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Nanaimo, BC

TOURISM VANCOUVER ISLAND EMBRACES PARTNERSHIP WITH COWICHAN 2008 NORTH AMERICAN INDIGENOUS GAMES SOCIETY

For immediate release: Tourism Vancouver Island is pleased to be working in partnership with the Cowichan 2008 North American Indigenous Games Society to assist in the successful implementation of the North American Indigenous Games (NAIG) in the Cowichan Valley on Vancouver Island from August 3-10, 2008. This event may just be the largest sporting and cultural event to be held in the Vancouver Island region, with opening ceremonies expected to draw 20,000 people. Indigenous people from across North America will travel to the Cowichan Valley to participate in this international celebration of youth, sport and culture.

In the scope of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the two organizations, Tourism Vancouver Island has agreed to assist by developing destination stories to increase awareness of the region, recognize and acknowledge sponsor and volunteer involvement, and liaise with on-site media. Tourism Vancouver Island will also be involved with a General Awareness Committee and Media Relations Committee throughout the planning process. Tourism Vancouver Island will also act as the first point of contact for tour receptors and tour operators as well as travel media for travel planning, story ideas, images, and more.

“Major events in British Columbia are significantly raising the profile of the Province and we at Tourism Vancouver Island will ensure that we leverage that awareness to increase visitation and tourism revenues to the Vancouver Island region.” says Dave Petryk, President and CEO of Tourism Vancouver Island. “We are delighted to have entered into this MOU with the North American Indigenous Games Society and look forward to working with them to ensure that this event leaves a long-lasting legacy in the Cowichan Valley and Vancouver Island.”

“In August, the Cowichan Valley will play host to one of the largest gatherings of Indigenous peoples in North America,” says Rick Brant, CEO of the Cowichan 2008 North American Indigenous Games Society. “The Games are expected to bring thousands of visitors to the Island and that will have a tremendous impact on the Island economy, specifically the tourism industry. Our partnership with Tourism Vancouver Island will ensure that the tourism industry is positioned to take full advantage of the benefits an event of this magnitude has to offer.”

This exciting sport and cultural event expects to welcome 9,000 participants, 5,000 spectators, and untold numbers of tourists, and bring in an estimated \$30 million to the local and provincial economy. The 16 sporting events include 3-D Archery, Athletics, Badminton, Baseball, Basketball, Boxing, Canoeing, Golf,

Lacrosse, Rifle Shooting, Soccer, Softball, Swimming, Taekwondo, Volleyball and Wrestling. In addition to the games, activities scheduled prior to the opening ceremonies include Tribal Journeys, Senior Team Competitions, an Education Symposium, and a Coast Salish Welcome. This will be the seventh NAIG since the first games held in Edmonton in 1990. For more information, please visit www.cowichan2008.com

Mountains, old-growth forests, salty ocean air, fresh lakes and rivers – you will find it all in the Cowichan Valley. Considered one of the best and most beautiful places in Canada to live, the Cowichan Valley has much to offer visitors besides the breathtaking views: kayaking, hiking, seaside dining, live theatre, organic markets, artists' studios and galleries. For those travelling to Cowichan for the Games, this will be more than just an international multi-sport games – it will be the experience of a lifetime.

Tourism Vancouver Island is one of six regional destination marketing organizations in British Columbia that administers co-operative marketing and advertising projects for its stakeholders throughout the region. To access information about Tourism Vancouver Island and marketing initiatives, please visit www.tourismvi.ca. For general travel information on Vancouver Island, Victoria and the Gulf Islands, please visit www.vancouverisland.travel.

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Tourism accounts for more than 117,900 direct jobs in British Columbia, representing approximately one in every 20 jobs in the province. BC's tourism industry generated approximately \$9.8 billion in revenues in 2005 and over \$5.8 billion in GDP in 2004, making tourism one of the largest resource industries in the province. (source: cotabc.com)

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