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# Native Wellness for the New Millennium: the Impact of Gaming

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*The challenges confronting Native people have been studied over the years. Their plight in dealing with alcoholism, colonization, poverty and health and mental health problems still exists outnumbering all other minority groups in the United States. For decades, Native people have relied upon the federal government to provide services, which were often not sensitive to Native values. During the last decade, gaming has given Native people have an avenue to enter higher education, develop tribal enterprises, tribal courts and health and mental health programs that meet the needs of their communities. Most importantly, Native people have reclaimed their independence. Since gaming is new to tribal life there are drawbacks and limitations. Nevertheless, the benefits seem to outweigh the limitations. This article will focus on how Native gaming has contributed to restoring balance and wellness in Native communities.*

Over the centuries, Native people have maintained wellness in their communities though a lifestyle of balance. This balance branched over many areas of living such as food, housing, clothing, recreation, celebration, medicine and family support. Food gathering through hunting, farming and fishing, making clothing and household necessities through weaving and sewing, and trading with other Native communities for goods, aided in providing the staples of life. Health was maintained though herbal and spiritual healing. Family support was maintained through ceremony, extended family and honoring the place each person held in the community to maintain balance.

Colonization upset this critical balance through its mission of genocide, boarding schools and the removal of people from their homelands. Federal policies for the 1800's that deemed tribes as

"wards of the state" stripped tribes of their land and resources. When tribal sovereignty was achieved, tribes received no resources to increase the quality of wellness in their communities.

"The tragic irony for American Indians was that when they had resources, they were to be controlled, and when they no longer had those resources they were left on their own. Either way represented a loss for the Indian people. This pattern is now being challenged with the advent of gaming and casinos on American Indian reservations" (Gerdes, Napoli, Pattea and Segal, 1998, p. 21).

This paper will explore how Native gaming is beginning to change the life of those tribes by offering the opportunity to restore culture and language through education, health, employment and the rise of political power. There are differing opinions regarding the benefits of gaming among tribal nations. Many feel that gaming is moving Native people away from traditions and is a detriment to Native lifestyle. Some of the drawbacks of gaming such as gambling addiction, crime, and emphasis on money and materialistic living have been expressed. For these and other reasons, tribes such as the Navajo nation have decided against gaming, feeling that the disadvantages outweigh the advantages. Although gaming has its drawbacks, this paper will focus on how gaming has enhanced the quality of life and wellness for Native people as we move into the new millennium.

### Native Gaming

"In 1987, the Supreme Courts confirmed that Indian tribes had the authority to operate gaming establishments on their trust lands without having to comply with state laws and regulations. To resolve outstanding issues between tribes and states and to provide oversight, Congress passed the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act of 1988." (<http://www.access.gpo.gov>, p. 4).

Native gaming is active in twenty-eight states across America sustaining a \$9.6 billion industry that is growing three times faster than non-Indian gaming (Useem, 2000). Of the 556 federally recognized tribes, 361 have no gambling operations and of the 195 that do, 23 percent account for 56 percent of revenues,

(Useem, 2000) and 10 percent of gaming tribes are losing money (Paige, 1997). The Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (INGRA) of 1988 designated that revenues from tribal gaming were to be used to (1) fund tribal government operations or programs (2) provide for the general welfare of the Indian tribe and its members, (3) promote tribal economic development (4) donate to charitable organizations or (5) help fund operations of local government agencies (<http://www.access.gpo.gov> p. 19).

In spite of Native sovereignty, the states negotiate compacts with each gaming tribe for a "cut of the action." Some feel that tribes are "paying their dues" by kicking back profits to the state. The growth of casinos has been curtailed since government officials carefully monitor them. There is continuing tension between tribes and governors who want more authority and larger cuts of casino profits, yet tribes are protective of their sovereignty. Conflict continues in the upper echelon of government for gaming tribes to pay federal taxes. Tribes pay no federal taxes on income made on tribal land, no state income taxes on income earned on the reservation, no sales taxes on transactions on the reservation and no local property taxes on Indian trust on reservation lands (Paige, 1997).

### Problems Related to Gaming

Many opinions have evolved about the advantages and disadvantages of Native gaming. For example, many feel that Native people are getting rich at the expense of mainstream communities and are spending their portion of gaming revenues on alcohol and drugs. On the other hand, many feel that gaming is the route to economic security which can open the door to independence and Native sovereignty.

