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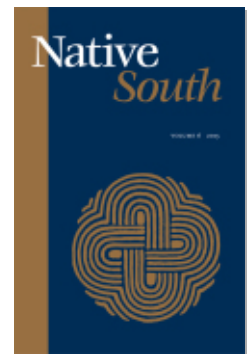
The Nine from the Pines: High-Stakes Bingo and Federal
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FIELD NOTES

The Nine from the Pines

*High-Stakes Bingo and Federal Intervention in
Coushatta Tribal Affairs in the 1980s*

JAY PRECHT

Five years after a federal court decision allowed the Seminole Tribe of Florida to operate a high-stakes bingo parlor on reservation lands in 1979, the Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana began running their own bingo hall on their reservation in Louisiana's piney woods. Local officials contested the tribe's authority, and on October 28, 1984, the Allen Parish Sheriff's Department raided the bingo operation in what Coushatta Tribal Chairman Ernest Sickey characterized as an invasion of a sovereign nation.¹ Ultimately officers charged nine employees—including Jaco LeBlanc, a Lafayette architect who helped fund the purchase of gaming equipment, with illegal gambling. Alluding to the reservation's location in the piney woods ecoregion and what he perceived as overreaction by the sheriff's office, LeBlanc reportedly quipped, "You've heard of the Chicago Seven? You've heard of the Dirty Dozen? We're the Nine from the Pines."²

The "Nine from the Pines" incident led to a federal court case to settle the question of jurisdiction but exacerbated conflict over gaming within the Coushatta community.³ The tribe's internal struggle brought what was for the Coushattas an unprecedented level of Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) paternalism, increased scrutiny of the Sickey administration, and the return to the community of many Coushattas living out of state, including members of the Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas. The Coushatta experience in 1984–85 reinforces Brian Klopotek's contention that federal recognition does not deserve the "transformational aura" often ascribed to it and comes with both positive and negative consequences.⁴ The Coushattas received federal recognition in 1973, which brought increased resources to the tribe, but these resources were in-

sufficient to maintain the necessary bureaucracy and help the people. In trying to obtain sorely needed discretionary funds through gaming, the Coushatta Tribal Council sparked a dispute that would cause significant turmoil and discord within the community for a time.⁵ This conflict over gaming proved less violent than similar disagreements in the Ho-Chunk Nation in Wisconsin and the Oneida Indian Nation in New York, but resulted in a tribal election heavily influenced by the BIA, marking a shift in federal treatment of the community from neglect to paternalism.

The Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana had called Bayou Blue near Elton, Louisiana, home for almost ninety years when they gained federal recognition. Before they settled there, Coushattas survived by relocating, taking advantage of European and later American rivalries, and associating with larger Indian confederacies.⁶ They have lived in Tennessee, Alabama, Texas, and Louisiana, and ultimately settled in three separate communities in Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Texas. The Coushattas in Louisiana established a permanent home by homesteading and purchasing private property and maintaining a close relationship with their relatives in the Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas. In 1898 community member Sissy Robinson had 160 acres placed in trust with the federal government, preventing the sale of the land and its mineral rights and implying government recognition of Robinson's Indian identity, and a few years later Congregationalist minister Paul Leeds began converting the Coushattas to Christianity.⁷ Consistent with shifts in federal policy toward communities in the South highlighted by George Roth, after three decades of effort by Coushatta leaders, the BIA only extended educational and medical services to the community in the 1930s and 1940s.⁸ BIA officials unilaterally ended these services in 1953, but Congress never officially terminated the tribe.⁹ After this *de facto* termination, the Coushattas struggled to maintain a viable community and regain federal recognition. Efforts to achieve the latter goal began officially in 1965 when the community formed Coushatta Indians of Allen Parish, Inc., to sell pine-needle baskets and other crafts.¹⁰

Seven years later the newly formed Coushatta Alliance headed by Ernest Sickey—who had served as vice-chairman in the earlier organization—received state recognition, and after establishing a reservation reached a significant goal when the federal government re-recognized the Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana the next year.¹¹ The leaders

of the Coushatta Alliance became the community's first tribal council, with Sickey as its chair. Sickey was not only a leader within the Coushatta community, but also, according to historian Denise Bates, a "spark that fueled the development of a new Indian movement in Louisiana."¹² He served as consultant to the first commissioner of the Louisiana Office of Indian Affairs in 1972 and later became the first American Indian to hold that post. He helped found the state's Inter-Tribal Council and became its first chairman. Through this involvement in state politics Sickey developed valuable political connections and honed his administrative abilities. He helped the Jena Band of Choctaws organize their tribal government in preparation for their push for federal acknowledgement and established a crafts cooperative that became a model for other tribes.¹³

Achieving re-recognition brought increased access to federal programs, but the community still struggled economically. Ninety percent of the community earned less than three thousand dollars annually, and about 50 percent of potential wage earners remained unemployed.¹⁴ Sickey worked hard to improve the situation, focusing on self-sufficiency through entrepreneurial efforts. The community invested in agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry, tourism, and craft sales to improve the local economy.¹⁵ Mississippi Choctaw Chief Philip Martin demonstrated the economic possibilities for Indian reservations, and the Coushattas followed a similar pattern. Like Martin, they invested government and private funds in community business ventures and assumed control of BIA programs in their community. However, the Coushattas' lower population and smaller land base made the Mississippi Choctaw model difficult to follow.¹⁶

By the 1980s gaming had become a viable option for federally recognized American Indian communities. Because federal support for community programs dwindled in the 1970s and few economic opportunities existed in most sectors of Indian country, Indian governments explored the possibilities of high-stakes bingo to provide necessary funds for tribal services.¹⁷ In 1979 the Seminoles set an early example for other Indian communities when Broward County, Florida, challenged their right to offer bingo games that violated state law. Although the Supreme Court under Chief Justice John Marshall recognized indigenous freedom from state jurisdiction in the nineteenth century in *Worcester v. Georgia*, the court also expressly recognized the right of Congress to

grant states this jurisdiction. In 1953, as Congress debated whether to end the trust relationship between the federal government and indigenous communities, it passed Public Law 83-280. This law, described by historian John Wunder as “perhaps the most successful attempt to limit Indian sovereignty and stifle Indian rights,” allowed states to unilaterally accept criminal jurisdiction on Indian reservations within their borders.¹⁸ The state of Florida had accepted this jurisdiction in 1961 and invoked it to challenge Seminole gaming. However, the Southern Federal District Court of Florida ruled that since the state allowed games and limited pots, Florida law was regulatory and not criminal. Therefore, Seminole games did not fall under state jurisdiction.¹⁹ Coushatta leaders were aware of *Seminole Tribe of Florida v. Butterworth* and reasoned that, since Louisiana was not a PL-280 state, they had even less to worry about when opening their bingo operation. The state’s lack of criminal jurisdiction proved important because Allen Parish officials later argued that the Coushattas provided games that were illegal, rather than regulated, under state law.

Louisiana’s history suggests a general tolerance for gambling, and therefore offered a promising environment for the introduction of Indian gaming. Although North Louisiana is typically Southern, Protestant, and conservative, predominantly Catholic South Louisiana is, in the words of journalist Tyler Bridges, “noted for its love of good food, good music, and good times.” In South Louisiana, wagering has contributed to these good times since its colonial founding. According to Bridges, “Louisiana is a pro-gambling state, so the only question throughout its checkered past has been whether the wagering was wide-open or undercover.” Two of the most popular games of chance, poker and craps, came from Europe and first became popular in Louisiana before spreading throughout the country. Riverboat gambling flourished in New Orleans before the Civil War, and although legalized gambling ceased for almost a hundred years in Louisiana after a scandal led to the end of the state lottery in 1892, criminal organizations operated illegal casinos during much of this time.²⁰

In the 1970s Louisiana enjoyed a robust economy based on oil exploration, and its governor, Edwin Edwards—a regular at Las Vegas casinos—shut down most of the remaining illegal casinos in the state. The oil bust of the 1980s severely strained Louisiana’s economy, and Edwards led an effort to legalize gambling and create a state lottery. After

eight years out of office he made the issue a central part of his 1991 campaign for an unprecedented fourth term as governor, prompting sitting governor Buddy Roemer to take the steps suggested by Edwards during his last term.²¹ Edwards won the election despite a general reputation for corruption and federal racketeering charges during his third term. In fact, during his infamous runoff election against former grand wizard of the Ku Klux Klan David Duke, bumper stickers supporting Edwards read, “Vote for the Crook, It’s Important.”²² Even before this reemergence of legalized gambling in the 1990s, Louisiana allowed local governments to license charitable bingo, leading professional operators to offer large pots that local charities could not match.²³ Given the history of gambling in Louisiana, examples of high-stakes bingo locally, and a favorable decision in *Seminole v. Butterworth*, Sickey began considering gambling as a potential source of revenue in the 1980s—with the reasonable expectation of tolerance if not acceptance from the state’s citizens.

