



University of Nevada  
Cooperative Extension

## Fact Sheet-06-63

# Walker River Indian Reservation: Youth Development

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### Introduction

The Walker River Paiute Indian Reservation is located 32 miles north of Hawthorne, Nevada, and is confined primarily within the boundaries of Mineral County. The reservation was established November 29, 1859 by a letter from the Indian Affairs Commissioner to the General Land Office requesting land from sale or settlement. The reservation is composed of 323,405 acres. The constitution of the Walker River Paiute Tribe was ratified May 8, 1937 and the Tribe is known as the Agai Dicutta -Trout Eaters (*Bureau of Indian Affairs,, 2000*).

The township of Schurz is the largest community located on the Walker River Paiute Indian Reservation. The population of Schurz increased from 617 people in the 1990 Census to 721 people in the 2000 Census. (Census Bureau, 2000) According to the Bureau of Indian Affairs in 2000, there were approximately 694 tribal members residing on the reservation.

There is a small elementary school operated through the Mineral County School District for grades Head Start through eighth grade (*Bureau of Indian Affairs, 2000*). High school aged students have a choice to attend Mineral County High School, Lyon County High

School or Churchill County High School. Transportation is provided to both Mineral County and Lyon County high schools.

In 2004, the Tribe's Education Department contracted a research project to survey all reservation youth and identify risk and protective factors on the reservation. In order to get adult opinions and perceptions, a youth risk factor section was added to the comprehensive survey of residents.

The comprehensive survey of residents on the Walker River Indian Reservation required that the reservation needs assessment be reported in three fact sheets. The fact sheet topics are: Youth Development, Community Needs and Issues, and Quality of Life/Community Demographics.

### **Walker River Indian Reservation: Survey of All Residents**

A formal survey instrument was created with the assistance of the Walker River Paiute Tribe. The Tribe passed Resolution WR-88-2005 in August 2005 that enabled the University of Nevada Cooperative Extension to conduct a needs assessment by surveying all households on the reservation and compiling and reporting the results. The survey was conducted from November 9, 2005 to

December 30, 2005 through door-to-door and face-to-face contact.

The survey instrument was designed as an "opinion poll" of community expectations, concerns and issues. It included 9 sections regarding community risk factors, youth risk factors, quality of life, community concerns, substance abuse, health concerns, operation of tribal government, law and order codes and community demographics. A complete report was presented and made available for the Walker River Paiute Tribe in April of 2006.

### Methodology

The survey was completed in 2005 with households on the Walker River Indian Reservation. The total estimated number of houses on the reservation for this research was 350. The surveying team divided the reservation into three sections using area-frame maps (Salant & Dillman, 1994). Each potential household respondent was asked to participate by filling out the survey instrument. There was a 48% response rate from reservation households. A total of 107

households participated in the study and 61 households declined to participate in the study.

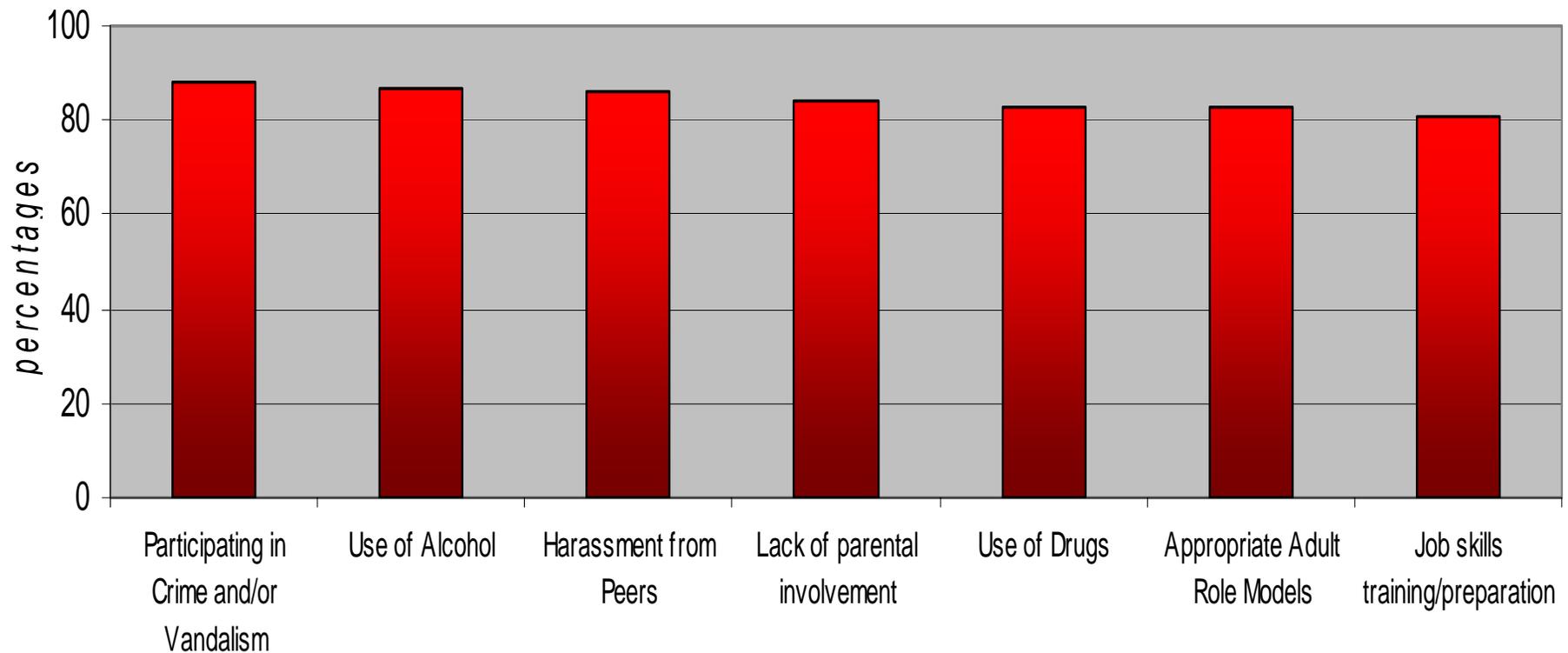
Survey administration procedures were designed to help protect the privacy and anonymity of all participating respondents of a household. The respondents of a household who participated are representative of Schurz, Nevada and/or Walker River Indian Reservation. Participants had to be an adult to participate.

