



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Document examines health status of Native American Indians of Alabama

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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A newly published document, titled "Health Survey of American Indians of Alabama 2008: Keeping the Circle Healthy," compiles the self-reported health findings of the nine Native American Indian tribes in Alabama. This 62-page report contains the results of a survey of more than 1,200 households and a total population of almost 3,000 people who are members of the tribes.

The names of the tribes surveyed are as follows: Cher-O-Creek Intra Tribal Indians, Cherokee Tribe of Northeast Alabama, Echota Cherokee Tribe of Alabama, Machis Lower Creek Indian Tribe of Alabama, Mowa Band of Choctaw Indians, Piqua Shawnee Tribe, Poarch Creek, Star Clan of Muscogee Creeks, and United Cherokee Ani-Yun-Wiya Nation.

The document provides a first-time depiction of self-reported profiles that contains the risk factors, health status and lifestyle behaviors of Alabama Native American Indians. The interviews used to collect the data were performed by community health navigators who represented the tribes recognized by the state. The Alabama Indian Affairs Commission provided the tribal support and monitored the training of these local tribal representatives.

The survey tool was developed by the Office of Minority Health and Center for Health Statistics of the Alabama Department of Public Health, and the Alabama Rural Health Association. This survey tool is patterned after the recognized Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey, conducted in each state and territory, and is developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The survey uncovered important differences between the health of native Alabama American Indians and the health of the general population, as well as differences within each Indian tribe's population. The survey also showed variations in access to health care, geographic location, and socioeconomic status. This document can help policy makers, clinician and researchers better understand the health status of Alabama Indians in order to impact changes that can improve their health status.

Eloise Josey, executive director of the Alabama Indian Affairs Commission, said, "The Alabama Indian Affairs Commission board and staff commend the Alabama Department of Public Health, Office of Minority Health, for its invaluable support and willingness to pursue and present for the

first time the health issues that Alabama's Indian people suffer, and for shining a light on Alabama's invisible minority."

Many of Alabama's Indian health practices are based upon a combination of traditional healing practices and modern Western medicine. The survey concludes that rigorous efforts are needed to reduce the risk of disease and to minimize higher rates of chronic disease such as diabetes, hypertension and congestive heart failure on this population. The publication was produced by the Office of Minority Health and Center for Health Statistics of the Alabama Department of Public Health; Alabama Rural Health Association; and University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Public Health.

Copies of the document may be requested by contacting Wendy Dixon-Flamand at (334) 206-5396, omh@adph.state.al.us.

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