

THE GOONZETTE

Digital Culture • Commentary • Analysis

Daily Edition - Thursday, January 1, 2026

Week Whatever NFL Recap: Some Teams Cooked, Others Got Served Stone Cold 🏈

Kia ora, whānau! Your boy Tommy coming at you with another week of NFL chaos that had me switching between my analytics spreadsheet and my group chat faster than a cornerback getting burned on a double move.

First up, let's talk about what actually mattered this week because honestly? Some of these games were straight up mid, no cap. But that's the beauty of this league - even when teams are serving up disappointment platters, there's always something to unpack.

****The Good, The Bad, and The Absolutely Unhinged****

Man, watching some of these offensive coordinators call plays had me thinking about that whakataukī: "He aha te mea nui o te ao? He tangata, he tangata, he tangata" - what is the most important thing in the world? It is people. But apparently some of these coaches missed the memo because they're calling plays like they forgot actual humans have to execute them.

Had multiple games this week where teams were up big and then decided to get cute with their play-calling. Brother, if you're up by 14 in the fourth quarter, maybe don't call a flea flicker on your own 20-yard line? That's not galaxy brain strategy, that's just asking the football gods to humble you real quick.

****Defensive Takes That Hit Different****

The defensive performances this week were a whole vibe though. Saw some edge rushers putting QBs in the blender like they owed them money. Nothing gets me more hyped than watching a good pass rush scheme come together - it's like watching poetry in motion, except the poetry involves 250-pound athletes running full speed trying to separate someone's soul from their body.

One thing that's been bugging me about the discourse online though - y'all need to stop acting like every missed tackle is because players are "soft" now. Trust me, having been in those trenches, sometimes you just whiff. Physics is undefeated, and momentum is a cruel mistress. Plus, these skill position players are different breeds now - they're faster, stronger, and more elusive than ever.

****Special Teams: The Chaos Department****

Special teams this week was serving up content like a TikTok algorithm that knows exactly what you want to see. Had kickers missing extra points, returners taking kicks out of the end zone for no reason, and coverage teams looking like they learned their assignments from a fever dream.

There's another whakataukī that goes "Kāore te kumara e kōrero ana mōna ano" - the kumara doesn't speak of its own sweetness. But some of these special teams coordinators need to start speaking up because their units are out here looking lost like tourists without GPS.

****The Real Tea: Injury Management****

Here's where I get a bit serious for a minute, whānau. The injury situation across the league right now is genuinely concerning. Not just the big names going down, but the way teams are managing player health in general.

Having been through the grind myself, I can tell you that the difference between playing hurt and playing injured is real, but it's also a fine line that gets blurred when playoff implications are on the table. Watching some of these games, you can see guys who are clearly compromised still out there grinding because that's the culture. Respect to them, but also... man, take care of yourselves.

****Looking Ahead: Playoff Picture Getting Spicy****

The playoff race is heating up now and honestly? Some of these wild card spots are going to come down to tiebreakers that'll have fans pulling up calculators and acting like mathematicians. Love to see it though - nothing better than meaningful football where every snap matters.

What I'm really watching for in the coming weeks is which teams can handle the pressure when the lights get bright. Regular season success is one thing, but playoff football is a different beast entirely. Some teams are built for that intensity, others fold like bad poker hands.

****Final Thoughts****

This week reminded me why I love this chaotic, beautiful game. Sure, some performances were mid, some coaching decisions had me questioning reality, and the refs... well, they were there. But at the end of the day, we got to witness elite athletes doing impossible things while 70,000 people screamed at them.

That's pretty special, even when it's frustrating as hell.

Ka kite anō, stay locked in whānau!

-Tommy

***P.S.** - If your fantasy team is struggling, maybe don't ask me for advice. I drafted three running backs who are now on IR. Sometimes the football gods just laugh at your carefully crafted plans.*

Beyond Recognition: Why Indigenous Rights Require Structural Change, Not Just Acknowledgment

The recent surge in land acknowledgments, tribal consultation policies, and corporate diversity statements mentioning Indigenous peoples might seem like progress. But as someone who's spent decades navigating both federal courtrooms and tribal council meetings, I can tell you that recognition without redistribution of power is just another form of colonization—this time with better public relations.

