



# The Houlton Band of Maliseets Health Needs Assessment Summary Report





# COMMUNITY HEALTH NEEDS ASSESSMENT REPORT

Completed in 2012, the Waponahki Tribal Health Needs Assessment was a major health survey of Tribal members of the four federally recognized Tribes of Maine: The Aroostook Band of Micmacs, The Houlton Band of Maliseets, The Passamaquoddy Tribe - Indian Township and Pleasant Point, and The Penobscot Nation. Tribal Health Directors from each participating community in partnership with the University of Nebraska Medical Center, College of Public Health conducted the health needs assessment. The purpose of this report which focuses on Houlton Band of Maliseets is to inform Tribal members and other interested parties of key results of the Waponahki Tribal Health Needs Assessment. The Houlton Band of Maliseets Health Department also hopes that this report will raise awareness of and stimulate discussion, follow-up, and planning among Houlton Band of Maliseets Tribal members on the community's health needs and priorities.

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## Background

The Houlton Band of Maliseets is located in Houlton in Aroostook County in northern Maine and is part of the Maliseet Nation which also has tribal communities based in Canada. The tribe is also a member of the Wabanaki Confederacy, an alliance formed in the 18th century among the Maliseet, Micmac, Passamaquoddy, and Penobscot Tribes of what is now called New England (primarily Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont) and the Canadian Maritimes (particularly Nova Scotia and New Brunswick).

The Maliseets are river people who have traditionally been hunters and gatherers in the St. John River basin, of which the Meduxnekeag is a tributary. Before contact with Europeans, the Maliseets occupied much of what is now considered the eastern border line of the U.S. and Canada in northern New England. After the Jay Treaty in 1794, the Maliseets obtained free border crossing rights between the two countries because their villages spanned both countries. The Houlton Band of Maliseets, or Metaksonikewiyik (People of the Meduxnekeag) currently have approximately 1,240 acres of farm and commercial land holdings (in both fee and trust status) in Aroostook County Maine. Much of the land borders the Meduxnekeag River, a critical link in preserving tribal practices, traditions and history.

In the early 1970's, some Maliseet and members of other tribes not living on recognized reservations banded together to form the Association of Aroostook Indians, which eventually allowed them access to federal and state programs. The Houlton Band of Maliseets was federally recognized on October 10, 1980 as part of the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act.

The Houlton Band of Maliseets is comprised of some 1400 tribal members. Tribal sovereignty has long been an important issue for the Maliseets, a degree of which has been reached through legislation by the US Federal Government. The governmental structure of the Tribe consists of a six (6) member Council plus one (1) elected as Tribal Chief.

\*This information was taken directly from [www.maliseets.com](http://www.maliseets.com)

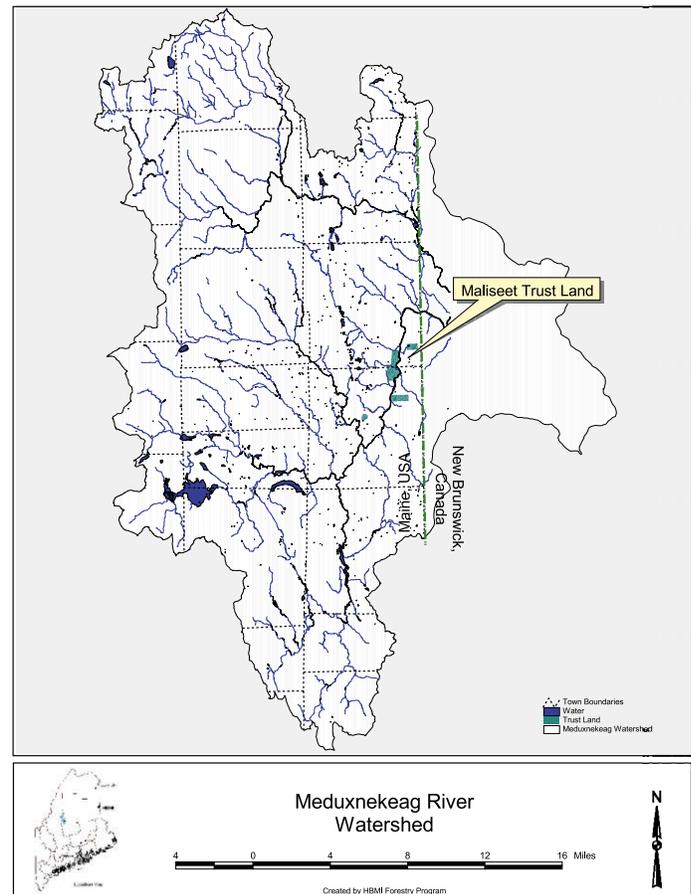
# Introduction

According to the 2010 census, 1.4% of Maine's population, or 18,482 individuals identified themselves as American Indian or Alaska Native (AI/AN) alone or in combination with another race.<sup>1,2</sup> National data indicate that AI/AN experience worse health outcomes in comparison to White Americans, reflected in higher death rates from diabetes, suicide, unintentional injuries, sudden infant death syndrome, and alcohol related injuries.<sup>3,4</sup>

The relatively small number of AI/AN who participate in state-wide surveys such as the behavioral risk factors surveillance system (BRFSS) prevents the analysis of data at individual Tribal levels that will provide meaningful results. The BRFSS, the nation's leading telephone survey, allows states to identify emerging health problems, establish and track health objectives, and develop and evaluate public health policies and programs.<sup>5</sup>

In order to address the lack of existing data on the health of members of Maine Tribes, the Maine Tribal Health Directors of the four federally recognized Tribes of Maine: the Aroostook Band of Micmacs, the Houlton Band of Maliseets, the Passamaquoddy Tribe - Indian Township and Pleasant Point, and the Penobscot Nation, identified the need for a multi-Tribal health assessment based on the Behavioral Risk Factors Surveillance System. In collaboration with researchers from the University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC) College of Public Health, the Maine Tribal Health Departments completed the 2010 Waponahki Tribal Health Needs Assessment, the first-ever multi Tribal health assessment in the state of Maine. The results of the survey are anticipated to provide guidance for:

- Health program planning
- Development of health services
- Education
- Research
- Seeking future funding





# Methods in Brief

## ***Approval Process***

The UNMC Institutional Review Board and the Tribal Councils of the Aroostook Band of Micmacs, the Houlton Band of Maliseets, the Passamaquoddy Tribe Indian Township, the Passamaquoddy Tribe Pleasant Point, and the Penobscot Nation approved the study.

