INDIGENOUS POLITICS

CONVERSATIONS WITH ACTIVISTS, SCHOLARS, AND TRIBAL LEADERS

J. KĒHAULANI KAUANUI, EDITOR

FOREWORD BY ROBERT WARRIOR

JESSICA CATTELINO ON INDIAN GAMING, RENEWED SELF-GOVERNANCE, AND ECONOMIC STRENGTH

Jessica Cattelino offered an interview about her new book, *High Stakes: Florida Seminole Gaming and Sovereignty* (2008), a stellar work that documents how economic strength through casino development also enabled renewed political self-governance for the tribe that has transformed decades of U.S. federal control. As her research shows, this dramatic shift from poverty to relative economic security has created substantial benefits for tribal citizens, including employment, universal health insurance, and social services. At the same time, this growth has brought new dilemmas to reservation communities and prompted outside accusations that Seminoles are sacrificing their culture by embracing capitalism. Cattelino's book challenges those charges, showing how Seminoles use gaming revenue to enact their sovereignty, in part, through relations of interdependency with others. Cattelino earned her PhD at New York University in 2004. She is an associate professor of anthropology at the University of California Los Angeles. She has been an assistant professor at the University of Chicago; a member in the School of Social Science at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, New Jersey; and a Weatherhead Fellow at the School of American Research, now the School for Advanced Research, in Santa Fe, New Mexico. It was there in 2003 that we first met, while we were both in-residence fellows. Her current research project explores citizenship and territoriality in the Florida Everglades, with a focus on the Seminole Big Cyprus Reservation and the nearby agricultural town of Clewiston.

This interview took place on October 13, 2009.

J. Kēhaulani Kauanui: I wanted to ask if you would start by telling us a bit about your personal background and how you came to this project.

Jessica Cattelino: Well, it was a long way from growing up as a white farm kid in northern Wisconsin to doing research in South Florida on Seminole gaming. No doubt part of this was because, when I was growing up, treaty rights in the

form of hunting and fishing were big issues in Wisconsin. But, more generally, I came to anthropology as an anthropologist of the United States, with the conviction that we have a lot to learn about the ways that economy, culture, and small-p politics come together in everyday life. And when I was in graduate school in the 1990s, tribal gaming was hitting the news, especially in the Northeast, with Mashantucket Pequots and Mohegans in Connecticut opening lucrative casinos near big media markets like New York and Boston.

I thought that the debates about casinos lacked a deep understanding of what gaming looked like in practice in reservation life and how it raised big questions that would be of concern to a broad public, and there was no better place to look into this than in Seminole Country in South Florida.

JKK: Would you tell us some of the brief history of Seminole gaming and the landmark court case that opened up gaming across Indian Country?

JC: Absolutely. Seminoles were the first tribe to start Indian gaming back in 1979, when they opened a high-stakes bingo hall, really a modest operation, on their urban Hollywood Reservation. Seminoles have six reservations that are scattered across the swamps and the suburbs of South Florida, and at the time they were facing endemic poverty on those reservations. The important thing to note is that gaming, when Seminoles started it, was not a federal grant or a federal program that somehow allowed them to start gaming. Rather, they were part of a larger trend in Indian Country of looking around and seeing how tribes could engage in self-determination, could undertake economic and political activities to look out for their own people on their own terms. And Seminoles decided that gaming was part of a larger set of activities that they could run and operate, that they could run on their own reservations. And so they just did it, and didn't ask anybody: didn't ask the federal government, didn't ask the state, decided this was within their sphere of authority.

The state of Florida balked at this and said, you know, that this was not legal. And this led to a big case: *Seminole Tribe of Florida v. Butterworth,* which went up into the federal courts. And eventually the courts ruled in favor of the tribe, saying that states could not regulate on-reservation economic activities as long as those activities were not illegal in the larger state. Bingo wasn't illegal—churches were running bingo games—and so the Seminole tribe could proceed to set up its own jackpots, its hours of operation, and other regulations and run its bingo hall. This then opened the floodgates for other tribes to start exploring gaming as a revenue generator, although it wasn't until 1987 that the Supreme Court weighed in and made tribes more confident across the country that they could do this.