*Addiction.* Although the major impact of gaming has been beneficial for Native people it has also brought its problems. Gambling addiction seems to be the biggest problem associated with tribal gaming. Many of the larger gaming tribes have set up counseling services and hotlines to deal with the problem. In addition, tribes have sought to counter problems such as crime and family stresses associated with gambling by downplaying large payoffs,

prohibiting the sale and use of alcohol, prohibiting the use of check or credit cards, prohibiting the development of tabs (credit) for regular customers, and educating persons against gambling addiction (Jorgensen, 1998). Although efforts are being made to curtail gambling addiction, the fact remains that addictions, particularly alcohol, have controlled Native people for decades. This issue needs to be dealt with seriously to prevent exacerbating the problem.

*Crime.* Corruption on gaming reservations does exist as in any other enterprise where money is plentiful. Native people are not free from this temptation, particularly since being poor has been a way of life. For example, the tribal chairman of the Kee-weenaw Bay tribe was imprisoned for taking kickbacks from a slot-making company. Old conflicts about land, sovereignty, money and power are rising not only between Native people and the dominant culture but also among tribes themselves (Paige, 1997). Gaming has posed problems not only for the tribes but also for the general public. For example, Las Vegas and Atlantic City have booming economies because the majority of their customers are out of state and don't deplete the state's economy. Native gaming attracts mostly customers in the nearby area and infringes upon the economy. "A 1990 Maryland report showed that the states' 50,000 compulsive gamblers were responsible for \$1.5 billion in declining work productivity, embezzlements, and other losses. Another researcher estimated that problem gamblers are responsible for \$1.3 billion worth of insurance-related fraud annually" (Klein, 1997 p. 3).

Crime continues to be a problem where money is plentiful, yet some tribes have reduced crime. For example, since the first full year of casino operation, the Ho-Chunk tribe of Wisconsin has had an increase in crime in all three of their casinos while the Mashantucket and Pequot tribes in Connecticut, the Oneida tribe in Wisconsin, the Sault Ste. Marie and Chippewa tribes in Minnesota have found a decrease in crime. (See table 1)

Prior to the opening of their casino, crime on the Winnebago reservation had reached epidemic proportions. With a population of 1200 people there were 1476 arrests prior to the casino opening in 1991 and 492 arrests in 1992 the year the casino opened.

Table 1  
 Visitor-Adjusted (1) Crime Rates in Counties Containing Tribal Casinos, Pre- and Post-Gaming

Tribe	Gaming County	Index Crime (2) reported per 100,000 Population in Gaming County									
		First Full Year of Cason Operation	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996		
Ho-Chunk	Jackson, WI	1993	3376	3875	3634	3615	3748	3177	3910		
	Sauck, WI	1993	2968	2863	3087	2848	3310	N/A (3)	3869		
	Wood, WI	1993	3180	3273	3044	3489	3104	2858	3214		
Mashantucket Pasquot	New London, CT	1992	4943	5194	3850	3734	3268	3495	3178		
Oneida	Brown, WI	1992	4008	4110	3731	3705	3715	3846	3716		
Sault Ste Marie Chippewa	Chippewa, MI	1992 (4)	3419	3025	3437	2949	2811	2176	2602		
	Mackinac, MI	1991	7467	5591	4655	4828	5650	5640	4242		
Standing Rock Sioux	Sioux, ND and Corson, SD	1994	N/A	N/A	2291	675	2415	392	174		

Notes:

- (1) Visitor adjustment is performed by adding the estimated number of daily casino visitors to the resident population of the county when calculating crimes per 100,000. For the Sault Ste. Marie Chippewa Tribe, Ho-Chunk Nation, and Standing Rock Sioux Tribe daily casino visitors are estimated using actual 1997 casino visitation data. For the other tribes, daily visitors are estimated based on the population within a 50 to 100 mile ring around the casino and the known propensity for individuals within that distance from the casino to patronize the casino.
  - (2) Index crimes are the sum of known offenses and arrests for murder, manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery, aggravated assault-burglary, larceny, and motor vehicle theft.
  - (3) Incomplete statistics reported in 1995.
  - (4) The Sault Ste. Marie Tribe has operated a casino in Chippewa County since 1985. Prior to 1991/92, when the casino went through a major expansion, the casino was very small.
- Source: Federal Bureau of Investigation, Information provided by Tribes.

