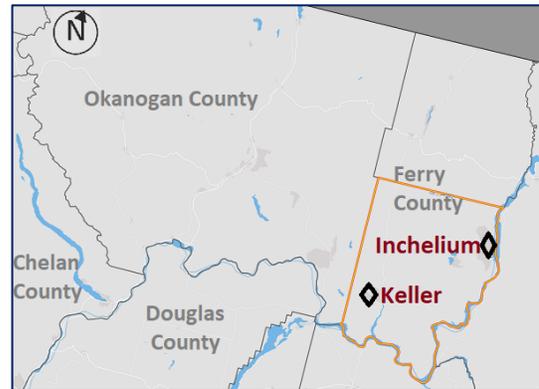


Inchelium-Keller Opportunity DRAFT#1

With of about 1,800 residents, the Ferry County portion of the Colville Reservation (see map to the right) represents less than one-quarter of the population of the entire reservation in both Okanogan and Ferry Counties. Unlike the Okanogan portion, the Ferry County portion of the reservation has been experiencing modest population growth over the last 1-2 decades.

The Ferry reservation area contains no incorporated cities. The primary unincorporated communities within the Ferry County portion of the reservation are Inchelium and Keller. The Keller community is accessed via the SR 21 state highway, providing access from the Keller Ferry at the Columbia River north through the Keller community and to the county seat of Republic. The primary access to Inchelium is from the north-south SR 25 corridor on the east side of the Columbia River with river crossing access west to Inchelium via the Gifford-Inchelium ferry.



Inchelium and Keller are the two largest (albeit unincorporated) population centers on the portion of the Colville Reservation located in Ferry County
- Area outlined in orange is the U.S. Census County Division (CCD) encompassing the Ferry County portion of the Colville Reservation

DEMOGRAPHICS

While detailed data is not available for the communities of Inchelium and Keller, more can be understood in the context of the portion of the full Colville Reservation area in Ferry County:

- This greater Inchelium-Keller area encompassing the Ferry portion of the Colville Reservation has experienced a population gain of about 4% since 2010 – reflecting a rate of growth just below that of Ferry County.
- At 41-42 years, the median age of Inchelium-Keller area residents is above state-wide figures but well below the even higher 52-year median age figure for all of Ferry County.
- At an estimated \$43,900, the annual median household income of the Inchelium-Keller reservation area is comparable to (just 3% less than) the Ferry County median.
- New housing is being built at a rate comparable to that being experienced county-wide. About 6-7% of housing both on and off the reservation has been constructed since 2013.

LABOR FORCE & EMPLOYMENT

Just under half (49%) of reservation residents in Ferry County age 16+ are currently in the labor force – a relatively low participation rate but higher than the 43% participation rate for all residents county-wide who are age 16 and older. Of added note:

- As of 2019 (pre-pandemic), business and agency employers on the Ferry portion of the reservation employed approximately 440 workers; reported on-reservation employment increased by a remarkable 56% from 2010-19.
- With 28% of Ferry County's jobs as compared with 23% of county-wide population, the Ferry portion of the reservation serves as a solid contributor to county-wide job base.
- Over 60% of on-reservation employment is represented by jobs divided between health care/social assistance, public administration and educational services. Natural resource activities represent 15% with employment in real estate comprising another 10%.
- The most significant employment increase experienced from 2010-19 was in health care and social assistance – up by over 70 net new jobs. Job gains are also noted agriculture/forestry and real estate sectors.
- About 56% of on-reservation workers are native American, a proportion that has increased over the last decade.
- Compared with all of Ferry County, on-reservation workers tend to be better paid, with similar educations levels, and a higher proportion of middle-age workers (ages 30-54).

While not yet available for local communities, more recent 2020-21 data county-wide indicates that employment has yet to recover to pre-pandemic levels. Ferry County has experienced less net job loss (in percentage terms) than the adjoining 3-county NCW region of Okanogan, Douglas and Chelan Counties. The primary sectors for which county-wide job counts are less as of 2021 than pre-pandemic are retail trade and hospitality (lodging and dining). Other sectors have held their own or increased job counts – as with health care and government.

COMMUNITY ASSETS & PRIORITIES

While less populated than the Okanogan side, **assets** of the Ferry County portion of the CCT reservation also center on the area's vast land territory and natural resource capacity, coupled with demonstrated tribal capacity to plan and carry through on complex project transactions. A key difference is the orientation of Ferry County to the Lake Roosevelt National Recreation Area upriver of Grand Coulee Dam – important for the Keller and Inchelium communities.

