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Communities  
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# Media Release

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME RECEPTION KICKS OFF INDIAN GAMING '09



NIGA Chairman Ernest Stevens, Jr. presents a Navajo rug to Richard Tall Bear, son of the Late Floyd Westerman who was honored at the NIGA Chairman's Welcome Reception

**PHOENIX, AZ. APRIL 14, 2009** – The Indian Gaming '09 Trade show and Convention kicked off with a bang at the Chairman's Welcome Reception on April 13, as guests were treated to rollicking performances from Native American entertainers and received a warm welcome by National Indian Gaming Association (NIGA) Chairman Ernest L. Stevens. About 250 guests attended the reception that was held at the Hyatt Regency in Downtown Phoenix.

"I am very proud of the progress Indian country has made," Chairman Stevens told the crowd. "I just want to say thank you to the tribal leaders and all of you for helping to give back to Indian country in spite of the current condition of our economy".

United States Congressman Patrick Kennedy, (D-RI) and Joe Garcia, the President of the National Congress of American Indians spent some on the microphone expressing their appreciation for Indian country and thanking Chairman Stevens for his work with NIGA.

Several presentations were also made throughout the evening. Chairman Stevens, on behalf of NIGA, presented a Native American rug to Richard Tall Bear in honor of his father, the late actor and activist Floyd Westerman. NIGA also presented a check in the amount of \$5,000.00 to the Native American Community Service Center, an organization providing aid to Native Americans living in urban areas. However, the big honor of the night belonged to the NIGA's Spirit of Sovereignty foundation as the NIGA Associate membership presented a check in the amount of \$54,560.00.

Contemporary Native American music artist Keith Secola and NCAI President Joe Garcia began the entertainment segment of the evening with a musical and video tribute to the Late Floyd Westerman.

The night ended with an energetic and moving performance from Canadian country music artist, Crystal Shawanda, a First Nations member of the Ojibwa tribe. Shawanda, signed with RCA Records, moved through a string of hits, including her chart-topping single, "You Can Let Go" and "My Roots are Showing". The crowd was enthralled with Shawanda and packed the dance floor to groove along with her set.

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**About the National Indian Gaming Association (NIGA)** - The National Indian Gaming Association is a nonprofit trade association comprised of 184 American Indian Nations and other nonvoting associate member. The mission 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 resources for tribes, policymakers and the public on Indian gaming issues and tribal community development. For more information, visit [www.indiangaming.org](http://www.indiangaming.org).