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Review of *Gambling and Survival in Native North America* By Paul Pasquaretta

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Gambling and Survival in Native North America. By Paul Pasquaretta. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2003. xviii + 202 pp. Notes, bibliography, index. \$40.00.

Indian gaming throughout the United States has become a forum in which much of America reveals and works out its perspectives on American Indians, historical struggle, cultural survival, gambling, reciprocity, and the matter of choice. California is in the throes of an advertising war over more, or possibly less, gambling in the state, even as new casinos are going up in New York, Florida, and many other states. The Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation runs Foxwoods in Connecticut, the Shakopee Mdewakanton (Dakota) Sioux Community runs Mystic Lake in Minnesota, and there are many other extremely successful Indian gaming enterprises, such as that of the Pechanga Band of Luiseño Indians in California, survivors of an intense and sometimes near-genocidal historical destruction. *Gambling and Survival in Native North America* addresses these core issues and others from an interdisciplinary perspective, fleshing out much of the controversy by grounding it in a historical discussion of cultural conflict and the management of socio-political identity.

The first chapters, concerning the Pequots and others in New England history, mix judicious literary analysis with some of the brutal events that too often reached levels of genocide. Notwithstanding their presumed three-hundred year disappearance, the Pequots' story is compelling because of their reappearance in the late twentieth century and their ultimately successful gambling enterprises. Pasquaretta also takes us through the writings and political adventures of William Apess, whose work and documented presence became key to Pequot claims over a hundred years later.

Based largely on Standing Bear's accounts, Pasquaratta offers an adept comparison of Native and white forms of gambling, focusing on the lack of drinking and negative behavior involving Dakota traditional gambling compared with the considerable debauchery

common to places like Paris. Pasquaretta makes contemporary comparisons between Indian gaming casinos, involving little drinking and the near absence of highly sexualized shows, and casinos in the cultural meccas of Las Vegas and Atlantic City, complete with prostitution and large-scale substance abuse.

Discussing Mourning Dove's novel *Cogewea*, Pasquaretta offers an incisive analysis of how allotment exposed Indian women to "white male speculators" through the transfer of land ownership. His treatment of Kathryn Gabriel's *Gambler Way* and a long list of authors, including Silko and Vizenor, stresses the "evil gambler" who devours others and their belongings. This becomes a metaphor for controlling excess and practicing a better life, often in conflict with mythical figures or at times with mundane dominators, as in Erdrich's *Bingo Palace*.

There is a danger of trivializing the "survival" of indigenous peoples through the great conflicts, wars, and social movements involved in the conquest of Native America, certainly the Great Plains, through the use of the metaphor of gambling. Both the Dakota and Lakota, along with a large majority of Native peoples, practiced gambling for social reasons as well as for metaphysical instruction. Gambling practices as cultural forms tend to get lost in the narrative of the colossal "land takings" by force followed by the outright attempt to alienate Native culture. Insofar as the metaphor holds, especially in an interdisciplinary approach that includes literature, history, and policy studies, we must remember that the resistance and survival of Native peoples represents an irony deeper than a rhetorical trope and a foundational connection to the land and history of this place we call America.

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