



H&N photo by Todd E. Swenson

Oregon State student John Reese delivers a portion of a report about the history of the Native American culture in the Klamath Basin at Las Palmas on Thursday.

OSU students study the Basin

Students spent spring break learning about Klamath County

By **STEVE KADEL**
H&N Staff Writer

They learned about sweat lodges, endangered suckers and the drought of 2001.

They heard about drug abuse and health problems, and economic hopes like biofuels.

Twenty Oregon State University students spent spring break immersing themselves in Klamath County culture. They talked with ranchers, farmers, law enforcement personnel, tribal members, business and government leaders.

Thursday afternoon they reported their findings during a luncheon at Las Palmas Restaurant. Students spoke about the region's past, present and future as they painted a picture of life in the Basin.

Mike Jones noted that

Chiloquin doesn't have a police department, so it must rely on other agencies. That adds extra response time by officers.

Jones added Chiloquin has a problem with drug and alcohol abuse, but said law enforcement is working with the schools to educate children about those dangers.

Domestic violence and suicide are other problems, Jones said.

Sports an outlet

David Hunter said sports have become a positive outlet for many teens who otherwise might get into trouble. Despite that, he said, the dropout rate is high in the county's rural schools.

As for the region's future, Ashlee Clair said young people leave Klamath Falls because of lack of jobs. At the same time, retirees who make up much of the in-migration are putting a strain on assisted living centers.

Class differences

The stream of newcomers from California has caused an increase in

Stereotype disproved

Oregon State University graduate student Jason Hatch grew up in Humboldt County, Calif., and has only lived in Oregon six years. He came to Klamath County for the spring break study with a stereotype of the area in his mind.

"Judging from media coverage of the 2001 water shut-off you would assume this is a community at war," he said. "It really helped to talk to people directly and see there are degrees of collaboration."

Hatch called it refreshing to have the precon-

ceived notion corrected. He added there's little room for bickering in small towns.

"In rural areas you don't have the luxury of not talking to people, because you're going to run into them everywhere," he said.

Hatch, who is studying water resource policy, also learned about the complex irrigation network that provides water to the Klamath Project.

"It's a very impressive system," he said. "Ag wouldn't exist here without irrigation."

Klamath County real estate prices, and has created a bigger difference "between the have and the have-nots," Clair said. "We heard many people say Klamath has been 'found' and there's good and bad with that."

Brandon Stewart said one of the most interesting things he saw was the

Chiloquin dam, a long-time block to fish passage that is now scheduled for removal. Stewart spoke of the cultural importance of suckers to the Klamath Tribes.

He also was glad to have seen his first sweat lodge, which he called a vehicle for "spiritual and mental cleansing."