



EDITORIAL

What are Critical Indigenous Gambling Studies?

Darrel Manitowabi, Fiona Nicoll

How Casino Rama's St. Germain's Steakhouse Got its Name

"I recall attending that community meeting in 1972 as clearly as if it were yesterday... I remember so well when a distinguished middle-aged man stood up to speak near the end... Granny whispered to me, 'That's Old George'... 'Ah-niin. Most of you know me. I'm George St. Germain, businessman, pilot, entrepreneur. I've been listening closely to the discussion this evening. And I almost don't want to say it, but I had a dream... And I keep thinking about this dream because it was so clear. In the dream, we had built a casino in Rama.' That's right a casino, right here. Lots of visitors poured through the doors in my dream. They all left their money at our Indian casino."

From the short story "Old George" in Lawson (2007, pp. 28-30)
Sherry Lawson, Chippewas of Rama First Nation

Introduction

In a seminal contribution to Indigenous studies and education, Jo-Ann Archibald (2008) introduces the concept of "storywork" to refer to the power of oral narratives in holistic meaning-making which are an important part of Indigenous knowledge systems. Thus, within this narrative tradition we begin with story, an abbreviated story above told by Sherry Lawson in a self-published book that personalizes the history and place of the Chippewas of Rama First Nation in south-central Ontario, home to Casino Rama, a major Indigenous casino in Canada. Casino studies often begin in the context of standard academic theoretical frameworks, such as 'colonialism', 'history', 'politics', 'sovereignty', 'pathology' among other academic constructions. Furthermore, standard academic frameworks are a predetermined linear trajectory: an introduction, literature review, methods, discussion and conclusion. In situ, Indigenous knowledge system frameworks often begin with a story and leave discussion and reflection in the place of the listener who is left to draw conclusions. In research settings, this is also the case; Elders or Indigenous knowledge holders may respond to questions with story and, in so doing, research becomes a poetic conversation with lived experience and memory embodied in responses. So, we begin this editorial with a story by a community member to a First Nation that is home to a casino, and who shares a little-known fact of Casino Rama, a story of a casino

emerging from a dream and a prophecy coming to fruition. In this edition of *Critical Gambling Studies*, Casino Rama is the backdrop in an article presenting an Indigenous framework of gambling studies through storywork, equating casinos and casino policies with the Windigo, an animate being transforming individuals and communities (Manitowabi, this volume).

The Problem of Representation in Indigenous Gambling Research

This special issue of *Critical Gambling Studies* journal takes an interdisciplinary approach to the question: how do historical and ongoing sovereignty struggles in settler-occupied nations shape cultural representations of and academic research on Indigenous gambling? In this editorial introduction, we consider how existing representations of Indigenous gambling might be influenced by critical Indigenous studies to inform responses to different contexts in which this question arises.

Recent Indigenous scholarship unsettles the liberal politics of representation framing wider discussions of Indigenous identity and issues. It also makes visible the role of racial institutions and colonial processes in the epistemological assumptions and ontological orientations of academic work in the field of Indigenous studies (Coulthard, 2014; Simpson, 2014). Aileen Moreton-Robinson (2016) distinguishes "critical Indigenous studies" as

...a knowledge/power domain whereby scholars operationalize Indigenous knowledges to develop theories, build academic infrastructure, and inform our cultural and ethical practices. We do this critical work to challenge the power/knowledge structures and discourses through which Indigenous peoples have been framed and known (p. 5).

Hokowhitu (2020) further situates this approach as a critical engagement of Indigenous peoples' representational entanglement within the historical perspective of anthropology and archaeology (p. 1). This perspective presents Indigenous peoples as pre-civilized beings, and these disciplines set the foundation for academic studies of Indigenous peoples. As representations shifted to a downtrodden people in need of development, academic inquiry therein shifted. Contemporary academic scholarship has now shifted to focus on Indigenous pathologies. Hokowhitu's analysis evokes Foucault's (2002) "archaeology of knowledge", demonstrating how the academic production of knowledge of Indigenous peoples changes over time, but nevertheless reveals distinctive eras in power relationships evident in Indigenous representation.