This wasn't the end of the story, though. The courts ruled in favor of the tribe, but after that later Supreme Court case the states grew anxious about regulating tribal gaming, and that led to the big federal law that regulates gaming,

the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act, in 1988. What's important to remember here is that the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act wasn't what started gaming, wasn't what allowed gaming on reservations. Gaming is based in the tribe's authority to run their own reservation's economic activities, and the law came later to regulate those activities.

JKK: And just to clarify, these sort of historical moments and these periods: you've got the first case going up in 1979, the Supreme Court ruling in 1987, and then it's in 1988 that you get the federal law, right?

JC: Exactly.

JKK: And that was under the Reagan administration.

JC: Right. Well, and it's a fairly quick turnaround to respond to the Supreme Court case, where the states really wanted Congress to give them some direction on what their role was in Indian gaming.

JKK: Could you give more background, perhaps "Indian Gaming Regulatory Act 101," just so that people get the nuts and bolts of what that federal law did? As you say, it did not authorize gaming—it regulates gaming.

JC: Exactly. I should start by saying that it's a complicated law, and I'm not a legal scholar, so I would encourage those who are especially interested to turn to a legal analysis, but I can give you a rough outline.

The Indian Gaming Regulatory Act divided games into a set of classes, and it said how different kinds of games could be regulated on Indian reservations. The first class was traditional games, and Indian tribes can do those however they want; there's no outside regulation there. The second class, Class II gaming, are games like bingo, some forms of poker, and lottery; if they're legal in the surrounding state, so in this case in Florida, the Seminole tribe—or any tribe—can operate those games on their reservation, can regulate them, can set up their own businesses without the states being involved. And that's in fact how Seminoles made their gaming empire; they did it on Class II games like bingo and lottery, including video bingo and video lottery.

Now, there's a third class, and this is where gaming often makes the news. It's called Class III games, and this was the grand compromise of the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act. These are the most lucrative games, like slot machines and blackjack, games of chance. And IGRA, the law, said that although generally tribes as nations have relationships with the federal government, in order to operate these most lucrative games the tribes have to negotiate a good-faith agreement with the state they're in. These agreements are usually called compacts, and you see them in the news all the time, negotiating the terms of compacts. Each side has to get something in these compacts. And this was a big compromise, because the tribes had to agree to negotiate with states, and the

states had to negotiate in good faith and give the tribes something in order to operate those big games.

In Florida right now, this is the hot issue. After decades, the Seminole tribe is closer than ever to a compact with the state of Florida, and they're negotiating that right now. Now, I've been talking about law here, but it's probably helpful to give a sense just of what's happened with Indian gaming since 1979. Gaming has really reshaped the economies on a lot of Native American reservations. It's also reshaped non-Indian perceptions of who Indigenous people are. In 2008, according to federal figures, gaming revenues from tribal gaming were almost $27 billion. This was a massive expansion in a very short period of time. It's important to note that not all tribes have casinos—in fact, the minority of them do—and that how much those casinos make varies dramatically, largely dependent on your geography. If you're near a big urban center or a tourist destination or a major highway, you're more likely to make money on your casinos. If your reservation is in the middle of a rural area, it might be a little tent with a few slot machines inside, and nothing much more. So it ranges dramatically depending on a lot of factors.

JKK: Absolutely, and for those who might be familiar with the Connecticut situation that you referenced earlier with the Mashantucket Pequots and the Mohegans, the compact agreements for those two tribal nations with the state of Connecticut was that the state would get a quarter cut from the Class III gaming.

JC: Indeed, and one of the interesting developments of the expansion of tribal gaming is that states like Connecticut, which are facing huge budget deficits and are really trying to get themselves out of difficult budgetary situations, are increasingly turning to tribal governments for revenues from gaming as a way to fill the gaps in their own budgets. And so tribes are becoming more and more important to state economies across the nation.

