

Six Nations resident wins powwow raffle

by Andrea Buma

OHSWEKEN - Barb Harris was presented with the aboriginal painting that she won in a raffle held at the 1997 Toronto International PowWow at a ceremony held at the Royal Bank in Ohsweken on Thursday, December 11.

The Royal Bank is the founding sponsor and exclusive industry supporter of the annual powwow, and each year the bank features a different aboriginal artist at the festival. This year's artist was Peter Big Hetty, a woodland Cree born in The Pas, Manitoba. His "Protector" painting was presented as a draw prize for the 20,000 participants at the powwow.

The painting features a large colourful rendering of a bear. It is a typical Big Hetty piece in its use of bold colour and powerful images.

Peter Montgomery, manager of Public Sector & Aboriginal Business for the Royal Bank in Ontario, was in Ohsweken to present the painting. He spoke of the success of Royal Bank ventures at Six Nations. The Royal branch in Ohsweken was one of the first bank branches in Canada to be located on a native reservation when it opened in December of 1991, and it has been a very successful venture.

In fact, the Royal Bank is looking to duplicate the model developed at the Six Nations branch in providing mortgages to native people in other communities. The Royal in Ohsweken has been running a successful mortgage program for 3 years. People looking for a mortgage apply at the Royal Bank branch to be qualified, and the Royal then notifies Six Nations Housing that they are willing to provide financing. Mortgages are guaranteed by band council.

In a recent change, Six Nations businesses can now deal with the local branch rather than Brantford to secure business loans. Elaine Lickers, branch manager, says that she received training from the Brantford business centre in loan administration in response to demands of the community, who prefer to keep business dealings within Six Nations. Lickers is proud of what they have accomplished in this community, and says that "the Royal Bank is a leader in Aboriginal banking."

Montgomery is continuing to work at giving aboriginals in Ontario greater access to banking within their communities. He is targeting small, isolated reserves in northern Ontario who currently have to drive an hour or more to access banking services. He



Pat Sheridan, Brantford & area banking manager; Elaine Lickers, Ohsweken branch manager; Barb Harris, raffle winner; and Peter Montgomery, Ontario manager of Aboriginal banking with the "Protector" print won by Harris at the 1997 Toronto International PowWow held November 29-30.

points out that many reserves in Ontario don't have the population base to support a branch within their communities.

But according to Montgomery recent technological advances mean that a "brick and mortar structure with the associated overhead costs" is no longer necessary. He is hoping to implement new banking solutions like electronic cash, telephone systems, and the internet.