

Ontario chiefs to discuss native issues at Chiefswood

June 3

OHSWEKEN — Canada's top native leaders gathered in Ohsweken today for the opening session of the annual Chiefs of Ontario conference.

The four-day outdoor conference at Chiefswood Park will focus on issues facing native communities on national, provincial and local levels.

Premier Bob Rae is expected to make a presentation about constitutional discussions on Tuesday afternoon. He will be accompanied by Natural Resources Minister Bud Wildman, the minister responsible for native affairs.

On Tuesday night there will be a forum for all six candidates running for the position of national chief of the Assembly of First Nations. The candidates are Chief Coun. William Montour of the Six Nations; Ovide Mercredi, a Manitoba vice-chief of

the assembly; Phil Fontaine, another Manitoba chief; Michael Mitchell, elected chief of Akwesasne; Neil Sterritt, a Gitksan hereditary chief from British Columbia; and Bill Wilson, a B.C. Kwawkgewith fisherman.

Georges Erasmus, vacating his position as head of the assembly in June, is scheduled to appear on several panels during the first two days of the conference. He will talk about native communities across the country where there is potential for trouble.

Mr. Erasmus also will discuss constitutional preparations being made by native groups.

Ontario's 130 chiefs have been invited to the conference. About 85 attended last year's meeting and more are expected this year.

The public is invited to attend the meetings, which get under way each day at 9 a.m.