Lacking a tax base, the Coshattas relied heavily on grants. As Sickey described it, “I went around using every resource I could find.”²⁴ These grants, however, provided money dedicated only to particular programs, and the tribal administration wanted discretionary funding to spend on new projects.²⁵ With this goal in mind, the tribal council unanimously authorized a gaming operation on January 18, 1984. The ordinance (no. 84-1) “authorized . . . Bingo, Keno, and related games of chance for amusement purposes on Reservation property in Allen Parish.”²⁶ The Coshattas planned to offer high-stakes bingo at their gym on the reservation and use the money to build tennis courts and a swimming pool, increase spending on the community preschool program, start a community-owned service station, and increase reservation housing.²⁷ Since the Coshattas lacked funds to purchase startup equipment, they formed a partnership with Jaco LeBlanc, but the Coshatta Tribal Council insisted that the community own and operate all games. High-stakes bingo began at the Coshatta Reservation on May 11, 1984; this first tribally owned gaming facility in the state led the way for the Chitimacha Tribe, which opened its own bingo operation a year later.²⁸

Throughout the twentieth century the Coshattas had maintained a predominantly positive relationship with surrounding non-Indian communities. Elton public schools welcomed Coshattas even before integration; the Allen Parish Police Jury aided the community in building a park, and the town of Elton partnered with the Coshattas to attract

tourists to the area.²⁹ Tribal leaders advertised in surrounding communities, and several local newspapers ran stories about the business. Local non-Indian communities seemed to support the new endeavor as both potential entertainment and a local source of employment. One local paper ran the article “Bingo in Elton—No Problem,” and the Coushatta community even hired three deputies from the local sheriff’s office to provide security and park cars.³⁰ Initially, local government agencies gave no indication that they might attempt to shut down the new business. According to the bingo manager, Bertney Langley, Allen Parish officials changed their position on Coushatta gaming when local church groups, who opposed gambling on moral grounds, and local bar owners, who viewed the operation as unfair competition, began to complain.³¹

Langley learned of the sheriff’s department’s plans to shut down the bingo hall and met the deputies at the door accompanied by his lawyer, John Demoruelle. He initially refused to allow them to enter the building, correctly maintaining that they had no jurisdiction on the reservation, but he stepped aside after conferring with local FBI agents. The sheriff’s department apprehended only selected employees, and Langley, who was not detained, maintains that parish officials were trying to avoid arresting American Indians. A few days after Langley complained to the local press that officers arrested employees and not their manager, the sheriff’s department picked up Langley. The warrant accused him of “the crime of gambling” and listed blackjack, roulette, and pull-tabs as well as bingo as games offered at the Coushatta gym.³² After the addition of Langley, the list of accused numbered nine.

With their employees facing arraignment for state prosecution, the Coushattas quickly worked to reopen their bingo hall and block the district attorney’s case, scheduled for court on January 15, 1985. Eleven days before the scheduled court date United States District Judge Earl Veron issued a restraining order against Allen Parish, preventing state prosecution, and scheduled a hearing for January 18 to settle the issue of jurisdiction on the reservation.³³ Before the raid on the Coushattas, Allen Parish District Attorney Alfred Ryder, who had supported Coushatta efforts for state and federal recognition in the 1970s, wrote to Louisiana Attorney General William Guste for advice.³⁴ Guste forwarded the letter to Fred G. Benton, a Baton Rouge lawyer serving pro bono for the state attorney general as a special assistant focused on Indian affairs. Guste

advised him not to pursue the Coushatta case in federal court, stressing that Ryder's case could adversely affect state efforts to limit the land claims of the Houma and Tunica-Biloxi tribes through negotiation by reinforcing the idea of tribal sovereignty.³⁵ Additionally, Coushatta officials had tried to convince Ryder and other local officials "that only the federal government" had "the jurisdiction to enforce laws on an Indian reservation."³⁶

Ignoring attempts by both the state and the Coushatta community to deter him, Ryder continued to pursue the case. He took "the position that where the federal government has not reserved exclusive jurisdiction in specific crimes. . . . [I]t was intended that the state exercise jurisdiction."³⁷ Ryder hoped to win the case by focusing on games allegedly offered by the Coushattas that were illegal under state law rather than regulated by the state.³⁸ However, unlike Florida, where the federal district court made a distinction between the state's jurisdiction over criminal and regulatory law, Congress had granted Louisiana no jurisdiction on Indian reservations.³⁹ The Coushatta case appeared strong, but as David E. Wilkins and K. Tsianina Lomawaima make clear, Indian law and policy have been "marked by inconstancy, indeterminacy, and variability in interpretation."⁴⁰

Despite his admittedly knowing little about Indian law, Carrol Spell Sr., a retired judge from Lafayette, acted as the attorney of record for the Nine from the Pines after learning of the case from his friend Jaco LeBlanc.⁴¹ By January 9, 1985, the Native American Rights Fund (NARF) had agreed to assist in the case; however, Henry Sockbeson, the NARF attorney assigned to the case, clearly stated that he was present to represent the interests of the Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana, not the individuals accused of gambling.⁴² The federal case, *Langley v. Ryder*, began on January 18, 1985, and Judge Veron announced his decision on February 12, ruling that the state had no jurisdiction on the reservation. Unfortunately this also meant that state and local law enforcement on tribal lands was pulled and the Coushattas were left with no police protection. Veron suggested three possible solutions: formation of a tribal police force, an increase in federal law enforcement in the area, or voluntary submission to state law.⁴³ Allen Parish appealed, and the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals upheld Veron's decision on December 18, 1985.⁴⁴ Before the court's decision, Bertney Langley had mused, "Maybe they'll let the Indians win some battles now," and indeed the tribe had won this one.⁴⁵

Despite the victory, the Coushatta community faced political turmoil because some of its members opposed gambling on the reservation and claimed the tribal council had approved it without community support. As opposition to gaming grew, Coushattas who had moved out of the state to seek better employment—primarily in the Houston area but as far away as California—returned to the Elton area to lead a political movement to oust the Sickey administration. They returned at the request of relatives who opposed gaming and felt marginalized by the tribal government. Council elections were then held on January 19, 1985; Sickey's political opponents replaced all five members of the tribal council, and elected Edwin Poncho, a California resident, tribal chairman. After the election, Poncho and his supporters claimed Sickey removed files, documents, and office equipment from the administration building and had the water and electricity disconnected. They also accused the tribal council and administrators of misusing federal funds and called for investigations. Sickey maintained that he had removed only personal items, and that utility companies had discontinued their services because he removed his name from agreements with them.⁴⁶ Sickey and his attorney, Spell, challenged the election as illegal, and six days after the vote the BIA agreed—acknowledging Sickey's continued leadership of the community in a conversation with Spell.⁴⁷ However, it also became clear to the BIA and the Sickey administration that the community needed an official election. Despite tribal guidelines for four-year council terms and elections every two years, the Coushattas had not held an election since 1973, and Sickey had led the tribe since federal recognition.⁴⁸ Langley maintains that before the political turmoil following the gambling debate the Coushatta people showed no interest in holding elections. Nevertheless, the people now demanded their right to vote, and the tribal council complied.⁴⁹ Sickey wrote to the BIA on January 29, 1985, "requesting technical assistance from the Bureau in compiling an eligible voter's list and voting procedure in preparation for a tribal election to be held at the earliest possible time."⁵⁰

