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Contact: **Kim Hayes, 202-454-0931** or
Jane DeMarines, cell: 202-285-0981

Tribes Help Each other in States Hit by Hurricane —Housing Needs on Reservations Increase as Homeless Return from New Orleans

Washington, DC—9-6-2005—A review of Native American tribes in the path affected by Hurricane Katrina shows that tribes in the area who have not been hurt are sending help to tribes such as the Chitimacha and the Tunica Biloxi Tribes whose members have suffered devastating effects of the hurricane, according to the **National American Indian Housing Council**.

In addition, tribal members who lived in the New Orleans area are going back to their reservations to seek shelter, pushing up housing needs on certain reservations.

According to **United South and Eastern Tribes (USET)**, the **Chitimacha Tribe** (Louisiana) was the most affected of tribes in the region. Wanda Janes, **USET Tribal Liaison Officer** said, “More than 200 members of Chitimacha living in the New Orleans area were evacuated to Arkansas and then have been relocated to the Chitimacha reservation in Louisiana. Many of these members are returning to the reservation to seek shelter, due to loss of their homes.” As a result the tribe has set up a shelter and is expecting several hundred people will need housing for an extended period of time, she reported.

The Tunica Biloxi Tribal members were also severely affected, but no loss of life was reported. Homes in Slidell, Louisiana felt the brunt of the storm and tribal members living in that area lost everything, according to the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI.) The Tunica- Biloxi tribe has set up a shelter that has more than 450 evacuees staying there at this time.

The **Poarch Band of Creek Indians (PBCI)** (Alabama), the Seminole Tribe (Florida), and Eastern Band of Cherokee (North Carolina) have all been helping affected tribes. Poarch Band of Creek will be acting as staging area for equipment and supplies and assist in transportation to the Chitimacha Reservation.

PBCI will be using their emergency response trailers and a police escort to get the supplies to Chitimacha. Susan Wicker, Executive Director of the Poarch Creek HA said they are expecting more tribal members to come over the weekend. She said they were aware of 50-60 displaced families coming back to the reservation. Tribal members are facing a lack of gasoline and lack of electricity. The tribe is monitoring gas, but has a supply for their work vehicles at this time. She reported that families were doubling and tripling up in a house to take care of the newcomers to the reservation.

“We understand the devastating effect on both Native and non-Native populations from Hurricane Katrina,” said **NAIHC Chairman Chester Carl**. “These are types of conditions that Indians face all the time: lack of necessities- not enough food, not enough water. It is time for the corporate world to provide leadership in this situation and not for the federal government to supply everything.”

NAIHC Executive Director Gary Gordon, said, “We are concerned with the devastation to families and applaud the work of those tribes who have stepped up quickly with generators, supplies, water, food and ice. Housing is going to be an issue for tribal members as those who have lost homes, jobs and more will be moving in with other families for the long-term. This is going to stress an already overburdened housing supply on reservations.”

NAIHC urged tribal members to send donations to NCAI’s Relief Fund Effort, which is collecting them at this address: NCAI 1301 Connecticut Ave. NW, Suite 200 Washington, DC 20036 (Please put Hurricane Relief in subject line of check)

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NAIHC assists tribes and tribal housing entities in reaching their goals of providing culturally relevant, decent, safe, sanitary and quality affordable housing for Native people in Indian communities and Alaska Native villages.

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