

Unlike the Minnesota tribes, the gaming tribes of Wisconsin have not sustained a strong, unified organization to represent their common political interests.²³ Though there was for a time the Wisconsin Indian Gaming Association (WIGA), it shared little in common with its Minnesota counterpart than the form of its name. WIGA was a loose confederation of the Wisconsin gaming tribes, and it disbanded in 1995 after a dispute relating to the Hudson casino proposal.

2. The City of Hudson Is an Attractive Site for Gaming Because of Its Proximity to the Twin Cities

Hudson is well-situated geographically to attract gaming customers from both Minnesota and Wisconsin. Located on the eastern shore of the St. Croix River, near the border of these two states, the City of Hudson is less than 20 miles from the major metropolitan area of the Twin Cities. The drive from downtown St. Paul to Hudson is along a major east-west highway, Interstate Highway 94 (I-94), and takes only a half-hour. Gaming, first in the form of dog racing and later in the form of a proposed Indian casino, emerged as a controversial issue within the Hudson community following a 1987 amendment to the Wisconsin constitution allowing parimutuel on-track betting.

In the fall of 1988, it became generally known that a dog track likely would be approved in each of five potential markets in Wisconsin, including one in western Wisconsin to service the Twin Cities area. Dog track promoters from across the country sent agents to the area to scout locations and to recruit local partners. The promoters understood that in order to receive a license, they would need to: (1) join with Wisconsin partners; (2) obtain local support in the form of a city council resolution; and (3) secure approval of the state racing board.

²³Some witnesses did describe, however, an effort among the Wisconsin tribes to unify in 1997 in negotiations for renewal of their gaming compacts with the state.