

THE GOONZETTE

Digital Culture • Commentary • Analysis

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****Level Up or Log Off: Why Gaming Communities Hit Different Than Any Locker Room****

Kia ora, whānau! Your boy Tommy here, and today we're talking about something that's been on my mind harder than a defensive coordinator studying film at 3am - gaming communities, bro.

Look, I've been in some tight-knit groups in my time. NFL locker rooms where grown men would literally die for each other on Sundays, cultural groups where we'd spend hours perfecting our haka until it was absolutely fire, not mid. But gaming communities? Ae, they're built different, and I mean that in the best possible way.

****The Real Squad Energy****

See, there's this whakataukī that goes "He kaha ki te mahi, he kaha ki te kōrero" - strong in work, strong in conversation. Gaming communities embody this energy perfectly, eh. You'll have some kid from Minnesota who's absolutely cracked at Apex Legends teaching rotation strategies to a grandmother from New Zealand who just picked up the game last month. That's beautiful, cuz.

In the NFL, we had playbooks thicker than a Māori-English dictionary, but gaming communities create their own meta knowledge that's constantly evolving. One day everyone's running the same loadout, next day some absolute unit discovers a new tech that changes everything. It's like watching offensive schemes evolve in real-time, but instead of coaches drawing up plays, it's a 16-year-old with too much energy drink posting a TikTok that breaks the internet.

****When Toxicity Tries to Crash the Party****

Now, let's keep it 100 - some corners of gaming culture can be more toxic than a Brett Favre text thread. You've got keyboard warriors talking big game from their gaming chairs when they wouldn't say boo to a

ghost IRL. That energy is absolutely not it, whānau.

But here's the thing that gets me hyped - the good communities self-regulate like a well-run marae. Real gamers know that "Manaakitanga" (hospitality/looking after people) applies whether you're welcoming manuhiri to your ancestral home or helping a noob learn the basics without being a complete menace about it.

I've seen gaming communities rally around members going through tough times faster than a blitz package. Mental health struggles, family issues, financial problems - suddenly the same people who were arguing about whether aim-assist is cheating are organizing fundraisers and support networks. That hits different than any touchdown celebration, trust me.

****The Grind Mentality****

What really connects with my athlete brain is how gaming communities understand the grind. These players will spend 12 hours straight perfecting frame-perfect combos or grinding ranked matches, and their teammates respect that dedication. It's the same energy as staying after practice to run extra routes, except instead of a coach yelling at you, you've got your squad in voice chat keeping you motivated.

"Kia kaha, kia māia, kia manawanui" - be strong, be brave, be steadfast. That's the energy I see in competitive gaming teams. They'll analyze VODs like film study, practice coordination drills, and develop team chemistry that would make NFL position groups jealous.

****Where We're Heading****

The future of gaming communities looks absolutely poggers, not gonna lie. With streaming platforms, Discord servers, and social features getting more sophisticated, we're seeing communities that transcend just playing games together. They're becoming legitimate social spaces where people form real relationships, learn from each other, and create culture.

But we need to stay conscious about keeping these spaces inclusive, eh. Gaming shouldn't be gatekept by people who think having more RGB makes them superior beings. Everyone brings something valuable to

the table - maybe it's mechanical skill, maybe it's strategy knowledge, maybe it's just good vibes and dad jokes that keep the team laughing during long sessions.

****Final Thoughts****

Gaming communities represent something special in our increasingly digital world - spaces where skill, creativity, and genuine connection matter more than traditional social hierarchies. Whether you're a casual mobile gamer or someone grinding for esports glory, there's a community out there that'll welcome you with open arms.

So next time someone tries to dismiss gaming as "just a hobby," remind them that these communities are building skills, friendships, and cultural movements that are reshaping how we connect with each other.

Stay blessed, stay gaming, and remember - it's not about the W's and L's, it's about the whānau you build along the way.

