



*Via Email*

February 12, 2021

Dear Tribal Leader:

We hope this letter finds you well. We are writing to share exciting news and provide updates on the recent activities across the National Indian Gaming Commission (NIGC). The activities are outlined in our newly created NIGC Commission Update. The Update will be a way for the NIGC to provide information in a periodic publication on matters important to Tribal Leaders and Tribal gaming facilities.

This edition of the Update features information on the following items:

- Jeannie Hovland appointment as Associate Commissioner
- Agency Continues to Grow COVID-19 Response and Resources
- Commission Seeks Second Round of Comments on Draft Fingerprint MOU
- Tribal Leader Briefing on NIGC Operations to Take Place in March 2021
- NIGC Reviewing Consultation and Nation-to-Nation Relations
- Agency Bulletin on Human Trafficking and Collection of Resources Published
- Bulletin Underscores the Importance of Tribal Regulatory Functions and Independence

We recognize the profound impact the COVID pandemic has had on tribal communities as well as the tribal gaming industry. The Commission and the Agency's dedicated staff remain steadfast in working with you in seeking resources, guidance, and innovative solutions while carrying on our mission to protect the Indian gaming industries reputation for integrity.

**MAILING ADDRESS: NIGC/DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR** 1849 C Street NW, Mail Stop #1621 Washington, DC 20040 Tel: 202.632.7003 Fax: 202.632.7066

**REGIONAL OFFICES** Portland, OR; Sacramento, CA; Phoenix, AZ; St. Paul, MN; Tulsa, OK; Oklahoma City, OK; Rapid City, SD  
[WWW.NIGC.GOV](http://WWW.NIGC.GOV)

For additional information about upcoming events and/or recent Commission activity, you may visit the NIGC website at [www.NIGC.gov](http://www.NIGC.gov).

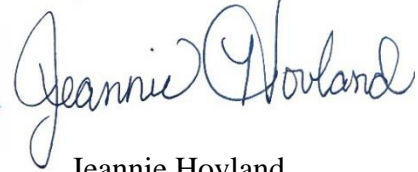
Kindest Regards,



E. Sequoyah Simermeyer  
Chairman



Kathryn Isom-Clause  
Vice Chair



Jeannie Hovland  
Commissioner

**MAILING ADDRESS: NIGC/DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR** 1849 C Street NW, Mail Stop #1621 Washington, DC 20040 Tel: 202.632.7003 Fax: 202.632.7066

**REGIONAL OFFICES** Portland, OR; Sacramento, CA; Phoenix, AZ; St. Paul, MN; Tulsa, OK; Oklahoma City, OK; Rapid City, SD  
[WWW.NIGC.GOV](http://WWW.NIGC.GOV)



## National Indian Gaming Commission Updates

### **NIGC Welcomes Commissioner Jeannie Hovland**

Following her appointment by the Secretary of the Interior, Commissioner Jeannie Hovland began at the National Indian Gaming Commission on January 17, 2021. Commissioner Hovland joins the Agency with policy, management, and legislative expertise at the federal level. She is an enrolled member of the Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe and is Oglala Lakota. She most recently served in leadership positions at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Her experience includes advisory positions on federal Indian policy at the HHS, the Department of the Interior, and the United States Senate. NIGC is grateful to have Commissioner Hovland aboard and we are now a full commission of three. Commissioner Hovland's biography is available at <https://www.nigc.gov/public-affairs/biographies>.

### **NIGC Continues to Grow Outreach Opportunities to Promote COVID Response Resources**

Considerations around event gatherings remains an important consideration for gaming regulatory bodies. In mid-December 2020, the Commission provided a briefing for Tribal leaders on resources available to assist tribe's in meeting their responsibilities for gaming operations' public health and safety. This included an overview of key resources and tools available at <https://www.nigc.gov/commission>.

The NIGC is committed to providing Tribal gaming facilities the most recent COVID-19 updates and resources available. The NIGC recently added additional information to highlight important NIGC resources around the topic of event gatherings for Indian Gaming operations. This information includes updated guidance from the Centers for Disease Control around event gatherings and considerations for the requirements maintained by Tribal gaming regulatory bodies. The updated event gathering resources can also be found on the NIGC COVID-19 Resources page. In addition, the NIGC Region Office Directors within the Agency's Compliance Division may provide assistance, and you or your staff may request a recorded copy of the December 2020 Commission Briefing for Tribal leaders on the NIGC's COVID Resources.

A commitment to communication has been an important part of the NIGC response to the COVID-19 pandemic along with collaboration and monitoring. Communication efforts have included an NIGC Informational Sessions Series, the regularly updated NIGC website's COVID Resources, and direct communications to tribal leaders and stakeholders.<sup>1</sup> The Commission

---

<sup>1</sup> An NIGC Informational Sessions Series was designed to discuss the timely topics identified by invited guests representing national and regional organizations. Efficient and transparent communications maintained and collected on the NIGC website's COVID Resources section includes Dear Tribal Leader Letters, FAQs, and relevant NIGC operations memoranda to staff. A dedicated NIGC email account provides a rapid response to any inquiries from Tribal officials or Indian gaming operators. Ongoing coordination with the NIGC's eight Region Offices provides local level coordination with the regulatory community and supports tribally-led decision making efforts.

continually identifies new means to maintain its commitment to communication around the important subjects related to the Indian gaming industry's response to the COVID pandemic.