Robert Benn, the superintendent of the Choctaw Agency in Mississippi, which administered BIA programs in both Mississippi and Louisiana, recommended a four-point plan. He proposed sending Harold Keyes, a non-Indian social worker who had some limited experience working with the Coushatta community, to provide assistance as a representative of the BIA; forming a five-person election committee no later

than February 25, 1985; and empowering the committee to update the tribal enrollment records, give notice of the election to tribal members, set the date of the election, and create opportunities for individuals to announce their candidacy. Additionally, Benn notified the Coughattas that Irvin Santiago, tribal relations specialist with the Eastern Area Office of the BIA, would assist in the research and development of the eligible voters list and that someone from the inspector general's office would begin auditing Coughatta programs in late February.⁵¹

Keyes met with the Coughatta people on February 21, 1985, to explain his role in resolving the political issues they faced. Accompanied by a six-man BIA special police force meant to solve the law enforcement problem highlighted by *Langley v. Ryder*, he insisted that members of the community must "settle their problems among themselves" and made it clear that federal funds would be discontinued if a solution were not found.⁵² Keyes stressed, "Everyone will lose unless the bickering can be stopped."⁵³ He also informed the audience that federal officials would audit the tribal government as requested by Poncho and his supporters, and Indian Health Services, which handled the community's healthcare needs generally and funded a community health clinic, would explain their program.⁵⁴

Facing accusations that they stole federal money intended for the welfare of the community, Sickey administration officials denied any malfeasance and suggested that some community members had unrealistic expectations. Langley, who served as Coughatta health services administrator as well as manager of the bingo operation, insisted some members of the community simply did not understand that federal funds were insufficient to meet the total needs of the community, and Lovelin Poncho, community housing director, asked rhetorically, "We have medical services, a school, recreation, housing. What else do they want?"⁵⁵ Community members expressed diverse opinions on this issue. Rhonda Greene told a local newspaper, "Half of the Indians [in the Coughatta community] don't understand the rules and regulations that have to be followed to get services."⁵⁶ Addis Williams, who lived with his wife and three children in a one-room home with no bathroom, insisted, "There is money to take care of the Indians, but it stops before it gets to us."⁵⁷ Williams's concerns echoed not only those of many within the Coughatta community but also other American Indians in the state. In 1988, Governor Buddy Roemer held a forum on Indian affairs, and

American Indians representing multiple communities expressed concerns that “Tribal chairmen/councils” are “not responsive to requests about programs, available services, grants received, tribal government, etc.” and that tribal members “are not getting the services they are entitled to receive.”⁵⁸ Clearly, tribal governments in Louisiana did not meet all of their communities’ needs, but available evidence did not clarify to state officials whether a lack of available resources, poor communication, or malfeasance created these problems.⁵⁹

Federal auditors with the Coushattas sought to answer this question but offered only unclear, conflicting assessments. Dr. William Betts of the Indian Health Service concluded that no evidence of impropriety existed in the community health program and maintained that many of the complaints about it “were motivated by no other reason than to discredit the present administration for political purposes.”⁶⁰ But federal auditors criticized both the BIA and Sickey for poor administration of other tribal programs.⁶¹ Accusations included “double-billing the federal government; charging rent for buildings and equipment, built or purchased with federal funds; excessive administrative costs; tribal employees receiving ‘an inordinate share’ of program benefits; and almost \$50,000 in housing funds for the needy given to Sickey and top ranking officials in his administration.”⁶² Frank DeRosier, who constructed most of the tribal housing and also worked on Sickey’s house, maintained that Sickey paid for his home improvements with his own money.⁶³ Additionally, although Jaco LeBlanc submitted an accounting statement indicating that he lost money assisting the Coushattas with the bingo operation, auditors insisted, “The lack of controls in the Tribe’s gambling operations included inadequate record keeping, no signed agreement between the tribe and the architect [LeBlanc], and no safeguards over the inventory of the gambling paraphernalia. These absent controls made the bingo operation susceptible to fraud and abuse, but the lack of records made it difficult to determine whether fraud or abuse occurred.”⁶⁴

Considering the complexity of these issues and the competing interpretations of events, many of the eighty-five to one hundred community members present at the February 21 council meeting understandably showed uncertainty about whom to trust.⁶⁵ Sickey missed the meeting due to a “prior appointment with an attorney,” and Poncho took the opportunity to suggest, “Sickey is never around.” Tribal members fired

tough questions at both Poncho and Langley, who represented Sickey, in both Koasati and English. Reflecting the confusion felt by many, one individual stated, "They (the Poncho faction) came to us and asked for our help. We have a sincere interest in doing what we feel is best for the tribe. It appears that both sides are not telling the truth about any of the situations." Despite occasional laughter, disagreements were heated. At one point a Coughatta elder berated Poncho for an inaccurate translation of a Keyes statement shouting, "Say what the man said and leave your opinions to yourself."⁶⁶

Both the historic relationship of the Alabama-Coughatta Tribe and the Coughatta Tribe of Louisiana and the issues dividing the Coughattas made establishing election guidelines difficult. Poncho and Sickey disagreed about whether to have residency requirements for voters and candidates and when to hold the election. Conflict surfaced immediately when Poncho submitted a petition from Coughattas living in Texas requesting the right to vote in the upcoming election. According to a local paper, Poncho argued, "their [Coughattas living in Texas] 'spiritual alliance' was tied deeply to the Elton area."⁶⁷ The Alabama-Coughatta Tribe had contacted the Coughatta Tribe of Louisiana as early as January 1985 concerning the issue, and Carol Battise, the Alabama-Coughatta tribal roll clerk, reported that tribal members began requesting termination from their rolls so that they could join the Louisiana Coughattas a year earlier, when the controversy over gambling first emerged.⁶⁸ The Alabama-Coughattas had only an unofficial list of their members because they were trying to certify their own enrollment as part of their effort to regain federal recognition, further complicating an issue that would resurface later.⁶⁹

The competing factions quickly selected representatives for the BIA election committee and scheduled their first meeting for February 27. Leroy Sylestine and Tom John, a retired Marine and resident of North Carolina who claimed that he returned to the Elton area as "a Christian peacemaker," represented Poncho supporters, and Bertney Langley and Barbara Langley, a secretary with the tribal administration, represented Sickey supporters.⁷⁰ Sickey continued to serve as tribal chairman but decided against running for reelection. When the election committee began the daunting task of certifying both voters and candidates, contentious issues reemerged immediately. Poncho supporters called for immediate elections with no residency requirements for voters or

candidates, while Sickey supporters wanted an August election and a six-month residency requirement for candidates.⁷¹ Because the two sides disagreed on virtually everything concerning the election, Keyes, the only non-Indian member of the election committee, held effective decision-making power: in fact, "Keyes cast the deciding ballot in each vote."⁷² BIA officials seemingly appointed Keyes under the assumptions that he would make impartial decisions and no Coughatta could maintain the same impartiality.

