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No Admission Required: Sovereignty, Slots and Native American Art

Jane Sinclair

Jane Sinclair
Candidate

American Studies
Department

This dissertation is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication:

Approved by the Dissertation Committee:

Peter L. White, Chairperson

Theodore S. Jojola

Joyce M. Szabo

M. Jane Young

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By

Jane Sinclair

B.A., Psychology and Studio Art, University of California, Santa Cruz, 1988
M.A., Art History, University of Washington, 1994

DISSERTATION

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DEDICATION

To M. Jane Young – a great teacher

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines how Native American art is displayed in Indian casinos in the Southwest. Exhibition strategies, employed by traditional art and natural history museums offer points of comparison. An overview of legal battles leading up to and following the passage of the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA) in 1988 is provided. While New Mexico is the primary focus of this discussion, the state of Arizona is also mentioned. The evolution of gaming compacts in New Mexico is detailed at length. Local attitudes both for and against the legalization of Indian gaming is documented through media sources, such as newspaper articles, letters to the editor and political cartoons. These sources all speak to the climate of the time: negative stereotypes are prevalent. Connections between tourism and casino advertising are also explored. Early advertisements capitalize on Indian humor, inside jokes that emphasize ironic wordplay or puns. Later examples become more generic, characterized by less text and fewer references to “Indian” culture. This study draws comparisons between American Indian literature, museum studies, the history of Native American art and depictions of gaming. Themes associated with oral histories, storytelling and a sense of place are analyzed. In addition, topics

related to tribal sovereignty, economic well-being and the growth of Indian gaming are investigated. Whether sovereign status is enhanced or depleted by the advent of legalized gaming is a reoccurring question. Native artists who depict casino subject matter are highlighted, with an emphasis on work that offers social commentary or questions the impact of Indian gaming on Native life. The visual culture of specific Indian gaming facilities is explored through Interior and exterior design, ranging from casino chips to monumental sculptures. Casinos discussed include Sandia Resort and Casino, Camel Rock Casino, Isleta Resort and Casino, Buffalo Thunder Casino and Resort, Twin Arrows Navajo Casino Resort, Casino Arizona and Foxwoods Resort Casino. While the main emphasis of this dissertation is on Pueblo casinos, other indigenous gaming facilities are discussed, including those owned by Navajo, Salt River Pima-Maricopa and Pequot tribal communities. This study provides a new perspective on how Indian casinos can function as museums.

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Chapter One

"Indian Gaming's Fate a Coin-Toss": The Road to Legalization in New Mexico

It's a mixed bag of trouble . . . There's lots of ways to make money, and gambling is not the nicest, not the best, not the prettiest. It's just the way available right now.

--Louise Erdrich, *The Bingo Palace* (1994, 95)

How much money can Indians make and still be Indians? Do you have to be economically poor to be spiritually rich?

--Rick Hill (1993,15)

Indian tribes are not states. They have a status higher than that of states.

--*Native American Church v. Navajo Tribal Council*, 1959, 272F.2d 131

Today, motorists who travel down any major interstate in New Mexico are greeted with intermittent billboards advertising casinos. At night, these neon billboards are especially surprising as they spring up in landscapes dominated by stars, cacti and an occasional coyote. Although the massive architecture of these Indian gaming facilities conveys a sense of permanence, it is important to remember that their presence is a relatively recent phenomenon. Currently, residents and tourists alike take casinos in New Mexico for granted. However, just a few short years ago, this was far from true. It is easy to forget the turbulence that marked this issue from the late 1980s through the 1990s. Casinos dot the landscape. While some mirror the physical environment, others do just the opposite, seeking to lure visitors with a Las Vegas-like flair. Three hundred and sixty-five days a year, not excluding holidays, casino parking lots are populated with hundreds of cars, owned by gamblers, concert goers, locals in search of all-you-can-eat buffets or a quick

infusion of cheap gas, and a vast array of employees who enable these businesses to operate. In New Mexico, larger Indian casinos are truly “Disneyfied,” offering a diverse menu of entertainment options.

The economic impact of Indian gaming is far reaching. In many cases, substantial material benefits are being enjoyed by certain tribes. Across the country, tribal community centers, child care facilities and hospitals are being built. However, obtaining the right to build these casinos emerged through ongoing disputes, marked by court case after court case, peopled by lobbyists and litigators galore. In this chapter, I will provide an overview/chronology of how these legal battles unfolded, waged between the federal government, groups of Indian/sovereign nations, elected officials, the New Mexico State Legislature, and finally, in the court of public opinion. Although these issues have played out in the courts for Navajo and Mescalero Apache peoples, my primary focus will be on Pueblo communities.

Recently, President Barack Obama predicted that in years to come both politicians and the American public will accept the Affordable Care Act, much like the way Social Security or Medicaid is viewed today. He asserted that by the time this law gains acceptance, negative connotations associated with the name “Obamacare” will drop away. While comparing these two laws may sound like a stretch, this is exactly the type of evolution that has taken place in New Mexico. The overall perception towards Indian gaming has changed. For the most part, controversy has been replaced by acceptance, or what some might describe as quiet resignation. For many Indian Nations, gaming has become an economic lifeline. In other words, once certain policies are enacted into law, there is no turning back.

Returning to the discussion at hand, how and when did legalized gaming gain a firm foothold on Indian land? In 1987, during George W. Bush's presidency, the U. S. Supreme Court weighed in on a critical case: *California v. Cabazon Band of Mission Indians*. This ruling provides the legal foundation for Indian gaming. According to the State of New Mexico Gaming Control Board, "if state law criminally prohibits a form of gambling, then the tribes within that state may not engage in that activity. However, if state law civilly regulates a form of gambling, then the tribes within the state may engage in that gaming free of state control" (State of New Mexico 2013). In other words, the Supreme Court gave each state the power to decide whether or not to legalize Indian gaming, and to determine the nature of its extent, ranging from bingo to blackjack. While this finding opened the door to Indian casinos, it offered little guidance for how individual states should "regulate" this issue. In all likelihood, these Supreme Court Justices had no distinct idea how this finding could impact tribal Nations and surrounding communities.

A year later, Congress established the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA). (From this point forward, this acronym will be used to refer to this Act.) This 1988 legislation enabled the Federal Government to oversee gaming on Indian lands throughout the United States. The passage of this Act opened a floodgate of controversy as tribes looked to individual states to legalize Indian gaming and to officially sanction Class 111 gaming, which allowed Indian communities to construct casinos, designed to house slot machines, black jack tables and the like. Given the number of Indian Nations that enjoy federal recognition, it is surprising that this U.S. Supreme Court finding failed to provide a roadmap to help states create legislation.

Therefore, each state was forced to chart new waters, no small feat. Unanswered questions abound. Just what constitutes “regulation” for individual states? Who holds the power? Who controls the purse strings? States now had to assume responsibilities that heretofore had always been shouldered by the federal government. Involved states were forced to negotiate with one or more sovereign Indian nations within their jurisdiction/geographical borders. At times, even defining these borders was difficult. In the case of the Navajo Nation, state and tribal borders overlap. The result is that the Navajo Nation had to reach an agreement with two state legislatures over legalized gaming: one in New Mexico and the other in Arizona.

It is impossible to proceed with this discussion without examining the concept of sovereignty. In a nutshell, there is no set definition of sovereignty. With the IGRA in place, each state and each tribe had to establish new conditions, new ways to relate to one another in a multitude of legal arenas. In most cases, the definition of this term has changed over time. Indeed, from state to state, this concept continues to be quite fluid. Political scientist W. Dale Mason offers this analysis:

> The status of American Indian tribes is unlike that of any other participant seeking to achieve goals within the American political system. Their anomalous status flows from their having retained vestiges of aboriginal sovereignty and from their constitutionally established relationship with the federal government. For some purposes, tribes act as sovereign entities similar to states; for others, they act as interest groups; and for still others, they act as both simultaneously. But no definition is fully explanatory because tribes can act in ways that states and interest groups (or states as interest groups) cannot. (Mason 2000, 3)

The legal rights of American Indian tribes, subject to such an abundance of interpretations, left individual states in a quandary in relationship to the IGRA.

Cultural anthropologist Katherine A. Spilde explores some unanticipated implications for tribes in association with this 1988 Act, stating:

> [The IGRA] actually required tribes to surrender some measure of sovereignty to the states in order to exercise their federal right to run gaming establishments. The idea that tribes surrendered sovereignty, rather than the popular notion that IGRA granted special gaming rights to tribes, represents a major ideological shift . . . The erosion of sovereignty encoded in the IGRA is often lost in special rights rhetoric, wherein the historical basis of the federal trust relationship . . . disappears and is replaced by an emphasis on contemporary racial or ethnic politics. (Spilde 2000, 87)

In the past, federally recognized tribes negotiated directly with the United States government – one nation to one nation based on a history/foundation of past treaties–clearly, a much stronger position of authority. When this Act was enacted, though, Indian nations, involved with governmental gaming, had to sacrifice a portion of their autonomy. Indeed, they had to start from scratch. Losing even the appearance of equal footing made tribes much more vulnerable to new sets of rules, often dictated by partisan state politics. This is why an emphasis on "contemporary racial or ethnic politics" dominates newspaper accounts of legal battles over Indian gaming, whether played out on a local or national stage.

Indeed, the passage of the IGRA, although hailed as a victory by the majority of Native nations, came at a price. Tribal groups that offer gaming now must submit to forms of state regulation that they were never subjected to before. In the essay "The Death of Indian Gaming and Tribal Sovereignty," political scientists Tracey A. Skopek and Kenneth N. Hansen assert that implementing the IGRA "could be a dangerous thing since states have not always been the best protectors of the civil rights of previously disadvantaged groups" (Skopek and Hansen 2011, 209). In other words, tribes had no choice but to forfeit the known protection of the federal

government in order to move forward. Under a narrow set of circumstances, however, the federal government could still offer a last line of defense. For example, tribes were allowed to bring suit against states that failed to negotiate Class 111 compacts in a reasonable amount of time. But at what point should the federal government step in? What constituted a reasonable amount of time? One year? Two years? Three years? By definition, legal disputes are always long and drawn out, especially ones on this scale, many involving state supreme courts. Therefore, the responsibility fell on lawyers, representing tribes and states, to prove that the federal government under the auspices of the IGRA, should provide a forum to resolve conflicts (Mason 2000, 121). Needless to say, local attorneys in states across the country benefitted from a sudden influx of work during this time period. Business was so lucrative that certain lawyers gained a reputation for specializing in this area. As a result of all this legal back and forth in the late 1980s through the 1990s, courts became backlogged. With huge amounts of money spent by special interest groups—representing both sides of the fence, each team fought to forge new legislation. In many ways, battles for and against Indian gaming represented a legal free-for-all.

In the face of such legal maneuverings, difficult choices had to be made. While seeming to be an overt expression of sovereignty, the IGRA could also represent a loss of autonomy. However, most tribal entities felt that the economic benefits of gaming outweighed this loss of legal standing. Anthropologist David Kamper clarifies this contradiction:

> Many Indians believe that they possess the inherent right to govern their communities. Due to external forces, however, they must abide by a more limited model of sovereignty, one engendered by and based on United States law. Herein lies the paradox: federal-and state-sanctioned gaming creates

> situations in which Indian communities must compromise some of their legal sovereignty in order to maintain economic independence. (Kamper 2000, vii)

While the academics cited above offer invaluable insights into the loss of the legal standing of tribes, it is important to remember that adopting legalized gaming has provided a way out of grinding poverty for many Indian communities. For many tribes, there was no choice but to fight for legalized gaming, regardless of future consequences. Immediate needs had to be addressed. Although referencing bingo as opposed to slot machines (a later development), a character from Louise Erdrich's novel *The Bingo Palace* provides a realistic perspective: "If you are poor and you suddenly get bingo rich you'll see money the way I first do. Not so much for what it gets you, but for what it keeps away—cold, heat, sore feet, nicotine fits and hungry days, even other people" (Erdrich 1994, 95). While a single individual expressed these sentiments, these words can certainly resonate through a Pueblo when gaming profits are distributed among members, when fundamentals such as heat, food and housing are delivered.

However, economic concerns are not the only factor to consider when discussing the impact of casinos on tribal groups. Since gambling is a long-accepted form of cultural expression in Native communities, journalist Kathryn Gabriel provides other ways to interpret a pro-gaming stance by many Native peoples. From a historical perspective, many indigenous groups believed/believe that "gambling and praying were two sides of the same coin. Even today, a gambling addiction is sometimes seen as a disease of the spirit" (Gabriel 1996, 11). To non-Native outsiders viewing gambling as a sacred activity may seem strange, but this narrative runs through the oral histories of many tribal communities. However, despite these

traditions, it is important to keep in mind that there is no universal attitude towards legalized gaming by Indian people. Although scholar and novelist Gerald Vizenor would certainly acknowledge the historical role of gaming as a cultural premise and the pressing need for economic independence in Native communities, he does not mince words when he writes, “bingo [gambling] as the new cash crop is based on losers” (Vizenor 1976, xii). Clearly, Indian gaming is a complex issue. In reviewing the predominantly black and white media coverage of Native peoples and views on gaming, one might walk away with the opposite impression. In other words, not all Indians are pro-gaming. There is no unified voice when it comes to this dispute.

Specifically, how have gaming tribes sacrificed sovereignty as they pursue economic growth? Primarily, this has played out in two ways. First, all Indian gaming establishments must report their profits to the individual states in which they are located. And second, they must turn over a set percentage of profits to the state. In short, when Indian nations are involved in legalized gaming, they must forego certain rights to privacy and the ability to truly control their economy. As a result, bits and pieces of autonomy are lost. This was and continues to be disconcerting to tribes, who believe accounts of gaming profits should be their business and their business alone. Tribal nations fear that, if they are mandated to disclose gaming proceeds, they could face punishment, via a loss of funding and/or services, both from state and federal agencies. Why is this? One reason is that individual states might be motivated to retaliate if state lottery revenues suffered losses due to Indian gaming. Of course, from an economic standpoint, it would be difficult to prove a direct case of cause and effect. For instance, profits from tribal gaming may or may not contribute

to a slowdown in yearly sales of state lottery tickets. Nevertheless, Indian gaming could pose a threat to state coffers, whether real or imagined.

The federal government could also justify cutbacks based on gaming proceeds. In the book *Uneven Ground: American Indian Sovereignty and Federal Law*, David E. Wilkins and K. Tsianina Lomawaima explore this Catch-22. They list a range of "anti-Indian" legislation posed by conservative U.S. Senators, spanning many years, from the late 1980s through the 1990s. Politicians, such as Republican Senator Slate Gorton, "sought to cut federal program funds that [were] still critical to tribal agencies and populations because of a perceived 'abundance' of gaming revenue" (Wilkins and Lomawaima 2001, 241). Questions such as the following abound. Who determines the definition of "abundance"? How does this vary from one state to another? Based on the cost of living, should California tribes earn more than Oklahoma tribes? In short, what should the per capita income be for Native nations involved in gaming? Twenty thousand a year? Thirty thousand a year? A salary equivalent to that of a U.S. Senator? Or, is it even fair to think of gaming revenues as "earned" income? Clearly, for these senators, this was no way to make an honest living.

This political culture both created and reinforced what the former director of the California Nations Indian Gaming Association refers to as the "myth of the rich Indian." In his essay "Most Native American Have Not Profited from Indian Gaming," gaming advocate Jacob Coin provides facts and figures that belie this stereotype:

> [It is] a mistaken notion that tribal government gaming has eliminated poverty and neglect in Indian country. While the benefits of tribal gaming are evident in the 28 states where some 2220 tribes operate 330 casino and bingo operations, prosperity has not trickled down to most Native Americans. Tribal

> government gaming generated $14.5 billion in revenues in 2002, but just 41 of the operations won 65 percent of the gross. Roughly 20 percent of the casinos are generating 80 percent of the revenues.
>
> Most tribal casinos and bingo halls are marginal operations providing valuable jobs and economic development on Indian lands. Of course, if you were to stack all the newspaper articles written about the lucrative Foxwoods resort in Connecticut [owned by the Pequot tribe] it would tower over what has been written about all the other 329 tribal gaming operations in the United States. The result is the misconception that all Indians are rich Indians. (Coin 2006, 15)

Many New Mexicans operate under the illusion that casinos have profoundly changed the lifestyles of Pueblo, Mescalero Apache and Navajo peoples. However, this is simply not true.

How does this misconception impact tribes engaged in government gaming? This myth of untold riches can be used to argue against state and federal legislation to deliver much-needed funding. Additionally, this line of thinking stands in direct contradiction to some tribal philosophies, including the Pueblo worldview, where the needs of the community are valued over those of the individual. Riches in Native communities are measured by different standards than in non-Native groups. Indeed, according to Wilkins and Lomawaima, few outsiders understand the collective needs of tribal communities. They provide these insights:

> In reality, gaming revenues are still quite recent and are unevenly distributed across tribes, and the economic challenges facing tribes remain immense. Tribes face the legacy of generations of underfunding, deferred maintenance, and serious infrastructural needs, which on many reservations have never been met by federal agencies or monies. Federal monies are still necessary to run many programs, while gaming revenues are being used to build infrastructure. Many reservations, for example, lack any fire-protection agencies—before tribal gaming revenues allowed tribes to establish fire departments, homes simply burned to the ground. Other infrastructures that the federal government has never adequately funded include roads, water systems, education, senior housing, senior care, and day care among others. (Wilkins and Lomawaima 2001, 241-242)

To provide another telling example of missing infrastructure, how many non-Native people know that most members of the Navajo Nation lack indoor plumbing or running water? For the majority of Dine people, filling and transporting tanks of water, via a family pickup truck, is part and parcel of everyday life. While the United States is not viewed as a third-world nation, the federal government has failed to address basic needs or "infrastructure" on reservation lands.

Despite concerns associated with sovereignty, the passage of the IGRA in 1988 was met with excitement by many Indian communities. In light of the large Native population in the state of New Mexico, it was only a matter of time before individual tribes started lobbying the state for rights to offer different levels of legalized gaming. To understand the entire picture, it is important to understand how key legal battles define the history of Indian gaming in New Mexico. One of the best ways to do this is to acknowledge a range of voices appearing in newspapers—whether for or against—during this tumultuous time. By examining a series of letters to the editor and newspaper articles, both local and national, I can revisit the emotions of those who spoke out, both for and against legalized gaming. Regardless of which side was represented, this issue inspired a string of passionate, back and forth debates. New Mexico politics would never be the same.

But first, how does Indian gaming vary from other forms of gambling? With the notable exception of charitable gambling sanctioned by most states, gaming operations are in business to generate profits for private businesses or state governments. Casino moguls like Donald Trump and Steve Wynn and state-run lotteries are two examples that come to mind. Private businesses felt threatened by

the potential competition. For instance, Donald Trump became a vociferous opponent of Indian gaming and testified before the House sub-committee in 1993, warning that if tribes were able to build on Indian reservations close to New York City that "it would be the economic death knell to Atlantic City" (qtd. in Gabriel 1996, 190). However, the goal behind Indian gaming operations is diametrically opposed to such a model of capitalism. Social scientists Thaddieus W. Conner and William A. Taggert elaborate: "Although individuals may benefit from managerial and financial arrangements, and state coffers may swell from 'revenue sharing' provisions and the like, Indian gaming was ushered in under the premise that it would benefit tribal community members in multiple direct and indirect ways" (Connor and Taggert 2009, 51). As a businessman, it was and probably still is difficult for Donald Trump to see any good in this approach. Addressing poverty in Indian communities can only interfere with the bottom line: generating profits for individual businesses.

Typically, tribal communities with successful casinos enjoy an array of benefits, including improved housing, jobs, college scholarships, yearly cash stipends, senior services, language preservation programs, etc. Gaming was and is seen as a tool, a way to address poverty by employing self-sufficient means. Of course, achieving this goal was far from clear cut. Today, tribal members across the country debate whether the proper percentages of profits are filtered back into their respective communities. In some instances, tribal "managers" are getting rich from gaming and nepotism is rampant. As a result, even when casinos on Indian lands are profitable, there can be inherent problems. Often, tribal members lack any way to lodge their complaints when monies are misspent. Perhaps the temptations of new-

found wealth are part and parcel of the human condition, regardless of whether a casino is located in Las Vegas, Atlantic City or Pojoaque Pueblo.

In 1990, New Mexico Governor Bruce King appointed a task force to negotiate gaming compacts with the Pueblo of Sandia and Mescalero Apache Tribe. From the beginning, King was reluctant to support legalized gaming, citing a direct conflict with the New Mexico state constitution. A year later, a gubernatorial appointed task force presented two negotiated gaming contracts to King, but he refused to sign them prior to the November election (qtd. in Mason 2000, 91-97). Native supporters of gaming turned on King, determined to generate votes for other candidates, regardless of party affiliation. Feelings were so heated that Pojoaque Pueblo governor Jacob Viarrial went on the attack declaring, "I think Gov. King has proven he's very anti-Indian. . . . Gov. King is hurting us and we are very, very unhappy and very hurt. It would be a sad day for Indian people if King were to get elected" (Mason 2000, 97). Governor King was unused to hearing Native leaders—long his supporters—hurl such attacks.

Viarrial was outspoken in other ways as well. In a *New York Times* article "Some Indians Buck a Stereotype," columnist George Johnson describes a stroke of political mastery by the former governor of Pojoaque:

> When he is not happy with the powers that be in New Mexico state government, Jacob Viarrial, the governor of Pojoaque Pueblo, has a foolproof way of turning up the heat. In a maneuver sure to stir up the environmentalists down in Santa Fe, he threatens to use the reservation, just a few miles from Santa Fe, as the site for a low-level nuclear waste dump.
>
> That is what he told former Gov. Bruce King a couple of years ago when the state tried to interfere with the pueblo's plans to open a gambling hall. And that is what he threatened earlier this year, when it looked as though the legislature might allow racetracks to compete with the state's proliferating

> supply of Indian-owned casinos. “With different people wanting to force us out of Indian gaming, we need to look at other areas,” Mr. Viarrial said in an interview last week. “Right now, we’re looking at low-level, but if it looks lucrative enough we might go with high-level waste” (Johnson, 1995, E6).

Is this hitting below the belt or what? For local environmentalists, this begged the question: Given a choice between these two options, could Indian gaming possibly represent the lesser of two evils? Both residents and tourists alike gravitate to Santa Fe, much like they do to Sedona in Arizona. These two areas have become Meccas in their own right, best defined as “spiritual supermarkets.” Going so far as to build a monolith of a home in Santa Fe, Shirley MacLaine’s attraction to this area epitomizes this notion. MacLaine and other representatives of the New Age movement in general believe that nature and Native Americans are truly synonymous. Hence, Santa Fe, “the place” beckons, representing a pilgrimage site. Certainly, it is no coincidence that the *Kiplinger*, a company that offers real estate forecasts, just ranked Santa Fe as the fourth most livable city in the United States. Directly stated or not, it is this mystical appeal defined by a Native American presence that makes Santa Fe such a livable city.

Viarrial capitalizes on this stereotype of Native Americans as the “original environmentalists” or protectors of the earth to challenge an all too pervasive depiction of Indian people. These romantic beliefs can be found in literature, the media and in advertising, expressed through a series of familiar tropes. For example, one only has to remember a popular 1970s public service announcement featuring Iron Eyes Cody (fig. 1), dressed from head to toe in traditional Plains Indian dress. (It is important to note that Iron Eyes Cody is a fictional figure. Although known for playing Indians in Hollywood westerns, this Italian-American actor’s real name was

Espera Oscar DiCorti.) Juxtaposed against waters polluted by industry, floating garbage and a towering steel bridge, he paddles his canoe. In a final close-up, Cody sheds a particularly poignant tear over littering. This iconic sixty-second "Keep American Beautiful" spot flashed across television screens from 1971 to 1983, successful because it conflated multiple stereotypes. Representing the voice of nature, this solitary Indian in a canoe spoke to a collective sense of grief felt by Americans writ large. Here, the "vanishing Indian" is equated with the loss of nature. Although Manifest Destiny did—and to some extent still does—stand as the unspoken law of the land, Americans continue to mourn the disappearance of "virgin" territory, symbolized by Indian people—always frozen in the past. This storyline underlies hundreds of years of U.S. history. However, this public service commercial was hardly a new idea. Perhaps the advertising executive found inspiration in Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, who created this image in his 1885 epic poem, *The Song of Hiawatha.* Here, a lone Indian man, the protagonist, paddles his birch canoe off into the sunset. The implication is that he will never be seen again. It is ironic, though, how often the "vanishing Indian" reappears. (However, one could argue that the secondary subject of Longfellow's poem is nature itself.) In light of such prevailing stereotypes, the Governor of Pojoaque could not have found a more effective, if shocking, bargaining tool. He forced Santa Fe residents to choose between the storage of nuclear waste and Indian gaming, both viable threats. In the process, he also challenged non-Native residents to reexamine their beliefs. In short, not all Indians are environmentalists. And perhaps Santa Fe was not all it seemed.

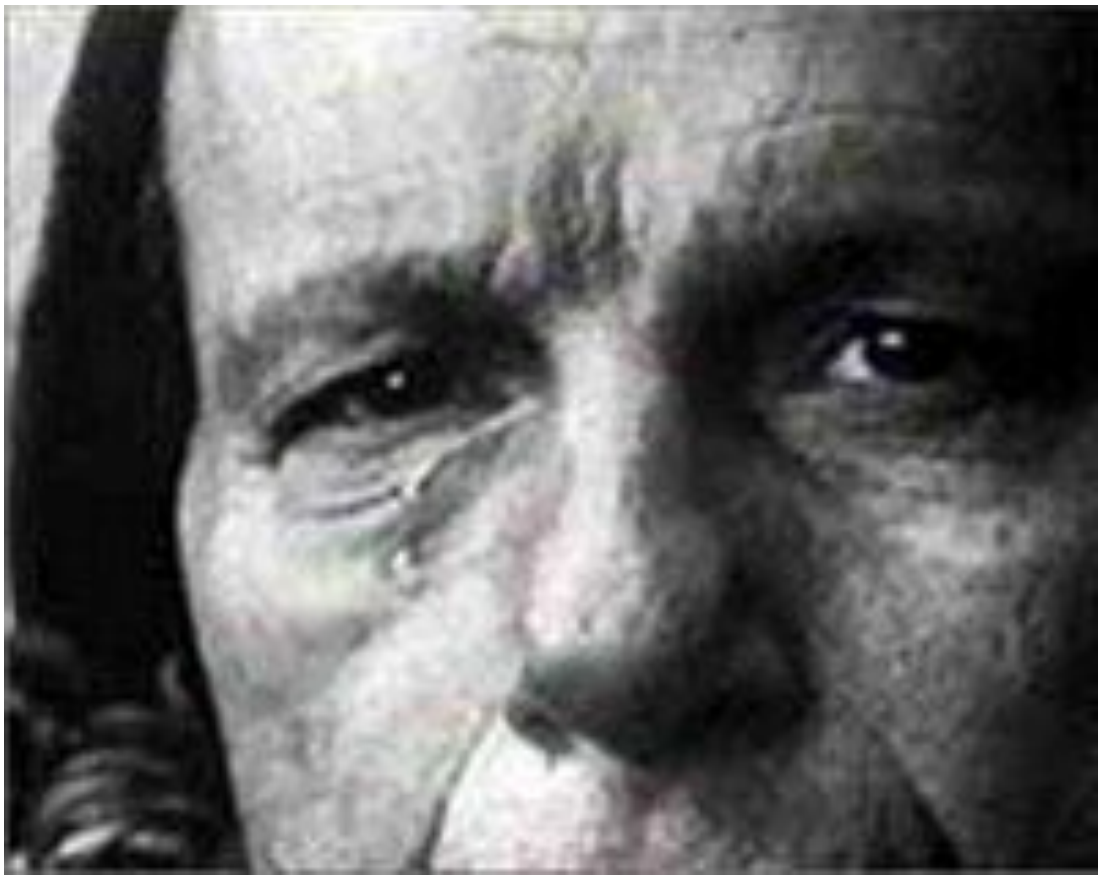

Figure 1. Public Service Announcement, *Keep America Beautiful*, Close-up of actor Iron Eyes Cody, 1971.

In another article, *Albuquerque Journal* columnist Larry Calloway reveals a behind-the-scenes rift within the New Mexico Democratic Party over Indian gaming:

> Court documents, filed by Johnson, reveal that after the June 1994 primary, [Bill] Richardson advised politically troubled Gov. King to sign one gaming compact based on the limited Arizona model and to stage a "media event" in which Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt would come to New Mexico to co-sign. "I see no downside to doing this, Richardson writes, but King doesn't do it" (Calloway 1995, Sec. G).

Why is this so surprising? Statistically, Native peoples in New Mexico register as Democrats and vote a straight Democratic ticket (Mason 2000, 91-97). Perhaps, if King had taken Richardson's advice and embraced even some small piece of Indian

gaming—a token gesture, the election might have yielded a far different outcome. After all, despite this particular issue, King was an incumbent. In this particular gubernatorial race, however, Native voters abandoned their loyalty to the Democratic Party in an effort to ensure future state support for Indian gaming. Due, in part, to this issue Republican Gary Johnson was elected governor in 1994, much to the chagrin of some Democrats.

Figure 2. Political Cartoon, Trevor, *Albuquerque Journal*, 1995.

In this political cartoon, the artist points to the disparity between the rapidity at which Indian gaming is gaining a foothold as opposed to the pedestrian, anti-gaming efforts of the New Mexico State Legislature (fig. 2). By pairing a racing semi-truck labeled “Indian Gaming” with an ever-changing “gambling limit” sign, the cartoonist highlights the gap between the two. The truck is decorated with a generic zig-zag “Indian” design, while the word “VROOM” and sailing mud flaps over the rear tires indicate speed. Representing the New Mexico Supreme Court, the befuddled, inept

worker has lost his glasses, a metaphor for being unable to keep up with the times or the pace at which Indian gaming is moving. Reminiscent of the cartoon character Mr. Magoo, this poor sign painter has run out of space to lower the speed limit anymore. Published by the *Albuquerque Journal* in 1995, this cartoon reflects public sentiment. Between the months of March and July, gaming compacts were again being questioned by the state legislature. Even though full-scale casino gambling was already in place, however, two decisions by the New Mexico Supreme Court put this all at risk. The Court claimed "that the compacts executed by the Governor [Johnson] are without legal effect and that no gaming compacts exist between the Tribes and Pueblos and the State of New Mexico" (New Mexico Supreme Court 1995). This dramatic reversal left gaming tribes in a quandary. Legal scholar W. Dale Mason notes:

> [T]he Court's decisions demonstrated again the vulnerability of tribes to political questions that on their face have little, if anything, to do with Indian policy. Their practical effect was to threaten not only the economic revival under way in Indian Country in New Mexico but also the fundamental ability of the tribes to conduct their own affairs free from the vagaries of non-Indian politics. Accordingly, the tribes proceeded to enter the political arena to protect their own interests. (Mason 2000, 147).

In response to this legislation, tribes launched a series of well-organized protests that took the non-Native community by surprise. On January 15, 1996, Native protesters took to the picket line at Isleta Gaming Palace with handmade signs proclaiming "Save our Jobs" and "Legislators: We Will Remember the Ones Who Let the Feds do Your Thinking." Of course, the "we will remember" refrain refers to upcoming elections. To hammer home this point, Isleta Pueblo made sure to set up a voter registration booth in close proximity to the demonstration (Mason 2000, 133).

Other Pueblos took part as well. For instance, residents of Nambe Pueblo threatened to block traffic with protestors and signs to make a pro-gaming statement—hardly the type of message the state wanted tourists to encounter as they set out for a scenic drive on the High Road to Taos.

Although Johnson was elected fair and square by a majority of the electorate in 1995, the public, both Republicans and Democrats, expressed concern over Johnson's age. After all, Governor-elect Johnson was perceived as a relative youngster at the age of forty-one. As a businessman—the owner of an Albuquerque construction company—Johnson was certainly a newcomer to the world of politics. Many alleged that this Republican candidate "bought" votes by backing Indian gaming. A sampling of this sentiment is expressed in an excerpt from a letter to the editor, published by the *Albuquerque Journal.* (Until Indian gaming was eventually legalized by the State Legislature, the *Journal* was an outspoken opponent of Indian gaming.)

> It is a shame that the Indian tribes were given, and accepted, poor legal advice and that our own Gov. Gary Johnson was so willing to sell them compacts in order to be elected. While we may sympathize with the tribes' predicament we must not let our emotions affect our decision—it is far too important a matter for that. (Bryant 1996)

While this reader gives a cursory nod to the "tribes' predicament [poverty]," she cannot concede that Native peoples possess the skills to manage such a challenge. Instead, she portrays the tribal entities involved as childlike, a monolithic entity, unable to understand the difference between good and bad legal advice.

Cultural anthropologist Katherine A. Spilde explores this phenomenon in her essay "Educating Local Non-Indian Communities about Indian Nation Governmental

Gaming: Messages and Methods" (Spilde 2000). The author outlines the role of local non-Indian involvement with casino politics. Spilde highlights how misconceptions by "neighbors," such as the one expressed above, can color views on Indian nation gaming, and points out how deeply disturbing these assumptions can be:

> [T]ribal people are a front for Mafia-run businesses, that they do not pay taxes, and that their identity is often manipulated for political purpose (by both Indians and non-Indians). The most insidious stereotype, however, is the insinuation that tribal people cannot handle the intricacies of federal recognition, land management and casinos on their own. . . . These popular images of tribal government gaming and Native American identity constitute the most difficult hurdles to jump in educating local non-Indian communities about Indian nation gaming and economic development. Because of their proximity to Native communities, non-Indians living near Indian casinos often feel that they know the realities of Native American life. Unlike the majority of Americans, whose perceptions of contemporary Native American realities are shaped primarily by feature films, frontier ideology and "vanishing Indian" narratives. These interactions often produce a sense of common ground. Non-Indians feel that they know about reservation life. However, what they know about Indian nation governmental gaming is often embedded in their own cultural background, economic class, and public discourses. (Spilde 2000, 83)

In other words, just because a non-Native person lives close by the Sandia or other Pueblo communities, this does not imply an automatic understanding of multifaceted issues. One's place of residency does not guarantee insight. However, in reviewing letters to the editor during the mid-90s, an attitude of "knowingness" based on place is pervasive. Many Albuquerque residents felt they possessed expertise and could access the inside track by virtue of proximity. In other words, a familiarity with pueblo lands, via property ownership, imbues non-Native neighbors with the right to pronounce judgment on the construction of casinos or Indian gaming in general.

Not to be deterred by a flurry of damning letters, the newly-elected Governor-appointed professor and lawyer Fred Ragsdale to negotiate compacts with various

Indian tribes. In February of 1995, thirteen identical compacts were signed between the State and the Pueblos of Acoma, Isleta, Laguna, Pojoaque, Sandia, San Felipe, San Juan, Santa Ana, Santa Clara, Taos and Tesuque, and the Jicarilla and Mescalero Apache Tribes. However, later that year, the New Mexico Supreme Court in *State ex. Rel Clark v. Johnson* ruled that Governor Gary Johnson lacked the authority to sign compacts on behalf of the state (State of New Mexico 2013). While all this transpired, it is important to note that legal ramifications associated with Indian gaming could be felt far beyond New Mexico borders. Hundreds of legal battles ensued, dominating newspaper stories in states across the country. This is illustrated by the headline "Year of High Stakes." Here, editors and directors of *Associated Press* member newspapers and broadcast stations overwhelmingly voted that Indian gambling should head their list of 1995's top ten stories (Calloway 1995, Sec. G). This ranking by journalists offers a direct testament to the national importance of this issue.

Another way to measure the impact of Indian gaming as an ongoing legal issue is to acknowledge the amounts of money spent by pro-gaming lobbyists in 1995. In his article, "Lobbyists Spent $272,000 Last Year, Mostly on Gambling," *Associated Press* writer Barry Massey provided a tally of how monies were allotted (Massey 1996). Not surprisingly, Governor Johnson and his staff were listed as key targets—as lobbyists sought to sway the opinion of lawmakers and government officials. These funds were spent on food, entertainment and gifts. Representatives from Indian nations had to play certain political games in order to promote their cause.

