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# Media Release

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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

### **SOBOBA BAND OF LUISEÑO INDIANS CHAIRMAN ROBERT SALGADO RECEIVES WENDELL CHINO HUMANITARIAN AWARD**

**SAN DIEGO, Calif., April 22** – Robert Salgado, Chairman of the Soboba Band of Luiseño Indians was honored with the National Indian Association’s (NIGA) Wendell Chino Humanitarian Award, the National Indian Gaming Association’s most prestigious award.

The award ceremony, which took place on the second day of “Indian Gaming ‘08” – NIGA’s 17<sup>th</sup> annual meeting and trade show -- was preceded by the swearing in of Kevin Leecy, Chairman of the Bois Forte Band of Chippewa Indians in northern Minnesota, as NIGA vice chairman. J.R. Mathews, Vice Chair of the Quapaw Nation of Oklahoma, was sworn in as NIGA treasurer. The swearing-in ceremony was conducted by Gerald L. Hill, former special counsel to the council of the Oneida Nation of Wisconsin and current President of the Indigenous Language Institute. This will be Leecy’s second term as vice chairman and Mathews’ first as treasurer.

“These two men are modern-day warriors and one day they will go down in history,” said Stevens. The swearing-in ceremony was followed by an honor song by Chief Frank King.

The evening’s master of ceremonies was actor Adam Beach and co-host actor Irene Bedard. California Attorney General Jerry Brown delivered the evening’s keynote address. “I’m very glad to be part of this and to follow in footsteps of the person to be honored this evening,” said Brown.

Wendell Chino, who served 43 years as Chairman of the Mescalero Apache Tribe in New Mexico, is remembered for his leadership and humanitarianism. Chino’s son Mark, former Mescalero tribal president, presented the award to Salgado. Chino paid tribute to his father, stating that in November it will be 10 years ago that he passed away.

“I ask that in November, on that day, wherever you are, that you remember my father and the things he did: the fight that he started on behalf of all of us as Indian people,” said Chino. “I would urge you to continue the battle in his memory, so that our rights and our sovereignty are protected for the generations. Without that fight, this battle is going to go on and on and on. All the things we enjoy as Indian people can never be taken for granted.”

The award ceremony was marked with a film that chronicled Salgado’s life and included tributes from U.S. Rep. Joe Baca (D-Calif.); U.S. Rep. Mary Bono, (R-Calif.); sister Rose Salgado; Rosemary Murillo, Vice Chair of the Soboba Band of Luiseño Indians; Pechanga Band of Luiseño Indians Chairman Mark Macarro; among others.

“I’d like to thank the creator; without him we are nobody, but with him we can do all things,” said Salgado. He reminisced about growing up on his reservation in a two-room house. “That’s why

we as tribal chairmen have to fight for our people -- so they don't have to suffer any more. There are still a lot of tribes out there without water. Kids still have to walk to school."

"We come from a bloodline of champions because we're the only group of people to trace our bloodlines back to this earth right here in Southern California -- and in America," said Salgado, who also included a moving tribute to Native women.

"We are a better group of people who are very proud to be who we are," said Salgado.

"Don't look down on people unless you are going to pick them up," said Salgado.

"Our youth are out there today, and we need to get programs to help them," said Salgado.

"They are our future leaders, our future teachers, our future chairmen."

The award ceremony was followed by a performance by the popular musical group, Earth, Wind and Fire.

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The National Indian Gaming Association is a non-profit trade association comprised of 184 American Indian Nations and other non-voting associate members. 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 resource for tribes, policymakers and the public on Indian gaming issues and tribal community development.