While the election committee worked through these issues, Sickey and the tribal council communicated with the BIA concerning a possible election date. In February Sickey scheduled the election for June 22, 1985. B. D. Ott, the BIA Eastern Area director, replied to the letter from Sickey suggesting the election be held before June 5, 1985, the date of the next annual meeting of the Coughatta Alliance.⁷³ On April 2, 1985, a delegation of Poncho supporters, including LeRoy Sylestine and Tom John, visited the BIA Eastern Area Office in Washington DC and unilaterally negotiated an agreement, stating, "[I]f no election took place on or before May 25, 1985, the Eastern Area Office would suspend the Letter of Credit authorization on all contracted programs." Ott presumably supported this threat to force the Sickey administration to accept what he considered a "compromise . . . election date."⁷⁴

Determining the eligibility of voters also remained a contentious issue because some members of the Alabama-Coughatta community in Livingston, Texas met the blood quantum requirements for enrollment in the Coughatta Tribe of Louisiana and wished to vote in the May election. Poncho supporters endorsed their efforts, while Sickey supporters stressed the importance of maintaining enrollment standards. Keyes sided with the Poncho supporters, and members of the election committee allowed members of the Alabama-Coughatta Tribe to terminate their enrollment in Texas and register to vote in the Coughatta Tribe of Louisiana's election. Bertney Langley accused Keyes of exceeding the committee's responsibilities by deciding tribal membership and claimed that some of the individuals trying to vote in the election "admitted they don't have a drop of Coughatta blood."⁷⁵ Later enrollment controversies would give credence to this suggestion that the committee may have enrolled some Alabamas.

A meeting of the Tribal Election Committee (TEC) on May 2, 1985, revealed the tension between Keyes and Sickey's representatives. Al-

though Keyes promised to go to Livingston, Texas, alone to meet with Alabama-Coushatta officials, he instead brought Poncho supporters Sam Robinson and Harold John with him. They returned with a list of active and inactive members of the Alabama-Coushatta Tribe who had registered to vote in the Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana's election. The entire next meeting of the election board became a power struggle between Keyes and administration officials Barbara Langley and Bertney Langley, with little input from Poncho's representatives. Criticizing Bertney Langley's cautious approach to accepting individuals from Texas as members of the community, Keyes focused on healthcare funding disbursed by the tribe to individuals in the Houston area. He asserted, "If you do not recognize them, I don't know how you could have justified expending the money. . . . I would conditionally certainly qualify these people . . . since ya'll by common law accepted them."⁷⁶ Barbara Langley quickly reminded Keyes, "it's not for you to decide," and Bertney Langley stressed to the committee chairman, "whenever everything is over here you personally will leave the reservation here, and we will never see you."⁷⁷ Bertney Langley's concern over the issue prompted him to send recordings of TEC meetings to Santiago at the BIA Eastern Area Office.⁷⁸

Dual enrollments, people claiming membership in the Alabama-Coushatta and Coushatta tribes simultaneously, were a real possibility because the Alabama-Coushattas had state but not federal recognition and movement between the two communities was common historically. Consequently Alabama-Coushatta Chairman Morris Bullock contacted Coushatta leaders in Louisiana to clarify several issues. Representatives from both communities met on April 3, 1985, and Bullock expressed concern about the number of individuals requesting termination from his community.⁷⁹ During the discussions Coushatta officials answered several questions concerning the options of individuals wishing to change their tribal affiliation. Sickey and Langley asserted that those forfeiting their recognition as Alabama-Coushattas "may apply for re-admission [to the Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana], but there is no guarantee that they will be re-admitted."⁸⁰ They also informed Bullock that anyone on the rolls of the Alabama-Coushatta Tribe did not qualify for anything from the Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana, regardless of where they lived.⁸¹ Consistent with *Santa Clara Pueblo v. Martinez*, Sickey supporters believed the tribal council—not the BIA—still controlled tribal membership.

At a meeting of the TEC, Keyes made it clear that he disagreed, suggesting that tribal elders join the election committee to determine the eligibility of individuals on the unofficial Alabama-Coushatta roles for membership in the Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana. Keyes's proposal implied that the election committee would determine eligibility for membership in the community, and if anyone missed the implication, Keyes spelled it out later in the meeting when Bertney Langley and Barbara Langley asked him who would make decisions concerning new tribal enrollments. He replied, "This committee." Bertney Langley immediately replied that the committee had "no powers to accept members."⁸² Both Sickey representatives reiterated this position in a letter sent to BIA officials—including Benn, Ott, and Keyes—in May. The letter asserted that the Coushatta Tribal Council exercised the power to grant membership in the community, and "unless the Council specifically delegates such an important responsibility to another entity, they retain it for themselves."⁸³

Keyes answered this letter by changing the focus from granting tribal membership to certifying electors. He argued that the tribal council delegated to the election committee the authority "of certifying candidates for office and individual electors who have signed certificates and who registered to vote."⁸⁴ However, Keyes's answer ignored the complex issues surrounding the registration of voters. If an individual appeared on the Alabama-Coushatta roles, then, based on the policy of the Coushatta Tribal Council, they did not qualify simultaneously for legal membership in the Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana—but Keyes allowed these individuals to vote if they met all other criteria for membership and relinquished their membership with the Alabama-Coushattas. Despite his technical response to these criticisms, Keyes hinted at his real motivation for controlling new enrollments at the May 2 meeting of the TEC. Despite the earlier BIA decision that Sickey remained chairman, he stated, "There are very serious questions as to the legality of the tribal council" and admitted the power wielded by the committee was only "an implied responsibility."⁸⁵ The issue concerned Sickey, who wrote BIA officials, arguing, "The attempt to equate voter eligibility with tribal membership on the part of Mr. Keyes seems to be the equivalent of the United States Government transferring all authority to grant US citizenship to local or state election committees."⁸⁶

Sickey requested a meeting with Keyes to discuss the matter, but

Keyes refused, arguing all members of the committee, including alternates, must be present for any meeting with the tribal council.⁸⁷ In response, Sickey wrote to Ott on May 16, 1985, arguing, "The matters of tribal membership and voter eligibility *must* be kept separate," suggesting that the TEC's sole function was to register Coushatta voters already clearly enrolled in the tribe.⁸⁸ He voiced concern that Keyes was not following the regulations established by the tribal council. For example, the council and the election committee had agreed to a deadline of April 25, 1985, for voter and candidate registration, but after the designated date passed, individuals continued to terminate their enrollment with the Alabama-Coushatta Tribe to vote in the Coushatta election. Sickey recommended that the BIA freeze the Texas community's rolls beginning on May 13 and that the Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana not accept any conditional terminations or offer any guarantees of acceptance.⁸⁹ Despite the concerns of Sickey, Langley, and others, the election committee accepted voters who had recently terminated their affiliation with the Alabama-Coushattas, and the relinquishment form did offer conditional termination, stating, "If such enrollment (with the Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana) is not approved, this relinquishment statement is not effective."⁹⁰

By May 13, 1985, the Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana reported that 15 Alabama-Coushattas had terminated their enrollment in the Texas community to participate in the upcoming election.⁹¹ Although not a large number, it was significant because the community as a whole only had 298 registered voters and because tribal members would later challenge some of these enrollments.⁹² The 5-person committee examined each potential elector to insure that they met the eligibility criteria of being at least eighteen years of age, one-quarter Coushatta, and not adopted or enrolled in another Indian nation. As they proceeded, more problems arose.⁹³ Members of the election committee had agreed to keep their proceedings secret until they announced official decisions, but community members under review often knew about proceedings within the committee earlier. Both Barbara Langley and Bertney Langley wrote letters to Keyes informing him that individuals in the community were aware that the committee was questioning their status as eligible voters. Barbara Langley wrote, "I have been receiving phone calls, for example, Bridget Langley, asking why she was in question and she also requested to meet with the Committee to object to the action that

was presumably taken.”⁹⁴ Keyes read the letter during a TEC meeting and responded, “I can understand; we should not be releasing that information anymore.”⁹⁵ However, just five days later, in a letter to the BIA official, Bertney Langley questioned his commitment to confidentiality, writing, “It seems that this agreement has not been kept as evident at the May 6 TEC meeting. At this meeting you asked the Committee to act on reviewing a relinquishment form submitted by Anna Thompson to you. The question that I have is: How did Mrs. Thompson know that she was in question when we, the Committee, had not mailed any letters to *anyone* pertaining to this matter?”⁹⁶

As the TEC worked to determine voter eligibility, residency requirements for candidates emerged as another contentious issue facing the committee. Poncho supporters wanted no residency requirement, and Sickey supporters favored a six-month minimum. Keyes offered a thirty-day residency requirement as a compromise.⁹⁷ However, Sickey and the council chose to amend Articles II and IV of the election ordinance submitted by the committee, which set residency requirements for candidates at thirty days, increasing the minimums to one year for candidates for tribal chairman and six months for candidates for tribal council.⁹⁸ The one-year requirement for tribal chairman made Edwin Poncho ineligible to run for the position, and his supporters reacted by threatening to stop the election.

