

Renee Ann Cramer. *Cash, Color, and Colonialism: The Politics of Tribal Acknowledgment*. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2005), pp. 234. \$24.95 ISBN 0-8061-3671-5 hc

Renee Ann Cramer has produced an engaging treatment of a controversial topic. In the wake of tribal gaming expansion and American Indian tribal fuel and tobacco revenue threatening Anglo-American retail sales, political opposition has risen among voters and in Congress. Cramer, who teaches political science at California State University-Long Beach, surveys tribal acknowledgment within the federal system.

She used a wide range of sources including local, state, and federal documents, interviews, and primary and secondary published information. She assesses the establishment of the federal process as currently codified in 25 CFR Part 83, the theories underlying the attainment of it, and the rocky road involved for tribal groups seeking it. She concludes with an examination of three tribes, the Mowa Choctaw and Poarch Creek in Alabama and the Mashantucket Pequot in Connecticut.

Congressional authorizing legislation set up what would ultimately be referred to as the Branch of Acknowledgment and Research. It is now called the Office of Federal Acknowledgment. She examines the long, expensive, and slow process which federal acknowledgement entails. Only fifteen tribal groups have thus far been federally recognized out of hundreds clamoring for it. Federal acknowledgement can bring with it federal dollars and trust land status for tribal territory. Her work looks at the latter aspect because of its importance for gaming income. Her assessment also stresses the importance of the U. S. colonial legal

legacy in Indian Country, racial attitudes, and the growth of Indian gaming revenue and influence leading to a backlash. The author views Indian racial identity and gaming as “points of crystallization” (p. xv) for federal acknowledgment. In a sense her work is about the popular reaction to Indian gaming (the “cash” in her title) even though the focus is on federal recognition of tribal groups.

Cramer takes the reader through a survey of the fundamentals of Federal-Indian legal history, then notes reformist tendencies that jolted the Bureau of Indian Affairs into action in the 1970s. The Branch of Acknowledgment and Research (1978) created criteria for federal recognition, which were modified in 1988 and 1994. The author examines roadblocks along the path to acknowledgment, especially what Cramer terms “cash and color.” She also sets forth scholarly critiques of tribal governmental structures and assesses federal acknowledgment procedures. Cramer’s recent work and that of Mark Miller the year before underscore the increasing scholarly interest in the topic.

Cramer then moves to the bulk of the work, an examination of acknowledgment centered on the experiences of the Mowa Choctaw Tribe near Coffeeville and the Poarch Band of Creeks near Atmore in Alabama, as well as the Mashantucket Pequot in Connecticut and the consequences that arose from their recognition. Gaming successes have made everyone more aware of the acknowledgment process. Gaming colors federal recognition procedures. A welter of tribal, local, state, and federal interests come into play along with civic, political, religious and other competing forces over recognition issues because of gaming as the focal point. The author points out that gaming success ignited a fierce backlash against American Indians in general and against acknowledgment in particular. Rising stakes fuel increasing litigation.

The author notes that the Mowa Band efforts have thus far been frustrated in their attempt to gain federal recognition. Cramer details how Poarch Creek public relations efforts won over initial local white hostility and gained unprecedented respect and support for economic development projects that now benefit all residents of the surrounding Escambia County. Compared to the relative quiet with which the Poarch were recognized, the Mashantucket met a firestorm of controversy attending their recognition and casino activities. For some, excesses of the Foxwoods Casino (and the nearby Mohican Sun Casino) in terms of congestion, crime, and impact exemplify all the problems over federal

recognition. In Connecticut, Cramer zeroes in on the Paucatuck Eastern Pequot Tribe and the Eastern Paucatuck Pequot prior to their merger (2002) to illustrate racial hysteria in reaction to Mashantucket recognition. Membership rolls had a tortured history, especially given the factionalism and racial language used. Factionalism was instrumental in the rejection of the Eastern (Paucatuck) Pequot Tribe petition for federal acknowledgment (2000). As a recent example of the complexity of the process, the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs subsequently reversed the holding, recognizing the tribe, only to have the Interior Board of Indian Affairs reverse the decision (2005) in an unprecedented action. Similar hurdles of proof bedevil the Golden Hill Paugussett (located just south of Colchester, CT) in their petition prospects. Connecticut voter and property owners' backlash fed opposition and litigation against federal recognition and have further complicated and politicized the federal recognition process. Cramer briefly examines suggested "fixes" proposed to rectify the acknowledgment process. She concludes that, instead of attempting to exclude politics from the procedures, everyone should acknowledge the pressures of political, social, economic, and racial issues and take them into consideration when making decisions.

Her conclusion about inclusiveness as a proposed solution will appear to some as too simplistic. The acknowledgment landscape in the United States is very broad and some might criticize the author's focus on only a few tribal examples. However, those examples ably illustrate the major points she makes. This is a solidly done work whose three examples illustrate the successes and problems inherent in contemporary tribal acknowledgment.

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