> As the 1996 Legislature convened Tuesday [in January], the debate over gambling continues and lawmakers face a potentially more intense lobbying campaign by those who want to expand the legal forms of gambling in New Mexico—from Indian tribes and their casino workers to horse racing tracks and firms that supply gambling equipment. . . . The expenditures by lobbyists cover a key period last year when the Legislature considered measures to expand gambling—including a state-run lottery—and Gov. Gary Johnson signed compacts with Indian tribes for casinos on tribal lands. (Massey 1996)

At the time, lobbyists may have wondered if these funds were ill spent because the state Supreme Court later nullified the gambling compacts. In truth, no one could foresee what the future might hold. Another *Albuquerque Journal* editorial illustrates this point. In this excerpt, the author, adopting a superior tone, writes: "And, rather than dancing around with dollar signs in front of their eyes, Indian gambling leaders are taking a realistic attitude about the long-term prospects for Indian gaming" (Anon. 1995). This author goes on to cite San Juan Pueblo Governor Joe Garcia:

> "Gaming is a trend, maybe even a fad," said San Juan Pueblo Gov. Joe Garcia. "I don't see it being here in fifteen or twenty years. But while it is here, we have to build our economic base. It is a stepping stone to financial independence."
>
> "I can only speak for San Juan Pueblo [now Ohkay Owingeh]," Garcia said. "But the preservation of our religious and cultural traditions is paramount. We can never jeopardize that." (Anon. 1995)

Again, this is one of the few instances in which a Pueblo leader is actually interviewed and cited by the *Albuquerque Journal* during this time period. However, the inclusion of this particular set of quotes may tell us more about the author than Governor Garcia. Here, the writer seems reassured by two of Garcia's observations. The first assertion is that Indian gaming may not last. And second, that "real" Indians are not motivated by money. The litmus test for this is that they reject "dancing around with dollar signs in their eyes," all in favor of tradition. In addition, it is no

coincidence that the writer utilizes “dancing” as a verb. After all, Indians are known for participating in “rain dances,” an all too handy stereotype.

Of course, San Juan residents cannot host a dance or offer a feast day without the ability to purchase food or pay the electric bill. It is as if economic realities should be removed from cultural/religious practices. This is the true measure of authenticity. To be too eager about gaining financial independence could detract from how and why Indian peoples should be allowed to offer legalized gaming. The views expressed in this editorial speak to how Native peoples are romanticized in general. In an article on Indian gaming, former National Museum of the American Indian curator Rick Hill makes an observation that is more than applicable: “How much money can Indians make and still be Indians? Do you have to be economically poor to be spiritually rich?” (Hill 1993, 15). The questions posed by Hill are profound. In a few words, he is able to cut through the rhetoric surrounding the stereotypical definition of a “real” Indian.

Media expert Richard C. King further expands on how the media can distort images of Indian people. In his essay “Media Representations of Indian Gaming,” he describes reoccurring patterns that are quite problematic:

> . . . [M]any Americans have stereotypes about Indians and Indian gaming. Public misconceptions often derive from and mirror media coverage. Indeed, while much of the news reporting on the subject is fair, biased reporting remains far too common, reinforcing anti-Indian racism.
>
> Reporters and columnists rely on clichés to convey the nature of tribal casinos and perpetuate ugly, hurtful images of Native Americans. In recent years, the media used phrases like “on the warpath,” “war drums,” and “Indian massacre” to describe the conflict over Indian gaming. Moreover, supporters of casinos and tribes have been maligned through racist rhetoric. One tribal lawyer in California was dubbed “Chief Running Mouth.” And politicians receiving campaign funds from tribes with casinos, in turn, have found

> themselves debased through similarly charged language. Former Governor Gray Davis was called a “pale-face” after “wampum,” while Lieutenant Governor Cruz Bustamante was doing a “rain dance” for campaign funds. (King 2006, 1)

This time the “rain dance” is being performed by a non-Native politician, but the racist language is still applicable. This guilt by association tactic would not be acceptable if used to describe other ethnic groups. For instance, in what comparable context could Governor Gray Davis ever be referred to as a “pale-face”? However, with Indian people this is fair game. Somehow, the biased nature of this terminology does not count.

Scholar Mary Lawlor explores the complex nature of these issues at length in her book *Public Native America: Tribal Self Representation in Museums, Powwows and Casinos*. She points to how casinos/Indian gaming has been oversimplified by the media.

> The singular focus on the disputes, risks, and ironies of Indian casinos, it seems to me, often serves to distract attention away from the continuing poverty on reservations, the continuing marginalization of American Indians from the continuing poverty on reservations, the continuing marginalization of American Indians from the structures of power in the United States, and the heinous history of colonization that rarely gets looked at in the face in this country—by academics any more than by the neighbors of Native American communities who are in competition with them over land and sovereignty. (Lawlor 2006, 23)

Indeed, the same theme emerges. It is the “neighbors” of Sandia Pueblo who feel especially moved or even entitled to criticize Indian gaming. Why does the *Albuquerque Journal* present such a one-sided view of this debate? Of course, there are certainly downsides to the world of gambling. Meetings for Gamblers Anonymous/Twelve-Step programs abound in Albuquerque. (Indeed, as a condition of gaming compacts, Indian casinos in the state of New Mexico are required to fund

a range of social service programs for problem gamblers.) However, why were so many non-Native journalists automatically threatened by the advent of Indian gaming? And what kept them from actually speaking to their Native neighbors directly about the pros and cons of this issue? One can only assume this is representative of a greater problem: a lack of communication between Native and non-Native communities. To return to the Affordable Health Care analogy, perhaps Native communities could have adopted a more pro-active role in educating the public at large about legalized gaming. Unfortunately, too many New Mexicans reacted out of ignorance.

One of the best ways to examine this public outcry is to examine a series of protests lodged against Indian gaming. In an outpouring of 1995 and 1996 editorials and letters to the editor published by the *Albuquerque Journal,* the regional nature of this media bias comes to light. While a valid concern, many readers raised questions about organized crime, convinced that criminals would invade the state in search of easy money—a vacuum waiting to be filled. An excerpt from one such editorial reads:

> Let's start with a few givens:
>
> Organized crime exists.
>
> Organized crime has often been attracted by and flourished in the presence of big cash flows, like those generated by gambling. The same conditions also attract interests that operate right on the edge of legality, while exercising a corrupting influence.
>
> New Mexico is on the verge of agreeing to gambling on Indian lands, where the state could end up without any regulatory leverage. Indian advocates for Indian gaming like to say it's paternalistic for the non-Indian community to have such concerns. It's not. It's enlightened self-interest to keep all of New Mexico, including Indian lands, as unattractive to organized crime as possible. (Anon. *Albuquerque Journal*, 1995)

Although the tenor of the above editorial is much more reasonable than those sent in by some readers/the public at large, the nameless editor (representing the *Albuquerque Journal*) capitalizes on the fear of increased crime to provide a cautionary tale against Indian gaming. Indeed, letters—both from and to the editor—offer a unique format and assume the form of a conversation, an on-going dialogue. Some readers agree, while others disagree. Here is one example of a pro-gaming/anti-organized-crime response from a dedicated reader of the *Albuquerque Journal*.

> After reading thousands of words about the pros and cons of legal gaming in New Mexico, it seems that nobody has addressed or mentioned the adverse effects of illegal gambling and its relationship to drugs and prostitution which, incidentally, helps form the foundation of a three-legged stool that perpetuates illicit crime.
>
> If gambling, especially on Indian lands, is legislated to be illegal, then the missing leg for nefarious individuals will be returned to help support the stool, leaving a lucrative door open for the potential benefit of some of our society's most despicable participants.
>
> Since it is a fact that we have not found a way to eradicate drugs or prostitution, it is also a fact that it is impossible to keep gamblers from gambling. So, regardless of whether or not we have legal or illegal gambling, it is inevitable that someone will take advantage of this profitable niche. Consequently, there can be no doubt that the criminally-oriented are in a rare and unique position of being in total agreement with our most noble, anti-gambling citizens. (Cox 1996, A13)

This letter writer opines that the only way to prevent the widespread introduction of organized crime is to legalize gaming. For him, it is important to legalize Indian gaming in order to avoid the influx of other "crimes." Again, this letter does nothing to reference how Indian gaming might benefit his neighbors, despite the risk. Couched in sarcasm, he underestimates the ability of tribal authorities or the state of New Mexico to secure his safety. While the tone is patronizing, the writer supports

legalizing gambling, finding it the lesser of two evils. *Notes from Indian Country* columnist Tim Giago provides a succinct explanation for his approach:

> History, at least history taught in most American schools, has instilled in [journalists] the image of the downtrodden Indian, beaten into submission, and taken advantage of at every turn. They see the casinos and immediately assume that whites have found a new way to get rich off of Indians. Never mind that it is the Indian tribes who have finally discovered a way to get rich off Whites. (Giago 1994, A13)

Titled "Dying for Casinos is Ridiculous," an Albuquerque resident writes a letter to the editor that is also disturbing for its "us versus them" mentality:

> We NOW have people who are claiming that they will die for their slot machines and casinos if they have to.
>
> Now, I have heard of people dying for their families, or to save someone else's life. I have also heard of people dying for their faith. But I have never, ever heard of people dying for a slot machine!
>
> Maybe these folks don't remember back just a while ago, when they survived just fine without the revenue from the casinos. You would think they had been living off this income for years and years. And maybe we're supposed to feel sorry for the young people who just might have to go out and get a job, say at the mall or a fast food place or something!
>
> Well, before they give their lives for that slot machine or blackjack table, I hope they will observe a moment of silence and they are also dying for people: who have spent their mortgage money at the casinos, people on welfare who can't afford food, but will [insist on putting their] last nickel in the slots.
>
> Sure, people are accountable for their own behavior, and gambling is an addiction. But it can also ruin lives. And I wouldn't want my tombstone to read, "Died to save a blackjack table." There are much more noble causes to fight for in this life. (Shapiro 1996, A5)

Where does one begin to address the issues raised by such a letter? First, it is surprising that the *Albuquerque Journal* would even publish a letter with such racist overtones. Never once does the writer state that she is referring to Pueblo people. Instead, she refers to them as "these folks." This phrasing is strangely reminiscent of

when President Bill Clinton, facing impeachment, shook his finger on national television and emphatically stated that he "never had sex with *that* woman." By leaving tribal entities or an individual unnamed, the writer negates their credibility, a very effective strategy. Clinton victimized Monica Lewinsky, and the author of this letter victimizes her neighbors by slinging such global accusations.

Clearly, this letter reveals more about the writer than actual issues at hand. Otherwise, she would express concern over the role of discrimination in the workplace or high unemployment rates that plague so many Native Americans. Much of the justification behind "dying for casinos" does center on creating jobs and increasing opportunities for education. Instead, she feels that Native young people should find employment at a "mall or a fast food place or something!" She does not make an argument for higher forms of education/aspirations. By offering only these menial forms of employment, she acknowledges the lack of career opportunities for too many Native American young people. In addition, she expects Indian people to accept full responsibility for harming others, as they fight to acquire some level of economic independence. Historian Phillip J. Deloria provides a relevant observation: "while Indian people have refined new traditions that mingle white-Indian difference with a more fluid social and cultural hybridity, white Americans have, for the most part, proved unable to follow their lead" (Deloria1998, 189). The words of this non-Native writer demonstrate a lack of flexibility. She is incapable of seeing that Indian gaming might, on one level, represent a "noble cause." Deloria points to a historical inequity: Indian people are expected to adapt to cultural change, while non-Indians are much more reluctant to make adjustments to Native American life, the example

here being legalized gaming. Of course, referring to this history as cultural change is tepid terminology when thinking of the violence associated with forced assimilation, such as boarding schools and the loss of Native languages.

Fortunately, missives like the above did not go unanswered. In an argument that promotes personal responsibility, Bosque Farms resident Mike Ellison wrote his own letter to the editor titled "Fight about More Than Gambling," a few weeks later. He states:

> I would like very much to rebut Laura L. Shapiro's letter ("Dying for Casinos is Ridiculous"). This fight is no longer just about casinos and slot machines. This is about Native Americans creating a better life for themselves and their children. It is about our freedom of choice.
>
> It is about protecting our votes so we don't have to war with self-interest coalitions and self-righteous zealots every time we vote for one freedom or another.
>
> There are individuals in New Mexico that are addicted to everything from care to spray paint. Are we going to ban everything from everyone just because a few will have the audacity to spend their last nickel on their addiction?
>
> I have a good friend who once spent his last nickel on a parking ticket. Do you really think the Justice Department really cared if it was his last nickel or not? I don't think so, but he did learn to park after that.
>
> How a free man or woman spends their last nickel is nobody's business but their own, and no other man or woman shall ever be accountable for it. . . . (Ellison 1996, A7)

One of the most striking differences between these two letters is Ellison's use of the word "our." It is refreshing that the author perceives this issue as one that faces all Albuquerque voters, whether Native or non-Native. In fact, when first reading this letter, one might suspect that the writer may even be a Native person. In short, Ellison does not divide his community into separate camps, a marked contrast from the approach espoused in the letter "Dying for Casinos is Ridiculous."

Addressing employment opportunities in casinos, Jim Thomas, former executive director of the National Indian Business Association, wrote a letter to the editor entitled “Casinos Contribute to the Economy” a few weeks later. He starts by posing a provocative question: “Who really cares if an Indian working in a casino loses a job and has to return to jewelry making?” (Thomas 1996, A6). He goes on to report the following facts: “Nationally, our Indian casino employees are more than 60 percent non-Indian. . .”. He also points out how the local economy benefits from casinos and wants legislators to take note:

> Ever wonder how many rolls of toilet paper wheel into those casinos? Someone is warehousing them, hauling them down the road (highway taxes) and someone makes a commission on the sale.
>
> Do we think about beef in pounds for these Indian businesses? How about tons? . . . Someone is raising the product, someone is processing the product, someone is brokering the product, someone is stocking the product—and someone is selling it to the casino. (Thomas 1996, A6)

Unfortunately, Thomas gives Native artists little credence when he insults jewelry making as a profession. While he may not be a fan of the arts/”traditional” forms of cultural expression, there is some validity to his argument. Basically, he presents an argument for choice. Although awkwardly stated, he wants to compare the security of a forty-hour-a-week job to the insecurity, so often associated with the lives of any skilled artisan, whether Native or non-Native. For example, even award-winning jewelers at Indian Market often have to struggle to make ends meet. Thomas also addresses the interconnectedness of the economy. In 1996, many viewed casinos as a possible drain on the economy. In a direct fashion, he describes how keeping a casino running requires products and services from a range of businesses. Thomas emphasizes that it is a mistake to think that Indian people alone will profit. This is not

how economic machines work, and he sees casinos as a driving force to better local businesses.

In the end, the feelings of Tijeras resident Beth Corwin reflect a decided turn in the tide of public opinion. With compassion, she comments on the inevitable role of casinos in New Mexico. In her letter "Too Late to Close Casinos," Corwin writes,

> Our state's Pueblos have incurred huge debts to build casinos in response to Gov. Gary Johnson's compacts. They are generating much-needed revenue for their people and for the state. Under the circumstances, the least we can do is to allow an opportunity for the Legislature to legalize this arrangement, and if they do not, to allow the casinos that have already been built to operate under a grandfather clause.
>
> Otherwise, we are forcing the tribes to default on huge debts, and causing them to lose major investments of tribal funds, funds they definitely need to fight poverty on the pueblos.
>
> While Gov. Johnson may have been wrong to enter into the compacts, we can't go back and erase his actions, as if they never occurred. Not when casinos have already been built, such as the one Pojoaque's governor says the tribe owes $30 million for.
>
> It's too late to pretend the compacts never happened. At this point, responsible action includes accountability for what our governor did, whether it was right or wrong. (Corwin 1996)

Corwin's suggestion of a grandfather clause for existing casinos offers a unique solution. She also steps away from blaming Governor Johnson in hopes of finding a resolution. It is unfortunate that she is not an elected official, since cooler heads should prevail in this debate.

During the highly-charged period in which the above letters were written, 1995-1996, new legal action was enacted that set a precedent for all Indian Nations. In 1996, the U.S. Supreme Court in *Seminole Tribe of Florida v. Florida* found that certain provisions in the IGRA were unconstitutional in compelling the State of

Florida to negotiate a compact (State of New Mexico 2013). Although discouraging, this finding did not deter New Mexico tribes with active gaming facilities from making a case for new legislation. With this finding, the federal government clearly ruled on behalf of state interests as opposed to the rights of the Seminole people to offer gaming. During this same period, a similar lawsuit was pending in New Mexico. First filed in 1995, a group of New Mexico tribes filed a lawsuit in U.S. District Court, asking that gambling compacts signed with Governor Gary Johnson be upheld under federal law (State of New Mexico 2013). However, this action was viewed with dismay by many politicians and New Mexico voters. For example, in an *Albuquerque Journal* article, Frank Zoretich reports on an issues forum at Sandia High School, where over one hundred people were in attendance. Anti-gaming sentiments ran particularly high at this gathering.

> Indian gaming has a "50-50" chance of being approved during the 30-day session of the legislature that starts Tuesday, Senate Pro-Tem Manny Aragon said Sunday in Albuquerque . . . Aragon and Albuquerque Mayor Martin Chavez were the featured speakers. . . . If Indian gaming is approved by the legislature, Aragon said, "State representation will be very intense—the state will be able to tell every time someone puts a quarter in one of those machines." (Zoretich 1996, B8)

The last sentence sounds like a ubiquitous threat from "big brother," And the entire article raises two significant issues along these lines. First, from a technical standpoint, how could the state possibly monitor the identity of anyone pulling the arm of a slot machine? And second, what could the Legislature possibly do with this information? The implication is clear: gamblers might be threatened with arrest or risk being blacklisted by the state. Even if Indian gaming is legalized, certain politicians will do what they can to scare away potential gamblers. At this point,

Manny Aragon was incapable of seeing gaming as a strategy for economic survival for Native peoples in New Mexico. He wanted to deny power to those who might benefit from Native American gaming enterprises.

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the 10th Circuit in *Pueblo of Santa Ana v. Kelly* reasoned very similarly to the New Mexico Supreme Court decision in *State ex. Rel Clark v. Johnson* in 1997. They found that Governor Johnson lacked the proper authority to bind the state to the compacts and thus did not comply with the IGRA. The 1995 gaming compacts were then introduced into the 1997 New Mexico Legislative Session to comply with the court rulings. Later, the compacts were approved by the legislature and signed by Governor Johnson. Not surprisingly, this law faced stiff opposition from constituents in states across the country, many interpreting the passage of these state compacts as a dangerous precedent, representing a potential "breakdown of family values." In comparison to New Mexico politics, Indian gaming is often perceived in a much different light on a national level. Often, there is little, if any, understanding of tribal concerns. One striking instance is illustrated in an editorial written by conservative columnist and television commentator George Will. Oblivious to the complex issues involved with Indian gaming or his condescending tone, Will writes:

> If in the new economy the rewards of life increasingly go to the intellectually gifted, and if that gift is to a significant extent conferred by genetic inheritance, then life is to a certain extent a lottery won or lost at conception, so one might as well roll the dice as life rolls along.
>
> The pursuit of wealth without work is not new to this vale of tears. However, to the extent that "players" regard gambling not as play but as a utilitarian activity, and one tinged with despair or desperation, the proliferation of gambling is deeply disturbing. (Will 1996, A8)

For Will, there is no gray area. He views gambling as immoral. Indeed, gamblers are unable to escape the conditions of their birth. In addition, his opinion reflects his eastern sensibilities. In comparison, gambling is often presented in a much more positive light in the West, reflecting a frontier sensibility. For example, on the television series *Bonanza*, playing poker was a community activity, at least for men. Even characters in white hats would stroll through the swinging doors of the saloon and take a seat at the poker table. It was their role to guard against cheaters—not to speak out against gambling per se. The plot is played out again and again in a common plot twist, when a "good" gambler is forced to administer western justice by shooting a "professional" gambler. Surely, Will did not grow up with an understanding of this narrative.

Today, Las Vegas and Atlantic City are considered gambling getaways by many New Mexicans. This begs a question: if gambling is considered such an entertaining pastime, it certainly would be easier to drive a few miles than to fly out of state. However, many New Mexicans viewed this as a negative option, and adopted a suspicious stance, best categorized by the accustomed refrain: "not in my backyard." One such opinion was expressed in a 1996 letter to the editor, penned by Los Alamos resident Ernest A. Bryant:

> I believe it would be a serious mistake to change the laws of New Mexico to make casino gambling legal. It is my conviction that the harm that would result from legalized gambling far outweighs any benefits.
>
> The harm comes in many forms; development of a gambling lobby that will have the financial clout to unduly influence the legislature; loss of business from small establishments near casinos; loss of state tax revenue; and, most serious, a dramatic increase in the need for human welfare services to deal with poverty. Child abuse and other family crises that are the direct or indirect result of gambling losses. . .

> I strongly urge the Legislature to resist the pressure to change our state gambling laws.
>
> Finally if, in spite of strong citizen opposition, the laws are to be changed, then concomitant steps should be taken to increase state revenues to deal with the problems, especially the increase in welfare needs of our children. (Bryant 1996)

The irony here is that many of the arguments employed in this editorial could easily be flipped to argue just as strongly for the legalization of Indian gaming. For example, no one argues that there are social costs associated with legalized gambling, but freeing Indian Nations from the restraints of poverty may very well cut back on instances of child abuse. While it is difficult to identify statistics that support this claim, it is critical to acknowledge that there are two sides to this coin. Who exactly suffers losses from gambling? The supposition here is that Native peoples do not fall prey to addiction. When the author refers to "our children," who is he addressing? Much like the author of the previous letter, this writer refrains from mentioning/identifying specific Native peoples. "Our children" do not include Native children; their needs are removed from the equation. After all, federal government entities such as Indian Hospital (IHS) serve the needs of Indian children. Although Native peoples have been greatly marginalized over time, the author still feels threatened. The underlying assertion that individual Indian governments can form a gambling lobby "to unduly influence the legislature" represents a danger to the status quo, not only to economic concerns in Albuquerque but throughout the state.

Of course, in retrospect, this lobby did become quite powerful, and did benefit the state as a whole. It certainly did impact the election of Gary Johnson over the incumbent Governor Bruce King. As to the author raising issues such as child abuse,

there is little information regarding the social and economic consequences of Indian gaming (Connor and Taggert 2009, 51). This area warrants further study by economists and social scientists. Otherwise, those researching the impact of Indian gaming lack concrete data to formulate arguments, whether for or against Indian gaming. Given the difficulty in acquiring data from sovereign nations, however, it will be difficult to establish these connections, especially in relation to issues like child abuse. Pueblo communities are quite conservative when it comes to sharing information of this sort.

The next major step in legalizing Indian gaming took place in 1999 when the New Mexico State Legislature adopted the Compact Negotiation Act which formalized the process for compact negotiations between the Tribes and the State of New Mexico. A term unfamiliar to many before the fight for Indian gaming, a compact is best defined as "an agreement between state and tribal governments and can set standards for casino games and provide for state oversight or regulation" (Cole 1995, A2). In the following year, the Attorney General for New Mexico sued the gaming tribes for non-payment of "revenue-sharing" under the 1997 gaming compacts. All gaming tribes with the exception of the Mescalero Apache and the Pueblo of Pojoaque settled the case, all paying back amounts owed to the State as a precondition to signing the 2001 gaming compacts.

In 2001, a very important year in this lengthy battle, new gaming compacts were negotiated and approved by the New Mexico State Legislature. This is when all involved tribes signed this key gaming compact. Although previously voted down by members of the Navajo Nation in 1994 and 1997, the State of New Mexico and the

Navajo Nation also entered into a gaming compact in 2001. Over the years, many Navajo traditionalists, elders and tribal members had effectively argued against legalized gaming. Anthropologist Maureen T. Schwarz provides a summary of these arguments. Some are universal in nature (many expressed at previous points in this discussion), while others offer a uniquely Navajo perspective:

> When members of the Navajo Nation were consulted on gaming, some voiced concerns over the danger of compromising sovereignty through state gaming compacts. Other members feared that gaming would attract social ills to their communities. Among those who opposed gaming on what can be called traditional grounds, many reiterated age-old prohibitions against excess, warnings about witchcraft, statements about the importance of family, fundamental tensions between the simultaneous desire for personal agency and the need for group consensus—which operate within the framework of strong interdictions against any person attempting to control another—and narratives from Navajo oral tradition. (Schwarz 2012, 516)

The Navajo Nation held a third vote and the referendum passed in 2005, with greater rights to gambling established in 2006. As the first Navajo casino, Fire Rock Casino opened its doors in 2008 and is successful to this day. As the largest reservation in the United States, legalized gaming in Navajo country is truly changing the face of the Southwest. However, without previous legal precedents set by Pueblo communities, building Fire Rock Casino would not have been so easy.

Also in 2005, the Pueblo of Pojoaque settled disputes with the State of New Mexico and retroactively entered into the gaming compact of 2001. Two years later, amendments to the 2001 Tribal State Class 111 Gaming Compact were negotiated and approved by the New Mexico State Legislature. Nine gaming tribes signed the 2007 Amendments including the Pueblos of Isleta, Laguna, Sandia, San Felipe, Santa Ana, Santa Clara, Taos and Tesuque, and Ohkay Owingeh. Two non-gaming

tribes, the Pueblos of Nambe and Picuris, also signed the 2007 Amendments (State of New Mexico 2013).

According to Thaddieus W. Connor and William A. Taggert, "the legalization of Indian gaming was an evolution, and individual Indian casinos . . . did not appear at a single point in time. Rather, their emergence was gradual," beginning with a couple of bingo establishments, dating back to the 1980s (Connor and Taggert 2009, 54). In looking back, it is hard to believe that so much legislation was enacted over the course of a few short decades. Of course, the story of Indian gaming in New Mexico is still unfolding. No longer subject to so many heated "letters to the editor" or editorials in local newspapers, such as the *Albuquerque Journal*, Indian gaming continues to impact the economic and social structures of the state. Indian gaming, now an established entity, still inspires political confusion and partisan debate, but on a much more limited scale. It is important to remember that the blinking lights of Indian gaming establishments/casinos, however flashy, represent just one small part of Native American life. Mary Lawlor addresses this phenomenon,

> [C]asinos are not so common or as categorically successful, as the abundant attention they have gotten would imply. The singular focus on the disputes, risks and ironies on Indian casinos . . . often serves to distract from the continuing poverty on reservations, the continued marginalization of American Indians from the structures of power in the United States, and the heinous history of colonization that rarely gets looked at in the face in this country—by academics any more than the neighbors of Native American communities who are in competition with them over land or sovereignty. (Lawlor 2006, 23)

The risk here is that Indian gaming, through the actual architecture of casinos and endless possibilities for entertainment, will soon become the sole identity for Native Americans. Because of the emphasis on the millions of dollars that have been generated, many assume that poverty or access to education for young people is no

longer an issue. In conclusion, the legal battles waged in New Mexico have enabled Class 111 Indian gaming to get off the ground in New Mexico. The jury is out, however, on how, and to what extent, these revenues will benefit tribes and the state of New Mexico as a whole. Socioeconomic realities can only be evaluated in the years to come. The only certainty is that the future of Indian gaming, whether in New Mexico or other states, will be played out in federal, tribal and state courts.

Chapter Two

Marketing Casinos: Coupons, Giveaways and "Indian" Motorcycles

Located just minutes from Santa Fe, Camel Rock is the jewel of New Mexico's gaming industry. Owned and operated by the Pueblo of Tesuque, it is reflective of the intrinsic beauty and quiet strength of its ancient heritage. (http://www.thepeoplespaths.net/news/casino.htm)

Tourism intensifies historical amnesia.

> --Chris Wilson, *The Myth of Santa Fe: Creating a Modern Regional Tradition* (1997, 311)

When it's Starbucks, it's good business. When it's Walmart, it's free enterprise. Why is it that Indians, in their businesses, can't be any different?

> --Nikki Symington, quoted in *Indian Gaming and Tribal Sovereignty: The Casino Compromise* (2005, 127)

Indian gaming is a business, a commercial endeavor. As such, casinos must appeal to all types of tourists, best classified through the following categories: age, gender, socio-economic standing, urban versus rural and Native versus non-Native. From one tribal community to another, casino profits are disseminated in any number of ways, but funding sources are dependent on outside patronage or tourism. Some tourists live a few miles away, while others travel great distances, using discretionary or, in the case of problem gamblers, non-discretionary income to pay for airline tickets, rental cars and hotel rooms in order to access one or more casinos. Long-distance tourists—hailing from other states or countries—are often attracted to the mystique of the Southwest, where "Indians," viewed in tandem with a desert landscape, play starring roles. Demographics vary. Many visitors call Japan or the United Kingdom home, although a high percentage of visitors are local gaming

enthusiasts—who view casinos as everything from a backyard luxury to a community center sporting a favorite all-you-can-eat buffet. This brand of tourist can jump into a car for a quick commute down I-25, 1-40 or Highway 84 to reach a casino hot spot—a veritable hop, skip and a jump to discover a marketplace of entertainment possibilities. Performance Studies scholar Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett asserts that "To compete for tourists, a location must become a destination" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998, 152).

Throughout this chapter, I will concentrate on three overlapping areas. First, I will raise questions fueled by the ways in which Indian gaming establishments are marketed in New Mexico, with a particular focus on Pueblo casinos. The second will concentrate on a visual analysis of promotional materials that Pueblo casinos use to target the public/potential gamblers. These materials are designed to reach a wide variety of different audiences. For instance, Taos Pueblo offers a much smaller gaming facility than Sandia Pueblo in Albuquerque. And finally, the third part of my discussion will raise questions about how Native identity is either associated with or deliberately ignored when capitalizing on traditional art forms to market Indian casinos. In other words, advertisements for tribal casinos, whether depicted on the printed page or screened through television commercials, are often devoid of any reference to Native identity—so often defined through geography.

From the visual perspective of the freeway, the multi-storied Sandia Resort and Casino dominates the surrounding terrain with a monumental, multi-storied structure, surrounded by an expanse of manicured lawn, encircled by the desert reality of sagebrush. In comparison, Taos Mountain Casino is much less imposing,

operating in close proximity to non-Native businesses, framed by private residences, and only a short distance away from the Pueblo itself. From all outward appearances, the actual Pueblo of Sandia, and its plaza/the heart of the community are far removed from the day-to-day running of the casino and resort. The Taos Mountain Casino operates within walking distance of the Pueblo/plaza where ceremonial dances are staged. As such, a tourist could easily test his or her luck at the slots and pay to go on a guided tour of Taos Pueblo—all quite "doable" over the course of a day. Sandia Pueblo, on the other hand, maintains a strict separation between the casino itself and public access to "sacred" spaces. In other words, geographical access is not only divided but compartmentalized. One might ask: How many non-Native, non-Sandia gamblers have actually been invited to or attended a feast day at Sandia Pueblo? Art critic and social activist Lucy R. Lippard describes why there is such a gap between Pueblo people and outsiders:

> It is not broadly understood by tourists that when the ceremonial dances are open to the public, these are not spectacles performed for the spectators' pleasure but religious activities they are allowed to attend respectfully. Although Indians are all too often images and imagined into "the past," these dances are integral parts of contemporary Natives' lives. (Lippard 1999, 67)

While formal barriers to outsiders/tourists exist at both Pueblos, they are subject to a broad range of interpretations. There is no specific sense of place. Rather, they project a generic appearance. However, logos, symbolizing each pueblo, are almost always placed in ads. This seems to be the one tried and true exception. Indeed, if casino names were switched in the majority of television commercials that currently air in New Mexico, the same material could just as easily be used to promote a non-Native casino in Las Vegas. Many pueblo casinos deliberately choose to adopt a

generic tone/look throughout a range of marketing materials. Clearly, some pueblos prefer to maintain a divide between gaming establishments and tribal identity, marked by cultural practices related to language, dress or ceremony. Keeping a division between the secular and the sacred can be a key component of cultural preservation. Perhaps trading on one's own cultural heritage can hit a bit too close to home, especially when a casino is located on Pueblo or Navajo lands. Debunking stereotypical depictions of "Indians" may be lauded in classrooms and through the work of contemporary Native artists. But these same stereotypes can be capitalized on when it comes to promoting casinos—a true contradiction.

In the following advertisement for the Sandia Resort and Casino (fig. 3), featured in a high-end publication that caters to well-heeled tourists, this full color shot is quite understated. Unlike some other casino advertisements, there is no doubt that this was designed by a professional graphic designer. What are the clues? First, the graphic designer is letting the photographs, whether realistic or not, do the talking. Second, there is very little verbiage. The text: "Close to Home . . . Far from Ordinary" speaks to nearby residents who feel they deserve a sabbatical from the demands of everyday life. This sophisticated advertisement appeals on many levels. It entices locals to get away from it all. You, too, can escape the "ordinary" by driving a few miles down the road to leave the hustle and bustle of Albuquerque behind. From left to right, the four insets at the bottom of the ad convey a complete narrative. These four photographs exemplify the adage that "pictures speak louder than words." From left to right, the first photograph publicizes a well-appointed room with a decisive nod to "Southwest" style. Sandia hopes to promote their gourmet

cuisine in the second photograph, epitomized by a charcoal-grilled steak resting on a baked potato and a bed of asparagus. The third features a colorful stack of poker chips of various denominations and a winning hand of cards. And finally, the fourth photograph highlights an attractive young woman receiving a massage. Unlike other advertisements for Indian gaming facilities that will be discussed later, this one embraces a minimalist approach. Other than the name itself, "Sandia," there is no way for an out-of-state tourist to even suspect that this is an Indian gaming facility. There are no coupons or references made to corresponding holidays. Indeed, the advertisement possesses a timeless quality. In other words, it could be run again and again and never become dated.

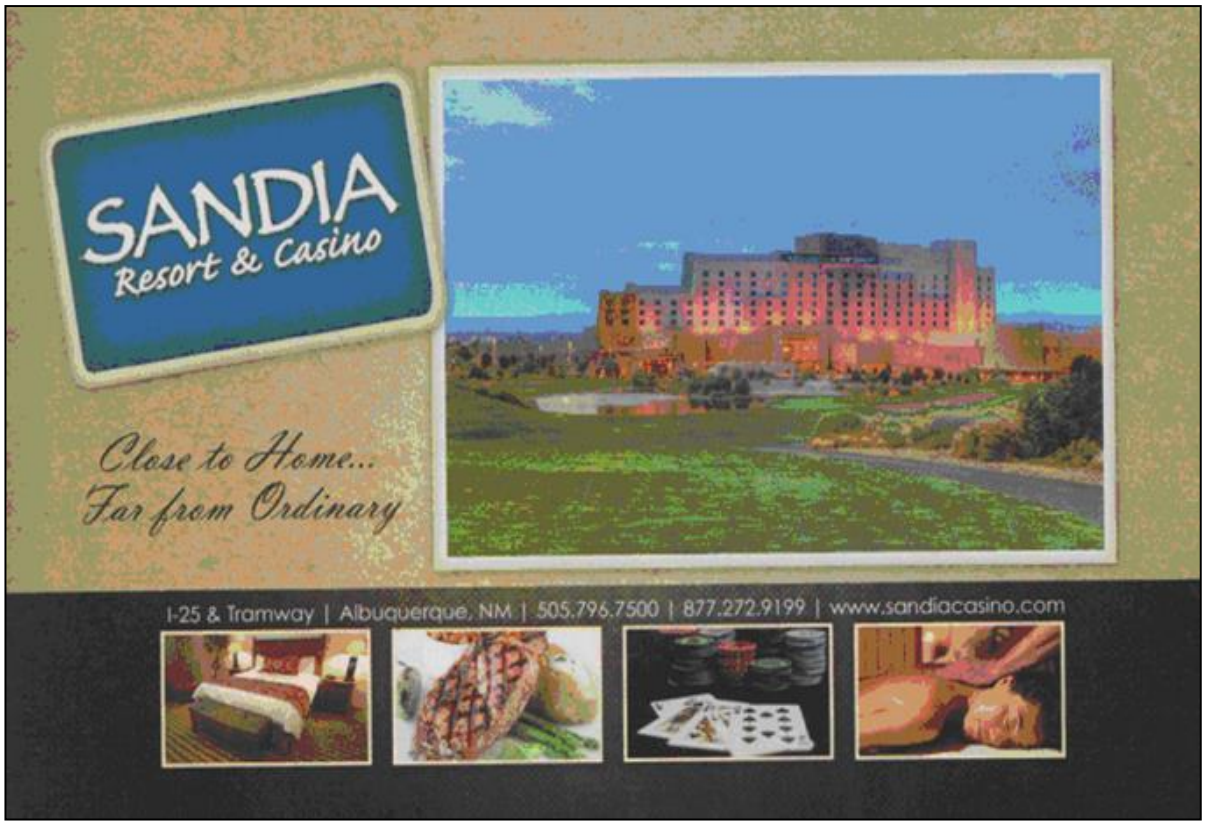

Figure 3. *Close to Home . . . Far from Ordinary*, Sandia Resort and Casino Advertisement, 2013.

