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Casino criticized for 'Slot University'

By CBC News
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Casino N.B. in Moncton is being criticized for its latest promotion which it's calling "Slot University."

Casino N.B. in Moncton has launched a controversial new promotion called "Slot University."

It's offering people an opportunity to learn to play slot machines for free. Casino management calls it a way to learn how to "maximize fun." But a former V.L.T. addict worries it will cause more people to get hooked on gambling.

Cameron Uhem, Casino N.B.'s Chief Operations Officer, said this week it promotes responsible gaming by helping people find the machine that suits them best before they spend any money.

"Our perception is it's not about gaming, it's buying an experience, it's like going to a movie, you're buying an experience," he said.

Former V.L.T. addict Sue Dryden said giving people free gambling lessons is like offering free drinking lessons.

"You might as well take a bottle of alcohol and set it down on a table and teach people how to drink responsibly...you're gonna get all wound up in all the action and it's slowly going to get bigger and bigger," she said. "If you're going to educate people then your need to educate them on what happens when it gets out of hand."

Dryden said when she decided to get help three years ago she was depressed and had cashed in her education savings for her children and her own retirement savings. In the end she lost \$50,000 and won about \$7,000.

She said at that time help was difficult to find. She called the 1-800 number but all she received was a list of support groups, many of which no longer existed, and some brochures.

"You never win, you lose...it's not just the money. It's the family life. You do things that are out of character. Lying and cheating and being deceitful and that's not who I was."