

NORTH AMERICAN
**INDIGENOUS
GAMES 2017**
TORONTO • ONTARIO



**2017 JEUX
AUTOCHTONES**
DE L'AMÉRIQUE DU NORD
TORONTO • ONTARIO

TORONTO 2017 NORTH AMERICAN INDIGENOUS GAMES REVEALS OFFICIAL MASCOT

Debwe, a turtle, will help to engage and inspire.

Toronto, ON - April 13, 2017 — Toronto 2017 NAIG Host Society introduced *Debwe* (pronounced: DEB-way), a turtle, as the official mascot for the Toronto 2017 North American Indigenous Games scheduled for July 16-23, 2017.

The turtle is an important symbol in Indigenous culture as it was present during the creation of the Earth and is believed to carry the teachings of life on its back. The turtle also represents *truth*, one of the seven grandfather teachings that many Indigenous communities coast-to-coast share, in one form or another. *Debwe*, is an Anishinaabe word, meaning “One who speaks the Truth.” *Debwe* will carry forward the legacy of campaign #Team88, which recognizes Call to Action #88 from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, aimed at promoting reconciliation through the inspirational power of sport.

Debwe's design came to life from a series of renderings, and features an upright turtle sporting a lacrosse hook and the Toronto 2017 NAIG logo on its T-shirt. The red cap is adorned with #88, a reminder that it is the responsibility of every Canadian to engage and actively participate in reconciliation.

The design of 14-year-old Anton, of Deer Lake, Ontario was selected from more than 200 submissions that came in from Indigenous youth across Canada. The Toronto 2017 NAIG team travelled to Deer Lake First Nation in February, where Anton was unofficially announced as the contest winner at a school assembly. Anton and his classmates linked into the official mascot unveiling Thursday via Skype. As the winner of the contest, Anton and his family have been invited to attend the Opening Ceremony of the Games.

The Toronto 2017 NAIG mascot design contest ran from December 6, 2016 to January 20, 2017. Youth ages 6-19 were asked to submit designs reflective of Indigenous culture many of which included other animals such as the fox, eagle, chipmunk and beaver.

The NAIG Cultural Advisory Committee narrowed submissions down to 10 finalists before the winning turtle design was chosen.

Hosted by the Aboriginal Education Centre, the official mascot unveiling took place Thursday morning at the Urban Indigenous Education Centre in Toronto.

Emceed by Toronto 2017 NAIG premier media partner CBC, the mascot unveiling event included speakers Chief Stacey LaForme of the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation, Toronto 2017 NAIG CEO Marcia Trudeau-Bomberry, the Hon. David Zimmer, Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, and a live hoop dance performance by a youth group under the direction of VIBE arts organization.

This unveiling represents a significant milestone along the journey to hosting the Toronto 2017 North American Indigenous Games.

Quotes

"I chose a turtle because it is one of the seven grandfather teachings, and the turtle represents 'truth.' The turtle has been here from the creation of the earth, and carries the teaching of life on his back."

-Anton, age 14 - Toronto 2017 North American Indigenous Games mascot design contest winner.

"Debwe the official mascot of the Toronto 2017 North American Indigenous Games represents the essence of these Games, which is truth, acknowledgement and reconciliation. Through our traditional teachings, Indigenous communities from across North America can celebrate a rich history and unique cultural heritage in an international spotlight. The upcoming Games provide a platform to celebrate Indigenous achievement in sport and culture, while inspiring a generation to come in this age of reconciliation."

-Marcia Trudeau-Bomberry, CEO, Toronto 2017 North American Indigenous Games Host Society.

"No relationship is more important to our government than the one with Indigenous peoples. I'm thrilled that Debwe's name delivers such an important and meaningful message, highlighting a priority for our government every time it is used. The North American Indigenous Games play an important role in reconciliation, as sport is a powerful vehicle to support the health and well-being of Indigenous youth, and to strengthen Indigenous identity and cultural pride."

-The Honourable Carla Qualtrough, Minister of Sport and Persons with Disabilities

Toronto NAIG Quick Facts

- From July 16-23, 2017, the Toronto 2017 North American Indigenous Games (Toronto 2017 NAIG) are expected to be the largest sporting and cultural gathering of Indigenous Peoples in North America. The Toronto 2017 NAIG will host more than 5,000 participants, and thousands of spectators for 14 sport competitions being held within world-class venues located across the Greater Toronto Area, including the Region of Hamilton and Six Nations of the Grand River. The 14 core sports of the Toronto 2017 NAIG include: 3-D Archery; Athletics; Badminton; Baseball; Basketball; Canoe/Kayak; Golf; Lacrosse; Rifle Shooting; Soccer; Softball; Swimming; Wrestling; Volleyball.
- Equally important, Toronto 2017 NAIG will host two week-long cultural festivals open to the public, showcasing a variety of Indigenous artists, traditional learning, vendors, food, cultural performances and nightly entertainment.
- Participating teams represent all 13 provinces and territories of Canada, as well as up to 13 regions from the United States; more than 5,000 athletes are expected to participate.
- More than 2,100 volunteers have already signed up to be involved with 2017 NAIG through www.naig2017.to/en/getinvolved.
- The Government of Canada and the Government of Ontario, have each committed \$3.5 million dollars to help fund the 2017 Games, in recognition of the NAIG as an important agent in promoting Indigenous sport development and recreation in Canada.
- The Aboriginal Sport and Wellness Council of Ontario (ASWCO), in collaboration with the City of Toronto and Government of Ontario, won the bid to host 2017 NAIG. As the sole

rights holder, ASWCO created Toronto 2017 NAIG Host Society, a separate corporation to manage and operate the Games.

- Net proceeds from 2017 NAIG will be directed to a Legacy Fund, aimed at providing increased sport, health and wellness programming, services and equipment to Indigenous youth across the Province of Ontario.
- The Opening Ceremony of Toronto 2017 NAIG will take place on July 16 at Aviva Centre, home to Rogers Cup.

Acknowledgement

Toronto 2017 NAIG Host Society honours the traditional lands and homelands on which the 2017 North American Indigenous Games will take place. We honour and thank the Huron-Wendat Nation, Metis Nation of Ontario, Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation, Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation and Six Nations of the Grand River as our community partners and traditional inhabitants of the lands of the City of Toronto, Region of Hamilton, Durham Region and surrounding areas.

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