Surprisingly, the advertisement does omit some prime selling points. The graphic artist and the Sandia managers have decided to forego images of the expansive swimming pool, the impressive golf course and the outdoor amphitheater. Perhaps these activities are too "active" for a spa-like experience. It could be that swimming and golfing—as exercise—are too closely associated with work. This successful advertisement is appealing on many levels. Indeed, this picture of Sandia Casino and Resort is reminiscent of the sparkling Emerald City in *The Wizard of Oz*. Here, poppy fields have been replaced by a lush lawn. This romantic scene—so full of greenery—offers a powerful draw. It is a challenge to paint Sandia Casino and Resort in such an inviting/rosy light. This particular graphic artist ascribes to the fundamental rule of design that less is more. As such, this advertisement conveys a remarkable sense of intimacy. There are no people or forms of transportation in sight. After all, no tourist wants to feel lost in a crowd.

In the next advertisement for Buffalo Thunder Resort and Casino, it may be that the design skills of the same graphic artist may are at work (fig. 4). The two images project a similar feel, utilizing a predominantly blue palette, limited text and simple strategies for design. This advertisement also projects a pastoral quality amidst an environment that bears little resemblance to the desert locale of the surrounding landscape. Marketing "A Better Way to Santa Fe," this ad focuses on the man-made "lake" that flanks one side of the casino. The following question is posed and answered: "Looking for a little more flavor in Santa Fe? Find it at Buffalo Thunder Resort and Casino, a resort experience that's anything but routine." Looking more like an estuary or a nature preserve that one might find on Cape Cod or

Monterey Bay, this image focuses on the water and the shimmering light of a sky at sunset. The casino itself, despite its massive size, projects a welcoming feel. The play between blue and gold and lights emanating from the hotel windows contributes to this natural setting, with nary a car in sight. "Everything is better at Buffalo Thunder Resort." However, anyone visiting this resort will likely spend more time engaged with inside activities, such as gambling in an atmosphere tinged with cigarette smoke. Patrons may very well miss out on seeing a sunset such as this. Casinos, whether Native or non-Native, are known for round-the-clock bright lights and a lack of clocks. The primary goal is to help the gambler forget if the sun is about to rise or set. The twist is that a false view of nature is created to promote an artificial setting.

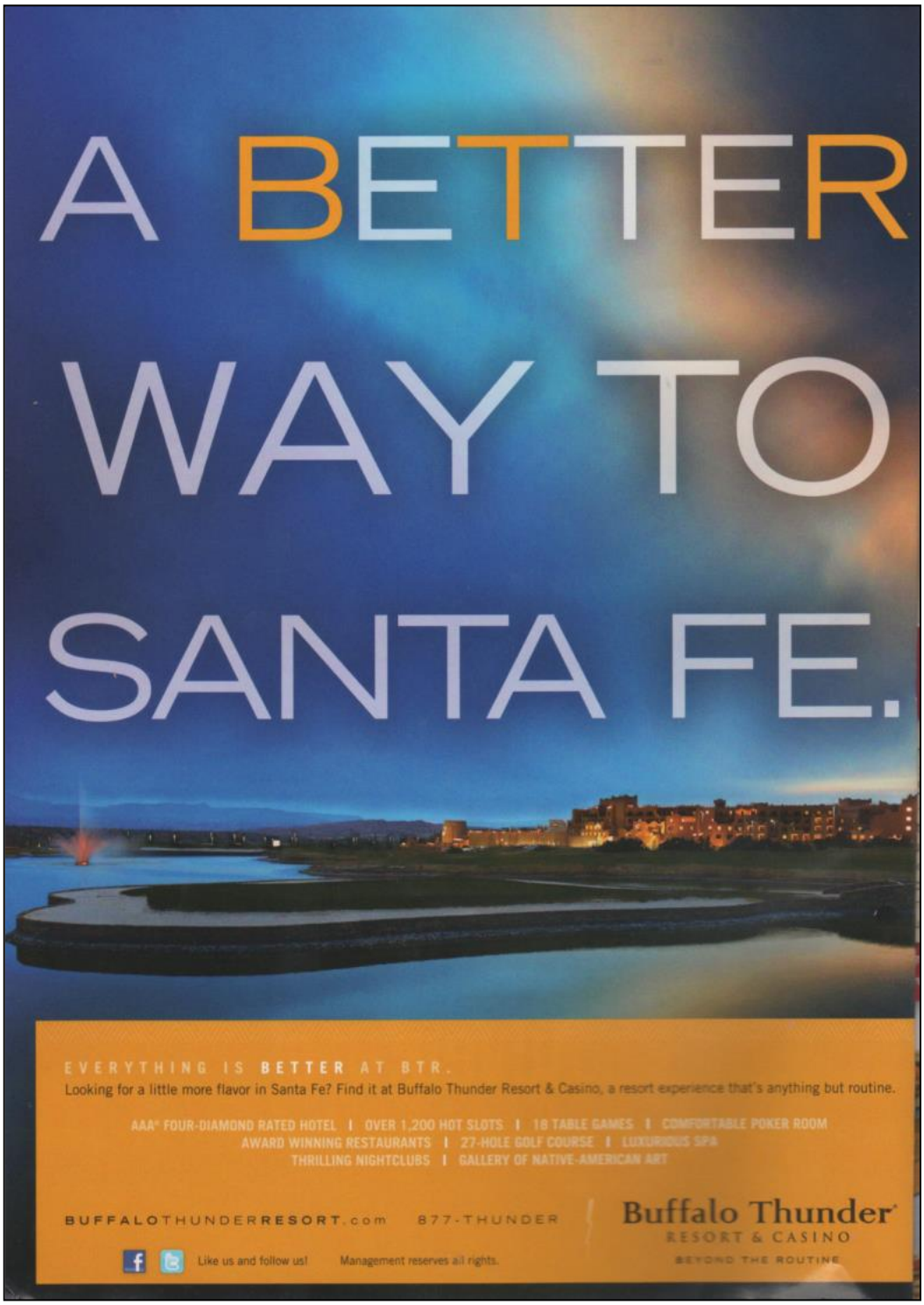

Figure 4. *A Better Way to Santa Fe*, Buffalo Thunder Resort and Casino Advertisement, 2013.

Why do these advertisements and others like them fail to reference their Pueblo identity or historical roots? Sadly, both advertisements are devoid of any geological landmarks that form the foundation of so many oral histories. There are two possible reasons for this deliberate erasure of visual cues so often associated with Pueblo imagery. First, for the sake of privacy, certain Native communities want to separate their gaming identity from who they are at home. Gaming is just a means to an end. And second, some marketers have decided that a pronounced "Indian" identity may not be as attractive to outsiders who could just as easily be tempted by a more exotic flight to Las Vegas. With so many Native people already on board, the challenge is to attract fresh visitors, a new pool of tourists with deep pockets. Bystanders at casinos in more "remote" areas often attest to the overwhelming reality that most patrons are local. With so few other outlets for entertainment, casinos can become a community center of sorts. However, unlike a standard community center, the focus is on gaming. In 1998, the Honorable Wayne Taylor Jr., Chairman of the Hopi tribe, offered this poignant testimony:

> One need only visit an Indian casino to realize that a significant number of casino patrons are Indian people from the reservations on which the casino is located or from other nearby reservations, including non-gaming reservations. . . . I believe it is also safe to conclude that most Indian people do not routinely have a surplus disposable income which should be expended on games of chance. Most of our people on most reservations and tribal communities find it difficult enough to accumulate enough income on a monthly basis to meet the most basic needs of their families. While the decision to expend those funds in gaming activities is an individual choice, the impacts on family members who frequently do not participate in that choice are nevertheless affected. (Taylor 1998, 16)

It makes perfect sense that if casinos are dependent on the repeat business of low-income gamblers, it will be difficult to count on a consistent level of profits over time.

No wonder so many advertisements are geared to non-Native peoples/tourists who do have discretionary income to spend. (Although there are certainly a fair number of wealthy Indians in the world.) In addition, some might argue that temporary, out-of-town visitors fail to represent the same type of threat to the social infrastructures of Pueblo communities or the Navajo Nation. While local tourists/residents may offer repeat business, their presence can be problematic. After all, there is a reason that tribal casinos are mandated to donate a percentage of their profits to provide treatment programs for addicted gamblers, and, by extension, their families. For example, the *Albuquerque Journal* reported on January 1, 2000 that:

> Santa Ana Star Casino . . . donated $10,000 to the New Mexico Council on Problem Gambling. The State Legislature included provisions in 1997 tribal gambling compacts that require Indian and racetrack casinos to spend one quarter of one percent of their net revenues from slot machines on programs to fight compulsive gambling. Daniel Blockwood, program director for the nonprofit New Mexico Council on Problem Gambling, said the agency is grateful for the support. The council, operated primarily through donations and volunteers, runs a hotline that takes calls from problem gamblers and refers them to counselors around the state. He said three casinos—Sandia, Santa Ana and Camel Rock—and the Ruidoso Downs Racetrack have made donations to the center. (*Albuquerque Journal* 2000)

To summarize, being too depende43nt on one's own people to generate profits can be short sighted and potentially self-destructive for the community at large. While some may be lucky some of the time, the house always wins. This is why the New Mexico Council on Problem Gambling is open to anyone who calls. Given that New Mexico is one of the poorest states in the country, these problems are doubly compounded. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that Indian casinos must employ multiple strategies to cultivate a diverse audience. Tribal members and non-Native "neighbors" may provide a base, but outside tourists are necessary as well. Of

course, it is troublesome that casinos are only required to donate “one quarter of one percent of their net revenues from slot machines” to benefit those who suffer from such a crippling addiction. Given the far-reaching consequences of this addiction, much more should be done. However, this situation presents a Catch-22 for tribes. Broadcasting the dangers of gambling runs counter to encouraging the public to gamble.

In stark comparison, other Indian gaming operations define themselves through a mixture of images and text that reference, or, as some might argue, exploit cultural identities for commercial purposes. One thing is obvious, though, Indian gaming facilities are becoming more and more creative when it comes to marketing. In 1998, art historian Steven Leuthold wrote: “The degree of cultural borrowing by natives from white cultures and its implication for identity formation has not been explored fully by indigenous media people and artists” (Leuthold 1998, 192). Chances are, Leuthold would be reluctant to record and publish this observation today. With the passage of fifteen years, today’s promotional materials for Indian gaming do reflect cases of cultural borrowing by Natives from white cultures. After all, this is the best way to attract a white audience. Otherwise stated, indigenous gaming facilities are constantly learning new tricks of the trade, a trickster mentality if ever there was one. Literature critic Jace Weaver provides a succinct definition of a trickster in his book *Other Words: American Indian Literature, Law and Culture*:

> This comic but compassionate clown undermines peoples’ expectations and punctures the pompous—contradicting and unsettling lives, but, in the very process of disruption, imaginatively keeping the world in balance. By the trickster’s actions, the world is defined and recreated. (Weaver 2005, 56)

Truly, the trickster mentality is being maintained as tribal entrepreneurs look for better and better ways to promote Indian gaming.

Although discussing American attitudes toward memorial structures in the United States, New York University professor Murita Sturken makes a series of arguments that can just as easily be applied to the world of Indian gaming. In the introduction to her book *Tourists of History: Memory, Kitsch and Consumerism, From Oklahoma City to Ground Zero*, Sturken examines the overall role of consumerism in America:

> American mythology clings tenaciously to the belief that one can always heal, move on and place the past in its proper context, and to do so quickly. . . This belief in the concept of healing is related to the dominance of U.S. consumer practices, in which consumerism is understood to be a kind of therapy. Throughout American history, consumer culture has also played a central role in the shaping of concepts of citizenship and national identity. From its very early origins, American culture constructed itself around particular concepts of choice and individual reinvention. (Sturken 2007, 14)

With this theory in mind, Indian casinos can provide paths to create a new set of identities. Although it may seem like a stretch to construct a parallel between the moving memorial at Oklahoma City, with its clock forever frozen on the time of the bombing, to an Indian casino, it could be that many Native and non-Native visitors view these structures in a similar manner. In other words, Native lands, as sites, can symbolize past acts of terrorism. Indeed, as places, Indian lands can testify to prior atrocities, much like a Civil War battlefield. Looked at in this context, it is possible to argue that building a casino is a transformative act. And it is consumerism—whether measured through gambling or purchasing mementoes in the gift shop—that offers visitors and tribal members alike a way to heal. Regardless of whether this is a

conscious act, patronizing an Indian casino can become a way to address past wrongs.

Architectural historian Chris Wilson details another episode in Unites States history that offers a basis for comparison in his seminal book *The Myth of Santa Fe: Creating a Modern Regional Tradition*. He describes an internment camp in Santa Fe that held up to 2,100 Japanese-American men against their will during World War Two. Wilson chronicles the history of this camp through the lens of tourism. Wilson writes:

> The camp's remains were obliterated by the Casa Solana subdivision in the early 1950s, and its very existence passed from public acknowledgement. Only in 1991, after [a] congressional apology and reparations bill, did the Santa Fe camp begin to receive attention. This black episode in the history of the United States was being suppressed, as unpleasant details that contradict a country's ideals so often are. From the day Japanese relocation was proposed, Santa Fe's leaders understood that their reliance on tourism required special vigilance to suppress any unpleasantness. Tourism intensifies historical amnesia. (Wilson 2001, 311)

One only has to remember the atrocities that took place at Acoma Pueblo in 1599 and place this stark reality against the backdrop of the neon lights of the Sky City Casino and Resort, located far below the village cliffs. In an act of retaliation, Spanish conquistador Don Juan Oñate decreed that all men over the age of twenty-five have their left foot amputated. In addition, hundreds of people from the village of Acoma were pressed into slavery. Sky City Casino and Resort provides a prime example of how "tourism intensifies historical amnesia." Potential gamblers do not want to be reminded of such heinous acts. While tours are offered at the "real" Sky City—a World Heritage Site—sponsored by the Sky City Cultural Center and the Haaku Museum, the casino must distance itself from such a defining past. The

theory must be that each site appeals to a different audience. Designing promotional materials to address such disparate activities must be difficult.

In a handout for Sky City, published by the Sky City Cultural Center and Haaku Museum, the New Mexico Land of Enchantment Tourism Department, and the National Trust for Historic Preservation, barely mentions the Sky City Casino Hotel. The two exceptions are a small notation on a map of the area and a brief description under the heading of "Acoma Business Enterprises" (*Acoma Pueblo Sky City Handout* 2013). The text reads:

> Experience a living history of centuries-old culture at the Sky City Cultural Center. Play and stay at Sky City Casino Hotel, home to the most million dollar winners in New Mexico. Refuel and revive yourself at Huwak'a restaurant or Sky City Travel Center.
>
> Make your getaway complete with the comfort and hospitality of Sky City Casino and hotel. Let our hotel's deluxe accommodations and friendly service make your visit to Sky City one to remember. (*Acoma Pueblo Sky City Handout* 2013)

While this handout does reference the casino, it places a greater emphasis on the "deluxe accommodations and friendly service." The rest of the handout focuses on photographs of the Sky City Cultural Center, San Esteban del Rey Church, the Haak'u Museum, Gaits'i Gift Shop, and the Y'aak'a Café. The entire back page provides details on tours, including prices and departure times. In other words, the Sky City Casino is given short shrift in comparison to Sky City, considered the physical and spiritual home for the Acoma people.

A history of this sort stands in direct contradiction to a facility devoted to gambling, a destination for "light" entertainment as opposed to the "heavy" hand of history. If statistics could be gathered it would be interesting to find out how many

tourists visit both the casino and the village at Acoma. Lucy R. Lippard would certainly describe Sky City, the village, as a site for "tragic tourism," a term she coined. Sky City, however, is a bit of an anomaly because it is still inhabited today. In comparison, most sites of tragic tourism, such as Nazi concentration camps, are empty; the village of Acoma is a living, breathing place. Lippard asserts that:

> Historical tours are billed as educational fun but can equally function as anecdotes to the onset of amnesia, which is perhaps the ultimate tragedy. The closer we are to forgetting, the closer to the surface of events and emotions alike, the further we are from the depths where meaning and understanding reside. Public memorials and visited sites are the battlegrounds in a life and death struggle between memory, denial and repression. (Lippard 1999, 119)

While Acoma Pueblo does offer "historical tours," memories or even knowledge of past atrocities are checked at the door of the Sky City Casino. Perhaps the words of historian Philip J. Deloria are applicable here: "[W]hile Indian people have lived out a collection of historical nightmares in the material world, they have also haunted a long night of American dreams" (Deloria 1999, 191). Phrased a bit differently, non-Natives have long suffered from a collective sense of guilt over past wrongs, whether they were directly responsible or not. It makes sense that triggering these feelings through promotional materials might put a damper on the desire to hit the blackjack table.

American Studies scholar Mary Lawlor offers a compelling analysis of the many faces of Acoma:

> The difference in the visual rhetoric between the museum and mesa, on the one hand, and the casino, on the other, are remarkable and suggest very different, even contradictory, interests in the tribe's projects of self-representation. It goes without saying that the practices of display at the mesa are older by many years, and they have not changed with the casino's construction. Rather than tampering with the aesthetic tones of the mesa and

> cultural styles of the gambling house, the mesa village maintains the posture of silence and understatement that has characterized it for generations. Differences in architectural design between the museum and Sky City Casino cannot be cross-referenced like those between Foxwoods and the Mashantucket Museum and Research Center. Apart from the generic differences, these institutions occupy separate worlds: the mesa, in its austerity and self-enclosure, and the museum project images of Acoma in terms of its ancient and colonial past, while the casino is seated solidly in a present that looks energetically towards the future and a good time and good luck for guests in the coming hours. While the museum and the village finally seal off the interior sanctums of tribal life from the eyes and ears of visitors, the casino positions itself in the stream of cash and culture flows of post-modern American society, a posture nicely imaged by its location astride the highway. While the casino is part of the tribe's tourism complex described in the same brochures that invite tourists to the mesa, its relation to Acoma is to provide a reliable stream of much needed income for the once deeply impoverished pueblo without putting itself forward as an intentional representation of the tribe itself. (Lawlor 2006, 148-149)

On the whole, I agree with Lawlor's assessment. However, it is dangerous to cast the mesa and the village as a set representation of an "ancient and colonial past." She seems to overlook the reality that Acoma families still reside there on a full-time basis. Additionally, the tours themselves bring the mesa to life on a daily basis. Residents sell pottery and oven bread and interact with visitors. In light of this constant flow of tourists, the mesa and its inhabitants actually long for more privacy at times. It is a bit like being under a microscope. Although Acoma is "sealed-off" to outsiders after five p.m., it is rarely closed during the day. Perhaps, the primary exception takes place when a funeral is being held for an esteemed elder at the San Esteban del Rey Church.

Keeping these arguments in mind, I return to my examination of advertisements for Indian gaming establishments. In this advertisement for Taos Mountain Casino (fig. 5), two distinct ideas are expressed. Gambling represents consumerism and the gift shop demonstrates a pride in nationhood via the arts.

Here, art for sale can be equated to cultural pride, a way to build upon the "nationhood" status of Taos Pueblo, through traditional imagery and art forms. An analogy can be made: If the gaming and art share equal billing, both create a means to demonstrate cultural pride. The advertisement is nearly divided in half: the top advertises the casino/gambling, while the lower section is devoted to the Many Tiwa Hands Gift Shop and Gallery. Included in the gallery's moniker is a reference to the Tiwa people/Tiwa language. By promoting the indigenous language of Taos Pueblo, this advertisement, including the name of the shop, provides an opportunity to educate outsiders. Indeed, no one will buy a traditional drum or a piece of contemporary micaceous pottery without wanting to hear the story behind these works. This is the same concept behind the PBS series: the *Antiques Roadshow*. Viewers want to hear the story, which relates to past generations. Any successful seller on e-Bay is also well aware of this phenomenon. While the Many Tiwa Hands Gift Shop and Gallery is an ideal setting for cultural exchange, it also proves an age-old maxim: The better the story, the easier the sell.

Figure 5. *It's a Mountain of Fun! It's a Mountain of Art!* Taos Mountain Casino Advertisement, 1999.

Communicating through marketing can assume many forms, even conflicting directions. To be successful, Indian gaming establishments may utilize approaches that, on the surface, may read as anomalies. But certain constants exist. Casinos rely on a mixture of text and images to market their products, delivered through multiple sources, including websites, advertisements in weekly papers, magazines, billboards and television commercials. Fundamental questions provide a foundation for examining this phenomenon. Some can be answered, while others remain an enigma. For example, how is Native identity reflected in materials generated by Indian casinos in New Mexico? Who decides what images are used? Are non-Native consulting firms utilized? And, if so, how do tribal members either dictate to or influence this collaboration? Are casino managers, representing Pueblo or Navajo worldviews, responsible for making decisions along these lines, working in conjunction with an in-house public relations team or one or more graphic artists? How should a budget for advertising be established and spent? What publications can best reach a specific audience? Should casinos concentrate on reaching twice-a-year big rollers or weekly regulars who occupy a stool at a favored “loose” slot machine? And, finally, how much separation exists in the following trifecta: tribal governments, tribal casinos and religious leaders? How much separation exists between the secular and the sacred? In short, is one power base stronger than another?

Before delving into this area any further, though, it is important to examine ways in which non-Native casinos influenced the relatively recent development of Class 111 Indian gaming establishments. Much like Las Vegas or Atlantic City, tribal

gaming facilities in the Southwest have been forced constantly to diversify their offerings to insure a lucrative future. To do this, they have taken a page from casino magnates like Steve Wynn, a master at developing a one-stop marketplace for entertainment. Cultural geographer William L. Fox, in his treatise *In the Desert of Desire: Las Vegas and the Culture of Spectacle,* describes how the Bellagio Resort, Steve Wynn's brainchild, provides a whole new model for how a gaming marketplace—owned by a united set of investors—can experiment and branch out.

> A milestone in the history of national cultural spectacle was the opening of Steve Wynn's Bellagio Gallery of Fine Art in 1998. Featuring $300 million worth of paintings by masters safely entrenched within the canon of nineteenth- and twentieth-century European and American art, the presentation of such a collection in a casino toppled the already crumbling wall between what was once considered high and low cultures by Las Vegas.
>
> Wynn's Bellagio Resort was the single most expensive building in the world when it opened—a thirty-six-story luxury hotel that included an underground parking garage for six thousand cars, a convention center, and an enormous gambling floor. The resort's interior space totaled 6 million square feet and was fronted by a $52 million, ten acre, 22-million-gallon lake in which a fountain with 1200 jets shot water 250 feet into the air, the streams synchronized to dance along with classical music, which was broadcast onto the Las Vegas Boulevard via loudspeakers as well as piped into the hotel rooms. The Bellagio cost more than $1.6 billion to build, a figure touted by local tourism officials as proof that Las Vegas was invincible as a destination. To place art in such a context intrigued the resort industry, interested to see if the experiment would generate profit, either directly or indirectly. The gallery brought cautious approval from local cultural leaders, who hoped that Wynn was leading a charge to overthrow the image of the town as a cultural wasteland (which in reality it has never been). (Fox 2005, 9-10)

Still in operation today, the Bellagio Art Gallery has enjoyed widespread success. Wynn's initial showings were heavily weighted on the commercial side of the fine art world, featuring well-known works by Impressionist painters. "'Commercial" may sound like an odd word to describe a set of works that represent the Impressionist movement. However, museums and galleries alike are known to capitalize on the

widespread appeal of a Claude Monet. For example, the Denver Art Museum counts on ticket sales from scheduling periodic "blockbuster" Impressionist shows to fund other, less "popular" exhibitions. (Indeed, the goal of this museum is to showcase an Impressionist exhibition once every three years—guaranteed money in the bank.) Fortunately, Wynn has branched out from this tried and true recipe to develop exhibitions that hold less widespread appeal. For example, he has focused on a series of less bankable retrospectives, highlighting the work of "lesser known" artists, such as pop icon Andy Warhol. This is not to say that Warhol is not well-known, but his appeal may have less commercial value in Las Vegas. Undoubtedly, the irony of this situation would not be lost on Warhol, whose work commented on commercial practices in America.

From a historical perspective, this does represent a novel approach. But, in order to be prosperous, all casinos must branch out to fully participate in a vacation industry, already bursting at the seams with possibilities—ranging from Disneyworld to Sea Land. The challenge here is to meet the needs of adults and families alike—some with large budgets and some with small. Whether catering opportunities for last-minute impulse buys for a long-planned family getaway, this business model is based on a deep-seated American tradition, harkening back to a time when Frank Sinatra and the Rat Pack personified the glitz and glamour of Las Vegas. It makes sense that visitors attracted to gambling or a reenactment of Venice, Italy will also be attracted by big-name performers, today's equivalent of a Sinatra. After all, casinos are in the business of selling dreams. From this perspective, gambling represents only one component of a package deal. Over the course of his career, Sinatra owned

a controlling interest in, and even took up long-term residency at, several casinos, most notably the Sand's—a key landmark on the Las Vegas strip. Sinatra's name was up on the marquee in lights, and he called Las Vegas home, just as Celine Dion—some might argue his successor—does today. But how do Indian casinos in the Southwest compare? Are they carving out a distinct identity—independent from ways in which casino cultures are acted out in Las Vegas and Atlantic City? Perhaps, the most prominent difference is that big name performers do not appear for months and months on end, their names becoming synonymous with certain Indian casinos. Rather, lesser-known "stars" rotate through on a regular basis.

In New Mexico, a large percentage of visitors choose to bypass slot machines altogether, yet subsidize casino revenues via different venues. To reach such a diverse audience, architecture plays a vital role in attracting visitors. For instance, some gaming establishments house multiple venues under one roof, while others occupy a genuine compound: building separate buildings for separate activities, all on neighboring acreage. One may attend a concert at the Sandia Resort and Casino amphitheater in Albuquerque without stepping foot into the neighboring hotel or casino. Or, one can play eighteen holes of golf under the New Mexican sun and never visit a blackjack table. Cultural anthropologist and former lawyer Eve Darian-Smith explores the interrelationship between tourism and gaming that is more than pertinent to this discussion. In her brilliant monograph *New Capitalists: Law, Politics, and Identity Surrounding Casino Gaming on Native American Land,* Darian-Smith writes:

> Casinos and tourism often go hand-in-hand. Many reservations with casinos have been attracting a great deal of interest from the general population

> because of their gaming operations. As well as a host of other attractions such as museums, cinemas, and outlet malls largely built and financed through gaming profits. On successful gaming and tourist reservations, there is a swelling sense of identity, pride, optimism in the future, and renewed nationalist spirit. (Darian-Smith 2003, 12)

While outlet malls and cinemas are typically found in casinos located in the Northeast or on the East Coast, most famously the Foxwoods Casino in Connecticut, tribal casinos in the Southwest have focused primarily on museums/heritage centers, galleries and theaters. The Sky City Casino and Hotel at Acoma and the Buffalo Thunder Resort and Casino at Pojoaque have both been successful along these lines. Of course, there is always a flip side to such a glowing list of positive outcomes. More often than not, triumphs such as these can become a double-edged sword. Not surprisingly, outsiders become envious, jealous of new-found riches. Darian-Smith, however, recognizes this duality and presents a list of negatives that is understandable as well:

> [M]any of the tribes without gaming operations are becoming increasingly disillusioned by their marginalization from mainstream society and their inability to access the same resources as their more successful tribal neighbors. There is a growing disparity between rich and poor tribes, as well as in some cases between rich and poor members within a single tribe. This disparity is causing new cleavages and divisions within Native American populations and their surrounding non-Native, less economically successful communities. (Darian-Smith 2003, 12)

In short, there are no easy answers, no easy solutions. Indian gaming cannot provide a single panacea for tribal members or the public at large.

Additional venues can provide family-friendly forms of entertainment. For example, in larger tribal casinos, non-gamblers can choose from an extensive list of activities. Food, of course, is one of the most popular/necessary options. Diners may select from inexpensive buffet lines to five-star restaurants (usually well hidden and

reserved for VIP's); purchase turquoise/"Indian" jewelry—of varying quality—in gift shops; book luxurious hotel rooms with gourmet room service; lounge by an adjacent pool; receive a massage and pedicure at the in-house spa; play golf on a professionally designed course; and pay big-ticket prices to attend live concerts with nationally-known bands. Choices range from a stand-up comic delivering a witty monologue, to full-blown extravaganzas, featuring rock and roll bands or country western groups. For example, Kenny Rogers and the Oak Ridge Boys recently performed at Buffalo Thunder Casino, located on the outskirts of Santa Fe. Some outsiders might be surprised by such diversity. One last example: on November 20, 2013 at San Felipe Casino Hollywood, a production entitled Abba Mania, featuring songs by the Swedish band Abba performed to a sold-out crowd. The original group got its start in the 1970s, and is famous for such well-known hits as "Dancing Queen."

Scholar Steven Leuthold offers an explanation for the popularity of country western music in Indian casinos. He points to the widespread success of Indian rodeos and how a Western "cowboy identity," adopted by so many Indian men, is expressed through tight jeans and dramatic belt buckles (Leuthold 1998, 191-192). However, these style choices do not reflect a form of colonization/identifying with the oppressor. This style of dress, while co-opted, does not depict the classic cowboy, who stars in cowboy and Indian movies. In the fifties and sixties, when playing cowboys and Indians, most non-Native children were loath to be picked for the Indian camp. Instead, they wanted to be cast as a member of the winning team: the cowboys. According to Leuthold, this certainly ties into the emphasis on country

western music—so often booked for Friday and Saturday nights to appear at Indian casinos. For Leuthold, however, this should not be interpreted as a loss of cultural identity. He emphasizes practicality when he writes that: “cowboy hats and pickup trucks better suit Western environments than other forms of dress and technologies” (Leuthold 1998, 192). After all, an indestructible pair of Levi jeans is easier-to-produce and offers a more affordable form of clothing than garments fashioned from brain-tanned hide. In short, the Oak Ridge Boys model a familiar style of dress, popular with Native American men throughout the Southwest.

In her poem, “Raisin Eyes,” Luci Tapahonso, describes the irresistible appeal of “cowboy” attire to most Navajo women. This current perspective reflects how fluid the cowboy identity can be. For this highly-acclaimed Navajo poet, Tapahonso associates Tony Lama cowboy boots with a certain type of Navajo man—quite different from the enduring image of the non-Indian cowboy, personified by film stars such as John Wayne, Roy Rogers and Gene Autry (the latter two being singing cowboys). Indeed, if one spends time in Navajo country today, it becomes obvious that this style of dress has become a uniform of sorts. Even traditional medicine men—at least younger ones—dress in this fashion. In the following poem Tapahonso identifies herself—not only as a Navajo woman but as a “westerner” as well. Of course, this “bad boy” mystique has been known to appeal to all women, whether Navajo or not. This is but one incarnation of a familiar type, dressed not so differently from James Dean.

Raisin Eyes

I saw my friend Ella

With a tall cowboy at the store

The other day in Shiprock.

Later, I asked her,
Who's that guy anyway?

Oh Luci, she said (I knew what was coming).
It's terrible. He lives with me
And my money and my car.
But just for a while.
He's in AIRCA [American Indian Rodeo Cowboy Association] and rodeos a lot.
And I still work.

This rodeo business is getting to me, you know,
And I'm going to leave him.
Because I think all this I'm doing now
Will pay off better somewhere else,
But I just stay with him and it's hard

Because he just smiles that way, you know,
And then I end up paying entry fees
And putting shiny Tony Lomas on lay-away again.
It's not hard.

But he doesn't know when
I'll leave him and I'll drive across the flat desert
From Red Valley in blur morning light
Straight to Shiprock so easily.

And anyway, my car is already used
To humming a mourning song with Gary Stewart,
Complaining again of aching and breaking,
Down-and-out love affairs.

Damn.
These Navajo cowboys with raisin eyes
And pointed boots are just bad news,
But it's so hard to remember that all the time,
She said with a little laugh. (Tapahonso 1993, 41-42)

Whether expressed through this poem by Luci Tapahonso or throughout an iconic

Ralph Lauren promotional campaign, this western style of dress in the world of male

attire holds a universal appeal. The only difference is that a Navajo rodeo star does not have to worry about breaking in his wranglers or scuffing his Tony Lama cowboy boots.

Country and western performers are not the only acts booked by Indian casinos. Another popular category features comedians—usually one-man shows. (One-man being the operative description because female comediennes are so rarely featured.) For example, comedian Jay Leno—of *Tonight Show* fame—is known for making the rounds on the Indian casino circuit as a headline act. At smaller casino venues, particularly in the Navajo Nation, Dine comedian Vincent Craig was a crowd pleaser as well. Ticket prices for shows fluctuate because entertainment choices run the gamut, ranging from Elvis impersonators—on the low end of the cultural spectrum—to Grammy award-winning blues singers, such as Bonnie Raitt and Taj Mahal, who recently performed at the Sandia Amphitheater, on the other. This diversity of performers reflects arguments advanced by some scholars of popular culture. For example, Michael Petracca and Madeleine Sorapure assert that making value judgments based on the concept of "quality" can and should be suspect. They write:

> Some critics contend that it would be more valuable to study the products of high culture—Shakespeare rather than Spielberg, Eliot rather than Elvis. Their arguments often center on the issue of quality, as they assert that pop culture, transitory and often trendy, lacks the lasting value and strong artistic merit of high culture. Further, they argue that, because pop culture appeals to a mass audience rather than an educated elite, it is necessarily of low quality, no better than average. (Petracca and Soarpure 2004, 4)

However, a high percentage of these performances tend to be ranked as "B" as opposed to "A"—list acts. For instance, a full-fledged performance of Cirque de Soleil

cannot be found at even the largest Indian casino in New Mexico. While the outdoor amphitheater at Sandia Casino and Resort can accommodate up to four thousand people, this cannot begin to compare with capacity seating at the highly customized theater where Celine Dion performs in Las Vegas for months and years at a time.

In the book *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums and Heritage*, author Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett disputes this notion of taste or how "high" and "low" forms of culture are judged. She writes:

> What do aerosol cheese, Liberace, tattoos, Chihuahuas, and feminine hygiene spray have in common? Those who consider them examples of bad taste. The diverse social locations from which such instances of "bad taste" come make Spam, ant farms, facelifts, low riders, and Lawrence Welk incommensurable as a set. They have nothing in common but their relationship to the canon of good taste. Bad taste is one of the ways in which good tastes announces itself—the finger that points to the breach points to the rule. The connoisseurship of bad taste must therefore be read back on itself, for it reveals more about the arbiter than the offender. As Meyer Shapiro is said to have said, "kitsch is chic spelled backwards. (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998, 259)

It is amusing that the author provides proof positive of how easily these categories can change. Clearly, since 1998, tattoos, Chihuahuas and even Spam are now indicators of "high" culture. Think of Lady Gaga or Angelina Jolie and their tattoos, Paris Hilton cradling her Chihuahua or an annual Spam-carving contest in Seattle. Of course, Chihuahuas will always retain the mantle of dog du jour in New Mexico.