## ***Data Ownership***

From the project's beginning, the Tribal Health Directors stated a need for Tribal ownership of the data. Tribal Health Directors made the deliberate decision that each tribe must maintain ownership of their respective Tribal data and no data be shared for use or publication without express written permission from a designated Tribal authority.

## ***Participant Selection***

The Waponahki Tribal Health Needs Assessment participants included randomly selected male and female Tribal members 18 years and above, who lived within each Tribe's respective health service delivery area. Using Tribal rolls, all eligible participants were assigned a number, and these numbers were randomly selected to obtain the participant roster. Tribal Health Directors contacted potential participants in order of their selection until the target number was achieved or until the list of eligible participants was completed.

1127 Waponahki Tribal members 18 years and older completed the health needs assessment.

Waponahki participants include Tribal members from The Aroostook Band of Micmacs, The Houlton Band of Maliseets, The Passamaquoddy Tribe - Indian Township, The Passamaquoddy Tribe - Pleasant Point, and the Penobscot Nation. On the basis of the high number of participants who were randomly selected to take part in the survey, we believe the data presented in this report are generally representative of Tribal members residing in each health service delivery area.

## ***Recruitment***

Several methods were used to notify the Tribal members that the Health Departments would be doing a survey:

- The Tribal Health Directors placed notices regarding the survey in the bi-monthly joint community news letter
- The Tribal Public Health District developed and placed large posters in the waiting areas of each Health Department to advertise the survey
- Tribal Health Departments promoted the survey at health fairs
- The Tribal Chief or Tribal Health Director sent a recruitment letter to participants randomly selected to take part in the survey
- Interviewers contacted prospective participants up to three times before contacting the next participant
- Word-of-mouth played an important role in promoting the survey. Participants who completed the survey received a \$25 Walmart gift-card. In addition, participants received gas cards if they had to travel 30 or more miles roundtrip to complete the interview

## ***Conducting the survey***

Trained Tribal members and Tribal employees served as survey interviewers and conducted the laptop-assisted face-to-face survey. Participants had the option of completing the sensitive sections of the survey by themselves.

## **Survey questions**

### **Community-specific Questions**

Tribal Health Directors and researchers from the UNMC, College of Public Health developed community specific open-ended questions to examine Tribal members' views on:

- health problems facing the community
- health areas Tribal health programs should focus their efforts on
- areas of elder care to improve
- services to add first to elders
- greatest strengths of the community
- greatest sources of community pride
- Tribal health priorities
- needed elder services
- community sources of strength and pride

### **Historical Loss Questions**

In recent years a growing number of people from Native American communities have sought to understand the effects of: 400 years of European colonization, oppression, racism, forced relocation, loss of land, separation of parents and children, loss of culture, and loss of language, on the health of Tribal communities. Maria Yellow-Horse Braveheart, Hunkpapa, Oglala Lakota, PhD, does research in this field which she calls historical trauma. Dr. Yellow-Horse Braveheart defines historical trauma as "The cumulative and collective emotional and psychological injury over the lifespan and across generations resulting from a cataclysmic history of genocide."<sup>6</sup> Work by Les Whitbeck, PhD, with two Tribal communities in the upper Midwest indicates that Tribal members' perceptions of historical grief/losses may lead to emotional responses typically associated with anger/avoidance and anxiety/depression.<sup>7</sup>

To examine historical trauma we used the questions developed by Dr. Whitbeck that measure historical loss. The first set of questions describes historical grief losses and how frequently the people think about these losses. The second set of questions focus on feelings associated with historical grief losses. The questions in the Waponahki Tribal Health Needs Assessment have been adapted from Dr. Whitbeck's questionnaire through input from the Maine Tribal Health Directors. Tribal Health Directors included questions on historical loss to examine: historical grief losses, how frequently people think about these losses, and the feelings associated with these losses.<sup>7</sup> Survey interviewers asked participants how often they thought about:

- Loss of Tribal lands
- Loss of traditional spiritual ways
- Loss of family ties because of boarding/residential schools
- Loss of families from the reservation/ reserve to government relocation
- Loss of respect from poor treatment by state and federal officials
- Loss of respect from poor treatment by Tribal government officials
- Loss of trust in Whites from broken treaties
- Loss of cultural and language
- Loss from the effects of alcoholism
- Loss of respect by children and grandchildren for elders
- Loss of people through early death
- Loss of respect by children for traditional ways

In follow-up to these questions survey interviewers asked participants how they felt when thinking about these losses, including feelings of: sadness or depression, anger or rage, anxiety or nervousness, uncomfortable around white people, shame, weakness or helplessness, loss of concentration, bad dreams or nightmares, isolation or distance from other people, loss of sleep, need to drink or take drugs, fearful or distrustful of the intentions of white people, no point in thinking about the future, and like the losses are happening again.



### ***Sensitive Topics***

The survey included questions on sensitive topics such as: racism and discrimination, domestic violence, substance abuse, childhood trauma, and HIV/AIDS. Due to the sensitive nature of these questions the results from these questions are not included in this report.

