

# U.S. First lady visits Ganondagan

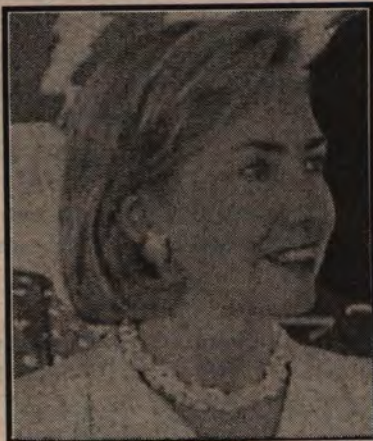
*GANONDAGAN- U.S. First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton arrived in Rochester last Wednesday to mark the 150th anniversary of women's rights movement and visited three historic sites including the Ganondagan State Historic Site in Victor*

Clinton arrived at Ganondagan at about 5 p.m. and while there focused on the Native American tradition of giving respect and power to women.

Clan mothers are the foundation of their communities, the First Lady was told. They appoint men as chiefs and act as the voice of the people.

Clinton met privately with five clan mothers from Upstate New York and got a quick lesson in history.

Clinton was told, that unlike white women in early U.S., history, the Clanmother told her, Native American women have always owned property, taken custody of children when a marriage dissolves and been viewed as the most important teachers of future generations.



***Hillary Rodham Clinton***

A light moment came in the discussions when about halfway through their 25-minute talk Maisie Shenandoah, An Oneida Nation clanmother, told the First lady that a single man could not become a Chief.

"A man is considered much more wise when he is married," Shenandoah said, causing Clinton to break out in a wide smile and chuckle.

But the clanmothers also told Clinton that although they have great power, their culture cautions them to use it wisely, fairly and with kindness.

"It's not like going to college and learning that you've got to be aggressive or you don't make it," said Janine Huff, a Tonawanda-Seneca clanmother.

"It's more important to help others than to show you're important," In fact, Native American women have lost authority over the years as they have been assimilated into white culture, said LuAnn

*(Continued on page 7)*



AIMEE K. WILES staff photographer

First lady Hillary Rodham Clinton and her entourage tour the Iroquois longhouse at the Ganondagan State Historic Site

## U.S. First Lady visits

(continued from front page)

Jamieson, who was at Ganondagan preparing a documentary of Clinton's visit for the Tonawanda-Seneca Nation Council of Chiefs.

Native American women "might live in the territory but they don't know about our traditional values and life ways. And if she doesn't know what her traditional responsibilities and capabilities are, she doesn't assert them."

Jamieson said she hoped to display her photographs of Clinton's visit in the Chiefs' Council Building in the Tonawanda Seneca Territory, where she lives.

"Because of the politics and the hype of this visit, it will help them acknowledge who they are and how important our original ways are--and how important it is to hang onto them and protect them," she said.

The clanmothers presented Clinton with a small, handmade, purple-and-white basket that smelled of sweetgrass and held a decorative chain symbolizing friendship.

"That was so exciting," Huff said afterward. "It was just like talking to another woman--she didn't seem any different from anyone walking down the street. She was very warm and very down to earth."

When the meeting was over, Clinton strolled from the main

building at the entrance to Ganondagan about a quarter-mile across a grassy field, and down a mowed path to a recent reproduction of a bark longhouse.

Inside, she heard about the traditional use of the longhouse, where Native American families slept, ate, and resided together. She also viewed Native American artifacts.

One item seemed to catch Clinton's eye, the cradle board, a wooden seat for babies. The cradleboard allowed mothers to prop their young children upright--for example alongside a tree--so that even tiny babies were not left in a crib and could observe their mothers at work. "That is a fascinating idea," Clinton said.

Clinton was in the area visiting three historic sites and celebrating the 150th anniversary of women's rights at Seneca Falls and Rochester. (With AP files)



AIMEE K. WILES staff photograph

**Shared gratitude** First lady Hillary Rodham Clinton thanks the women and clan mothers who met with her at the Ganondagan State Historic Site in Victor. The first lady is the keynote speaker in Seneca Falls today.

