



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

La Commission aux Droits et Connaissances des Peuples Indigenes



## **2008-2009 Report on the Indigenous Peoples' Knowledges and Rights Commission**

Produced by Commission Chair Jay T. Johnson

7 April 2010

The Indigenous Peoples' Knowledges and Rights Commission was officially inaugurated at the regional IGU meeting in Brisbane, Australia in 2006. As one of the first commissions to be formed between IGU congresses, this report will only cover the first one and half years of activity by our fledgling commission. We are very appreciative of the support we have received from the IGU Executive Committee, particularly Rob Abler and the late Adalberto Vallega.

As articulated by our commission's steering committee at our first meeting in Australia, our commission has three main goals; first 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 through our publications, with the discipline as a whole; second, to encourage and mentor young scholars, particularly Indigenous scholars, in pursuing geography as a career; third, 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.

### 1) Membership

The Commission's steering committee has one last place unfilled and being held for a representative from Central or South America.

Our membership continues to grow as we hold collaborative meetings with various organizations around the globe. The large number of members from Australia and New Zealand is indicative of our first meeting being held in Brisbane.

a) Commission Steering Committee

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## b) Commission membership

Through its list-serve, the commission membership is currently 127. We are also in the process of integrating interested members of the Indigenous Peoples Specialty Group of the Association of American Geographers and the Native Canadians Research Group of the Canadian Association of Geographers.

Aotearoa/New Zealand	20
Australia	27
Austria	1
Canada	6
Finland	2
Ireland	1
Israel	1
Indonesia	1
Norway	3
South Africa	1
Sweden	2
Taiwan	7
United Kingdom	7
United States	50

## 2) Meetings

### a) **Plymouth, Massachusetts, USA, 12-14 April, 2008**

The 2008 meeting of the IPKRC was, like the 2007 meeting in Taiwan, a joint meeting, this time held cooperatively with the Indigenous Peoples Specialty Group of the Association of American Geographers and the Native Canadians Study Group of the Canadian Association of Geographers. The meeting took place on 12-14 April in scenic and historic Plymouth, Massachusetts as a pre-conference meeting prior to the 104<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of the Association of American Geographers in Boston. Thirty-six participants came from across North America, Europe, Asia and the Pacific.

As with our previous meetings, our agenda included meetings with local Indigenous communities. In Plymouth the commission met with representatives of the Aquinnah and Mashpee bands of the Wampanoag Nation. While the Aquinnah band received formal recognition of their status as an American Indian tribe in 1987, the Mashpee band was not successful in receiving recognition until 2007. Paula Peters, a member of the Mashpee band's tribal council, shared the history of the band's struggle for recognition and their land claims process. Following Paula's presentation, a participant from Te Wai Pounamu (South Island, New Zealand) Puamiria Parata-Goodall presented Paula with a book outlining the Ngai Tahu tribes land claims struggle.

Our meeting in Plymouth included a visit to the Plimoth Plantation, a bicultural, historical museum dedicated to portraying the Wampanoag and Pilgrim cultures as they existed in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. Linda Coombes, director of the Wampanoag education program at the Plantation, discussed the evolving relationship between the two cultures represented at the museum and led us on a tour of the facility, including a demonstration of period muskets.

Breakout sessions were dedicated to discussing various topics of interest and concern to the participants. Several discussions concerned the possibility of launching an Indigenous Geographies journal or incorporating Indigenous topics into existing geography journals. Graduate students had the opportunity to discuss the challenges of working with Indigenous communities. Discussions also included interest in

publishing on various topics including a special edition discussing various aspects of the methodological concerns raised by forming research relationships with Indigenous communities.

**b) “Indigenous Urbanization Internationally: Population, Community and Identity.” Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada 28-30 October 2009**

This conference was organized jointly with Department of Native Studies and the Johnson Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy at the University of Saskatchewan along with the Office of the Federal Interlocutor for Métis and non-Status Indians and the Saskatoon Indian and Métis Friendship Centre. The commission traveled to various Indian and Métis organizations on the first day of the meeting to learn about the history and struggles of the Indigenous urban population. Two days of paper presentations followed at the Delta Bessborough Hotel in Saskatoon with presentations reflecting Indigenous urban communities across North and Central America, Oceania and Southern Africa. The conference organizer and commission steering committee member, Professor Evelyn Peters, has secured a book contract for an edited volume with the University of British Columbia Press.

**c) Christchurch, New Zealand, July, 2010**

This meeting will be a pre-conference prior to the joint meeting of the New Zealand Geographical Society and the Institute of Australian Geographers meeting.

**d) “Indigenous Peoples and Climate Change.” Inari, Finland, October, 2011**

**3) Networking**

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

Our 2007 meeting in Taipei, Taiwan was a collaboration with the Islands Commission and created the opportunity for extensive conversation and hopeful joint publication through the Taiwanese Journal of Geographical Science.

**b) Collaborations with other international bodies**

Our commission has applied for and been awarded observer status as an academic organization by the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. Several members of the commission including the chair and secretary attended the Permanent Forum’s Seventh Session in April, 2008 to present a statement prepared by our commission on the social and cultural impacts of climate change in Indigenous communities. We have collaborated with a number of national geography organizations including the AAG, CAG, NZGS, and the IAG.

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

None to date.

**4) Publications**

We released a newsletter in the second half of 2008.