Despite these considerations, casino advertisements do reflect the difference between what could be categorized as high or low culture. For example, the color ads for the casinos at the Sandia and Pojoaque Pueblo (Buffalo Thunder) establishments, pictured earlier (figures 3 and 4), stand in complete contrast to the down-home quality of the ad for Taos Mountain Casino (fig. 5). Here, the viewer is

bombarded by a plethora of black and white images: including a tiny cartoon character jumping on a pile of coins and text that endorses fun and actual photographs of fine art. Indeed, there are so many incongruous images at play that it is difficult to focus on any one message. This ad is more reminiscent of a flier posted on a university kiosk than an ad published in a newspaper. The designer for Taos Mountain Casino clearly believes that more is more.

When designing an advertisement of any sort, a graphic artist must work in tandem with his or her employer. At a tribal casino this means that more than one person is involved. In other words, the designer must strive to express the vision of multiple employers—never an easy job. The first and most fundamental question for any graphic designer in this role is: What audience or audiences do you want to reach? The second is: What message or messages do you want to convey? The third is: What medium or media is best suited to attract a certain set of customers? The word "certain" is paramount because some publications might reach high-stakes gamblers as opposed to locals who assume residency at a favorite slot machine. Both are profitable, but each subset of gambler may respond to different forms of advertising. This advertisement for Camel Rock Casino entices residents to "Enjoy the Local Life" (fig. 6). The text of this advertisement offers many cues. For example, the text "Great Giveaways" conveys an image that could just as easily promote any "Indian" powwow across the country. The term "giveaway" is quite familiar to most Native peoples, and therefore becomes a hidden "code" of sorts.

The artwork in the background references "generic" Pueblo pottery designs, another way to appeal to locals by creating a strong visual link. Of course, because

these designs decorate hanging light fixtures and a sconce, they are not utilized in a traditional manner. One might think this design strategy is targeted to appeal to local Pueblo visitors. However, because so many non-Native, affluent collectors of Indian art live in Santa Fe, this ad conveys a certain status. In comparison to other Indian casinos that seem to distance themselves from their Native identity, Camel Rock employs this as an effective marketing tool. With all this in mind, it is a puzzle why Tesuque Pueblo—the owners of this casino—leave their tribal affiliation/name out. The logo for Camel Rock Casino features the well-known rock formation across the highway. Referred to by most non-Pueblo peoples as a "camel," it holds a far different significance for the residents of Tesuque Pueblo.

Figure 6. *Come on Over . . . Enjoy the Local Life*, Camel Rock Casino Advertisement, 2013.

In order to maintain a lucrative profit margin—both Native and non-Native casinos share a common goal: to generate as much money as possible. They must cater to tourists with a wide array of interests, whether they are young, old or middle-aged. Often, this involves experimentation, relying on focus groups and the like, but Native American casinos enjoyed a true luxury: They did not have to start from scratch to assess the needs of different audiences/consumers. Indeed, some tribes were able to reap immediate benefits, paying attention to decades' old lessons, acted out in the casino industries of Atlantic City and Las Vegas. Later, tribes could profit from these lessons by hiring expert consultants. These initial partnerships must have presented a unique challenge, not only for consultants, but tribal members as well. Each had to learn a new language/way of communicating. Both had to step out of their element to learn how to communicate with each other. At first glance, high-stakes gambling, symbolized by the spin of the roulette wheel or the thrill of the blackjack table, might provide the driving force for large, Indian gaming establishments. It is important to remember, however, that these forms of gambling—no matter how flashy—represent just one slice of the entire economic pie. Pulling the curtain on behind-the-scenes maneuverings at casinos, as with any large business, such as Microsoft or Apple, can pose a challenge. No business wants to give their competitor an easy edge by revealing trade secrets. Given ongoing sensitivities over sovereign status, difficulties in dealing with state regulators and direct competition from other casinos, it is understandable that managers of tribal casinos are reluctant to release more facts and figures or strategies related to marketing. Despite this "closed-door" approach, much can be deduced through "reading" the advertisements

themselves. Indeed, all the promotional material discussed here can convey multiple stories. For example, one approach may center on age or gender. Many casinos choose to invest more of their advertising budget into promotional materials that pinpoint seniors rather than customers in their mid-twenties. In this case, it might be wise to focus on newspaper ads as opposed to a site—since so many seniors lack computer literacy. In comparison, "twenty-somethings" are in the habit of accessing information online, often by smartphone, and preferring advertising that targets repeat customers—mentioned above—offering points, coupons and discounts for visitors who return on a regular basis. Other advertisements capitalize on certain holidays, ranging from Halloween, Saint Patrick's Day, Super Bowl Sunday (a holiday in the minds of many), to Mother's Day, depicted in the following advertisement for Taos Mountain Casino (*The Taos News*, May 11, 2000) (fig. 7). Doesn't every mother want to celebrate Mother's Day at the casino? The sad thing is that these three "mothers" are featured as a group, removed from a family setting. Even if these women are going together to play the slots, this activity is far from a family event. Although many mothers might enjoy this sort of reprieve, by proclaiming, "The Mother's Day Gift that Keeps on Giving," the Taos Mountain Casino all but promises that the winnings will far outlast the day itself.

Figure 7. *The Mother's Day Special that Keeps on Giving*, Taos Mountain Casino, *The Taos News*, 2000.

Examples of advertisements that build on Saint Patrick's Day are particularly curious because they feature images of leprechauns as opposed to iconography associated with any standard expression of Pueblo roots. For example, advertisements for Camel Rock Casino, San Felipe's Casino Hollywood and Isleta Gaming Palace (figures 8, 9 and 10) illustrate a striking resemblance. All three were published within a few days of each other in March of 2000. In the ad for Camel Rock Casino (fig. 8), a leprechaun is pictured on the lower left-hand corner with a pot of gold. The figure projects a gnome-like quality, while brandishing a signature shamrock and guarding his pot of gold coins. In the ad for San Felipe's Casino Hollywood (fig. 9), also published in the *Albuquerque Journal*, visitors are lured by the chance to win $7,777 in cash in a "Pot of Gold Cash Giveaway." On initial viewing, this amount seems odd, but these four consecutive sevens all refer to the lucky number seven. These western symbols are paired against the trademark on the right-hand side that actually symbolizes the Pueblo of San Felipe. The ad for San Felipe's Casino also features a leprechaun on the lower left (fig. 10).

Figure 8. *Luck of the Irish Slot Tournament*, Camel Rock Casino Advertisement, 2000.

Figure 9. *Win Your Pot of Gold Here*, San Felipe's Casino Hollywood Advertisement, 2000.

Figure 10. Isleta Gaming Palace Advertisement, 2000.

However, this pot of gold promises a more profitable pay out: a total of $17,000 in cash drawings. Just like the ad for San Felipe, the number seven plays a key role. It is repeated in the directions from Albuquerque: “seven lucky minutes south on I-25, exit 215.” Right below the leprechaun is the casino trademark featuring an eagle holding a cane, issued to the governor by the King of Spain to acknowledge sovereignty and passed down to succeeding governors since the 1600s. Although this logo translates as “Indian” to the non-Native viewer, it holds a much deeper meaning for pueblo people. This is what Lawlor refers to when she discusses the notion of “self- display” (Lawlor 2006, 5). The leprechaun exploits popular culture, far removed from any Irish roots, while the logo captures the cultural essence of Isleta Pueblo. Replicating the feather design, representing the outstretched wings of an eagle, this imagery is synonymous with the work of famous San Ildefonso potter Maria Martinez. Without a doubt, the perimeter of this logo is influenced by this design element, so common on black-on-black plates. In contrast to the repetition of the feather outline, the eagle is depicted in a much more realistic fashion. With outstretched wings, the eagle presents a distinctly “American” image. Perhaps the inclusion of the eagle, although culturally significant to Pueblo people, is also geared to appeal to non-Natives as well. Indeed, this cross-cultural appeal is acted out at powwows during “Grand Entry” ceremonies. Honoring vets becomes a popular display of U.S. patriotism. Anthropologist Marta Weigle and folklorist Peter White provide an alternate view of eagle in their classic text *The Lore of New Mexico*:

> A written record of which is to found in some of the pueblos, is that Pecos Pueblo was the birth-place of Montezuma, that after he had grown to man’s estate he showed himself possessed of supernatural powers; that he at a certain time assembled a large number of his people and started from New

> Mexico on a journey south, Montezuma riding on the back of an eagle; and thus riding in advance, was to his people as was the star to the wise men of the East. Wherever the eagle stopped at night there was planted an Indian pueblo. The sign of arriving at the site of the great city and capital of the Aztec nation was to be the alighting of the eagle upon a cactus bush and devouring a serpent. This event took place when the eagle arrived at the site of the present city of Mexico, then first made a city and capital. (Weigle and White 1988, 69)

Clearly, the eagle symbolized and continues to symbolize power on many levels, informed by a wide range of cultural perspectives. In this story, the eagle is the key protagonist, responsible for the creation of individual pueblos. It also illustrates the close relationship between what can now be categorized as Mexico and New Mexico.

Another example of casino advertisements that is geared to a specific demographic focuses on seniors. In the ad below Taos Mountain Casino promotes the opportunity to become a "Taos Mountain Casino Super Senior" (fig 11). In a later ad for San Felipe's Casino Hollywood, seniors are targeted again (fig. 12). The five dollar coupon is only good on Mondays, a slow/slower day for most casinos. Since most seniors no longer work, a Monday may be preferable, with fewer crowds and less smoke. This reflects a reality that goes on at all casinos, whether Native or non-Native run. Prior to the opening of legalized Class 111 gaming establishments in New Mexico, bingo parlors were all the rage and seniors relied upon this activity as a way to socialize and to possibly score some pin money. Dave McKibben, a staff writer for the *Los Angeles Times* explores this trend in an essay entitled "Indian Gaming Offers a Therapeutic Escape to Many Senior Citizens." Overall, he casts this relatively new occurrence in a positive light:

Many senior citizens are spending their retirement years playing slot machines and other games at Indian casinos. At a time in their lives when they often suffer from the loss of spouses and relentless boredom, retirees are finding that casinos provide stimulation and excitement. The attraction to Indian casinos benefits not only the tribes but the seniors who play their games. Studies have shown that older gamblers are in better health than non-gamblers. Although some experts caution that gambling addiction can be a serious problem for seniors, casinos cater to their older clientele, offering bus service from retirement communities to the casinos. For some elderly people, Indian casinos add an element of joy not found elsewhere in their lives. (McKibbon 2006, 74)

Figure 11. *Be a Taos Mountain Casino Super Senior*, Taos Mountain Casino Advertisement, 2000.

Most pueblos with senior centers run a once-a-week shuttle to visit a nearby casino. These trips serve multiple functions. First, if Native elders lend their support/dollars to Pueblo casinos, this amounts to a stamp of approval on legalized gaming by the community as a whole. This is because Pueblo elders often serve as role models, providing a moral compass for younger generations. Second, since bingo, which used to be offered at pueblo senior centers—on a much more casual basis—has been abandoned in favor of slot machines (or a glitzier form of bingo in a casino setting), casinos offer a replacement form of entertainment. And finally, since casinos do offer a range of services, seniors can also enjoy an inexpensive lunch at the buffet, among other benefits. Of course, there are economic implications for this trend. Seniors now have to come up with a budget for gambling.

In the next advertisement "Every Monday is Senior Day!" (fig.12), San Felipe's Casino Hollywood makes a concerted attempt to reach seniors. Making a clever play on the classification of King and Queen and images on face cards, the coupon offers a dollar off the buffet and a five-dollar match towards slot machine funds. Getting something for nothing is always an appealing offer. This may seem like a good deal, but it only amounts to play money for the casino.

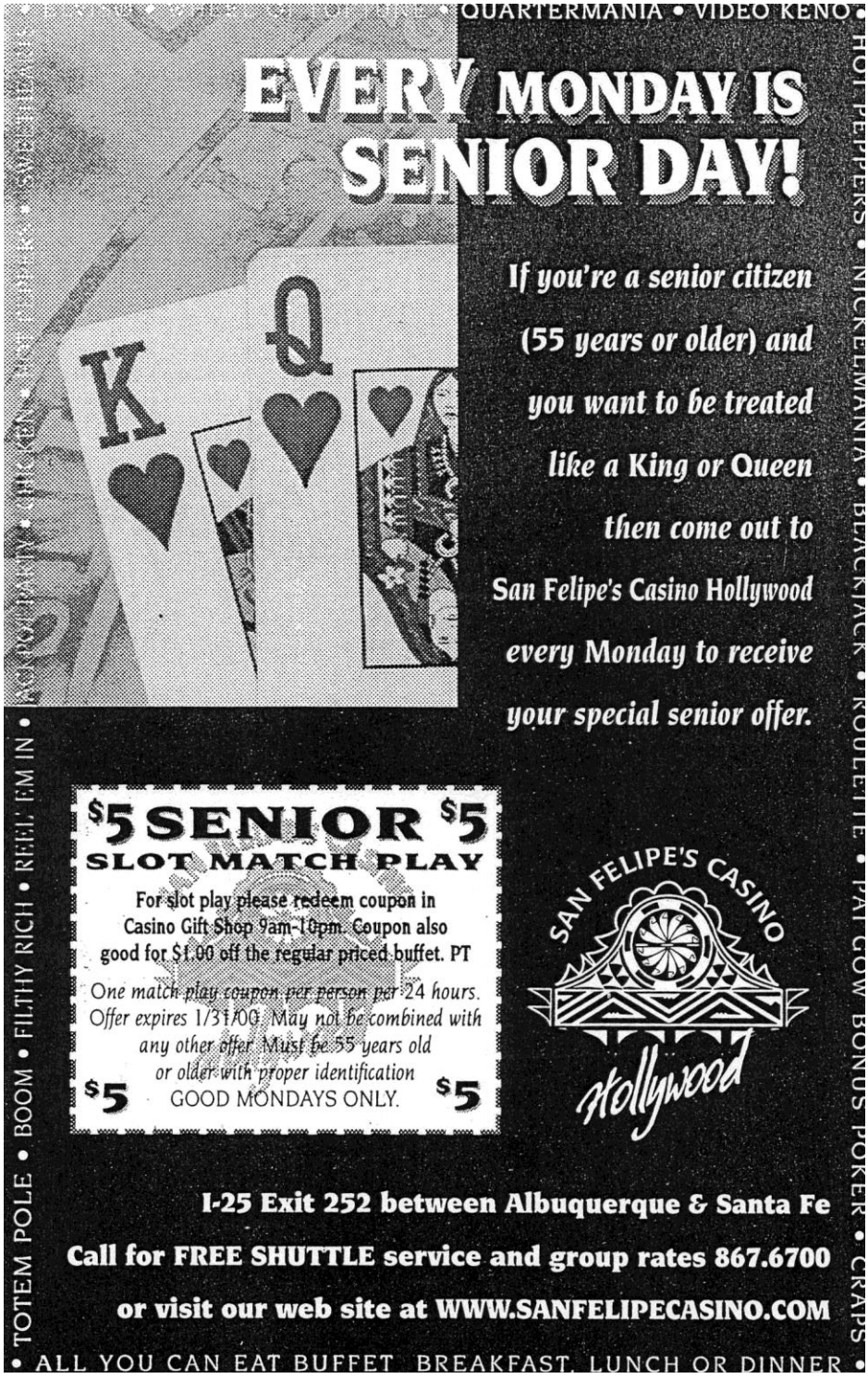

Figure 12. *Every Monday is Senior Day*, San Felipe's Casino Hollywood Advertisement, 2000.

Dave McKibbon offers additional insight into the psychological impact on seniors who gamble. Obviously, this issue is far more complex than it may first appear.

> Despite the potential benefits, many experts say gambling addictions are being kindled –with unforeseeable consequences for retirees and their families.
>
> "Ever since the growth of Indian casinos, so many more seniors are gambling away their golden years," said Suzanne Graupner Pike, a psychologist with the San Diego Center for Pathological Gambling. "It's tragic."
>
> No hard statistics are available, but seniors are just as vulnerable as young people to gambling problems, they say, and the proliferation of casinos inevitably will ruin lives.
>
> Pike, who has been treating gamblers for eleven years, said one-third of her nearly fifty patients are seniors, and each is hooked on gambling at Indian casinos. Several of her elderly patients have refinanced their homes to pay off gambling debts, some have filed for bankruptcy and a few have attempted suicide, she said.
>
> "Aging is a time of repeated losses, and that can lead to depression," said Pike, who gets most of her referrals from a toll-free hotline. "Seniors are separating from their children geographically and losing their sense of self through retirement. So they go to the casinos to escape from their lives."
>
> Casinos welcome seniors with enthusiasm—in part because they arrive during the day, when other gamblers are scarce.
>
> "Seniors are half the market of Indian casinos," said Bill Thompson, a University of Nevada-Las Vegas professor of public administration who has written nine books on gambling. "They are the perfect demographic for the casino." (McKibbon 2006, 76-77)

After reading these sad statistics one must question the relationship between Indian casinos and the elderly. Who bears responsibility for this situation? Is it the casino itself or family members who support casino visits for their parents and loved ones?

In reviewing advertisements for pueblo casinos in New Mexico, there is a clear difference between casinos that decide to market their "Indianness" as

opposed to those that do not. Why is this? And how have the powers that be in individual casinos arrived at this decision? Given the amounts of money at stake, it is hard to imagine that focus groups have not been hired and paid. But all these activities take place behind the scenes. In writing about these issues, it is imperative to use qualifiers, such as “probably” or “chances are” because it is almost impossible to obtain data concerning how promotional choices are made. American Studies professor Mary Lawlor explores the complex nature of self-representation for tribes that can play a role in answering these questions.

> The presence of essentialist cultural claims in tourist venues where non-Native audiences meet the tribes can also function, somewhat paradoxically perhaps, to attract consumerist desire to the exotic and to the distinctly “other.” Such attraction can lead to the economic advantage of the tribe, and, together with the expression of distinct cultural heritage, can also have the effect of furthering social recognition and respect in the broader public sphere beyond the reservation. . . . However, rich and interesting a tribe’s self-display may be, it can often be understood as precisely a public skin, a public face for non-Indian audiences; and an important, though subtle, component of the representation is what, for want of a better term, I will call “displayed withholding”: a practice of showing that something is not being shown and that this something marks the crucial difference which furnishes distinctly Navajo, Acoma, Mashantucket, or Eastern Shoshone styles of being and knowing. (Lawlor 2006, 5)

When one looks at advertisements for Pueblo casinos in New Mexico, it is hard to know at times exactly what is being promoted. A hodge-podge of events are often presented in a fashion that contradict how most graphic artists are trained. (Refer back to fig. 10 for an example of this.) In short, most professional ad agencies would throw up their hands in despair at this overwhelming combination of text and images. If clean lines and a unified message are valued for some venues, these rules are often violated in the world of casino advertising.

I will close this chapter by looking at two advertisements—one for the Cities of Gold Casino and the other for Camel Rock Casino (figures 13 and 14). In figure 13, the headline reads: “Imagine Yourself on a 2000 Indian Chief.” This play on words reflects a type of “black” humor, given all the derogatory ways in which the term “chief” has been used over time. By omitting the word motorcycle, this heading could easily convey sexual overtones as well. The Indian motorcycle logo pictures a Plains Indian headdress, an emblem commonly used to symbolize all Indians. Historian Philip J. Deloria describes this form Indians from all different tribes employ to claim authenticity, and refers to the headdress as “white America’s marker of [an] archaic brand of authority” (Deloria 1998, 189). In an ironic, trickster-like twist, the Cities of Gold Casino uses an all-too-familiar stereotype to promote their casino. Of course, it is all done in fun and should be categorized as an example of “Indian” humor. The text of this advertisement and the next employs a type of humor that capitalizes on puns. In other words, visit our Indian casino and you too can register to win an Indian motorcycle.

A similar approach to humor is demonstrated in figure 13. It is hard to remember now the terror afoot when the calendar was set to enter the year 2000. No one knew for certain what the technological implications might be, especially for computers. This Y2K advertisement also employs a pun by offering a VW Beetle/Bug as a prize. The “bug” refers to the potential damage that a change of century might mean. Could everyone lose their data? Could jets still depart from Kennedy Airport? This fear was so great that museums across the country boarded up their windows in an attempt to protect their art, just in case security systems failed. In the book *The*

Trickster Shift: Humour [Canadian spelling] and Irony in Contemporary Art, art Historian Allan J. Ryan discusses contemporary Native American art as follows:

> In many cases much of [the] emotional impact or ironic magic derives from the juxtaposition of seemingly unrelated concepts and contexts. Yet what is seen as unrelated may merely reflect the viewer's, and sometimes the curator's, ignorance of historical and contemporary Native culture and a failure to recognize the hybrid nature and global context of present-day Aboriginal life. Well aware of this Native artists take full advantage of it. It is part of the subtle ambush, the coyote manoeuvre [Canadian spelling]—and the trickster shift. (Ryan 1999, 253)

This is exactly why the powers that be at Cities of Gold and Camel Rock Casino decided to give away an "Indian" motorcycle as opposed to a Harley Davidson (figures 13 and 14). Why not have a little fun in the process? Indeed, VW "bugs" are rarely offered as "giveaways" at Indian casinos. Mustangs or Jeep Cherokees are far more common. However, in honor of Y2K, a VW "bug" was the perfect choice. When comparing these final two advertisements to figures 4 and 5, this brand of humor is no longer in evidence. One can only hope that this ironic approach, reflecting a love of "word play," will continue to find a voice in the marketing of Indian casinos. However, as more and more "outsiders" are hired to create ads, this brand of humor, complete with coupons, may very well disappear.

In conclusion, promotional materials provide a window into how Indian casinos in New Mexico seek to define themselves. As advertisements and television commercials become more and more sophisticated, a series of new stories about Indian casinos will unfold. Indian gaming, on such a large scale, is still a relatively new phenomenon. Unfortunately, advertisements and other forms of paper ephemera are often overlooked as primary source material. But each and each "giveaway" provides a rich snapshot of how Indian casinos are evolving over time.

Figure 13. *Imagine Yourself on a 2000 Indian Chief*, Cities of Gold Casino, 2000.

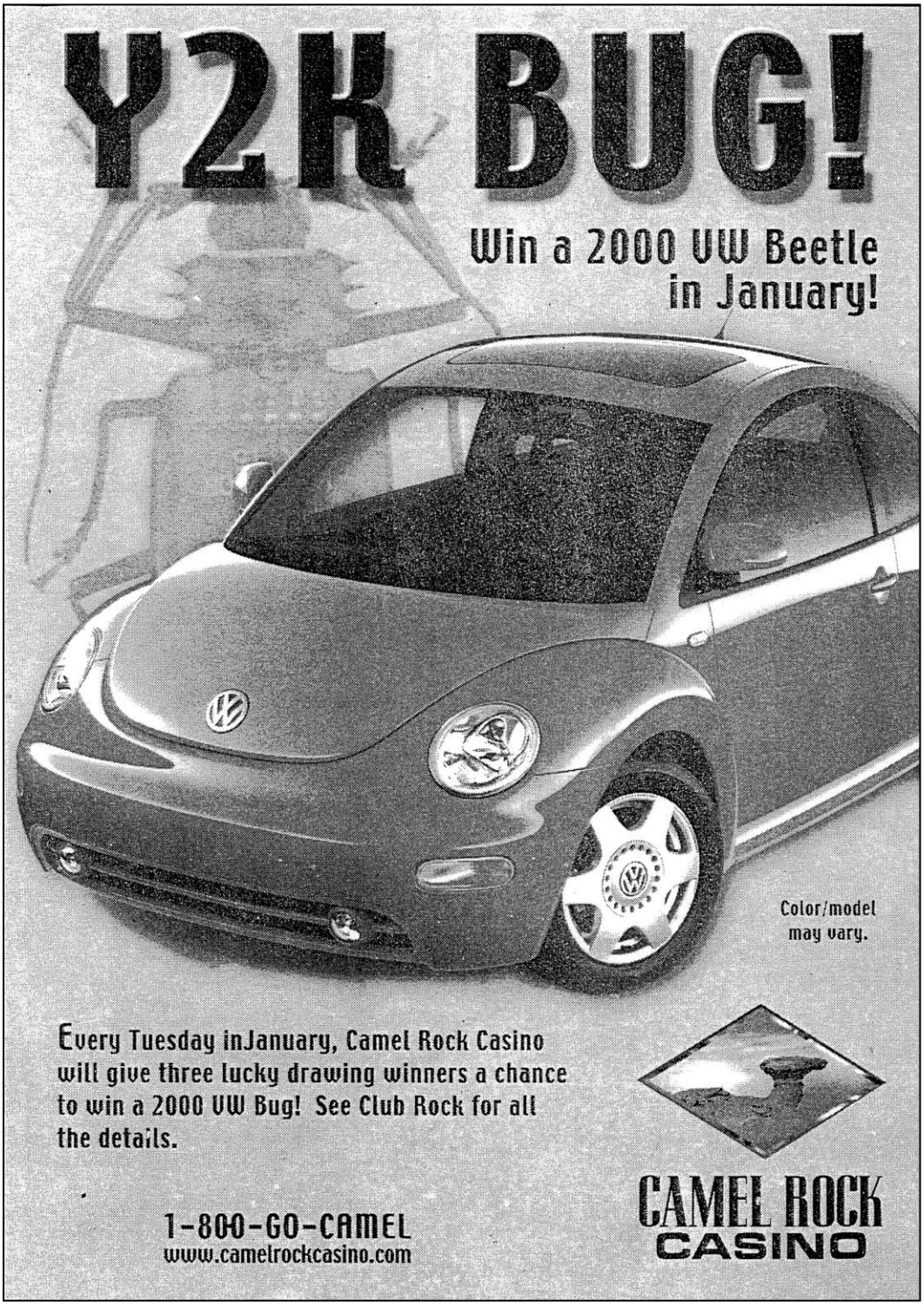

Figure 14. *Y2K Bug! Win a 2000 VW Beetle in January*, Camel Rock Casino Advertisement, 2000.

Chapter Three

Addressing the New Buffalo: Native Artists, Native Rights

> Righting the poetic present is a reverbalization of the visual.
> --Dean Rader (2011, 112)

The purpose of this chapter is to examine Indian gaming and casinos through the lens of art and architecture.[1] Touted as the "new buffalo," Indian gaming is seen as the source to rectify any number of economic hardships faced by tribal communities with participating casinos. Native art can be used as a tool to either promote or critique this winner-take-all mentality. While the path to legalizing Indian gaming, played out on a state or national stage tells one story, the world of visual culture reveals quite another. Although some works of art on display in casino settings convey the artist's intent, via a title—some more descriptive than others—the majority of design choices usually occupy an "untitled" space—subject to each viewer's personal interpretation. Text does not come into play. Indeed, many artists, whether Native or non-Native, are loathe to assign titles or to define aesthetic choices at length because they want their work "to stand on its own," a visual statement meant to be mediated without words. Given this familiar refrain, it is no surprise that viewers' interpretations reveal profound discrepancies, informed by both public and private knowledge. In other words, a Pueblo insider may read "casino art" in one way, while tourists or outsiders, including Native peoples with other tribal identities, might read the same work of art from a much different perspective. Pointing out such subtleties is necessary because the majority of

[1] This chapter is a revised version of my earlier article in *Visual Representations of Native Americans: Transnational Contexts and Perspectives* (see Sinclair 2012, 281-297).

viewers assume that Native American art is monolithic in nature, conveying a message that is intrinsically "Indian." Indeed, a tool box of prepackaged stereotypes, including buckskin, feathers and Indian maidens, is available at a moment's notice; these stereotypes inform our collective consciousness.

While it is difficult to draw distinctions between the categories of "fine" art, decorative arts and popular culture, it is important to point out that generic styles of "Indian" art do exist. (Art historians have been wrestling with these definitions for years. The difficulty is that these categories often overlap, in the realm of public art particularly.) As expressions of popular culture, a range of iconographies related to Native cultures are a part and parcel of our everyday lexicon. Sometimes these stereotypical images are regional, appearing again and again in some hybridized form; versions can be found on potholders, t-shirts and travel brochures. As such, these symbols are synonymous with tourism.

For example, on the Northwest Coast caricatures of totem poles are an essential part of popular culture, they are a primary marketing tool. It does not matter if a pole floats in space, devoid of any geographic or cultural context. In the West, arrows and zig-zag designs are often utilized in casino décor, ranging from trash cans to neon signs. And, in the Southwest, disembodied figures, such as petroglyphs and Mimbres pottery, are common motifs, the latter featured on a recent run of casino chips (fig. 41) at Sandia Casino in Albuquerque, New Mexico. These are easy ways to assert Indian identity, whether this imagery provides an accurate depiction of contemporary Native American life or not.

But should all uses of this type of imagery be categorized as exploitation? Indeed, what happens when Native peoples opt to work from the same toolbox of images when promoting their own casinos? For many, this reflects a deliberate form of strategizing. By concentrating on a visual vocabulary that does not depict ceremonial life, casinos—and the tribal communities they represent—can sidestep some internal controversy. In short, certain images can safeguard the sacred from commercial consumption. Indeed, with a few notable exceptions, the majority of viewers who walk through the doors of an Indian gaming establishment will never know the difference. And tribal insiders, who do frequent casinos, are more than willing to support or be entertained by the subterfuge.

Art historian Charlotte Townsend-Gault comments on these conflicting viewpoints in her essay "Art, Argument and Anger on the Northwest Coast." Although addressing issues that face First Nations peoples, her observations can just as easily be applied to art that adorns Indian gaming establishments in New Mexico. She writes:

> Material culture is being used by First Nations politicians, artists and others as a form of resistance, as a counter-hegemonic strategy and as a way to reshape their own social world. The argument is about finding ways to translate, transform, re-invent, protect and sometimes obscure the knowledge that is integral to the representation of a culture. Thus its embodiments, the physical objects, are located at the cusp of the argument over what is to be done about culturally specific knowledge and whether it should be put beyond the bounds of those outside the culture. The relevant parameters here are those between alienable and inalienable, sharing and withholding, translation and silence, between what is public and what is private, specific, local knowledge. This is the source of the power of representations, they are also discursive representations. (Townsend-Gault 1997, 151)

The ability to conceal visual cues can enable artists and designers to express a connection to cultural beliefs without revealing "insider" knowledge. In and of

themselves, casinos—both interiors and exteriors—provide a continuous display of public art. Here, imagined images of "Indianness" are often employed as a commodity to attract gamblers. However, markers of contemporary Native identity do exist, whether underground or hidden in plain sight. Historically, images, both of and by Native peoples, have been appropriated and exploited. Therefore, the need to protect or encode sacred imagery should come as no surprise. But how does this play out in the confines of a casino?

For traditional Native communities, merging the secular and the sacred, even within the confines of a casino, is paramount. Michael Marker, in his essay "Sacred Mountains and Ivory Towers: Indigenous Pedagogies of Place and Invasions from Modernity," addresses this phenomenon:

> Spiritual substance is infused in all processes of knowledge acquisition and application. Elders and traditional knowledge keepers reference a unified spiritual dimension that has no divide between sacred and secular experience. In the Indigenous communities this is not considered a "mystical" position, but rather a commonsense methodology for a form of conscientization. (Marker 2011, 199)

Since casinos are built on sacred land, they can never function as solely secular sites. And even though a few select members of a tribal community may manage a casino, they still must adhere to the wishes of the elders or "traditional knowledge keepers." They are the final authority. In the article "Space, Time and Unified Knowledge: Following the Path of Vine Deloria, Jr," anthropologist Jeffery D. Anderson notes that "the locus of all Native American unified knowledge was and is the land" (Anderson 2011, 97). The question then becomes: With a driving desire to generate profits, how do casino marketers strike an appropriate balance? Should it

matter how Indian gaming establishments entice gamblers to pull the lucky lever of a slot machine?

Is it possible to simultaneously respect the land, the stories and related lifeways while taking aggressive steps to alter the terrain? After all, in addition to the casino itself, parking lots, swimming pools and golf courses must be constructed. Such structures all raise problematic questions. A cynical observer might say the best way to reconcile this problem is to laugh all the way to the bank. However, casinos represent tribal communities, not developers. Since Indian gaming funnels resources back into the community and promotes sovereign status, emphasizing financial gain alone is a simplistic explanation at best. Clearly, an entrepreneur like Donald Trump will never view a building site via an indigenous belief system, where an outcropping of rock can provide a crucial link to a creation story. In the mainstream business world, land is only measured by acreage, price per square foot or a waterfront view. When comparing these points of view, the tried and true real estate adage: location, location, location, assumes a whole new meaning. In *Wisdom Sits in Places Landscape and Language among the Western Apache*, late anthropologist Keith Basso explored indigenous perspectives on land, where physical surroundings constitute a sense of place. According to Basso, this concept reflects “shared bodies of ‘local knowledge’ . . . with which persons and whole communities render their places meaningful and endow them with social importance” (Basso 1996, 1). This difference in belief systems concerning how land is valued demonstrates a profound discrepancy between the sites of Indian casinos and their counterparts on the Las Vegas strip.

The following cartoon (fig. 15) uses humor to address yet another set of complexities in regard to Indian gaming and casino culture:

Figure 15. Dan Piraro. Bizarro.com, "I'm just sorry it took us 400 years to figure out how to beat them," 2006.

The joke here is that the tables have finally been turned. Years of historical trauma are being addressed. The colonizer is now the colonized. As a non-Native cartoonist,

Dan Piraro tackles multiple topics: white liberal guilt coupled with a fear that gaming may enable Indians to gain the upper hand—at least from an economic perspective. This cartoon is "funny" because the two Indian men stand over the distraught gambler in a position of power. The text in the balloon over their heads addresses this irony. Gerald Vizenor might describe this cartoon as an example of Native "survivance over dominance" (Vizenor 1994, 4).

In the past twenty years, casino construction in New Mexico, particularly among the Pueblos, has experienced tremendous growth. The popularity of these casinos, in part, points to the global appeal of Indian gaming as a tourist activity. In this chapter, I focus specifically on three issues: the phenomenon of Indian gaming and its impact on contemporary Native artists; the relationship between ethnic tourism and marketing; and the shifting role of art in Pueblo casinos. I compare art showcased in casinos to images most easily classified as social commentary. Not surprisingly, the visual culture of Indian gaming reflects conflicting views, both within and outside Native communities. Indeed, the actual geography of the Southwest continues to shift as massive casinos redefine the landscape. Casinos reflect key aspects of Native American identity—both individual and collective—through decorative elements, displays of fine art, and architecture. Sometimes, visual signifiers of identity are hidden from non-Native viewers. However, members of the community recognize them immediately. Design choices can reflect multiple aspects of Native American identity. In short, casinos represent a new type of museum that caters to both insiders and visitors, who may not frequent museums with more mainstream exhibits of Native American art.

With millions of dollars generated every year, it is no surprise that casinos operate in a political arena. In the 1980s, tribes lobbied the federal government, arguing that their sovereign nation status entitled them to open gaming enterprises to the public. As a result, Congress passed the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA) in 1988. This legislation guaranteed that tribal governments could conduct gaming on reservation lands to promote economic growth. In comparison to privately-owned casinos that light Las Vegas or Atlantic City, Indian gaming establishments are expected to benefit tribal community members by redistributing profits to create jobs, scholarships and a wide array of social programs (cf. Conner and Taggert 2009, 51-52). Although Indian gaming is sanctioned by law, questions abound. For example, some critics question whether Native peoples risk sacrificing their cultural integrity to secure economic survival via casino capitalism. How do different audiences and collectors, including tourists from other countries, react to this controversy? What aspects and stereotypes of Native American life are used to publicize casinos? Do Native peoples deliberately promote the "White Man's Indian" (cf. Berkhofer, 1974) in ads that target non-Native audiences? For instance, images of tipis, whether indigenous to an area or not, often populate advertisements in lieu of photographs of Native men and women dressed in formal business attire. Journalists David Cuillier and Susan Dente Ross point to related research:

> The National Museum of the American Indian used stereotypes to attract non-Indian patrons. Navajo and Pueblo artists learned they could make more money if they created wares that fit the non-Indians' image of what Indian art was supposed to look like, transfixed in the past. […] The identity adaptation found in ethnic tourism also has been noted in the Indian gaming world. (Cuillier and Dente Ross 2007, 200)

Entrepreneurship is the driving force behind casinos, but striving for money runs counter to a commonly-held stereotype that Native people**s** are somehow special arbiters of spirituality, based on a nostalgic view of Native peoples. Jessica R. Cattelino explains this phenomenon from the vantage point of an anthropologist:

> Gaming as a *form* of economic development fuels critiques because to many Americans indigenous "tradition" represents the opposite of casinos, which embody capitalism, nonproductive market exchange, and money itself. Conservative critics of tribal sovereignty as "special rights" argue that tribes' embrace of casino capitalism indicates that they are no longer "really" Indians and thus do not deserve special legal status. Many critics of capitalism, on the other hand, decry the spread of casino-based materialism as corrupting indigenous ways. (Cattelino 2004, 84)

A certain irony is embedded in such theories/social critiques. Although gaming can be linked to greater self-sufficiency—a way to strengthen cultural identities by increasing economic stability—outsiders can view this move as "inauthentic." Native Studies scholar Kathryn Shanley explains just how narrow-minded this thinking can be:

> [N]othing brings out the ambivalence in the American cultural mind more than Native American gaming. Indians continue to suffer the dichotomized thinking that would have them be simply good Indians or bad Indians. When associated with the "natural" world, we are good Indians, but when involved with the business of making money from gambling, we are bad Indians. (Shanley 2000, 93)

This is a Catch 22 if ever there was one. When Native peoples reject poverty through gaming, their image, which may or may not be realistic, becomes tarnished.