JKK: Yes, and that definitely leads to something I want to ask you about later, what you're calling casino-era sovereignty, in terms of how tribal gaming really implicates tribal governance. Now, for those who might still be unfamiliar, I want to just lay out this groundwork with you first about how tribal gaming is distinct from commercial gaming. How are the Seminole tribe's gaming facilities different than Donald Trump's?

JC: This is vital to understanding what tribal gaming is. And too often those two, government gaming and commercial gaming, get conflated in people's understandings of what's at stake with tribal casinos.

Tribal gaming, by definition and by law, is run by a government. So, tribal gaming is more like a state lottery, say, than it is like Donald Trump's operation. Individual tribal citizens—an individual Seminole, for example—can't open up a casino. That would be illegal; only tribal governments can do this. So, com-

mercial gaming is for profit, but tribal government gaming is for governments to raise revenues. And here it's important to remember that most tribes don't have the capacity to issue taxes, to gain money, say, property taxes, because their lands are federal lands. Tribal nations have long struggled with the question of how to raise revenues that are necessary to run their government operations, something that every government struggles with. You know, nationally in the United States we're debating right now over taxation and redistribution issues. So, in the case of the Seminole Tribe of Florida, gaming revenues from their seven casinos go directly to the democratically elected tribal council, the government. And that group of elected officials makes decisions, makes policies, over how that money will be distributed. Will it be used to invest in other economic activities, to give funds to each individual Seminole, to run cultural programs or social services? People may disagree or agree with those policies, but it's important to remember that those are government policies, not individual decisions. It's not like, you know, a casino owner of a commercial casino being able to decide how to use the money however he pleases.

And, although it might seem strange to run your government on gambling, it might be interesting to note that gambling long has been a governmental activity on this continent. The U.S. colonies raised revenues through lotteries, to a large extent actually. And today, states that are grappling with how to fill their budgetary holes often turn to lotteries as a way to do that. So American Indian tribal gaming is part of a larger, nationwide expansion of governmental gaming that began back in the 1960s when New Hampshire legalized its state lottery. The larger point that I'm trying to make here is that, not only for Indian tribes but also more generally, gaming can be part of a government economy, a national economy, and a way to raise revenues for governments.

JKK: Yes, and I'm interested, too, in why you think this point gets confused with non-Native individuals, and I think you've mentioned earlier that linkage between casino rights and tribal sovereignty is the key to looking at it. But I also remember from your book that you note that tribes that have gaming are often characterized in the media and in the citizenry at large as lawless, and yet the gaming industry seems so incredibly and intensively regulated. What do you think about these perceptions that flood the mainstream?

JC: Well, in the United States there's a fundamental question of how all of our governments are organized that needs to be brought to the center of any discussion of gaming. That is that gaming, again, is run by tribal governments, and that American Indian tribal nations are governments. I mean, that's the first and most basic fact that people must consider when they think about gaming.

You know, we're used to crossing state borders and seeing that there are different laws on either side. Where do you buy your fireworks on the Fourth

of July? Where do you buy alcohol with different taxes, or cheaper gasoline? Where do companies relocate because they can get tax breaks from certain states? We're used to the idea that different polities, different jurisdictions, have the authority to make different laws that will have effects on how they do business. Tribes are no different in that regard. They're a complicated part of our multifaceted governmental system in the United States. It's not that laws don't apply on Indian reservations. Rather, it's that a complicated mix of federal, sometimes state, and always tribal laws apply. This is true not only for gaming but also for areas like tribal water quality, zoning, and in myriad areas of laws. Indian gaming is quite regulated under the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act.

There was a federal agency set up to regulate tribal gaming, and it requires all tribes to issue ordinances, tribal gaming ordinances. There are layers and layers and layers of regulations here. It's complicated, and everyone gets frustrated by the complexity of understanding what laws apply on Indian reservations, but this is often a problem not of lawlessness but rather of excess law, of too many different kinds of law all coming together in a confusing and jumbled way.

JKK: I think it's important for both readers and listeners to note that while you do establish the legal facts and the historical facts, you actually do not take a position one way or another on the questions and controversies of Indian gaming in your book, right?

