



## **Indian Gaming 2010: The National Indian Gaming Association Celebrates Its 25th Anniversary**

by Ernest L. Stevens, Jr.

This year marks the 25th Anniversary of the creation of the National Indian Gaming Association. From April 6-9 in San Diego, we will be celebrating Indian gaming's success and discussing the challenges ahead. Over the past 25 years NIGA has built upon our mission to protect and defend tribal sovereignty. Our dedication to this precious tribal right has helped tribes throughout the country pursue economic self-sufficiency through gaming.

The National Indian Gaming Association works with the federal government and Congress as an advocate on behalf of tribes engaged in gaming. NIGA has been at the forefront of engaging policymakers on Indian gaming issues and framing Indian economic policy. As Chairman, I am proud to carry on the hard work of past leaders in establishing NIGA as a legislative and public policy resource for tribal issues on Capitol Hill. With the help and leadership of our member tribes, NIGA has helped pass legislation that has enabled tribes to pursue economic opportunities previously closed to them. Many tribal governments are now able to meet their vital economic and social needs on the reservation while helping to spur economic activity in the surrounding non-Indian communities.

Our tradeshow brings together over \$25 billion worth of purchasing power under one roof and we will have over 300 vendors and exhibitors from all aspects of the gaming and hospitality industry. You can expect our tradeshow floor to be more exciting than ever with our annual Harley Davidson Motorcycle raffles throughout the week and the performance of our Native American artists and entertainers.

We will also hold our annual 2010 Wendell Chino Humanitarian Award Banquet on April 8. This year, NIGA is proud to honor Governor Bill Anatoubby from the Chickasaw Nation in Oklahoma. The Wendell Chino award recognizes individuals that have given their lives to the benefit of their tribal communities and Indian Country as a whole. The award is named in honor of the late Wendell Chino, a former Mescalero Apache Tribal Chairman who dedicated four decades of his life to helping Indian Country. As our recipient this year, we believe Governor Anatoubby embodies the best qualities of the Wendell Chino Award.

Since 1987, Anotubby has served as Governor of the Chickasaw Nation. Through 45 years of public service, his leadership has empowered the Chickasaw Nation to economic self-sufficiency. When he took office in 1987, the tribe had 250 employees and an operating budget of \$11 million. Today the Chickasaw Nation has more than 15,000

employees and an operating budget of \$350 million. His success and dedication to his people is truly deserving of national recognition.

The Indian Gaming 2010 agenda also includes our training and certification programs that target every aspect of the Indian gaming business from regulation to hospitality. Tribal leaders, tribal gaming commissioners, and tribal gaming employees, can attend over 215 hours of gaming related training and networking sessions taught by over 100 experts from the gaming industry. Our tradeshow attendees will gain valuable training that can help improve personal job performance, strengthen gaming regulation, and improve tribal gaming commissions. Some of the exclusive trainings featured are:

- *Casino Department Roundtables* - An ever-increasing favorite among NIGA attendees. These facilitated discussions provide ample opportunity to network with colleagues from other Indian casinos, sharing ideas and trends specific to Indian gaming.
- *The Showcase of Successful Gaming Programs* - Highlighting successful projects and programs at Indian casinos around the country. This unique opportunity gives NIGA members a chance to share successes so those programs may be replicated in other Indian casinos.
- *The Executive Leadership Series* - Trainings designed for tribal leaders to gain "know-how" to effectively handle federal legislative issues ranging from labor issues to healthcare reform and working with Congress.
- *Partnerships with government agencies* - A generalized training about everything from the 2010 Census to Homeland Security certifications in threat detections to "going green" and everything in between.
- *Continuing NIGA Certifications* - including the 12th Annual Commissioner Certification Series - Level 1.

While we have plenty of hard work to accomplish during the week, there is ample time to enjoy what Southern California has to offer. The tradeshow will feature some of the most dynamic and exciting golf found in the country. This year, NIGA is proud to feature two of the region's premier - and tribally owned - golf courses. The Sycuan Band of Kumeyaay Indians and owners of the award winning Sycuan Resort Golf Courses, will generously sponsor the Chairman's Tournament

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at Willow Glen and the Vice-Chairman's Tournament at Oak Glen.

The Sovereignty Tournament, sponsored by the Barona Band of Mission Indians, will be held at the Barona Creek Golf Club, named as one of the top five courses you can play in California by *Golfweek* magazine. All proceeds earned from the Sovereignty Tournament will support scholarships for the Spirit of Sovereignty Foundation, a non-profit organization with a mission to increase higher education by providing financial assistance to Native American students.

In 25 years, NIGA has grown as an organization and our tradeshow is now one of the top gaming shows in the country. The Indian gaming community continues to lead the industry in innovation and technological advancements. With over 3,000 attendees this year, NIGA's tradeshow will again be a prime networking platform for tribal governments and a place to enjoy great entertainment and exciting giveaways over four days.

Of course, Indian Gaming 2010 would not be complete without the great entertainment. As we work through our agenda, from the Chairman's reception to the closing at our cultural event, attendees can expect entertainment guaranteed to make your San Diego trip a great experience.

Thank you for 25 years of support and come join us as NIGA celebrates our 25th anniversary at the Indian Gaming 2010 Tradeshow and Convention. I hope to see you there. ♣

*Ernest L. Stevens, Jr. is Chairman of the National Indian Gaming Association (NIGA). He can be reached by calling (202) 546-7711 or visit [www.indiangaming.org](http://www.indiangaming.org).*



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