

# **NEWS from the North Dakota Department of Human Services and Native American Training Institute**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Feb. 12, 2015**

Contacts: Sandra Bercier, Interim Director, Native American Training Institute, 701-255-6374 or LuWanna Lawrence, Public Information Officer, North Dakota Department of Human Services, 701-328-1892

## **Indian Child Welfare and Wellness Conference to be held in Mandan Feb. 18-20**

BISMARCK, N.D. - "*Healthy Children, Healthy Families - Our Journey Continues*" is this year's theme of the 14<sup>th</sup> annual Indian Child Welfare and Wellness Conference, Feb. 18-20, 2015, at the Baymont Inn and Suites (formerly Best Western Seven Seas Hotel), in Mandan, N.D. The conference will feature experts on child welfare issues, juvenile justice, cultural and tribal relations, health and wellness, child behavioral health, and the Indian Child Welfare Act.

"This conference is about making positive connections and finding new resources so attendees can return to their communities and their jobs with a greater understanding of Indian Child Welfare and their part in promoting these efforts," said Sandra Bercier, Interim Director for the Native American Training Institute in Bismarck. "It is all about bettering the lives of our children and their families."

Conference sessions will include discussion on the Indian Child Welfare Act, human trafficking in North Dakota, ethics and values that guide professional social work practice, healing through Native American drum beat and song, strategies on parenting a strong-willed child, Tribal family structure and genealogy, and helping children cope with an incarcerated parent. Attendees will also hear about various programs available to help child welfare children transition to independent living from foster care and prevent youth from entering the juvenile justice and child welfare systems, and more.

In conjunction with the conference, award-winning Native American dancer and hip hop artist Supaman will perform and educate listeners with a message of hope through culture and music on Thurs., Feb. 19 at 6 p.m. at the Baymont Inn and Suites - Pier 7 room. The event is free and open to the public.

Conference attendees include social service professionals, child protection workers, judges, juvenile justice personnel, Tribal court personnel, foster parents, educators, mental health and substance abuse treatment professionals, and others interested in child welfare.

Continuing education units are available for licensed social workers, foster parents, and students attending United Tribes Technical College. Educational hours are also available for wrap-around re-certification offered by the North Dakota Department of Human Services.

Preregistration is encouraged, but registrations will be accepted at the door. For more details or a schedule of events, go online to [www.nativeinstitute.org](http://www.nativeinstitute.org) or call 701-255-6374.

The Indian Child Welfare and Wellness Conference is hosted by the Native American Training Institute with funding from the North Dakota Supreme Court and North Dakota Department of Human Services' Children and Family Services Division.

###