

# Pine Ridge Indian Reservation Demographics

*The Pine Ridge Indian Reservation is an Oglala Sioux Native American reservation located in South Dakota. Pine Ridge was established in the southwest corner of South Dakota on the Nebraska border and consists of 3,468 square miles of land area, the eighth-largest reservation in the United States, larger than Delaware and Rhode Island combined.*

## **Population**

The population of the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation is one of the most difficult statistics to confirm. *United States Census Report* counts put the Pine Ridge Reservation resident population at 15,521. However, a 2005 study conducted by Colorado State University and accepted by the Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development estimates the resident population to be approximately 28,787. Jim Berg, Executive Director for Oglala Sioux Lakota Housing, states that “the real number is closer to 40,000.”

## **Economic Realities**

- 80 percent of residents are unemployed.
- 49 percent of residents live below the Federal poverty line.
- 61 percent of residents below the age of 18 live below the poverty line.
- The Pine Ridge Reservation is located in Shannon County, where its per-capita income makes it the second poorest county in the United States, at \$6,286.
- If the Oglala Sioux Tribe were to equally disperse revenues from the Prairie Wind Casino to all enrolled tribal members, each resident would receive \$.15 per month.

## **Health and Well-being Realities**

- The infant mortality rate is 5 times higher than the United States national average.
- More than 4.5 million cans of beers are sold annually in White Clay, Nebraska, just over the border from the Pine Ridge Reservation. This amounts to more than 12,500 cans of beer a day. The reservation, itself, is dry.
- Obesity, diabetes, and heart disease occur in epidemic proportions on the Pine Ridge.
- Native Americans’ rate of amputations related to diabetes is 3 to 4 times higher than among the general United States population.
- Death rates due to diabetes among Native Americans are 3 times higher than among the general United States population.
- Unhealthy diets and lack of exercise are two main contributing factors behind these high numbers, despite the fact that in the early history of the Lakota, diabetes was virtually unknown.
- Life expectancy on the Pine Ridge Reservation is the lowest anywhere in the western hemisphere, except for Haiti. A recent study found the life expectancy for men is 48 years, for women it is 52 years on the Reservation.

## **Shannon County Residents**

- Shannon County has the highest population rate of Native Americans in the United States, and the lowest percentage of Caucasians.



- About 70 percent of residents have attained a high school diploma, while 12.1 percent have attained a bachelor's degree.
- On the reservation, 13 percent of residents lack complete plumbing facilities, while 9.2 percent lack complete kitchen facilities. Also, 22.8 percent lack phone service.
- Shannon County has the interesting distinction of having the highest percentage of Democratic votes for President in the 2004 election of any county in the United States.

### Youth Risk Behavior

A report from the South Dakota Office of Comprehensive School Health indicates that among South Dakota high school students:

- 67 percent had intercourse at least once in their life.
- 88 percent used alcohol during their life.
- 31 percent seriously considered attempting suicide.
- 15 percent attempted suicide in the last 12 months.
- 90 percent tried cigarette smoking.
- 80 percent tried marijuana.

### Charitable Giving

- Of all the foundation dollars infused every year to worthy causes, less than 1 percent of all philanthropic money goes to Native American causes, concerns and organizations.
- In 2006, South Dakota ranked third lowest in terms of money received from grants when compared to other states. Only Wyoming and North Dakota received fewer. South Dakota received the fewest total number of grants when compared with all other states.
- During the recession of 2001, South Dakota recorded easily the lowest level of charitable giving as a percent of income, at 0.4 percent. Just one year earlier South Dakota posted 1.8 percent of income earmarked for charities. South Dakota had a significantly larger decrease in percent of income donated to charities during this 2001 recession than other states, a decrease of 78 percent.

### College Debt

According to a news release by the *Rapid City Journal* in November 2008, South Dakotans rank 1st in the amount of average college debt owed upon completion of college.