



## Editors' Comments

The issue of gaming within aboriginal communities is a highly contentious issue, sparking debate that encompasses issues from all of the four directions. Gaming for some is a gift from Creator expressing a fundamental part of creation. For others, it is a human expression that fulfills very human needs. And for some, it is visible evidence of the devil at play. For most of us, it presents enormous challenges.

Gaming offers immense opportunity for wealth, employment and self-government. The wealth that it brings provides means for advancing the self-government agenda and helping communities to support badly needed school and education systems, cultural and language retention activities, and can serve as a source of capital to pursue other economic activities. Gaming can provide a steady reliable source of funds free of government administrative regulation that gives people and local governments an enhanced sense of control over community destinies. For individuals, it can provide a job and a steady income close to home, perhaps for the first time. For entrepreneurs, it can provide an opportunity for service and product sales.

Yet I am reminded by the Iroquoian story of the twins: the good twin who created all that is beautiful and the evil twin that came behind and put the thorns on the roses, so to speak. Gaming can have deleterious effects on the lives of individuals who divert

scarce resources to it in the hope of a high return. Some commentators call it a tax on the poor. It can seduce people with its promise of instant wealth and happiness. If engaged in with alcohol and drugs, it can have extremely harmful effects on one's individual health and the health of families and communities. Gaming for some can be addictive with all the effects that any addiction carries with it. Gaming can contribute to family and community violence and some argue that it causes an increase the sex and drug trade. Gaming can require increases in support for policing and justice activities, add to the already overburdened health and social service systems. Ameliorating the effects requires the use of some of resources generated by gaming.

In this issue, we present a range of analytic views on gaming. We want to stimulate a reasoned informed discussion about the issue of gaming as a component of an economic development strategy. We hope that communities will debate these issues themselves in an open, democratic, deliberate, inclusive and reasoned manner. Gaming can be a rose with thorns or thorns with a rose.

The Editors