### ***Health Risk Questions***

The Tribal Health Directors selected questions from the 2010 Behavioral Risk Factors Surveillance System (BRFSS) survey in the Waponahki Tribal Health Needs Assessment. Examples of BRFSS questions include questions about diabetes, heart disease, cigarette smoking, cancer, diet and exercise, asthma, HIV risk factors, depression and anxiety.

### ***Analysis***

The University of Nebraska Medical Center, College of Public Health, Department of Biostatistics completed the secondary data analyses of the Waponahki Tribal Health Needs Assessment data which included 1,127 men and women 18 years and older from the five participating communities. Potential respondents were selected via a simple random sample using a list of members residing within each Tribal Health Department service delivery area. All results for individual Tribes and for total Waponahki presented in this report are the raw survey results, except as noted (See page 20, Final Thoughts, chronic disease rates). In this report we use data from the US Census 2010, the State of Maine 2010 and 2011 BRFSS, and the One Maine Community Health Needs Assessment 2010 for comparison purposes.

It should be noted that the average age of Waponahki survey respondents is lower than the average age of the all Maine residents estimated by the Maine BRFSS which we use as a comparison population throughout most of this report. As we have not age-adjusted our estimates of chronic disease rates among the Waponahki, except as noted (See page 20, Final Thoughts, chronic disease rates) the differences in rates of diabetes, hypertension, and heart disease between Waponahki participants and Maine residents may be even greater than those documented in this report.

While not listing American Indian/Alaska Native representation, the 2010 Maine BRFSS had the following racial/ethnic breakdown: 95.7% White, 1.5% Black, 1.5% Hispanic, 1.5% Other, and 1.0% Multiracial.

### ***Limitations of the Study***

- The inability to accommodate Tribal members who were unable to travel to the areas designated confidential and secure areas to partake in the survey.
- Elders were not familiar/comfortable with using the computer during the self-administered portions of the computer.
- In selecting participants 18 years and older we did not obtain substance abuse data on the youth population. Based on patient visit data and referrals to substance abuse treatment programs, the Tribal Health Directors felt this age group appears to have the highest prevalence of substance abuse among all age cohorts.
- Using computer-assisted face-to-face interviews does not allow for an exact comparison with the BRFSS which is a random-digit dial survey.

### ***Format of the Report***

We based the format of the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indian Health Needs Assessment Summary Report on the format of the "Passamaquoddy Health Needs Assessment Summary Report for Motahkomiqewiyik naka Sipayikewiyik."<sup>8</sup>

# Findings

## Community Profile

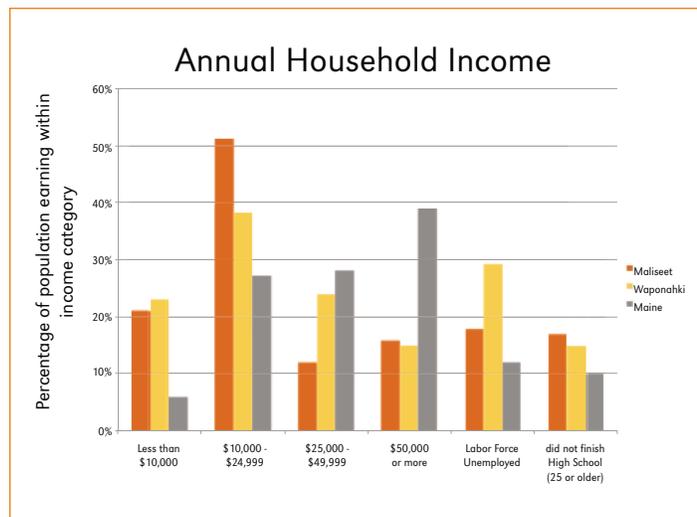
To better understand the help of a population it is important to recognize that: income, education, and employment play important roles in affecting the health of individuals. Studies have shown that people with higher levels of income and education tend to be healthier.<sup>9</sup>

### SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC INDICATORS

Demographics	Maliseet	Waponahki	Maine
Total Population Adults	339 <sup>a</sup>	3014 <sup>a</sup>	1,053,828 <sup>b</sup>
Waponahki Survey Participants			
Male		450	
Female		677	
Total		1127	
Annual Household Income			
% Less than \$10,000	21%	23%	6%
% \$10,000-\$24,999	51%	38%	27%
% \$25,000-\$49,999	12%	24%	28%
% \$50,000 or more	16%	15%	39%
% Labor Force Unemployed	18%	29%	12%
% did not finish High School (25 or older)	17%	15%	10%

a - Residing within Tribal Health Center self-defined area - includes Tribal Health Center and non-Tribal Health Center users.  
b - 2010 Census count.

On average, most Maliseet Tribal members appear to be poorer, have less education, and have higher unemployment rates than other Maine residents. 21% of Maliseets and 23% of Waponahki earned less than \$10,000 per year compared to 6% of Maine residents. Furthermore, a higher proportion of Maliseets, 18%, are unemployed in comparison to Maine, 12%. At 17%, the percentage of Maliseet Tribal members who did not complete high school appears higher than the percentage Maine residents overall, 10%.



## Community Identified Strengths and Concerns

The survey interviewers asked participants open-ended questions about major strengths of the community, sources of pride, and biggest health problems.

### Community Strengths

The top three community strengths identified by Houlton Band of Maliseets included “Sense of Community, Solidarity & Shared Values,” “Family/Family Ties,” and “Health Care.” Waponahki participants ranked “Sense of Community, Solidarity & Shared Values” and “Culture” first and second, and “Family Ties” third.



### TOP 5 MAJOR STRENGTHS OF YOUR COMMUNITY

Rank	Houlton Band of Maliseets	Waponahki
1	Sense of Community, Solidarity & Shared Values (count = 24)	Sense of Community, Solidarity & Shared Values (count = 325)
2	Family/Family Ties (count = 20)	Culture <sup>a</sup> (count = 92)
3	Health Care (count = 8)	Family/Family Ties (count = 87)
4	Housing Issues (count = 8)	Health Care (count = 58)
5	Culture <sup>a</sup> (count = 8)	Language (count = 56)

a - This category includes responses about culture, heritage/history, customs, and traditions as well as Tribal/cultural activities. Count refers to the number of survey participants who listed a specific topic in their response to the question.