### Youth Risk Factors

Participating household respondents were asked 18 questions to prioritize identified youth risk factors. Respondents were asked to give each possible risk factor in the survey instrument a rating (1 through 4). The rating of "1" meant major problem and the rating of "4" meant no problem. Table 1 lists participating households' responses in percentages for the 18 identified risk factors. Graph 1 illustrates the top 7 youth risk factors on the reservation.

<b>Table 1: Walker River Indian Reservation Youth Risk Factors</b>					
<i>All numbers represent rounded off percentages.</i>					
<i>Ratings</i>	<b>Major Problems</b>		<b>No Problems</b>		<b>No Answer</b>
	<b>(1)</b>	<b>(2)</b>	<b>(3)</b>	<b>(4)</b>	
1. Doing well in school	28	35	23	12	2
2. Youth Suicide	17	20	42	17	5
3. Job skills training/preparation	47	34	13	5	2
4. Use of Drugs	70	13	8	7	2
5. Lack of parental involvement	66	18	8	6	2
6. Use of alcohol	74	13	8	4	2
7. Family abuse (physical, sexual, emotional)	47	32	14	5	3
8. Teenage pregnancy	29	41	22	6	3
9. Getting along with teachers	34	35	19	11	2
10. Graduating from 8th Grade	27	24	31	15	3
11. What to do after school	38	27	25	8	2
12. Graduating from High School	46	32	13	7	3
13. Appropriate adult role models	48	35	10	5	3
14. Harassment from peers (bullying, teasing)	57	29	8	4	2
15. Participating in crime and/or vandalism	61	27	4	7	2
16. Activities for youth after school	34	27	29	8	2
17. College training/preparation	38	38	16	7	2
18. Parenting skills/education/classes	39	35	21	4	2

### Graph 1: Youth Risk Factors: Major Problems & Problems



The top 7 prioritized risk factors identified by respondents are represented in the graph above. These rankings were created by combining responses, (1) "Major Problem" and (2) "Problem," which indicated a perceived problem. The number one risk factor (88%) was youth "Participating in Crimes and/or Vandalism." The "Use of Alcohol by Youth" was second at 87%, "Harassment from Peers" was third at

86%, and "Lack of Parental Involvement" was fourth at 84%. The "Use of Drugs" and "Appropriate Adult Role Models" tied for fifth and sixth priorities as major problems in the community at 83%. The seventh priority rated as a major problem was job skills training/preparation for youth.

## Protective Factors on the Reservation

There are identified programs on the reservation to help youth from high risk behaviors. The Walker River Paiute Tribe has an Education Department that monitors youth development in local schools, provides direction for higher education, and provides tutoring when appropriate. The Tribe also has a 638-Contract with the Bureau of Indian Affairs to allocate funds to assist tribal members in attending colleges and vocational schools.

The Tribal Council has also worked diligently to establish a local Boys & Girl Club in the last few years. The Club has been a positive influence on youth. It provides a variety of after school activities. University of Nevada Cooperative Extension also has a satellite office on the reservation to provide 4-H activities. Cooperative Extension also works closely with the Boys & Girls Club with risk prevention programming.

## Conclusions

Surveys are scientific tools in research that gather accurate and useful information in which target populations' opinions and characteristics can be identified. It is important to understand that survey results are not

absolutes and are just one of many ways to assess a target population. The target population in this research was 350 households located on the Walker River Paiute Indian Reservation. There was a 48% survey response rate.

Participating households were asked 18 questions to prioritize identified "Youth Risk Factors." The top seven prioritized youth risk factors range from "Youth Participating in Crime and/or Vandalism" to "Job Skills Training/Preparation." This represents the accumulation of opinions of adults regarding risks that reservation youth are facing. From the adult perspective, the prioritized risks reported here are real and important.

Several tribal departments are working with youth to provide positive opportunities. Cooperative Extension and the Boys & Girls Club are also working together with tribal departments to focus on major problem areas on the highlighted risk factor identification in this study. This research compiled with the 2004 contracted youth assessment provides a strong base to identify program priorities.

## References

Bureau of Indian Affairs, Western Region. 2000. *Indians of Arizona, Nevada, Utah*. United States Department of Interior

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