



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

La Commission aux Droits et Connaissances des Peuples Indigenes



## 2012/2013 Report on the Indigenous Peoples' Knowledges and Rights Commission

Produced by Commission Chair, Brad Coombes, 4 December 2013

Since submission of the 2008-2012 quadrennial report, the IPKRC has focused on developing informative study tours which engage more directly with Indigenous communities and within their environs. These more active and engaged meetings better facilitate the core objectives of the commission: to create a network amongst Indigenous and non-Indigenous geographers; to encourage and mentor young academics, particularly Indigenous scholars; to encourage and foster geographic research for and with Indigenous communities.

### 1) Membership

The Commission's steering committee has remained stable for several years. We desire more active representation from Asia and South America, but the membership of the steering committee is representative of those countries that are most responsible for research on Indigenous geographies.

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#### a) Commission membership

On the basis of individuals who are registered with our email list-serv, the Commission's membership is currently 172. That includes several new members who were enlisted after the Commission's study tour to Hokkaido/Ainu Mosir during 2013.

Aotearoa/New Zealand	36
Australia	37
Austria	1
Canada	18
Finland	2
Ireland	2
Israel	2
Indonesia	1
Norway	3
South Africa	1
Sweden	3
Taiwan	8
United Kingdom	7
United States	51



Herders' shelter outside Steinkopf, South Africa (Photograph: Brad Coombes)

## 2) Meetings

### a) Cape Town 2012, with Study Tour to Richtersveld Community Conservancy

Because it would have been difficult to connect with Indigenous communities if the Commission had attempted a meeting to coincide with the IGU conference at Cologne, it decided instead to meet at the *Society of South African Geographers Conference* at Cape Town. After the conference, a group of 16 travelled to Eksteenfontein for three days to explore the efforts of the Nama to restore their Indigenous rights through a community conservancy. It was anticipated by the Nama that the proximity of the conservancy to the Richtersveld National Park and the Ai-/Ais Transfrontier Park, which spans the border between South Africa and Namibia, would enable tourism development. As the travelling party witnessed, however, neither the anticipated flows of tourists nor the capacity to profit from tourism have yet been realized.

Photo blog: <http://www.indigenousgeography.net/IPKRC/photoblogs/Richtersveld-2012/index.html>



Meeting at an Ainu log house, near Nibutani, Japan (Photograph: Brad Coombes)

### b) Study tour to Ainu Mosir/Hokkaido 2013 – prior to IGU Conference at Kyoto

Several members of the Commission have active research partnerships with academics in Hokkaido and have contributed many times to symposia about Ainu rights and development. A four day study tour to Hokkaido provided the opportunity for a group of 37 to evaluate whether the Diet's 2008 recognition of the Ainu as an Indigenous population has yielded meaningful outcomes. Flooding or destruction of cultural sites caused by construction of the Nibutani Dam, insecurity about whether the state will support language retention programmes, and the refusal of the local university to give back 1027 cadavers all suggest that progress with implementing Indigenous rights has been slow. Highlights of the trip included the active participation of Ainu people on the study tour, and the first ever 'Indigenous Geographies' symposium in Hokkaido at Hokusei-Gakuen University.

Photo blog: <http://www.indigenousgeography.net/IPKRC/photoblogs/AinuMosir-2013/index.html>

**c) Scheduled for June 2014: community engagements prior to the IAG/NZGS Combined Conference at Melbourne**

This will be a joint initiative of the Indigenous Peoples Working Group of the Institute of Australian Geographers, the New Zealand Geographical Society which may soon create an Indigenous Peoples Study Group and the Commission. The steering committee of the Commission has committed to facilitating involvement from Pasifika academics and to engage with local Indigenous communities.

**d) Scheduled for October 2014: symposium on Indigenizing Community Development at Winnipeg**

In 2009, Evelyn Peters – a member of the Commission’s steering committee – led a highly successful symposium on urban Indigeneity. The approach and outcomes of that symposium will be repeated in 2014 with a symposium on ‘Indigenizing Community Development’ that will include members of the commission and is intended to generate a book.

**3) Networking**

**a) Collaborations with other Commissions and Task Forces**

None during 2013.

**b) Collaborations with other international bodies**

There were no official collaborations during 2013, but the Commission and its members often work with national geographical associations to develop study tours or off-conference meetings.

Service, mentoring and foundational work with the Commission were listed as prominent reasons for recent awards that were bestowed upon some of its principal members. **Evelyn Peters**, who has been a member of the Commission’s steering committee since its inception, was awarded the *2013 Canadian Association of Geographers Award for Service to the Profession of Geography*. Her award notice refers to her “direct formative role in the establishment of the Commission on Indigenous Knowledges and Rights of the International Geographical Union in 2006” and her “experience and organisational capacities [which] have been crucial in building its membership and developing a strong platform of activities” ([http://www.cag-acg.ca/en/evelyn\\_peters.html](http://www.cag-acg.ca/en/evelyn_peters.html)). Along with three others, **Jay Johnson** (former chair of the Commission and current steering committee member) and **Renee Pualani Louis** (until recently, the secretary for the Commission) received the *2013 Association of American Geographers Enhancing Diversity Award* (<http://www.aag.org/cs/diversityaward>). The nomination letter for the award notes that “Johnson proposed [the...] Commission to the International Geographical Union” and that he organized pre-conference meetings which brought together the Commission and other national geographical associations with Indigenous communities (<http://news.aag.org/2013/12/enhancing-diversity-award/>).

The IPKRC has observer status with the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

**c) Cooperative efforts with the ISSC and ICSU**

None during 2013.

#### 4) Publications

##### a) Communications

The Commission regularly updates its membership through use of a dedicated website:

<http://www.indigenousgeography.net/ipkrc.shtm>

During 2013, the web site has been developed further to include a series of photo blogs about the Commission's study tours. Some of the Ainu organisations and individuals who were involved in our Hokkaido study tour requested that it be recorded online so that the thoughts of Indigenous academics could be conveyed to domestic politicians and policy makers. Provision of an interpretive and, at times, critical commentary is viewed as a means of giving back to the Indigenous communities that have supported our study tours. The links to photo blogs for those tours are:

<http://www.indigenousgeography.net/IPKRC/photoblogs/AinuMosir-2013/index.html>

<http://www.indigenousgeography.net/IPKRC/photoblogs/Richtersveld-2012/index.html>

<http://www.indigenousgeography.net/IPKRC/photoblogs/Taumutu-2010/index.html>

##### b) Written publications

The book resulting from the Saskatoon meeting which was mentioned in s. 2(d) was finally published during 2013: *Indigenous in the City – Contemporary Identities and Cultural Innovation*. (eds E Peters and C Anderson. UBC Press). Several steering committee and other members of the Commission contributed chapters for that book.

Three steering committee members approached *Progress in Human Geography* in 2010 to demonstrate the need for a series of progress reports on 'Indigenous Geographies.' The last of those reports – on methodological challenges/innovations – was recently accepted for publication. The other two are:

Coombes, B., Johnson, J. T., and Howitt, R. (2013). Indigenous geographies II: The aspirational spaces in postcolonial politics – reconciliation, belonging and social provision. *Progress in Human Geography* 37 (5), 691-700.

Coombes, B. L., Johnson, J. T., and Howitt, R. (2012). Indigenous geographies I: Mere resource conflicts? The complexities in Indigenous land and environmental claims. *Progress in Human Geography* 36 (6), 810-821.

#### 5) Archived materials

None transferred in either 2012 or 2013.