

Saving Indigenous Peoples

CAN NATIVE CULTURES SURVIVE IN THE MODERN WORLD?

Indigenous peoples in lands conquered by white Europeans — the Americas, Australasia and the Arctic — face a wide range of environmental, cultural and social problems. The world's native populations have rebounded numerically since the early 1900s, when many had been decimated, often by harmful assimilation policies. Australia and Canada have formally apologized for their earlier assimilation policies, and many indigenous groups today are seeking — and being granted — legal recognition of their political, economic and cultural rights. But uncertainty hangs over the survival of native cultures. Fewer young people speak their mother tongues and traditional customs are dying out. Moreover, native peoples often face daunting social problems, including dramatically lower life expectancies and significantly higher rates of poverty, suicide, alcoholism and domestic violence than among nonindigenous populations. Now, native groups face perhaps one of their biggest challenges: governments and private developers encroaching on their ancestral lands to exploit energy and other natural resources.

Indigenous Brazilians and environmental activists in São Paulo protest on Aug. 20, 2011, the proposed construction of the Belo Monte Dam on a tributary of the Amazon River, which would create the third-largest hydroelectric plant in the world. Indigenous lands around the globe are under attack by governments and private investors seeking to develop energy and other resources.



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Saving Indigenous Peoples

BY BRIAN BEARY

THE ISSUES

This is what Jenny Macklin, Australia's minister for indigenous affairs, saw on a recent visit to an Aboriginal community in the Outback town of Alice Springs:

"Women and children slept on mattresses in the open air, exposed to the elements. Children roamed the streets at all hours of the day and night, with no regard to going to school or getting home safely at night. Alcohol visibly ravaged the communities, resulting in terrible health, terrible violence and terrible tragedy."¹

Few in indigenous societies — native peoples who were conquered and are still dominated by white Europeans — face such dire living conditions, but the situation is nevertheless alarming. In the Americas, Australia, New Zealand and the Arctic, indigenous peoples have chronically high poverty rates, disproportionate shares of the prison population and life expectancies 10 years shorter than the general population.²

In recent years, however, some indigenous groups have made progress in bolstering their legal and political rights. Several Latin American nations, for example, now recognize the rights of indigenous peoples, according to the Copenhagen-based International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA). But a huge gap remains between those legal rights and how they are implemented in practice.³ For instance, states and multinational corporations are exploiting many of the natural resources found on in-



AFP/Getty Images/Martin Bernetti

A Mapuche girl sports traditional garb and plays with the group's national flag during festivities in Temucuicui, Chile, on Nov. 13, 2009. Argentina and Chile have deprived the indigenous Mapuche of control over their ancestral lands, according to the forest-dwelling group, in violation of international conventions. Mapuche activists have used violence and hunger strikes to press their case.

igenous lands in Latin America, notes the IWGIA, while the residents typically share little in the profits and see few improvements in their economic status.

In Europe, the term "indigenous peoples" generally applies to the Sami of northern Scandinavia (formerly known as Laplanders), the Inuit of Greenland and dozens of tiny enclaves in northern Russia. The Inuit — or Eskimos — also live in Canada, Russia and Alaska. In the United States the term applies to Native Americans. In Latin America, determining who is "indigenous" is more difficult.

"The [Spanish] Conquistadores intermarried more than other colonialists did with the native peoples, so it is harder to say who is an Indian and who is white," says Eduardo Gonzalez, a Peruvian who monitors indigenous rights issues for the International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ). The New York-based group helps countries recovering from mass atrocities and repression to establish institutions to help provide accountability and redress for past abuses.

