

**Statement of Brian Cladoosby,  
Chairman of the  
Swinomish Indian Tribal Community  
Before the  
U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs  
May 26, 2010**

**Good Morning Chairman Dorgan and Members of the Committee. My traditional name is Speepots, I am Brian Cladoosby, Chairman of the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community. It is my honor to appear before you today to introduce Mrs. Tracie Stevens as President Obama's nominee to be the Chair of the National Indian Gaming Commission. On behalf of Swinomish and my fellow Washington Tribes we extend our deepest support for Ms. Stevens, a respected tribal member who has committed her career to the good of Indian Country and the United States of America. We give thanks to her husband Kyle and daughter Cierra, for their love and support which is evident throughout her accomplishments as a mother, wife and leader.**

**Let me share a little bit about myself. I have served my people as Chairman for 14 years and have been on our Senate for 26 years. I am also privileged to represent my colleagues from Washington tribes for the past 10 years as President of the Association of Washington Tribes and represent the 57 Pacific Northwest Tribes in seven western states including Alaska as President of the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians. In my short career I have been an Executive Board member of the Washington Indian Gaming Association as well as a member of the US Environmental Protection Agency's National Environmental Caucus. We have some fantastic tribal leaders in Washington State and in the Pacific Northwest, and I am honored to work with all of them.**

**I have had the pleasure of knowing Ms. Stevens most of my career as Chairman and I hold her in high esteem as a colleague. She is an accomplished native woman who follows the footsteps of many strong tribal leaders from her family and community. In her lifetime there have been challenges that are not uncommon to most Indian people, which she has overcome. Today she represents the paradigm of a healthy and successful native woman in Indian Country. We are so fortunate to have a person of her will and commitment who will embrace the responsibility as Chair of the National Indian Gaming Commission.**

**Throughout her career, Ms. Stevens' many accomplishments have benefited tribes in the Northwest and throughout the Nation.**

**Ms. Stevens' reputation in governmental affairs is well known and respected by Washington State and our Tribes. The 12 years of experience at the various levels of gaming law, policy and management in Tulalip has provided her the expertise to fulfill the Chair's responsibilities. My personal experience working with Ms. Stevens was during the time when The Tulalip Tribes were negotiating multi-party tribal-state compact amendments. As the lead for Tulalip, she was responsible for not only the oversight and management of the development of the policy, but the legislative challenges and the overall protection of tribal interests of all 28 compact Tribes. During this period of time working with the tribes, state and federal legislation, she earned the reputation and respect as a tough negotiator in critical situations. Ms. Stevens was successful in the pursuit to make a change in policy that would be acceptable to all governing bodies and gained the standing of being trusted by all parties.**

**Like many of you in leadership positions, our success is often a reflection of who we depend upon as colleagues, staff, advisors and friends. My successor once told me to surround myself by people you can trust and who support you. For governmental affairs and gaming issues, this person was Ms. Stevens. I relied on her guidance when I was Chair of the Washington Indian Gaming Association, when she was the Northwest delegate to the National Indian Gaming Association and when she served as the Chair of the Gaming**

**Subcommittee for the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians. In her role as committee chair, she was responsible for providing the capacity for tribes to address policy and legislative actions, networking and communication, and reporting on key local, regional and national issues on Gaming.**

**This variety of positions enhanced Ms. Stevens' knowledge on various governmental relationships, agency responsibilities, federal agreements and most importantly, NIGC. Ms. Stevens' skills will enhance the NIGC's ability to make decisions that will reflect the stakeholder's governmental responsibilities and provide a cohesive approach in delicate situations.**

**We respect the Chair of the National Indian Gaming Commission as one of utmost importance. The responsibility of the Chair position will need to not only protect Indian gaming, but will also need to ensure gaming regulations are thorough and consistent at all levels of the industry. We view the Chair to be of a strong character and have a sound reputation to ensure that our futures are best represented at all times. We cannot afford for a mistake to occur, as it could be devastating for most Tribes.**

**For Swinomish, gaming has always been a means to an end, rather than an end in itself. Swinomish observes gaming as the sole source in partnership with federal funding that supports our governmental services; it is equivalent to your views of taxation. The goal of the Swinomish tribal government is to provide the best governmental services it can to its membership. Gaming provides desperately needed funds to support tribal activities and has been the answer to many prayers for what this community of over 800 members living on a 10,000 acre reservation could be. Prior to the advent of gaming, Swinomish leaders struggled to provide social services and supported the Tribe through Federal government grants and contracts and a variety of economic endeavors and commercial leases. Funds were limited and the needs were great then, as they continue to be now. The Swinomish story is heard throughout Indian Country and all tribal leaders share a vision for greater things for our people and work tirelessly to make a better life for our elders, children and grandchildren. I share this with you so you may understand the true meaning of what gaming**

**means not only to our community but to all tribal communities, and how important the role of the NIGC Chairman is to the sustainability of our governments.**

**With this in mind, let me say this in support of Ms. Stevens. She carries the bloodline of strong and independent Tulalip women who have provided leadership in their lifetimes. I have no doubt in my mind that Ms. Stevens has the integrity, wisdom and autonomy to make strong decisions that respect the responsibilities of the Commission. Her experience and accomplishments in Indian Country are vast and widely known by our governing bodies in the United States. If confirmed, she will be vigorous in her duties as Chairman of the National Indian Gaming Commission and her actions will ensure that all stakeholders are treated in an equitable manner.**

**Once again I thank you for giving me this opportunity to introduce to you Ms. Tracie Stevens. And may the Creator of all bless you and your families.**