

Oneidas show off community's progress

by Jonathan Drayna
News-Chronicle Staff Writer

With determination in his dark eyes, the strong Indian man flung the tomahawk, sinking it deep into a small chunk of wood 30 feet away.

A group of white men standing nearby, looked on with wonderment. They were impressed.

But on a fall day in 1985, the Oneida Indians of Wisconsin were not trying to demonstrate their prowess to white pioneers, but to Green Bay's top business executives.

And it was a sunny new clinic, a unique and highly competitive school, and enviable commercial enterprises — not tomahawk throwing — which really impressed the group.

Tuesday was tour day on the Wisconsin Oneida reservation, as some 80 executives were shown the dreams-come-true community, a community which many admitted they didn't bother to think about previously.

The reservation has an \$87 million annual economic impact on the community, Oneida Industrial park developer John E. Powell told the group, and the Oneidas are on the move.

Part of their progress, they say, comes from traditional values of community. The tribe is a government which, instead of levying taxes, pays its own way through operating businesses. It draws revenues from diverse sources, some common to many municipalities, and some normally reserved for the private sector.

For example, the Oneidas operate a convenience store/gas station, as well as an industrial park. They are developing a hotel as well as running a school.

The tribe's annual budget has grown from \$364,000 in 1972 to \$29 million in the fiscal year just ended. Tribal employment went from 50 people then to 500 now.

Despite all the good news, tribal leaders acknowledged the tribe still faces many problems. Unemployment is 28 percent. Much to the leaders' chagrin, the tribe is dependent on the federal government for many programs and revenues.

The goal of tribal development is to increase the standard of living for Oneidas, and to become completely independent financially, Powell said. The new hotel should bring unemployment down to 20 percent by next summer, he said.

The Oneidas took their guests around the reservation, showing their accomplishments, including:

- The 30,000 square-foot Irene Moore Activities Center, which draws bingo fans from three states.
- A \$10.5 million hotel, affiliated with the Rodeway Inn chain, which is designed to cater to business travelers and conventioners.
- The K-8 Norbert Hill Center School, a primary institution the Oneida language where students win state and national recognition for academic accomplishments.
- A nursing home, apartments for the elderly and a meal program. The meal program and the nursing home are open to Indians, and about half the meal recipients are from outside Oneida community.
- A museum which is the world's greatest exhibit of Oneida culture and artifacts.
- Several housing projects, with some duplexes and some individual homes, some owned and some leased.
- A library which brings the power of the state interlibrary loan system to the Oneida community.
- A 32-acre industrial park, fully developed.

New ideas proposed for arts center site

by Ronald Poppenhagen
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And then there were four.

What once seemed like a cut-and-dried choice Tuesday became four alternatives, three of them new ideas, for creation of a performing arts center in Green Bay.

And, Center Arts Inc., the group working for a performing arts center, created a new subcommittee to look at the new alternatives.

As reported in *The News-Chronicle* Tuesday, the Center Arts Board is now looking at alternatives which would not use the Vic Theater as the main hall in a performing arts center.

The alternatives were proposed by board members Beverly French and Kelly Colton. Their proposals came after the board formally received the recommendation of its consultant, Daniel Pierotti, a recommendation

still among the possibilities being considered.

The four alternatives include:

► Using the Vic for a main hall seating about 1,000 people, with an addition to the west of the Vic including a smaller theater for about 230 people, offices and support facilities. That's the plan recommended by Pierotti.

► Building an entirely new performing arts center, with both large and small halls, plus the offices and support facilities, on land on the east bank of the Fox River, between Cherry and Walnut streets. The land is currently a city parking lot.

► Building the same all-new building on the site proposed by Pierotti, first demolishing the Vic.

► Building a new structure on either the river bank site or immediately west of the Vic — in either case using the Vic for a portion of the

needed space — perhaps as the smaller theater and some office or rehearsal space.

All of the new alternatives are designed to meet the main objection to the Pierotti plan — that the main hall of the Vic, at 1,000 seats, is too small for the performances of the Green Bay Symphony and the Brown County Civic Music Association.

The new plans would provide main hall seating for 1,500 — the number of seats in the West High School auditorium, which both groups routinely sell out.

The Center Arts Board appointed a four-member committee — French, Colton, Paul Abramson and Jim Schleiter — to consider the four alternatives further eventually seeking architectural proposals to give the Center Arts Board a cost estimate.

French, in making her proposals, said the group should seek to hold the

cost within the \$8.5 million estimate made by Pierotti for rehabilitating the Vic as a main hall and adding to it. If architects' estimates come in higher than that figure, the Center Arts Board can consider whether it is willing to trim back the facility to meet that limit, she said.

In agreeing to look at alternatives with a larger main hall, the Center Arts Board was bowing to pressure from supporters of the Symphony and Civic Music Association.

Max Frost, designated as spokesman for Center Arts, said building a performing arts center that wouldn't accommodate the two groups would be like building a shopping center without an anchor store.

But, Frost acknowledged the board had been advised by community leaders that it would be difficult to raise the funding for a center that did not

provide space sufficient to meet capacity needs of the symphony association.

In his written and oral reports to Center Arts Board, consultant Pierotti cautioned that adding more seats would raise the price tag — and just for the additional seating space.

He noted that building codes specify the number of aisles and lobby stairs based on capacity.

Pierotti's cost estimates include:

- \$7.9 million for remodeling Vic as the main hall, with an addition to the west.
- \$10.1 million for a new facility with a main hall seating 1,050.
- \$8.8 million for using the Vic, increasing capacity to 1,200 by cutting openings in the west wall and adding upper level side terrace seats.
- \$12.4 million for a new building with a main hall capacity of 2,000.

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