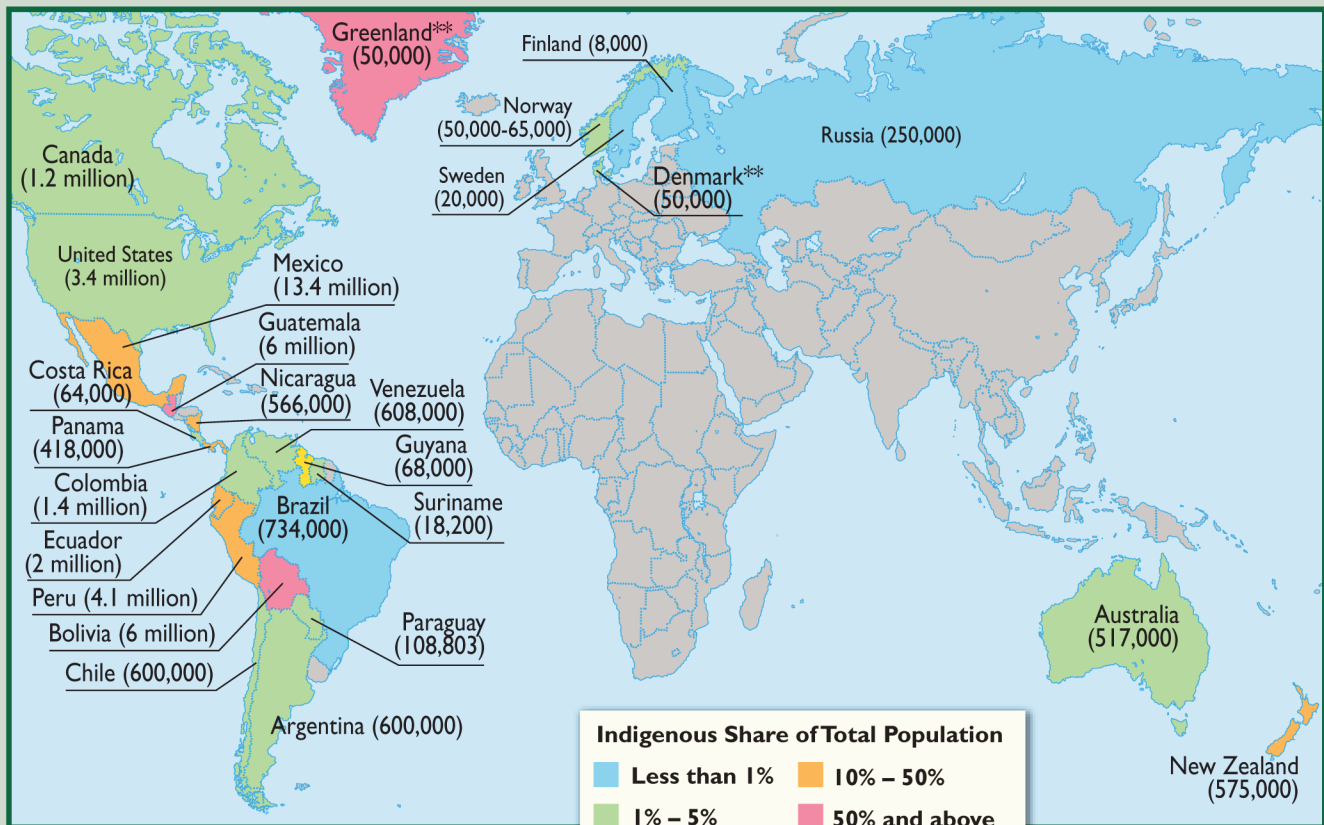
In his native Peru, Gonzalez notes, the 40 native Amazonian groups who make up less than 5 percent of the population self-identify as indigenous, while Quechua-speaking descendants of the Incas do not. By contrast, he says, the Mayans in Mexico and Guatemala call themselves "Indians." Meanwhile, in Hawaii, where most residents have mixed ancestry, some native Hawaiians want to create an electoral roll of so-called purebloods who would be granted a special form of autonomy.

Indigenous peoples in Latin America fare differently compared to those in the Anglophone New World countries of Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States. For example, while indigenous peoples usually comprise a minority of the overall population (with the notable exceptions of Bolivia, Guatemala and Greenland), they form even smaller percentages of the population in populous English-speaking countries, such as the United States, Australia and Canada. And while many indigenous groups live in remote settlements or reservations, in the United States fewer than half live on reservations,

Indigenous Peoples Are Sliver of Most Populations

More than 42 million indigenous people live in the 25 countries settled and still run by descendants of European colonizers,* but they represent less than 5 percent of the population in most of their homelands. In Bolivia, Guatemala and Greenland, however, 60 percent or more of the inhabitants are indigenous.

Indigenous Populations in Selected Countries
(by number and percentage of population)



* Except for Bolivia, where the new president is from an indigenous tribe.

