



TRIBAL GAMING, COMMUNITY WELL-BEING, AND THE NEED FOR RESPONSIBLE GAMING RESEARCH

Tribal gaming has become a cornerstone of economic development for many Native communities across the United States. Revenue generated through gaming supports essential services such as education, healthcare, housing, and infrastructure. For many Tribal nations, gaming is more than an industry. It is a pathway to sovereignty, stability, and long-term community strength.

Because gaming directly supports these critical systems, protecting community well-being is not optional. It is essential. When communities are healthy, gaming remains sustainable. When communities are struggling, the long-term benefits of gaming are at risk. Supporting that balance requires more than good intentions. It requires evidence-based research that helps communities understand risk, respond early, and make informed decisions.

As gaming continues to expand, including the rapid growth of sports betting and mobile platforms, the landscape is changing quickly. What was once limited to physical locations is now accessible at any time, from anywhere. Research supported by the International Center for Responsible Gaming (ICRG) shows that accessibility, frequency of play, and perceived control can significantly influence gambling behavior (ICRG, 2025).

These changes bring opportunity, but they also introduce new risks. Faster play, constant access, and the normalization of betting can increase the likelihood of problematic behavior, often before it is recognized (ICRG, 2025). For Tribal communities, where gaming revenues support essential services, these risks have broader implications. This is not only an individual issue. It is a community issue.

WHY TRIBAL-SPECIFIC RESEARCH MATTERS

Most existing gambling research focuses on the general population. It does not fully reflect the lived experiences, cultural values, or community structures of Tribal nations. This gap matters.

Without research that includes Indigenous perspectives, communities are left to make decisions without a complete understanding of how gambling behaviors develop within their own context. Prevention strategies may miss the mark. Resources may not reach the people who need them most.

Tribal communities are not all the same, and solutions cannot be one-size-fits-all. Research must reflect the diversity, sovereignty, and priorities of each nation.

THE ROLE OF ICRG IN SUPPORTING TRIBAL COMMUNITIES

The International Center for Responsible Gaming plays a critical role by funding independent, evidence-based research on gambling behavior and addiction. ICRG-supported studies have helped identify emerging risks, including those associated with sports betting, and have contributed to a deeper understanding of how problem gambling develops (ICRG, 2025).

Expanding this work to include Tribal communities is a necessary next step. It ensures that research is not only accurate, but also relevant. It creates opportunities to develop culturally informed strategies that align with community values and priorities.

This is not about limiting Tribal gaming. It is about strengthening it. When communities have access to the right data and tools, they are better equipped to protect their people and sustain the benefits that gaming provides.

SUPPORTING COMMUNITY-LED SOLUTIONS

The most effective solutions come from within the community. Tribal leadership, cultural knowledge, and local experience must guide the development of responsible gaming strategies.

This includes:

- Investing in culturally relevant prevention and education
- Expanding access to community-based support and treatment
- Ensuring Indigenous voices are included in research and policy development

Partnerships with organizations like ICRG can support these efforts by providing the research needed to guide action, while respecting Tribal sovereignty and leadership.

LOOKING AHEAD

Tribal gaming has created real and lasting benefits for Native communities. Protecting those gains requires continued attention to community well-being and a commitment to informed decision-making.

Research is not just a tool. It is a foundation. It helps communities anticipate challenges, respond effectively, and build strategies that support both economic growth and long-term health.

As the gaming landscape continues to evolve, investing in research that reflects Tribal experiences and priorities is not just important. It is necessary. To learn more about responsible gaming research, visit icrg.org.