



Rebuilding  
Communities  
Through Indian  
Self-Reliance

# Media Release

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## **Proceeds of Indian Gaming**

### **HELPING INDIAN NATIONS RECOVER FROM CENTURIES OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL NEGLECT**

With only 198 tribes having gaming compacts out of the 558 federally recognized tribes, most are still struggling to lift themselves out of a centuries-long cycle of poverty. It is a myth that Tribes who entered into gaming are "rolling in dough". Only the top 20 tribal gaming operations, because of their proximity to major population center, in the country make up 55.5% of the total portion of Indian gaming revenue. Indian Nations are utilizing the profits to build self-sufficiency and government infrastructure on Indian reservations.

Like State Governments use their taxes; the tribal governments use their gaming profits for the purposes of providing for the general welfare of their people. As detailed in IGRA, profits can only be used for law enforcement, education, economic development, tribal courts and infrastructure improvements. Tribes are using gaming profits to fund social service programs, scholarships, health care clinics, new roads, new sewer and water systems, adequate housing, chemical dependency treatment programs and dialysis clinics, among other things.

### **INDIAN NATIONS ARE AT THE BOTTOM OF ECONOMIC, SOCIAL LADDER**

Indians, the first Americans, comprise only approximately 1% of the entire population of the U.S. Indians are the smallest minority in the U.S., and the people indigenous to this land. Indians living on reservations are still at the bottom of virtually every economic category. Unemployment rates often reach ten times the national average on reservations, many of which are located on remote lands with little or no tax base. In fact, 70% of all Indian reservations are rural. The life expectancy of the American Indian is 47 years, contrasted with the American average of 78.

The 1990 U.S. Census revealed that 30.9 % of the country's Indians live in poverty. Their poverty rate is the highest of any ethnic group in America. The census defines poverty as an individual earning less than \$6,300 a year, or a family of four earning less than \$12, 674. The poverty rate for the entire United States population was much lower, 13.1 %.

The employment rate for all Indians living on reservations was 45 % in 1991, according to latest figures available from the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Some Tribes have unemployment rates as high as 80%. An unemployment rate of more than 6% in a community in Mainstream America is considered a recession; and a rate of 9% is a depression. But even this number does not tell the whole story. Of those Indians who had jobs, only 28% earned more than \$7,000 a year, according to the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Since the first immigrant set foot on our land, gaming is the only economic development that has worked for the Indian Nations.

### **GAMING HOLDS SOME HOPE FOR REDUCING INDIAN POVERTY, BUT IS NOT A PANACEA.**