** Greenland is under Danish sovereignty but is largely autonomous. Greenlandic Inuit represent only 1% of all Danes, but 90% of Greenlanders

Sources: "State of the World's Minorities and Indigenous Peoples," Minority Rights Group International, July 6, 2011; Kathrin Wessendorf, "The Indigenous World 2011," The International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, May 2011; Brian Beary, Separatist Movements, CQ Press, 2011; U.S. Census; James Anaya, "The situation of the Maori People in New Zealand, Report of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples," Feb. 17, 2011; "Closing the Gap — Prime Ministers Report 2011," Government of Australia, February 2011. Map by Lewis Agrell

and in New Zealand, a majority of the Maori live in cities.⁴

Indigenous peoples share common political goals. Since the late 1960s, most have been demanding some form of autonomy or self-determination but have been struggling with their na-

tional governments over how those terms are defined. Shayna Plaut, who is studying Sami self-determination at Sami University College in Norway, says "self-determination can mean so many things — from control over cigarette taxes on Indian reservations to the

right to devise your own education system, to running your own police force or having media in your native language."

Historically, governments often have applied a double standard to the issue of self-determination, according

to an article in *Human Rights Quarterly*. “In the process of decolonization, the right of self-determination was extended or forcibly exercised (through ‘wars of independence’) by the ‘settlers’ from the colonizing group, while the indigenous population remained subjugated, excluded and marginalized,” two academics wrote. Modern states have “vociferously resisted” extending the right to self-determination to indigenous peoples, they added, because they feared it would be tantamount to admitting an “effective right of secession.”⁵

Governments usually firmly oppose secession rights and are keen to control how natural resources in indigenous homelands are exploited, especially in fast-developing Latin America. According to Maria Railaf Zuniga, an activist with the Mapuche Foundation Folil, a human rights advocacy group founded in the Netherlands by Mapuche Indians for their countrymen who remained in Chile, “Chile and Argentina nowadays can be called ultra-liberal economies — economies where literally everything is for sale.” Ancestral lands have been sold to forestry companies to plant environmentally damaging eucalyptus trees, she notes, and multinational corporations like Benetton have bought lands in southern Argentina’s Patagonia to raise sheep.

Regardless of where they live, nearly all indigenous groups struggle with many of the same social problems, including serious domestic violence. Indigenous women in Australia are 35 times as likely to be hospitalized as a result of family violence-related assaults as nonindigenous females.⁶ In the United States, two of every five Native American women will suffer domestic violence during her lifetime, and one in three will be sexually abused.⁷ Donald Rodgers, chief of South Carolina’s Catawba Indian Nation, said violence against women “has been an issue for hundreds of

Many Indigenous Groups Live in Cities

Many indigenous groups enjoy sovereignty and live on remote, rural reservations — such as in Guyana and Canada. In other countries, such as the United States and New Zealand, more than half of indigenous groups live in cities, including the Maori in Auckland and the Lakota Indians in Rapid City, S.D.

Where Select Indigenous Groups Live

- **United States** — More than 50 percent live off-reservation, mostly in large cities.
- **Colombia** — Reservations for indigenous peoples occupy one-third of the territory.
- **Chile** — Up to half of the Mapuche, the country’s most populous indigenous group, live in urban areas. Most of the rest live on reservations.
- **New Zealand** — 80 percent of the Maori live in cities, 25 percent of them in the greater Auckland area.
- **Guyana** — 90 percent of the Amerindians live in vast, remote savannah or rainforest areas.
- **Australia** — 32 percent of the Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders live in major cities, 43 percent in regional areas, 25 percent in remote areas.
- **Canada** — 56 percent of indigenous Canadians live in urban areas.

Source: The International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, www.iwgia.org/iwgia_files_publications_files/0454_THE_INDIGENOUS_ORLD-2011_eb.pdf; Minority Rights Group International, www.minorityrights.org/10848/state-of-the-worlds-minorities/state-of-the-worlds-minorities-and-indigenous-peoples-2011.html; U.S. Census Bureau, www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/race/censr-28.pdf

years for Indians,” largely due to alcohol abuse.

