

# Census surveys could mean more grants

By Ron Karten

Smoke Signals staff writer

The Census Bureau is back and the Grand Ronde Tribe is encouraging Tribal members to participate.

The 2010 U.S. Census is over, but what had been a once-a-decade exercise to count every American has, since 2005, expanded into a continual exercise in information collection.

The official census is down to asking 10 questions, but the American Community Survey, another product of the Census Bureau, has taken over the detail work with a 28-page questionnaire that comes monthly to 300,000 randomly selected addresses across the country. That sample translates into no more than a handful of local addresses.

On a national basis, the American Community Survey covers about 12.5 percent of the population every five years. In areas with populations smaller than 20,000, like the Grand Ronde community, it takes five years to collect a representative sample of responses large enough to ensure that no single answer will point to a specific address.

In addition, Census Bureau workers emphasize, the random selection process chooses addresses, not individuals.

In 72 years, the details from each year's survey are turned over to the National Archives where it becomes a treasure trove for studying genealogy and many other disciplines.

The second American Community Survey five-year report, covering the years 2006-10, came out at the beginning of this year. Beyond the increased detail provided by these surveys, its value is in providing more up-to-date information than a 10-year census form could ever provide, said Linda Clark, a dissemination specialist for the Census Bureau. Clark conducts free training sessions teaching how to



Photo by Michelle Alaimo

**Wendy Woods, middle, field representative for the U.S. Census Bureau, talks with Tribal Council about getting their support with the bureau's American Community Survey effort to increase Tribal member cooperation if they get randomly selected to take the survey. Sitting behind Woods is Linda Clark, a dissemination specialist for the Census Bureau.**

access the data online.

In the American Community Survey, the Census Bureau works with complex mathematical formulae that allow the sampling of very few Americans to represent the entire population. With the 10-year census, when every American is asked to return their survey, there is no margin of error. Examples of this are seen in the numbers of individuals in a community or the number of homeowners. As the sample size shrinks, as with the American Community Survey, the margin of error grows.

What the American Community Survey lacks in accuracy, however, is made up for in the sheer breadth of information they develop. The surveys go into specifics of education, employment and housing.

For many reasons, Census Bureau workers sometimes encounter resistance to filling out the forms.

"People are overwhelmed," said Wendy Woods, a field representative for the Census Bureau, who

collects the data. "They have other priorities. And they worry about confidentiality."

Census workers are reassuring about how seriously the bureau guards confidential information. They are bound legally to keep the information they collect private.

Native Americans, of all Americans, know the sting of broken federal promises, but the benefits of an accurate census count are so valuable that both Census Bureau workers and Tribal leaders are pushing for responses from everybody in the Tribal community.

The recent visit by the Census Bureau workers to Tribal Council on March 1 came to redouble that effort. American Community surveyors have seen that when Tribal Councils support the survey effort there is better cooperation in Tribal members completing the surveys.

Also as part of that effort, Census Bureau workers do everything they can to put those surveyed at ease. Surveyors often come from the communities they survey, and the workers patiently visit households where the surveys have not been returned, again and again until all the forms are filled out and filed.

For the Tribe, more complete results translate into more accurate federal funding, meaning higher dollar amounts. If the survey for a Tribal member address is not returned, for example, that address is not counted in the formula for allocating federal and state grants to the Tribe.

"This is one of our important sources of funding," said Tribal Council Chairwoman Cheryl A. Kennedy, "and my goal would be to have accurate information."

In an effort to reassure members of the Tribe who might be surveyed in the future, and to improve participation rates, Census workers Woods and Clark came to Grand

Ronde to describe the process to Tribal Council, some department managers and staffers and to seek their help in supporting the effort.

The information from the American Community Survey can "help the Tribe monitor progress toward its goals," said Woods.

One of the Tribe's goals, however, is to tweak the methodology by which the Census Bureau counts Tribal members, said Kennedy.

