



The Indigenous Peoples' Knowledges and Rights Commission of the International Geographical Union

January 4, 2007

Dear friends and colleagues,

Welcome to those who have recently joined us, and a huge thank you to everyone who has had a part in bringing this Newsletter together. The IGU Commission on Indigenous Peoples Knowledges and Rights (IPKR), was officially launched by Ron Abler at the Regional Conference of IGU in Brisbane on Thursday 6 July, 2006. Before this official launch, a diverse group of people, including many Commission steering committee members, gathered at Minjerribah Camp, Dunwich, on North Stradbroke Island. Thank you to everyone who assisted in bringing this together, particularly, Garth Cant (University of Canterbury) who worked with Auntie Joan and Aunty Margaret and ensured the Minjerrabah community were actively involved in both the preparations and the excitement that followed. Their welcome to country was an enlightening and valuable experience time for us all. The time together at Minjerrabah was spent discussing the objectives and expectations of an IPKR commission, and resulted in the following mission statement.

- To create a network within geography which allows Indigenous and non-Indigenous geographers working with and for Indigenous communities to share their research and experiences with each other and the discipline as a whole.
- To encourage and mentor young scholars, particularly Indigenous scholars, in pursuing geography as a career.
- To encourage and foster geographic research for and with Indigenous communities with the long-range goal of bringing the research needs of these communities to the attention of the discipline.

There were two keynote speakers at the IPKR launch at the Brisbane IGU Conference. Marcia Langton (Professor of Australian Indigenous Studies at the University of Melbourne, Australia) spoke about "The Aboriginal domain: key challenges for researchers and stakeholders". The title of Sir Tipene O'Regan's (Assistant Vice Chancellor - Maori at the University of Canterbury, Aotearoa/New Zealand) presentation was "Recarving old wood: Maori in the modern commercial world". The launch of the IPKR also acknowledged and paid tribute to the work of Dame Evelyn Stokes, Waikato University and Dr. Elspeth Young, Australian National University.

At the Brisbane IGU Conference, the IPKR organized seven paper sessions with thirty speakers on a variety of topics having to do with indigenous knowledges and rights. The sessions were very well attended and many attracted audiences from other sub-

disciplines. Many of the papers from these sessions were submitted for publication in a special edition of *Geographic Research* which will be published in 2007. The conference also provided a useful venue for a variety of informal meetings.

While the IGU meets every two years, the IPKR will endeavor to meet annually, with sessions related to a variety of regional meetings in the years when there is no IGU International Conference. Discussions at the Brisbane meeting resulted in the following provisional programme:

2007: IPKR meeting in Taiwan (October)

2008: International Geographical Congress in Tunisia

2009: IPKR meeting in Saskatchewan, Canada

2010: IGU regional conference in Tel Aviv

We will provide more information about these meetings as plans develop further. The IPKR representative from Taiwan has applied for funding from the Taiwan national government for next year's meeting. The 31st International Congress of the IGU will be organized by the Association of Tunisian Geographers and will be held in Tunis in 2008 (12-15 August, 2008) on the theme "Building together our territories" (see information below). The IPKR meeting in Saskatchewan, Canada, will be timed to allow participation in the Canadian Association of Geographers' annual meeting. As part of the process of building relationships with Indigenous communities, the IPKR will attempt to organize annual meetings so that there is engagement with local Indigenous communities in "their place", as well as academic presentations. This may present a challenge in some countries, for example with the Berber in Tunisia and Bedouin in Israel.

The IPKR list-server is now operational. If you know of others who would like to be added, please let us know. Dr. Maree Hemmingsen (University of Canterbury) is acting as interim secretary. We hope that once all the groundwork has been completed you will be able to interact with each other more freely and you will be able to have a significant input into future newsletters. Please feel free to send any material you would like included in future letters, to maree.hemmingsen@xtra.co.nz. The IPKR website is currently being developed and you will all be notified as soon as that is up and running.

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