

# **Effect of Hospitality / Gaming Education on the Goal Fulfillment of Achieving Traditional “7<sup>th</sup> Generation Standard”\* Tribal Stability**

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## **ABSTRACT**

*With Indian Gaming, profit is not necessarily the “goal of the firm” as with privately or publicly held “commercial” gaming hospitality facilities. Rather, gaming is often used as a means to an end to ensure the fulfillment of continued, cohesive sovereignty as a tribe for future generations of tribal members (i.e., the 7<sup>th</sup> generation ideal). The “7<sup>th</sup> Generation” paradigm is based on not only maintaining, but also improving community welfare and leveraging positive externalities from the gaming industry.*

*Since Indian gaming is, at its root, a business and, through various social science studies, a link has been established between education and business success, the purpose of this study is to examine is whether this linkage holds true for general and industry education and relative success of tribal entities involved in development, management or operation of Indian Gaming. Numerous “commercial” gaming and hospitality endeavors have strengthened their service core (and subsequent success key performance indicators) by investing in personnel with internal and external training (e.g., seminars, certifications) and formal secondary education (i.e., pursuit of degrees).*

**Keywords:** 7<sup>th</sup> generational goals, Indian gaming, hospitality / gaming, education

## **INTRODUCTION**

While there are a multitude of reasons why education is important to an individual tribal member and collective bands, two fundamental rationales may be delineated. Foremost, an informed consumer of internal and external business goods and services makes for a good consumer. Secondly, to maintain a hold on a sovereign people’s economic, cultural, and social development, tribal management must champion the virtue of self-reliance (through education) as paramount. This effort of internal improvement via the pursuit of education is not without challenge at even the highest level of organization.

The fundamental flaw with government oversight (and its acting as a steward) may be that the Indian Gaming Regulatory Association (IGRA) does not explicitly provide a conduit for general Indian education funding, neither for the 40 percent of tribes that maintain gaming nor the 60 percent that does not. Despite attempts over the years, no major changes to the Indian

Gaming Regulatory Act have passed Congress since the law's enactment in 1988. Federally legislated educational funding from Indian Gaming resources is not in the foreseeable future.

One Wisconsin Tribe, a band that recorded unemployment levels of 70 percent just 25 years ago (pre- National Indian Gaming Commission legislation that allowed for mass Indian gaming expansion) serves as benchmark, noting, "Gaming has given us the ability to take control of our destiny" (Flanagan & Samuelson, 1997). For some (tribes), Indian Gaming has allowed them to consider future goals (with long term potential). For others (not receiving the positive externalities of tribal gaming), educational attainment and even basic survival can be ephemeral."

The purpose of the proposed research endeavor is to offer substantial evidence that education (in general and specifically in the field of gaming) has a positive effect on the welfare of individual tribal members and their respective communities. The philosophical bearing is based on Robert S. Kaplan and David P. Norton's Balanced Scorecard metric format focusing on the fourth perspective of "Learning and Growth". This measure serves as a proxy or indicator of dedication by tribal gaming operators to enhance overall performance by maintaining a consistent program of continuing education for the entity's employees.

The study will use traditional survey methods to attempt to establish a correlation between gaming tribe members and respective individual and communal continuing education goals and demonstrative results of increased welfare. If the alternative hypothesis of a relationship between the two variables (tribal education and fulfillment of measurable 7<sup>th</sup> generational goals having a significant relationship is accepted, then the study will serve as a basis for the continuance of promoting Indian gaming education that can be better suited to the studied populace's needs.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The attainment for Native Americans of some college, including vocational or technical level of education, was at 32.9 percent in 1980, 43 percent in 1990, and had a drastic drop to 12 percent in 1992. The latter figure may be explained by the larger increases in the achievement of bachelor's and graduate professional degree numbers. Little surprise should result from learning that there is a 35 percent premium of Indian seeking education degrees over the norm. These fields (with a disproportion concentration of business studies for the current generation, education for the next) are the very tools necessary to build the strongest, most self-reliant communities.