### Greatest Source of Community Pride

Houlton Band of Maliseets identified “Culture,” “Housing Issues,” and “Accomplishments” as the top three major sources of pride. Among Waponahki participants “Culture,” “The Children” and “Language,” were identified as the top three sources of community pride.

### TOP 5 GREATEST SOURCES OF PRIDE IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Rank	Houlton Band of Maliseets	Waponahki
1	Culture <sup>a</sup> (count = 37)	Culture <sup>a</sup> (count = 400)
2	Housing Issues (count = 12)	The Children (count = 149)
3	Accomplishments (count = 12)	Language (count = 129)
4	The Children (count = 11)	Native & Tribal Identity (count = 93)
5	Native & Tribal Identity (count = 8)	The Elders (count = 62)

a - This category includes responses about culture, heritage/history, customs, and traditions as well as Tribal/cultural activities. Count refers to the number of survey participants who listed a specific topic in their response to the question.

### Biggest Health Problems Facing the Maliseet Community

Houlton Band of Maliseets and Waponahki participants all identified the same top five biggest health problems facing communities: “Drug/Substance Problems,” “Diabetes,” “Alcohol Problems,” “Obesity/Overweight,” and “Cancer.”

### TOP 5 BIGGEST HEALTH PROBLEMS FACING YOUR COMMUNITY

Rank	Houlton Band of Maliseets	Waponahki
1	Drug/Substance Problems (count = 74)	Drug/Substance Problems (count = 584)
2	Diabetes (count = 63)	Diabetes (count = 460)
3	Alcohol Problems (count = 38)	Alcohol Problems (count = 363)
4	Obesity / Overweight <sup>a</sup> (count = 28)	Obesity / Overweight <sup>a</sup> (count = 185)
5	Cancer (count = 16)	Cancer (count = 184)

a - This category also includes weight management issues. Count refers to the number of survey participants who listed a specific topic in their response to the question.

### Historical Loss/Response

Many Maliseet Tribal members think about losses daily or multiple times a day. Tribal members thought most frequently about the “loss of respect by our children and grandchildren for elders,” followed by “loss of respect by our children for traditional ways” and “loss of our culture and language.”



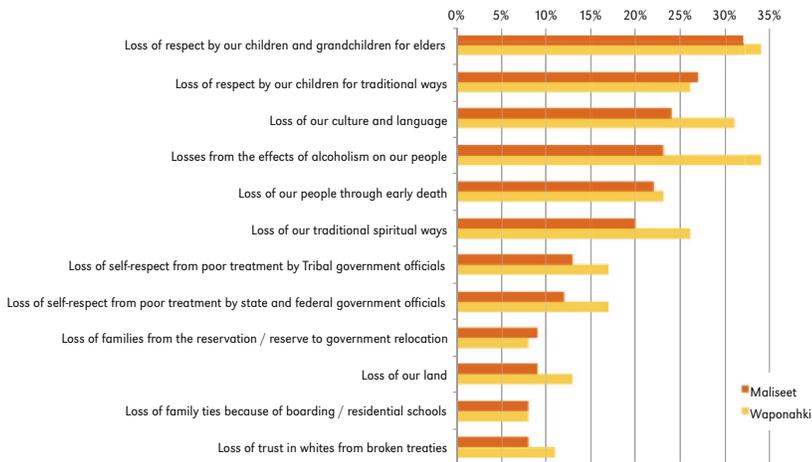
## HISTORICAL LOSS: "I THINK OF THE LOSS OF..."

Percentage of participants reporting thinking about loss at least once per day

Historical Losses - think of at least daily	Maliseet	Waponahki
Loss of respect by our children and grandchildren for elders	32%	34%
Loss of respect by our children for traditional ways	27%	26%
Loss of our culture and language	24%	31%
Losses from the effects of alcoholism on our people	23%	34%
Loss of our people through early death	22%	23%
Loss of our traditional spiritual ways	20%	26%
Loss of self-respect from poor treatment by Tribal government officials	13%	17%
Loss of self-respect from poor treatment by state and federal government officials	12%	17%
Loss of our land	9%	13%
Loss of families from the reservation / reserve to government relocation	9%	8%
Loss of trust in whites from broken treaties	8%	11%
Loss of family ties because of boarding / residential schools	8%	8%

## Historical loss: "I Think Of The Loss Of..."

Percentage Reporting Think of Loss at Least Once Per Day



The most common responses by Maliseet Tribal members to historical loss questions include “feel anxiety or nervousness,” “experience a loss of sleep,” and “feel sadness or depression.”

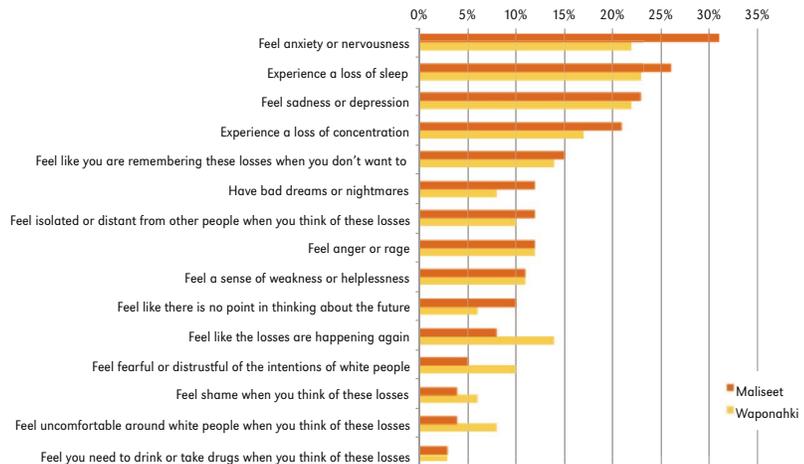
**RESPONSES TO HISTORICAL LOSS: “HOW OFTEN DO YOU...”**

