



University of Nevada  
Cooperative Extension

**Fact Sheet 06-64**

# **Walker River Indian Reservation: Quality of Life & Community Demographics**

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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. 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, there are several types of housing units on the reservation that include Home Improvement Program (HIP) dwellings, manufactured homes, Housing and Urban Development (HUD) low rent/mutual help units, and private standard/substandard housing (*Bureau of Indian Affairs, 2000*).

A comprehensive survey of residents on the Walker River Indian Reservation required that the reservation's needs assessment be

reported in multiple fact sheets. This fact sheet reports on "Quality of Life/Community Demographics." Other fact sheets report on youth development, and community needs and issues.

## **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 nine 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 every household on the Reservation. The total estimated number of houses for this research was 350. The survey 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.

Survey administration procedures were designed to help protect the privacy and anonymity of all participating respondents. The respondents are representative of households in Schurz, Nevada and/or Walker River Indian Reservation.

## Community Demographics

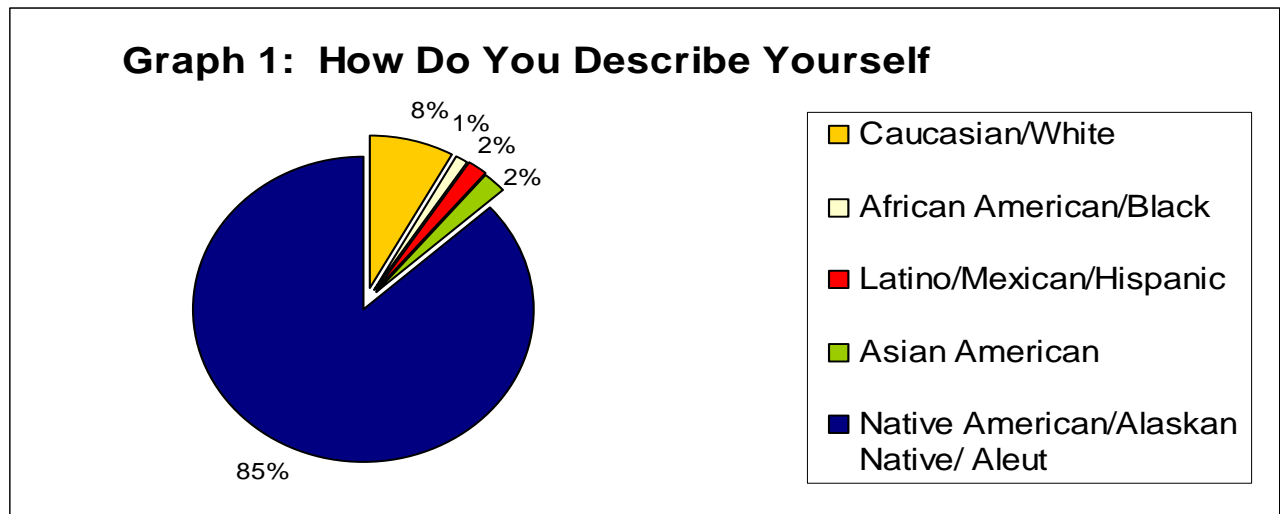
The nationality breakdown of responding households is illustrated in Graph 1 with 85% of respondents being Native American. Fifty-six percent of respondents were female and 40% male. Four percent did not answer the gender question. Seventy percent were Walker River Paiute Tribal members and 28% were not. Over 69% of the respondents lived in the community more than

16 years. Furthermore, 45% of respondents lived in the community 25 years or more. Two-thirds (64%) of respondents' reported their family had lived on the reservation for generations.

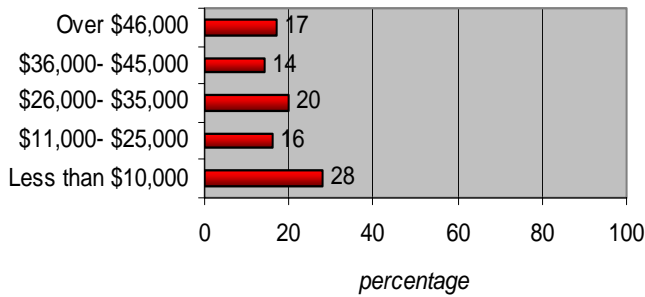
## Income, Household Makeup, and Education

The income breakdown of respondents is shown in Graph 2. Twenty-eight percent of respondents have a yearly household income of less than \$10,000 with 64% having a yearly household income of \$35,000 or less.

