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**CANADIAN FIRST NATIONS' CRYSTAL LAMEMAN TO SPEAK AT
20TH ANNUAL WEGE SPEAKER SERIES ON THURSDAY, APRIL 21**

Beaver Lake Cree Nation spokeswoman to talk about the environmental and human impacts of tar sands oil mining

Grand Rapids, Michigan – February 17, 2016 – The Wege Foundation (www.wegefoundation.org) will host the 20th Annual Wege Speaker Series on Thursday, April 21 at 4pm at the Aquinas College Performing Arts Center.

The speaker this year is Crystal Lameman, a member of the Beaver Lake Cree Nation, whose homeland is the site of the massive “tar sands” oil development in Alberta, Canada. Her talk is titled, *The Real Costs of Oil: The Case for Justice at the Ends of the Pipeline*.

The indigenous people of the Beaver Lake Cree Nation live in an area of forest the size of Switzerland and, based on their Treaty of 1876, enjoy legal rights to hunt, fish and trap in their territory, as their ancestors have done for generations.

In 2008, the Nation launched a Treaty Rights litigation against the Canadian government, claiming that the 19,000+ fossil fuel projects in their territory violate their treaty rights and threaten to destroy their way of life by polluting and fragmenting the land and water that have sustained them for centuries. Lameman, who serves as the Intergovernmental Affairs and Industry Relations Treaty Coordinator and Communications Manager for the Nation, combines her academic background and her indigenous ways of knowing to articulate the devastating impacts of the largest industrial project in the world.

“In Michigan, much attention has been paid to the safety of the oil pipeline running underneath the Straits of Mackinac and to proposals to ship tar sands-derived oil on the Great Lakes, ” said Mark Van Putten, who in November was

named President and CEO of the Wege Foundation. “Less attention has been paid to the environmental and human costs of tar sands production at the locations of the mines. Lameman will seek to deepen our understanding of what is happening at the source as she speaks about her people’s fight for justice on the front lines and the climate change consequences for all of us.”

The Aquinas College Performing Arts Center is located at 1703 Robinson Road S.E. in Grand Rapids. The public is invited and the event is free. Registration is required at www.aquinas.edu/wegespeaker

About Aquinas College

Aquinas College is a Catholic liberal arts college founded in 1886 by the Dominican sisters of Grand Rapids. The wooded, 117-acre campus is located in Grand Rapids, Michigan. With over 1,200 students and 60 academic programs, Aquinas College is an inclusive education community that emphasizes career preparation, leadership, service to others and lifelong learning. www.aquinas.edu

About the Wege Foundation

Founded in 1967 by Peter M. Wege, son of Peter Martin Wege, who started what is now Steelcase Inc., the Wege Foundation focuses on funding good works that enhance the lives of the people and preserve the health of the environment in West Michigan. The Wege Foundation’s Five Pillars, or areas of interest: Education, Environment, Arts & Culture, Health Care, and Human Services. For more information, go to www.wegefoundation.org

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