

## California Tribes Gather for 24th Annual Western Indian Gaming Conference

More than 400 tribal leaders, regulators, industry professionals and policy experts, gathered at the 24th annual Western Indian Gaming Conference at Harrah's Resort Southern California for a series of speeches, workshops, and state-of-the-art tradeshow.

The WIGC and trade show has proven to be one of the most informative conferences in Indian Country and features the annual State of the Tribal Nations speech during the conference's general session.

This year, the State of the Tribal Nations Address was divided up and delivered by CNIGA Chairman Steve Stallings, who reported on the state of the Indian gaming industry in California, CNIGA Vice Chairman James Siva, who reported on tribal charitable and community outreach efforts throughout the state, as well reports on the state of CNIGA and public policy.

Chairman Stallings began by listing several large-scale projects throughout California, including new projects and expansions of existing facilities, while extolling the major economic benefits for the State of California.

Citing figures from the California Employment Development Department, Stallings said 64,000 Californians are under the direct employ of tribal governments, representing an increase of 2.9% over last year and that "it is estimated that more than 250,000 are now employed, either directly or indirectly, because of Indian gaming."

In terms of major issues facing the industry, Stallings called for tribes to come together to help craft sports wagering policy in California in the wake of the U.S. Supreme Court's



Steve Stallings

decision to overturn a previous prohibition against the practice. He also advised to not rush in considering ways to authorize sports wagering in California.

"Caution should be taken and all aspects of implementing sports wagering, including development of a regulatory framework that includes enforcement, must be thoroughly developed before California considers legalizing another form of gaming," said Stallings.

Stallings also called for more effective enforcement from the state against a small group of card rooms that have been flagrantly violating the law, including running house-banked and percentage card games at their establishments.

"It is in our best interest, and the interest of the state, that the gaming industry, both commercial and governmental be fair and well regulated. Tribes are proud of our regulatory track record and hope cardrooms will be held to the same standard."

Vice Chairman James Siva also addressed the general session citing a long list of tribal charitable actions, focusing on the extensive measures tribes have taken in the wake of increasingly devastating wildfires that have ravaged California in recent years, and mentioning the many tribal fire departments that are involved in fighting fires off reservation.

"Whether it be an every-day call or the unimaginable firestorm, tribal fire departments answer the bell," said Siva, who went on to say: "Tribes throughout California sent their tribal fire departments to Santa Rosa, Redding and Paradise, all of whom saw devastating firestorms in their area."

In addition to the general session, which focused on the current political environment, attendees participated in various seminars and workshops focusing on tribal governmental issues, casino operations and security, regulation, finance, and a series that, with state bar approval, counts toward the 25 hours of minimum continuing legal education requirements (MCLE) that the State of California requires of attorneys to complete every three years.

The WIGC also honors both tribal and industry leaders with a special awards luncheon held every year at the conference with the Anna Sandoval Leadership Award and Pauline Murillo Industry Leader Award, named for noted



L-R: Raymond Sandoval, Sycuan Tribal Member; Brenda Soulliere, Councilmember Cabazon Band of Mission Indians, Chairwoman Emeritus-CNIGA (accepting the Anna Sandoval Leadership Award); Brianna Sandoval, Councilwoman Sycuan Band of the Kumeyaay Nation; and Daniel Salgado, Chairman Cahuilla Band of Indians & Secretary of CNIGA.

California tribal figures well-known for their work in asserting tribal sovereign rights and improving the lives of their respective tribes.

This year's recipient of the Anna Sandoval Leadership Award was Cabazon Band of Mission Indians tribal member Brenda Soulliere, who played a big role in asserting tribal sovereignty and self-determination in California and has been an important figure since the dawn of the industry.

Charles "Chief" Boyd, a member of the Cherokee Nation, was similarly honored with the Pauline Murillo Industry Leader Award. Boyd has had a lengthy career as an architect in Indian Country that has established him as one of the premier American Indian architects. Over the last 55 years, Chief has spearheaded projects with 116 tribes and first nations to build a better future in Indian Country. ♣

For more information about the California Nations Indian Gaming Association (CNIGA), visit [www.cniga.com](http://www.cniga.com). A transcript of the State of the Tribal Nations address can be obtained at [cniga.com/press-releases](http://cniga.com/press-releases).



L-R: Linda J. Roe, Vice President Client Development, TBE Architects; Chief Boyd, CEO & Principal of TBE Architects (honored with the Pauline Murillo Industry Leader Award); and Nick Schoenfeldt, Vice President and Principal of TBE Architects.

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