JC: Yes, that's generally true. I think, you know, there is an important place for policy analysis. People need to be talking about what's good and what's bad about Indian gaming, but I think that can blind us to other issues that are really important. In part, I respect the fact that tribes across the country have taken very different approaches to gaming. Some tribal nations choose not to pursue it at all; they see it as anathema to their cultural values. Others do. It's a mistake to extrapolate from just one case. I'm not trying to dodge the real questions; rather, I'm suggesting that focusing on whether gaming is positive or negative sometime leads us to ignore too many of the real questions that gaming raises.

JKK: And that leads me to really get to the method you undertook in this study. You tell this story of Seminole gaming through an ethnographic lens, that is, through your fieldwork in southern Florida with the tribe. You had tribal permission to conduct this research, right?

JC: Yes, I did.

JKK: Could you talk about what this approach entails, for those unfamiliar with the field of anthropology, and how it differs from, say, a statistical focus or simply a focus on law and policy as you've sort of already broached?

JC: Ethnographic research focuses on depth of understanding in a single

community. It means, in my case, relocating to South Florida for a year and then for countless trips back and forth since then, trying to take a lot of time to understand what gaming means in everyday life. Most importantly, ethnography, this kind of intensive fieldwork, not only helps to get at answers but also helps you develop questions that you might not have anticipated at first. It took me months to develop all my questions, to keep my ear to the ground, to learn what questions are relevant here that I might not have thought of in a library or when reading other books. What are the questions that are really important to hear?

Now, I'm an outsider to Seminole tribe. I'm not Seminole, I'm not Native. And so I'm not claiming to tell this story from any Seminole point of view, but rather taking a closer look as is appropriate from an outside perspective. Gaming is not only understood by looking at economic indicators. Rather, gaming has both allowed and forced Seminoles to examine who they are, who they've been, who they want to be. And those are kinds of questions that are hard to get at through statistics or through policy analysis, and I think you can only get at them through ethnographic research.

JKK: Well, it is so beautifully written. You have such an incredible ethnographic eye, and as you've said, you try and get as close as you can, as close a look as is possible that is appropriate. This is a very compelling book with a lot of rich detail in terms of trying to sketch for the outside reader what is going on inside the tribal community, and, as you put it earlier, how they are grappling with who they are and who they want to be, and what they might become in light of this economic upsurge.

JC: And one of the funny things about ethnography is that it leads you in unexpected directions. So, for example, I thought I'd spend a lot of time in casinos, but it turned out I really didn't, because it wasn't where Seminoles were spending their time mostly, and it wasn't the most important place to understand. It was more important to go to birthday parties, or tribal council meetings, or school tours to understand what casinos meant. I didn't expect to be writing about things like housing, but people kept on bringing it up, and I took that cue, and said there's something important here that I need to follow up. And that's the kind of intuition that ethnography allows.

JKK: Well, could you give our readers a brief overview of the book and why you've organized it into the two sections, the first being economy and the second sovereignty?

JC: The goal of the book is to tell the story of Seminoles' complex efforts to maintain their political and also their culturally distinct values and ways of life under dramatically new economic conditions. I am trying to explore major issues raised by gaming that are of widespread importance to a broad readership.

As I mentioned before, Seminoles, through gaming, have been able but also have been forced to ask big questions. Things like, what kind of government is a good government? What's the balance between investing in collective activities and providing resources to individuals to spend however they want? What's the relationship between culture and money? How do you raise children under new economic conditions? These are questions that are being asked in our health-care debates, in debates over taxation, in households across the country.

Gaming has really brought those into relief, in ways that I explore. I do that in a range of chapters that cover everything from how culture and economy have been tied together in Seminole activities like alligator wrestling or wage labor; on how culture in the casino era has blossomed but also faced challenges like bureaucratization; on new forms of consumptions, such as what Seminoles are buying with the money; on economic diversification, such as how they are spending the money to pursue other kinds of economic activities, from agriculture to commercial real estate investment. And I look at sovereignty issues both by studying how Seminoles seek their control over their self-governance and also by seeing how Seminoles interact with other governments as they stake out their sovereign territory.