Let me be clear: Indigenous rights aren't about inclusion in existing systems that were designed to eliminate us. They're about honoring the fundamental truth that our nations existed here long before the United States drew its first border, and that our sovereignty derives from sources far older than any colonial constitution.

The Problem with "Consultation"

Take the current federal approach to tribal consultation. Agencies proudly announce new policies requiring them to "consult" with tribes before making decisions affecting our territories. Sounds progressive, right? Except consultation isn't consent. It's not even negotiation between equals. It's a bureaucratic box to check before proceeding with predetermined plans.

Real Indigenous rights would mean free, prior, and informed consent—not after environmental impact studies are complete and budgets are allocated, but at the conception stage when projects are just ideas on someone's whiteboard. It would mean that "no" from a tribal nation actually means no, not "let's see what we can do to make this work for everyone."

I've watched this play out repeatedly in natural resource disputes. Federal agencies arrive with thick binders full of mitigation measures and economic development promises, treating our sacred sites like line items in a cost-benefit analysis. They offer to build us a community center in exchange for letting them flood our ancestors' burial grounds. This isn't consultation—it's extortion with a smile.

Sovereignty Isn't Symbolic

The most fundamental Indigenous right is self-determination, but even well-meaning allies often misunderstand what this means. Sovereignty isn't about war paint and powwows. It's about the power to make consequential decisions about our own communities, territories, and futures without asking permission from colonial governments.

True recognition of Indigenous sovereignty would fundamentally alter the American legal landscape. It would mean acknowledging that tribal nations aren't subordinate "domestic dependent nations" trapped in a legal framework designed by John Marshall in the 1830s. It would mean confronting the Doctrine of Discovery—the legal fiction that European "discovery" somehow transferred Indigenous lands to colonial powers.

Congress could start by repealing the plenary power doctrine, which gives federal lawmakers unlimited authority over tribal affairs. Imagine if the U.S. claimed such power over, say, Canada. The international community would rightfully call it what it is: imperialism.

Economic Justice as Indigenous Rights

Indigenous rights also require honest conversations about economic justice. The wealth gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities isn't an accident—it's the predictable result of centuries of systematic resource extraction and exclusion from economic opportunities.

Gaming revenues and federal programs haven't closed this gap because they don't address its structural causes. We need policies that return land to tribal control, respect Indigenous intellectual property rights, and ensure that extractive industries operating on traditional territories provide meaningful benefits to Indigenous communities.

This isn't about charity; it's about justice. When energy companies profit from resources extracted from Indigenous territories, those communities should receive more than token consultation fees. When researchers benefit from traditional ecological knowledge, Indigenous knowledge holders should be partners, not subjects.

The Path Forward

Advancing Indigenous rights requires more than good intentions—it requires powerful institutions willing to share power. This means state and federal governments must stop treating tribal sovereignty as a quaint anachronism and start engaging with tribal nations as the distinct political entities we are.

It means corporate boards and foundation executives must move beyond symbolic gestures toward policies that redistribute resources and decision-making authority. It means universities must go beyond land acknowledgments to actual land return and genuine research partnerships.

Most importantly, it means non-Indigenous allies must be willing to challenge systems they benefit from, even when it's uncomfortable. Supporting Indigenous rights isn't just about adding tribal flags to your diversity materials—it's about questioning whether your organization's very existence depends on the ongoing colonization of Indigenous lands and resources.

Indigenous peoples have survived genocide, forced removal, boarding schools, and termination policies. We're not going anywhere. The question is whether American institutions are ready to evolve beyond their colonial origins to build relationships based on justice rather than domination.

That conversation starts now, and it starts with understanding that Indigenous rights aren't a footnote to American democracy—they're a prerequisite for it.