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**Black Ash Basketry Master Artist Kelly Church (Ojibwe)
at Mitchell Museum Thursday, April 30**

April 15, 2015—Join the Mitchell Museum of the American Indian on Thursday, April 30 from 6:30 to 8:00 as black ash basketry master artist Kelly Church (Ojibwe) demonstrates the process that goes into weaving a basket that goes back five generations. Kelly will also discuss the Emerald Ash Borer, and the devastating effects it has had on black ash trees, as well as what is being done to protect them and sustain the art for generations to come.

Kelly learned the process of gathering, harvesting and weaving from her father and cousin. All of the materials come from the woods and forests of Michigan. Her family weaves with black ash, white cedar, birch bark, sweetgrass, and basswood, and makes baskets, quill boxes, and birch bark bitings. Birch biting is an art form made by biting down on small pieces of folded birch bark to form intricate designs. Kelly is one of only about a dozen practitioners of this craft left in the United States and Canada.

Kelly's baskets range from the utilitarian fishing creels, market baskets and bark baskets to traditional rectangular wedding baskets and whimsical strawberry baskets. She also creates experimental baskets with materials such as copper, photographs and plastic window blinds—the later a warning of what the future might look like without black ash trees.

In 2002, the Emerald Ash Borer (a beetle like bug) was discovered in Michigan. Since its discovery, Michigan has lost over 400 million ash trees, and the Department of Agriculture is predicting the loss of the entire Ash resource in North America if actions are not taken to eliminate the bug. Kelly will share what is being done to save seeds of the precious ash trees.

“We are very active in educating the public about the Emerald Ash Borer,” says Kelly. “We travel extensively to share our teachings with tribes from around the US and Canada. To sustain the traditions of the Anishnabe (Ojibwe) and cultures of the Northeast United States, seed collection from ash trees is vital.”

Kelly is a graduate of the American Institute of Indian Arts. She has become nationally recognized for her craft. She has won many awards including the Michigan Traditional Arts Apprenticeship Award and the 2008 Southwestern Association for Indian Arts Fellowship.

The event is generously sponsored by Janet Smith-Peterson of the Sundance Gallery. To RSVP, contact visitor services at (847)475-1030 or rsvp@mitchellmuseum.org by April 24th. Cost is \$15 for members and \$20 for non-members. The price includes materials and refreshments. After the demonstration, each participant will finish the evening by making a black ash animal to take home with them. Kelly's baskets will be available for purchase during the evening of the event.

The Mitchell Museum is one of only a handful of museums in the country that focuses exclusively on the art, history and culture of American Indian and First Nation peoples throughout the United States and Canada. In 2012, the Mitchell Museum was named "Best Museum of The North Shore: Up and Comer" by *Make it Better* magazine, won the Superior award by the Illinois Association of Museums and was named a national finalist by the American Association of State and Local History award program.

For more information about the Mitchell Museum of The American Indian, visit www.mitchellmuseum.org or call 847-475-1030. The museum is open Tuesday-Saturday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Thursday, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m., and Sunday noon to 4 p.m. Admission is \$5 for adults, \$3 for seniors, students and children and Free for Mitchell Museum members and Tribal members.

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