

## ***Six Nation's Sing to be in Kahnawake***

By Teiowí:sonte (Thomas Deer)

On Saturday November 23, 2003, the Seneca Nation at Allegheny hosted the bi-annual Six Nation's Sing. This traditional event is a type of gathering for the various singing societies of the Haudenosaunee to gather and share their renditions of the *Konnón:kwe Aotinónnia* (the Woman's Dance) and also serves as an occasion for the societies to report on activities they had performed within their communities since the last Sing. The Kahnawake Singing Society was well represented in Allegheny and endured a long 11hour bus ride there and back.

The itinerary of a Sing has three parts, beginning with each singing group performing five verses of the Woman's Dance, which lasts all day until dinner. The communities who traveled the farthest distance have the pleasure of singing first, while the local society finish off the afternoon. At this time also, it is encouraged for each society to learn verses from other communities so that at the next Sing, such verses would be incorporated into another society's set of verses. In order to do so, many bring their tape recorders and record the entire Sing.

Once all the societies finish singing and the people begin to feast, delegates from each society are then asked to convene in council and report on the activities they have carried out in their communities. Speakers also share and remind the societies of their duties and responsibilities within their nation and community. Haudenosaunee Singing Societies, also known as Mutual Aid Societies, carry out important duties and responsibilities in their community. From piling wood for the elderly to cleaning up the Long House, these societies provide a service to people in need. The societies also act as study groups for dedicated students of *Kanohsonni'kéha*, and gather to learn language, speeches, and of course; traditional songs and dance.

It is near the close of this meeting whereby it is decided in which community the next Sing will take place. This year, after a request made by a delegate of the Kahnawake Singing Society, it was unanimously decided in the meeting that Kahnawake would host the next Sing around April of next year. This was certainly a cause to rejoice, as it is quite an honor to host the Six Nation's Sing; a pleasure Kahnawake has only experienced twice in the history of this event. The fact that this decision was made without protest, only demonstrates the increasing momentum of unity that continues to grow amongst the younger generation of Haudenosaunee.

While the meeting takes place and when the people are finished eating, a traditional social commences in the early evening. This part of the Sing had seen hundreds of Haudenosaunee in attendance, who shared together laughter, happiness, and peace in both song and dance. When the delegates closed the council, a message was dispatched to those in the social, where a young Seneca speaker, in a proud tone of voice, announced that the next Sing would be in Kahnawake. The people reacted to the message in joy and continued to sing and dance until almost midnight.

The Kahnawake Singing Society now must prepare themselves for almost five months of hard work in order to prepare for a gathering that could potentially see an attendance of hundreds. Considerations of lodging, parking, and funding will soon occupy the time of these singers and other volunteers, but it is a small price to pay to bring about unity and friendship back into the hearts of the Haudenosaunee.

The Kahnawake Singing Society would also like to mention that this recent trip to Allegheny, which took a lot of effort and fundraising, went problem free and its singers acted with respect and dignity. With that, the Kahnawake Singing Society would now like to take this opportunity to thank all who contributed and helped make the trip to Allegany possible, among them:

- Robertson Distributing
- Kahnawake Youth Center
- Carla Hemlock
- Turtle Shell
- Mohawk Bingo
- Kanien'kehá:ka Onkwawén:na Raotitióhkwa
- The Men of the Longhouse
- And the many other volunteers and donations

Again, a big niá:wen to all of you and hope to see you at the Sing in April.