



**NATIONAL  
INDIAN  
GAMING  
ASSOCIATION**

Rebuilding  
Communities  
Through Indian  
Self-Reliance

# Media Release

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Media Only: Liz Hill (202) 744-7629**

**“Indian Gaming ‘08” Information: [www.indiangaming.org](http://www.indiangaming.org)**

### **ADAPTIVE CHANGE KEY TO FUTURE, OLYMPIC STAR TELLS TRIBES**

Olympic gold medal winner Billy Mills keynotes NIGA leadership luncheon

**SAN DIEGO, Calif., April 21**—Olympic legend and Lakota Indian Billy Mills told tribal delegates and gaming industry leaders at the annual meeting of the National Indian Gaming Association (NIGA) today in San Diego that “intelligent programs of adaptive change” are the keys to success for future generations of Native Americans.

Mills, 70, was the featured speaker at NIGA’s leadership luncheon, which is held annually to recognize Indian individuals and groups that have made important contributions to Indian country through their leadership. He told an audience of more than 900 tribal gaming industry leaders that adapting to change is one of the keys to success for future Indian generations.

“As the world has changed around us, we have learned to adapt and to recognize that we have the power within ourselves to choose success,” said Mills. He pointed to positive changes in several areas, including tribal political engagement, Indian entrepreneurship, and especially education.

“Education has the power to heal our broken wings,” said Mills, noting that his own Olympic career was made possible because of his athletic success at the University of Kansas, where he graduated with a degree in physical education. “It is education that gives us the power to heal our broken wings, to move past self-pity to realize our dreams. Education teaches us about our shared humanity, which is also the Olympic theme--global unity through diversity.”

In introducing Mills, NIGA Chairman Ernie Stevens, Jr. described the Olympic athlete as “a true hero, not just to Indian people but to all Americans.” Mills won the gold medal in the ten-thousand-meter run at the Tokyo Olympics in 1964, a feat no other American has ever duplicated. Later he was inducted into the U.S. Olympic Hall of Fame and the U.S. Track and Field Hall of Fame.

Tribes and individuals honored at the luncheon included:

- Jim Warne, Oglala Sioux, former NFL player and director of the Center for American Indian Rehabilitation at San Diego State University, for his work with Native youth through the Warrior Society Development program;
- The Gila River Indian Community for its support of “Jam on the Rez,” one of the special social events of the NIGA’s annual meeting and trade show;
- Eight tribes and companies that provided major support for the NIGA Christmas Drive. They were the Sycuan Band of the Kumeyaay Nation; the Viejas Band of Kumeyaay Indians; the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians; the Table Mountain Rancheria Band; the

Mohegan Tribe of Connecticut; the Seminole Tribe of Florida; International Game Technology (IGT); and Rocket Games and Video Gaming.

IGT also was recognized for its three-year commitment of \$1.2 million to NIGA for activities to support and protect tribal sovereignty.

The NIGA 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting and Trade Show continues through Wednesday at the San Diego Convention Center. More than 5,000 tribal leaders, gaming industry vendors and guests are attending this year's NIGA meeting, convention and trade show, which is showcasing more than 500 vendors and exhibitors representing all aspects of the gaming and hospitality industries.

###

The National Indian Gaming Association is a non-profit trade association comprised of 184 American Indian Nations and other non-voting associate members. The common commitment and purpose of NIGA is to advance the lives of Indian people – economically, socially and politically. NIGA operates as a clearinghouse and educational, legislative and public policy resource for tribes, policymakers and the public on Indian gaming issues and tribal community development.