“There are so many vicious-cycle issues” involving violence, suicide, sexual abuse and drug and alcohol abuse among Native Americans, U.S. Sen. Al Franken, D-Minn., a member of the Senate Indian Affairs Committee, said in July. “We owe Indians a special debt for our own negligence in not fully funding Indian health care, education and law enforcement, which we are supposed to do by treaty.”⁸

In New Zealand, the Maori comprise only 14 percent of the general population but 51 percent of prison inmates.⁹ The insecurity and violence prevalent in Mexico today are “particularly notable in states with signif-

icant numbers of indigenous peoples and/or African-descendant populations,” according to the London-based Minority Rights Group International, which supports indigenous peoples in 60 countries worldwide.¹⁰ In Canada, “the living conditions of First Nations are still shocking,” * says Shawn Atleo, national chief of the Assembly for First Nations, which represents Canada’s Indians. “Some in my community have no running water. The gap is widening, and we need to close it.”

* First Nations refers to the Canada’s more than 600 indigenous peoples, except for the Inuit and those of mixed European-First Nations ancestry, who are called Métis.

Some governments have acknowledged that their past actions toward indigenous groups have caused or contributed to these problems. In February 2008 Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd delivered a heartfelt apology for government policies from 1900 to 1970 that led to some 50,000 Aboriginal children being forcibly taken from their parents and placed in white foster homes, creating the so-called Stolen Generation.¹¹ Later that year, the Canadian government apologized for its treatment of indigenous Canadians, notably the

forced relocation of Inuit families to the High Arctic in 1953.

While the overall picture seems bleak for indigenous peoples, some pockets of home-grown economic development provide some grounds for optimism. Since 1988, when the U.S. Congress gave Native Americans special rights to establish gaming casinos on their reservations, Indians have developed a lucrative gaming industry, with \$26 billion in revenue in 2010.¹²

Donald Laverdure, U.S. deputy assistant secretary for Indian Affairs, says

gambling has helped tribes provide better education and health care, but critics say the revenues are concentrated in a small number of tribes and aren't always used to promote Indians' social and economic development.

As indigenous societies struggle to make progress, here are some of the key questions being raised:

Should indigenous peoples control their natural resources?

Most governments resist the idea of ceding control over natural re-

Latin America's First Indigenous Leader Makes Waves

Bolivia's Evo Morales remains a popular yet polarizing leader.

Chewing on an illicit coca leaf he brought in to a U.N. meeting on drug policy in Vienna, Bolivia's President Evo Morales, made the case for legalization of coca to a somewhat bemused audience: "This is a coca leaf. This is not cocaine. This represents the culture of indigenous people of the Andean region," he said.¹

Morales, a former coca farmer, may be best known in the United States for his publicity stunts, colorful native clothing and close alliance with outspoken anti-American Venezuelan leader Hugo Chávez. But as an Aymara Indian who was elected president in December 2005, Morales is also widely recognized as Latin America's first indigenous leader.

Although he was re-elected four years later with an impressive 64.2 percent of the vote, many Bolivians have mixed feelings about him. Critics say his socialist government has pushed through constitutional amendments that have dangerously centralized power, particularly a provision allowing the government to seize lands and re-designate them as native community lands.

"The government is trying to control all the branches of government," said Javier Comboni, who was Bolivian finance minister under the previous administration and is now a professor of political economy at Wheaton College in Wheaton, Ill. "They have been successful but with absolute power comes absolute corruption," he continued, citing harassment of the judiciary and the takeover of private property in the natural gas-rich eastern lowlands as evidence.²

Bolivia's ambassador to the Netherlands, Roberto Calzadilla, who is of mixed ethnic background, firmly rejects such criticisms. The 2009 constitution, approved in a referendum, "recognizes the rights of indigenous peoples, which previously were denied and repressed for so long," he says. It establishes an "equal rank and hierarchy" among various tiers of government

and formally recognizes that Bolivia's "36 indigenous communities and groups have the right to territory, language and their own communitarian justice."

Bolivia's wealthy class opposes the new constitution, largely because it bans private ownership of more than 5,000 hectares (12,400 acres) of land.

About 60 percent of Bolivia's 10 million people are indigenous, but until Morales' victory they had never reached the highest echelons of power. Previous Bolivian leaders came from among the country's "mestizo," or people of mixed European-indigenous descent, who today live mostly in the eastern lowlands.

The languages used by the two largest indigenous groups, the Aymara and Quechua, were not officially recognized until 1977. The two groups live mostly in the western highlands, while smaller indigenous groups, such as the Guarani, Arawak and Chiquitano live in the eastern lowlands.

