

FMYN President Receives Top Honors at NIGA

In an evening filled with joy, tears and pride, President Dr. Clinton Pattea received the Wendell Chino Humanitarian Award from the National Indian Gaming Association for his lifetime of service to Indian Country and to the Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation on April 15.

NIGA Chairman Ernie Stevens, Jr. (Oneida) called Pattea a "great man and a dignified warrior." During a video presentation, NIGA honored Pattea as a leader who "has brought about a new era of hope and prosperity for all his people."

Wendell Chino served 43 years as chairman of the Mescalero Apache Tribe in New Mexico and is remembered for his leadership and humanitarianism, as well as for being a staunch proponent of tribal sovereignty and self-governance. After his death, NIGA created the award that carries his name.

Pattea was characteristically low-key and humble as he accepted the award. "I got to know Wendell Chino personally over the past 50 years," he said; Chino was Pattea's Sunday school teacher and continued to be a mentor until his passing in 1998.

During his remarks, Pattea described



FMYN Vice President Bernadine Burnette [left] and NIGA Chairman Ernie Stevens Jr. [right] congratulate President Clinton Pattea for the Wendell Chino Humanitarian Award during the NIGA Conference on April 15

how Fort McDowell rose from a small impoverished community with no running water and dirt-floored homes to the strong community it is today. "I'm proud of the hard work of a group of individuals who transformed our community," he said. He thanked the tribal members he has served for 45 years who made the journey from poverty to

prosperity with him.

He once again recounted the memories of fighting against Orme Dam, and of the morning of May 12, 1002, when the FBI staged an armed raid on the Fort McDowell Casino during a dispute over gaming rights with the state of Arizona. "We used everything we had - cars, trucks, horses, wagons -

to block the way [of the trucks containing the slot machines]," he said.

Other tribal leaders from across the nation honored Pattea. Ivan Makil, former president of the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community as well as a recipient of the Wendell Chino award, said, "True leaders like him come along once in a long while." Makil remarked that he is very grateful to have Pattea in a leadership role. Other tribal leaders who honored Pattea included Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley, Jr., Tohono O'odham Nation Chairman Ned Norris and Citizen Potawatomi Chairman John "Rocky" Barrett.

Vice President Bernadine Burnette fought back tears as she said, "Clinton had a vision, a true vision, for his kids." She praised Pattea for his vision and leadership during the fight for sovereignty, prosperity and independence, and called him one of her teachers. "Those of us who are young will have to carry on that spirit," she said. "There're 900 tribal members who wanted to be here tonight, but they would have filled this hall up!"

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President Pattea Receives Wendell Chino Award



Proud family: President and Mrs. Pattea and their daughters pose at the NIGA Awards Banquet

