

## WOMEN

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individual who could take care of her business and what needed to be done, fiercely independent," said Whitefoot, who wore a red dress — representing missing and murdered indigenous women — otter furs, shell jewelry and moccasins to the bill signing ceremony.

Travis Hampton, superintendent of the Oregon State Police, told attendees, many of them Native American women, that he was emotionally invested in bringing results. He said he had

been concerned about a lack of state police jurisdiction in Indian country but that it would be compensated for with collaboration among federal, state and local law enforcement.

"I will treat these women and girls; these sisters, these mothers, these daughters, as if they were my own," he said to applause.

Montana, Washington state, Arizona and New Mexico have passed similar legislation. A bill re-introduced in the House of Representatives last week would expand tribes' access to some federal crime databases, establish protocols for handling

cases of missing and slain Native Americans, and require annual reports.

The bill is named Savanna's Act, after Savanna LaFontaine-Greywind, who was killed while pregnant in 2017 in North Dakota. Her baby was cut from her womb but survived.

In urban areas alone, some 500 Native American women in 71 U.S. cities vanished or were killed, the Urban Indian Health Institute, a division of the Seattle Indian Health Board, reported last year. Most of the cases cited occurred since 2010.

On some reservations, fed-

eral studies have shown women are killed at more than 10 times the national average. Predators believe they can get away with abducting or killing American Indian women there because of scant law enforcement presence, said Rep. Tawna Sanchez, chief sponsor of the Oregon bill and the only Native American in the state Legislature.

Some tribes have no law enforcement, while the FBI might be able to dedicate only one agent to investigate crimes on sprawling reservations, Sanchez said.

"All of these jurisdictional issues make it really, really dif-

ficult for people to know and understand what they can and cannot do," she said. "Most tribes don't have the ability to deal with anyone around a criminal issue on a reservation."

The new Oregon law, which takes effect immediately, directs the state police to study how to increase and improve state criminal justice protective, responsive and investigative resources. It also calls for better systems for reporting, identification, investigation and rapid response to future and past cases.

The state police must report its findings by September 2020. ■

## LHS students delve into education issues

By Dick Mason  
The Observer

These 13 La Grande High School students know little about university campus life, but their understanding of what it takes to write a dynamic college research paper is beyond their years.

The students are the three juniors and 10 seniors enrolled in Introduction to Education at LHS, a new year-long class taught by Anne March, a Spanish and education teacher. The course is part of the Oregon Teacher Pathway program at Eastern Oregon University, which teaches high school juniors and seniors about the field of education and offers incentives to go into the program at EOU.

These incentives include the opportunity to earn EOU education credits at a reduced tuition rate. Students in the class recently completed college level research papers about education topics ranging from how to boost under-achieving gifted students to addressing the education needs of students who have had traumatic brain injuries.

The 13 students spoke about their research at EOU this morning at an Oregon Teacher Pathway Spring Symposium. The symposium included students from 10 Eastern Oregon high schools that offer Oregon Teacher Pathway Introduction to Education classes. Today's presentations followed ones given recently to the public at LHS's library.

Those who wrote research papers include LHS senior Natalie Sumerlin, who wrote about helping students "navigate adverse childhood and negative life experiences."

Sumerlin said it is critical for educators to be aware of students whose lives have been impacted by adverse experiences such as domestic violence, physical and/or emotional neglect, or an addiction in their family.

"Research shows that a child who has had four



Dick Mason/The Observer

La Grande High School senior Alyssa Jones discusses the research paper she wrote on "Stress in the Classroom" with Principal Brett Baxter.

adverse experiences is 10 times more likely to later develop a substance abuse problem," Sumerlin said.

Caden Johnson's report focused on how educators can better address the needs of students who suffer from the effects of a traumatic brain injury. Johnson wrote that teachers should provide regular timed breaks for these students and raise the awareness level in the classroom of their condition.

Senior Maritza Villagomez Ortiz wrote about understanding the effects of poverty on brain development. She said her findings indicate that teachers who take classes on field trips are providing a remarkable benefit for children from lower income families. Villagomez Ortiz said such students are more likely than their peers to visit places on field trips that they would not otherwise experience.

