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NEWS RELEASE

Wednesday February 4, 2009 **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

RESEARCH TO ASSESS NEEDS OF NAN CHILDREN AND YOUTH AT RISK

THUNDER BAY, ON: Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) Grand Chief Stan Beardy today announced a medical needs assessment and environmental scan project that will assess the needs of NAN children and youth at risk and identify gaps in services.

"We requested that First Nations Inuit Health conduct this research to help us better understand the complex medical needs of some of the most vulnerable people in our communities," said Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) Grand Chief Stan Beardy. "We hope this project will help prevent our children from falling through any cracks in the system and ensure that they, their families and caregivers, receive appropriate and timely service response and care."

Research will be held in cooperation with communities and Aboriginal organizations within NAN territory from February 2 to March 31, 2009 and will focus on three areas:

- Exploration of the current system and identification of service access gaps for NAN children and youth up to 21 years of age with complex medical needs on-reserve/off reserve, and in care/out-of-care;
- Recommendations for NAN children and youth with complex medical needs who require the services of multiple providers/funders (services to address needs like mobility, speech and hearing, drug therapies, special accommodations to attend child care, therapies, respite etc.); and
- Recommendations related to federal-provincial-First Nations integration of services for NAN children and youth with complex medical needs both on-reserve /off reserve, and in care/out-of-care.

The project builds on the 2008 May Report of the Auditor General of Canada on First Nations Child and Family Services Program-Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. It will enable multiple stakeholders to identify the needs of NAN children at risk and to collaborate on solutions.

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

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