Challenges also are similar to those of the Okanogan counterparts – relating to limited infrastructure and lack of buildable land together with needs for improving education levels, child care and employment opportunities. A greater challenge for the Keller and Inchelium communities is the lack of direct state-side road access out of Ferry County – but dependent on the Keller and Inchelium ferry crossings across Lake Roosevelt. In effect, these Ferry County communities are substantially more isolated than their Okanogan County counterparts.

Key **community priorities** for Inchelium, Keller and surrounding reservation areas are to:

- Develop new and improve existing housing (an immediate need)
- Improve recreation-tourism facilities and opportunities
- Revitalize the main business corridors serving both communities.

Neither community is large enough to have what might be considered as a traditional downtown. Both communities have school, community center and post office facilities. Keller also has a community store with fuel service. Inchelium also is home to a health center plus convenience store with fuel center as well as restaurant and child care center – plus a nearby open field area potentially suitable for development.



The Keller Community Center – one of four center operated by the Colville Confederate Tribes

- Photo: www.colvilletribes.com/community-centers

For **Keller**, a priority is to focus on wastewater management as uses are currently on septic. Water service runs from two separate systems which might function better if integrated. At the south side of the Keller Ferry (outside Ferry County) is a campground. Camp improvements and possible RV facility are suggested in conjunction with the ferry crossing. The Keller Ferry Marina has been recently renovated – currently offering both campground and marina store facilities as well as fuel access and seasonal moorage.

Inchelium has a water system with adequate capacity. However, the system is dated and in need of upgrade.

As with the Okanogan portion of the reservation, an added priority for Ferry County communities is to improve broadband access for the entire reservation – for reasons of safety as well as complete coverage. Both communities are actively involved as part of a joint action team to make this long-held goal a reality. Also noted is that planning is underway for a wellness center – for which preliminary design work has been completed – as well as for a boat launch facility on Lake Roosevelt.

NEXT STEPS

The Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation (CTCIR) maintain adopted Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies, the principal purpose of which is to “facilitate the retention and creation of living wage jobs and to foster a stable and diversified regional economy, all for the intended outcome of maintaining and, ultimately improving the quality of life in the CTCIR.”

Building from the tribal record of strategic economic development planning, key next steps for Nespelem and the western Okanogan portion of the Colville Reservation could be to:

- Start with a steering committee to create and coordinate implementation of **an action plan** focused on this eastern portion of the reservation– drawing on the expertise of interested businesses, citizens and civic leaders

- Due to a 40+ mile drive distance between Keller and Inchelium, consider **separate sub-groups** for each community with joint planning and coordination sessions on a less frequent basis.
- Focus on identified **needs and opportunities** for new and improved prioritized housing, recreation-tourism, business and infrastructure projects
- Look for opportunities to engage Inchelium and Keller for near-term wins, **building momentum** for longer term initiatives that need local plus outside funding



Mirroring the diversity of CCT groups, each community center has its own story to tell. The same is true for each of the communities of the Colville reservation.

- Photo: www.colvilletribes.com/community-centers

Both here and throughout the NCW region, neighboring communities are encouraged to work collaboratively. This could be of particular value in collaboration with the Republic community further north in Ferry County as well as the CCT community to the west in Okanogan County.

PATHS LESS TRAVELED

The Inchelium-Keller area is distinctive not only for its federal reservation status and predominant Native American population – but also for its remoteness and outstanding recreation opportunities. Building on these assets offers solid, *one step-at-a time* prospects for continued if not improved *home-grown* economic vitality in the years ahead.

Working with its partners in Ferry County, the North Central Washington Economic Development District (NCWEDD) encourages the identification and submittal of *shovel-ready* or *potential shovel-ready* economic and community development projects for project review and ranking. Top-ranked projects will receive grant writing and administration support from the NCWEDD and partner organizations. The closer to *shovel-ready*, the *better the opportunity* for successful funding.

This *community profile* has been prepared by the North Central Washington Economic Development District (NCWEDD) serving communities of Chelan, Douglas and Okanogan Counties.

Data is compiled from sources including U.S. Census, Washington Office of Financial Management (OFM), Washington Employment Security Department (ESD), and the nationally recognized private firm Claritas.

For further information as to business and investment opportunities and economic development programs for the Inchelium-Keller communities and the greater NCW region, contact Alyce Brown, NCWEDD Executive Director via phone at 509-899-9321, email director@ncwedd.com