The book's main arguments are that, on the one hand, about money and economy, there's a widespread expectation in American popular culture and law that money interferes with culture. I don't think that's necessarily so, and I show how it's not. And then, secondly, that sovereignty is the most meaningful and powerful explanation for gaming and its effects, but sovereignty is complicated, and I explore the ways it is. Both of these—both economy and sovereignty—point to the significance of gaming, not just for law or money but for the ways that, in everyday life, politics and economic action are deeply intertwined, and that's what I hope to shed some light on with this book.

JKK: I think you certainly have. Now, I want to dwell on that question around culture in terms of how you really looked at how the Seminole people grapple with the question of cultural integrity. In your book you explain how many of the tribal members explicitly explained to you that casinos are their business, not their culture, and yet, as you've just said, there's this assumption by non-Indians that casinos are causing Indians to lose their culture. Could you say more about that sort of equation that your book really undoes? You really challenge that assumption, offering evidence that is very persuasive. And I wonder if you would speak to that, and also how that stereotype of the "rich Indian" might be playing into this.

JC: Absolutely. Well, back in the seventies, when Seminoles started casinos, there was widespread surprise on the part of outside observers, whether government officials or local media or academics, that it would be Seminoles who were considered to be so traditional, so tough—they're really proud of

being un-conquered because they never signed a peace treaty with the United States—why would these Seminoles, so traditional, start gaming and embrace casino capitalism, which seemingly stood for all that was American?

Part of the explanation in the book is that it's precisely those values of independence, of political toughness, of cultural integrity, that spurred Seminoles to pursue gaming as a way to make money to look out for themselves. There is a widespread assumption that, well, I should say that one of the most common questions I get when I tell people that I work on tribal nation gaming is whether casinos lead Indians to cultural loss. And this question is based, in part, on an assumption about money and what it is and does in the world. And gaming, I think, raises big issues about the nature of money. Money is very often seen as corroding culture, as abstraction, as reducing the individual and collective differences and distinctions that make people who they are. There's a long-standing association in the United States of Indigenous peoples with poverty, and more specifically with the inability to use money. So money kind of stands for modern life, for all that's good and bad in modern life. That powerful image, then, makes it seem almost like an oxymoron or a contradiction in American life, that you can be wealthy and Indigenous, pursue money and be Indigenous at the same time.

Now, this is, I think, an impoverished, wrong view of both the diversity of Indigenous people's economic lives and also of what money is more generally. Seminoles use money in a variety of ways. They see money as necessary to operating cultural programs, to a kind of cultural renaissance that they're undertaking. And, to understand why that's so, we need to look a little bit into history. Seminoles will often say that they were self-sufficient and relatively wealthy until they became poor with the expansion of colonialism, with the population boom that came to South Florida and stripped them of their lands, with the economic space falling out from underneath them when settlers took over South Florida. A lot of Seminoles will associate poverty with colonialism, and will associate poverty with cultural loss, because when you don't have any money you're working three jobs, you have almost no control over your governmental activities. It's hard to sustain a cultural way of life that you value. So, this led me to ask the question, why do we so often associate poverty with culture and wealth with a lack of culture, or cultural loss, when in fact for many Seminoles—not all, there's disagreement on this for sure—but for many Seminoles, they would more associate poverty with cultural loss and regaining resources and control over resources with a cultural renaissance?

JKK: Thank you for laying that out, and telling us what you found in your study. I want to just go back and qualify something I said around the stereotype of the "rich Indian." In New England the way that stereotype operates is a way for non-Native people to assert that Indians aren't really Indians. So it actually gets used to discount a Native person's claim to being Indigenous, precisely because

there's this dominant assumption that you cannot have your culture intact and still drive a really nice car that you got through casino income, right?

JC: That is an old and powerful assumption, and it's not only something that people, individuals, might think, but it's also been an assumption built into law and policy. And just one quick example of that: back in the 1950s, there was a policy, a federal policy, that's often called "termination," whereby the United States government sought to make Indian tribes no longer governmental entities, to dissolve them as tribal nations. And one of the criteria the federal government used to decide which tribes to dissolve was their economic capacity; if you had more resources you were more likely to formally and legally no longer be allowed to be called an Indian tribal nation. And that's a rather obscure example, but it's one that indicates a bright thread running through the last couple hundred years, which is that when Indians got wealth, their status as Indians was often called into question. And gaming is a new chapter in that story.