Percentage of participants reporting these feelings often or almost always

Reactions to historical losses - often or almost always	Maliseet	Waponahki
Feel anxiety or nervousness	31%	22%
Experience a loss of sleep	26%	23%
Feel sadness or depression	23%	22%
Experience a loss of concentration	21%	17%
Feel like you are remembering these losses when you don't want to	15%	14%
Feel anger or rage	12%	12%
Feel isolated or distant from other people when you think of these losses	12%	10%
Have bad dreams or nightmares	12%	8%
Feel a sense of weakness or helplessness	11%	11%
Feel like there is no point in thinking about the future	10%	6%
Feel like the losses are happening again	8%	14%
Feel fearful or distrustful of the intentions of white people	5%	10%
Feel uncomfortable around white people when you think of these losses	4%	8%
Feel shame when you think of these losses	4%	6%
Feel you need to drink or take drugs when you think of these losses	3%	3%

**Responses to Historical loss: “How Often Do You...”**

Percentage Reporting These Feelings Often or Almost Always



### Health Status Indicators

30% of Maliseet Tribal members perceived their health as fair or poor, which is similar to what Waponahki participants reported. Among adult Maine residents only 16% reported their health as fair or poor.

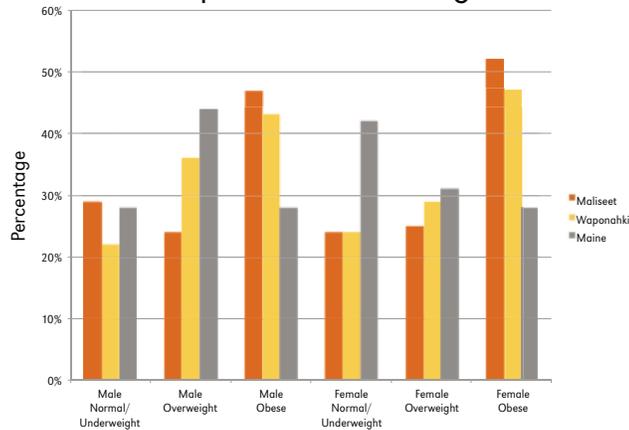
#### PERCEIVED HEALTH STATUS

Outcomes	Maliseet	Waponahki	Maine
% who perceived health excellent, very good, or good	70%	73%	84%
% who perceived health fair or poor	30%	27%	16%
% with 11+ days in the past month where their physical health was not good	21%	22%	14%
% with 11+ days in the past month where their mental health was not good	25%	24%	13%
% with 11+ days in the past month where their physical or mental health kept them from doing usual activities	15%	15%	17%

#### RISK FACTORS FOR HEART DISEASE AND SEAT BELT USE

Outcomes	Maliseet	Waponahki	Maine
Percent of Population by BMI categories			
Normal weight/underweight	26%	23%	35%
Overweight	24%	32%	37%
Obese	50%	45%	28%
% who exercise – at least 60 minutes of vigorous exercise or 150 minutes of moderate exercise each week*	25%	34%	57%
% who exercise – at least 75 minutes of vigorous exercise or 150 minutes of moderate exercise each week*	24%	33%	N/A
% who had any physical activity in the past month	56%	59%	77%
Females	54%	57%	77%
Males	60%	62%	77%
18-34 years old	61%	65%	85%
35-54 years old	46%	57%	77%
55+ years old	61%	53%	72%
% who had no physical activity in the past month	44%	41%	23%
% who consume 5 or more cups of fruits and vegetables everyday	6%	8%	19%
% who are current smokers	49%	43%	23%
% who always wear seatbelts	83%	74%	84%

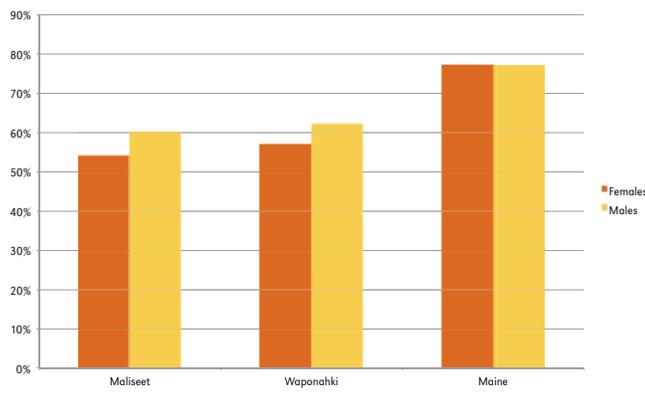
## Percent of Population Overweight & Obese



## OVERWEIGHT & OBESITY

Overweight and obesity are associated with: increased risks for high blood pressure, heart disease, type 2 diabetes, chronic back pain, degenerative joint disease, gallbladder problems, and certain cancers. Data from the Waponahki Tribal Health Needs Assessment indicate that 50% of Maliseet Tribal members and 45% of Waponahki are obese. These numbers appear relatively high in comparison to Maine where 28% of the population was obese.