A number of colleges and universities around the country have begun offering degree programs or certification in casino management. According to Shawn Pensoneau at the National Indian Gaming Commission, "We've seen a lot of expansion in recent years, so an increase in these types of programs is probably beneficial." Peter LaMacchia, director of the Gaming and Casino Management program at Morrisville State College in upstate New York, began a certification program about ten years ago and an associate's degree program nine years ago. Since then, both have been a huge success in terms of producing graduates that land jobs (in Indian owned and operated casinos).

Another synergistic partnership in New York state is the Seneca Nation working with Niagara County Community College in Niagara Falls, N.Y. They are working in tandem on a Casino and Gaming Management Program that will serve the niche needs of this local/regional facility (Babco, 2005).

Marketplace Productions, a (non-accredited, private” Indian Gaming education producer in St. Paul, MN, recognized the need (for primarily short-term, vocational gaming training) and now provides workshops for more than 150 tribes in Minnesota. The “Land of a Thousand Lakes” is a prime location for Marketplace Productions. The state is home to 11 reservations, all of which are in gaming, giving the state a total of 18 casinos. Furthermore, the five- state region surrounding Minnesota contains 40 percent of the nation's casinos. According to Al Paulson, owner and founder of Marketplace Productions and member of the Ojibwa tribe in northern Minnesota. To further accountability, Marketplace Productions began collaborating with Minnesota's St. Cloud State University's Center for Continuing Studies. Together, they now offer certificate programs of tribal planning, wagering compliance and gaming protection (Gaining in Gaming, 2003).

The increasing number of tribal member seeking formal higher education suggests a trend of tribes internally building themselves to ensure self-sufficiency through the increased control of business activities requiring higher and continuing education to perform with maximum efficiency and economy. Educational efforts derived from improved current and expected business is not solely a means to greater revenue; rather, the general good or raising of communal welfare via education it is a pathway to satisfy the 7th generation goals of preserving sovereignty and promoting self reliance.

## **METHODOLOGY**

It may be argued that a significant correlation exists between individual tribal member pursuit and completion of higher and continuing education in hospitality/gaming and (as a communal sovereign entity) achieving traditional “7th Generation Standard” Tribal Stability. To provide defense of the efforts conjecture, this study will solicit information from a sample of properties from the population of Indian Casinos within the borders of the State of Oklahoma. This year (2010) marked the first time Gross Gaming Revenue (GGR) for the state’s tribe exceeded those of the establish market powerhouse of Connecticut’s Foxwoods and Mohegan Sun properties; coming in only second to the GGR of California.

The initial concept for this research was based on a national context of Indian Gaming, but for further investigation, the population will consist exclusively of tribal gaming operators within the state of Oklahoma. The specific drive of conducting a stratified (by GGR per operation) sample survey of Oklahoma casinos is to garner information for an education conference produced by *Casino Enterprise Management* that is to be held in Tulsa, OK in May of 2011.

The research method of a survey will provide not only valuable feedback, but also a sense of inclusion of tribal gaming entities that will result in higher attendance rates due to the phenomenon of “buy in” as a motivator. The distributed surveys (via traditional mail and followed up with alternative electronic (e.g., e-mail/fax reminders) will seek representative input on what types of sessions the respondents believe would be most helpful in facing some of the

challenges and capitalizing on the opportunities of the uniquely regional Oklahoma (Class II and Class III) Indian Gaming market.

The self reporting survey will explore, using traditional survey tools (e.g., closed/multiple choice, Likert scales of preference - determining range of agreement/disagreement on the need for seminars based on industry specific fields (e.g., event planning and analysis, food and beverage operation, gaming floor analysis, etc.) and semi-open (but directed) supplementary questions. The information sought includes what historic, current and expected efforts, including but not exclusive to internal training and outsourced education (at learning facilities for gaming / hospitality instructions) are and if these efforts have resulted in positive externalities such as decreased employee turnover of those employees in whom investment has been made with education and if internal promotion has occurred as direct result of continuing education efforts for and by the employees.

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