



## *HTM Tribal Gaming Program Receives Chairman's Leadership Award from NIGA*

In November 2008, NIGA Chairman Ernie Stevens, Jr. came to San Diego State University to present an award to the Sycuan Institute on Tribal Gaming (SITG). The presentation of the National Indian Gaming Association's Chairman's Leadership Award was made to HTM Associate Professor and Sycuan Chair Kate Spilde Contreras during class time in HTM 371, Tribal Casino Operations. After the award presentation, Chairman Stevens stayed to give a guest lecture in the class, which covered all aspects of the tribal government gaming industry. Tribal gaming students were able to meet Chairman Stevens and learn about the Indian gaming industry from one of its chief executives and most passionate advocates.

Chairman Stevens provided a historical overview of tribal gaming and updated students on the latest gaming activities on Capitol Hill, including labor and regulatory issues. He also stressed the value of incorporating a formal education with a connection to contemporary political issues. "This program is being honored because it is the first to link the hospitality side of tribal gaming with the research and policy. Tribal governments work in many environments, ranging from the hospitality world to Wall Street to the halls of Congress. We need well-rounded individuals who are comfortable in all these worlds."

Everyone involved was excited about the Chairman's visit. "I'm honored to receive the NIGA Chairman's Leadership Award on behalf of the Sycuan Institute on Tribal Gaming," said Kate Spilde Contreras. "NIGA is the national voice for Indian gaming and a powerful advocate for tribal gaming rights in Washington, D.C. As NIGA's former Director of Research, I am



**CHAIRMAN STEVENS PRESENTING NIGA CHAIRMAN'S LEADERSHIP AWARD TO PROFESSOR CONTRERAS**

especially excited about strengthening the Institute's national focus on gaming policy while working closely with tribal gaming representatives here in San Diego to develop our research and policy agenda."

Tribal gaming students were also inspired. Tribal gaming major Kevin Chow reflected, "It makes a big difference to hear about tribal gaming from those who live it every day. Meeting someone like Chairman Stevens reminds me of the larger purpose of Indian gaming and inspires me to work harder preparing for my career in tribal gaming."

Contreras points out that all aspects of the tribal gaming program incorporate a "real world" component that incorporates site visits to tribal gaming facilities and industry conferences as well as meetings with tribal leadership and gaming executives. "While we can prepare students for the technical parts of the hospitality---and gaming---industry, it is critical that our students also have opportunities to apply the lessons they learn in class. There are so many opportunities in tribal gaming and our program is tailored to help each student find their best fit, whether on the tribal or the gaming side."

For more information about the National Indian Gaming Association, see [www.indiangaming.org](http://www.indiangaming.org).

**CHAIRMAN STEVENS WITH SDSU TRIBAL GAMING STUDENTS**