JKK: Yes. I want to come back to that question of cultural renaissance in a moment, but first I want to ask you something else. I notice that you refused, in the book, to divulge the amount of tribal members' per capita payments, and I'm wondering if you could explain why. And also some of the issues that arise when non-Indians expose those figures in hostile ways, which sort of also leads to another kind of question of how the tribe administers the funds. You talked earlier about the way the economic funding from the gaming institutions goes directly to the tribal council, so maybe you could sort of take us there in terms of what is the tribe doing with it.

JC: Well, the Seminole tribe has chosen to use a large portion of its casino revenues for governmental activities, especially for social services like housing, education, health care, and welfare more generally. It also has devoted casino monies to cultural programs, such as a wonderful museum that your listeners can go see on the Big Cypress Reservation, outside of Fort Lauderdale—language programs, cultural education, and the like. It also has invested in economic diversification, trying to go beyond gaming into agriculture, into just a wide range of activities, such as buying Hard Rock International, Hard Rock Cafes in forty-five countries around the world.

So, there have been a wide range of ways to spend the money. One of them, and the one that gets the most attention in local media, is the use of casino revenues to distribute money in per capita payments to each tribal citizen on a regular basis. This has been a controversial issue, within Indian communities and more broadly. I should start by saying that different tribes choose different ways of distributing casino money. Some don't distribute any of it in per capita payments but put it all into collective programs; others focus on individual payments. That's a decision that is made locally.

Outsiders often want to know how much Seminoles make in per capita payments. I've taken a cue from Seminoles. They don't publish the number; they don't make it public. Seminoles often take great offense when asked by strangers how much they make. It's an area of great resentment. We don't often ask each other how much money we make and exactly how we make it as individuals. So, instead, I want to ask other questions. Why do we want to know? Why do outsiders want to know that? What is it that we seek? Why not ask, instead, how much is spent on social services? On crime prevention? This raises big questions about what's a legitimate way to make a living, what's a legitimate way to distribute revenues by governments. And per capita payments have been a hot issue all around the country because of this.

JKK: Yes, indeed. Now, going back to your point about economic diversification, you suggest in your book that tribal economic power both undergirds and threatens tribal sovereignty. Could you explain the ways that economic diversification can pose a threat, and how the tribe is navigating those currents in this time?

JC: Well, you know, the economic integration is both an opportunity and a threat. You can't make money off of casinos without being economically entangled with larger communities. So Seminoles have become more reliant on a non-Seminole public as consumers in their casinos, as legislators. If you're going to, say, buy Hard Rock International, like Seminoles did, you're going to have to waive some of your sovereign rights to enter into contracts that your investors will approve of. And in order to do business overseas, for example. So, gaming has brought tribes into the realm of big business, Wall Street investing, international finance—not all tribes, but the ones with the most lucrative games. And this has led to tough discussions over how much do you keep your economy on your reservation, under your own regulations, and how much do you venture into broader economic waters and navigate all of the compromises to your sovereignty that that will require.

JKK: Now, you've just touched on the going global. Bringing it closer to home, you mentioned housing and listening carefully to the people that you met in the field site, people of the tribe, and you said that they kept talking about housing, so you followed your intellectual intuition and thought you better take a look at that. What is going on with housing in terms of what the tribe decided to do with some of those funds? What has helped bolster that cultural revitalization? You also just mentioned how difficult it can be when people are working multiple part-time jobs to really keep up, and it seems from your book that housing has been a way to really ground and stabilize the community in traditional and new ways.

JC: Well, some of the ways that casinos have changed life are more obvious. Individuals have more options how to live their lives because they have higher

incomes—you see shiny new buildings. Seminoles now can work for the tribe in a range of jobs that was never available before. They can stay on the reservation to work; they can go to endless numbers of tribal activities. Everybody has dresser drawers filled with commemorative T-shirts from, you know, the Miss Seminole Princess Pageant, or the school awards, or the sporting tournaments on reservations. Those are easier to see, as is Seminoles' prominence in law, in politics at a local, state, and national level. So, those I had a better handle on.