## Past Month Participation in Any Physical Activities or Exercise



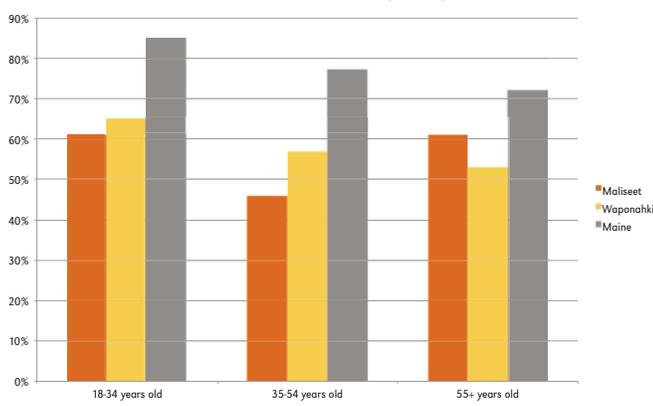
## PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, US Department of Health and Human Services (CDC) indicate that adults need at least 2 hours and 30 minutes of moderate intensity aerobic activity such as brisk walking every week and muscle-strengthening activities on 2 or more days a week that work all major muscle groups (legs hips, back abdomen, chest shoulders, and arms) to see benefits.<sup>10</sup> Benefits of regular exercise include:

- reducing risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and certain cancers
- strengthening bones and muscles
- improving mood
- increasing chances of living longer

A large percentage of Maliseet Tribal members (44%) and Waponahki (41%) were not physically active in the last month, which appears to be higher than the proportion of Maine adults (23%).

## Past Month Participation in Any Physical Activities or Exercise by Age Group



## FRUIT AND VEGETABLE CONSUMPTION

Studies show that healthy diets rich in fruits and vegetables may reduce the risk of cancer and other chronic diseases such as type 2 diabetes and heart disease. Survey results showed that only 6% of Maliseet Tribal members and 8% of Waponahki participants reported eating enough fruits and vegetables to meet the current standards of a healthy diet.

## TOBACCO USE

Cigarette smoking represents the single most preventable cause of disease and death and is associated with increased risks for: asthma, emphysema, lung cancer, cervical cancer, prostate cancer, low birth weight babies, high blood pressure and heart disease. Secondhand smoke from cigarettes also can lead to similar health effects; however, children and infants are particularly vulnerable to the effects of secondhand smoke. The percentage of smokers among Maliseet (49%) and Waponahki participants (43%) appears to be significantly higher than among all Maine residents (23%).

## SEAT BELT USE

Motor vehicle crashes represent the leading cause of death in individuals aged 5-34 years old in the US. While adult seat belt use is the most effective way to save lives and reduce injuries, millions of adults do not wear their seat belts on every trip. 83% of Maliseet Tribal members reportedly use seatbelts and 74% of Waponahki wear seatbelts. 84% of Maine residents wear seatbelts.

## ORAL HEALTH

To maintain optimal oral health, the American Dental Association (ADA) recommends regular dental visits, at intervals determined by a dentist. 65% of Maliseets, 67% of Waponahki, and 68% of all Maine residents reported dental visits in the past year.

### ORAL HEALTH

Oral health	Maliseet	Waponahki	Maine
% with a dental visit in the past year	65%	67%	68% <sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> - Not available in 2011 Maine BRFSS; 2010 data used instead.

## VACCINATIONS

92% of Maliseet tribal members and 81% of Waponahki participants 65 years and older had received a flu vaccination in the past year, which appears to be high compared to 62% of Maine adults who received the immunization.

The pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccine, also known as the pneumonia shot, is recommended for all adults 65 years and older and for anyone who is 2 years and older at high risk for disease. The pneumonia shot is also recommended for adults 19 through 64 years of age who smoke cigarettes or who have asthma. 83% of Maliseets and 75% of Waponahki adults 65 years and older reported having had a pneumonia vaccination.

### VACCINATIONS

Outcomes	Maliseet	Waponahki	Maine
% who received a flu vaccination in the past year (65 years and older)	92%	81%	62%
% who have ever received a pneumonia vaccination (65 years and older)	83%	75%	73%

## CANCER SCREENING AND PREVENTION

27% of Maliseets and 30% of Waponahki adults 50 years or older had undergone a colonoscopy in the past two years which appears to be lower than the proportion of Maine residents (42%).

77% of Maliseet women and 73% of Waponahki women 40 years and older have received a mammogram in the past two years which appears to be lower than the proportion of women in the State of Maine who have been screened (86%).

Survey results indicate that Maliseet and Waponahki females have comparable rates of cervical cancer screening rates compared to women in Maine. 85% of Maliseet women have received a pap smear in the past three years, while 83% of Waponahki women and 81% of Maine women have received a pap smear in the past three years. 19% of Maliseet women reported being vaccinated against HPV, in comparison to 45% of Waponahki women.

### CANCER SCREENING AND PREVENTION

Outcome	Maliseet	Waponahki	Maine
Colonoscopy past 2 years (Age 40+)	27%	25%	NA <sup>a</sup>
Colonoscopy past 2 years (Age 50+)	27%	30%	42%
Digital rectal exam past year (Age 40+)	39%	23%	54%
Home blood stool test past year (Age 40+)	30%	12%	27%
PSA test past 2 years (Age 40+)	43%	39%	80%
Mammogram past 2 years (Age 40+)	77%	73%	86%
Pap smear past 3 years (Age 18+)	85%	83%	81%
Ever received HPV Vaccine (Age 18-26)	19%	45%	NA

<sup>a</sup> - Only asked of those 50+ in Maine BRFS.

## MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH

Prenatal care refers to the regular health care recommended for pregnant women. Through regular check-ups, prenatal care allow doctors or midwives to treat and prevent potential health problems throughout the course of the pregnancy while promoting healthy lifestyles that benefit both mother and child. The availability of routine prenatal care has played an important role in reducing miscarriages and maternal death rates, as well as birth defects, low birth weight, and other preventable health problems that can affect mother and child. Most Maliseet (96%) and Waponahki (95%) mothers received prenatal care as early as they wanted. However, a high percentage of Maliseet (42%) and Waponahki (39%) women smoked during pregnancy. Smoking during pregnancy puts mother and child at risk for: premature birth (being born too early), low birth weight baby, birth defects, and sudden infant death.

### MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH

Outcome	Maliseet	Waponahki	Maine
% of women who received prenatal care as early as they wanted to (women who gave birth within the last 5 years)	96%	95%	NA
% of women who used cigarettes at any time during their last pregnancy	42%	39%	NA
% who said children under the age of 18 Always use a child safety seat, booster seat or seat belt when riding with them in the past 30 days (Among those who rode with	97%	93%	NA

## Selected Health Outcomes and Chronic Conditions

### CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE

Heart and blood vessel disease – cardiovascular disease – includes numerous problems such as: stroke, heart attack, coronary heart disease, arrhythmias, and angina. Many of these conditions can be prevented through avoiding cigarette smoking, eating healthy, and exercising. Additional risk factors for cardiovascular disease include: high cholesterol, high blood pressure, and type 2 diabetes. The percentage of Maliseet and Waponahki adults who report having a heart attack (7% and 6%, respectively) or report being diagnosed with coronary artery disease (5% and 6%) respectively is similar to the proportion of adults in Maine who report these conditions.

#### CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE

Outcomes	Maliseet	Waponahki	Maine
% Diagnosed with heart attack	7%	6%	5%
% Diagnosed with angina or coronary artery disease	5%	6%	5%
% Diagnosed with congestive heart failure	3%	2%	NA

### HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE

High blood pressure represents a leading risk factor for cardiovascular diseases such as strokes, heart attacks, and kidney disease. 29% of Maliseet tribal members report having high blood pressure while 40% of Waponahki participants and 32% of Maine residents report having this condition.

#### HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE

High blood pressure	Maliseet	Waponahki	Maine
% Diagnosed with high blood pressure	29%	40%	32%

### HIGH CHOLESTEROL

High cholesterol significantly increases the risk of cardiovascular diseases such as heart attacks and strokes. The US Preventive Services Task Force recommends screening men aged 35 and older for cholesterol and women aged 45 years and older at increased risk for coronary heart disease.<sup>11</sup> The survey indicates that 39% of Maliseet Tribal members, 47% of Waponahki citizens, and 41% of Maine residents have been told by a provider that they have high cholesterol.

#### HIGH CHOLESTEROL

High cholesterol	Maliseet	Waponahki	Maine
% Diagnosed with high cholesterol	39%	47%	41%

## DIABETES

Having diabetes or pre-diabetes puts a person at increased risk for heart disease and stroke. A person with diabetes can lower their risks for these conditions by keeping the blood glucose (also called blood sugar), blood pressure, and blood cholesterol close to the target numbers recommended by health care providers. Strategies for reaching targets include:

- choosing foods wisely
- being physically active
- taking medications if needed

The survey indicates that Houlton Band of Maliseets (17%) and Waponahki (17%) may have a higher proportion of adults who report having diabetes in comparison to other Maine residents (10%). Of the Houlton Band of Maliseets and Waponahki adults who report having diabetes the majority (100% and 94%, respectively) reported that they had had their hemoglobin A1C checked at least once in the past year. 89% of Maine residents with diabetes had had their hemoglobin A1C checked in the last year. Similarly, a large proportion of Houlton Band of Maliseets and Waponahki adults with diabetes also report having a pupil dilation eye exam and foot exam in the past year. The percentage of Houlton Band of Maliseets adults with diabetes who have taken a course or a class on how to self-manage their diabetes (61%) appears to be relatively high in comparison to other Maine residents (54%).

### DIABETES

Outcomes	Maliseet	Waponahki	Maine
% Diagnosed with diabetes	17%	17%	10%
% Among those diagnosed with diabetes:			
% Ever taken a course or class on how to self-manage diabetes	61%	43%	54% <sup>a</sup>
% Had A1C checked at least once in past year	100%	94%	89% <sup>a</sup>
% Had pupil dilation eye exam in past year	76%	78%	76% <sup>a</sup>
% Had foot examination in past year	82%	79%	78% <sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> - Data from One Maine Community Health Needs Assessment 2010.

## ASTHMA

Asthma is a chronic (long-term) lung disease that inflames and narrows the airways. Asthma causes recurring periods of wheezing, chest tightness, shortness of breath, and coughing. Cigarette smoking, mold, and other environmental factors can worsen the asthma. The proportion of Maliseet (26%) and Waponahki adults (23%) reporting an asthma diagnosis appears to be higher than among all Maine residents (17%).

### ASTHMA

Outcomes	Maliseet	Waponahki	Maine
% Ever diagnosed with asthma	26%	23%	17%

## Mental Health and Substance Use

### ALCOHOL COMSUMPTION

Binge drinking is defined as males having five or more drinks on one occasion and females having four or more drinks on one occasion. Binge drinking is associated with many health problems, including:

- Unintentional injuries (e.g., car crashes, falls, burns, drowning)
- Intentional injuries (e.g., firearm injuries, sexual assault, domestic violence)
- Alcohol poisoning
- High blood pressure, stroke, and other cardiovascular diseases
- Liver disease
- Neurological damage
- Sexual dysfunction.
- Poor control of diabetes

Binge drinking is more common among Maliseet and Waponahki adults. Roughly 49% of Maliseet Tribal members engage in binge drinking in comparison to 17% of other Maine residents.

### MENTAL HEALTH

44% of Maliseet and 35% of Waponahki Tribal members reported being ever diagnosed with depression which appears to be significantly higher than the prevalence of depression among all Maine residents which is 15%.

#### MENTAL HEALTH

Outcomes	Maliseet	Waponahki	Maine
% Binge drinking in the past month (5+ drinks for males, 4+ drinks for females)	49%	35%	17%
Female	43%	32%	12%
Male	58%	40%	23%
% Currently depressed (CESD-10 $\geq$ 10)	38%	36%	15% <sup>a</sup>
Female	33%	38%	NA
Male	40%	33%	NA
% Ever diagnosed with depression	44%	35%	24%
% Ever diagnosed with anxiety	38%	32%	NA
% Felt so sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks that you stopped doing usual activities in the last 12 months	22%	20%	NA
% Considered attempting suicide in the last 12 months	8%	8%	NA

# Final Thoughts

Maine Tribal Health Directors believe that the development, implementation, and analysis of the Waponahki Assessment 2010 should be considered a major accomplishment for the five Maine Tribal Health Programs. The health assessment represents one of the largest documented Tribal health surveys completed east of the Mississippi River. This is the first time that the Maine Tribal Health Programs have had access to data regarding Maine Tribal populations that is accurate and meaningful to them.