No question on these surveys asks for a sign of being enrolled in a Tribe, like an enrollment number, and particularly in the cities Indians self-select their Native American lineage. Some are members of the Grand Ronde and other Tribes, and some are not, muddying the results, meaning that federal and state granting decisions may be short-changing federally recognized Tribes. The difference could be in the tens of thousands in the Portland area alone, Kennedy said.

Kennedy also pointed to a recent TV news report detailing continuing poverty among the Lakota Sioux in South Dakota.

"(Native American) needs are not being met," she said, because Native people are "hidden in that data."

"We rely upon what you all do, but I would advocate you take a Tribal view (for population numbers), rather than (surveying people on) Tribal lands. That would give you a better result."

Starting with the 2010 Census, the bureau has agreed to a larger Grand Ronde Census Designated Place or CDP.

This change started with the Grand Ronde Tribal Planning and Grants Department when manager Kim Rogers noted that the CDP boundary for Grand Ronde in the 2000 Census was only a small area near Highway 18. It excluded Tribal housing and many other neighborhoods in the community.

The Tribe then worked with Polk and Yamhill counties and the Mid-Willamette Valley Council of Governments to request approval of a CDP that included the entire community of Grand Ronde.

"The ACS survey is helpful in making our arguments for federal funding to the Grand Ronde community," Rogers said. "It's also helpful for members nationwide to respond if surveyed."

"This is the missing part of the census," said Volker Mell, GIS coordinator for the Tribe. He uses information from these surveys to create maps for many Tribal uses. As one example, he said, "The data will help us figure out exactly how many people are living in our ceded lands." ■

## Committee & Special Event Board meeting days and times

Below is the most current information on the meeting days and times for Tribal Committees and Special Event Boards:

- **Ceremonial Hunt Board** meets as needed. Chair: Shonn Leno.
- **Cultural Trust Board** meets at 4 p.m. on the first Wednesday of each month. Chair: Perri McDaniel.
- **Culture Committee** meets at 1 p.m. the first Wednesday of the month in Modular No. 3. Chair: TBD.
- **Education Committee** meets at 5:15 p.m. on the first Monday of the month in the Adult Education Building. Chair: Jon George.
- **Elders' Committee** meets at 10 a.m. the third Wednesday of the month in the Elders' Activity Center. Chair: Gladys Hobbs.
- **Enrollment Committee** meets quarterly in Room 204 of the Governance Building. Acting Chair: Robert Schmid.
- **Fish & Wildlife Committee** meets at 5:30 p.m. the second Tuesday of the month at the Natural Resources Building. Chair: Harold Lyon.
- **Health Committee** meets at 10 a.m. the second Wednesday of the month in the Tribal Wellness Center. Acting Chair: Patti Tom-Martin.
- **Powwow Special Event Board** meets at 5 p.m. the first Thursday of the month at the Tribal Community Center. Chair: Dana Ainam.
- **Rodeo Special Event Board** meets at 6 p.m. the first Thursday of the month at the Tribal Rodeo Office. Chair: Harold Lyon.
- **Social Services Committee** meets at 4 p.m. the second Monday of the month in the Social Services Conference Room. Chair: Jenny Sanchez.
- **Timber Committee** meets at 5 p.m. the second Thursday of the month at the Natural Resources Building. Chair: Bob Mercier.
- **Veterans Special Event Board** meets at 4 p.m. the first Tuesday of the month in the Tribal Community Center. Chair: Dakota Whitecloud.

## Family Movie Night on March 23

Family Movie Night, sponsored by the Tribe's Youth Prevention Program and Community Awareness Team, will show the Adam Sandler comedy "Jack and Jill" at 5:30 p.m. Friday, March 23, in the Tribal gym.

Dinner will include chicken nuggets, fish sticks, tater tots and cookies. Seventy-four people attended the February Movie Night.

For more information, contact Youth Prevention Assistant Shannon Stanton at 503-879-1489 or Shannon.stanton@grandronde.org. ■