not distinguish between a drug dealer selling to children near a school and someone selling drugs in a house

during the middle of the night.

In York, for example, most of the city falls within a drug-free school zone, so an adult convicted of even a first-time offense could face time in state prison.

And if a district attorney decides to invoke a mandatory minimum sentence of two to four years, a judge must hand down that sentence whether he or she agrees with it or not.

York County District Attorney Tom Kearney said his office decides whether to invoke mandatory sentences on a case-by-case basis, but it's a tool that he wants to keep in his arsenal.

"I like the flexibility the legislation has provided to me," he said. "What we want to get are the bad guys."

He said, however, that he can understand concerns about the lack of consistency across the state.

State Rep. Eugene DePasquale, D-West Manchester, said that since the state prison population keeps going up as crime has been decreasing, lawmakers have to address mandatory minimum sentences for first-time, nonviolent offenders. But he said lessening any offense in a school zone would put children in danger.

Stewart Weinberg, superintendent of the Dallastown Area School District, said drug-free school zones help to keep drugs off of school property, and he does not want to see penalties reduced. And, he asks, if someone is selling drugs at 2 a.m. out of a house, what will stop that person from doing so when school is in session?

Defense attorney Richard Robinson, however, said the minimums take too much power from judges. He said he represented a

college student with no prior record who sold marijuana in his dorm room to some friends.

The district attorney threatened to invoke the mandatory minimum, imposing a two-year sentence, he said. The student ultimately was placed on probation.

"They have a hammer over your head," Robinson said.

Defense attorney Christopher Ferro calls the law "justice by tape measure" since the school zones don't really take into account whether numbers were involved in a crime.

Especially unfair, he said, is that the law disproportionately affects defendants in urban areas because of the number of school buildings.

"It's almost impossible to go anywhere in York City, and you're not in a drug-free school zone," he said.



Michael Dwyer/Associated Press

West Virginia Gov. Joe Manchin speaks at a conference in Boston.

Manchin calls for college standard

National Governors Association Chairman Gov. Joe Manchin wants to raise college completion numbers.

By Glen Johnson
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

BOSTON — The incoming head of the National Governors Association said Sunday he will make increasing the number of students who complete college his focus during his scheduled yearlong tenure.

West Virginia Gov. Joe Manchin, a Democrat, assumed the chairmanship of the NGA on Sunday from Vermont Gov. Jim Douglas, a Republican. Nebraska Gov. Dave Heineman, a Republican, replaced Manchin as vice chairman.

Manchin said he will work to unite governors, higher education officials, campus leaders and corporate chief executives behind the college initiative he calls "Complete to Compete."

"If we don't improve college completion rates in this country, our children will be less educated than we are," he told reporters.

"That will be the first time in the history of the United States of America that will have happened. That should be the most alarming statistic to get you motivated to make changes than anything else we can do."

Whether Manchin will be there to see the effort to fruition is a question. He has said it's "highly likely" he will announce Monday he is running this fall for the Senate seat vacated by the death of Democrat Robert Byrd.

Manchin told reporters at the NGA meeting that much of the work on his initiative has already been started, ahead of when other incoming chairmen might start work on their favored topic.

He is aiming to have individual state programs incorporated into the State of the State addresses many governors will deliver in January.

The election to replace Byrd is in early November. "As far as it being affected, no, not at all, it won't," Manchin said.

BP pleased with oil-leak effort, continues work

By Tom Breen
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

NEW ORLEANS — Underpromising with hopes of overdelivering, BP said Sunday that it is making progress on what could prove its most effective effort yet to contain the Gulf oil leak, but cautioned that the verdict could be several days away.

A new cap being placed atop the gusher is intended to provide a tight seal and might eventually allow the oil giant to capture all the crude leaking from the well for the first time since an April 20 oil rig explosion set off the environmental crisis.

But several prior failed attempts to stop the leak have made BP PLC careful to keep expectations grounded.

"We're pleased with our progress," said BP senior vice president Kent Wells, who then hastened to add the operation was still expected to last up to six more days.

Asked during a conference call if the new cap and collection efforts would end the spilling of oil into the Gulf, Wells said only that BP will capture all the oil "at some point."

Wells said BP may have to bring another vessel back online and add additional collection capacity in order to stop the oil flow altogether.

Officials won't be satisfied the cap is working until they've run tests on whether it can withstand the tremendous pressure of oil pushing up from below the seafloor, Wells said.

"We've tried to work out as many of the bugs as we can. The challenge will come with something unexpected," he said.

