

The International Conference on Gambling and Risk Taking provides a critical forum for those who study, regulate, manage or in any other way participate in the global gambling industry. It is truly an intellectual “home base” for so many stakeholders, and is the most interdisciplinary event of its kind. Its longevity is a testament to its effectiveness as a social community and I, like many, have benefitted immeasurably from participating in and attending this incredible assembly regularly. In many ways, the International Conference provided a solid bedrock for me while my own career as a gambling researcher and educator took many turns. Regardless of my employer or my research topic at a given time, I was always made to feel that my work “fit in” at the International Conference since Bill Eadington and Judy Cornelius attracted a loyal and diverse group of top investigators in many fields at this important event.

When I finished my Ph.D. in cultural anthropology in 1998 with a study of the impacts of tribal government gaming, I still identified myself solely as an anthropologist. That same year, however, I was hired as a policy analyst and report writer for the National Gambling Impact Study Commission (NGISC) and had the pleasure of meeting a raft of academics and experts who had dedicated their careers to the study of gambling policy, gambling regulation and gambling’s impacts. Professor Bill Eadington was among this esteemed group who provided testimony and expertise through the National Research Council (NRC) or through testimony at NGISC hearings.

After the NGISC issued its final report in 1999, I was hired by the National Indian Gaming Association (NIGA) in Washington, DC to help shape the national research agenda for the tribal government gaming industry. My exposure to the research team at the NRC and my interaction with the subject matter experts in the field of gambling studies through the NGISC hearings exposed me to the ways that the impacts of tribal government gaming were as much political as they were anthropological in nature. I began to see how I was no longer “only” an anthropologist and found myself doing more applied research in a non-academic setting for NIGA. By then I had developed a relationship with Bill Eadington, who provided incredible personal support and guidance, and he suggested I submit a proposal for The International Conference on Gambling and Risk Taking, to be held in Las Vegas in 2000. It was at this conference that I first felt like my work was reaching an audience that was both invested in what I was doing and could help expand the methods for doing it. Bill had essentially assembled the world’s largest intellectual community dedicated to the broad topic of gambling studies and I was thrilled to be a part of it.

As my own work evolved and I moved from NIGA to (and through) several University positions, I found The International Conference to be an essential venue for identifying resources, both written and human. Regardless of the topic at hand, whether I was writing about “nation building” by tribal governments using casino revenues

*In many ways, the International Conference provided a solid bedrock for me while my own career as a gambling researcher and educator took many turns. Regardless of my employer or my research topic at a given time, I was always made to feel that my work “fit in” at the International Conference since Bill Eadington and Judy Cornelius attracted a loyal and diverse group of top investigators in many fields at this important event.*

or putting together a syllabus to teach tribal casino operations management, Bill's conference was *the place* to meet people who could relate to my ideas and provide guidance and resources to elevate my work. Critically, the participation by so many international scholars provided a larger global perspective for the work of tribal governments as part of the larger government gaming movement and, I believe, gave the tribes proper credit for their nation building activities. The format, perfected by Bill and Judy over the years, allows for significant networking among attendees and I have created long-term friendships and collaborations as a direct result of my many lunches and dinners at this event.

As the gambling industry continues to expand globally and as it becomes less marginalized as an academic subject, the International Conference will continue to play an important role as the site for maintaining an intellectual and social community dedicated to the policy, operations, regulation and study of gambling and risk taking. I look forward to my continued participation in this outstanding event and offer my highest praise and thanks to Bill and Judy and the organizers for their vision and hard work.

Katherine A. Spilde, Ph.D. MBA  
Associate Professor, School of Hospitality and Tourism Management  
Endowed Chair, Sycuan Institute on Tribal Gaming  
San Diego State University