

# BACKGROUND

## THE 2008 COWICHAN NORTH AMERICAN INDIGENOUS GAMES The Journey of a Generation August 2 – 10, 2008

It is the vision of the Cowichan Tribes and Central Vancouver Island First Nations and supporters that in August 2008, First Nations/Indigenous people from around the world will gather in the Cowichan Valley to celebrate the NAIG circle of sport and culture.

The Cowichan Tribes, with very strong support from the community and leaders in the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community entered the bid process to win the 2008 NAIG for the Cowichan Valley, in early 2004. They outscored Chilliwack to become the successful BC bid and prepared to compete against Saskatchewan, Ontario and Quebec for the honour of hosting the 7<sup>th</sup> NAIG.

The Cowichan bid team traveled to Denver, Colorado to present the bid on behalf of the Cowichan Valley and, as a result, only the Cowichan Valley and Regina, Saskatchewan are remaining in the bid process for the 2008 NAIG. One of these sites will be chosen for the 2008 NAIG.

The 2008 Cowichan NAIG bid committee is planning to organize 16 sports in seven days. More than 5,000 athletes will be competing in:

Archery	Baseball	Basketball	Boxing
Canoe Racing	Golf	Lacrosse	Shooting
Soccer	Softball	Swimming	Tae Kwon Do
Track and Field	Volleyball	Wrestling	

Indigenous Games (War Canoe Racing, Lahal, Hoop Dancing, Futsol (Indoor soccer))

Culture is an equally strong component of the NAIG. Cultural activities planned for the 2008 Cowichan NAIG include:

- Opening/Closing Ceremonies (20-30,000 participants and spectators)
- Tribal Journeys Canoe Regatta (the largest ever planned with more than 80 canoes)
- Cultural Village (International Stage, Arts and Crafts, Merchandising displays, Elders Circle, Story-telling Circle etc).

It is estimated that economically more than \$30 million dollars will be generated as an result of these Games and 90 per cent will stay in the Cowichan Valley. More than 2,000 volunteers will be needed to deliver the best NAIG ever. See backgrounder attached.

**For media information call Brennan Gohn or Sabba Sall: (250) 709-7902.**

# THE NORTH AMERICAN INDIGENOUS GAMES

*In our cultures, to vision quest is strong and good medicine. To have a vision for the people is powerful and to fulfill a vision for the people is sacred. Our ancestors were given visions by the Creator, which lead the people to help themselves.*

*The NAIG was a vision*

*Morningstar Mercredi*

## **The Vision Quest:**

The dream of a large scale Indigenous Games originated in Reno, Nevada when the National Indian Athletic Association held a meeting of 48 representatives in which Canada was also represented. Here, the dream was born!

A few years later Alberta's Willie Littlechild (Cree Nation) introduced the concept of a World Indigenous Games at the World Conference of Indigenous Peoples in Geneva, Switzerland. Representatives of the world's indigenous peoples were thrilled with the concept.

## **The Spirit -Strong, Brave, True:**

The distinctive logo of the NAIG, designed by John Fletcher, Ron Gauthier, and Terry Lusty Incorporates symbols of Aboriginal philosophy. The large outer circle of the logo represents the great Turtle Island which houses all the Creators creations, including animals and plants.

The Runner in the center of this circle represents the Native athlete. This runner has a feather in his/her hair and the feather is a very powerful symbol in the Aboriginal culture. It represents friendship, power, spiritually, speed, purity, courage and strength.

The sash around the runner's waist represents the aboriginal Metis peoples. The four feathers on the four arrow shafts represent the holistic development of the athlete which is essential for balance and harmony. The four arrows illustrate the need to cultivate the mental, physical, emotional and spiritual aspects for the athletes' well being and complete development.

## **The Sacred Bundle:**

The first games were held in 1990 in Edmonton, Alberta. These games consisted of archery, baseball, canoeing, rifle shooting, soccer, swimming, track and field and a rodeo.

In order to begin the 1990 Games in a culturally correct, respectful and powerful way, a Sacred Bundle was designed through consultation with tribal Elders. The Sacred Bundle also carried two blessings/messages-one from Canadian Elder Tufus Goodstriker and one from an American Arapaho Elder.

A Sacred Run was started from the Sacred Medicine Wheel area in the Wyoming Bighorn Mountains on June 19, 1990 and this marathon culminated at the Opening Ceremonies in the Edmonton Butterdome on July 1, 1990. This Sacred Run represents the strong link amongst all aboriginal people and included the participation of the Blood, Cree, Peigan, Blackfoot, Sioux, Sarcee, Hobbema, Metis, Mohawk and many other First Nations. Notable runners included Billy Mills (Sioux Nation), 10,000 metre gold medallist in the 1964 Olympics and Alwyn Morris (Mohawk Nation), kayak gold medallist in the 1984 Olympics.

**NAIG Council:**

The number of athletes from the first Games have continued to grow. The Games in Edmonton attracted 3,000 athletes and this number swelled to 4,400 athletes in Prince Albert. The 1995 Games in Blaine co-ordinated 5,000 athletes in 17 sports: archery, badminton, baseball, basketball, boxing, canoeing, golf, lacrosse, rifle shooting, soccer, softball, swimming, tae kwon do, tennis, track and field, volleyball and wrestling.

The highly successful 1997 NAIG Games were co-ordinated by ASRA in Victoria, British Columbia. Close to 6,000 athletes from 27 Canadian and American teams competed in 16 sports. More than 2,000 cultural performers arrived in Victoria from all parts of the world to Celebrate the Circle – Share the Sport. Thousands of volunteers joined Aboriginal and First Nations peoples to create a legacy which is still alive and well – only 45 minutes from Duncan, Cowichan. This legacy is a huge resource which the 2008 NAIG CWC intends to utilize as a strong support structure, learning experience and checks and balances mechanisms.

The highly successful 2002 NAIG were held in Winnipeg and the 2005 Games are being planned for Colorado, USA.

The NAIG are governed by a Council consisting of thirteen mandated representatives from Canada and thirteen representatives from the U.S.A. The NAIG Council is responsible for the philosophy, objectives and rules of the Games. The Council develops policies and procedures to guide the preparation and staging of the Games, and ensures that the Games play an important role in Aboriginal sport development. The Council is also responsible for determining, through a bid process, the site of future North American Indigenous Games.

**NAIG Mission Statement:**

*To improve the quality of life for Indigenous peoples by supporting self-determined sports and cultural activities which encourage equal access to participation in the social/cultural fabric of the community they reside in and which respects Indigenous distinctiveness.*