The NIGC wants to support your tribe's efforts to inform the public and operations staff about the mitigation measures associated with ensuring the protection of public health and safety amid the pandemic. To complement your tribe's efforts in this area, the CDC has made available a variety of print and communication resources that can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/communication>. Signage can be used to promote awareness around event gathering considerations, emergency closure and reopening procedures, masking and social distance protocols. Additional guidance for signage and how to communicate safety protocols to employees and customers can be found in the NIGC's Model COVID-19 Infectious Disease Preparedness and Response Plan which can also be found on the NIGC's website. If you or your team are interested in obtaining material or to discuss how the NIGC can support your outreach and communication efforts by your operations or gaming regulatory body, please contact Ms. Mary Parker at [Mary.Parker@NIGC.gov](mailto:Mary.Parker@NIGC.gov).

### **Additional Opportunity for Input on NIGC Fingerprint Program MOU**

The Commission is providing Tribal leaders with an update on its efforts to improve the NIGC Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Tribes for participation in the NIGC fingerprint program. The update will be shared in a Dear Tribal Leader Letter sent during the week of February 15, 2021. The update will explain how the NIGC incorporated tribal feedback on an earlier draft MOU during the end of 2020. Much of the feedback improved the document's clarity. The update will also include information about a new opportunity to provide a final round of feedback before the MOU is finalized in the spring 2021. The MOU's improvements are driven by the Federal Bureau of Investigation's requirements particularly in the area of information security for all users of the National Crime Information Center database.

### **Tribal Leader Briefing on Agency's Quarterly Operations is Set for Mid-March**

A telephonic briefing for tribal leaders will be held the week of March 15, 2021. The briefing will focus on the NIGC's last quarter of operations and is part of the NIGC's commitment to promote accountability in NIGC operations by encouraging greater tribal involvement in the Agency's planning processes. Updates on the NIGC operations have been an especially timely topic given the uncertainty in operational needs and resources that exist because of the COVID pandemic's impact on the Indian gaming industry. Through modifications to promote operational efficiency and public health and safety measures, the NIGC continues to take proactive planning steps related to its operations. These planning steps ensure that all NIGC operations continue without interruption and establish roles for tribal involvement in shaping the NIGC budget development process. Additional information to register for the briefing will be sent to Tribal leaders in a Dear Tribal Leader Letter in the coming days.

---

## **NIGC Welcomes Executive Memorandum on the Importance of Tribal Consultation and Strengthening Nation-to-Nation Relationships**

President Biden's January 26, 2021, Executive Memorandum underscores the value of strong intergovernmental relationship including meaningful consultation with Tribes. The President's memorandum can be found at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/01/26/memorandum-on-tribal-consultation-and-strengthening-nation-to-nation-relationships/>. As an independent Agency, the NIGC is committed to supporting and respecting the Nation-to-Nation relationships and the benefit of consultation to improving the industry's integrity. The NIGC is beginning an internal review of its consultation practices and efforts to strengthen our Nation-to-Nation relationship with tribal governments. This review will look to identify opportunities to improve the NIGC's agency practices as a way to support strong tribal governments. Outreach to tribal governments for their involvement will be part of this review process. This outreach will strive to account for the demands on tribal governments' time and resources. The existing NIGC policy on Tribal consultation can be found at <https://www.nigc.gov/images/uploads/ConsultationPolicy071813.pdf>. The Commission welcomes any initial considerations by Tribal leaders as the Agency develops a review process.

## **Commission Publishes First-Ever Bulletin on Human Trafficking and Highlights Resources**

During the month of February 2021 the NIGC will publish the first-ever agency bulletin on the topic of Human Trafficking. In addition, a dedicated portion of the NIGC website will feature and highlight resources to assist gaming operations and regulatory bodies' efforts to combat human trafficking. In a recent statement on the topic of human trafficking, the Commission noted the important role operations and regulatory bodies can and have played to combat the human cost from human trafficking that impacts tribal communities and neighboring jurisdictions. These efforts are in addition to the Commission's work over the last several years to bring awareness and education to issues surrounding Human Trafficking. Some of the NIGC's initiatives include partnering with the FBI and BIA to present Human Tracking awareness training at our Regional Training Conferences and hosting events with other organizations such as the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children and Truckers Against Trafficking. The Commission looks forward to continuing to highlight the Indian gaming industry's unique and important contributions in this area.

## **Commission Publishes Bulletin Underscoring the Independence of Tribal Gaming Regulatory Bodies and Their Functions.**

During the month of February 2021, the NIGC will publish a bulletin on the topic of Tribal gaming regulatory authorities roles and independence. Tribal regulatory bodies are an important part of the NIGC's government-to-government relationship and essential for a comprehensive regulatory framework to protect both the integrity of gaming and the interests of a tribal government. The Indian Gaming Regulatory Act outlines the specific governmental regulatory responsibilities necessary to game under the law. Very often, Tribal gaming commissions are an appropriate type of governmental agency to implement these regulatory responsibilities. While each tribe's approach to satisfying these requirements will be specific to each tribal government,

specific measures to ensure independence have been an important consideration for a healthy regulatory framework. During the COVID pandemic the commitment by tribal governments' decision makers has underscored the value and unique role of a healthy tribal regulatory framework.