"Interviews with law enforcement officials generally indicate that they feel that the increased employment generated by gaming enterprises reduced the incidence of crime. Moreover, The highly regulated atmosphere in Indian casinos appears actually to be a crime deterrent" (Cornell, et al, 1998, p. 73).

Although arrests were down 67 percent and the tribe built their own college in 1973, however, job opportunities did not keep pace with the academic attainment of the community.

Gaming has not been a part of Native lifestyle for long and it will take more years of experience to deal with the problems that have arisen. Many tribes have viewed gaming as a way out of poverty. Some tribes have made extraordinary profits, other tribes have lost money. Although Native gaming has its problems, this paper, nevertheless, hopes to highlight the benefits of gaming and how it has contributed to the enhancement of Native wellness.

### Reclaiming Wellness in Native Gaming Communities

Most of America's 1.7 million Indians, and especially those living on reservations are poor. Native people have a poverty rate 2 ½ times the national average. Since Native people have been and still are the poorest minority group in the country they have had to settle for inadequate housing, education and health services and little or no representation in developing government policies that affect Native people. Maintaining balance in their physical, mental and spiritual life has been a challenge when poverty controls one's life.

Gaming has often been called the "new buffalo." Historically, the buffalo provided food, clothing and shelter for the plains tribes meeting their needs for survival. Gaming in many ways has replaced the "buffalo" providing tribes an avenue to bring themselves out of poverty and provide for themselves with the hope that they will finally be free of federal paternalism. For many years, Native people have been dependent upon the federal government for services to meet health, mental health and housing needs. Non-Native professionals who have not taken tribal values and traditions into consideration have developed many of these services. Financial autonomy is one key to open the door for Native people to become self-sufficient. Tribes who have

self-governing pacts can assume responsibility for administering their own programs freeing them from dependency upon the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Yet, beyond money, Indian tribal leaders profess that gaming is developing a new attitude among Indian people, "rising pride and can-doism" (McAuliffe, 1996).

Gaming tribes devote a large proportion of their revenues to the advancement of their community. For example, "In 1998, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation contributed more than \$6,417,000 to enrich their community and their region (<http://www.umatilla.nsn.us>). Gaming tribes not only support their own communities, but also donate a significant amount of their revenues to outside charities many of which serve Native families. In 1998, millions of dollars were donated to fifty-four organizations from tribal gaming enterprises nationwide (Cornell, Kalt, Krepps & Taylor, 1998). McAuliffe (1996) believes that gaming has offered tribes a winning hand in creating economic development, a task that federal policy has failed to deliver for over a century. Gaming has brought hope of economic security, thereby increasing the quality of life for Native people.

### *Education and Gaming*

To maintain wellness in tribal communities, it is critical for Native people to restore the balance of having a healthy body, mind and spiritual life. Since most tribes have been living in poverty, it has been difficult to sustain wellness in reservation communities. Isolation and the need for basic survival and resistance to the "white man's ways," have kept Native people out of higher education for decades. Education is an important ingredient to bring the balance of healthy living back to Native communities. Historically, minority groups have moved out of poverty by obtaining an education. Gaming has given tribes the opportunity to enter higher education making them less dependent upon non-Native people.

Gaming revenues offer tribes the opportunity to hire Native professionals and educate tribal members to develop curriculum and to apply for state certification of tribal schools, placing them in competition with mainstream schools. In addition, gaming tribes have the means to travel to other states to explore existing tribal programs that they can model. Tribal schools can develop

educational programs that reflect their history, language, geography, philosophy, arts and traditions while preparing children for future leadership and development. Many tribal schools are developing across the country with the main goal of educating the young and restoring wellness through tribal traditions.

Several higher educational institutions have taken the plunge to develop programs that are sensitive to the enhancement of professional development and tribal traditions. For example, the mission of the Blackfeet Community College is to achieve a balance between educational advancement and cultural preservation. The Ojibwa Community College says in part that "the curriculum will reflect Ojibawa culture and tribal self-determination" (Ambler, 1997, p. 2-3). Gaming revenues have given the Spokane Natives a preschool for their children (Useem, 2000).