Aroha nui,

Tommy

When Treaties Become Weapons: The Supreme Court's Dangerous Game with Indigenous Rights

Hoocak Hacı Nijic

The Supreme Court's recent dance around treaty interpretation should worry every tribal nation in this country. When justices start treating solemn agreements between sovereigns like outdated contracts ripe for creative reinterpretation, we're not witnessing legal evolution—we're watching the systematic dismantling of the foundational promises that supposedly govern federal-tribal relations.

Let me be clear about what's happening here. The Court's increasing willingness to narrow treaty rights isn't some neutral application of legal doctrine. It's a deliberate strategy to chip away at tribal sovereignty, one carefully crafted opinion at a time. And it's working exactly as intended.

Take the recent trend of applying state law to reservation disputes, or the Court's growing embrace of the "implicit divestiture" doctrine—the legal fiction that tribes somehow gave up rights they never explicitly surrendered. These aren't accidents of jurisprudence. They're features of a system designed to minimize Indigenous power while maintaining the illusion of honoring treaty obligations.

The real tragedy is how predictable this has become. Federal courts approach treaty interpretation with what I call "colonial math"—finding ways to subtract Indigenous rights while multiplying state and federal authority. When tribes win, it's portrayed as special treatment. When we lose, it's just the law following its natural course.

But here's what the legal establishment doesn't want to acknowledge: treaties aren't just historical documents gathering dust in government archives. They're living agreements that created the legal foundation for this country's existence. Every acre of land outside current reservation boundaries exists

under U.S. jurisdiction because tribes agreed to cede it—usually under duress, but through recognized legal processes nonetheless.

When courts erode treaty rights, they're not just harming tribal communities. They're undermining the legal architecture that legitimizes federal authority itself. You can't have it both ways—claiming the benefits of tribal land cessions while dismissing the obligations that made those cessions legally valid.

This is where strategic thinking becomes crucial. Tribal advocates need to stop playing defense and start questioning the premises. Why are we accepting legal frameworks that treat Indigenous rights as presumptively limited? Why are we allowing courts to apply contract interpretation principles to agreements between sovereigns? Why aren't we demanding that federal judges recuse themselves from cases where their own government's interests conflict with fair treaty interpretation?

The Ho-Chunk Nation learned these lessons the hard way. For decades, we watched federal courts twist our treaty language to justify land seizures, restrict our jurisdiction, and limit our economic development. We discovered that playing by their rules meant accepting their assumptions about who deserves power and who doesn't.

Real progress came when we started changing the conversation. Instead of just arguing about specific treaty provisions, we began challenging the colonial mindset that treats Indigenous sovereignty as somehow lesser or conditional. Instead of accepting unfavorable legal precedents as permanent, we started building political and economic leverage that forces courts to reconsider.

The path forward requires multiple strategies. Tribal nations need to strengthen intergovernmental compacts that recognize treaty rights regardless of federal court interpretations. We need to build economic relationships that make it costly for states to ignore our sovereignty. We need to educate non-Native communities about how treaty erosion threatens everyone's legal security.

Most importantly, we need to stop pretending that legal arguments alone will save us. The Supreme Court's hostility to Indigenous rights isn't a legal problem—it's a political problem that requires political solutions. That means building coalitions, changing public opinion, and creating real consequences for judges who treat treaty obligations as optional.

The current Court seems determined to test how much they can diminish tribal sovereignty before facing serious resistance. They're betting that tribal nations will continue accepting incremental losses rather than demanding fundamental change in how treaty relationships operate.

That's a dangerous bet for everyone involved. Treaties aren't just Indigenous concerns—they're the documentary proof that this country's legal authority rests on negotiated agreements rather than simple conquest. When courts treat those agreements as meaningless, they're not just attacking tribal rights. They're undermining the rule of law itself.

The question isn't whether treaties will survive the current assault. The question is whether tribal nations will demand the respect and recognition our sovereignty requires, or continue accepting crumbs from a system designed to starve us out entirely.

Some fights are worth having. This is one of them.