Nishnawbe Aski Nation
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NEWS RELEASE

Tuesday March 24, 2009 **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

NAN GRAND CHIEF URGES FIRST NATIONS TO WORK FOR UNITY, HEALING AT EMBRACE LIFE CONFERENCE

THUNDER BAY, ON: Nishnawbe Ask Nation (NAN) Grand Chief Stan Beardy urged NAN First Nations to work towards reconciliation, healing and unity during his opening remarks at the 2009 Embrace Life conference in Thunder Bay today.

"First Nation communities in the NAN territory are faced with longstanding, challenging issues that can be seen through high rates of family dysfunction, violence, youth suicide, drug trafficking and substance abuse," said Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) Grand Chief Stan Beardy. "These are deeply-felt concerns for community leaders, but it is difficult to implement treatment programs and interventions on a community-wide basis. Our hope for this conference is to work together to improve the lives of Nishnawbe Aski people by enabling community leaders and organizations to share their expertise and resources."

The Embrace Life conference (March 24-25) will feature presentations and workshops by NAN political and spiritual leaders as well as representatives from community service organizations. Cree Nation of Mistissini member Kenny Blacksmith, founder of Gathering Nations International and former Deputy Grand Chief of the Grand Council of Crees, will deliver the keynote address.

"During this conference we will hear from individuals and organizations who work collaboratively, and we will consider their strategies as a potential template for other communities," explained conference committee spokesperson Raymond Neckoway. "By working together we hope to minimize the isolation between groups and increase the quality of services to community members."

The Embrace Life conference was started in 2001 at the request of NAN Chiefs to seek ways for spiritual leaders, First Nations leaders, and community service organizations to work together to benefit the people of NAN communities.

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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