Calzadilla says the situation for indigenous peoples in Bolivia has greatly improved since the 1950s, when the elite populations of largely European ancestry viewed the natives as slaves, or "pongos," and did not allow them to enter the main square of the capital, La Paz. Today, he says, indigenous people are represented in the executive and legislative branches of government and at all levels of the army. The Morales government also has adopted anti-racism laws, and many indigenous Bolivians credit Morales' policies with helping them to finally reach equality after centuries of discrimination.

But the 40 percent of the population with European or mestizo ancestry who still control most of Bolivia's mineral and petroleum resources fear Morales will redistribute their wealth to poorer regions. The lowlands' economic dominance has emerged only in the past few decades. During colonial times, Bolivia's wealth was concentrated in the silver- and tin-rich highlands.

Eduardo Gamarra — a comparative politics professor at Florida International University in Miami and a Bolivian national — notes that lowlanders are worried because the Morales government “has been sending waves of indigenous people into the lowlands of Santa Cruz.” That could erode the political power of the mestizo elite and make them more intolerant of indigenous groups. He adds that “Venezuela is financing Morales,” and points out that Morales and Chavez “are both anti-U.S. and view the white elites as racist.”

Calzadilla admits that in the early years of Morales’ rule “strong resistance came from the nonindigenous population, mostly descendants of the Spanish colonizers” who live in the lowlands, some of whom in 2007 and 2008 even threatened to organize a secessionist movement. Such talk seems to have quieted down in the past couple of years.³

Although most indigenous Bolivians support Morales, some also criticize him. For example, the indigenous communities living in sprawling Madidi National Park worry about government plans to authorize oil and gas drilling and construction of a hydroelectric dam and highway in the park.

Mirna Fernández, coordinator of the Save The Madidi Campaign, says President Morales is guilty of “reprehensible incoherence” by invoking Pachamama — or Mother Earth, the Andean deity of indigenous peoples — while moving to exploit nonrenewable resources in protected areas.⁴

Calzadilla says the government’s relations with indigenous groups in the lowlands are “very good” but admits that native communities take a more “ecological” view of government infrastructure projects in the area.

— **Brian Beary**

¹ “Bolivian President Chews Coca During Speech At UN,” *The Huffington Post*, March 11, 2009, www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/03/11/bolivian-president-chews_n_174075.html.



AFP/Getty Images/Aizar Raldes

Bolivian President Evo Morales — Latin America’s first indigenous leader — greets Andean natives during a collective marriage ceremony for 355 couples in a coliseum in La Paz, on May 7, 2011. The ceremony was designed to honor ancient Andean rituals.

² Comments made during conference entitled, “Bolivia: A Country Divided,” at the Hudson Institute, Washington, D.C., April 1, 2009.

³ For background, see Roland Flamini, “The New Latin America,” *CQ Global Researcher*, March 1, 2008, pp. 57-84.

⁴ Frank Chavez, “Madidi National Park and the Curse of Petroleum in Bolivia,” *IPS*, Dec. 13, 2010, www.galdu.org/web/index.php?odas=5001&giella1=eng.

sources to indigenous peoples, notes Sheryl Lightfoot, a Canadian Anishinabe Indian and assistant professor in First Nations studies and political science at the University of British Columbia.

“Many countries accept that indigenous peoples should have their rights to language, culture and religion recognized and respected,” she says. “What most countries in the world object to — whether they admit it or not — are indigenous rights to land and resources, as well as self-determination.”

Governments often claim to consult systematically with indigenous peoples over the use of natural resources, but skeptics say they only give the semblance of doing so. Even in Bolivia — which has an indigenous president and claims to protect indigenous rights — large-scale government development projects have faced resistance from some indigenous groups. For example, groups from the Madidi National Park area are protesting plans by President Evo Morales to allow oil and gas drilling

there and construction of a hydroelectric dam and highway.

In Argentina and Chile, according to Chilean human rights activist Zuniga, “The main problem of the Mapuche can be put in one word: land, more specific, ancestral land. . . . Not for nothing the word Mapuche means: ‘People of the Earth.’ ”¹³

Zuniga lambasted Argentina and Chile for policies that effectively deprive indigenous communities of control over their lands, in violation of the two countries’ legal obligations under

Problems Proliferate Among Indigenous Groups

The socioeconomic situation for indigenous societies around the globe is often significantly disparate from the general populations in their home countries. Life expectancy, for example, is much lower for indigenous individuals in Canada, Australia and New Zealand than for the overall population. Suicide rates among Native Americans and the Canadian Inuit are higher than in the nonindigenous populations, and Guatemala's indigenous peoples are less educated and poorer than other Guatemalans.

