

**Statement of Tracie L. Stevens,  
Nominee for Chairman of  
the National Indian Gaming Commission  
Before the  
U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs  
May 26, 2010**

Thank you, Chairman Dorgan and Members of the Committee. I am honored to appear before you today as President Obama's nominee to be the Chairman of the National Indian Gaming Commission. With me today are my husband Kyle, to whom I have been happily married for 16 years, and our beautiful 11 year old daughter, Cierra, who has been a constant source of joy for both of us. It is their never-ending support and sacrifices that have made it possible for me to be here today.

I would also like to recognize members of my own tribal leadership from Tulalip who are here today: Business Committee Chairman Glen Gobin and Quil Ceda Village Manager and Washington State 38<sup>th</sup> District House Representative John McCoy. These leaders and so many others back home, like Chairman Cladoosby, provided constant encouragement without which I might not be here. So I thank them for their continued support today.

I am member of the Tulalip Tribes in Washington State, whose reservation is located approximately 35 miles north of Seattle, Washington. The Tulalips are the people of the salmon and successors in interest to the Snohomish, Snoqualmie, Skykomish and other allied tribes and bands signatory to the 1855 Treaty of Point Elliott. My family is Snohomish. My great-grandmother was Sara Charlie-Sheldon, my grandmother is Katie Gates, who is going strong at a mere 97 years old, and my mother is Vi who instilled in me a very strong work ethic. I am proud to say that I come from a long line of strong, independent women who committed their lives to serving their families and their communities, and I am

grateful to them all for their teachings that have led me here to stand before you today.

I am the youngest of four children. I was born in Los Angeles, California, shortly after my father left the military. Eventually, my mother, my three siblings and I returned to Tulalip. I attended public school at and near Tulalip in early childhood and then later, we moved to areas where employment opportunities for my mother were more plentiful. In 1985, I graduated from high school in Yakima, Washington. I was the first member of my immediate family to graduate from high school.

Shortly thereafter, I returned to the Tulalip area where I attended community college but as for many young people, the need for an income prevented me from pursuing full-time studies. After years of attending college part-time, often at night and while working, I graduated from the University of Washington with a Bachelor of Arts in Social Sciences. I was the first member of my immediate family to graduate from college.

In 1995, I began working in the Human Resources department at my tribe's gaming facility. In that position, I recruited and hired hundreds of employees not only for the Casino but for the tribal government as well. My responsibilities expanded later to include assisting the 900+ managers and employees with human resource and personnel matters like employee training and development, counseling and guidance, and disciplinary actions.

I transferred to the Operations side of the Casino to work for the Director of Casino Operations on management and personnel issues, budgeting, regulatory and operational compliance. Eventually I became the Executive Director of Strategic Planning where I worked for the Chief Operations Officer and was delegated to work with various department directors on overall regulatory and operational compliance, budgeting, and current and new facility improvement planning.

In 2002, I transferred to the Tribal Government to work in the office of Governmental Affairs where I acted as an intergovernmental liaison, ensuring that

the positions of the Tribe regarding local, state and federal policy reached the appropriate legislative and regulatory officials and bodies. I advanced to Senior Legislative Policy Analyst where I was responsible for the Governmental Affairs department personnel, budget and practices. As part of my work in this department, I headed the tribe's initiative to rewrite our gaming ordinance. In this capacity, I directed policy as the legal staff rewrote the tribe's gaming ordinance line by line. This effort included working with our gaming operators and regulators as well as using the NIGC's ordinance checklist to ensure that we produced a comprehensive ordinance that protected and safeguarded the operation thoroughly and complied with all applicable requirements.

I also represented my tribe in a 28 tribe compact amendment negotiation with the State of Washington. I worked with my council to develop policy direction and asserted those positions in the negotiation. I also directed legal staff to ensure that the final compact language represented the tribe's interest. Part of this negotiation included writing Class III internal control standards in collaboration with State and tribal regulators, testing labs, manufacturers, other small and large tribal operators and their attorneys. This was no small task. It took 2 years from start to finish: from the first tribal discussion among all Washington tribes to final Interior approval.

Another aspect of my work on behalf of Tulalip was serving on the various regional and national tribal organizations. I served on board of the Washington Indian Gaming Association, was the Northwest delegate to the National Indian Gaming Association and served as the Chair of the Gaming Subcommittee for the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians. These experiences with various organizations allowed me to establish working relationships with tribes across the country, helping me to understand the larger impact of policies upon tribes outside my own. But more importantly, serving on these organizations furthered my experience in working with tribes with varying and often differing cultures, traditions, priorities, and positions. It helped to bolster my skills in consensus building and bridging differences.

My experience working in one of the three largest tribal gaming operations in the Northwest, as well as for a tribal government, has afforded me the opportunity to learn where and how policy intersects with real-time practice. The work I did for my tribe required me to become knowledgeable of the application of the full range of Federal, State, and tribal laws and regulations that apply to Indian gaming and Indian tribes in general. Further, as a result of my experience working with large stakeholder groups, I have developed skills at working collaboratively to find the best solution even where there are competing interests.

In addition to having worked since 1995 as a professional at various levels of Indian gaming operations, working at the intersection of the regulatory world, as I have just described, I would tell you that there is no better preparation for a grueling position in which an individual is caught between competing interests than standing before of the Tulalip council. I have on occasion been required to justify my opinions before the Council with careful reasons and strong arguments. The Tulalip council can be a tough audience, but they have and continue to praise me for walking in both worlds, for which I am grateful.

Walking in both worlds is a phrase that is used in Indian country to refer to the ability to work not only in the tribal context but to function as well in the broader, non-Indian world. I think this phrase could also be used in a different way that is relevant to the position for which I am nominated, to describe an ability to cross the divide between gaming operations and broader policy. I think that this ability has served me well. Most recently I have served as an advisor to the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs at the Department of the Interior. If confirmed, I will bring all these experiences and skills to the position of Chairman.

Working at my tribe's gaming facility and also for my tribal government and at the Department of the Interior has reinforced my commitment to safeguarding Indian gaming. Tribes as primary regulators are doing a good job and if confirmed, I look forward to working with them. And while I have a history and background in working with tribes and I bring with me my tribe's tradition of collaboration first, let me be clear: I commit to upholding the statutory authority

and responsibilities of this position to oversee the regulation of Indian Gaming and where appropriate, to take enforcement action. If confirmed, I will work to ensure that Tribes achieve and maintain compliance with all applicable statutes and regulations under the NIGC's authority. Indian gaming has provided a much-needed economic boost whether in the form of revenue for services to communities or jobs; it has made a difference. And that is why thorough and consistent regulation at all levels of this industry is so vitally important. If confirmed, I commit to you, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, I will work to make that happen.

It is truly an honor and privilege to be considered for this position. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to testify before you today. I will be happy to respond to your questions.