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The International Conference on Gambling and Risk Taking was the first prominent academic event to feature presentations on problem gambling. Dr. Bill Eadington's decision to accept papers about "the downside" was seen as quite noteworthy at the time. But it was very much in line with his longtime interest in gambling addiction as a real and consequential externality of gaming. In fact, Bill has been one of the most persistent and effective advocates for responsible gaming in the field. He served on the National Council on Problem Gambling Board of Directors for 30 years and helped found the Nevada Council on Problem Gambling. But it was his work as the leading gambling economist, his reputation for objectivity and dispassionate analysis, and his deep understanding of and relationships with gaming industry that made him so quietly effective.

Over the years, government regulators and gaming companies have given great heed to his counsel on the need for measures to mitigate the social costs of gambling. Indeed, for many in the gaming industry their first exposure to responsible gaming may have through Bill's conferences and courses. Bill, and Judy Cornelius, a significant contributor to the success of the conference in her own right, nurtured and introduced many problem gambling researchers to the broader gambling studies field – and vice versa, improving both in the process. The conference began and remains as THE place the gambling field comes together. No other event brings such a broad array of stakeholders. The atmosphere is egalitarian and convivial, a tone set by Bill. In spite of, or now perhaps because of the global reach of gaming, the International Conference serves as a reunion for those of us who have been working in this field. Every three years we approach it with a sense of anticipation. We appreciate the opportunity to come together to see old friends and to make new ones; to hear the latest research and developments. But most importantly we come to learn from and honor the unquestioned Dean of the gambling studies field. No one has done more to legitimize the study of gambling, and of problem gambling.

Keith Whyte
Executive Director
National Council on Problem Gambling

In 1993, I collaborated on my first gambling research project with Drs. Garry Smith from the University of Alberta and Rachel Volberg from Gemini Research in the United States. This was a study of the prevalence of gambling and problem gambling in the Province of Alberta, and was only the third gambling prevalence study to be undertaken in Canada. At the time, the worldwide community of gambling researchers was very small, and this was especially the case in Canada.

The 9th International Conference on Gambling and Risk Taking was taking place in May 1994, so Dr. Smith and I submitted a proposal to present some qualitative findings about problem gamblers gleaned from our Alberta study. Fortunately, the conference organizers accepted our paper, which gave me the opportunity to meet the “who’s who” in the international gambling research field at the time – Henry Lesieur, Dewey Jacobs, Howard Shaffer, Ken Winters, Randy Stinchfield, Mark Griffiths, Michael Walker, Mark Dickerson and other eminent researchers. Ironically, I even met two important fellow Canadian gambling researchers for the first time in Las Vegas – Jeff Derevensky and his stellar graduate student Rina Gupta. Looking back, I am very gratified that many of these initial introductions have led to life-long friendships and numerous collaborative research projects.

At this conference, I also met conference organizers Dr. Bill Eadington and Judy Cornelius for the first time. Of course, I recognized Dr. Eadington’s name from the literature; however, I was amazed he established the 1st National Conference on Gambling and Risk Taking way back in 1974. If the gambling universe was in its infancy when I joined in 1994, then Bill Eadington was present during the “big bang” that created the field.

As well as providing a forum for me to meet gambling research luminaries from around the world, the 9th International Conference was unique and valuable for another reason. The scope of Conference topics was impressively broad, extending far beyond my relatively narrow interest in problem gambling prevalence. Gambling economic and policy issues; gambling and the law; the economics of gambling regulations; understanding betting markets; gambling legislation; casino design; casino management issues; cultural and literary perspectives on gambling; and other such topics appealed to a rich mix of conference attendees that included economists, psychologists, gaming industry managers, anthropologists, sociologists, public health professionals, treatment specialists, and problem gamblers themselves. The Conference brought together an eclectic group of people who were clearly interested in many facets of gambling. The Conference showed me that, although in its infancy, the gambling studies field had a much more broadly developed knowledge base than I imagined.

To this day, I consider the triennial International Gambling Conference on Gambling and Risk-Taking to be the most important forum for sharing ideas and initiatives in the gambling studies field. No other conference in my experience brings together such a diverse range of people and topics in our field. The opportunities I have had to meet and work with colleagues from around the world may be traced back to my participation in

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the 1994 Conference, for which I will be eternally grateful.

To Bill Eadington – you are a true pioneer in the gambling studies field and your creation of the International Conferences and, later, the Institute for the Study of Gambling and Commercial Gaming in Reno will continue to serve our gambling studies community for years to come. To Judy Cornelius and the staff – the selection of topics and organizational diligence you have applied to making the International Conferences the very best in the world has truly helped build the knowledge base in our field. The gambling studies community will be forever in your debt.

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