



# research reveals...

an update on gambling research in ALBERTA

## About The Alberta Gaming Research Institute

The Alberta Gaming Research Institute is a consortium of the University of Alberta, University of Calgary, and the University of Lethbridge. Its primary purpose is to support and promote research into gaming and gambling in the province.

The Institute's identified research domains include bio-psychological and health care, socio-cultural, economic, and government and industry policy and practice.

The Institute aims to achieve international recognition in gaming-related research. It is coordinated by a Board of Directors working in collaboration with the Alberta Gaming Research Council. The Ministry of Alberta Gaming provides funding to the Institute.

### OUR MISSION:

*To significantly improve Albertans' knowledge of how gambling affects society*

### THE INSTITUTE'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**Ms. Vickii Williams**

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Welcome to the first issue of the Alberta Gaming Research Institute's newsletter. We invite you to read the articles and have a look at our Web site: [www.abgaminginstitute.ualberta.ca](http://www.abgaminginstitute.ualberta.ca).

Your comments and queries are welcome either by e-mail: [abgaming@ualberta.ca](mailto:abgaming@ualberta.ca) or phone (780) 492-2856.

## From Summer Midways to Casinos and Slot Machines

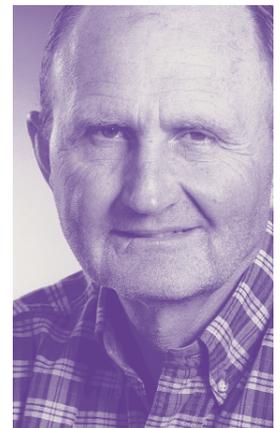
### Dr. Garry Smith Studies Our Changing Views on Gambling

WHEN GARRY SMITH left Alberta to do his graduate work in the early 1960's, the only legal gambling options available to Albertans were horse racing, usually four week events in both Edmonton and Calgary, and the summer midway nickel-and-dime operations. When he returned in the early 1970's to join the Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation at the University of Alberta, much had changed: lotteries, bingos and casinos were now legal as well. In the decades since, gambling has become more and more a regular recreation for many Albertans. Garry was curious from a sociological perspective about why what was once a vice was now an acceptable diversion for most people and, for some people, an addiction. For the past 20 years, Garry has studied gambling patterns and habits, and has become a recognized international authority on the subject.

As the University of Alberta's Node Coordinator for the Alberta Gaming Research Institute, Garry is responsible for promoting research into gambling issues at the U of A. He remains an active researcher in the field, and believes that the Institute's work will provide a better understanding of virtually every aspect of gaming, because its research mandate spans the full spectrum of human behaviour, from economics to sociology to psychology to health care.

Garry has a number of research projects either underway or at the proposal stage. One is a study of adult Albertans' gambling patterns using a new index – the Canadian Problem Gambling Index. Another is a study of crime and gambling, in conjunction with a major police service in the Province. The study will examine the demographics of crime and gambling are there different crimes and crime rates in the vicinity of major casinos, for example. It also will examine specific police files dealing with embezzlement and fraud and similar crimes, and try to determine what percentage are gambling related.

Apart from his research, Garry acts as an expert witness at trials involving gambling addiction. He is also a frequent media guest, commenting on gambling issues both locally and nationally. He has researched various public policy aspects of gambling.



**Gambling is a business that has ethical dilemmas built right into it.**

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# 2000-01 Research Grant Awards

THE FOLLOWING research projects have been funded by the Institute and are currently underway. The name of the principal investigator is at the end of each entry. For further information, please see [www.abgaminginstitute.ualberta.ca/grant\\_approvals.htm](http://www.abgaminginstitute.ualberta.ca/grant_approvals.htm).