The Winnebago tribe of Iowa have used their gaming revenues to enhance the quality of education for their people. Prior to gaming this tribe had sought higher education, but the financial burden prevented the implementation of that vision. During the first years of the Winnebago casino's operation the tribal council provided \$120,000 to their primary and secondary schools. In 1995, 5 percent of all future casino profits were targeted for education programs for Winnebago children (Winnebago News, 1995 in Colton, 1999). In 1995, in honor of its last great war chief, Little Priest, the tribe established its own tribal college with an initial grant of \$1 million dollars and a \$500,000 annual operation fund (Tribal College Journal, 1998). Additionally, in 1997, the tribe began requiring education plans for each tribal employee without a college degree, with salary increases and promotions tied to the completion of educational goals. Since gaming funds became available, the American College Testing Program (ACT) scores at the Winnebago Public school increased.

The Mohegan Tribe of Connecticut provides complete funding for full time students in college, funding up to \$10,000 for continuing education students, vocational training, private education for all high school students and for younger students located in areas with substandard school systems, and a 'cohort' program in cooperation with the local community college to reintroduce continuing education students to school. The Ho-Chunk Nation of Wisconsin established an undergraduate and post-graduate

scholarship program. The Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians recently established a \$4 million fund for higher education that provide assistance to tribal members in paying for college costs. The Oneida Indian Tribe of Wisconsin has put gaming revenues into comprehensive educational facilities and services consistent with the goal of cultural preservation. Aside from the culturally symbolic elementary school, Oneida children are exposed to their traditional culture by requiring the teaching of the Oneida language through the eighth grade (Cornell, Kalt, Krepps & Taylor, 1998). The Choctaw tribe offers free college education, computers, and has also built their own tribal school. They have reclaimed their economic status as one of the most prosperous tribes. since their removal to Oklahoma in the 1830's. "We're just beginning to build things we needed a long time ago," says Chief Martin, 74 years old. (Useem, 2000).

The southern Yavapai of Arizona were removed from their homeland in Ft. Hills and moved north to the San Carlos Apache reservation for decades. During that time they lost thousands of people, having no provisions for food and warm clothing. Decades later they returned home and resumed their lifestyle of farming. It was a struggle to survive until the opening of their bingo hall and casino in 1993. Annual revenues have been put toward education for a day care center, pre-school and entry level grade school, tutoring programs and a computer for every home. All tribal educational programs teach the Yavapai language, history, songs, dances and traditions. Incentives to complete high school and college are in place within the tribal constitution with the promise of paid tuition and promotions for existing tribal positions. Opportunity to work in the tribal court, education, health and mental health, youth council, elders center, finance, farming, engineering and council leadership is the goal and benefit of higher education for the Yavapai.

In addition to the formal education complex, the tribe views maintaining balance in all things a significant part of healthy living. A state-of-the-art Recreation complex has brought the children, adults and elders the opportunity for competitive sports; traditional programs such as "Camp Wikkiup," a summer program for children; a Native educational seminar program; and an annual Orme Dam celebration (honoring the tribe's initiative to

prevent the government from flooding their land) which sponsors traditional Native dancing competition nationally. Student academic achievement has increased, partnerships with the local university have been established, and the vision to expand the existing school is currently in the planning stage.

The Grand Ronde Confederation, a tribe that lost its land and was assimilated into mainstream culture, has reclaimed its tribal status at the opening of the Spirit Mountain Casino. They have used their money to repurchase lost land, reclaim cultural artifacts, start classes in its near-extinct language and build housing for the community. (Useem, 2000). Gaming communities are beginning to see the results of empowering their community members. "They see the new glimmer in the students' eyes fueled by hope. As the students learn history, science and gain a cultural foundation, they see the ember grow into the flame of pride" (Ambler, 2000 p. 6).

### *Health and Gaming*

The changing lifestyle of Native people has led to an increase in chronic disease, heart disease and type II diabetes. Native people have the highest mortality rate in the country. It is important to Native people to return to a traditional diet and increase exercise to maintain a more balanced lifestyle. Although there are many mainstream programs that address these diseases, few are Native specific. Gaming tribes are now able to develop their own resources to confront these fatal diseases. The Gila River Indian community has developed a diabetes prevention assistant certificate. In addition, Quest, a diabetes prevention program for children in grades K-3 has been developed, \$8 million has been allocated for a nursing facility, three childcare centers and the renovation of three schools have been built. These programs include tribal customs and culture (Two Feathers, 1999).

The Spokane Native community has also provided basic health care services through gaming revenues (Useem, 2000). The Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians in Suttons Bay, Michigan have used their gaming profits to build their own comprehensive health department, meeting many of the health needs of their members, from infectious diseases, to

optical services to counseling and psychological services for families in distress. The White Mountain Apache Tribe of eastern Arizona has collateralized casino revenues for the construction of a 25-bed alcohol/substance abuse treatment facility, a cultural leaning center, a museum, a youth center and an elderly day care center.