The visual culture of Indian gaming also depicts a complex conversation between casino culture, Pueblo worldviews, sovereignty, and public perception—whether local, national or international. However, it is impossible to discuss Pueblo casinos and transnationality without acknowledging the role of sovereignty or

nationalism as a consistent framing mechanism for Native peoples. Robert Warrior states that "many Native people, including Native scholars, rely on the language of nationalism, the language in which the political struggle for their actual social world is being waged" (2007, 808). Because it has been so difficult to gain recognition and legal status as clearly defined nations within the United States and Canada, the concept of transnationalism remains relatively unexplored by Native scholars. If establishing concrete borders and nationhood is paramount, it is not surprising that the permeable nature of global boundaries remains a secondary concern.

Newfound riches continue to change the dynamics of power within many Pueblo communities. In *Manifest Manners: Narratives of PostIndian Survivance,* Gerald Vizenor asserts that "Casinos have raised new contradictions, the bereavement of traditional tribal values, and the envies of outsiders" (Vizenor 1994, 142). "What we appear to have here," Isleta scholar Ted Jojola specifies, "is a contest between proponents who interpret [Indian] gambling as vice and those who view it as an exercise in self-determination." Jojola does not hesitate to put a personal face on this issue:

> I have […] listened to arguments that equate gambling to a moral vice. And, in all good consciousness, I must defer from tribal experts who contend that gambling is benign. There was a recent suicide in my extended family that was most definitely exacerbated by gambling. I don't think this was an exception and, what's more, we didn't even see it coming. (Jojola unpublished manuscript, 2005)

Obviously, the existence of casinos raises many issues—within and outside Native American culture. Since casino art is one visually prominent site where these contests are acted out, it may show the scope of the discussion. Many questions arise. For example, what aspects of Native American identity are reflected in the

decoration of casinos? What is the relationship between Pueblo artists and casino environments in New Mexico? Outward expressions of culture can be assessed through a range of design choices, such as architecture, interior settings, slot machines, and exterior surroundings, including landscaping or signature sculptures (cf. Bodinger de Uriarte 2007). Individual art works reveal much about Native artists, casinos as places of business and community involvement, as well as the employees and patrons who bring these gaming establishments to life.

Casinos are a familiar sight in New Mexico. However, it was not so long ago that Native American casinos fought to keep their doors open. Prior to the building of giant casinos like Camel Rock in Tesuque and Cities of Gold in Pojoaque in the early 1990s, however, community bingo halls filled a similar, if less visible, role in Pueblo communities. It is important to note, though, that Pueblo peoples made trips to Las Vegas and destinations across the world to gamble, long before the construction of casinos in New Mexico. Transnationalism is reflected in how tourists migrate between different gaming sites. After all, slot machines in Las Vegas or Monte Carlo are nearly identical to those found in most Pueblo casinos. This stands in conflict with a commonly held misconception—that Native Americans do not travel—preferring to remain close to home. However, Native peoples do journey all over the world, and Las Vegas has long been a popular destination. Today, the act of gaming transcends geography. An example of this exchange is illustrated by Nora Naranjo-Morse's 1988 clay sculpture, *Pearlene Teaching Her Cousins Poker* (fig. 16). Intently focused on their cards, these striped figures are modeled on *koshares* or sacred

clowns who appear at Pueblo ceremonial events. Naranjo-Morse shares her thoughts on this piece:

> I made this grouping after I'd gone to that sinful city of Las Vegas for a very, very lost weekend. Pearlene returning a little more worldly, tainted if you will, returning to the village to teach her cousins […] the seedier side of life. Of course, I am dealing with the process of assimilation, couched in an appealing format. (Noranjo-Morse1992, 62)

Figure 16. Nora Naranjo-Morse (Santa Clara Pueblo), *Pearlene Teaching Her Cousins Poker*, clay (private collection), 1988.

Gambling has a long, well-documented history in Pueblo communities. However, Naranjo-Morse demonstrates how the act of playing poker is a relatively new phenomenon for Pueblo people. The artist relishes the incongruous pairing of traditional Pueblo figures and commercial playing cards. The face of the resolute

figure on the far right is obscured as she studies her 'basic' poker manual. Through humor, Naranjo-Morse challenges notions about 'authenticity' that outsiders might bring to the table. If these voluptuous *koshares* are sacred, then any game they choose to play must fall in the same category.

Many contemporary Native artists 'code' their work. In other words, the viewer does not have to understand this mix of poker-playing *koshares* to appreciate these figures as a work of art. Here, appreciation is expressed on two levels. The first stands for the voice of the marketplace and the second represents cultural insiders, which may or may not include collectors. However, with such appealing figures, non-Pueblo audiences are not required to decipher multiple meanings. Nevertheless, "Native viewpoints," as Craig Womack points out, "are necessary because the 'mental means of production' in terms of analyzing Indian cultures have been owned, almost exclusively by non-Indians" (1999, 5). In short, creating these poker-playing figures allows Naranjo-Morse to explore alternative roles as a Pueblo woman, a successful strategy for resistance. But true understanding depends on whether viewers can decipher this panoply of meanings.

Completed in May of 2001, Sandia Casino and Resort, Albuquerque, New Mexico, features an impressive display of sculpture and works in other media, including bronze door handles, carpeting and lighting fixtures by Pueblo artists, all inspired by Sandia Pueblo design motifs (Previtti 2001, 12). Prior to the building of this casino, a committee of tribal members selected Estella Loretto, a sculptor from Jemez Pueblo and a protégé of Chiricahua Apache artist Allan Houser, to create a life-size bronze, entitled *Pueblo Maiden* (fig. 17). Housed in a niche close to the

entrance of the casino, this sculpture of a traditional Pueblo woman projects a nostalgic, almost timeless, quality. Standing with an *olla* or water jar balanced on her head, Loretto's bronze perpetuates a popular stereotype about Pueblo women and Pueblo society. Should Estella Loretto's sincerity be questioned? Her belief in a traditional Pueblo life, as seen through this figure, outweighs political or social motivations. However, there are reasons why the casino selected this depiction of a Pueblo woman in ceremonial regalia.

Figure 17. Estella Loretto (Jemez Pueblo), *Pueblo Maiden,* bronze, Sandia Casino and Resort, Bernalillo, New Mexico, photograph by author, 2001.

Anthropologist Barbara A. Babcock raises key questions about this familiar figure:

> What happens when indigenous Pueblo signifiers of stability—women and potteries—become valued items of exchange, cultural brokers and agents of change precisely because they embody a synchronic essentialism for postindustrial Anglo consumers? Why has a traditionally dressed woman shaping or carrying an olla, a water jar, become the classic metonymic misrepresentation of the Pueblo, and why has Anglo America invested so heavily in this image for more than a century? (Babcock 1990, 403)

In other words, when tourists come to New Mexico, this is an image they expect to see. Of course, this is not the way contemporary Pueblo women dress on an everyday basis. Modern plumbing has replaced the utilitarian need for carrying water ollas—no matter how picturesque.[2] The majority of non-Native casino patrons will never attend a feast day at a pueblo or witness a traditional dance—the most likely way to see a Pueblo woman in ceremonial dress. However, purchasing a piece of Pueblo pottery inside the casino gift shop is certainly an attainable goal. Although finished in 2001, Loretto's sculpture of a Pueblo woman is reminiscent of photographs taken by turn-of-the-century photographer Edward Sheriff Curtis—hence the appeal (fig. 18). This static, romantic sculpture belies the noisy technology of coins, loud voices, and slot machines just a few feet away. Why does this particular piece represent Sandia Casino? And, why did a Pueblo artist model her representation of Native Americans in accordance with the enduring stereotype of the White Man's Indian?

[2] Although at Zuni Pueblo, pots are still carried as a key component of ceremonial rain dances.

Figure 18. Edward Sheriff Curtis, *Girl and Jar*–San Ildefonso, photogravure, Portfolio XVII, plate 590, 1950.

Figure 19. Roxanne Swentzell (Santa Clara Pueblo), *The Casino Maiden*, clay, (private collection), 1997.

While these are difficult questions to answer, other Native artists opt to challenge misconceptions held by the dominant culture. Roxanne Swentzell, another Santa Clara artist, contests the traditional depiction of a Pueblo woman. Swentzell explores the world of Indian gambling in her clay figure *The Casino Maiden* (1997). Because Swentzell is Naranjo-Morse's niece, it is easy to find similarities in the approaches of these two artists—via subject matter, the medium of clay, and Pueblo worldview. The *Casino Maiden* (fig. 19) offers a rich contrast to Estella Loretto's sculpture (fig. 17). Although the *Casino Maiden* does not wear the stripes of a *koshare*, this Santa Clara woman assumes the role of trickster, a figure bent on challenging the familiar. Her appearance calls into question the association between the value systems of Pueblo culture and gambling. The hem of her manta is trimmed in numbers inspired by the black jack table. Dice dangle from the edge of her dress. Hearts, clubs, spades, and diamonds repeat to form the pattern of her sash. Instead of holding traditional evergreen boughs, she clutches casino vouchers or money. On top of her head, she wears a *tablita*, emblazoned with the word *casino*. A turquoise and silver necklace has been replaced by a strand of large casino tokens. Is this woman participating in a ceremonial dance at Santa Clara, or does she feel more at home at Camel Rock Casino? This maiden's loyalties are divided, and her attire illustrates this split—ceremonial dress with casino-inspired accessories.

In critiquing Indian gaming, Swentzell enters risky territory. Visual messages in this piece are more pointed than many found in print. Overall, casinos enjoy widespread support in Pueblo communities. Economic gains have brought about extensive improvements in housing, opportunities for education and a newfound

voice in the making of state and federal policies. However, black humor allows Swentzell to question how Indian gaming affects the cultural and religious activities of women at Santa Clara. Is it less than politic for Swentzell to cast Indian casinos in anything but a positive light? Some might argue yes. There are many circles within which this type of social commentary is not appreciated.

Of course, one needs to consider the audience for this piece. Swentzell states: "This piece is a statement on Indian gaming. It's meant to be a thought-provoking piece for the Indian community. I've gotten many different reactions but it was done objectively" ("Casino Maiden," 2009). The artist's comments raise a series of questions: Was this piece ever displayed at Santa Clara Pueblo? If so, how was it received? Would the *Casino Maiden* inspire discussion, or, in the words of Paulita Aguilar (Santo Domingo/Kewa Pueblo), be seen as sacrilegious (cf. Paulita Aguilar, personal communication, 2010). Placement is everything. What if the *Casino Maiden* is displayed in some far-away museum? How are meanings construed in New York City or Berlin as opposed to Santa Fe, in the heart of Indian Country? Finally, does it matter if a non-Native collector fails to understand the full significance of the *Casino Maiden*, yet purchases this piece?

I now examine the overall history of Sandia Resort and Casino. To get an idea of how much this establishment has changed over the years, one only has to compare the original casino housed in a white tent (fig. 20) to today's imposing structure, complete with a sweeping entrance and valet parking (fig. 21). A spa and golf course with "76 acres of playable turf" was added in 2007. Promotional material states:

The Club features a 16,000 square foot “Pueblo style” clubhouse complete with a fully-stocked golf shop, full service 42 seat restaurant & grill and a 3,000 square foot outdoor covered patio and event area overlooking the golf course and the Sandia mountains. (“Sandia Golf Club,” 2007)

Figure 20. Sandia Casino, white tent, photograph, Bernalillo, New Mexico.

Figure 21. Present Sandia Casino, entrance, photograph, Bernalillo, New Mexico.

Designing this casino and resort was no small feat. Its presence has dramatically changed both the landscape and economy of Albuquerque. In order to be competitive, new casinos cannot afford to stand alone: they must offer alternative recreational activities as well.

Not every Indian gaming establishment is quite so grand, however. For example, the Cities of Gold Casino, located between Pojoaque and Espanola, New Mexico, features a single monumental carving of a buffalo by Pojoaque Pueblo artist and current tribal governor George Rivera (fig. 22). He writes:

> While I show my work in museums and galleries, I also choose to show my artwork in Pojoaque, as much as possible, as a model for the viability and development of the arts for the people of Pojoaque and northern New Mexico. This choice is in keeping with my focus to further public recognition of the Pueblo of Pojoaque as an arts training center and to reflect how Pojoaque has flourished, both in earlier times and for the past decade. (Rivera "Towa Artists," 2003)

Situated by the entrance to the Cities of Gold Casino, this massive buffalo stands like a sentry. Rivera recognizes that some Pueblo people are more comfortable visiting a casino than venturing into the silent and elitist world of an art museum. The buffalo serves as a potent symbol for many Native peoples, both in and out of the Southwest. This imagery is not locked in a romanticized past. As an icon with contemporary currency, Rivera's *Buffalo* can be interpreted in numerous ways, many of which have strong emotional associations. For example, buffalo have been reintroduced to Pueblo lands, including Taos and Picuris. Rivera's stone carving reminds viewers of nature, a sense of place. Viewers, particularly Native viewers, share this collective awareness. Indeed, proponents of Indian gaming often refer to casinos as the *new buffalo*, a symbol of unending prosperity. As the nineteenth

century came to a close, great herds of bison—that thundered across the Plains by the millions—were slaughtered in search of hide, meat and even sport. Nearly reduced to extinction in the name of westward expansion, the plight of the buffalo now serves as a metaphor for many Native peoples. Today, proceeds from casinos are perceived as a symbolic replacement for the plentiful resources and economic independence once provided by the buffalo (cf. Darian-Smith 2003, 64-65).

Figure 22. George Rivera (Pojoaque Pueblo), *Buffalo* (on permanent display) and exterior of Cities of Gold Casino, photograph by author, 2007.

Roped off by stanchions, this sculpture is also protected by a "Do Not Touch" sign (fig. 23). However, respect for the buffalo is marked by nickels and quarters that visitors have thrown at the feet of this sculpture. An unlikely substitute for a fountain

or a wishing well, this buffalo offers an opportunity for a quiet moment before entering the casino. Whether wishing for luck with the slots or acknowledging the buffalo itself, this gesture is quite telling. As opposed to occupying space in a high-priced museum, this sculpture attracts a completely new public, at home, in front of the Cities of Gold Casino. With every penny thrown, this buffalo becomes an interactive work of art.

Figure 23. *Do Not Touch* sign, Cities of Gold Casino, photograph by author, 2007.

Located in close proximity to Cities of Gold, Camel Rock Casino is named after a dramatic landmark. Sometimes nature gets lost when speeding down the highway in search of one casino after another in northern New Mexico. A 1950s postcard of "Camel Rock," however, is a reminder of how casino architecture can never compete with rock formations in this area (fig. 24). A nostalgic view of a man standing behind a horse-drawn cart, hauling a load of firewood, is featured in the lower left-hand corner. The caption reads:

> Nature, the great sculptor, has fashioned many fantastic shapes and forms resembling human beings and animals but nowhere has she done anything more realistic than this camel rock just alongside Highway No. 285 about 13 miles north of Santa Fe, New Mexico. Here, for centuries this lifelike portrayal of a camel lying down looks forever toward the north over a waste of unwatered soil, scrub pine and cedar. (fig. 24, caption on opposite side)

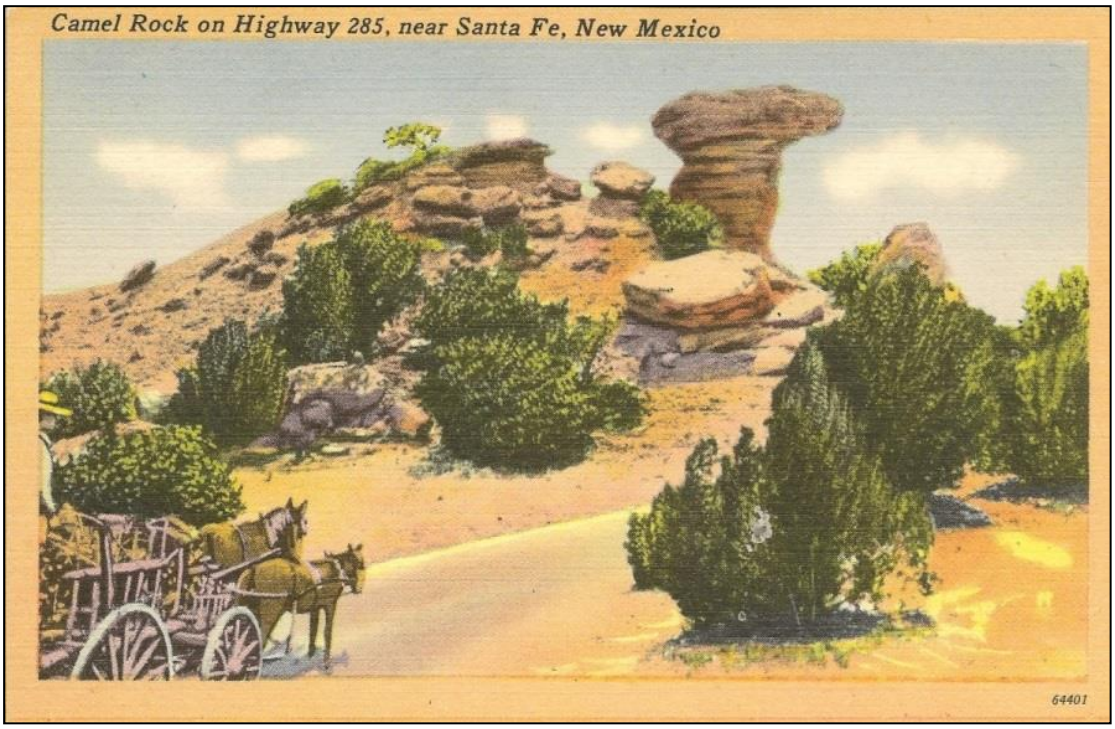

Figure 24. *Camel Rock on Highway 285, Near Santa Fe, New Mexico*, postcard, c. 1950s, collection of author.

This postcard and its accompanying text raise three salient issues. First, this postcard makes absolutely no mention of the Pueblo people who inhabit this area. Second, since camels are not indigenous to the Southwest, the name *Camel Rock* was assigned by outsiders. Indeed, the owners of this casino, members of Tesuque Pueblo, identify this rock formation by another name. According to Tesuque Pueblo resident Bea Duran (2009), the *Tewa* name for this site can best be translated as "sandstone that has a neck." Calling this casino Camel Rock, as opposed to its proper *Tewa* name, divorces this gaming facility from its Tesuque identity. Perhaps, this name was deemed a less threatening moniker for tourists. Third, describing this land as a "waste of unwatered soil" runs counter to a traditional Pueblo worldview, where land is viewed as a rich resource, a place where stories come to life. Art historian Steven Leuthold explains this division: "While some non-Natives may be sympathetic to the environmental implications of Native views of the land, many may stop short of the visionary, religious understanding of nature found in native cultures" (Leuthold 1998, 196). Clearly, the image on this postcard can be read on many levels.

In conducting research for this project, I confronted many hurdles, perhaps best summed up by the photograph of a sign, taken outside of Camel Rock Casino (fig. 25). It reads: "No Cameras Permitted on Casino Grounds, or Other Tribal Land Areas." There are two reasons for this admonition. First, as with any casino, there are security issues to take into account. Second, with rare exception, outsiders are not allowed to take photographs on Pueblo grounds. This is especially true when ceremonies and dances are taking place. If photos are forbidden, one may infer that

casino grounds are considered an extension of nature or sacred territory—a difficult concept to understand given the odds against hitting a jackpot in any casino, whether Native or non-Native run.

Figure 25. *No Cameras Permitted on Casino Grounds, or Other Tribal Land Areas*, Camel Rock Casino sign, photograph by author, 2007.

Chippewa artist David Bradley, a long-time resident of Santa Fe, provides a far different sort of commentary on casinos and the marketing of Santa Fe (fig. 26). In his 1997 painting *New Mexico*, Bradley supplies a series of narratives that define his outlook on the "Disneyfying" of Santa Fe. Every inch of the painting's composition is packed with movement, as a semi-truck and SUV with matching trailer stream by. In the background, below the Santa Fe sign on the mountain, a train spouts smoke as it runs on tracks to the right. Located on the bottom right of the picture frame, the

imaginary Rio Grande Casino occupies a prominent position. A small gas station provides scant separation between the traditional pueblo and the casino. Indeed, the whole compound could be interpreted as a living museum. Painted in an identical red hue, all three buildings read as “authentic” adobe structures, but this is only an illusion when it comes to the recently built casino. The authentic past needs to be replicated in order to attract true “ethnic” tourists.

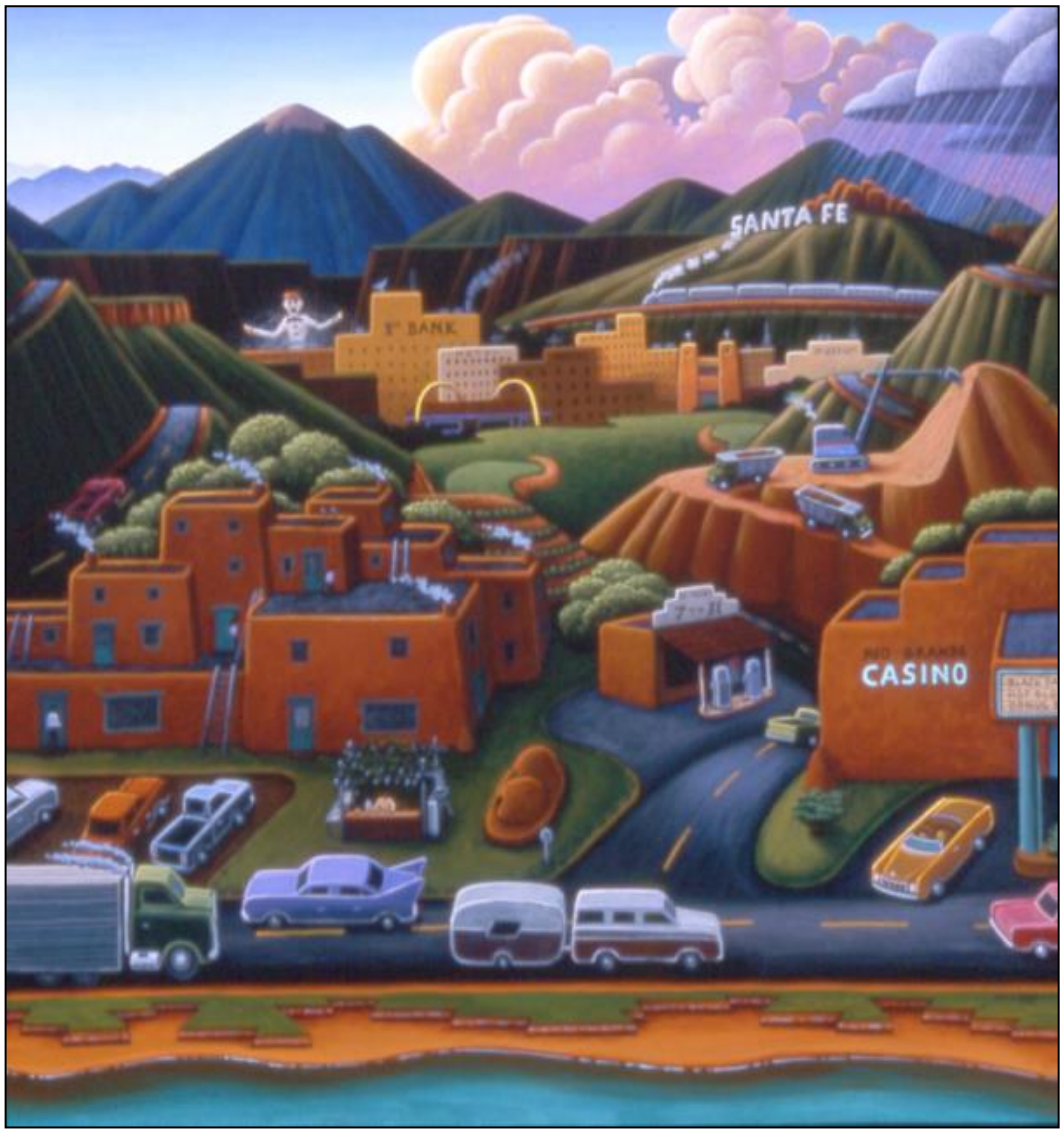

Figure 26. David Bradley (Chippewa), *New Mexico*, oil on canvas, 1997 (private collection).

In this painting, Bradley cites images from popular culture: “Old Man Gloom” or Zozobra and the iconic Hollywood sign (fig. 27). On the left, waving his arms behind an exaggerated First State Bank (a nod to the ever-present role of commerce), this seventy-foot-tall invented figure is now part of Fiesta in Santa Fe. Fashioned from papier-mâché, Zozobra is set afire, while a crowd of thousands chant “Burn, Burn.” Western painter Will Schuster created this image in 1924, finding inspiration in the much-smaller puppets that are still paraded through the streets of Mexico during Holy Week (Owings Dewey 2004, 3). What light does Zozobra shed on casinos? First, the existence of Zozobra illustrates flexibility when it comes to building new traditions in New Mexico. Not surprisingly, casinos are now an accepted part of the landscape. However, the Santa Fe sign warns against the unchecked commercialism so often associated with Hollywood. Here, the casino is just one more reflection of a universal trend in marketing.

Figure 27. Paired photographs of Old Man Gloom or Zozobra and Hollywood sign.

Calling upon Grant Wood's iconic painting, Bradley presents another interpretation of casino culture: *American Gothic: O'Keeffe and Stieglitz Meet Tonto and the Lone Ranger* (fig. 28). Posed under a sign for the Silver Bullet, a combination trading post and motel, The Lone Ranger and Tonto now enjoy second careers as owners of a bed and breakfast. Their business is competitive, offering a full range of services, including psychic readings and massage. Note how the casino in this painting assumes a less prominent role. The casino is relegated to the right of Stieglitz's head, with three tour buses lined up on a diagonal. On the opposite side, a vacancy sign is posted above a partially obscured drive-up window for liquor sales. Through black humor, the artist critiques the ugly side of tourism in the Southwest,

ranging from a new-age audience, hence the psychic readings, to packaged tours sponsored by organizations like the Smithsonian or Elder hostel.

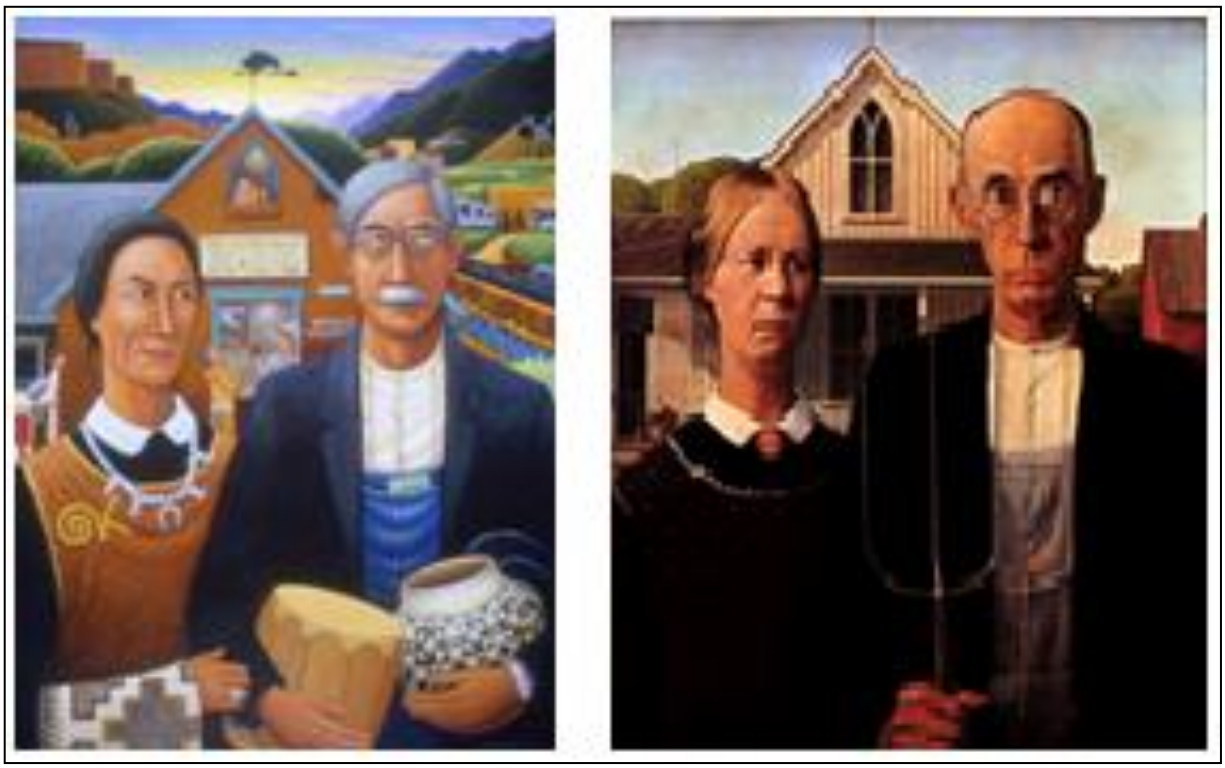

Figure 28. Left: David Bradley (Chippewa), *American Gothic: O'Keeffe and Stieglitz Meet Tonto and the Lone Ranger*, oil on canvas, 1998. Right: Grant Wood, *American Gothic*, oil on beaverboard,1930.

Cochiti artist Mateo Romero critiques casinos from yet another perspective: that of a local Pueblo participant and community/outside observer. Unlike Bradley, who lampoons the influence of the tourist market, fueled by romantic expectations of visitors from far and wide who visit Santa Fe, he looks close to home. Romero presents the portrait of an individual, a combined archetype of friends and family who may struggle with an addiction to gaming. In the painting *Indian Gaming*, also titled *Santo Domingo Playing Bingo* (fig. 29), Romero depicts a heavyset Santo Domingo man poised to pull the lever on a slot machine. Brought to life with broad, painterly

strokes, the viewer is left to wonder: Will he win or not? Will he be disappointed or not? According to anthropologist and critic Nancy Marie Mithlo, “The katchina heads depicted in the slot machine were viewed as controversial because of their reference to religious imagery” (Mithlo 1998, 136). Indeed, the artist wrestled so much with this issue that the canvas was still wet when he delivered it for display at the Museum of Indian Arts and Culture in Santa Fe.

Romero questions whether signifiers of Pueblo religion should be used as mere decoration to attract gamblers. This painting is part of his *Self-Addiction*-Series, in which Romero questions not only gambling but other addictive behaviors, such as smoking and a dependency on junk food. How should Native artists and casinos come together? Romero feels casinos should set aside one to two percent of their profits to support the arts. However, this means informed choices need to be made. Casinos should hire curators to make purchases and oversee collections. However, most casinos are not in the business of critiquing themselves. Relinquishing control by hiring outside curators could leave casino management in a vulnerable position.

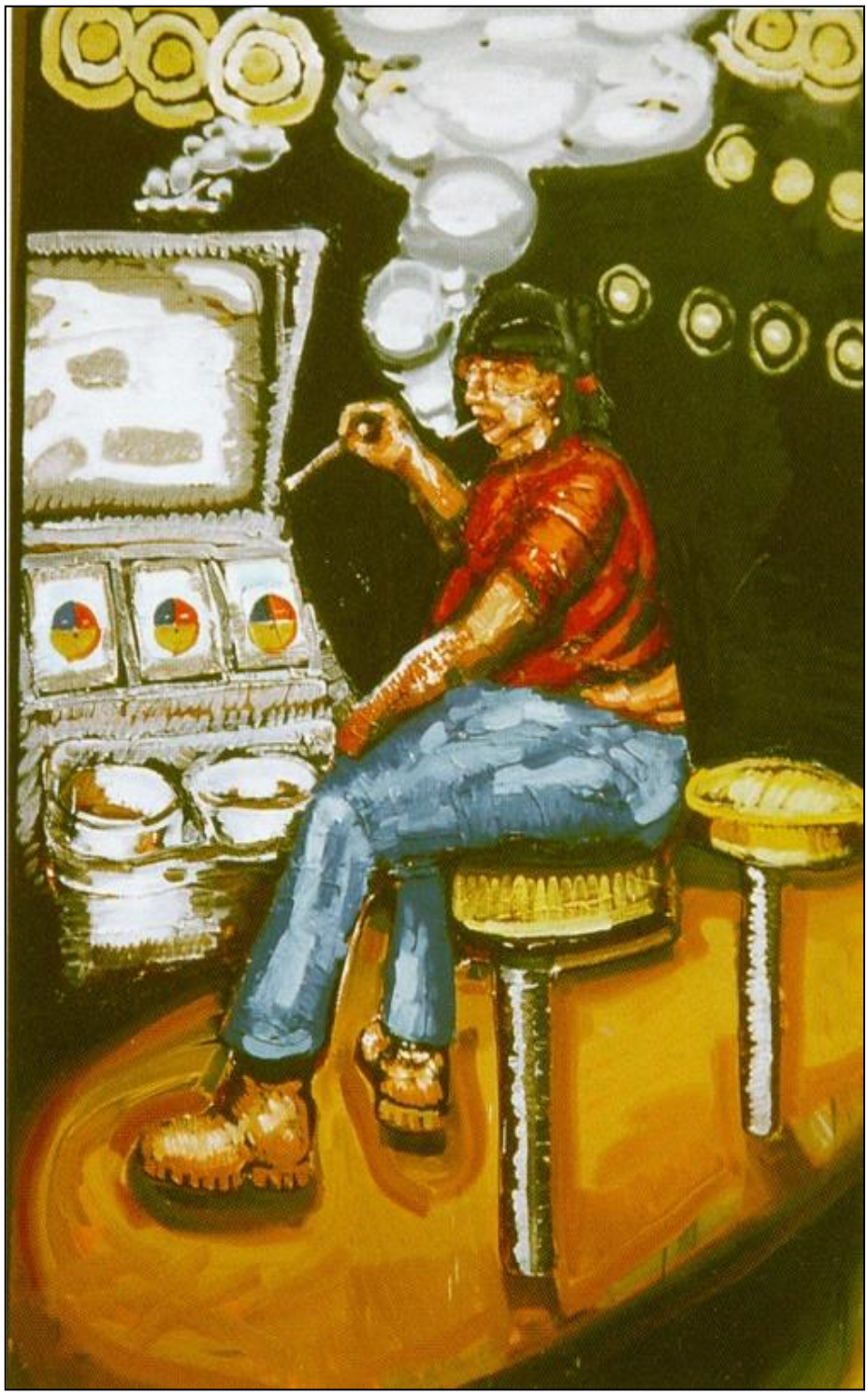

Figure 29. Mateo Romero (Cochiti Pueblo), *Indian Gaming* or *Santo Domingo Playing Bingo* (part of *Self-Addiction Series*), oil on canvas, 1992, Museum of Indian Arts and Culture, Santa Fe.

