

Policy, Economics, and Culture: The Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community and the
Casino Arizona

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As a tribe with a large casino in Arizona, the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community is heavily invested in gambling. Because of this, the tribe has had a history of legal and political relations with the State of Arizona, and has used their revenue to diversify their tribal assets and improve quality of life on their reservation, while also creating a casino with cultural representation, although this culture is not well-represented in the social media websites of the casino.

Background

The Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian community consists of two tribes, the Pima and the Maricopa. Pima legends say that the tribe originated in the Salt River valley. The Pima and Maricopa tribes have been allied for many years; the Maricopa moved to the Salt River valley and began living with the Pima in the early 1800's. Together, the two tribes protected each other against the Apache and Yuman tribes, and fought wars with them ("Pima Tribe, 2013). However, the Pima and Maricopa were generally on friendly terms with tribes in the Southwest ("Salt River Pima-Maricopa", 2013).

The Pima and Maricopa were generally agrarian cultures, growing corn, beans, squash, and other crops. They are also known for their basket making (woven from roots by the Pima and made from pottery by the Maricopa). A central religious image of the Pima and Maricopa (as well as other Southwestern tribes) was I'itoi, known as the "man in the maze". This image is of a man standing at the top of a circular maze, and is said to represent I'itoi, an underworld deity ("Man in the Maze", n.d.). It is also used as the emblem of the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community.

Life changed for the Natives of the Southwest when the U.S. government began expanding westward into their traditional lands. Many tribes faced decimation at the hands of settlers and soldiers; however, the Pima and Maricopa instead saw this as an opportunity to increase their protection from the Apache, while also striking against their traditional enemies. As a result of this, beginning in 1856, the Pima and Maricopa began working as scouts for the U.S. Cavalry in their wars against the Apache ("Indian Wars", n.d.). The Pima and Maricopa also set up economic alliances with American traders.

As a result of their friendly relations with the United States, the Pima and Maricopa were not forced off of their traditional lands, and were granted a reservation in the Salt River valley in 1879 by President Rutherford B. Hayes. This reservation consisted of 52,000 acres of land.

In the early 2000's, the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community opened Casino Arizona, a large casino offering slots, blackjack, poker, keno, and other table games ("Casino Arizona, 2013). They also opened Talking Stick Resort, a hotel, spa, entertainment destination, and spring training facility for Major League Baseball, that calls itself "A Cultural and Entertainment Destination" ("Talking Stick Resort, 2013). Located in Scottsdale, Arizona, just outside of Phoenix on the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Reservation, the casino is a major gambling destination for tourists traveling to Arizona.

The website of the architect who designed the Casino Arizona talks about how he met with community members in order to ensure that cultural motifs were well-incorporated into the casino design, providing a cultural richness to the casino, while also providing gambling and entertainment features .

Today, Casino Arizona is a successful gaming and entertainment destination; however, Indian gaming has not always been so successful or accepted.

Modern American Indian gaming has been contested since its beginning; it is marked by a series of court cases that set the stage for today's major gaming industry. In *Seminole v. Butterworth*, the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals decided in favor of the Seminole Tribe, ruling that high-stakes bingo could be conducted on Indian land as long as gambling was legal in the state where the reservation was located ("Seminole Tribe", 1980).

The next major case in the history of Indian gaming took place in 1986: *California v. Cabazon Band of Mission Indians*. In this case, the State of California wanted to apply state

gambling laws to the Cabazon Band of Mission Indians, and Riverside County wanted to apply city ordinances. Together, the state and the county laws would have shut down card games and made bingo legal for charitable purposes only. The tribes of the Cabazon Band of Mission Indians brought suit against the State of California, saying that their rights as a sovereign nation were being restricted. The U.S. Court of Appeals found in favor of the Mission Indians, ruling that state or county gambling regulations cannot be applied to Indian lands (“California”, 1986).

In 1988, the United States Congress passed the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act, an Act that aims to regulate gaming on Indian lands, while also granting tribes certain rights that are not affected by state gambling laws. It also established the National Indian Gaming Commission, whose goal is to “work within the framework created by the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA) for the regulation of gaming activities conducted by tribes on Indian lands to fully realize IGRA’s goals” (“National Indian Gaming Commission”, 2013). The IGRA allowed tribes to conduct Class I and II gaming without state regulation, but requires tribes to form compacts with the State that they are located in before they can conduct Class III gaming (Slot Machines, Roulette, Blackjack, etc.) (“Indian Gaming”, 1988).

With the passage of the IGRA, reservations across the United States began to petition states for gaming compacts. In Arizona, the state established the Department of Gaming, which seeks to regulate Indian gaming throughout the state. In 1995, the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community sued the State of Arizona, seeking to force negotiation of a tribal-state compact. This case was ruled in favor of the state, based on the court’s view that the state’s governor did not have sufficient authority to conduct negotiation of a Class III gaming compact (“Arizona Dep. Gaming Annual Report.”, 2012).

