Nishnawbe Aski Nation
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NEWS RELEASE

Thursday February 12, 2009 **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

CHIEFS DECLARE CALL TO ACTION ON PRESCRIPTION DRUG ABUSE

THUNDER BAY, ON: After three days of intense meetings regarding pressing social issues affecting their communities, Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) Chiefs from the Sioux Lookout Zone, together with a group of Chiefs from Grand Council Treaty 3, emerged with a signed declaration to take their communities back from the grip of prescription drug abuse.

"We know there are social impacts in our communities resulting from prescription drug abuse," said Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) Grand Chief Stan Beardy.

"Our focus of our meetings was not to highlight the problems, but to come together and develop solutions and a plan to affect real change," said Eabmetoong Chief Sol Atlookan, one of the community chiefs taking ownership of the problem. "What emerged after three days of meetings was a declaration – a call to action – for our communities."

As part of the declaration, the Chiefs have agreed to work together toward strengthening families through supportive programming, advocacy, training and education, announced Deputy Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler, who holds the social and health issues portfolio at Nishnawbe Aski Nation.

"We recognize that the roots of this problem lie in our history, the failure of governments to honour their obligations to us, the policies and laws, which have limited exercise of our rights to our political development, the residential school experience and other negative consequences of colonialism," write the Chiefs in their declaration. "The First Nations take ownership of this problem and recognize that the solutions and answers are within our culture and our communities."

Nishnawbe Aski Nation is a political territorial organization representing 49 First Nation communities in James Bay Treaty 9 and Ontario portions of Treaty 5 – an area covering two thirds of the province of Ontario.

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