University of San Francisco English professor Dean Rader's phrase "aesthetic activism" certainly applies to this painting. Rader's definition of this term is clear: "Unlike marches, sit-ins or other forms of political protest, aesthetic activism implies social action on the plane of artistic discourse" (Rader 2011, 5). Here, Romero's S*anto Domingo Playing Bingo* (fig. 29) becomes an ideal illustration for aesthetic activism. This painting also illustrates the function of parody. But a question has to be posed. Who is Romero's intended audience? Its first showing was in a museum in Santa Fe, where the majority of visitors, with the exception of opening night, were non-Native. However, part of the power of this painting is its function as an inside joke. The figure grasping the lever of the slot machine is all too familiar to many Pueblo people, a possible depiction of a family member or a reminder of how gambling and loss go hand in hand.

While few artists choose to write in such a self-reflexive fashion about their own work, Mateo Romero is eager to share the thought processes behind some of his paintings. Under the chapter heading "Despair," from his book *Painting the Underworld Sky: Cultural Expression and Subversion in Art*, Romero describes the above painting and his outlook on Indian gaming:

> The central figure is overweight, chain-smoking, and addicted to the slots. One couldn't paint a bleaker materialistic existence. This painting is about our "self-addictions" (that is, self-imposed addictions). Specifically, as Native people we face a plethora of social problems: diabetes, drug addiction, alcoholism, high blood pressure, suicide, high unemployment rates, and physical and sexual abuse. Many of these problems come in part from remote rural reservation locations; some are unique to the urban Indian malaise; and some we inflict on ourselves. All of the gaming tribes have in-house problem-gaming programs to help addictive personalities cope with gaming problems. In the end, blaming Indian gaming for people's personality disorders is mainstream hypocrisy. In a self-destructive, self-indulgent, spiritually bankrupt mainstream society like ours, one can legally engage in drinking, smoking,

> gun ownership, gas guzzling and polluting cars, prostitution (in some areas). Viagra, junk food, and finally gambling (in some areas.) This is the essence of the American Dream: Choose your own form of little suicide but pay your taxes. Once the Indians get a piece of something not completely uplifting and wholesome, we demonize the hell out of it. (Romero 2006, 231)

Romero comments on the dangers associated with a dependence on fast food and smoking. In comparison, California Maidu artist Judith Lowry creates a platform to focus on other vices—namely avarice and lust—to voice her opinions on Indian gaming through her painting *Jingle, Jingle* (fig. 30). In stark contrast to Romero's lone male figure, who is engaged with the slot machine and his cigarette, the women depicted by both Swentzell (*Casino Maiden,* fig. 19) and Lowry turn their gaze outward.

Art historian and museum educator Elyssa Poon offers an insightful analysis of *Jingle, Jingle*:

> While the jingle dress and buckskins are clear markers of Native identity, both are worn in dances common at powwows, the modified clothing is intentionally vulgar. The woman's "dress" represents Native cultures corrupted by the money that literally pours from her crotch. The kino balls flying toward the viewer above her head reinforce this idea. The number on the lotto balls form a date, which is the day one of Lowry's relatives was murdered after he threatened to expose corrupt casino politics. (Poon 2011, 32-33)

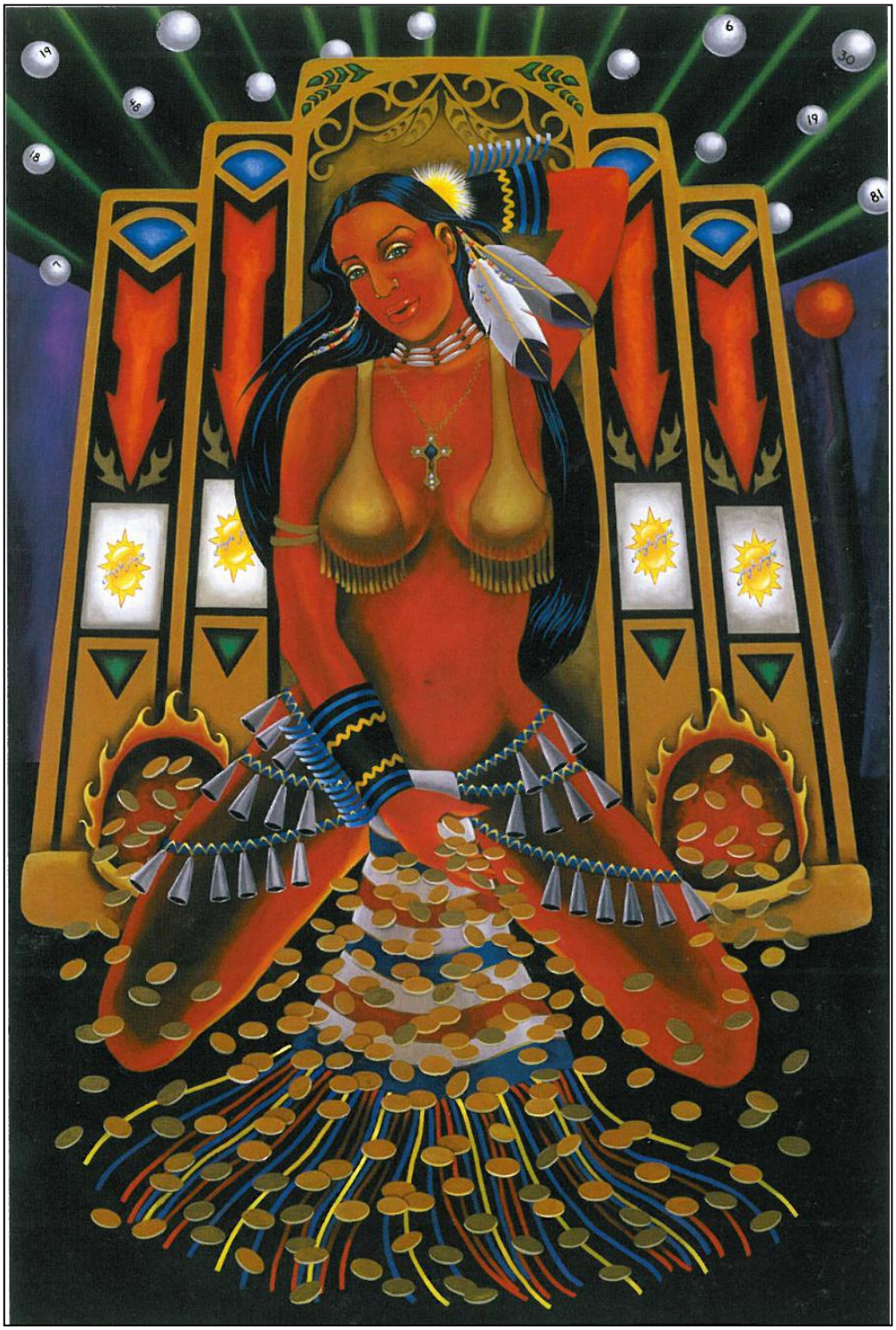

Figure 30. Judith Lowry (Maidu), *Jingle, Jingle*, acrylic on canvas, 1997, Denver Art Museum.

In the image above, the Native woman's body becomes a canvas, writ large with highly sexualized brushstrokes. While Roxanne Swentzell (*Casino Maiden,* fig. 19) and Judith Lowry both feature the monumental form of single Native woman, Lowry's figure assumes a more aggressive stance. On one level, her kneeling pose is reminiscent of the Land O' Lakes Butter label, where a "true" Indian Princess proffers not only herself, but her product to the consumer (fig. 31).

A comparison can be made to another well-known American icon: Aunt Jemima, whose face and upper body are still used as a marketing tool to sell syrup and pancake mix. However, as a character, Aunt Jemima projects an updated appearance: she has shed her *Gone with the Wind* attire, a considerable amount of weight, and gained a new hairstyle. Her persona is no longer that of a slave or a "mammy." In comparison, the generic Plains Indian woman featured on the Land O' Lakes label has remained virtually unchanged since 1939, the last redesign date for the label. One has to ask: Why were advertisers forced to "modernize" Aunt Jemima, while the company behind Land O' Lakes Butter can continue to portray their maiden as timeless? Obviously, the court of public opinion has not weighed in on this matter. Much like Indian-inspired mascots that represent sports teams, stereotypes such as the "Indian Princess" are not deemed offensive by most non-Native and even some Native viewers. While this debate has heated up in the last twenty years, the notion that Indian-themed sports and mascots can cause damage is still met with ridicule. Journalist Lynn Klyde-Silverstein summarizes current research on this issue: "Several researchers have concluded that the use of American Indians as mascots misuses religious symbols, stereotypes all Native tribes by erasing their many

differences, and misrepresents the United States' past by casting Natives as aggressive warriors" (Klyde-Silverstein 2012, 113). In much the same way, the Indian "maiden" in *Jingle, Jingle* sheds a spotlight on similar issues. Both roles are one-dimensional: an Indian man may be depicted as a virile noble warrior/savage, while an Indian woman is objectified as she assumes her role as princess. Regardless of gender, the widespread acceptance of these "types" can limit how Native peoples are perceived.

Unlike the relatively wholesome depiction of Land O'Lakes Indian princess (fig. 31), Lowry's bikini-clad figure is far from subservient: modesty is the least of her concerns. Instead, her legs are splayed as she simultaneously gives birth and experiences pleasure. Clearly, she is in the business of bearing coins, not children.

Figure 31. Land O' Lakes Butter Label.

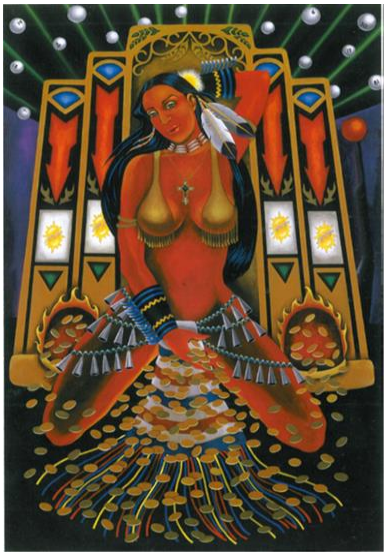

Figure 15: Judith Lowry (Maidu), *Jingle, Jingle*, acrylic on canvas, 1997, Denver Art Museum.

The subject's jingle dress/bikini must compete against the raucous sounds that emanate from any casino. In this painting, gold coins fall from beneath her hand and

ricochet off the floor. In comparison to the bikini sported here, a traditional jingle dress is long with three-quarter length sleeves. Originally fashioned from broadcloth or calico, jingle dresses tinkle softly as a woman dances forward in a deliberate and dignified manner at a powwow. Individual tin cones, created from recycled sardine cans or chewing tobacco lids in years past, are carefully sewn to each dress. When dancing is performed outside, tin cones catch the light as they bounce back and forth. Because the amount and placement of tin cones varies from one dress to another, each dancer generates a unique sound when performing at a powwow. Indeed, some jingle dresses are valued for their connection to healing and are carefully passed down from one generation to the next. Today, some might label contemporary jingle dresses garish because they feature neon materials and honor football teams. Despite these changes, the tin cones remain, and even today's jingle dresses bear no similarity to the bikini modeled here.

When compared to Swentzell's *Casino Maiden* (fig. 19) or even the Land O' Lakes butter label (fig. 31), the message is far from subtle. Indeed, the body of Lowry's protagonist becomes a physical extension of the slot machine. No matter how lurid the fantasy, winning the jackpot assumes multiple meanings— all dependent on this woman's body and her sexuality— as she issues coins. Notice how the subject's skin tone is almost identical to the downward-pointing arrows of the slot machine. Here, machine and woman are one and the same. Without a doubt, Lowry subverts the standard notion of an Indian princess. This woman is not pliant. She is not demure. Although Native women are still subject to the colonizing power of the male gaze, this bikini-clad figure looms overhead. In short, Lowry turns a standard

response to an Indian princess on its head. As a self-contained giantess, viewers feel tiny, much like the Lilliputians in *Gulliver's Travels.* By asking them to engage with this giantess, Lowry challenges viewers to recognize the link between corruption, Indian gaming and the allure of the female form—removed from nature and garbed in "Native" attire.

In light of Lowry's scathing visual critique, it is surprising that art historian and activist Lucy R. Lippard shares the following in her essay "Aiming for the Heart," the text for an exhibition catalogue that accompanied a 1999 retrospective of Lowry's work at the Wheelwright Museum of the American Indian in Santa Fe.

> [Lowry] enters the more problematic arena of Indian casinos, a personal dilemma since her own family has suffered mightily from their presence. At the same time, not all tribes have casinos, and not all casinos make money. Convinced that gaming is a legitimate use of Native sovereignty, Lowry has vowed never to protest it if the people themselves decide it is necessary for economic stability. 'Nobody wants Indians to make money.' She pulls no punches in the painting, however, which speaks for itself in a garish fusion of sex and money. Yet it really is a memorial. (Lippard 1999, 9)

Actually, this theme emerges again and again. Perhaps this explains why some Native artists are so reluctant to comment on Indian gaming. In some ways, it is a taboo subject. Providing social commentary through art can be an extremely complex issue. This is because Native artists grow up knowing that speaking out against one's community constitutes breaking an unspoken rule. The mixed sentiments expressed by Lowry are felt by many artists. Jemez artist Laura Fragua Cota describes her many roles—sometimes contested—as an individual, an artist and as a participating member of Jemez Pueblo:

> I think that even though I do work and I consider myself an individual, I am still a part of that people. And I always will be. Whether I live in the village or not. And there are things . . .just because I am away from the reservation does not

> give me the right to talk about whatever I want or show or make whatever I want to make. It's that responsibility. And I am sure there are those who don't take that responsibility. "Oh, I don't care. I don't live over there. What do they give me?" But that's not how I feel. I mean, there are things that I will fight if I feel that I have that right to do so. But there are certain things that I feel, because I am a part of this community, that I cannot do or I cannot show. (qtd. in Mithlo, 70)

While some might call this censorship, others simply acknowledge that giving up individuality in favor of communal oversight is part and parcel of being a Native artist. In other words, many Native artists must walk a fine line as they define themselves in relationship to work and community. Clearly, the topic of casinos/Indian gaming is truly complex. Indeed, who wants to argue against sovereign rights or economic independence? Last year, while listening to the radio show "Native America Calling," Jemez artist Kathleen Wall participated in a live interview. This radio show is recorded in Albuquerque and airs across the country. Callers typically hail from heavily represented areas of "Indian Country," such as New Mexico, Oklahoma and Alaska. Suddenly this highly articulate artist, who is no stranger to pushing boundaries in her work, shut down when the topic turned to Indian gaming. The quality of her voice changed and it became clear that she was afraid to speak out in any way, either for or against Indian gaming. Wall's response provides another example of how the topic of Indian gaming is often taboo.

Some viewers/consumers might question how the Land O'Lakes princess or other like images could be damaging in any way. American Studies scholar Victoria E. Sanchez in her essay, "Buying into Racism: American Indian Product Icons in the American Marketplace" provides one explanation:

> Simplistic stereotypes of American Indians are constructed by recurrent portrayals of American Indians that we have grown up seeing around us every

> day in the mass media . . . The dominant culture then comes to expect the real people of American Indian nations to be like the artificial and incorrectly portrayed Indians that are presented by the mass media for their consumption. Indeed, these stereotypes are often powerful enough to be self-confirming even when an individual is faced with evidence that contradicts a deeply-held stereotype. . . Meanwhile, authentic members of American Indian cultures in the twenty-first century remain almost invisible in the American public consciousness. (Sanchez 2012, 157)

In other words, non-Native viewers can be so entrenched in the vocabulary of popular culture, perpetuated by such stereotypes, that actual Indian people are rendered invisible. Years ago, I witnessed an exchange that shows how deep a divide can exist between perceptions of contemporary and imagined Indians. While working as the Director of School Programs at Denver Art Museum, it was my job to oversee an annual outreach program for local school children. As part of the day's events, two Native storytellers were scheduled to perform. One came dressed in traditional regalia, while the other, a Comanche man from Oklahoma sported a pair of jeans, scuffed up cowboy boots and a brand new t-shirt, marked by a logo for the Denver Indian Center. Unfortunately, upon meeting this storyteller, the docent—in charge of rotating students through his station—became quite upset. Concerned, I listened closely to their exchange. She proceeded to ask him why he had neglected to dress like a "real" Indian on this of all days? Did he not realize how disappointed the children would be when confronted with his lackluster outfit? With a puzzled look, he responded that he was a "real" Indian and that this was how he always dressed. Still unsatisfied, she carried her complaint to me. The docent truly believed this storyteller was not holding up his end of the bargain. After all, had he not signed a contract? Were we not paying him? Although I tried to explain why it was just as important (if not more so) for these fifth graders to meet this Comanche man in street

clothes as opposed to an outfit composed of an eagle headdress and brain-tanned hide, she could not embrace this point of view. Clearly, this docent, despite her specialized training in Native arts, could not reconcile her image of a “real” Indian with the man who stood before her.

While artists like Nora Naranjo-Morse, Roxanne Swentzell, David Bradley, Mateo Romero and Judith Lowry may never change the mind of this particular docent, their work offers a welcome departure from standard images of Native culture. By commenting on the downside of Indian gaming they become risk takers, some might say tricksters. In conclusion, they interrogate their communities by mirroring issues of identity, place, and a range of Native belief systems. Certainly, the long-term benefits of a casino economy are yet to be seen. The relationship between New Mexico casinos and contemporary American Indian artists is in a state of flux. This transitional state makes us ask what type of art will be commissioned when new casinos are built. How will Native communities utilize visual culture to promote Indian gaming and tribal identity within a global marketplace? And, perhaps most importantly, will these images encourage connections or separate Native peoples from their own social and community realities? From a transnational perspective, Indian casinos will continue to challenge borders as brokers of capitalism, as sovereign nations, and as members of the international tourist trade.

Chapter Four

Raising the Stakes: Indian Casino, Gambling Hotspot or Museum Venue?

To be an Indian artist means always arguing about the rules, the process, the judges, the reviews, where the shows are and where they aren't.

--Paul Chaat Smith (2009, 35)

When artists are denied entry to a mainstream gallery, exhibit, catalogue or competition on the basis of Native American ethnicity, the problem is not so much a debate about aesthetics as a violation of civil rights.

--Nancy Marie Mithlo (2008, 23)

The goal of this chapter is to address key similarities and essential differences between mainstream art museums and a sampling of Indian gaming establishments in the Southwest. Throughout this discussion, I examine the myriad ways in which Native artists use casinos to market their art, and, on the other hand, the extent to which casinos rely on Native art to promote Indian gaming. Is this a symbiotic relationship? Chances are the interests of the house/casino are usually weighted on the winning side of this equation. Without a doubt, Indian casinos provide an array of new exhibition spaces for a sometimes under-recognized art movement. But can casinos hold their own against standard art museums, identified by white walls, an abundance of light and carefully-spaced text? Perhaps this is a classic case of comparing apples to oranges. After all, in an effort to promote gambling, casinos—whether Native or non-Native—deliberately design settings that are devoid of natural light, clocks or any other reminders of the outside world. To properly assess whether Indian casinos function as a viable alternative to traditional art museums, three issues need to be explored through a series of questions.

First, what constitutes an art museum? In general, how does this umbrella term relate to contemporary Native arts? Do modes of interpretation vary to attract different audiences? For instance, when compared to typical visitors to an art museum, typical gamblers do not frequent a casino with the sole intent of looking at art. For most, the act of looking, if it happens at all, comes as an afterthought. As for issue two, more questions should be tackled, such as: How do some casinos serve a dual function as "art" museum and gaming establishment, while others do not? When donning the hat of viewer, patron, gambler or critic, is it possible to distinguish between somewhat superficial nods to interior or exterior design versus a true commitment to the arts? After all, any professional architect or landscape designer is required to create a certain amount of curb appeal. On this score, all clients expect to be wowed. But when do plans for a building project transcend just a passing concern for décor or decoration? One has to remember that buying original art demands a substantial financial investment, above and beyond the building and surrounding landscape, which may or may not include a pool and a golf course.

And finally, the third issue can best be illustrated by these questions: In what ways do Native artists benefit from selling their work to casinos? Do they profit when their work is on permanent display, gaining visibility in a public setting? In other words, as a result of this exposure, do artists build a reputation, sell more work? In addition, as a viable substitute for typical exhibition spaces, can casinos support Native artists on an ongoing basis? It certainly could be argued that most casinos' support for the arts begins and ends with purchasing power and placement concerns. Generally, casinos do not offer official openings, educational or outreach

programs, such as gallery guides, complete with essays to complement a collection. For the most part, “casino art” is only commented on by local art critics or used to illustrate a casino brochure or website. However, most Indian gaming establishments allow art to languish in the background, subject to constant clouds of cigarette smoke and conditions marked by fluctuating levels of humidity. The unpredictable nature of this climate would be greeted with dismay by any museum registrar/conservator dedicated to the preservation of original art.

In an article published in the 2013 issue of *Museum and Society*, co-authors John Bodinger de Uriarte and Melissa Briggs touch on some of these issues in their article “Wag(er)ing Histories, Staking Territories: Exhibiting Sovereignty in Native America.” An excerpt from their abstract provides a framework for this discussion:

> . . . [G]aming revenues created new possibilities for Native peoples to take control of their own public histories as expressions of cultural and political sovereignty. [This article] recognizes museums and cultural centers as parallel spaces for cultural self-representation. Casino-generated funds allow many tribal nations to expand existing exhibitionary spaces for repatriated objects, including—museums, casinos, resorts, and public attractions—that publicly articulate stories about history, identity and the practice(s) of sovereignty. Seemingly disparate spaces—casinos thematic and generic, museums old and new, garden and memorial sites, village greens and hotel lobbies—can best be understood as an array of responses to the challenges of articulating Native identities to mostly non-Native publics. Such sites exemplify particular strategies of Native curation in a variety of spaces actively shaped for public attention. (Bodinger de Uriarte and Briggs 2013, 122)

In the process of conducting research for this project, I found that only the rare scholar was willing to equate Indian casinos with museums. Anthropologists Bodinger de Uriarte and Briggs are a major exception, however, because they argue against assigning discrete boundaries between museums and casinos, writing that the term “museum” can best be defined in three words: “contained exhibitionary

spaces." They ask us to consider: "What do the designations 'museum', or 'museum practices' contain? If we extend far enough in this direction, for example, what is *not* the museum?" (Bodinger de Uriarte and Briggs 2013, 123)

The viewing sites or "parallel spaces for cultural self-representation," mentioned above, vary greatly, but they can certainly all be described as "contained exhibitionary spaces." And, as I argue later in this chapter, Bodinger de Uriarte and Briggs could have added specific examples of alternate sites. Perhaps one of the most important is Indian Market, an annual event that takes place in Santa Fe, New Mexico. While this three-word definition of "museum," is useful, it is not widely accepted in the art world. This raises the question: Why do so many Native people possess ambivalent feelings about museums? And why are Native artists so willing to accept non-traditional locations in which to show their art? What explains this phenomenon? Perhaps this is a logical outgrowth of cultural differences. First, it comes as no surprise that Native peoples who grow up in rural settings often lack access to art museums. Geography is a true deterrent. (Unfortunately, this is a downside that can impact residents of all rural communities, whether in the United States or Canada, where few resources are available to rent buses for school field trips.) And, on the other hand, urban Indians often feel hesitant to cross the threshold of a standard art museum—no matter how close the location. The setting is just too austere. In short, most museums do not offer a hospitable environment for Native audiences. Even today, there are museum professionals who prefer dealing with objects/material culture rather than meeting one-on-one with Native artists or visitors, whose parents or grandparents may have created the very art that "lives" in

their collections. It is no wonder that casinos, as public spaces for self-representation, are such a big draw for Native visitors. In general, “casino” art is displayed in a relaxed, if noisy atmosphere. Once a painting has been purchased and hung, mediation is nonexistent. In other words, you will never find a docent leading a tour through a casino.

From a historical perspective, utilizing museums as display areas for art or storehouses for objects is a relatively new concept. Art historian Susan Vogel, in her breakthrough essay, “Always True to the Object, in Our Fashion,” reminds the reader that museums, as institutions, have only been in existence for a short period of time:

> Almost nothing displayed in museums was meant to be seen in them. Museums provide an experience of most of the world’s art and artifacts that does not bear even the remotest resemblance to what their makers intended. This evident fact lies in the very heart of museum work (which is a work of mediation) and should be a preoccupation of all museum professionals, though most museum visitors seem practically unaware of it. An art exhibition can be seen as an unwitting collaboration between a curator and the artists represented, with the former having by far the most active and influential role. (Vogel 1991, 191)

From a historical perspective, the architecture of most museums—with stone facades, marble floors and impossibly high ceilings—projects a sense of permanence. Brand new museums do this as well, due to the sheer scale and building materials, including concrete and steel. Although the climate in many museums is becoming far more inclusive, few non-Native curators truly collaborate with Native artists. Challenging the “curator as god” notion is no small feat. It is no wonder that some Native artists experience a greater sense of ownership when their work is exhibited in a casino.

This lack of inclusion or collaboration is often played out with Native visitors as well. When given the opportunity, Native visitors frequently gain a deeper understanding of museums when exhibition spaces are sidestepped to access collection areas. This is particularly apparent when members of Pueblo communities go behind-the-scenes to tour pottery collections. While working as a museum professional, both at the Museum of Indian Arts and Culture/Laboratory of Anthropology and the Denver Art Museum, I was privileged to hear sudden shouts of joy when family members spotted an auntie's pot on a packed shelf from across the room. In this moment, a single pot can embody a loved one. This example indicates that objects continually tell stories in the world of Native arts, both past and present. But meanings shift as viewers change. In the essay "Encoded Knowledge: Memory and Objects in Contemporary Native American Art," Native Studies scholar Sherry Farrell Racette elaborates on the potential relationship between viewer and object:

> Many objects are a form of visual literacy, not only in terms of symbols coded on their surface or the actions and gestures that provide their human context, but for the words, prayers and fervent hopes that are spoken into them at the moment of their creation and over their lifetime. . . [T]heir narrative power is maintained by revisiting, re-reading and re-deploying their evocative power to engage memory and link knowledge. They are a form of hypertext and constitute physical intellectual tools that can index, store, retrieve and deliver memories. . . For an indigenous viewer, the presentation of a familiar technique or significant object triggers a shock of recognition. (Racette 2011, 52)

In other words, the act of interpretation is never static. This view runs counter to the position accepted by some art historians who approach objects from a Western perspective. Typically, art historians build upon a body of work by past scholars. However, the process of interpretation can operate in a vacuum, divorced from actual brushstrokes or familial ties. This idea is demonstrated through the story of an

architectural historian who based her entire dissertation on a cathedral in Europe, without ever seeing it in person. (Unfortunately, financial constraints stood in the way.) Of course, this scholar referenced detailed photographs and relied on a legacy of past scholarship. However, she never set foot in the actual building. Chances are Racette would apply the standard—described above—to non-Native spectators as well. From Racette's vantage point, this architectural historian's lack of tactile experience, no matter how understandable, must be viewed as suspect. For Racette, Native viewers play a vibrant role in how Native art not only is perceived, but re-perceived. In short, the act of looking, in and of itself, is an act of reinvention. While this historian may have presented a new set of conclusions, part of the experiential puzzle will always be missing. This is the point at which museums, and, at times, casinos, share common ground. Both give visitors the opportunity to interact with original examples of Native art—often undervalued in the field of art history.

Museum professionals should encourage more opportunities for Native viewers to view objects/art from their collection, and to record oral histories based on specific pieces. Documenting reactions, such as the poignant moments described above, could lead to a repository of stories, all based on a particular pot or weaving. Racette asserts that "objects are alive and must be handled with respect" (Racette 2011, 40). This comment is especially thought-provoking because one has to ask: Can any exhibition of art in a casino venue ever be classified as a "respectful"? When compared to the meditative nature of a museum, can casinos ever provide an appropriate setting? After all, context is everything. Anthropologist Barbara Saunders offers her own definition of "museum" that emphasizes this conundrum. From

Saunders' tone, the reader can safely guess she is referring to a fine arts or anthropology museum, as opposed to a small, but popular institution like the American International Rattlesnake Museum in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Saunders writes:

> In the modern world, no other institution can claim greater importance as a treasure trove of material and spiritual wealth than a museum. A society's most revered beliefs and values are enshrined in a museum, its primary purpose being to affirm national/ethnic ideology. A museum is therefore usually a symbol of identity—of state—or ethnicity equated with these revered terms. (Saunders 1994, 115)

Saunders' views raise a number of significant questions: If casinos function as spaces to exercise sovereignty and express culture, why should this definition not apply? Is it possible for a casino to be viewed in a reverential light? Lined with one-armed bandits, singing Elvis impersonators and busloads of tourists, these adjectives seem contradictory at best. Nonetheless, the sacred and the profane can and do overlap.

In a conversation with me, Tessie Naranjo, sociologist and Santa Clara resident, revealed that Pueblo women often pray and gently touch the exterior wall of a casino before entering to gamble, which usually involves playing the slots. She said this is especially true if there is a pressing bill that needs to be paid. And, if they win, the same women will always take a moment to thank the corn mothers for their good fortune. (Naranjo, personal communication, 4/7/14). This interaction between individual and building can be described as nothing but reverential. Here, the built environment, geared to generate gaming revenue, is transformed through prayer. In the Pueblo worldview, such repeated acts do reflect "revered beliefs" and prove that casinos are indeed a "treasure trove of material and spiritual wealth." Of course,

there has always been a connection between gambling and spirituality for Pueblo peoples. For example, Leslie Marmon Silko references traditional Keres stories about gambling in her seminal book *Ceremony*, with a protagonist named Gambler (Silko 1977). Additionally, scholar Paul Pasquaretta, in his book *Gambling and Survival in Native North America*, writes that, "According to Keres tradition, games of chance were invented by Iyatiku, the Corn Mother or Earth Mother during times of drought" (Pasquaretta 2003, 145). In one way, casinos can be interpreted as an outgrowth of long-established belief systems. And it is important to remember the popular role that bingo once played in Pueblo communities, prior to the creation of casinos. Art historian Allan J. Ryan highlights the importance of bingo in his book, *The Trickster Shift: Humour and Irony in Contemporary Native Art*:

> The intense passion for bingo that enlivens — and enriches? -- [one long dash here] many Native communities is reflected in the frequent reference to the game in recent indigenous literary and visual artforms. Examples include the play *The Rez* Sisters (1988), by Tomson Highway; the novels *The Heirs of Columbus* (1991), by Gerald Vizenor, and *The Bingo Palace* (1995), by Louise Erdrich. (Ryan 1999, 123.)

This photograph (fig.32) reveals the social appeal of a weekly game of bingo. The woman in the middle is smiling as her friends, deep in concentration, hope against hope that tonight will be the night. Every woman is sitting on the edge of her seat. The tension is palpable as they monitor stacks of bingo cards, waiting for the emcee to call out a particular number. Any minute one of them will shout out "bingo" and double her investment. In comparison to playing slots in a casino, these players sit in close proximity, their shoulders almost touching. In short, this is a community event. When the bingo game comes to a close, participants can exchange tidbits of gossip and catch up on all the recent news at Acoma.

Figure 32. Women Playing Bingo at Acoma Pueblo, photographer and date unknown. Photograph from the collection of Theodore Jojola.

I return now to discussing the much less intimate world of Indian gaming and casino art. While the initial act of hanging a painting or placing a sculpture in casinos may be carried out with the utmost respect, follow-up care is often lacking. At the beginning of this chapter, I touched on the issue of conservation, but this topic deserves more attention. In casinos, some pieces of art may stay in place for years. (In contrast, most museums rotate “fragile” works in and out of collection storage on a much more regular basis.) Once initial demands associated with decorating a casino are met, two additional issues come into play. First, casino management may

not understand how to care for art. And second, the powers that be may not be able to justify the expense of hiring a professional conservator to rotate textiles or clean the surface of an oversized painting. Even though security guards stand watch, it is the environment itself—as opposed to vandalism or theft—that may pose the greatest risk to any artwork on display.

One of the main differences between art museums and casinos is the educational programming that can stimulate interest in exhibitions of art. Understandably, arts education is not a priority for most casinos, whether Native-run or not. (Of course, casino-mogul Steve Wynn has paved new ground by exposing fresh audiences to his casino/museum and resort in Las Vegas.) Whether museums boast a large collection of American Indian art, outreach efforts to Native communities are far from commensurate. As a former museum educator, I witnessed this sad state of affairs. Without a doubt, a certain level of lip service is paid to this cause. Still, problems exist. By providing residencies or day-long demonstration opportunities for a handful of well-known artists, museum-goers only gain minimal exposure to Native artists. For example, in the Southwest, a Navajo weaver or a Pueblo potter—with widespread name recognition—can be hired to demonstrate his or her work. All in all, this equals a winning scenario for artist and museum. This type of "event" promotes the career of an individual artist, while enabling the museum to draw a larger audience. However, this act of inclusion, while a step in the right direction, does little to advance the careers of new or emerging artists. Steven D. Lavine, Director of CalArts, wrote these words in 1992, but they are still applicable today: "Many museums have taken up the challenge of responding to their various

constituencies and relating to them more inventively . . . These changes however major they may feel from within the institution, have thus far been modest" (Lavine 1992, 137). Of course, this model does not apply to truly innovative museums like the National Museum of the American Indian or the Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art.

In comparison, a group of well-established Native artists are known for navigating a well-worn circuit between the Heard Museum in Phoenix, Arizona; the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C.; and the Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art in Indianapolis, Indiana. While it is difficult to fault these partnerships or the well-earned success of individual artists, these appearances are largely targeted to appeal to non-Native audiences. In comparison, the needs of overlooked audiences, such as Native high school students, are rarely addressed through special programming. While an emphasis on educational outreach programs has improved in recent years, most museums are still perceived as inaccessible by most Native peoples. Even a museum with a singular focus, such as the Museum of Indian Arts and Culture/Laboratory of Anthropology (MIAC/Lab) in Santa Fe, New Mexico, is plagued by this reality. Dr. Tessie Naranjo (Santa Clara Pueblo) recently told me that the director of MIAC asked the Indian Advisory Panel—of which Naranjo is a member—for advice on how to attract more Native visitors (Naranjo personal communication, 4/7/14). Considering that Santa Fe is located in what is commonly referred to as the "Heart of Indian Country," this dearth of Native visitors may come as a surprise. However, because museums are widely perceived as unfriendly/puzzling places, it is no

wonder that indigenous artists are forced to cross boundaries, to find new exhibition sites. When formal museum constructs are rejected, new spaces open up. In other words, if a casino can exhibit objects of cultural expression to declare sovereign status, so be it. This new breed of "curator" is often run by committee as opposed to the dominant voice of a sole curator. These "committees" are not restricted by the idea that all display sites should be defined by traditional trappings. It does not matter if art and slot machines live side by side. Indeed, unlike most art museums, where curators are required to hold advanced degrees in art history or anthropology, casino curators come to the table with varied backgrounds, ranging from community members without degrees to non-Native consultants from Las Vegas or Atlantic City.

Of course, there are exceptions to this rule. One of the most notable is Aleta Ringlero, a curator at Casino Arizona, located in Scottsdale, Arizona. The casino's extensive collection of art reflects the vision of Ringleo, a Ph.D. Candidate in Art History at the University of Arizona (fig.33). Ringlero, a member of the Salt River Pima-Maricopa community that owns the casino, has spent more than fifteen years acquiring art and designing displays, both for Casino Arizona and its sister enterprise—the massive Talking Stick Resort, completed in 2010. In response to a question I posed about the selection process for acquiring art at Casino Arizona, she wrote:

> There is no collection plan. It has been virtually left to me and the architect to deliberate on where and what we need. In each case, we trust each other's taste enormously. He's been wonderful in locating some kinds of objects I would not think about because he knows the spaces better than I, such as for the upcoming project [the Talking Stick Resort]. In other instances, I see a new artist who I think should be either purchased or followed or commissioned. The original idea for the collection was to acquire a piece of art from each tribe in Arizona, however, since not all tribes produce "art," I

quickly disregarded that idea in favor of contemporary art and the exclusivity of a very select group, some whom I had featured at the Smithsonian, and others I encountered or thought had been very cutting edge. I have "stretched" the boundaries of Arizona, principally because the majority of professional artists live in Santa Fe, and of course, the Navajo span several states. Also, with Harry Fonseca, although a Maidu and obviously Northern-California born, his influence on the art of the Southwest and his geographic residence made him "southwest." Don't ya just love stretching the boundaries? (Ringlero, personal e-mail communication, January 7, 2010)

Figure 33. Aleta Ringlero. Photograph by Paul Markow, July 20, 2010, *Arizona Highways*.

