

Digest

Volume 12/Number 1



Dioxin Afflicting Inuit

High concentrations of dioxin in the Arctic, a cause of health problems among the Inuit, have now been traced to specific sources in the US, Canada and Mexico.

A study was conducted for the Montreal-based North American Commission for Environmental Cooperation (NACEC) by the Center for the Biology of Natural Systems, Queens College, City University of New York. The study covered a one-year period beginning in July 1996. This report is the first to use weather patterns, pollution data and corporate emissions records to track dioxins through the atmosphere to the Arctic from specific sources across North America, said Barry Commoner, the pioneering ecologist, expert on dioxins and co-author of the report.

This study compiled 44,091 specific dioxins, of which 16,729 were in Canada, 22,439 in the US and 4,923 in Mexico. Nine of the top ten contributors of dioxin deposited in Nunavut were in the US, including three municipal waste plans in Minnesota, Iowa, Pennsylvania; three cement kilns in Michigan, Missouri

and Nebraska; two iron plants in Indiana, and a copper smelter in Illinois. Some have since reduced or eliminated their dioxin emissions.

The study used the remote and pristine Nunavut territory, which has few local sources of dioxins, to show how dioxin travel to pollute areas far from where it is emitted. A range of toxic chemicals of global concern, including dioxin, DDT and PCBs, all known as "persistent organic pollutants" (POPs), break down extremely slowly in the environment and are linked to cancer, birth defects and other neurological, reproductive and immune-system damage in people and

continued on page 3

What's INSIDE

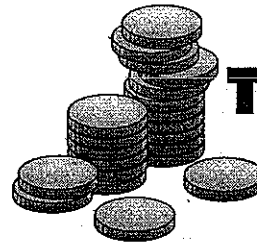
3 Sovereignty Struggle in Maine

5 New Anti-Sovereignty Groups

7 Protest at Liz's

SPECIAL INSERT

Annual Report 2000



The Myth of Indian Gaming

By James P. DeNemie (Bad River Chippewa)

Native American Tribes and their Anglo customers have recently embraced Indian gaming with all the subtlety of a bear trap. Many believe the flood of casino cash flowing into Indian communities will act as a cure-all for social dilemmas associated with the lives of reservation Indians. Don't bet on it!

Of more than 550 Federally recognized Tribal Nations in the U.S., fewer than twenty-five percent are involved in casino-style operations. Indian gaming represents a small market share, just 10% of the U.S. gaming industry pie. In 1999, twenty-two Tribes generated 56% of all revenues in Indian Country. Most successful tribes operate from locations near major population centers or resort areas. The rest, mostly in remote locations, break

continued on page 2

continued from page 1 The Myth

little better than even.

Gaming critics often ask "Just where does all that money go?" In accordance with the 1988 Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA), 50% of gaming income must be reinvested in Tribal infrastructure or community facilities and programs.

Indian gaming revenues legally and socially extend beyond the bottom line. According to "AP", Apesahakwat, Chairman of the 8,000 member Menominee Nation in Wisconsin, says, "Gaming provides money for housing, education and health care. Just last year, our health care expenses skyrocketed by some three million dollars!"

Income remaining after deducting general operating expenses and the required 50% reinvestment into community infrastructure may be used to make per capita payments to Tribal members. A few fortunate Indians experience the financial things dreams are made of. Most do not and never will.

The reality of Indian gaming sees outside revenue entering reservation communities. Reservation cars, once held together with duct tape or worse, have been replaced by clean, smooth running newer models, a sign of gaming related family-supporting jobs and (somewhat) stronger Tribal economies.

Critics of Indian gaming often fail to realize America's fateful links to games of chance. Lotteries were critical to funding the Revolutionary war, colonization of America, and even helped fund the beginning of venerable educational institutions like Harvard University.

As European immigrants gained control of North America, virtually every means of self-sufficiency was taken away from American's Native people. Most ultimately were forced onto remote, impoverished reservations lands. Today's gaming is often the only viable source of employment and revenue available to tribes. In virtually all

instances, gaming revenues are used by Indian Nations for community development and cultural preservation.

Tribal leaders understand the cyclic nature of an industry in the midst of a boom economy. Those with positive gaming revenue streams are now looking to diversify their economic bases. This will enable Tribes to discover paths to mainstream self-determination and self-sufficiency.

For those without tribal gaming, American Indians remain our country's most impoverished racial group. Horrific statistical evidence highlights the gaping hole between the reality of today's Indian community life and the image of gaming rich Indians. The gap is especially notable in health care, unemployment, infant mortality and substandard housing.

The "rich Indian" gaming image has been used by anti-Indian political groups and international marketers of gas, oil, timber and minerals in efforts to derail desperately needed Federal/Indian social programs and to gain control of valuable natural resources. This image has also been used as ammunition through which to question the social needs on America's reservations. It has been used to divert attention from government programs that are, in reality, installments on an outstanding bill owed by the U.S. government to Native American Nations, through treaties between sovereign nations.

In most cases, the few Indians affiliated with gaming tribes are working, but not rich. For the remaining citizens of Indian Country, life continues without the promise of entry into the economic mainstream of American life.

James P. DeNomie (Bad River Chippewa) whose Indian name, Maahng de wag vai means loon he flies fast, wrote this article for T.R.I.A.D. (Tribal Response: Indians Against Racism)



CUBA COMES THROUGH!

During a Congressional Black Caucus delegation to Cuba, a Congressman from the Mississippi Delta remarked to President Fidel Castro that there are large areas in his district which do not have a single physician. President Castro responded with an offer of full scholarships for students from impoverished regions of the US to study medicine in Cuba. This offer was intended to be more than a short-term solution. It is the beginning of the creation of a health care infrastructure for generations to come. Cuba is offering 250 full scholarships per year for students from underserved communities in the United States to study medicine in Cuba. *Tuition, dormitory room and board, and textbooks are all free of charge.* For more information contact:

The Interreligious Foundation
for Community Organization
402 West 145th St.
New York, NY 10031
212.926.5757
www.ifconews.org

HONOR
Digest

This HONOR Digest is produced by Deb Pipkorn. Most articles are compiled by Sharon Metz, assisted by Rose Soulier. Guest articles are welcome. Call 1-202.546.8340 or E-mail us at HONOR@dgs.dgsys.com. c 2001 ○