

Report of the Local Arrangements Cluster to 2009 National Gathering of DUCC

The Local Arrangements cluster began its work in October of 2007 with a meeting to check in with each other and to begin looking at possible dates and locations for the 2009 National Gathering. For this meeting and a couple others, we intentionally met at the office of Hamilton Conference with the sole purpose of raising our profile in the area.

Over the course of the 1 ½ years since then, we met numerous times to consider the various facets of being the Local Arrangements cluster: location of gathering, airport/ground transportation issues, food, environmental concerns, registration, costs and bookkeeping issues and overall communication with the other clusters.

A major challenge in the local arrangements work revolved around the location of the gathering. The last National gathering in St. Albert, Alberta had noted that this would be the 25th Anniversary of the creation of DUCC, which was conceived at Five Oaks, so it would be appropriate to have the gathering there. The other option was to have the event at Crieff Hills Retreat Centre (the location of the 2003 National Gathering) because it is more central to the Hamilton and Toronto airports. Also, the initial cost quoted to us from Crieff was substantially less expensive than the one from Five Oaks. However, through the diligence of one of our cluster, a cost closer to the Crieff quote was negotiated with Five Oaks and presto, the decision was made. A second challenge was the date ... we had preferred to host from April 21-24, to stay away from the week after Easter, however neither site was available that week.

I would say the highlights of all our meetings were the laughter and sense of support that was present. I think it's safe to say that although this cluster has been a great deal of work, it's been good to have a purpose to bring us together on a more regular basis than what would normally be the case.