

Madras High School has accepted the challenge to extensively research a topic, then condense the material down to 500 words for possible publication in the online Oregon Encyclopedia.

"Oregon Encyclopedia in the Classroom" is being field-tested in select schools in Oregon. At MHS, students in the Cultures of Warm Springs class, taught by Becky Dudley and tribal guest speakers, are participating in the pilot project.

Started in 2008, the Oregon Encyclopedia, at www.oregonencyclopedia.org, is a comprehensive resource for information about the history and culture of Oregon.

The storehouse of information is being built through selected submissions from Oregonians themselves.

But unlike Wikipedia, all submissions go through nu-

the grade, are then entered into the encyclopedia.

Previously, workshops were held in communities around Oregon to encourage people to submit entries about their areas. This year, the classroom project is expanding the encyclopedia's reach to include the perspective of students.

Dr. Bill Lang, executive director of the Oregon Encyclopedia, spoke to students Feb. 15, to explain the project and what type of writings are being sought.

"We now have 1,000 entries on the encyclopedia, and our goal is to have 5,000 en-

originally written, and can not be copied from other websites or publications.

"We have had 450 authors for those 1,000 entries. No other encyclopedia can match that," Lang said, commenting on the way it is being compiled.

The perspective of Warm Springs tribal students could add a lot to the encyclopedia, Lang said.

"Why? Because if you pick up an Oregon history textbook, the story is extremely narrow; there are only three or four themes," Lang said, citing the Oregon Trail as an example.

"Instead of staying in those same old ruts," he quipped, "other people, places and events should be part of the Oregon story." And that includes tribal history.

Worldwide, people are very, very interested in Indian tribes, but not much information is available.

"The interest is so large, I can guarantee 150 to 200 people every week to a gathering in which native culture is discussed," Lang said.

Students in foreign countries are already using the encyclopedia. "People from 65 foreign countries visit our website every month," he said.

Dudley said her students have compiled a list of possible research topics, including

Warm Springs government, and biographies of chiefs.

The MHS students' primary source for information will be tribal elders and members. "We could have five to 12 tribal people a day working with my students," Dudley said.

"You are using human beings as a resource, not writings elsewhere. Lived experience is the ultimate reality, and they're sitting here right now," Lang said, gesturing at the tribal volunteers in attendance who have been working with the class.

During the process, students will develop research, interviewing, and writing skills, while delving into tribal history.

There is no guarantee their finished essay will be accepted by the Oregon Encyclopedia. But entries can also be reworked and entered in the National History Day competition.

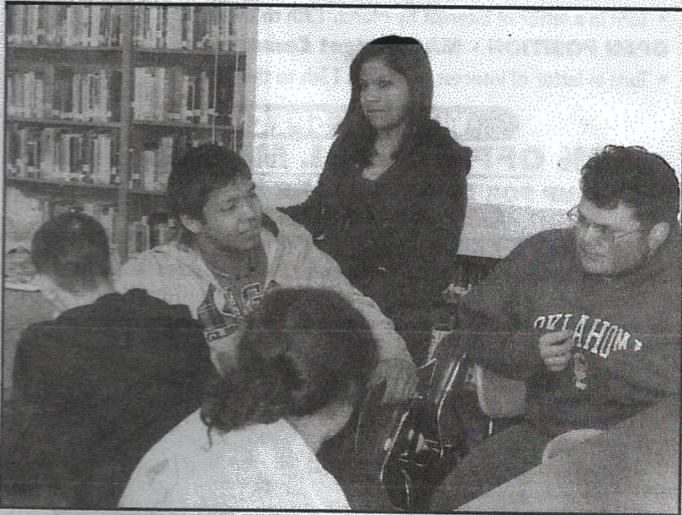
"If we could get one or two of you on the Encyclopedia that would be great. You'd be the first Native American students published there," Lang said.

The Oregon Encyclopedia is a partnership between Portland State University, the Oregon Council of the Teachers of English, and the Oregon Historical Society.

The classroom project is being funded by a grant from the federal Institute of Museum and Library Services, through the Library Services and Technology Act.



Bill Lang, Oregon Encyclopedia executive director.



Students tell why they signed up for the Cultures of Warm Springs class.