Findings from the survey suggest that the five Tribal Health Department are implementing preventive care activities that result in rates that approximate or exceed the United States' health targets described by Healthy People 2020 for:

- dental visits
- eye and foot exams for diabetics
- mammograms
- and colorectal cancer screening

Also, 95.4% of women who were pregnant within the past five years received prenatal care as early in their care as they wanted.

However, rates of chronic diseases and risk factors for chronic diseases remain higher among Waponahki Tribal members in comparison to other Maine residents. In comparison to all Maine residents survey results indicate that Waponahki Tribal members are:

- 2.5 times as likely to have been told they have diabetes
- 2.0 times as likely to report they have been told by a provider that they have an anxiety disorder
- 1.5 times as likely to report they have been told they have high blood pressure
- 1.6 times as likely to be obese
- 1.6 times as likely to report they have been told they had a heart attack
- 2.8 times as likely to smoke
- 1.7 times as likely to report that they have been told by a provider that they have a depressive disorder
- 0.4 times as likely to exercise an adequate amount

For the eight comparisons above, Waponahki and Maine BRFSS data were both age adjusted prior to comparison. Doing this gives us a more accurate picture of how the Waponahki compare to their neighbors in the rest of Maine. This is the only use of age-adjustment in this report.

Tackling these differences in health between Waponahki Tribal members and Maine residents will require the collaboration of many partners, including those outside of the health clinic or health department.

Results from the survey indicate that Tribal health programs reinforce prevention activities and play a critical role in keeping Tribal members healthy. However, improving the health of Tribal members will also require dealing with matters such as: nutrition, physical activity, obesity, cigarette smoking, substance abuse, and high school graduation rates. Tackling these issues will involve developing partnerships between different Tribal departments and other stakeholders who can play a role in promoting community health.

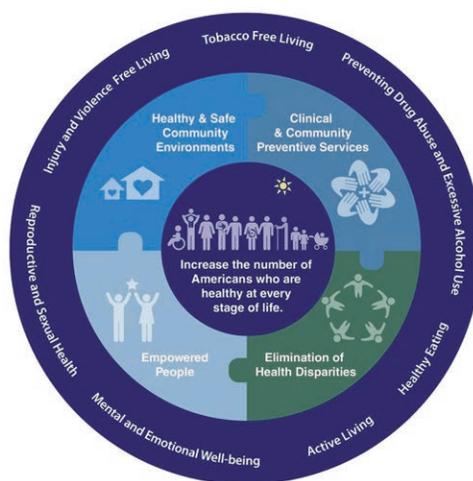
It is the hope that the results highlighted in this report will spark collaboration between different organizations that serve Tribal members and promote the establishment of a Wabanaki Public Health District Community Health Plan. A community health plan can play an important role in developing partnerships between different departments. The Maine Tribes have the Wabanaki Public Health District that could lead the development of such a plan and the development of strategies that could ultimately improve the health of Tribal members. Developing a community health plan will require planning and the transition of the assessment data from the Health Programs to the Wabanaki Public Health District. The ultimate goal of the Community Health Plan will be to improve the health and well-being of Waponahki Tribal members.

According to survey results, the Houlton Band of Maliseets Health Department and other Waponahki Health Departments enjoy recognition as a source of community strength. In addition, they successfully deliver clinical and community and preventive services to Tribal members. Access to clinical and community preventive services provided by Tribal Health Departments can reduce tobacco and drug abuse, improve screening for colon and breast cancer, prevent heart disease through more timely treatment for high blood pressure, and reduce obesity and diabetes through more active living and healthy eating.

However, in addition to clinical and community preventive services there are several factors outside of the health care system that can lead to “good” health throughout all stages of life. Key factors that shape the health of people are not just medical treatments or lifestyle choices but the living conditions they experience, the social determinants of health. In fact the health of an individual is often influenced more by factors outside of the health care system, such as education level, income, occupation, and housing. This finding underscores the need for different departments and agencies to work together to address these social determinants of health that impact the health of Tribal communities.

Called for by the Affordable Care Act, The National Prevention Strategy provides actions and examples that different Tribal departments can take to promote community wellness. In this model, increasing the number of people who are healthy involves tackling social determinant of health, changing conditions in communities such as educational and job opportunities, safe and affordable housing, accessible transportation and parks, and the absence of toxic substances. The strategy also outlines four strategic directions that provide a foundation for improving community health. Those four strategic directions are:

- **Building Healthy and Safe Community Environments:** Prevention of disease starts in our communities and at home; not just in the doctor’s office.
- **Empowering People to Make Healthy Choices:** When people have access to actionable and easy-to-understand information and resources, they are empowered to make healthier choices.
- **Eliminating Health Disparities:** By eliminating disparities in achieving and maintaining health, we can help improve quality of life for all Waponahki Tribal members.
- **Expanding Quality Preventive Services in Both Clinical and Community Settings:** When people receive preventive care, such as immunizations and cancer screenings, they have better health and lower health care costs.<sup>12</sup>



A Wabanaki Public Health District Community Health Plan that builds on the four strategic directions of the National Prevention Strategy provides opportunities for different organizations to work together. In addition to Tribal health departments and the Wabanaki Public Health District, partners could include: education, housing, workplaces, government, environmental services, and other partners.

By working together through a community health plan each department has the opportunity to play an important part in improving the health of Waponahki Tribal members.



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