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NEWS RELEASE

Thursday March 7, 2013 **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

EMBRACE LIFE FORUM TO HELP HEAL AND EMPOWER FAMILIES

THUNDER BAY: Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) Deputy Grand Chief Goyce Kakegamic and First Nation, spiritual and community leaders are gathering together to bring healing and empowerment to First Nation families at the Embrace Life Forum being held March 7-8, 2013 at St. Paul's United Church in Thunder Bay.

"The focus of this gathering is healing and showing people new ways to take active responsibility for their own lives and the lives of others through proactive decision-making and individual family responsibility," said NAN Deputy Grand Chief Goyce Kakegamic, who holds the Social Services portfolio at NAN. "This is not about assessing blame for the problems facing our communities but to help First Nations take responsibility for the health and well-being of their families, friends and communities."

The theme of the forum is Empowering Families through Taking Responsibility. It is designed to help First Nations develop life skills and strategies for their journey of healing. It is not a political event and does not seek retribution for injustices against First Nations people. All events are open to the public and everyone is encouraged to participate.

"The families in NAN territory must be revitalized and empowered to retake their rightful place as the central, most vital institutions in our First Nations so we can achieve the spiritual and moral turn-around to help heal, grow and strengthen our communities," said Kakegamic. "Empowerment comes from awareness and skill development, which is critical to enable our youth to overcome a sense of hopelessness while they are desperately trying to live positive and productive lives."

The two-day event will include workshops aimed at empowering students, improving parenting skills, healthy meal preparation, raising social awareness, teaching traditional wisdom and culture, and providing family counseling. There will also be educational and trade booths to promote career choices.

Nishnawbe Aski Nation is a political territorial organization representing 49 First Nation communities in James Bay Treaty No. 9 and Ontario portions of Treaty No. 5 – an area covering two thirds of the province of Ontario in Canada.

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