Tom John voiced their position in a local newspaper, stating, “They [Poncho supporters] will do whatever they have to do to change the requirement. If it means stopping the election and federal funding to the reservation being cut, that is what we are prepared to do. Edwin Poncho will run for office. The people realize whatever funding they are presently receiving, including Indian Health Service money, will stop and are prepared to accept this.”⁹⁹ This threat from John intensified the debate in the Coughatta community and in the press. A local paper quoted Bertney Langley as saying, “They asked for an election, one has been set, and now they are going to fight against what they wanted to start with. . . . I doubt he [Tom John] is speaking for the total Coughatta people.”¹⁰⁰

Despite all of the issues surrounding the TEC and the tribal council, election clerk Phyllis Abbey went forward with voter registration and candidate qualifying at the Indian Health Service Building, and the election took place on May 25, 1985.¹⁰¹ Edwin Poncho unwillingly ended

his campaign for the tribal chairmanship, but voters elected one of his supporters, Leroy Sylestine—who then appointed Poncho tribal administrator, a new position in Coushatta politics. Sylestine believed he had a mandate against gaming and for increased community involvement in tribal government. The *Lake Charles American Press* quoted Sylestine as saying, “The majority of people have spoken and we don’t want gambling here. We just want to have a say in what is going on so we will have monthly tribal meetings to keep everybody up-to-date on everything.”¹⁰²

Sickey and his supporters described the May 25 election as illegal in a number of letters to BIA officials. According to them, the election committee conditionally qualified two candidates for office, failing to clear the candidates before the April 25 deadline; issued absentee ballots after the May 10 deadline, including the day of the election; and in one case accompanied an individual to the polls.¹⁰³ They blamed Keyes for these irregularities, claiming he had failed to perform his duties as chairman of the election committee. On May 16, 1985, Sickey had written to W. D. Ott requesting that the BIA replace Keyes, arguing, “In many ways it is evident that Mr. Keyes is *not* a neutral person. His partiality to one of the factions in the forthcoming election is quite evident. . . . The Coushatta Tribal Council can no longer tolerate Mr. Keyes’ obviously biased approach. We request that another person be assigned at the earliest possible time, who will be completely neutral and who will conscientiously follow the guidelines of the Tribal Election Committee as established by the Council.”¹⁰⁴ A letter from Bertney Langley and Barbara Langley to Keyes sent after the election echoed Sickey’s sentiments, stressing that Keyes had proven himself “biased . . . and far from neutral.”¹⁰⁵

Objections from Sickey supporters did result in Keyes’s temporary removal from the TEC by Superintendent Benn of the Choctaw Agency in Philadelphia, Mississippi, but Ott overruled his decision sending Keyes back to the Coushatta community.¹⁰⁶ The election results stood, but conflict continued, and the political transition was far from smooth. After his election, Sylestine could not arrange a transition meeting with Sickey, who was out of his office searching for a new job. When Sylestine took office on June 5, he found tribal offices locked and tribal employees gone. When employees filed for unemployment, the new administration appealed to the state to deny benefits, arguing that they had fired no one. Bertney Langley, who represented the former employees seeking benefits, argued that the incoming chairman failed to re-

new federal contracts or contact his new employees; therefore, Langley and others assumed that they no longer held jobs with the community. In testimony to Louisiana's Appeals Tribunal for the Office of Employment Security, Langley stated, "When the new chairman was elected . . . I don't believe he made an effort to contact me or my staff or the funding agency . . . they had a week to contact me or the funding agencies and this did not happen. . . . So I figured, well, since there is no boss to tell me what to do I have to lay everybody off because I assume there is no money coming in."¹⁰⁷ Ideally the old and new administrations would have worked together to insure the smoothest possible transition for the benefit of the community, but the contentious nature of the election combined with articles in local newspapers suggesting that Sylestine and Poncho would replace all tribal employees clearly influenced Langley's actions. The animosity created during the election meant that the community's most experienced officials no longer worked for the tribe, and Sylestine's tenure as chairman ended early with a recall election.

Reflecting on his role in Coughatta politics over twenty years earlier, Keyes acknowledged he made mistakes chairing the TEC and may have favored one side because he opposed gambling.¹⁰⁸ However, the BIA placed him in an impossible situation. In 1985 Keyes asserted, "[W]e are here in a diplomatic capacity."¹⁰⁹ However, by choosing paternalism instead, the BIA further exacerbated the tribe's internal divisions. The BIA also failed to learn from their efforts to mediate tribal politics, sending Keyes to Rhode Island to handle a similar situation. Although Keyes refused to serve personally as chairman of the election committee this time, instead appointing a respected community member, the result was no better.¹¹⁰ More recently the Interior Board of Indian Appeals (IBIA), which has jurisdiction over BIA decisions, asserted, the "BIA must refrain from taking sides and from issuing a decision, i.e., intervening in the dispute."¹¹¹ Unfortunately the assertion was necessary because the BIA continued these paternalistic practices. In May 2011 an unelected group claimed leadership of the Coyote Valley Band of Pomo Indians, and the BIA superintendent for Central California and the acting Pacific regional director recognized them as the community's representatives. After an appeal by the tribal council the IBIA reversed the decision.¹¹²

Clearly the political divisions that emerged in the Coughatta community in the mid-1980s are not unique in American Indian history, and the paternalism of the BIA fits the master narrative in the field. But until

1985 the Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana, like many tribes in the twentieth-century South, had encountered primarily federal government neglect. Federal recognition in 1973 brought increased access to resources but also increased expectations from community members. After twelve years of recognition the Coushattas faced a challenge to their political self-determination as the BIA heavily influenced a tribal election, threatening the sitting tribal council with removal of services. Coushatta politics remained contentious after the 1985 election, and political disputes led to at least three additional requests for BIA intervention between 1987 and 2004.

After the 1987 election to replace Sylestine as tribal chairman, the TEC certified Beverly Poncho as the winner, but her opponent Barry Langley challenged her eligibility to run for chairman based on the residency requirements established during the 1985 election. Although the TEC saw insufficient cause to void the election, Sheila Lambert, a magistrate for the Eastern Band of Cherokees, declared Poncho an invalid candidate after an appeal by Langley. The TEC and two council members subsequently declared Barry Langley chairman, and the Eastern Area Office of the BIA refused to recognize Langley, instead insisting that the vice-chairman, who happened to be Beverly Poncho, serve as interim chair until the tribe held a new election. The community elected Lovelin Poncho, Sickey's former housing director, chairman in 1988, and despite an appeal by council member Anna Thompson, the BIA accepted the election results.¹¹³ In the wake of the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA) the Poncho administration began working to open a Las Vegas-style casino. Ironically, Bertney Langley, former manager of the bingo operation, led opposition to the casino, insisting the Coushatta people vote on the issue. Langley and his allies managed to delay the casino's opening, but they did not force a tribal referendum. Poncho negotiated a compact with the state, and the Coushatta casino became very profitable, quieting any potential internal opposition.

