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An Environmental Assessment of Childhood Obesity on the Quinault Indian Reservation

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Background:

- According to the CDC approximately 17% of children and adolescents between the ages of 2-19 year old are obese.¹
- Among all ethnic groups, American Indians (AI) have the highest rates of obesity in the United States.²
- The social and built environments play an important role in influencing access to food as well as physical activity.³

Demographics of the Quinault Indian Nation (QIN):

- Located in Grays Harbor County, WA
- Population: 840⁴
- Total town area: 1.7 square miles
- Total reservation area: 316.3 square miles

Methods:

- Survey of three convenience stores frequented by community members using the Nutrition Environment Measurement Survey in Stores (NEMS-S).
- Town-wide, physical walkability, and policy assessment of the environment using the Rural Activity Living Assessment (RALA) tool.
- Evaluation of the Taholah School District school wellness policy.

References:

- ¹Ogden, C. and Carroll, M. (2010). Prevalence of Obesity Among Children and Adolescents: United States, Trends 1963-1965 Through 2007-2008, *National Center for Health Statistics*.
- ²Lindberg, S., Adams, A., and Prince R. (2012). Early Predictors of Obesity and Cardiovascular Risk Among American Indian Children. *Maternal Child Health Journal*, 1024-1029.
- ³French SA, Story, M, Jeffery RW. (2001). Environmental influences on eating and physical activity. *Annual Review Public Health*; 22:309-35.
- ⁴2010 U.S. Census Data.

Results:

- The local stores surveyed received NEMS-S scores of 31, 17 and 11 of a total of 54 points.
- The town received 42 of 100 possible points using the RALA Program and Policy Assessment Scoring tool.
- Score of 67% in the RALA town-wide assessment.
- District scores for the wellness policy evaluation were as follows:
Comprehensiveness: 63%
Strength: 26%



Taholah, WA

Photo credit: Jim Wark

Strengths:

- A wide variety of fresh produce and low-sugar cereals are available from the local store.
- Availability of fitness centers to community members of all ages.
- School wellness policy received high comprehension scores in physical education and physical activity.

Recommendations:

- Increase the availability and variety of lean meats in the local store.
- Use competitive pricing strategies to increase sales of healthier food items.
- Create policy related to sidewalks and bike paths be placed in areas of new infrastructure.
- Research the feasibility of a "Walk to School" program.
- Strengthen the district wellness policies related to USDA Child Nutrition Program and the Nutrition Standards for Competitive Foods.
- Present NEMS-S findings to the local store manager.
- Meet with the Taholah School District to discuss the feasibility of strengthening wellness policies.
- Go before the Tribal Council and Planning Department to discuss policy recommendations.

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