The Salt River Pima community has developed a diabetes treatment and prevention program for its community and the Ft. McDowell Yavapai community has built its own health facility which not only has a diabetes prevention and treatment program, but also serves the community for general health problems and wellness services for children, adults and elders. They have staffed their clinic with tribal members and Native physicians embracing the culture and traditions of their ancestors. In addition, they have developed a family and community service center that offers counseling and prevention services. Counseling services have included family and alcohol counseling, adolescent boys cultural identity group, and educational seminars on domestic violence, and substance abuse. Prevention programs have included a healthy community meal program, a children's empowerment program, a parent and healthy child development social program, stretch and relaxation, and massage therapy. Opportunities to integrate traditional medicine in all health services in tribal programs can meet the needs of these gaming communities. Without gaming revenues, these tribes would still be dependent upon the BIA for services and at their mercy for administration and program development.

Gaming revenues have supported services to the elderly, offering the potential of increasing their life span. Their wisdom passed down through the generations is a major resource in preserving culture. It is critical that the elders remain in the community to stay connected to family and community decisions. The Tohono O'Odham tribe has built a state-of-the-art nursing facility for their elders with gaming revenues. The staff has been educated at the local university to fill the positions in nursing, administration, recreation and nutrition. All staff speak the tribal language, and meals and activities are geared toward maintaining

tribal traditions. Most important, the home is located at the center of the community.

The Sprit Mountain Casino serving the Grand Ronde tribal communities generated \$53 million last year and employs 1500. Elders can now retire with the hope of spending time with friends and family in their senior years. A 91 year old elder, Ila Dowd who worked in a cannery until she was 70, can now enjoy a monthly pension check of \$600 and spend time with other elders in the tribal community center that provides meals. She says, "Wik-lili masayka mukmuk," that's Chinook for "almost time to eat" (Useem, 2000, p. 226). Today there's no worry about putting food on the table.

### *Employment and Gaming*

Without employment, families are subject to stress in all areas of life. The focus on survival becomes paramount and the quality of life decreases. Moving Native people out of poverty is essential to restore wellness in Native families and communities. "In its analysis of 100 gambling and non-gambling communities close to newly opened casinos, NORC found that 'unemployment rates, welfare outlays and unemployment insurance declined by about one-seventh" (Cornell et al, 1998, p. 7).

### *Elimination of Public Assistance*

The Pine Ridge Reservation is one of the poorest counties in America. For the roughly 100 families directly affected by casino employment, it seems safe to assume that, without the casino, some of these 100 families would be on public assistance and suffering the social and health hardships attendant to unemployment and poverty (Cornell, Kalt, Krepps & Taylor, 1998). A Minnesota tribe's dependence on public assistance dropped 16 per cent with gaming (Conboy, Erkkila & Harger, 1994).

Gaming revenues were able to eliminate unemployment for California's San Bernardino tribe. In 1988 about 75 percent of the San Bernardino tribe's work-eligible population was unemployed and the same proportion of tribal members received welfare benefits. In 1993, following an energetic advertising program that drew 100,000 gamblers per month, the casino eliminated tribal unemployment and welfare (Jorgensen, 1998). According to the

Economics Resource Group study done in July 1998, the number of tribal members receiving welfare support through tribal social services at the Gila River Indian Community has dropped by 75 to 85 percent since their casino opened in 1993 (McGavin, 1999).

*Increase in Employment, Tribal Services and Enterprises*

*Employment.* The unemployment rate for the Winnebagos prior to the casino opening was 60–80 per cent. It was significantly reduced in 1992 with the opening of the casino. The Spokane Two Rivers resort and casino has meant employment for approximately 100 tribal members (Useem 2000). The Oneida Nation employs 1500 workers at its casino (Coopers & Lybrand, 1995), Gila River fills 1300 jobs with 90 per cent Native employees (Anders, 1996) and the Pequot Tribe in Connecticut with its \$1 million-a-day casino has unlimited employment opportunities for tribal members (Munting, 1996).