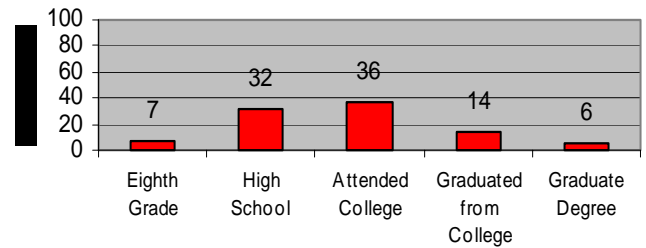
Fifty-five percent reported two adults per household. There were four adults in 4% of households and three adults in 12%. Thirty-two percent of respondents had graduated from high school and 36% had attended college. The complete breakdown of education levels is illustrated in Graph 3. It is also important to note the number of children in the household; especially concerning the youth development sections of the survey (Refer to Youth Development Fact Sheet). Thirty-eight percent of respondents did not have any children in the household. Two percent of respondents had five children, 8% had four children, 8% had three children, 16% two children, and 20% had one child in the household.



**Graph 2: What Is Your Yearly Household Income**



**Graph 3: What Level of Education Do You Have**



### Quality of Life

Six survey questions asked respondents about the quality of life and where they live. Twenty-two percent of respondents agreed that there was pride in the community while 56% said there was not. However, twenty-two percent of respondents were not sure.

In regards to the future, respondents were asked if things would be better off for them in five years. Forty percent of respondents felt they would be better off in five years while 35% were unsure. Forty-four percent of respondents do not believe that the

future of their community looked bright, while 39% were unsure about the future.

In addition, Graph 4 illustrates respondents' opinions on whether or not people work together toward community goals. The majority of respondents (73%) believe that people do not work together toward community goals. In addition, the majority of respondents (74%) agree that equal opportunity is needed for their community to improve. Graph 5 illustrates respondents' opinions on equal opportunity.

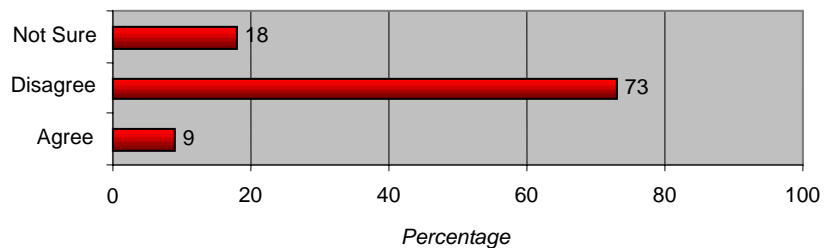
**A healthy economy base is essential for meeting the needs of the community, families and individuals in the community. Our economy base is extremely poor.**

*- Quality of Life Comment*

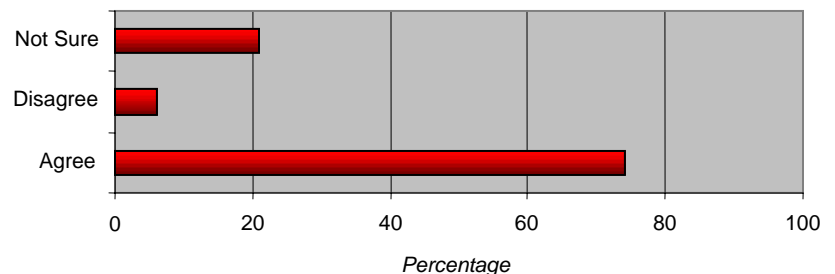
**Quality of life is what you choose to do to improve it.**

*- Quality of Life Comment*

**Graph 4: People Work Together Toward Community Goals**



**Graph 5: Equal Opportunity Is Needed For My Community to Improve**



## Conclusions

It is important to understand that survey results are not absolutes. They are, however, one useful way to gather accurate information about the opinions and characteristics of a specific population. The target population of the research was 350 households located on the Walker River Paiute Indian Reservation. There was a 48% survey response rate. The community demographics and quality of life reflect 107 respondent households on the reservation.

Eighty-five percent of respondents were Native American. In addition, 28% of respondents' households had an income less than \$10,000, which is an indicator of why some are not optimistic about the future. The majority of respondents had lived on the reservation over 16 years (83%) and were part of a multi-generational family (64%) residing on the reservation. It was also important to note

that 38% of respondents' households did not have children.

There were several respondents (39%) who were not sure about the future of their community while 56% felt there was a lack of pride in the community. Three-fourths of respondents believed people do not work together toward community goals on the reservation. It was also interesting that 40% of respondents felt that in five years things would be better off for them. It is interesting because some still believe that a bright future is attainable.

Overall, the demographics are reflective of the Walker River Indian Reservation. The quality of life questions were a moment in time snapshot of what people thought about their community. This information should be useful in program planning to meet the needs of local residents.

## References

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

Salant, P. and Dillman D.A., 1994. *How to Conduct Your Own Survey*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

United States Census Bureau. 2006. Web Address: <http://www.census.gov>

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