In 1998, the Arizona Supreme Court overturned the State Superior Court's ruling, and compact negotiations were begun with Governor Hull of Arizona. On August 26, 1998, Governor Hull and the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community signed a tribal-state gaming compact, allowing the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community to conduct Class III gaming on their land. This provided a major source of income to the SRPMIC, allowing them to improve quality living for Community members.

For many Native American tribes, sources of income are limited. When reservations were established, they were often put in areas that did not have resources, and were considered areas of unwanted land. One result of this is an average unemployment rate on Indian Reservations of 31.2%, nearly three times the national average ("Walking Shield"). Symptoms of this lack of income are seen in low percentages of houses with sewer, utilities, or telephones on some reservations. Another result of this low income is seen in the poor-quality healthcare available to many Natives living on reservations. Native Americans living on reservations are much more likely to die from alcoholism, tuberculosis, diabetes, suicide, and other health problems than people living off of reservations ("Walking Shield").

In order to combat these money-related problems, many tribes now operate casinos on their reservations. In Arizona, 16 tribes currently operate 23 casinos ("Arizona Department of Gaming"). Casino revenue for the American Southwest (Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico) was \$2.7 billion in 2012 ("National Indian Gaming Commission").

Since such huge quantities of money are being brought into reservations, the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act dictates where the money goes. Tribes with Class III gaming are required to have a revenue allocation plan in place that dictates where revenue is transferred to. Areas of required revenue allocation include tribal government, economic development, and

funding local government. After these are achieved, then per capita payments are made possible for individual members of the tribe (“National Indian Gaming Commission”).

In addition to the requirements of the IGRA, tribal-state compacts also determine where funds must go. The Arizona tribal-state compact requires that tribes contribute 1 to 8 percent of their gaming revenue to the state, from which the state divides up this funding and uses it to pay for instructional improvement in schools, trauma and emergency care, tourism, and wildlife conservation. The tribe also decides where some of this contributed money goes, and can distribute it to cities, towns, and counties of their choosing, for use in funding community service and public safety programs. Since 2003, tribes have contribute \$780 million to state interests (“Arizona Department of Gaming”).

As a tribe with a large casino in Arizona, the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community is heavily invested in gambling. Because of this, the tribe has had a history of legal and political relations with the State of Arizona, and has used their revenue to diversify their tribal assets and improve quality of life on their reservation, while also creating a casino with cultural representation, although this culture is not well-represented in the social media websites of the casino.

Findings

The policies and regulations of the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community mainly stem from the compact that they signed with the State of Arizona. Under the Arizona Department of Gaming, tribes that signed compacts with the state are subject to several regulations. For example, slot machines are required to have a theoretical percentage payout of 80 percent. It also sets a limit of 18,158 slot machines for the state. One rule that isn’t limiting is that any tribe with a compact can lease their slot machines to another tribe; this allows remote tribes to benefit from

more centrally-located casinos. The last major regulatory rule is that all Arizona tribes engaged in gaming must have a law enforcement plan in place to address criminal and other undesirable activity, and provide resources to protect public health and welfare (“Arizona Dep. Of Gaming”, 2013).

Other rules of compacts define where funds must go. For example, all Arizona tribes with casinos are required to contribute 1 to 8 percent of their gaming revenue to the state, and to cities, counties, and towns. These funds are then used to pay for improvements to schools, emergency care, tourism, conservation, and community services. Since 2003, tribal casinos have contributed over 780 million dollars to the State, counties, and cities (“Arizona Dep. Of Gaming”, 2013). This shows that, contrary to some people’s belief, tribal casinos do contribute to areas surrounding them, instead of draining local funds.

Like most other states that allow gambling, the website for Talking Stick Resort has a link at the bottom to a page about responsible gambling. The Arizona Department of Gaming also has a document titled “Social Gambling Tips to Remember” (“Arizona Dep. Gaming Annual Report”, 2012). These serve to combat gambling addiction, which can be a major problem for some people.

Membership in the SRPMIC can be achieved through several routes: people whose names appear on the original roster of the Community are members; people who are descendants of those who are on the roster and have a native blood quantum of at least $\frac{1}{4}$ are also members. Lastly, people of Indian blood who marry a member of the SRPMIC can also be eligible for tribal adoption, if they are approved by a $\frac{3}{4}$ vote of the Community council (“Constitution”, 1940).

Other policies followed by the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community are related to their business practices. When hiring employees for their casino, the SRPMIC seeks out those of Native American descent first, though not necessarily members of the SRPMIC. If there are no qualified Native American applicants, then the job is given to another qualified applicant, regardless of ethnicity (“Talking Stick Resort”, 2013). The National Indian Gaming Commission requires all Indian casinos to submit annual audits and background checks of key employees (Kamper, 2006).

The Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community’s Casino Arizona has generated substantial revenue for the tribe. The first expansion that the Community performed was to expand the Talking Stick Resort to include a spa, as well as provide lounges and other entertainment in addition to gambling. The tribe has used this money in several areas, ranging from economic development to increasing the sustainability of nature on the reservation. The most wide-ranging area of improvement is the establishment of additional businesses.

