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**PRESS RELEASE**

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**CPUC’S TEAM COLLABORATIVE FINDS DISCREPANCIES  
IN TELEPHONE SERVICE FOR RURAL  
NORTHERN CALIFORNIA NATIVE AMERICANS**

San Francisco, CA – November 22, 2010 - The California Public Utilities Commission’s (CPUC) Telecommunications Education and Assistance in Multiple-Languages (TEAM) Program has found that as many as 39 percent of Native Americans living in Northern California do not have telephone service of any kind, and that for the 61 percent who do have phone service, they have significant problems with reliability, being charged for services that are not or cannot be delivered, and experience communication difficulties with service agents.

A TEAM survey of 1,027 Native Americans living in Humboldt, Lake, Mendocino, and Sonoma Counties documented for the first time significant discrepancies in cost, quality, reliability, and availability of telephone service in remote rural areas. Findings and recommendations resulting from the survey are in the CPUC TEAM Collaborative report, “Native Americans in Rural Northern California Phone Survey,” compiled by the Suscol Intertribal Council, a TEAM member, with the assistance of Dr. Tamsen Stevenson.

The report substantiates a host of problems preventing Northern California Native American communities from access to modern communications technologies, including landline telephones, cell phones, and the Internet, which are services essential to health, safety, and education in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The report indicates a number of reasons for the lack of Native American access to these services, including costs, lack of essential infrastructure, service challenges, and cultural misunderstandings.

The report recommends a battery of solutions to be implemented by culturally competent ombudsmen and service providers involved in telecommunications. For example, the survey

included questions about Enhanced LifeLine Telephone Program, a Federal program supported by the CPUC that provides discounts to help those living on Tribal Lands to obtain landline telephone service for little more than a dollar a month. It is a key strategy to assure Native Americans access to modern communications. But only 41 percent of all respondents to the survey had heard of the program. This indicates a continuing need for more outreach and education about Enhanced LifeLine to residents of Tribal Lands.

The report is available on the Public Advisor's page of the CPUC website at [www.cpuc.ca.gov/PUC/aboutus/Divisions/CSID/Public+Advisor/](http://www.cpuc.ca.gov/PUC/aboutus/Divisions/CSID/Public+Advisor/). TEAM is a CPUC program comprised of a network of community-based organizations throughout the state that educates consumers about telecommunications services and helps them solve their problems, including access, billing, or services and contract disputes, in more than 22 languages. TEAM is administered by Self Help for the Elderly. Visit [www.TelephoneIssues.com](http://www.TelephoneIssues.com) for more information.

For more information on communications issues, please visit [www.CalPhoneInfo.com](http://www.CalPhoneInfo.com).

For more information on the CPUC, please visit [www.cpuc.ca.gov](http://www.cpuc.ca.gov).

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