With the financial success of the Coushatta casino, the tribe realized the economic development touted by Ernest Sickey and increased their potential for self-determination, but internal political disputes continued to prompt BIA intervention into tribal affairs. In 1995, the same year the Coushatta casino opened, council members J. D. Langley, Harold John, and Roderick John passed a resolution accepting Lovelin Poncho's resignation as chairman and transferring his authority to Langley. Pon-

cho denied resigning, and the BIA refused to recognize Langley leading to another appeal to the IBIA, which was decided in the BIA's favor.¹¹⁴ As the tribe's economic power increased, the Poncho administration devoted more resources to protecting the casino—in part through lobbying. In 2001, in the midst of casino compact renegotiations with the state of Louisiana, the tribe hired Jack Abramoff as their lobbyist. Although effective in the short term, Abramoff would ultimately interfere in tribal politics and cost the tribe approximately 20 million dollars. "Questions raised about spending precipitated a political split reminiscent of the infighting in 1985."¹¹⁵ Council member David Sickey, son of Ernest Sickey, led opposition to the Poncho administration. According to David Sickey, "Chairman Poncho publicly decided to step down at the request of the tribe" at a February 7, 2004, meeting.¹¹⁶ Poncho denied resigning and, facing increasing opposition, petitioned for a restraining order against his political opponents. Although Coshatta Judge T. J. Davis granted the order, both the Coshatta police, led by Kevin Sickey, brother of council member David Sickey, and the local sheriff's office refused to enforce it. In response, Poncho requested and was granted BIA assistance to restore order.¹¹⁷ This BIA takeover of law enforcement was the first since the 1985 election controversy.¹¹⁸ During the next election in June 2005 Kevin Sickey became chairman, a post he held until 2013, when the tribe elected former chairman Lovelin Poncho.¹¹⁹

Before 1985 the history of Coshatta relations with the federal government was a story of an indigenous community struggling to gain recognition and assistance. Although achieving federal recognition in 1973 remains a pivotal moment in Coshatta history, 1984 and 1985 mark a more pronounced shift in Coshatta history and the Coshatta relationship with the federal government. BIA involvement in the 1985 election began a pattern of internal political disputes and BIA interventions often related to gaming. The struggles faced by the Coshattas remind us that federal recognition and gaming offer challenges as well as opportunities as tribes navigate relationships with local, state, and federal governments.¹²⁰

NOTES

1. Undated and unidentified newspaper clipping, News Clippings, Indian Affairs: 1983–1992, Louisiana State Archives, Baton Rouge LA (hereafter cited

as NCIA-LSA). Parishes in Louisiana are the equivalent of counties in other US states.

2. “Problems Raised by Indians’ Arrest,” *Baton Rouge Morning Advocate* (hereafter cited as *BRMA*), November 26, 1984, 2B, provided by Bertney Langley, housed in Heritage Department, Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana, Elton LA (hereafter cited as Heritage Department, Coushatta Tribe; copy in author’s possession).

3. The Coushatta’s experience supports Thomas Biolsi’s argument that “the discourse of federal Indian law” limits the potential claims of Indian communities to largely jurisdictional questions without necessarily solving larger structural problems. Biolsi, *Deadliest Enemies: Law and the Making of Race Relations on and off Rosebud Reservation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 182.

4. Brian Klopotek, *Recognition Odysseys: Indigeneity, Race, and Federal Tribal Recognition in Three Louisiana Indian Communities* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 5.

5. The Coushatta experience is consistent with the analysis of federal aid to Indian communities by Russel Barsh and Katherine Diaz-Knauf, “The Structure of Federal Aid for Indian Programs in the Decade of Prosperity, 1970–1980,” *American Indian Quarterly* 8, no. 1 (Winter 1984): 1, 12–13.

6. For a discussion of Coushatta relocations see Sheri Marie Shuck-Hall, *Journey to the West: The Alabama and Coushatta Indians*, *Civilization of the American Indian* 256 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008).

7. Ernest Cushing, Washington DC, “Investigation of Alleged Loss by Koasati Indians of Louisiana of Lands Acquired by Them Under Homestead Patents,” March 14, 1941, Joe Jennings Collection, Series 4C, Box 48, Folder 7, Archives of Appalachia, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City TN (hereafter cited as Jennings Collection); application no. 13010, Louisiana State Lands Office, Baton Rouge LA; Linda Langley, Claude Oubre, and Jay Precht, “Louisa Williams Robinson, Her Daughters, and Her Granddaughters (1855–1932): Recognizing the Contributions of Three Generations of Coushatta Women in Louisiana,” in *Louisiana Women: Their Lives and Times*, ed. Janet Allured and Judith F. Gentry (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2009), 164; The Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana, “*The Struggle Has Made Us Stronger*” (Elton LA: Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana, 1977), 4; Bobby H. Johnson, *The Coushatta People* (Phoenix AZ: Indian Tribal Series, 1976), 90; Kathryn S. Johnson and Paul Leeds, *Patteran: The Life and Works of Paul Leeds* (San Antonio TX: The Naylor Company, 1964), 93.

8. George Roth, “Federal Tribal Recognition in the South,” in *Anthropologists and Indians in the New South*, ed. Rachel A. Bonney and J. Anthony Paredes (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2001), 52. For more on early Coushatta efforts to gain BIA services, see James H. Precht, “The Lost Tribe

Wanders No More”: Indian Gaming and the Emergence of Coushatta Self-Determination,” PhD diss., Arizona State University, 2007, 45–75.

9. Precht, “Lost Tribe,” 76–80; Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana, “Struggle,” 2; Johnson, *Coushatta People*, 90.

10. Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana, “Struggle,” 4; for a discussion of the relationship between business cooperatives and establishing social and political infrastructure in Southeast American Indian communities, see Anthony Paredes, “Paradoxes of Modernism and Indianness in the Southeast,” *American Indian Quarterly* 19, no. 3 (Summer 1995): 354.

11. Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana, “Struggle,” 2; Johnson, *Coushatta People*, 91–93.

12. Denise E. Bates, *The Other Movement: Indian Rights and Civil Rights in the Deep South* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2012), 1.

13. Bates, *The Other Movement*, 16–19.

14. Fred B. Kniffen, Hiram F. Gregory, and George A. Stokes, *The Historic Indian Tribes of Louisiana: From 1542 to Present* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987), 308. Johnson claims household annual incomes were less than \$2,000 in the 1970s. Johnson, *Coushatta People*, 91.

15. Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana, “Struggle,” 5; Johnson, *Coushatta People*, 95–96; Kniffen et al., *Historic Indian Tribes*, 307–308.

16. Benton R. White and Christine Schultz White, “Phillip Martin: Mississippi Choctaw,” in *The New Warriors: Native American Leaders since 1900*, edited by David Edmunds (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 198–204.

17. Steven Andrew Light and Kathryn R. L. Rand, *Indian Gaming and Tribal Sovereignty: The Casino Compromise* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2005), 39; W. Dale Mason, *Indian Gaming: Tribal Sovereignty and American Politics* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2000), 44.

18. John R. Wunder, “Retained by the People:” *A History of American Indians and the Bill of Rights* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 97.

19. *Seminole Tribe of Florida v. Butterworth*, 491 F. Supp. 1015 (1980), available online through Lexis-Nexis; Renée Ann Cramer, *Cash, Color, and Colonialism: The Politics of Tribal Acknowledgement* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2005), 86–87; Light and Rand, *Gaming and Tribal Sovereignty*, 39–40; Mason, *Indian Gaming*, 46–47. For more on Seminole bingo as an extension of other twentieth-century efforts at economic development, see Jessica R. Catelino, “Casino Roots: The Cultural Production of Twentieth-Century Seminole Economic Development,” in *Native Pathways: American Indian Culture and Economic Development in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Brian Hosmer and Colleen O’Neill (Boulder: The University of Colorado Press, 2004), 67–68.

20. Tyler Bridges, *Bad Bet on the Bayou: The Rise of Gambling in Louisiana and the Fall of Governor Edwin Edwards* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux,

2001), 4, 6, 6–7. Catholics and Protestants agree on many other socially conservative political issues in Louisiana. For example, both the Catholic Church and most evangelical Christians oppose abortion rights.

21. Bridges, *Bad Bet*, 37.

22. Wayne Parent, *Inside the Carnival: Unmasking Louisiana Politics* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2004), 1.

