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Reflecting on the State of the IIPJ and the Condition of Indigenous Peoples Around the World

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Reflecting on the State of the IIPJ and the Condition of Indigenous Peoples Around the World

Abstract
As we come to the end of 2012, it is natural for the IIPJ contributors, readers, staff, and volunteers to reflect on the work of the Journal and on the reason we all contributed to that work. The year has been, by any standards, a real success. Yet, when we look worldwide, there is still much work to be done. Take, for example, the continuing gap in well-being; it is clear that there are some common problems across the more developed countries. Where efforts to create real partnerships between Indigenous peoples and governments have started, we hope they push forward. Where they have not, then they must start. May this upcoming year, 2013, be a year we look back on with pride for the accomplishments that occur.

Keywords
evidence-based policy, Indigenous, well-being

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Editorial for year's end 2012

Reflecting on the Past Year of the Journal

As we come to the end of 2012, it is natural for the IIPJ contributors, readers, staff, and volunteers to reflect on the work of the Journal and on the reason we all contributed to that work. The year has been, by any standards, a real success. We have published four issues including one special edition, "Water and Indigenous Peoples;" one regular edition with a focus "Economic Development in Indigenous Communities;" and two regular editions. We tripled the number of policy papers, published 30 percent more research-focused contributions, and four editorial essays. Over the year, more than 25,000 people used the Journal articles for research and teaching purposes, which represented a 100 percent growth from year two.

We look forward to reaching over 30,000 downloads of articles for research and teaching purposes in 2013. Our acceptance rates have gone down as more scholars, policy analysts, and researchers submit their work. This is natural as space in the journal becomes more competitive. We have honored our commitment to short turn-around times, both peer refereed and editor comments so authors can rely on getting material out in quality formats while the research is most useful. We will maintain our pledge. I should note that our hosts, Western University and Berkley Press, have used our exemplary record as goal in their on-line webinars.

Next year we will continue our pace of publishing with two special editions planned: One on early parenting and one on education. We will also publish two regular editions covering a spectrum of issues from around the world.

As we look at the published material, it is clear that the vast majority comes from developed countries with Indigenous populations. We are setting goals to reach out to communities, Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars, and policy analysts in less developed countries particularly in Latin and South America. We will work to keep our strong ties with Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the US. We are also looking at expanding our reach by publishing articles in languages other than English. Such articles will be accompanied by high quality English executive summaries.

Thanks to everyone for your interest and support. We welcome feedback on how we might do even a better job in the coming years.

Reflecting on Why We Developed the Journal

The Journal is an expensive undertaking, both in hours of work and finances. To create the quality of presentation, consistency of style, and website services and navigability takes considerable resources. We put these resources into the work because we passionately believe that with better evidence comes better policy and decision-making. It is critical that businesses, governments, administrations, individuals, and other institutions practice evidence-based decision-making and policy development. Too long have policies and actions been directed at, and imposed on, Indigenous peoples that are ideological, racialist, ethno-centric and/or politically motivated. Evidence-based actions that recognize

both "Western " and "Indigenous knowledge" perspectives are bulwark against these problematic approaches. However, to do that we need the very best evidence! This doesn't "drop from the sky – it comes from hard work," to quote a long past philosopher. That work is quality research, new and traditional knowledge that emanates from the very clearest understandings of the world around us and the activities of living things in that world.

The Journal is a small part of a system that acts as a gatekeeper to sort the good from not-so-good and disseminate evidence and evidence-based policy that can play a role in changing the social and physical world in which we live.

Reflecting on Indigenous People's Well-being

In 2007, the United Nations (2008) Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was passed and countries around the world signed on to its many proposals. The declaration outlines central principles such as non-discrimination and fundamental rights, self-determination (including forms of autonomy and the right to participate in decisions that impact you), individual and collective cultural rights, and a right to the integrity of your culture, rights to territories, control over natural resources, and the right to socio-economic well-being.

Although Indigenous peoples account for less than 5 percent of the world's population, they are about 10 percent of the poor. Within Indigenous populations, a large proportion live in poverty; the peoples number 300 million and more than 100 million fall below the poverty line in their respective countries (World Bank, 2011). In the World Bank's (2011) studies, there were few positives to note. Basing their analysis on indicators that matched Millennium Development Goals (under-five mortality, water deprivation, malnutrition, literacy, and net primary school enrollment), they find that in most or all countries and regions Indigenous peoples have lower scores across these indicators than the non-Indigenous populations (World Bank, 2011). Finally, the same meta-study found that the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations has maintained itself or increased across every region except China, India, and Vietnam (World Bank, 2011). Given a large proportion of Indigenous people in the world live in these countries, the relative improvement in poverty levels, health, and educational attainment is important.

When we look at the continuing gap in well-being, it is clear that there are some common problems across the more developed countries. Some of these commonalities include:

- Geography, including climate: The lands that peoples traditionally held or have been force into are not productive given current conditions.
- Manufactured dependency as part of colonial systems.
- Poor access to capital and other productive assets to generate and stimulate economic development.
- Ongoing barriers to self-determination that include governmental non-compliance with treaty and agreement rights.
- Limited access to many services, as well as the infrastructure needed to carry out those services themselves.
- Levels of human capital, measured in relative educational attainment and specific training, are low.

- General health is lower when measured as life expectancy, and higher when measured in terms of infant mortality and chronic and infectious disease prevalence indicators, than the non-Indigenous population.
- Specific health conditions, such as diabetes, tuberculosis, heart disease, and HIV/AIDS, show significantly higher incidence and prevalence rates.
- Community and collective trauma from centuries of colonial practices, including residential or boarding schools.

Taking up the Declaration of Indigenous Rights (United Nations, 2008) and working in partnership with the Indigenous peoples to improve these conditions are necessary steps for governments and other institutions that wish to see an improvement in the well-being of Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, alike. In the words of Wu Hongbo (2012), Coordinator of the Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples:

> Challenges persist, especially in recognizing [I]ndigenous peoples' right to ownership, and use of their lands, territories and natural resources. It has become even more imperative that Indigenous peoples are consulted about projects affecting their own communities. The principle of free, prior and informed consent must be fully operationalized and applied. Corporations and extractive industries interested in exploiting resources located in indigenous territories, must abide by the principles and norms of corporate social responsibility. On 13 September this year, we celebrated the fifth anniversary of the historical adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Let us all be guided by the principles and rights enshrined in the UN Declaration. Let us make this Declaration a living document where the world's indigenous peoples, through their rights to self-determination, can freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development. (p. 2)

Where these efforts have started, we hope they push forward. Where they have not, then they must start. May this upcoming year, 2013, be a year we look back on with pride for the accomplishments that occur.

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