Rarely is a committee of two ever allowed to operate with so little oversight, especially when millions of dollars are at stake. Of course, not every Native community with a casino can turn to a community member, who has such specific training in the arts and museum studies. In an excerpt from a 2010 *Arizona*

Highways profile “Casino Art? Bingo!” reporter Nora Barbara Trulsson sets the stage for her readers: “A huge painting by Harry Fonseca anchors a wall next to a bar. A glass case by an elevator holds a clay piece by Harry Fonseca. Another wall is covered with a Dan Namingha painting. In all, the casino boasts more than 175 art works in various mediums” (Trulsson 2010). Ringlero was profoundly influenced by her father Mervin Ringlero, who supplied Hollywood cowboys with ornately-carved saddles. Exposed to the arts from a young age, Ringlero has assembled a collection of contemporary Native American art that nearly rivals the holdings of the nearby Heard Museum in Phoenix. In many ways, Casino Arizona could function as a model for how Indian gaming establishments can approach Native art. While I will not be discussing this institution here, Buffalo Thunder Casino and Resort in Santa Fe has certainly followed suit, now claiming a collection of over three hundred pieces of contemporary Native American art.

When seeking admittance to an art museum, visitors typically follow a set routine, a performance repeated again and again: push to open an impressive door, pay admission, check your bag—if necessary—and attach a small metal button/souvenir to your lapel. Through these actions, you are automatically cast in the role of tourist, whether bearing the label of local resident or out-of-state visitor. While dictated by security concerns, each and every one of these steps enforces the notion that visitors are entering a rarified space, otherwise known as an art museum. By way of comparison, other types of museums, with objects just as valuable, convey a much more casual, therefore hospitable environment. Examples run the gamut, ranging from natural history museums to historic homes to “garden and

memorial sites, village greens and hotel lobbies" (Bodinger de Uriarte and Briggs 2013, 122). In comparison to settings like a formal garden, that may go unmonitored at times, art museums constantly remind their patrons that they have entered a no-touch zone.

While all types of museums employ security guards, their presence tends to be more conspicuous in art museums. Certainly, a strong comparison can be made to casinos, where the presence of security guards is even more evident at times. The difference is that as casino employees, the number one priority of security guards is to protect funds on hand, cashiers behind the cage, and to spot cheaters. Overall, art is a secondary concern. However, whether employed by an art museum or a casino, security guards are required to fulfill a multitude of roles. A *Los Angeles Times* article titled "Museum Security Guards: Lots of Art and a Little Eavesdropping," highlights how diverse these responsibilities can be:

> Harlan Booker, a security guard at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, states . . . "One of the things that people forget about museums, and forget about guards, is that when the docents go, the curators go, we're the only ones left. . . . And patrons are very demanding—they don't care if you are a curator, they want to know, and you are supposed to know because you are standing in front of this stuff. . . And to know a lot, more than just where the toilet is and where's the Picasso. They want to know about every kind of art there is." Booker, as well as security guards from MOCA and the Getty Museum . . . don't pretend to be art experts—but these quiet sentries, who spend long hours on their feet in the galleries, say they develop an intimate relationship with the art that can't be developed while rushing through with a docent or audio tour. (Haithman 2011)

After observing security guards at numerous casinos, I can say that they play a similar role in relationship to the art they patrol on a daily basis. Except at a casino, there are no docents or curators to interact with visitors. However, after speaking with numerous guards at Casino Arizona, I discovered that most have developed an

intimate relationship with the art on display. They may not garner as many questions from casino patrons about a particular sculpture or painting, but they do develop relationships with the art, whatever the medium. When I spoke with security guards at Casino Arizona, each one took the time to point out a favorite work or two.

In stark contrast to the constant din of a casino, art museums tend to be contemplative spaces—much like libraries. Indeed, the silent spell of an art museum is only broken by a docent leading a tour, educational activities or special events, such as the formal opening of an exhibition. It is easy to picture the obligatory wine bottles, platters of cubed cheese and an array of fresh fruit. Other than such notable exceptions, hushed tones prevail. As an aside, this offers one explanation for the growing popularity of audio tours in many museums. When visitors wear headphones, they are much less likely to converse with one another—another way to guarantee a quiet environment, while controlling efficient movement throughout galleries. Although I am describing what amounts to a zen-like experience, today's museums are placing more of an emphasis on interactive events for visitors, whether they be children or adults. Without question, the low murmur of an art museum stands in stark contrast to the noise that emanates from a casino. Here, bells and whistles, background music and loud conversations all contribute to a party-like atmosphere, a cacophony of sounds designed to encourage round-the-clock gambling. As theater, a big win at any slot machine must be announced, celebrated. After all, even a digital recording of falling coins can inspire hope.

As for the topic of how casinos operate as museums, how and where Native American art forms are displayed continues to be a hotly-debated issue. Until

recently, American Indian artists could only display their work either outside or on the periphery of the mainstream art world. They were confined, both from a historical or current framework, to the walls of anthropology museums. A1988 exhibition titled *ART/Artifact: African Art in Anthropology Collections* demonstrated how African art and material culture can be displayed from multiple perspectives, viewed from a white pedestal in an art museum or housed inside a diorama at an anthropology museum (*ART/Artifact: African Art in Anthropology Collections*, 1988). Without a doubt, the same dynamic certainly holds true for Native American arts and culture.

Historically, the work of Native artists has been relegated to natural history/anthropology museums, where "material culture" was only identified by type (basketry, pottery, weavings, etc.), tribal associations or geographical locations. This approach, referred to as "salvage ethnography," still enjoys currency, bolstered by the conviction that Native cultures were and still are disappearing. The certainty of this belief explains the problematic relationship between Native peoples and anthropology museums. One only has to think of Ishi, the "last" Yahi and how he lived out the reminder of his life in a University of California building in San Francisco. Ishi took up residence in 1911, following the genocide of his people resulting from the California gold rush and exposure to a raft of new diseases. Anthropologists such as Alfred Kroeber, from the University of California at Berkeley, took Ishi under their wing. Perceiving Ishi as the "last" Yahi, Kroeber was desperate to record everything about the Yahi culture before it was lost. Although a few well-known exceptions exist, the names of most Native artists failed to be recorded since anthropologists put an emphasis on recording culture over individuals. To this day,

they remain anonymous, their work seen as artifacts. However, Ishi subverted these stereotypes at every turn. According to Drew Lopenzina:

> Ishi is the living, breathing museum artifact that resists classification. Fitting perfectly into the prefabricated model of the "last of his race," he nevertheless defies the stereotypes of static indigenous identity that the photographers, ethnographers, and museum curators labored to produce by failing to wear feathered headdresses, perform rain dances, or assume the role of "big chief." He was the quiet, gentle repository of unspoken oral stories and traditions who decided that, rather than wear skins, he would don overalls like the people around him and earn his keep doing his day job at the museum. He seems to have understood himself not as the "last of his race, but as one of the people." (Lopenzina 2010, 212-213)

Kroeber might be amazed to read this contemporary portrayal of Ishi. Clearly, Lopenzina values Ishi's actions as a janitor/one of the people over the recordings that Kroeber and his colleagues so diligently prepared for posterity.

Thankfully, attitudes are changing. Contemporary Native artists are starting to gain access to institutions, ranging from the Museum of Modern Art in New York to high-end galleries in city centers. For example, a work by Jimmie Durham is currently featured in the 2014 Whitney Biennial, a crowning achievement for any artist. *New York Times* critic Holland Cotter singles out this work for praise in his review "One Last Dance in the Old Place," a reference to the impending move of the Whitney to a new building. He writes:

> A piece at the entrance by Jimmie Durham — Native American by descent, in self-exile from the United States since 1987 — was a good omen. His abstract but roughly humanoid sculpture called "Choose Any Three" is made of stacked wood chips inscribed with names: Vanzetti; E. Zapata; Crazy Horse; Ho Chi Minh; Cristóbal Colón; Johnny Colón; Kay Starr; Malcolm X, etc. Mix and match and create your own political meaning for the piece. (Cotter 2014, 1)

However, the inclusion of Native artists, and particularly Native women artists, in exhibitions like this proves the exception and not the rule. Additionally, when Native

artists are included in exhibitions like this, they tend to be male artists. A gender divide does exist. Given the exclusionary tactics of the art world, “Indian” artists are forced to seek out unconventional avenues to gain recognition. One reason that the work of more Native artists does not find its way into the hallowed halls of major art museums is that it is immediately labeled as “Indian” art. A parallel can be drawn to the world of Native American literature, where N. Scott Momaday, whose Pulitzer-prize winning book *House Made of Dawn*, may only be listed as required reading in courses devoted to Native American literature. In much the same light, there are curators who still believe that Native American art/artifacts belong in anthropology museums, and are truly puzzled by outside intrusions from the art world. Here I include a useful story. In 1995, while attending the Native American Art Studies Association Conference in Santa Fe, New Mexico, I overheard a conversation between three senior curators who were employed by prominent natural history or anthropology museums. All were lamenting the presence of performance artist James Luna. After all, what was this field coming to? (fig. 34). For them, it was far preferable to work with so-called “material culture” than to grapple with a living artist, especially one who lives to stir up controversy. The following photograph depicts Luna, who posed himself in a standard museum display case or vitrine at the San Diego Museum of Man. In order to lie still for extended periods of time, he took a sedative on a daily basis. Luna, clothed only in a leather loincloth, lay on the sand, surrounded by documents that spoke to his identity, such as a tribal enrollment card; a Jimi Hendrix cassette tape (it was the eighties); discharge papers from the military; and a label pointing to his scar from an emergency appendectomy. Although Luna

did not perform this particular piece at the NAASA Conference, his very presence as a paid keynote speaker/performance artist did challenge the status quo. These curators, all old guard scholars, preferred counting the number of warp and weft threads that constitute a prized Navajo textile to being challenged in any shape, way or form. To be sure, Luna's confrontational approach became an unwelcome intrusion, the very intent of this performance artist. Why did the work of this conceptual artist pose such a threat? In the book, *Everything You Know about Indians is Wrong*, curator and activist Paul Chaat Smith offers one explanation:

> The particular kind of racism that faces North American Indians offers rewards for functioning within the romantic constructions, and severe penalties for operating outside them. Indians are okay, as long as they are "traditional" in a non-threatening (peaceful) way, as long as they meet non-Indian expectations about Indian religious and political beliefs. And what it really comes down to is that Indians are okay as long as we don't change too much. Yes, we can fly planes and listen to hip-hop, but we must do these things in moderation and always in a true Indian way . . . It presents the unavoidable question: Are Indian people allowed to change? Are we able to invent new ways of living that have no connection to previous ways we have lived? (Smith 2009, 91)

If these three museum professionals felt free to respond in an uncensored fashion to Smith's questions at the time, they might very well have said no, at least within the safe confines of their group. Chances are each one of these women would answer quite differently today, albeit a bit begrudgingly.

Figure 34. James Luna (Luiseno), *The Artifact Piece*, 1987. Performance and installation. San Diego Museum of Man.

It is important to note the far-reaching impact of *The Artifact Piece* on both Native and non-Native peoples. For example, some twenty years later, Native artist Erica Lord sought permission from Luna to recreate his performance, this time putting her body—that of a Native woman—on display (fig. 35). Since Native women's bodies are just as objectified as those of Native men—if not more so, this recreation delivers a strong message to visitors and museum professionals. Like Luna, Lord's body calls into question the long standing practice of staging life-size models of

Native peoples in dioramas, true cabinets of curiosity, separated by glass and frozen in time. Since anthropologists have depicted “Indians” as relics, museum-goers expect to see images of dead Indians. Perhaps this partially explains why the photographs of Edward Sheriff Curtis are so appealing to non-Native audiences. To address the issue of gender, Lord identifies her body via texts/labels that describe her attitudes towards childbearing and finding a mate (Askren 2012,132-133). Both pieces are successful because they do not steer too far afield from familiar ways in which Native peoples have been displayed over time, especially in natural history museums. Credit needs to be given to the Museum of Man for supporting James Luna’s original performance of *The Artifact Piece* (fig. 34). In doing so, they had to cast a critical eye on their own use of dioramas. Today, many of these large dioramas, never to be exhibited again, are probably taking up valuable storage space in the basement of the San Diego Museum of Man.

Figure 35. Erica Lord (Athabascan, Inupiaq, Finnish, Swedish, English and Japanese). *The Artifact Piece*, Re-visited, 2009. Performance and installation. Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian, New York, Gustave Heye Center.

In general, when museum professionals—employed by encyclopedic museums— exhibit any examples of Native American art, whether categorized as historic or contemporary, these pieces are usually relegated to a separate gallery or wing of the museum. The other alternative is that entire museums or fine arts galleries elect to specialize in a particular area of "ethnic" arts. The Museum of Contemporary Native Arts MoCNA) in Santa Fe is but one example. At face value, there is nothing wrong with this scenario. To be effective, every curator/scholar must limit his or her scope to "display" knowledge in a very circumscribed space. However, adopting a strategy of separation can be dangerous. For instance, it can

cut off dialogue by denying Native and non-Native artists easy access to respond to each other's work. Perhaps the greatest loss, however, is that Native artists are blocked from reaching diverse audiences. For instance, a visitor seeking out examples of traditional Comanche beadwork on display may have little or no interest in contemporary Native art. In other words, works by contemporary Native artists are often overlooked because visitors want to see "the real thing." The result is that opportunities for discussion are severely curtailed. Indeed, many contemporary artists and critics refer to this process as the "ghettoization" of contemporary Native art. This process is illustrated at the Denver Art Museum, where an entire floor is dedicated to the exhibition of Native American art (fig. 36). (Please note: separate sections are set aside for the "ethnic" display of African and Oceanic art as well—a common practice in most encyclopedic museums.) Art historian Steven Leuthold elaborates on these divisions:

> For the traditionalist, art may be recognized in several ways: the medium of expression (shellwork, quillwork, basketry, etc.) designs that clearly relate to tribal, clan or other group identity; or subject matter pertaining to Indians. Though all these elements might not be present in a given work the underlying assumption is that there is something in the artwork, not just the artwork that makes an artwork Indian. . . The location of Indianness in the ethnicity of the artist rather than in the artwork frees artists from formulaic expressions of Indianness, but risks excluding those audience members who do not understand new visual languages that result from formal innovation. (Leuthold 1998, 152)

Indeed, museums are still wrestling with how and where to locate Native American art. Issues associated with collection practices are also charged. Mario A. Caro, a curator and art historian points out that "The number is museums that include an emphasis on collecting contemporary Native art is small" (Caro 2001, 65). However,

he does list exceptions, such as the Eiteljorg, the Heard and the Museum of Contemporary Native Arts.

Figure 36. Denver Art Museum. Detail of the *Artists of the Southwest Gallery*, Permanent Collection.

The "Artists of the Southwest Gallery" at the Denver Art Museum exemplifies how many institutions address this issue. This gallery holds a mixture of historic and contemporary pieces of Native art, all housed in close proximity to each other. Of course, it comes as no surprise that artists—Native or otherwise—cite past images or techniques, but this chronologic approach is not modeled in other parts of the museum, except those dedicated to African and Oceanic arts. Chances are the work of a textile artist, not identified by ethnicity, will probably hang on its own. In most cases, wall text will only list the artist's name, the piece's title, medium and a date. In other words, there is no need to contextualize an artist's work via his or her

grandmother's or great-grandmother's crazy quilt. If deemed necessary, additional biographical data/family influence can be implied through text, without being illustrated. The question then becomes why does this practice of documenting lineage through objects enjoy such widespread popularity in the world of Native arts? One answer is that most curators and museum directors come to the table with a standard education in Western art history. As a result, they are reluctant to embrace a new way of seeing or exhibiting collections of Native American art. Instead, they rely on an anthropological approach. While departments dedicated to contemporary and Native arts at the Denver Art Museum do collaborate from time to time, they are classified as two separate entities.

Anthropologist Nancy Marie Mithlo provides a synthesis of stances embraced by contemporary Native American artists as they relate to the mainstream art world. She writes:

> A central concern . . . is the sense that contemporary Native artists are falsely confined to regional and ethnic spheres instead of belonging to more universalist fine art realms. Talking seriously about any ethnic arts requires an engagement with notions of individualism and the collective. Ethnic qualifiers in the fine arts automatically connote a paradigm that privileges unconstrained individual freedom while rejecting communal imperatives. Ethnic artists who speak outside this agenda are rarely taken seriously under Western hegemonies of universal and objective fine arts criteria. . . In the Native American arts market, these tensions may be described as the fine arts/crafts divide. Native American crafts are assumed to be communally based, historically accurate and tribally specific. If Native American artists wish to exhibit under fine arts imperatives, they must become white by rejection of their tribal status. ("I'm an artist first, an Indian second"). Alternatively, they can look to reconfigure the fine arts market by way of critique ("There's no word for *art* in my language") or choose to segregate themselves from the mainstream ("I live in two worlds"). These counter-ideologies are reactive, ineffective for social change, ultimately reifying of status quo modes of reflection. (Mithlo 2008, 76)

It is no wonder that many Native artists can heave a sigh of relief when they sell their work to a casino. As a result, the above categories may be rendered null and void.

One of the main venues for the display of Native American fine art is Indian Market—an event not mentioned by Bodinger de Uriarte and Briggs in their article "Wag(er)ing Histories, Staking Territories: Exhibiting Sovereignty in Native America" (Bodinger de Uriarte and Briggs 2013). Years ago, I took an artist friend from Brooklyn (Coney Island to be exact) to experience Indian Market. Because of the August heat and the hour drive between Albuquerque and Santa Fe, he was a reluctant volunteer for this all-day excursion. Another deterrent was that he proclaimed that he had been to a million arts and craft shows, and did not need to see another. Needless to say, he was stunned by both the art on display--a multi-media feast for the eyes—and how easy it was for him to converse with artists. After moving from booth to booth, he kept mumbling that so much of this work belonged in a museum. When I commented that the majority of Indian Market artists are represented by well-known museums or galleries, he was perplexed. He was even more surprised when I explained that few artists at Indian Market generate enough sales/commissions to support themselves and family members throughout the coming year. While this club of successful artists is small, it is remarkable nonetheless. But Lonnie Vigil, a renowned potter from Nambe Pueblo, is certainly a member (fig.37). After working with Vigil as a demonstrating artist and visiting his booth for the past twenty years, I know how nervous he feels when he tries to safely situate his pots in an open-air setting, with throngs of people passing. This atmosphere poses a definite threat to his pots, vessels he lovingly refers to as his

children. (Today, Vigil's work is in such demand by collectors that a pot of this size and quality could easily sell for sixty-thousand dollars or more.)

For my New York friend, the notion of a "street show" should not be synonymous with such high levels of quality. After all, for two full days, artists navigate grueling hours, stand on uneven pavement and rely on "port-a-potties." Not aware of the long tradition behind Indian Market, my friend asked why the City of Santa Fe could not provide better accommodations. He was shocked that artists of this caliber should be forced to wrestle with folding tables and unruly canopies. These tarps can only offer nominal protection from the elements, be they sun, wind or a sudden rainstorm.

Figure 37. Lonnie Vigil (Nambe Pueblo) posing with one of his black micaceous pots, Photograph by Toba Tucker, 1998.

Anthropologist Lea S. McChesney describes the process that Native artists go through to promote their work in this setting.

> By the time objects are exhibited in museums, their value has been established by the writing of critics and other experts in the context where the work is being circulated prior to exhibition, including galleries, open-air markets and auction houses. Museum exhibitions, (especially in their accompanying catalogs) sanctify this achieved status, institutionally confirming the authenticity and beauty of the object and transforming it into a celebrity work of art. Publication in the museum's definitive, authoritative text transforms it into an icon. Prior, competitive market venues include judging and prizes that are awarded, in the case of traditional Native arts, by experts such as art dealers, museum curators, occasionally academic anthropologists and art historians, but rarely Native artists. (McChesney 2012, 4)

This is certainly true of the judging that takes place at Indian Market. Artists enter pieces into set categories, and the entire process takes place over a three-day period. Instead of a catalogue essay dedicated to the work of a particular artist or exhibition, first, second and third place ribbons acknowledge a wide array of talents and singular achievements. Notice how the first place ribbon dominates the piece below (fig. 38), almost overshadowing the intricate carving of this katsina and mudhead figure.

Figure 38. Bart Gasper Sr. (Zuni Pueblo), First Place Indian Market award winner, Pueblo Carvings Classification, photographer unknown, 2013.

Like Indian Market, casinos and museums are marketed as tourist attractions. All three are in the business of attracting tourists. And the concept of tourism informs each site. This identity is just as applicable to local visitors on a day trip, as a formal tour group composed of Japanese visitors. (One might be surprised to learn that Japanese tourists represent the largest single group of international visitors to target New Mexico as a destination). While author Kirshenblatt-Gimblett does not mention

casinos, her description of the strictures of the tourist economy is certainly applicable to such sites.

> Heritage and tourism are collaborative industries, heritage converting locations into destination and tourism making them economically viable as exhibits of themselves. Locations become museums of themselves within a tourism economy. Once sites, buildings, objects, technologies, or ways of life can no longer sustain themselves as they formerly did, they "survive"—they are made economically viable as representations of themselves. (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998, 151)

Perhaps this is why the architecture of so many casinos in the Southwest is reminiscent of traditional adobe-style buildings. While tourists may not make the time to visit an actual Pueblo, they can approximate the experience by viewing casinos and casino art.

One artist whose work may be found in a casino collection or two is that of Diego Romero (Cochiti Pueblo). His experience provides an understanding of why Native artists shy away from entering the "official" art world. Romero's story speaks to a bigger picture. Why is it difficult for a Native artist to reference traditional imagery in some MFA programs? I am deliberately inserting this rather lengthy passage because it illuminates the cultural difficulties that Native artists might face when enrolled in an MFA program at a major university or an art school, like the Rhode Island School of Design. California art dealer Richard Polsky, in his book *The Art Prophets: The Artists, Dealers and Tastemakers Who Shook the Art World*, describes Romero's experience:

> During the 1990s, Adrian Saxe, an esteemed ceramicist and professor at UCLA's graduate art program, had a promising student who refused to push himself to go beyond the obvious with his art. Diego Romero, a Cochiti Pueblo Indian, was a potter with a lot of skills and a remarkable upside as an artist. Apparently, his professor didn't think it was a viable skill set capable of breaking into the art market. Saxe claimed Indian pottery was only a craft. He

> didn't care for "Santa Fe" art. But the real problem was that Saxe felt that Romero was intellectually lazy and not seeing the greater artistic picture beyond. According to Romero, his teaching philosophy was that if it didn't have intellectual bedrock, it wasn't art.
>
> In his graduate program, Romero was making pottery covered in traditional Anasazi designs. Asked by Saxe to start digging a little bit deeper, Romero responded by switching to gold paint to glaze his pots—something no self-respecting Indian ceramicist had ever done. Adrian Saxe was still not impressed. Applying gold paint was merely a cosmetic makeover. Saxe then told Romero that unless he took more serious risks with his art, he could forget about seeing his master's degree.
>
> Freshly motivated, Romero hit on a format derived from ancient Indian art, with a twist. He decided to paint his bowls in the Mimbres style, but with imagery that incorporated the daily Native American contemporary reality. Each piece has an outer, geometric border and a central pictorial, maintaining its fidelity to Mimbres design. As the artist explained, "Most Pueblo pottery, the historic stuff and even the contemporary work, addressed a dialogue with fertility, rain, growth, and animals associated with that, whereas my dialogue centers around the postindustrilization, the commodification of Indian land, water, alcoholism . . ." Romero had found his signature style—blending social awareness with humor and ultimately a great respect for his ancestry. . . As a young man, Romero was highly influenced by comics. Perhaps the imagery Diego Romero is most recognized for a pair of fictional characters he invented called the Chongo Brothers. (A Chongo is a male Indian who wears his hair in a traditional bun.) (Polsky 2011, 122-126)

The dough bowl featured below (figs. 39 and 40) epitomizes Romero's work and his ongoing fascination with the Chongo Brothers. The artist juxtaposes the Mimbres imagery that decorates the perimeter of the bowl with a satirical take on how Native artists are forced to market their work. Romero has even featured Mimbres figures on the t-shirts these two figures wear—a nod to the widespread commercialization of Mimbres pottery in the Southwest. Adopting/appropriating Mimbres images has a long history. For example, in the mid-1930s, architect Mary Colter designed a series of "Mimbres" place settings to be used by diners on the Santa Fe Railway.

Figure 39. Diego Romero (Cochiti Pueblo), *Dough Bowl* featuring the Chongo Brothers, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1994.

Figure 40. Diego Romero (Cochiti Pueblo). *Dough Bowl*, detail of images and text at bottom of bowl, Museum of Modern Art, 1994.

It is ironic that Romero's professor in the Art Department at UCLA continually challenged his level of intellectual engagement. Perhaps the problem is that the exchange between the Chongo Brothers is based on a series of inside jokes. The first is the unlikely juxtaposition between the imagery found on the center of the bowl and surrounding patterns, and Romero's surprising twist on comic books (figures 39 and 40). It is easy to see that Diego has been influenced by pop artist Roy Lichtenstein as well. Both artists use text as a way to elevate the everyday. Here, it is a fast freeze moment of a conversation between two brothers. The issues addressed

include tribal enrollment numbers and commentary on what it means to be a successful Native artist in Santa Fe: to become the next "Indian Market Poster Boy." The character on the left, Dan-Yei-Bachata, states that his lifelong dream is to be the next Indian Market Poster Boy—a verbal stab at non-Native collectors, the provincial nature of Santa Fe and the never-ending consumption of contemporary Indian art. This sort of humor—directed both at themselves and non-Natives in particular—is prevalent in the world of American Indian art. As Ojibway artist Rebecca Belmore writes: "I think the humor in my work has really allowed me to slip into places, where, possibly had my work been of a different sort, maybe I wouldn't be getting exhibitions . . ." (qtd. in Ryan 1999, 45).

The interplay between Romero and his professor is quite complex. On the one hand, the professor's lack of cultural sensitivity/knowledge about Pueblo pottery is obvious. However, his ability to push Diego to explore new directions did enable him to arrive at his signature style. Perhaps, if Diego had been a student at the Institute of American Indian Arts, the instructor, apprehensive of stepping on any cultural toes, might not have pushed him to dig deeper.

Of course, Romero is not the only one to turn to Mimbres design for inspiration. For example, the Santa Fe Railroad utilized Mimbres imagery on their dinnerware. Not surprisingly, reproductions of these place settings can still be purchased in Santa Fe. Of course, the irony is that Mimbres culture may not be directly related to Pueblo peoples. In a sense, calling on Mimbres design motifs evokes ancestral "Indian" images while not necessarily providing a connection to contemporary Pueblo people who might be offended to find their sacred designs

incorporated in a casino blackjack chip (fig. 41). Archaeologist Steven LeBlanc questions the connection between contemporary design motifs in Pueblo art and Mimbres culture.

> Logically, the basis for interpreting Mimbres imagery must rest upon the analogies drawn to the beliefs and iconic systems of those modern southwestern Indians, believed to be in part descended from the Mimbres. However, about eight hundred historically eventful years separate the Mimbres from any possible descendant and make it difficult for us to judge the validity based on contemporary traditions. Further, there is no clear evidence to link the Mimbres with any particular Pueblo, and today, as in the past, the Pueblos—despite all similarities—are not a cohesive cultural, linguistic or political community. Their ideologies differ in many details, and different Pueblos may give different interpretations to similar images. (LeBlanc 1983, 110)

Figure 41. Retired blackjack chip featuring Mimbres imagery from Sandia Casino, date and designer unknown.

While questioning the connection between Mimbres design and contemporary Native art is valid, it is impossible to see a connection between Pueblo culture and the spokeswoman for Route 66 Casino (fig. 42).

Figure 42. Model used to advertise Route 66 Casino on billboards and television commercials.

The first question this figure raises is why is this particular image is employed by a Pueblo casino? It is hard to fathom how the airbrushed version of this long-legged blonde model has anything to do with standard expressions of culture at Isleta. Instead of turning to Pueblo forms of art to demonstrate a casino associated with a specific location, this image is associated with the tradition of 40s and 50s pin-

up girls. Indeed, the design team at Isleta has even steered clear of referencing any reductive “Indian” stereotypes. The model (fig, 42), although blonde, taller and quite a bit thinner, is reminiscent of a Betty Paige-style pin-up girl (fig. 43).

Figure 43. 1953, Bettie Page, Photographer unknown.

Why has Isleta veered so far afield of representing any connection to the cultural expression of Pueblo peoples? Perhaps they decided that if they want to focus on attracting a non-Native audience they might as well go for broke. The model’s clothing refers to a style of clothing worn by pin-up girls. She appeals to potential male gamblers, who believe they can purchase a fantasy. However, it is hard to imagine that Isleta elders would ever be comfortable when the image of this

woman flashes across their television screen during a commercial. The irony here is that Bettie Page looks far more “Indian” than the Route 66 model.

Just as advertising logos or voluptuous models, such as the Route 66 example discussed above (fig. 42), are selected to represent Indian casinos, the manner in which buildings are designed from the ground up must be decided upon as well. Glaring differences surface when comparing the planning process between Indian casinos and museums. As far as community involvement in casino design, the process is quite opaque. However, activities associated with museum planning are quite transparent, whether situated on tribal or non-tribal land. For example, architect Johnpaul Jones (Choctaw/Cherokee) and project manager Bruce Arnold designed the Southern Ute Cultural Center and Museum in conjunction with members of the tribe. Over a seven-year period, both Johnpaul and Arnold met with tribal representatives to discuss the plans for the museum. (Without doubt, this length of time marks a true commitment to the collaborative process.) According to Johnpaul Jones:

> It took the better part of a year to gain the trust of the elders on the museum board: “And one day they handed us this little pamphlet and said design the building around this. And the pamphlet was all about their circle-of-life philosophy. That’s what we want our building designed around, they said. And that’s what we worked with.” “It has to include the sky because the sky is such an important part of being Ute,” said Arnold. “It has to sit lightly on the land and speak broadly about the landscape.” . . . Also critical and represented on the side of the courtyard, is a reference to water: in the firm’s meetings with various youth groups, a high school student said, “One thing that is really important to us is that we were mountain people. We always went up to the mountains in the summertime and we were always in the meadows and there were streams. We were mountain people, so you should have a little stream, a little meadow stream as a welcoming and greeting thing.” (qtd. in Malnar and Vodvarka 2013, 143-145)

Why is it not possible to adopt a similar approach when creating casinos? This is a complicated question. First, there are practical concerns related to the design of a casino. Space must be set aside to house a certain number of blackjack tables, roulette wheels and slot machines. Also, on a philosophical level, it is much more difficult for an entire community to support a casino in comparison to a museum or heritage center. Despite the arguments for establishing sovereignty, generating much-needed income and providing work for tribal members, many elders remain ambivalent. Also, given that gambling is illegal for minors, it would be inappropriate to solicit the opinions of high school students. In short, community involvement in casino design or planning represents a moral conundrum.

Twin Arrows represents a casino where design input was limited to a small number of tribal members within the Navajo Nation. Named after a well-known trading post, diner and gas station, the Twin Arrows Navajo Casino Resort (figures 44 and 45), opened in May of 2013. Situated on Interstate 40 in Northern Arizona, a relatively short drive from Flagstaff, this business marks the end of a long battle over gaming in the Navajo Nation. In fact, when gaming initiatives were first put on the ballot in 1994 and 1997, they were voted down. Felicia Fonseca, a reporter for *The Associated Press*, describes Twin Arrows:

> The tribe has infused the new business with bits of Navajo culture and tradition. Turquoise twin arrows in the logo, for instance, symbolize the initiative and the journey of the Navajos through time. “It brings jobs that we don’t have in the past, it brings revenue, and it brings recognition for the Navajo people,” said Navajo tribal president Ben Shelly. A glittering chandelier greets visitors in the entryway, a depiction of the Navajos’ rise into the fourth world where humans came into existence. Stone walls and birch branches in the steakhouse represent the resting sites of eagles—among the most revered birds of American Indian tribes—while the design on the hotel’s exterior hints at a culture of weaving. The main entrance faces east in the

same way as traditional homes on the reservation, to capture the rising sun. Navajo artists were commissioned to create artwork that hangs throughout the casino, and some of the rooms have views of the San Francisco Peaks, held sacred by the Navajos. (Fonseca 2013)

Figure 44. Entrance Sign to Twin Arrows Navajo Casino and Resort. Photographer unknown, 2014.

Figure 45. Twin Arrows Navajo Casino and Resort entryway. Photographer unknown, 2014.

Using aspects of cultural expression as a design theme can be problematic. Recently, a Navajo friend related a story about Twin Arrows Casino and Resort to me. Her older sister called, excited to tell her about a possible way to earn some extra money. She cited an ad published in the *Navajo Times*. Twin Arrows Navajo Casino and Resort was seeking a Navajo speaker/storyteller to provide a brief, yet "authentic" synthesis of the Navajo Creation story to be used as text in the casino. When my friend declined to get involved, her sister urged her to reconsider,

reminding her that this might be a good way to earn some money to replace her old Ford truck. My friend thought it over, taking into account her vehicle, in need of a new transmission, and decided against it. She did not want to capitalize on the very stories that define her life. This excerpt from Leslie Marmon Silko's poem *Ceremony* offers a similar interpretation:

> I will tell you something about stories
> [He said]
> They aren't just entertainment.
> Don't be fooled.
> They are all we have, you see,
> All we have to fight off
> illness and death.
> You don't have anything if you don't have stories. (Silko 1977, 2)

This desire to fuse the bling of a casino with Navajo traditions raises a host of questions. Art historian Gloria J. Emerson in her essay "Art as Healing, Art as Struggle" asserts that:

> There is a fine line between honoring our traditions and misusing our cultural iconography. I see sacred icons used in kitsch, decorative art; in the 1960s and 1970s, there were still Navajos openly protesting their use in this way. I recently learned of a woman sand painter who travels out of our homelands into other states conducting workshops for non-Indians and claims to be healing them, for payment. (Emerson 2010, 20)

Incorporating sacred imagery into contemporary design elements may be motivated by cultural pride. However, when considering Fonseca's explanation of this elaborate chandelier, Emerson's point is well taken. Perhaps one such example can be found in the massive chandelier that dominates the lobby of Twin Arrows Casino. Designed to symbolize the story of the Dine people and how they emerged as human beings from the fourth world, this chandelier may be a bit too abstract for most visitors to decipher, whether Navajo or non-Navajo. In comparison, stories

embedded in the traditional Navajo weavings on display throughout the casino can easily be "read" by most Navajo viewers. Perhaps the designers of Twin Arrows Casino and Resort did cross the line between "honoring traditions" and "misusing cultural traditions" with this showy and oversized chandelier.

In conclusion, there are no easy answers to the questions posed throughout this chapter. Without a doubt, relationships between tribal communities, museums and casinos are in a state of flux. Amy Lonetree, an American Studies scholar, writes that "Museums can be very painful sites for Native peoples as they are intimately tied to the colonization process" (Lonetree 2012, 1). This has been a subtext throughout this chapter, whether discussing depictions of Ishi or the work of James Luna and Erica Lord. While Native participation in museums has grown, there is still a long way to go. And, in many ways, casinos offer a viable alternative. Mary Lawlor, in her book *Public Native America: Tribal Self-Representation in Museums, Powwows and Casinos*, writes:

> [T]he themes and designs of Indian casinos make the most of tribal motifs and images in the process of pursuing profit. In the halls and corridors of Native gambling institutions, we are confronted with a plethora of tribal self-representations that might appropriately be described as postmodern for their dramatically mixed designs that run the gamut from the historically accurate to the reductive and stereotypical. Given their functions as advertising logos and even incitements to consumption, we would not expect these devices to have the seriousness or steady focus of museum displays. . . They do, however, project ideas about Native America that prompt more than simple buying or playing. (Lawlor 2006, 21)

Indian gaming profits are being used to purchase Native American art. Bodinger de Uriarte and Briggs theorize that all museums can be defined as "contained exhibitionary spaces" (Bodinger de Uriarte and Briggs 2013, 123). Under this open-ended heading, all casinos can be classified as museums. However, certain notable

gaming establishments, namely Casino Arizona in Scottsdale, Arizona and Buffalo Thunder Resort and Casino in Santa Fe, New Mexico are dedicated to this cause. Both navigate dual identities: the first to gambling, and the second to the acquisition and display of contemporary Native art.