"They are so grateful. (The educators) may not think it is a big deal, but it is," she said.

Senior Alyssa Jones wrote her paper on stress in the classroom. She said studies indicate that stress levels decline in classrooms in which music without lyrics is played.

"It calms people down," she said.

Jones also draws upon her firsthand experiences in the classroom when discussing stress. All of the students in Introduction to Education helped second-graders in Heather Gooderham's class at Central Elementary School learn math in small groups. Jones said she observed that as an educator it is im-

portant to remain calm and not let children see they are nervous.

"If you are stressed, don't show it," she said. "It makes the students feel stressed."

The senior, when talking about the Introduction to Education class, said she immensely enjoyed assisting the classroom. She particularly liked working with second graders.

"It was so much fun. They are just at an age when they are figuring things out," Jones said.

She added the experience at Central helped convince her that she should pursue a career in education. A number of students, though, said they have realized they are not cut out for careers as educators.

At a meeting with the students, LHS Principal Brett Baxter said they should not be discouraged if they discovered they are not meant for a career in education.

"It is just as important to figure out this isn't what you want to do," Baxter said.

March was pleased with how her students immersed themselves in their research projects and with the topics they chose.

"They picked important issues in the field of education they wanted to explore," March said.

Their reports had to be 10 to 15 pages long and follow collegiate research paper APA guidelines. This meant each report had to have features including a review of current literature on their topic area and an abstract synthesizing the information they gathered.

March said in the process of researching their reports, the students had to learn how to take notes in a manner that would prove useful to them.

The LHS teacher was impressed not only with the students' interesting findings but also with how well they communicated their research via the written word.

"It was high-level writing," March said.

The experience of writing a research paper will serve well the students in the class who go on to college.

"They will not be intimidated when they have to write a research paper," March said.

The polish of the students' writing carried over to their oral presentations at the LHS library. Baxter said they appeared very poised and knowledgeable and if he hadn't known better he would have thought he was listening to actual college students.

Baxter, in a presentation to students in the Introduction to Education class, pointed out that teachers taking jobs in areas they are from are much more likely to stay with the school district for many years because of their community ties. He said students like those in Introduction to Education may find themselves as prime candidates for teaching positions in Union County.

"If you stick around, we will need you," he said. "It will not be too many years before we will be interviewing you." ■

## BUDGET

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receptive to the proposed changes.

"Our staff is very willing to help when needed," she said.

The school district's current financial situation is due to a loss of state funding from a program for small rural schools.

The school district received at least \$238,000 a year from the program until Elgin's enrollment became too high for it to qualify. The school district's enrollment increase has not come close to making up

for the loss of funding from the program for small rural schools, Greif said.

The school district received about \$42,000 a year in additional funding in 2017-18 and 2018-19 due to the enrollment increase. This is because school districts receive about \$7,000 a year from the state per student.

The Elgin School District's budget committee will discuss the budget when it meets June 17 at 6 p.m. at Stella Mayfield School. The committee may vote at that time to recommend a budget to the school board for adoption. ■

## HOUSING

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• Address severe rent burdens, which occurs when a family or individual is spending more than 50% of their income on rent

Once this housing needs analysis final draft is complete, it will be sent to the state for approval. The La Grande City Council plans to use the information and suggestions offered in the report to create an informed strategy on the best

way to address the community's housing needs.

At the end of the meeting, La Grande Mayor Steve Clements said he felt hopeful the city can achieve the goal of offering safe and affordable housing based on the report's findings.

"It relieves me somewhat because I know we have housing issues here but I also see possibilities," he said. "With the right developers and incentives, we might be able to pull this together." ■

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## BOARD

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Smolkowski could not run for re-election to Position 2 because he is in the process of moving into the city.

Smolkowski, who grew up in La Grande, has been a Grande Ronde Valley resident most of his life. He is completing his fifth year on the Elgin School Board. He is an executive adviser for CVS, a national drug store company.

Smolkowski speaks highly of Spikes, noting that he is well-respected.

"He has a good reputation for giving back to the com-

munity," Smolkowski said.

Smolkowski hopes to continue to be involved in community service and said is considering volunteering for the Elgin Museum and may run again for the Elgin School Board. ■

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