*Services.* The Ft. McDowell Yavapai, through gaming revenues, were able to establish their own tribal court, increase their tribal police force from 5 officers to 26 and develop their own fire department which cost them less money than paying the local town for fire department services. In fact, the tribal fire department, recently saved the life of a community employee simply because it was on the reservation. Programs that meet the community's needs are developing, crime has decreased and the number of motor vehicle arrests is declining. To aid in retaining employees and attract better qualified personnel the Yavapai offer casino and tribal service employees 100 percent paid medical benefits and contribute 10 per cent of the employees' annual salary to a pension plan. (Gerdes, Napoli, Pattea, & Segal, 1998). Employment opportunities have increased in all tribal programs, services and enterprises.

*Enterprises.* Many tribes have been successful in developing competitive businesses and advanced training for professional leadership that are congruous with tribal lifestyle, such as hunting and fishing. Businesses that foster the development of tribal land and traditions are sought out. The Ft. McDowell Yavapai of Arizona, historically a farming tribe, have expanded their farming enterprise by increasing their crop of alfalfa and developing land

for new crops. Tribes such as the Choctaw in Mississippi have capitalized on their \$100 million gaming revenues from the Silver Star Resort & Casino by developing other enterprises. They now have an electronics company, a printing company, a golf club, an assembler of wiring harnesses for cars, and the First American Plastic Injection Molding Company. The tribe's 8300 members are effectively both employees and shareholders. Tribal councilman Hayward Bell boasts that any tribal member who wants a job can have 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>.

Most importantly, gaming revenues have taken some Native people out of "survival mode" and brought back the significance of balance and connection to family and to the land. Families do not have to focus on fear of starvation and homelessness but can now spend time harvesting land that has been reclaimed and participate in activities and ceremonies with family members. Gaming revenues have given tribes the opportunity to maintain intrinsic values such as mentoring the young and taking care of the elders. One Ft. McDowell Yavapai tribal council member believes that "the important things in life are free, like throwing rocks in the river with my son, spending quality time together. Gaming gives us the opportunity to have more of the time freely." (Gerdes, et. al, 1998, p. 28). It is critical that gaming tribes use their economic security and autonomy to move them out of poverty and pave the path to restore wellness by maintaining tribal values and traditions.

### *Political Power and Gaming*

The benefits of gaming can have a domino effect leading to enhanced political clout. As revenues from gaming create jobs, opportunities for higher education increase. Native professionals can advocate for their people in education reform to reflect Native history with accuracy, hold public office to represent Native people in developing local, state, federal and national policies and continue to expand financial assets, particularly those that are related to tribal traditions, to decrease dependence on gaming revenues.

*"Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell, the only American Indian in Congress and the first ever to chair the Senate Indian Affairs Committee states . . . " as tribes build political clout—and they are now learning how to use the system everybody else has used for years. . . . It becomes much more*

*difficult to find a solution when nobody wants to give . . . some tribes formerly content to maintain their sovereignty and slice of the federal pie are becoming more assertive, even 'expansionist' (Paige, 1997, p. 6).*

The story of the Choctaw tribe from Mississippi illustrates a tribe's perseverance for self-determination. Tribal chief Martin insisted that the casino serve as a vehicle to self-sufficiency and political self-determination. The tribe wants to have enough revenues whose interest alone could sustain the tribe should federal or gaming funds dry up. In preparation for expansion of its casino, the tribe recently bought out the contracts of its outside management companies for \$72 million. The irony of their success is shown in a comment made by the mayor of Philadelphia, "Our best industry is the Choctaw Nation. If the tribe went bankrupt, we'd go into a depression." (Paige, 1997, p. 10).

To maintain control over tribal casinos, gaming tribes permit outside firms to invest in casinos, even manage casinos, but they cannot gain more than 30 percent of profits, and they can do so for only the first five years of operations (Cozetto, 1995). The Pequot of southern Connecticut, whose capital to build Foxwood casino came from a federal judgment, have not needed infusions of federal capital to maintain the casino and its work forces. In fact, the casino has flourished, causing alarm to casino operators in Atlantic City who claim that the proximity of the Pequot operation has throttled their own operations (Jorgensen, 1998).