But people, like you said, kept on talking about housing, or medicine, and this led me to look at the ways in which gaming has changed everyday social services on the reservations. Now, if you go on a Seminole reservation, the houses are changing. They're going from small, little Housing and Urban Development federal, little concrete block-structure houses, to houses that more closely resemble middle-class neighborhoods throughout South Florida. That itself is, of course, a consequence of gaming; the tribe has gone from having most of its housing funded by the federal government to having most of it funded by tribal money from casinos. But it's not just that there's more or nicer housing; it's what housing means to people that I want to focus on.

Housing was a key site of colonialism, you could say, on Seminole reservations. Seminole households had been run by women in matrilineal, clan-based families. Extended families had lived together in thatched-roof chickee houses dispersed across the landscape of South Florida. The federal government moved Seminoles into dense housing developments. They would only issue leases to male heads of households, and they would settle people in nuclear family units, rather than the extended families that people had lived in before. Suddenly, you weren't surrounded by people from the Panther clan like you, but you had your little nuclear family next to somebody else that you maybe didn't even know. Many, many Seminoles will talk about this as a period of great distress for cultural transmission, for living a way of life that people were used to. So, it's no coincidence that when Seminoles began to exercise their political self-determination and gather their economic resources from gaming, housing was one of the places they turned, and you're seeing a return to larger households with multiple generations dispersed more broadly across the landscape, and more and more houses are owned by women and accommodate a way of life that's more familiar. There's a housing shortage, so it's not all roses here, and there's controversies over who gets housing, but nonetheless, you're seeing a shift back to fighting for a way of life where it matters most in the less obvious places, like how your house is structured.

JKK: As we wrap up, I want to be sure that we have some time to talk about how you end your book with that chapter discussion on sovereign interdependencies. You spoke earlier, when you were talking about how you organized the book, about the question of sovereignty and how complicated sovereignty is when the tribe is, say, doing global investments, getting entangled with a lot of

different forces that can implicate their expression of sovereignty and exercise of it. Can you share more as to how you theorize sovereign interdependencies?

JC: Absolutely. All too often, sovereignty is taken to be synonymous with autonomy. Insofar as you're autonomous, you're sovereign; insofar as you're dependent, you're not. Well, if this is our definition of sovereignty, it makes American Indian tribal nations, on the face of it, seem like failed sovereigns. But it also makes a lot of countries around the world not seem like sovereigns at all.

Very few polities are autonomous. Countries all over are dependent on others for economic aid, military protection, and political alliances. So, actually, what sovereignty is in the modern age is not so clear at all, for anyone. Seminoles have certainly had their sovereignty compromised by colonialism, but it's a mistake to see any time that they're entangled with other polities as going against their sovereignty, because part of sovereignty is being able to decide and assert your claim to political distinctiveness in relation to other governments, other peoples, and that can mean negotiating agreements, it can mean getting legally entangled.

You can't determine sovereignty solely based on autonomy. Instead, we need to assess whether relations among governments and peoples lead to the ability of communities like the Seminole Tribe of Florida to claim and realize their political distinctiveness on their own terms. And sometimes that leads us to look in unexpected places. American Indian tribes have much to teach us about globalization and world power today, far beyond the limits of any given reservation.

JKK: Yes! In conclusion, I want to invite you to leave us with anything you'd like us to consider.

JC: Well, I think the biggest thing is just to realize that, again, gaming isn't just about money, or about political loopholes or special rights, but rather, it's about big questions of fundamental importance, not only to Indigenous people but to your broader listening public. And that tribal nations like Seminoles are among the most creative places and peoples to be thinking about fundamental questions that are debated in the news and in the public everywhere, and if we pay attention to the creative ways that they're using their casino revenues, we have a lot to learn about issues far beyond what first hits us on the surface as being Indian gaming.