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## Shooting for gold

VANOC's community relations director discusses sustainable procurement

BY [MICHAEL POWER](#) ON JUNE 10, 2011 3:23PM[Email](#) | [Print](#) | [Text Size](#)

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**WHISTLER:** Maureen Douglas knows how to make the best of a situation. Known as "Mo" Douglas, she was the Vancouver 2010 Organizing Committee (VANOC) director of community relations for eight years. During her keynote speech June 10, Douglas addressed delegates at PMACs 86<sup>th</sup>-annual national conference.

The games boasted a \$1.88-billion budget for the 27-day event. During her presentation, Douglas discussed how the committee worked to get the best value from each dollar spent on the games

We decided to create a culture of doing good with our money, she said. Our goal really was to maximize every opportunity from these games.

Everything VANOC did to prepare for the games happened through the lens of sustainability, Douglas said. The team worked to influence buyers and train their employees to embrace a culture of sustainability. We used our supply need to get out there and start changing mindsets, she said.

VANOC decided to source locally whenever possible, Douglas said. The committee enlisted local print shops, catering companies and other services. Doing so helped keep transportation costs down while aiding the local community, Douglas said.

Every project was an exercise in sustainability and giving back to the community, she said. For example, temporary housing for the games has since become housing for local residents. Another initiative involved asking suppliers what they were doing for the community and environment, a decision Douglas said helped change the mindset of many organizations the committee worked with. Suppliers would tell her the committees insistence on asking those questions forced them to re-think about how they did business, realizing there were many opportunities to help the environment and young people.

Aboriginal organizations held hiring workshops that resulted in thousands of young people being introduced to potential employers. Those fairs continued after the games, Douglas noted.

"Every day we challenged our extended team to make this all better, and we had the opportunity and we didn't let a day go to waste," she said.

The committee kept its eyes on longer legacies from the games, such as economic opportunities for native groups, she said. VANOC offered two sole-source contracts for a large construction project that allowed a native company to build trails used for the games. As well, another native group developed a construction company that built a day lodge.

The committee also received a proposal for lost and found services for the games from an inner-city organization which managed and received more than 5,000 items (such as gloves and other clothing items) during the games. Items not claimed were turned over to the organization and put to use for those in need of them.

"We asked ourselves, how far down the chain can we keep this good going; there was incredible momentum," Douglas said.

When the games were in need of thousands of items such as ski racks, lane markers and podiums, the committee partnered with Rona to enlist young people from inner-city Vancouver to be trained to make those items. Overall, 64 young people worked for the games in that capacity.

Douglas concluded by challenging delegates to try to influence their organizations and suppliers to look at different ways of doing business.

"You have the opportunity to go for gold and be an Olympic-calibre performer," she told the audience. "Be the champion for sustainable purchasing within your organization and you will make a bigger difference out there than you ever thought possible."

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