Negotiating gaming compacts, increasing businesses, and the increasing number of Native professionals working in reservation and non-reservation programs and businesses are bringing Native people into the political arena with "Native clout." They can now advocate for their people when their independence is threatened. An official like Senator Slade Gorton who speaks out against tribal sovereignty says, "My fundamental view then and my fundamental view now is that all Americans ought to be treated equally under the law." Bill Archer of the Texas House Ways and Means Committee and Gerald Solomon of the House Rules Committee profess that tribal casinos should pay federal taxes on income (Paige, 1997). The tribal chair of Minnesota's Fond du Lac Chippewa discusses his strong position that the United States has an obligation to Indian people, and he states, "I'm going to hold them to it. . . . Even if the tribe has money

enough to pay for it themselves. Does Bob Hope need Social Security? the chairman asks rhetorically. He's eligible for it" (Paige, 1997 p. 9).

### Challenges Facing Gaming Tribes

The fact remains that the majority of Native people are poor and still dependent upon the federal government for support. Reservation housing remains in shambles despite \$4.3 billion in federal housing assistance during the last decade. More than 100,000 Native people are believed to be homeless. Approximately 73 percent of the 1.2 million Natives on or near the nation's 275 reservations earn less than \$9000, with unemployment hovering at near 50 per cent (Paige, 1997). Gaming tribes need to be aware of the acceleration of addictions gambling can cause. Since alcohol addiction is the biggest threat to Native mortality, adding or transferring that addiction to gambling can add to their own genocide. Gaming tribes cannot ignore this possibility and need to use gaming as an opportunity to move out of the "disease of addiction" and back to their tradition of wellness and balance.

Gaming has not solved these problems, yet the knowledge that gaming tribes are gaining through their business, education, politics and law put them in a place of being available as mentors and supporters to those tribes who do not have the means to pull themselves out of "survival mode."

It is imperative that Native people use the advantage of gaming to make them a strong and independent nation. They have long struggled to survive and now have the opportunity to thrive. Native people can implement their traditional values in their business ethics. Sharing the wealth for the betterment of community wellness versus individual gain is inherent in Native values. This is another way of preserving the culture. The western philosophy of business "every man for himself," contradicts these Native values, which stress "community versus individuality." To keep sovereignty among all Native people, to embrace the Native philosophy of sharing, gaming tribes are beginning to spread the wealth not only for their own communities but also for other tribes still facing poverty. For example, the Ft. McDowell Yavapai of Arizona have 'adopted' the PaiPais a cousin tribe in

Mexico, who has been living below poverty level for decades. They have shared their gaming profits to provide electricity, a school, clothing, food and other necessities to enhance the quality of life for tribal members.

“Everything we do is based upon the principles, natural laws and values taught to us by American Indian elders” (www.white bison.org, 1/16/01). It is time for Native communities to pull together and create strong Nations having the experience gained from “both worlds. “Like Sitting Bull said, if you see something good in the white man’s path, pick it up. And if it’s no good, throw it away (Iron Moccasin 2000, p. 13).

### Recommendations to Maintaining Wellness

- a. **Prevention**—services that deal with health, employment and education need to be expanded upon to prevent Native people from being the highest risk in mortality and poverty. Maintaining ceremonies, tribal crafts, music and dance, physical exercise through sports, and family communication programs are but a few ways to keep Native people out of crisis and moving toward wellness.
- b. **Educating and supporting non-gaming tribes**—it is important that gaming tribes share their wealth of information to move the non-gaming tribes out of poverty, enabling them to reclaim balance and independence.
- c. **Maintaining tribal sovereignty**—it is crucial for gaming tribes to stay afloat in the political arena. Years of isolation have kept Native people at the mercy of the government who makes laws that have not benefited them. Educating tribal members to be lawyers and political leaders will give Native people the power to make laws that serve them in education, business and health.
- d. **Maintaining higher education for tribal members**—to keep tribal enterprises and services in the hands of the community, it is critical to educate teachers, lawyers, doctors, engineers, and financial planners. These Native professionals can administer quality services in a way that embraces the community’s values and traditions.

In summary, although gaming poses problems, for the most part it has given tribes the opportunity to move out of poverty and become less dependent on the government. They have been able

to reclaim their traditions by developing their own schools, health services, courts, businesses, recreation and services to elders and families. They have also been able to reclaim lost land and reestablish fishing, hunting and farming enterprises. The Oneida Nation, for example, has grown from a 32-acre reservation to nearly 4,000 acres. "Indeed, for much of Indian Country, the alternative to gaming is the *status quo ante*: poverty, powerlessness, and despair. Self-determination—and the ways that Indian nations have used it—constitutes a public policy of success of major dimensions. Indian gaming is a striking example of that success" (Cornell, Kalt, Krepps & Taylor, p. 78).

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