23. “Bingo Operators Air Complaints,” *Lake Charles American Press* (hereafter cited as LCAP), 15 January 1985, provided by Bertney Langley, Heritage Department, Coushatta Tribe (copy in author’s possession).

24. Ernest Sickey, interview by Linda Langley, ca. 2007, Elton LA, video recording, Heritage Department, Coushatta Tribe.

25. Sickey, interview.

26. Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana, Tribal Ordinance no. 84–1: Bingo Operations Authorization, January 18, 1984, provided by Bertney Langley, Heritage Department, Coushatta Tribe (copy in author’s possession).

27. Undated and unidentified newspaper clipping, NCIA-LSA.

28. “Gaming,” Sovereign Nation of the Chitimacha, http://www.chitimacha.gov/tribal_about_gaming.htm.

29. Frank E. Brandon, Horton KS, to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Washington DC, January 12, 1920, Jennings Collection, Series 4C, Box 48, Folder 7; Johnson, *Coushatta People*, 94.

30. Richard Zmijewski, *Opelousas & St. Landry Today*, June 17, 1984, provided by Bertney Langley, Heritage Department, Coushatta Tribe.

31. Bertney Langley, interview by Jay Precht, October 10, 2002, Elton LA, recording, Heritage Department, Coushatta Tribe (copy in author’s possession).

32. Warrant for the arrest of Bertney Langley, October 28, 1984, provided by Bertney Langley, Heritage Department, Coushatta Tribe (copy in author’s possession).

33. Ann Kidder, “Gambling Case Asks Who’s in Charge on Indian Reservations,” *LCAP*, January 9, 1985, provided by Bertney Langley, Heritage Department, Coushatta Tribe (copy in author’s possession).

34. James E. Hawkins, Washington DC, to Alfred R. Ryder, Oberlin LA, April 30, 1971, Governor’s Commission on Indian Affairs, Indian Affairs: 1983–1992, Louisiana State Archives, Baton Rouge LA.

35. Fred G. Benton Jr., Baton Rouge LA, to Alfred R. Ryder, Oberlin, Louisiana, November 8, 1984, provided by Bertney Langley, Heritage Department, Coushatta Tribe (copy in author’s possession).

36. Quotation attributed to Ernest Sickey. “Problems Raised by Indians’ Arrest,” *BRMA*, November 26, 1984, 2-B, provided by Bertney Langley, Heritage Department, Coushatta Tribe (copy in author’s possession).

37. Quotation attributed to Alfred Ryder. “Problems Raised by Indians’ Arrest.”

38. Stephen L. Pevar, *The Rights of Indians and Tribes: An American Civil Liberties Union Handbook*, 3rd ed. (Southern Illinois University Press: Carbondale and Edwardsville, 2002), 143.

39. Undated and unidentified newspaper clipping, NCIA-LSA.

40. David E. Wilkins and K. Tsianina Lomawaima, *Uneven Ground: American Indian Sovereignty and Federal Law* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001), 6.

41. Linda Young, "Indian Jurisdiction Hearing Set for Jan. 18," *Jennings Daily News* (hereafter cited as *JDN*), January 10, 1985, provided by Bertney Langley, Heritage Department, Coushatta Tribe (copy in author's possession).

42. "Indian Rights Groups to Intervene," *JDN*, January 10, 1985, provided by Bertney Langley, Heritage Department, Coushatta Tribe (copy in author's possession).

43. *Langley v. Ryder*, 602 F. Supp. 335 (US District Court, Western District of Louisiana, Lake Charles Division, 1985), available online through Lexis-Nexis.

44. *Langley v. Ryder*, 778 F. 2d 1092 (5th Cir. 1985), available online through Lexis-Nexis.

45. Quotation attributed to Bertney Langley. Undated and unidentified newspaper clipping, NCIA-LSA.

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47. Ann Kidder, "Attorney Says Sickey Is Leader of Coushattas," *LCAP*, January 26, 1985, provided by Bertney Langley, Heritage Department, Coushatta Tribe (copy in author's possession).

48. Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana, Tribal Ordinance No. 1: An Ordinance to Establish Election Rules and Procedures of the Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana, May 1976, provided by Bertney Langley, Heritage Department, Coushatta Tribe (copy in author's possession); "Indians Convene," *JDN*, March 15, 1973, provided by Bertney Langley, Heritage Department, Coushatta Tribe (copy in author's possession).

49. Bertney Langley, interview.

50. Robert Benn, Philadelphia MS, to Ernest Sickey, Elton LA, February 11, 1985, provided by Bertney Langley, Heritage Department, Coushatta Tribe (copy in author's possession).

51. Langley, interview.

52. Linda Young, "Former Indian Residents Seek Voting Rights," *JDN*, February 22, 1985, provided by Bertney Langley, Heritage Department, Coushatta Tribe (copy in author's possession).

53. Ann Kidder, "Indians Urged to Work Together," *LCAP*, February 22, 1985, 5, provided by Bertney Langley, Heritage Department, Coushatta Tribe (copy in author's possession).

54. Kidder, "Indians Urged to Work Together."

55. Bertney Langley, interview; "Too Many Chiefs," newspaper clipping, pa-

per and date unidentified, provided by Bertney Langley, Heritage Department, Coushatta Tribe (copy in author's possession).

56. Suzie Smith, "Women Voice Support for Sickey Administration," clipping with no paper or date identified, provided by Bertney Langley, Heritage Department, Coushatta Tribe (copy in author's possession).

57. Linda Young, "Disabled Indian Wonders Why He Doesn't Receive Help," *JDN*, n.d., provided by Bertney Langley, Heritage Department, Coushatta Tribe (copy in author's possession).

58. Forum on Indian Affairs, Summary of concerns discussed, May 25, 1988, Indian Affairs: 1983–1992, Louisiana State Archives, Baton Rouge LA.

59. Participants in the forum also expressed concern about lack of communication from tribal governments, tribal enrollment, and lack of services for urban Indians and tribal members outside service area. Forum on Indian Affairs, Summary of concerns discussed, May 25, 1988.

60. Linda Young, "Indian Complaints Called 'Political,'" *JDN*, May 8, 1985, 2A, provided by Bertney Langley, Heritage Department, Coushatta Tribe (copy in author's possession).

61. Ann Kidder, "Indians, Feds Work on New Election Process," *LCAP*, February 28, 1985, 6, provided by Bertney Langley, Heritage Department, Coushatta Tribe (copy in author's possession).

62. Linda Young, "Federal Audit Alleges Indians Misused Funds," *JDN*, n.d., provided by Bertney Langley, Heritage Department, Coushatta Tribe (copy in author's possession).

63. Frank DeRosier, interview by Jay Precht, December 11, 2008, Elton LA, video recording, Heritage Department, Coushatta Tribe.

64. LeBlanc's accounting showed a net loss of \$23,765.67. L. J. LeBlanc, accounting statement, 10 April 1987, provided by Bertney Langley, Heritage Department, Coushatta Tribe (copy in author's possession); Linda Young, "Gambling Operation Audited," *JDN*, n.d., provided by Bertney Langley, Heritage Department, Coushatta Tribe (copy in author's possession).

65. The *Jennings Daily News* estimated eighty-five in attendance. Linda Young, untitled article, *JDN*, 22 February 1985, provided by Bertney Langley, Heritage Department, Coushatta Tribe (copy in author's possession). The *Lake Charles American Press* estimated one hundred. Kidder, "Indians, Feds Work on New Election Process," *LCAP*, February 28, 1985, provided by Bertney Langley, Heritage Department, Coushatta Tribe (copy in author's possession).

66. Young, "Former Indian Residents Seek Voting Rights."

67. Young, "Former Indian Residents Seek Voting Rights."

68. Carol Battise, Livingston TX, to Ernest Sickey, Elton LA, January 29, 1985, provided by Bertney Langley, Heritage Department, Coushatta Tribe (copy in author's possession).