- *A consumer model for the regulation of gaming*: to determine if and to what extent the standard model of consumer protection legal regulation applies in the general public interest to the gaming transaction to render the latter legitimate. Dr. Peter Bowal, Faculty of Management, University of Calgary
- *Gambling craving and its relation to addiction and personality*: to investigate whether gambling craving among pathological gamblers is similar or different from alcohol craving among alcohol-dependent individuals, and investigate the relation of craving to personality structure. Dr. Nady el-Guebaly, Faculty of Medicine, University of Calgary
- *How near wins and near losses affect gamblers' self-perceptions, risk estimations, and future gambling behaviour*: to examine the effects of near wins and near losses on gaming decisions. Theory suggests these experiences may significantly affect a gambler's self-perceptions, risk estimations and future gambling behaviour. Dr. Michael Enzle, Department of Psychology, University of Alberta
- *Preventing relapse in former gamblers*: A low cost, easily accessed relapse prevention approach for problem gamblers who have recently quit gambling. Minimal intervention involving repeated mailings of relapse prevention materials to participants. Dr. David Hodgins, Faculty of Medicine, University of Calgary
- *Prevention of pathological gambling*: development, implementation and evaluation of an evidence-based five session gambling prevention program to high school students at two sites in Alberta. Dr. Robert Williams, School of Health Sciences, University of Lethbridge
- *Association between pathological gambling and suicide attempt/ideation*: Diagnostic interview schedule data on 25,017 community residents and five US urban centres will be analyzed to determine whether a lifetime history of DSM-III pathological gambling is associated with suicide attempt/ideation. Dr. Stephen C. Newman, Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry, University of Alberta
- *Measuring problem gambling in Alberta with the Canadian Problem Gambling Index*: Validate the newly developed Canadian Problem Gambling Index in Alberta. CPGI items will be imbedded in a telephone survey of a random sample of adult Albertans. Results will provide a baseline status of problem gambling in Alberta communities. Dr. Garry J. Smith, Faculty of Extension, University of Alberta
- *High quality aging or gambling with health? The lifestyles of elders who play bingo*: To study the three main questions 1) Who plays bingo after age 65? 2) What do elders believe they "get" out of playing bingo 3) What are the day to day patterns of a "bingo lifestyle" and the implications for health and well-being? Sandy O'Brien Cousins, Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation, University of Alberta
- *A social history of gambling in Alberta to 1970*: the history of gambling in Alberta. Identify the province's gambling traditions, attempts by agencies and government to either suppress or regulate, and the persistence of gambling as part of our culture. Christopher Hosgood, Faculty of Arts and Science, University of Lethbridge

> It is clear that the work ahead makes Garry enthusiastic. "Gambling is a business that has ethical dilemmas built right into it," he says. A recent Canada West Foundation survey found that while gambling is seen as an acceptable activity, the public is ambivalent about it. "It's acceptable and inevitable," says Garry, "but the perception is that it detracts from our quality of life."

It is those attitudes and the issues underlying them that Garry is most interested in and intends to pursue, working with researchers at all three campuses. Garry fully intends the Alberta Gaming Research Institute to play a significant role in helping us better understand gambling.

## Conferences and Events

*Gambling, law enforcement and justice system issues: Canadian perspectives* (proposed conference) to be sponsored by University of Alberta's Node on **March 8<sup>th</sup>** and **9<sup>th</sup>** in Edmonton – as it becomes available registration and program information will be included in the next issue of 'Research Reveals...' and posted on the Institute website.

## Awards

**Albertan wins research award from the National Council on Problem Gambling.** The NCPG is an American organization comprising 33 state affiliates. Among its activities, NCPG sponsors the *Journal of Gambling Studies*, the premier academic journal in the world devoted to problem gambling research. The 15<sup>th</sup> Annual meeting was held in Seattle, June 21-23. **Karyn Makarchuk** received the 2001 award for best master's thesis. Her thesis, *Minimal Treatment Approaches with Concerned Significant Others of Problem Gamblers*, was completed as part of her Master's of Science degree in Medical Science at the University of Calgary. Karyn is the second Albertan to win this award. In 2000, **Katherine Diskin**, currently a doctoral student in psychology at the University of Calgary, won for her thesis examining physiological arousal during video lottery terminal play. Both Katherine and Karyn were supervised by Dr. David Hodgins, who holds a university appointment funded by the Alberta Gaming Research Institute.

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ISSN 1499-2639 (Print)  
ISSN 1499-2647 (Online)

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