

Who will host the 2002 North American Indigenous Games?

by Mark McEachern

OHSWEKEN - It will be two weeks before Six Nations and their partners find out if they will host the 2002 North American Indigenous Games (NAIG), at which time a decision will be announced in Fargo, North Dakota on August 8th.

On Wednesday and Thursday, members of the NAIG Site Selection Committee visited Six Nations and their partners - New Credit, Hamilton and Brantford - the last site vying to host the 2002 Games.

Winnipeg and Kahnawake are also in the running to host these Games

"You try to show them (NAIG Site Selection Committee) so much in just three days, it is very hard and people were getting very tired at the end of their visit", said Six Nations Parks and Recreation

Director Cheryl Henhawk, one of the key members behind this bid, which began over a year ago. "It was my first experience in anything like this, so I really don't know what to expect or how we did in our presentation."

"This has been a project that I have been working on for over a year now", added Henhawk. "It was on Saturday that I realized there wasn't anything more we could do as group in terms of the bid, so I was a little down on the weekend. now we'll just have to wait and see what happens."

As far as Henhawk was concerned, she felt that the bid was a success and that she thought that the Site committee, composed of Alex Nelson from British Columbia, Robert Roybal of Colorado and Ted Hodgson of Alberta, all left with a good

impression about Six Nations and their capabilities of hosting such an event."

"They were very diplomatic, very tight lipped during their visit", she said. "You could tell though that they were touched by the support of our community with this bid, it was something that I know they felt and admired with great respect and I personally got the feeling that they hadn't seen this kind of support from the other communities who also want to host the Games."

Hundreds of members from the Six Nations community lined the streets of Ohsweken on Tuesday morning to show their support for the bid, many of whom waved flags and held signs that read; "We Want the 2002 Indigenous Games." Many local businesses donated most of their advertising



The NAIG Site Selection committee took a load off of their feet during their busy schedule when golf carts were provided to assist them in their tour of the McMaster University campus, one of the lodging facilities that will be available if the Six Nations bid is successful.

space to support the 2002 Games with signs of similar requests.

"It was very nice to see the community come out and show their support for this bid, all of their flags and signs and all of the cheering that they did as we left the village", said Six Nations Chief Wellington Staats on Tuesday morning.

On Wednesday, the Site Selection Committee was taken to both Brantford and Hamilton to visit some of the event locations as well as the lodging and facilities needed to host such an event. Henhawk said that because of the busy two day schedule, the Site committee didn't have much time to relax and visit the area themselves, something that all three members wished could have happened during their stay.

"They wanted to see Niagara Falls and the CN Tower while they were here, which we did for them before they left on Friday", said Henhawk. "This is another advantage I feel that our site has over the others, the fact that there is so much to see historically here in Ontario and you don't have to drive to far from here to see it."

Now that the bid is finished, Henhawk said that some of the aspects of their proposal could have been different, but all in all, she was very happy with the work that her group demonstrated over the two day audition.

"We could have had our protocol down a bit better", she said. "Whether people were just too nervous or whatever, we could have improved in this area in terms of our bid."

"Some of our partners from Hamilton, who have been involved in similar bids for events such as the Canada Summer Games, said that we were well organized as a group and that we would all have a little bit of a let down when this was all over", added Henhawk. "They were right, we all felt a little worn out and empty after it was all over, but now we'll just have to wait and see what happens and hopefully the NAIG will be coming here to Six Nations in 2002."