69. Tribal Election Committee (hereafter cited as TEC), audio recording of meeting, May 2, 1985, provided by Bertney Langley, Heritage Department, Coushatta Tribe (copy in author's possession).

70. Kidder, "Indians, Feds Work on New Election Process."

71. Linda Young, "Indian Election Set for May 25," *JDN*, April 11, 1985, provided by Bertney Langley, Heritage Department, Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana (copy in author's possession).

72. Young, "Indian Election Set for May 25."

73. B. D. Ott, Washington DC, to Ernest Sickey, Elton LA, March 5, 1985, provided by Bertney Langley, Heritage Department, Coushatta Tribe (copy in author's possession).

74. B. D. Ott, Washington DC, to LeRoy Sylestine, Elton LA, April 2, 1985, provided by Bertney Langley, Heritage Department, Coushatta Tribe (copy in author's possession).

75. Bertney Langley, interview; TEC, audio recording of meeting, May 2, 1985.

76. TEC, audio recording of meeting.

77. TEC, audio recording of meeting.

78. Bertney Langley, Elton LA, to Irving Santiago, May 1985, provided by Bertney Langley, Heritage Department, Coushatta Tribe (copy in author's possession).

79. Morris Bullock, Livingston TX, to Alabama-Coushatta tribal members, April 16, 1985, provided by Bertney Langley, Heritage Department, Coushatta Tribe (copy in author's possession).

80. TEC, audio recording of meeting.

81. TEC, audio recording of meeting.

82. TEC, audio recording of meeting.

83. Bertney Langley and Barbara Langley, Elton LA, to B. D. Ott, Washington DC, May 3, 1985, provided by Bertney Langley, Heritage Department, Coushatta Tribe (copy in author's possession).

84. Harold Keyes, Elton LA, to Bertney Langley, Elton LA, May 9, 1985, provided by Bertney Langley, Heritage Department, Coushatta Tribe (copy in author's possession).

85. TEC, audio recording of meeting.

86. Ernest Sickey, Elton LA, to John Fritz, Washington DC, May 16, 1985, provided by Bertney Langley, Heritage Department, Coushatta Tribe (copy in author's possession).

87. Ernest Sickey, Elton LA, to Harold Keyes, Elton LA, and Keyes, to Sick-ey, May 6, 1985, provided by Bertney Langley, Heritage Department, Coushatta Tribe (copy in author's possession).

88. Ernest Sickey, Elton LA, to W. D. Ott, Washington DC, May 16, 1985, provided by Bertney Langley, Heritage Department, Coushatta Tribe (copy in author's possession).

89. Sickey to Ott, May 16, 1985.
90. Relinquishment form, May 13, 1985, provided by Bertney Langley, Heritage Department, Coushatta Tribe (copy in author's possession).
91. Ernest Sickey and Leonard Battise, Elton LA, to Morris Bullock, Livingston TX, May 13, 1985, provided by Bertney Langley, Heritage Department, Coushatta Tribe (copy in author's possession).
92. "Sylestine Elected Chief of Troubled Coushatta Tribe," *LCAP*, n.d., provided by Bertney Langley, Heritage Department, Coushatta Tribe (copy in author's possession).
93. Coushatta Tribal Council, Resolution No. 85-15, 4 April 1985: A Resolution to Accept Tribal Election Ordinance No. 1 with Modifications, provided by Bertney Langley, Heritage Department, Coushatta Tribe (copy in author's possession).
94. Barbara Langley, Elton LA, to Harold Keyes, Elton LA, May 2, 1985, provided by Bertney Langley, Heritage Department, Coushatta Tribe (copy in author's possession).
95. TEC, audio recording of meeting.
96. Bertney Langley, Elton LA, to Harold Keyes, Elton LA, May 7, 1985, provided by Bertney Langley, Heritage Department, Coushatta Tribe (copy in author's possession).
97. Young, "Indian Election Set for May 25."
98. Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana, Coushatta Tribal Council Resolution No. 85-15.
99. Linda Young, "Poncho Faction Will Try to Stop Election," *JDN*, April 19, 1985, provided by Bertney Langley, Heritage Department, Coushatta Tribe (copy in author's possession).
100. Linda Young, "Coushatta Indians Disagree," *JDN*, April 26, 1985, provided by Bertney Langley, Heritage Department, Coushatta Tribe (copy in author's possession).
101. Young, "Indian Election Set for May 25."
102. Ann Kidder, "Sylestine Elected Chief of Troubled Coushatta Tribe," *LCAP*, [25] May 1985, provided by Bertney Langley, Heritage Department, Coushatta Tribe (copy in author's possession).
103. J. D. Langley et al., Elton LA, to Tribal Election Committee, Elton LA, May 27, 1985, provided by Bertney Langley, Heritage Department, Coushatta Tribe (copy in author's possession).
104. Ernest Sickey, Elton LA, to W. D. Ott, Washington DC, May 16, 1985, provided by Bertney Langley, Heritage Department, Coushatta Tribe (copy in author's possession).
105. Bertney Langley and Barbara Langley, Elton LA, to Harold Keyes, May 28, 1985, provided by Bertney Langley, Heritage Department, Coushatta Tribe (copy in author's possession).

106. E. Harold Keyes, interview by Jay Precht, September 10, 2007, Meridian MS, Heritage Department, Coushatta Tribe (copy in author's possession).

107. State of Louisiana Appeals Tribunal for the Office of Employment Security, proceedings of hearing to decide a claim by Bertney Langley against the Coushatta Alliance, July 31, 1985, Opelousas LA, provided by Bertney Langley, Heritage Department, Coushatta Tribe (copy in author's possession).

108. E. Harold Keyes, interview.

109. Ann Kidder, "Tribe Meeting Called in Elton," *LCAP*, February 21, 1985, 9, provided by Bertney Langley, Heritage Department, Coushatta Tribe (copy in author's possession).

110. E. Harold Keyes, interview.

111. *Coyote Valley Band of Pomo Indians v. Acting Pacific Regional Director*, BIA, 54 IBIA 320, Interior Board of Indian Appeals, <http://www.oha.doi.gov/ibia/Ibiadecisions/54ibia/54ibia320.pdf>.

112. "Department of Interior Upholds Coyote Valley Council in Tribal Governance Dispute," Coyote Valley Tribe of Pomo Indians website, <http://coyotevalleytribe.com/coyotetribalrelease.pdf>.

113. *Anna Thompson et al v. Area Director, Eastern Area Office*, BIA, IBIA 88-31-A, Interior Board of Indian Appeals, <http://www.oha.doi.gov/ibia/IbiaDecisions/17ibia039.pdf>.

114. *Harold John and Roderick John v. Acting Eastern Area Director*, BIA, IBIA 95-158-A, Interior Board of Indian Appeals, <http://www.oha.doi.gov/ibia/IbiaDecisions/29ibia/29ibia275.pdf>.

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116. Shawn Martin, "Tribal Leaders at Odds," *LCAP*, February 8, 2004, 1 (copy in author's possession); Precht, "Lost Tribe," 187-188.

117. Shawn Martin, "Poncho Requests Federal Lawmen," *LCAP*, February 21, 2004 (copy in author's possession); Precht, "Lost Tribe," 189-90.

118. Shawn Martin, "Judge Delays Ruling on Reservation Resolution," *LCAP*, May 15, 2004, 1 (copy in author's possession); Precht, "Lost Tribe," 191-92.

119. Shawn Martin, "Tribe Holds Vote Despite Delay," *LCAP*, June 5, 2005, 1 (copy in author's possession); "Former Coushatta Tribal Chairman Lovelin Poncho Re-elected to Position," *The Republic*, June 4, 2013, <http://www.therepublic.com/view/story/9189ed4e6e1b4ee1879427fa50a4e1ed/LA--Coushatta-Tribal-Election>.

120. Klopotek's argument concerning federal recognition is also applicable to Indian gaming in this case, Klopotek, *Recognition Odyseys*, 5.