Shifting this analysis to explore an "archaeology of Indigenous gambling knowledge", a recent Web of Science search for the term "Indigenous gambling" resulted in 87 records, all under the following categories with numbers in parentheses: substance abuse (35); psychiatry (15); psychology clinical (15); psychological multidisciplinary (12); public environmental occupational health (11); anthropology (8); social issues (8); social sciences interdisciplinary (4); history (3) and sociology (3). Publications begin in the year 1997 and continue up to the present. Most Indigenous gambling studies from North America are situated in two eras, before the development of legal casino gambling and thereafter. Before the casino, anthropology and archaeology represent most of the source material on gambling, and after the casino, other social science disciplines emerge but most literature is published within psychology.

The first comprehensive approach to gambling studies took place in the work of Culin (1907) in his examination of North American Indigenous gambling. In that era gambling studies also encompassed anthropological and archaeological studies more generally (e.g., Gabriel, 1996). More recent research on Indigenous gambling is situated within a harm reduction approach (Hilbrecht et al., 2020) or problem gambling approach (Williams et al., 2021; Saunders & Doyle, 2021). Within a critical Indigenous studies framework, then, gambling studies can be understood as a microcosm of the academic gaze on Indigenous peoples as described by Hokowhitu (2020) and

Moreton-Robinson (2016). Both scholars call for a more comprehensive account of academic inquiries of Indigenous peoples, one that moves beyond the anthropological gaze or pathologized subject, encouraging critical reflection on disciplinary representations of Indigenous peoples and scholarly engagement with Indigenous agency in knowledge production.

Shifting the Research Paradigm

In many ways, this edition of CGS introduces a *critical Indigenous gambling studies* that situates Indigenous knowledge within and beyond the arena of disciplinary gambling studies. This approach is inclusive of Indigenous and non-Indigenous critical scholarly voices in gambling studies from New Zealand, Canada and the United States. And its transnational platform not only diversifies story, voice and analysis but also enables learning through comparative perspectives. In doing so, it demonstrates that gambling studies is more than a health studies specialization in addiction or harm reduction, and that important contributions can be made from critical scholars working in areas such as Indigenous studies, law, archaeology and anthropology, as well as community-based practitioners.

Ruth Herd's essay develops a new paradigm for approaching the politics of gambling and public health in settler-colonial states. Her academic storywork embeds issues that gambling poses for Maori youth within the Waitangi Treaty Claims process. She also highlights the agency of Maori women in shifting the ground on which gambling harms are currently understood and addressed in New Zealand. Gabriel Yanicki revisits early anthropology and archaeological sources to demonstrate the importance of bettor-wager patterns in regulating inter-group relations between nations that were culturally, linguistically and politically diverse yet connected through gambling and warfare. Theodore Gordon explores the limits of recognition of Indigenous sovereignty in the context of tribal casino labor relations in the United States. He demonstrates how the San Manuel decision limited tribes' power over labor in casinos through applying the concept of 'tradition' as a criterion for judgment. Other tribes have subsequently contested this ruling, notwithstanding their support, in some cases, for organized labor more broadly. Gordon argues that continuing resistance and refusal are necessary in the face of a stubborn paradox whereby Indigenous sovereignty's recognition also becomes the ground of its limitation by juridical and political actors.

This special issue also includes the research of experts whose sphere of practice lies outside disciplinary academic contexts. Murry Marshall explains the historical and ongoing significance of Kahnawà:ke Gaming Law which marks its 25th

anniversary this year. He shows how this Mohawk nation on the St Lawrence River near Montreal has practiced its jurisdiction over gaming as an inherent 'Aboriginal right' to support economic growth and to become an early innovator in the online gambling sector. An interview between community practitioner, Sheila Wahsquaonaikezhik and Indigenous scholar, Darrel Manitowabi, presents further insights about the culture and ethics of gambling research, the politics of gambling industries and the everyday practices of Indigenous youth videogamers. Caitlyn Salmon offers a fascinating cultural history of the relationship between gambling and videogames from the mid twentieth century from the perspective of a gamer and digital media professional. Her genealogy of gambling's integration within popular games brings important insights about contemporary videogaming platforms featuring lootboxes and other lucrative devices euphemistically referred to as "surprise mechanics".

To conclude the collection, Sylvia Kairouz offers a short commentary from her position as an academic gambling researcher who has worked on research projects with Indigenous communities in Quebec for many years. Her self-reflexive discussion of the personal and cultural politics of ethical research collaborations powerfully evokes the image of journeying over the bridge that connects Montreal and Kahnawà:ke.

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