The SRPMIC has an economic development plan in place that seeks to improve facility qualities and establish additional enterprises, while also preserving traditional Community values(). Enterprises of the SRPMIC include a communications company, a landfill, a concrete production facility, and a golf course. These additional businesses help to provide additional income to the tribe, and diversify assets of the tribe. Another company owned by the Community is Salt River Development Company, a company that was established to help develop and manage commercial assets of the community. The company is staffed by experts in Indian law, real estate acquisition and development, and finances and accounting (“Salt River”).

Another area supported by the economic success of the Casino is the preservation of nature and wildlife. 19,000 acres of the 52,000 acre reservation are set aside as a nature preserve,

which is overseen by the Environmental Protection and Natural Resources division of the Community Development Department (“Salt River”).

Support of the Community’s members is accomplished through several ways. The Community Development Department seeks to support the interests of the Community through economic development, cultural and natural preservation, expansion of business relationships, and managing the Community’s zoning ordinances and design (“Salt River”).

When the required areas of improvement were met according to the IGRA, the SRPMIC voted to distribute funds equal to 35% of net gaming revenue for each quarter to eligible tribal members over the age of 18. These per capita payments are not restricted to certain uses, and are thus subject to federal income tax (“Salt River”).

The SRPMIC recently completed construction of Two Waters, a new governmental office for the Community that was constructed using funds from tribal revenue (“Salt River”).

The SRPMIC also contributes to surrounding communities through their tribal-state compact with the State of Arizona. According to this compact, the tribe contributes funds to surrounding communities’ public safety and community services. They also contribute to emergency care, tourism, wildlife conservation, and other areas of interest to the State (“Arizona Department of Gaming”).

Websites and social media are two major sources of information and advertisement for both the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community and the Casino Arizona. The Salt River website is a well-maintained site that provides cultural history of the Pima and Maricopa, while also talking about the economic development and nature preservation that is taking place on the reservation. The website also provides a brief summary of the Casino Arizona’s gambling and entertainment offerings, and a link to the casino’s website. The Salt River website also mentions

that the Casino is home to one of the largest contemporary Native American art collection in the Southwest. This art collection is free and is open to the public (“Art at Casino Arizona”, 2008). However, on the casino’s website there is no mention of this art collection. This could possibly be to prevent overcrowding of the art collection.

Casino Arizona’s website is combined with Talking Stick Resort’s, and together these websites provide information and advertisement for the casino games, dining, and entertainment that happens at the casino. There is very little mention of Native American culture on these sites though, aside from one page that is found at the bottom of the Talking Stick website, and provides similar information to that found on the Salt River website, in addition to a direct link to the Salt River site. Also, in the part of the website that talks about the new Major League Baseball spring training facility, the site makes a connection to culture by stating “Sports have long been a part of the Native American culture in Arizona, dating back to the original Hohokam Peoples who used ball courts as gathering places for games and ceremonies as far back as 750AD. Continuing in this tradition is Salt River Fields at Talking Stick” (“Talking Stick Resort”, 2013).

Other economic factors of the tribe’s casino include their marketing strategy, which can be found on the tribal and casino websites of the SRPMIC.

The social media sites of the tribe and casino were similar to main websites of the tribe and casino.. The Salt River Pima-Maricopa Facebook page had 1,091 likes at the time this paper was written, and was a very basic page that had zero posts and provided some basic information about the tribe, as well as linking to the Talking Stick spring training facility. The Casino’s Facebook page was also quite limited, also providing only basic information about the casino.

However, the spring training facility page was very active, with daily posts describing entertainment and baseball events taking place at the facility.

Twitter was the site where the largest difference between tribe and casino was observed. While the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian community had no Twitter page, the Casino Arizona' was very popular and well-maintained, with 2,526 followers and several tweets a day that talked about things such as "Karen won the Hyundai Accent tonight on #bingo!" or "#Happyhour starts now!" ("Casino Arizona Twitter", 2013).

The differences in social media websites between the tribe and the casino reflect the business goal of the tribe, which is to maximize profit by providing a Las Vegas-style casino experience on Arizona tribal land.

Conclusion

The policies of Casino Arizona are designed to promote responsible gambling while also maximizing profit and the hiring of Native American employees. These policies have led to Casino Arizona's success, and made diversification of assets possible. This success has given the tribe the funds necessary to improve quality of living for tribal members, while also preserving nature and creating more modern infrastructure for the tribe and community. The Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indians have a rich cultural heritage, and this is represented in their casino through Native American art and architecture. However, this level of cultural representation is not seen in the casino's websites, indicating a desire to mainly focus on gambling and entertainment instead of cultural features. Possible futures studies of the SRPMIC could focus on the interaction between cities/states and tribal governments, and compare the policies of the SRPMIC with the policies of tribes from other reasons. Other future studies could focus on the marketing efforts of tribal casinos, the desire of the tribe to educate outsiders about their culture,

or on the level of cultural incorporation found in the casino websites of different regions and different tribes, as well as the websites of indigenous peoples from around the world. Possible future studies could focus on the marketing efforts of tribal casinos, the desire of the tribe to educate outsiders about their culture, or on the level of cultural incorporation found in the casino websites of different regions and different tribes.

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