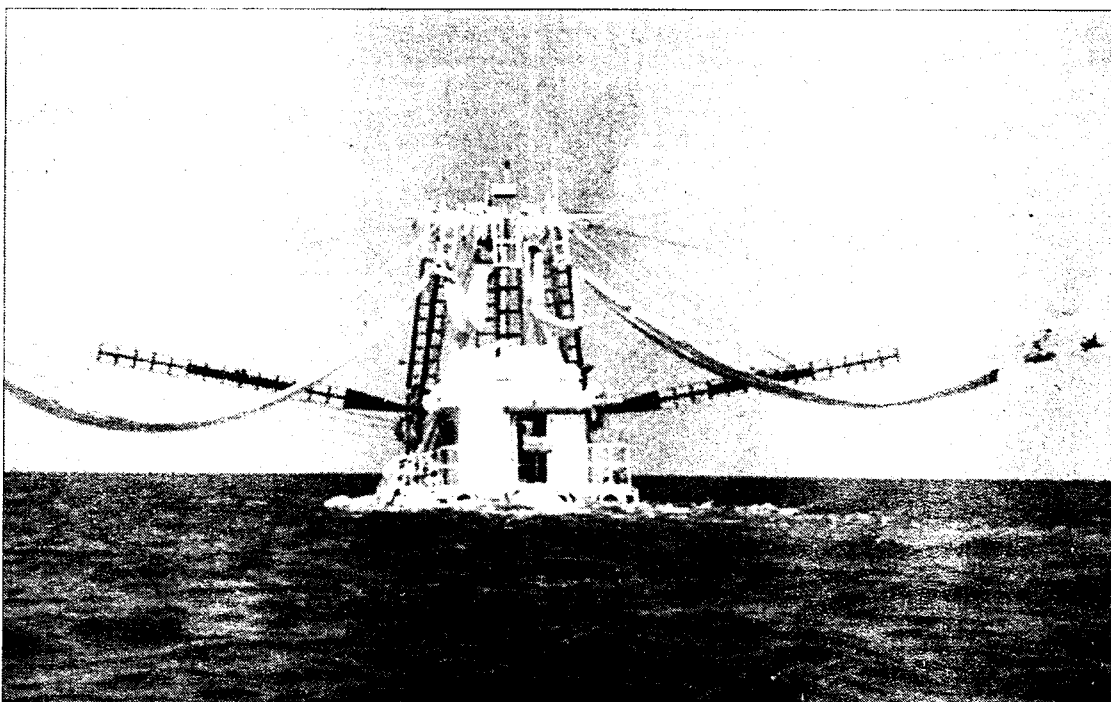
The well has been gushing largely unchecked since an old, leaky cap was removed from the wellhead Saturday to make way for the new one.

Between 88 million and 174 million gallons have already spilled into the Gulf, according to federal estimates.

Wary Gulf residents reserved judgment about BP's latest effort and said the damage already done to the environment, fishing and tourism will haunt the region for a long time either way.

"At this point, there have been so many ups and downs, disappointments, that everybody down here is like, 'We'll believe it when we see it,'" said Keith Kennedy, a charter boat captain in Venice, La.

Robotic submarines finished removing a busted piece of pipe



An oil boom hangs from a clean up boat in the Gulf of Mexico near Cocodrie, La., on Sunday.

that was bolted around the leak around 3 a.m. Sunday. That paved the way for the installation of a pipe-like connector called a flange spool that will sit on top of the spewing well bore.

The new cap would be mounted on top of that connector and have flexible pipes leading up to surface ships.

The work was being closely monitored at the White House, where President Barack Obama is being briefed multiple times a day, adviser David Axelrod said on ABC's "This Week."

"We have every reason to believe that this will work," he said.

The new cap will be aided in containing the leak by the arrival of the Helix Producer, a vessel that will be able to take in about 1 million gallons of crude per day by Tuesday after gradually ramping up.

Like another vessel already operating, the Q4000, the Helix will take in oil through connections beneath the new seal. Once the new cap is affixed, two other vessels are to connect to it for their oil collection.

Ultimately, the four vessels collecting oil from the leak would have a rough capacity of about 2.5 million to 3.4 million gallons a day — enough to capture all the oil leaking, if federal estimates are right. Getting all the vessels on the task will take about two to three weeks.

The hurricane season that lasts through November could inter-

fer. There are no storms forecast now, but if one blows through, the ships collecting the oil may have to leave and crude would spew again for days into the water.

If the new cap is a complete success in stopping the leak, that will be a first.

In May, BP tried to drop a four-story, 100-ton steel-and-concrete box on the leak, but abandoned it when it was encased by ice-like crystals. That was followed by a mile-long siphon tube designed to suck up oil escaping the leak. That, in turn, was scrapped after it managed to suck up only about 900,000 gallons after roughly a week of operation.

The most anticipated effort was the so-called "top kill," in which mud and cement were pumped down from above the leak. After about three days of the strategy, BP announced on May 29 it had failed.

Then came the cap that was removed Saturday. That device didn't form a perfect seal on the jagged pipe that was cut to make room for it, and the inexact fit meant that it was able to collect only 1 million gallons or so of oil a day.

The new, tighter cap is not intended to be the permanent fix to the problem.

Relief wells are being dug for the permanent fix, a "bottom kill" in which heavy drilling mud and cement are pumped in from below the broken wellhead.

The effort to drill relief wells was moving ahead of schedule,

Wells said Sunday. BP and government officials have said the wells are expected to be completed sometime around mid-August.

The new cap, or "Top Hat 10," weighs some 150,000 pounds. It is designed to fully seal the leak and provide connections for new vessels on the surface to collect oil. The cap has valves that can restrict the flow of oil and shut it in, if it can withstand the enormous pressure.

Former Sen. Bob Graham of Florida, co-chair of the national oil spill commission, said capping the spill would be a relief.

"But the problem is still going to be there to deal with the enormous amount of petroleum put in the Gulf of Mexico," he said during a stop at a local emergency operations center in the Florida Panhandle town of Southport.

Crews are working to skim oil from the Gulf's surface and remove it from the coast, but the job is enormous. People on shore who depend on the Gulf for their livelihood are paying attention to the latest effort but wonder if the damage already done by the spill is too much.

Trey Riviere, 42, who owns a fishing lodge in Myrtle Grove, La., said that even if BP is successful, he fears the aftermath could last for years. He said crude was already in his waters in the marshes west of the Mississippi River.

"How are they going to get all that out of there?" he asked.