Chapter Five

Conclusion: Final Thoughts, Final Questions

Pueblo people have always played games, not so much to "win," but to be playful.

--Roxanne Swentzell (2009)

Figure 46. Roxanne Swentzell (Santa Clara Pueblo), *Gaming Clowns*, Buffalo Thunder Resort. Santa Fe, New Mexico, photographer unknown, 2009.

This dissertation examines the interaction between Indian gaming facilities and contemporary Native American art, exploring how, or even if, casinos function as museums. A substantial amount of research exists on socioeconomic concerns related to Indian gaming; however, few studies have been conducted on how

casinos and “casino art” represent Native identity. Taken as a whole, this work addresses roles played by contemporary Native artists, whether they are critiquing Indian gaming outside casino walls, or exhibiting their work inside the framework of a casino. Pictured above, Roxanne Swentzell’s piece *Gaming Clowns* (fig. 46), speaks to the importance of gaming in Pueblo communities. Commissioned by Buffalo Thunder Resort, these enigmatic clowns gamble with cards and dice on a pot that represents the earth. Clearly, gaming, in all its forms, symbolizes the underlying belief systems of many Pueblo peoples. In comparison to these monumental clowns and the many games they play, the “earth” is almost insignificant.

Understanding the steps that led to the legalization of Indian gaming was key to establishing a proper groundwork for this discussion. This research enabled me to focus on the impact of gaming on tribal entities throughout the state of New Mexico, with a special emphasis on Pueblo communities. Chapter One provided an overview of the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act or IGRA, passed by Congress in 1988, which opened the gates for individual states to approve legislation to allow legalized gaming on tribal lands. In Indian Country, the concept of “sovereignty” became a lynchpin in fights to legalize gaming. By chronicling the ways in which Native communities navigated relationships with the legal system, via state and federal laws, I discovered that issues related to sovereignty emerged again and again. However, definitions of sovereignty often varied—sometimes dramatically—from one account to another. Writer Paul Demain (Oneida/Ojibwe) addresses the conflicted nature of this ever-changing term:

> Sovereignty, in my view, is a plain principle and basic right of human beings to exist and function in society as they choose for themselves and without

> interference. . . My position as a news editor, a radio commentator, and journalist brings me in contact with a repeating smorgasbord of issues that touch on the edge of sovereignty on a regular basis. Yet most people in the general public and most students of academia would be at a loss to describe it. (Demain 2012, 169)

When I read this passage I felt a sense of relief, because over the course of conducting this research, the term sovereignty/sovereign status was used in multiple ways, tailor-made to suit different issues. This became particularly apparent when examining specific court rulings and governmental litigation related to Indian gaming and casinos.

In my initial chapter, I monitored how public opinion changed in response to state and federal mandates. This enabled me to analyze a seemingly endless series of legal battles and resulting legislation. In short, this was a very exciting time period in the history of New Mexico, acted out by Native and non-Native participants. Indeed, business became so lucrative that lawyers started specializing in this field. Primary source material played a key role in evaluating these changes. Looking at legal issues through the multifaceted lens of letters to the editor and editorial cartoons helped me measure the tenor of the time through public opinion. Whether speaking for or against Indian gaming, Native and non-Native writers expressed passionate viewpoints. (However, the majority of letters were composed by non-Native readers.) Debates about whether or not to legalize gaming were contentious, and protests received front page coverage in the *Albuquerque Journal* and the *Santa Fe New Mexican*. The prospect of legalized gaming caused furor throughout the state, and letters ran the gamut from racist attacks on Native residents to heartfelt support, acknowledging widespread poverty in Native communities. While

professional journalists reported on court dates and protests, letters to the editor tell a far richer, though more troubling story. Although trying to prove a point, these letters often lack polish. In the end, some letters reveal more about the writer than the actual issue. Due to space constraints faced by any newspaper, the majority of these letters are quite short. These unvarnished letters provide an unmediated measure of how Indian people and communities were viewed during this time period. In particular, these missives gave me the opportunity to study opinions of non-Natives towards their Native neighbors. For example, despite living in such close proximity, Albuquerque residents knew little about living conditions at Sandia Pueblo. From a historical perspective, these legal battles played out a short time ago. But times have changed. Comments in many letters published in the late eighties and nineties, penned by non-Native writers, are racially prejudiced. From today's vantage point, one can only hope that such comments would not be tolerated. Most would-be writers know better and would practice self-censorship. In short, newspapers such as *The Albuquerque Journal* and the *Santa Fe New Mexican* will automatically reject such offensive material, for fear of how their publications might be perceived.

Certain stereotypes enjoyed widespread popularity in these letters. For example, many non-Native writers were threatened by the new notion of the "Rich Indian." Countless readers worried that Native people with money might lose their "innate" link to spirituality, which could deprive them of their true status as "Indians." Of course, underlying these "concerns" for cultural identity was a deep-seated anxiety that Indians might gain more power by accumulating wealth. Anthropologist Katherine Spilde writes that "the authenticity argument implied by the Rich Indian

image rests on notions of class: Since 'real' Indians are not wealthy, being 'rich' means that some Native American are not sufficiently different from 'other' Americans to deserve sovereign rights" (Spilde 1999,5). Another argument used against the legalization of Indian gaming was based on the stereotypical belief that Native people did not possess the requisite skills to build casinos and manage their own businesses. As a result, many readers wrote in expressing fear that organized crime would invade New Mexico. This builds upon an enduring stereotype, characterized by historian Scott B. Vickers as the "stupid Indian," . . . "full of gibberish, irascible and childlike" (Vickers 1998, 36). Patronizing phrases like "our Indians" were used as propaganda. And even "well-meaning" citizens who wrote letters to the editor could undermine the future of Indian gaming. Paul Chaat Smith's words certainly apply here: "The discourse on Indian art or politics or culture, even among people of goodwill, is frequently frustrated by the distinctive type of racism that confronts Indians today: romanticism" (Smith 2009, 17). After all, romantic ideas of New Mexico, symbolized by "Indians" and related imagery, has motivated many an outsider to move to Santa Fe. Anthropologist Eve Darian-Smith states that "it is important for the dominant non-Indian North American population to retain a belief that some resemblance of 'authentic' Indians still exist, which in turn bolsters a hope that a golden past could possibly be returned to one day" (Darien-Smith, 5). In many cases, the influx of Indian gaming has disrupted such nostalgia notions.

Relying on visual analysis, Chapter Two delivers readings of advertisements for casinos. Sometimes overlooked as primary source material, advertisements speak to Native identities through a complex interplay of word and image. Like any

business, Indian gaming facilities promote themselves in an effort to attract multiple audiences. However, much like the letters to the editor discussed in Chapter One, considerable changes have taken place in how promotional campaigns are approached and where advertisements are placed. It was surprising to see, again in a few short years, the dramatic changes that have taken place in advertising. The contrast between past and present examples is glaring. For instance, when Indian casinos first opened their doors, advertisements appeared cluttered, overloaded with text, coupons and images. They appeared more like fliers for a local event, such as a powwow, than advertisements for a business. Indeed, the more information/images that could be packed on a page, the better. Casinos wanted to get their money's worth. Those in charge of running Indian gaming facilities relied on in-house amateurs to employ a cut-and-paste approach to design. It has taken years for casinos to allocate enough funds to produce advertising that can reach a broader audience—whether national or international.

A motif that runs through these early advertisements is a strong emphasis on humor and irony. For example, the 2000 Cities of Gold newspaper advertisement discussed in Chapter Two features an Indian Chief motorcycle, about to be awarded as a grand prize (fig. 13). Choosing an "Indian Chief" over a Harley Davidson epitomizes a true trickster mentality. Being able to win or "ride" an Indian Chief motorcycle also functions as sexual innuendo, a key component of tricksterism or coyote culture. While today's advertisements may be more sophisticated, they no longer convey a subversive love of puns—a genuine loss. However, a similar use of wordplay and visual puns can be found in the work of many contemporary Native

artists, including David Bradley and Roxanne Swentzell, whose art is explored in Chapter Three. There is a direct correlation between how humor/irony is utilized in early ads and how contemporary Native artists approach their subject matter. Art historian Allan J. Ryan understands this common ground, and defines Indian humor from a universal perspective: “Transcending geographical boundaries and tribal distinctions, it is most often characterized by frequent teasing, outrageous punning, constant wordplay, surprising association, extreme subtlety, layered and serious reference and considerable compassion” (Ryan 2000, xii). In other words, it should come as no surprise that similarities exist between advertisements placed in newspapers and examples of fine art. Both mediums function as forms of cultural expression. Advertisements are a direct outgrowth of popular culture, while work by artists such as Bradley and Swentzell can be equated with the world of fine arts.

Today’s casinos hire professional graphic artists to produce state-of-the-art advertising that appears in newspapers, travel brochures and online. Focus groups are hired to assess the best way to reach potential gamblers. Since it is fairly safe to assume that Native patrons who live in close proximity will visit, the task of such advertising is to target non-Native gamblers, perhaps with more discretionary income at their disposal. This allowed me to raise the issue of cultural tourism, a common thread that runs throughout this dissertation. In addition, the “business” of Indian gaming and the amount of income generated continues to grow. This is illustrated by a colorful advertisement that occupies the entire back cover of the Spring 2014 issue of the *National Museum of the American Indian* magazine (fig. 47). Sponsored by the National Indian Gaming Association (NIGA), this annual tradeshow and convention

attracts attendees from all over the United States and Canada. According to the NIGA website:

> The National Indian Gaming Association's Indian Gaming Tradeshow and Convention is the nation's premier Indian gaming event where Indian gaming executives, buyers and industry professionals meet each spring to discuss serious business. If you are currently doing business or want to begin doing business in the Indian casino entertainment industry, you can't afford to miss being a part of the Indian gaming industry's number one event.

Clearly, the business of Indian gaming is flourishing, evidenced, in part, by the choice of location for this event. Selecting an expensive city, such as San Diego, to host this convention speaks volumes. San Diego, a location where the cost of food and accommodations might prove prohibitive for other businesses and other conventions, sends just the right message for the National Indian Gaming Association (NIGA). It is somewhat ironic that the logo of this organization is often accompanied by the words "Rebuilding Communities through Indian Self Reliance." Often, the booming industry of Indian gaming can stand in direct contradiction to the grinding poverty that plagues so many Native communities.

Figure 47. Back cover advertisement on *National Museum of the American Indian Magazine*, Spring, 2014.

Chapter Three delineates how a group of Native artists, from different tribal backgrounds, provide commentary on Indian gaming. Here, the work of contemporary Native artists takes center stage. Established artists like Mateo and Diego Romero, Roxanne Swentzell and Judith Lowry all offer critical commentary on casinos and Indian gaming. Dean Rader, in his book *Engaged Resistance: American Indian Art, Literature and Film from Alcatraz to the NMAI*, makes repeated use of the term "aesthetic activism" (Rader 2011), a fitting label for the philosophy espoused by each of these artists. For some community members, artists in particular, it may be difficult to speak out against Indian gaming. Indeed, some Native artists are quite reticent, preferring to steer clear of political entanglements. There are two reasons why critiquing Indian gaming may be a risky proposition. First, family members may be benefiting from gaming revenues, whether working directly for the casino or by receiving services, via a newly-built health clinic or a senior center. And second, there is always a fear that casino managers might boycott the work of certain artists. For example, it is doubtful that any Indian casino would ever purchase Judith Lowry's provocative painting *Jingle, Jingle* to put on display (fig. 30). However, this does not necessarily mean that other paintings by Judith Lowry, with a less overt message, might very well be purchased. An image that could have been included in Chapter Three "Damn, I Keep Thinking of Three Cherries" (fig.48) summarizes several key issues. Tsinhnahjinnie combs through archives to find historic portraits of Native subjects, reinterprets these images via digital collage, and adds captions. Art historian Theresa Harlan addresses this image and the photographer's perspective. She writes:

> Tshnahjinnie wields irony to expose how Native sovereignty is still misunderstood, ridiculed and ignored by the U.S. government and public opinion. 'Damn, I Keep Thinking of Three Cherries' may seem to be an unsuitable title for a portrait of a Native man in deep concentration. This man, Little Six, a Mdewakanton Dakota, has much to think about as he awaits his execution for his participation in the 1862 Sioux revolt in Minnesota. Wars, revolts and numerous battles against England, France, Spain, Mexico and the United States must be understood not as 'American Indian problems' or 'Indians on the war-path' but as national actions taken by leaders to protect their sovereignty, territories, and way of life of their people from foreign intrusion. What more of an honorable reason would one need for a call to war.
>
> . . . Lately, one way for Indian nations to accrue economic and political power has been through the development of casinos on reservations. When the Mdewakanton Dakota opened its first casino, they named it after Little Six. Now state governments are working to shut down Indian casino operations with the help of large cash pockets of gambling interests from Las Vegas, Nevada. So dreaming about these three cherries spinning on a slot machine is not that much different from dreaming about sovereignty. (Harlan 2000, 241-242)

Pairing this historic portrait with such unexpected text casts casinos/slot machines in a much different light than the one in which they are usually seen. Much like Mateo Romero's painting "Santo Domingo Playing Bingo" (fig. 29), the photograph of Little Six points to the disconnect between reality and the glitz and glamour of casino life. While Romero tries to warn a Native audience against dangers associated with junk food and smoking, Tsinhnahjinnie wants viewers to recognize the historical trauma of a not-so-distant past. To name a casino after Little Six reinforces this connection. The question is whether an unadulterated version of the life of Little Six is actually posted in the casino. This is where the Dan Piraro cartoon captioned "I'm just sorry it took us 400 years to figure out how to beat them" (fig.15) reveals what many refer to as the hidden power of Indian gaming. In short, the colonizer has become the colonized. While Little Six may have been executed, his people now control casino profits.

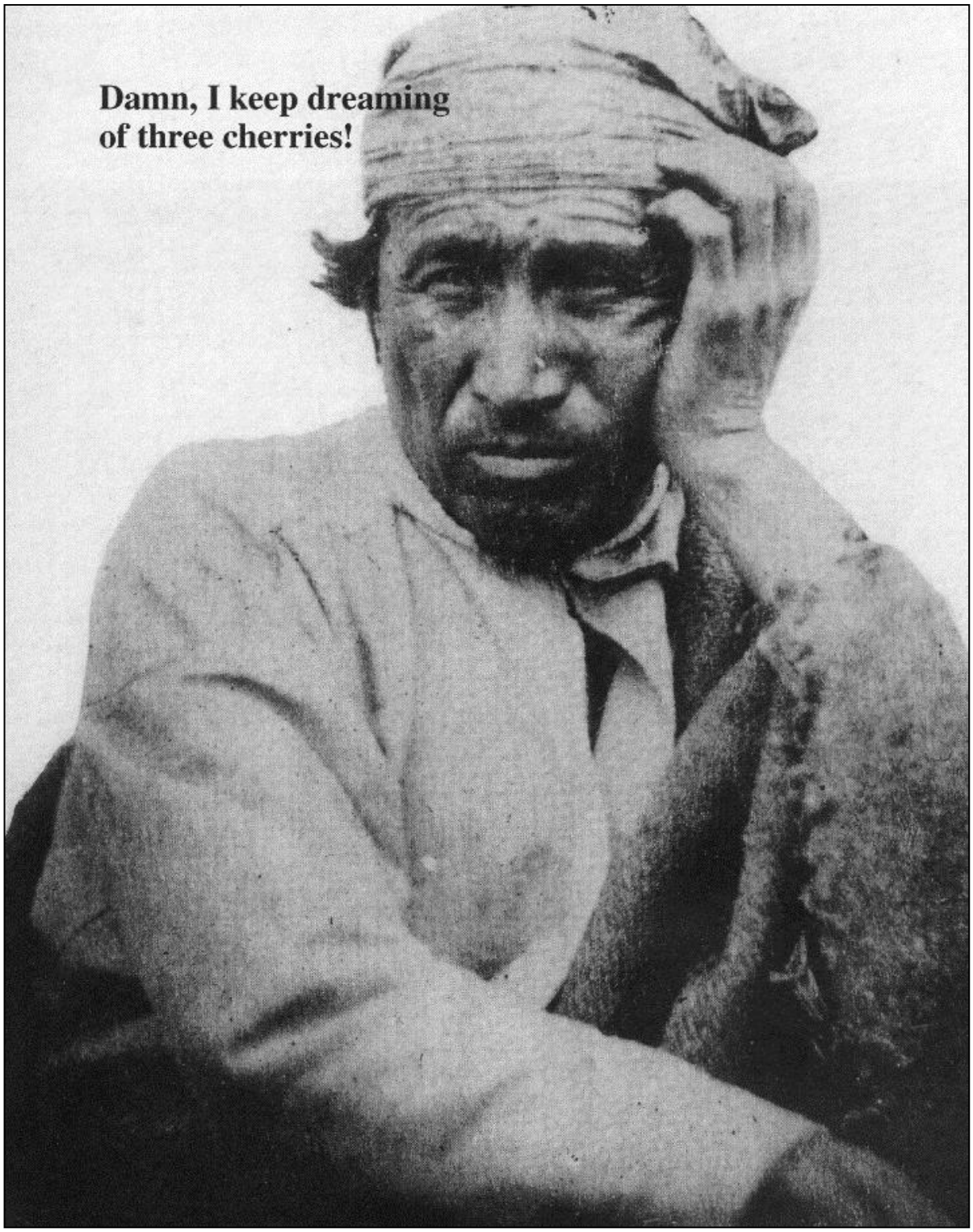

Figure 48. Hulleah Tsinhnahjinnie (Seminole, Muskogee, Dine), *Damn, I Keep Dreaming of Three Cherries!* Black and white digital print, 1998.

Chapter Four examines how, and even if, casinos can function as museums. The model provided by curator Aleta Ringlero and Casino Arizona enabled me to delineate ways in which premier examples of Native American art can share space with slot machines and blackjack tables. However, much like issues associated with casino architecture, decisions about how to assemble collections of Native art are anything but transparent. For the most part, community members are excluded from this activity, denied access to open forums. Perhaps the amount of effort required to solicit community input is not compatible with the business interests of a casino. After all, time is money. Amy Lonetree, in her book *Decolonizing Museums: Representations of Native America in Nation and Tribal Museums*, gives a sense of how demanding this process can be: "Developing community-collaborative exhibitions demands more than being well versed in the scholarly literature on a respective topic or on the latest in exhibition practices. It is about building trust, developing relationships, communicating, sharing authority and being humble" (Lonetree 2012, 170). Somehow this description, especially the word "humble" is rarely associated with the world of Indian gaming.

In this chapter I defined many variations between standard art museums and Indian gaming facilities. These included discussions on sound: the virtual silence of art museums compared to the noisy environs of casinos, Native or otherwise. I also raised questions about a range of audiences and how their needs are served by different settings. Ideally, Indian casinos, with examples of "museum quality" work on display can attract viewers who may not frequent actual museums where Native art is on exhibit. The issue of educational outreach was also considered. Unlike

museums that actively promote their exhibitions of Native art, this is not a priority for most Indian gaming establishments. As casinos expand their collections of Native American art in years ahead, this policy may be reassessed. Chapter Four also explored the tension-filled relationship between natural history or anthropology museums and Native artists. Citing Ishi, a man who represented the "last Yahi," and the work of current performance artists such as James Luna and Erica Lord allowed me to give a brief overview of why museums continue to arouse such suspicion, and why alternate display sites enjoy such widespread popularity. In addition to casinos that function as exhibition sites, one can point to other examples, such as Indian Market where Native artists display their work once a year in Santa Fe. Issues explored in Chapter Four are particularly exciting due to the construction of new casinos and the reinvention of others. One only has to think of the recent rebranding of the Hard Rock Casino and Resort to the Isleta Resort and Casino. Billed as a "return to Native roots," Isleta is once again displaying Pueblo art. (However, the overall the quality of this material cannot be compared to work exhibited at the Buffalo Thunder Resort and Casino.) In closing, one of the best ways to define cultural identity is through artistic expression. Mario A. Caro, in his insightful essay "Owning the Image: Indigenous Art Since 1990," offers these observations:

> During the last twenty years, a radical reconfiguration of how Native arts are exhibited, marketed, and contextualized within scholarly discourses has taken place. Much of this change is due to the rapid increase in the participation of Native scholars, curators and other arts professionals. Of course, leading these new approaches are Native artists who often tend to perform many of these roles simultaneously. Not only have Native artists been prolific in their practice, their work has driven the development of discourses that specifically address new themes, media and venues. Their efforts have continually posed challenges to the ways in which we think about the practice of exhibiting Native art. (Caro 2011, 67-68)

While Caro does not specifically mention casinos, they clearly provide a new and valuable venue for exhibiting Native arts.

Further Thoughts: A Case Study

Gerald Vizenor, in his novel *Shrouds of White Earth*, provides a scathing interpretation of Indian gaming. The storyline centers on a Native artist commissioned by a casino to create a series of paintings. Unfortunately, this collection of paintings, titled "Casino Walkers," is greeted with criticism. Vizenor describes the response of several serious gamblers:

> [T]he actual hand to mouth casino losers who finance the casino and two native patrons—started to shout and curse at the paintings, but the shouts, of course, were directed at the artist, the creator of the bulbous figural gamblers. One diptych shows a happy, toothy gambler behind a walker decorated with a deer antler, and reaching for an oxygen mask attached to the slot machine. . . One actual gambler on a walker threw rhubarb cobbler at a diptych. (Vizenor 2010, 74)

Through his character, the Native painter, Vizenor contradicts the oft-repeated mantra that casinos and the revenue they generate are laudable because they provide opportunities for employment, define sovereign status, improve housing on tribal land and provide scholarships for college students. He presents an unflattering portrait of casino patrons, primarily the non-Native gamblers who populate casinos. Vizenor points out that simple pleasures, once associated with slot machines, are no longer part of the casino experience. For example, credit cards and pieces of paper have replaced the tactile act of dropping loose quarters in a slot machine.

> Casino games are the primary sources of income, and native trickster stories and artistic irony chases the losers away. Yes, the losers, not the winners, those habitual gamers, senior citizens, some on walkers, who consent to the rigged slot machines as an obscure rendition of penance.
> Who were these gamers as young people? Maybe they were the old race haters who created the simulations of Indians. Yes, once the haters, now the

> losers at casinos. Earlier the losers could take some pleasure with a single coin in one-armed bandits. Now only credit cards and the lighted buttons on the machine are the necessary cues of penance. The casinos are evil, not moral, rather a moral crime, and surely casinos have become the sardonic termination of native sovereignty.
>
> Casinos are the reversal of sovereignty.
>
> The shamanic union of chance is forever lost at casinos. The nasty games, however, may never end the love, hate and simulations of the Indian. My grotesque portrayal of casino games is the ironic art of native liberty.
>
> The new frontier is a mundane casino game. (Vizenor 2010, 112)

Here, when Vizenor refers to the "new frontier," he might as well be asking whether Indian gaming really does represent the "new buffalo," a concept discussed at length in Chapter Three. One of the issues that Vizenor points to is the average age of most casino patrons. It is no coincidence that the next New Mexico Conference on Aging is being held at the Isleta Resort and Casino (fig. 49). Of course, all casinos generate income by renting out space for conferences. But since seniors compose a major demographic of the gambling world, this location, at face value, seems suspect. Vizenor is right. When touring the slot machine section of any casino, elderly gamblers seem glued to their chairs, sometimes with walkers and wheelchairs in tow. It is sad, but at Isleta Resort and Casino, several seniors have actually died while playing the slots. Surely, the sound of sirens and the sight of medical personnel rushing to roll a gurney out of the casino cannot be good for business. In Chapter One, I thoroughly discussed the role of the Republican Party in passing legislation to legalize Indian gaming in New Mexico. Republican Governor Susana Martinez, a sponsor of this conference, has now assumed the mantle of past Republican Governor, Gary Johnson. Historically, Pueblo people usually identify as

Democrats. However, when it comes to Indian gaming (as discussed in Chapter One), Republicans have been stronger advocates.

Figure 49. Flier for 36th Annual New Mexico Conference on Aging, 2014.

Suggestions for Further Work

There is no shortage of subjects that should be explored when examining the relationship between art and casinos. Perhaps, most importantly, from the perspective of this dissertation, art collected by Indian gaming facilities should be documented. If possible, questions should be raised about the collection process. In other words, why did certain casinos decide to purchase art by a particular artist? Unlike museums accredited by the American Association of Museums, most casinos operate without a registrar. Without access to detailed records, it is difficult to track the work of particular artists. Ideally, each casino should employ the services of a registrar. For example, who decides to commission a rug by a Navajo weaver or when cultural elements, such as the chandelier at Twin Arrows, should incorporate Navajo design elements, issues raised in Chapter Four. A natural outgrowth of this research could entail a detailed comparison of art collected by Casino Arizona and Buffalo Thunder Casino and Resort in Santa Fe. Out of all Indian gaming facilities located in the Southwest, these two have made the greatest strides in pushing boundaries between casinos and museums.

Architecture comprises another area that calls out for future research. Casinos are rarely designed by Native architects, or with substantial input from Native architects. What explains this puzzling reality? And, why do casino managers, while planning a building/complex, fail to solicit so little feedback from their communities? In many ways, casino planning is an opaque process. In contrast, other examples of Indigenous architecture, whether museums or heritage centers, do call upon Native architects and community members for input, especially in the

design and building phases. Surprisingly, this is not the case with casinos. For example, in the anthology *New Architecture on Indigenous Lands* not a single casino is highlighted (Malnar and Vodvarka 2013.) The omission of casinos from this book is puzzling because the largest and best-funded buildings on any indigenous lands must be casinos and their associated resorts, golf courses and spas.

With the exception of the piece by photographer Hulleah Tsinhnahjinnie, the medium of photography has been overlooked in this dissertation. However, more photographs by Native artists depicting casino subject matter should be assembled. One project could involve soliciting photographs and stories associated with casino sites from members of Pueblo and Navajo communities. Photographic evidence could provide a history of "before" shots that should be preserved—a way to map the past. Since the landscape of the Southwest has changed so dramatically, and over such a short period of time, these records would be invaluable. From an archival perspective, gathering this documentation and related oral histories should be a priority. Keith Basso's book *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language among the Western Apache* (Basso 1996) could serve as a starting point for this work. An example of this can be found in Chapter Three in which Bea Duran, a resident of Tesuque Pueblo, refers to the land formation known as Camel Rock, the casino's namesake. However, "Camel Rock" bears little resemblance to the name first coined by the Tewa, who had never seen a camel.

As an extension of casino design, pools and golf courses are often key components of the exterior landscape. However, because the Southwest will always be mired by environmental issues associated with drought, pools and golf courses

are problematic. A separate project, dedicated to gathering images of pools at golf courses at different casinos, could lead to vital discussion. And finally, in casino design, a definite trend has emerged. Both Native and non-Native sculptors are commissioned by Indian gaming facilities to create large statuary to decorate the front of a casino. While a major investment for any casino, a single piece of monumental sculpture can become an automatic logo, a signature for the entire casino. Perhaps the twelve-foot glass sculpture, at the Mashantucket Pequot's Foxwoods Resort Casino in Connecticut best personifies this concept. Titled *The Rainmaker* (fig. 50), this sculpture, which continuously changes color, depicts a Native man kneeling on one knee, pointing his bow and arrow to the sky. This sculpture is inspired by *The Sacred Rain Arrow*, a bronze by Chiricahua Apache artist Allan Houser. Of course, how this sculpture directly relates to Pequot identity is questionable. While Pequot men did wear breechcloths, *The Rainmaker's* clothing is minimal at best. Traditionally, a Pequot man would have worn an additional apron panel to cover the front and back of his breechcloth, elaborately decorated with beadwork or embroidery. According to art historian John J. Bodinger de Uriarte, "*The Rainmaker* serves as an extensively trafficked symbol for the casino. The statue is the reservation's best-known emblem and its most popular piece of public material culture. It appears on postcards, menus, mouse pads, coffee mugs and jackets" (Bodinger de Uriarte 2007, 68). This image of a generic Indian warrior appeals to a wide audience. Compiling images of sculptures that adorn casinos across the country could offer a means of analyzing how casinos choose to project their own notion of "Indianness" through art.

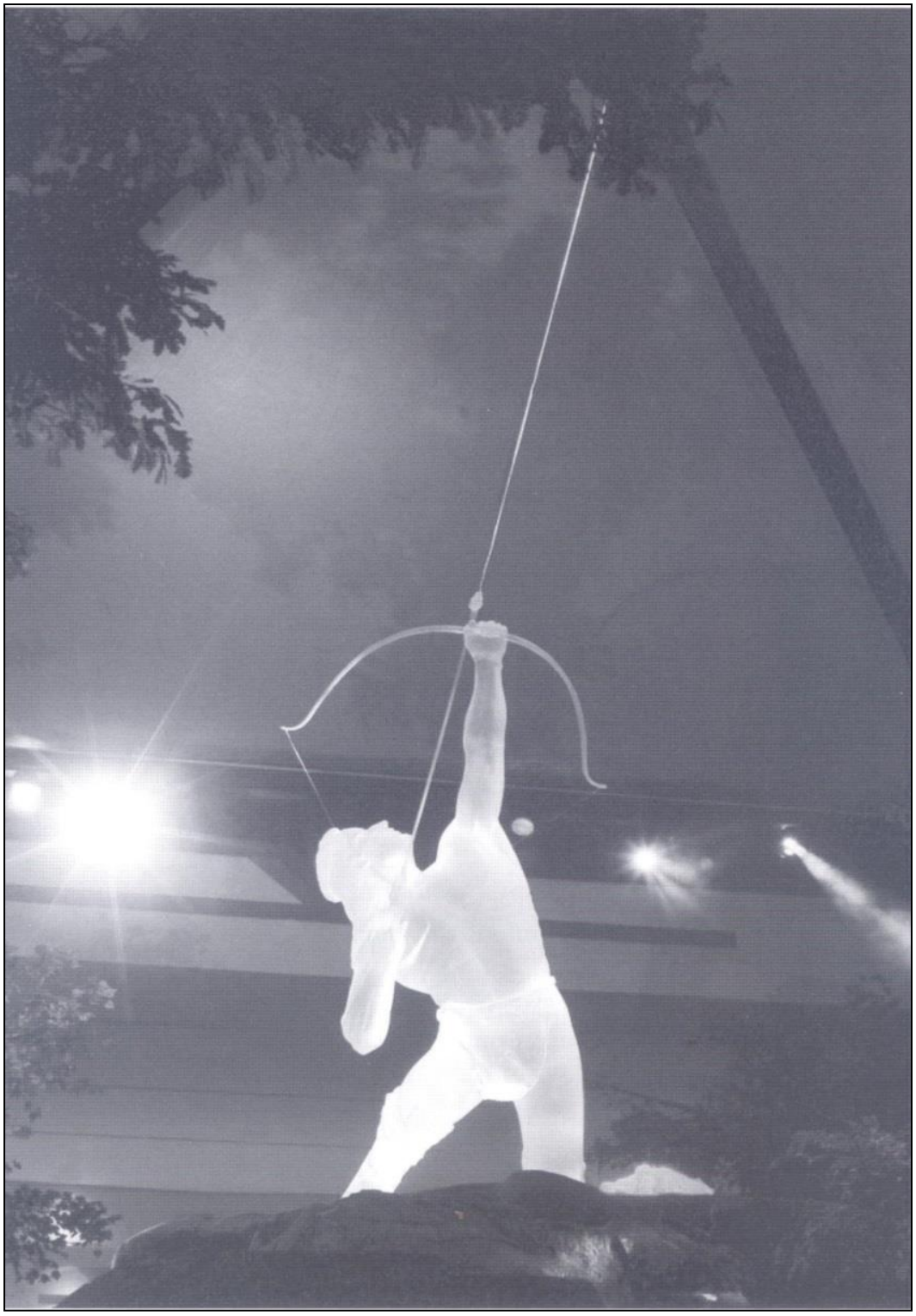

Figure 50. *The Rainmaker*. Based on *The Sacred Rain Arrow* by Allan Houser (Chiricahua Apache), Foxwood Casino. Photograph provided by the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Museum (Bodinger de Uriarte 2007, 66).

Closing Thoughts

Several years ago, I attended a wedding at the Buffalo Thunder Wedding Chapel in Santa Fe. Hosted by friends Andrew and Judy Harvier, from Santa Clara Pueblo, whose son was getting married, this special occasion illustrated how casinos can play multiple roles in Native communities. While this Mission-style church/wedding chapel rents to the public for $1,500, this was a "local" event, free from any commercial overtones. The church holds two hundred and fifty people, and was filled to capacity. Invited guests represented a veritable who's who in the world of Southwest Indian art. While casinos have become a prime venue for exhibiting Native art, they also play a role in community functions, ranging from weddings to graduation ceremonies. Even for non-gamblers, casinos represent a powerful draw as sites for social interactions. For example, senior centers at individual Pueblos sponsor weekly casino outings, where slot machines and a cafeteria-style lunch offer easy and "affordable" forms of entertainment. From a geographical standpoint, there are many instances in which casinos offer a convenient setting for round-the-clock dining. Whether publicized as an all-you-can-eat buffet or a five-star restaurant, casinos are now a meeting ground for members of nearby Native communities.

While many Pueblo and Navajo people were adamantly opposed to the legalization of Indian gaming, the cultural terrain has shifted. For example, sociologist Tessie Naranjo (Santa Clara Pueblo) still worries about the impact of Indian gaming. However, she now "tolerates" casinos because of the space they provide for conferences and personal gatherings—spaces she frequents on a regular basis (Naranjo, personal communication, 4/7/14). In closing, the *Dollar Earrings*

created by teenage artist Chris Gachupin (Jemez Pueblo), illustrate how gaming has become part and parcel of everyday life for many Pueblo people (fig. 51). Purchased for ten dollars at the Santo Domingo Indian Arts and Crafts Show in 2011, these taped and folded dollar bills function as good luck charms to be worn while gambling. Imitating the Japanese art form of origami, Gachupin fashioned a unique pair of earrings. Functioning more as kitsch than "high art," these earrings represent the intersection between Indian gaming and cultural expression.

Figure 51. Mathew "Chris" Gachupin (Jemez Pueblo). *Dollar Earrings*. From the author's collection, 2011.

To date, the body of literature devoted to the industry of Indian gaming has clearly been dominated by discussions of legal and socioeconomic issues. There are many reasons for this. First, it is relatively easy to measure the impact of casino life on tribal communities by compiling hard and fast data. The majority of these facts and figures can be accessed through public records of one sort or another. For example, since its inception in 1985, the National Indian Gaming Association (NIGA) has issued an annual report to document the economic impact of casinos on tribes throughout the United States. Statistics related to job creation and revenue growth are essential tools when projecting profits or expanding a business model. Although information such as this is valuable, questions raised in this dissertation are much less black and white. After all, analyzing the work of contemporary Native artists is a far more subjective practice. And the field of Native American art history is still gaining a foothold, informed more and more by Indigenous scholars. Establishing whether Indian casinos can or should assume multiple identities presents a distinct challenge. Yet to remain viable as tourist attractions, casinos—whether native or non-Native—must offer multiple options for entertainment. Today, several Indian gaming facilities can be classified as "museums." However, it may take a long time before the term "museum" can ever find its way into the official lexicon of Indian gaming.

Throughout this dissertation, I have emphasized the importance of stories, the majority of which are based on oral traditions. Whether manifested through the landscape or the antics of tricksters, gambling has and continues to play a role in the day-to-day life of many Native people. Outsiders often view casinos through a moralistic eye, defined by such terms as temptation or addiction. However, the role

of the “Gambler” can assume many forms and lessons associated with winning and losing will continue to inspire Native artists.

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