Socioeconomic Indicators for Select Indigenous Groups

- **Life expectancy:** Canadian Inuit die 15 years younger than other Canadians. New Zealand Maori die more than eight years earlier than non-Maori. Aboriginal Australian men die 12 years younger than non-Aboriginal men and Aboriginal women 10 years earlier than non-Aboriginal women.
- **Alcoholism:** Liver disease among Native Americans is four times greater than the U.S. national average.
- **Obesity:** Maori have nearly twice the national rate of obesity compared to the rest of New Zealand.
- **Suicide:** The suicide rate among Native Americans is 70 percent higher than among the general population. Canadian Inuit are 11 times more likely to commit suicide than the general population.
- **Poverty:** 80 percent of the indigenous population in Guatemala is poor, compared to 40 percent of the nonindigenous population.
- **Crime:** 51 percent of the prison population in New Zealand is Maori despite being only 14 percent of the overall population. 34 percent of Canadian male and 41 percent of female young offenders are members of the First Nations, despite being only 4 percent of the country's total population.
- **Education:** Only 5 percent of university students in Guatemala are indigenous, despite comprising more than half of the population.
- **Domestic violence:** Aboriginal Australian women are 35 times more likely to be hospitalized as a result of family violence-related assaults than nonindigenous females.

Sources: Peter Katel, "American Indians," CQ Researcher, April 28, 2006 (updated July 2010); Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami; Joanna Hoare, "State of World's Minorities and Indigenous People 2011," Minority Rights Group International, July 6 2011, pp. 113, 174

the International Labour Organization's Convention 169.¹⁴ The treaty gives indigenous peoples "certain collective rights," she says, "especially regarding foreigners entering the area for economic exploration and exploitation." Zuniga welcomed a recent court ruling in Argentina that supported the Ma-

puche, who argued a major land purchase by the Piedra del Aguila oil company would have pushed the Mapuche off their land.¹⁵

The Arctic's Inuit also are keen to avoid a resource grab by outsiders. International interest in their region is growing due to the abundance of oil

and other natural resources, which are becoming more accessible as the polar ice caps melt.

"We have lived here for thousands and thousands of years," said Patricia Cochran, former chairperson of the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) and an Alaskan Inuit. "You must talk to us and respect our rights."¹⁶

Cochran's ICC colleague, Aqqaluk Lynge, is equally forceful. "This is Inuit territory. While we are very loyal to our respective governments, they must assist us in helping to build Inuit unity and helping Inuit use the resources in a sustainable manner," says Lynge, chairperson of the ICC, who is Greenlandic Inuit. Indigenous peoples historically have managed resources more sustainably than foreigners, he said, citing the 1600s, "when the first foreign whaling ship came to hunt our big whales and decimated our stocks, from which they have never recovered."¹⁷

Canada — with an abundance of oil sands, much of it on indigenous homelands — has adopted the First Nations Land Management Act, under which 30 participating nations manage their lands and resources. In 2009, First Nation companies performed \$810 million in contract work for oil sands companies, and more than 1,600 native peoples were directly employed in oil sands operations.¹⁸ According to Chief Atleo of the Assembly of First Nations, "more and more industries realize they need to consult indigenous peoples — it makes commercial sense." But he admits there remains some disagreement with the Canadian government over the precise meaning of "consultation" and "consent."

In New Zealand, the Maori's right to control their natural resources is enshrined in the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi. Article 2 of the treaty guarantees the Maori would have "full and exclusive possession of their fisheries," notes Valmaine Toki, a member of the U.N. Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and a law lecturer at

the University of Auckland. When the government introduced a private property-based quota system for fish catches, the Maori sued to get their traditional community fishing rights recognized, and won. "This is an example of Maori exercising a form of self-determination," says Toki.

Brazil, however, lacks "an effective mechanism for consultation with indigenous peoples on the planning of major development projects, such as large-scale mining, and highway and dam construction," laments James Anaya, U.N. Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.¹⁹ In Guyana, a 2006 law earmarked 20 percent of the royalties from mining activities for Amerindians. But indigenous leaders have complained about not being consulted in the country's anti-deforestation campaign, including how to spend \$250 million that Norway has donated to fight climate change.²⁰

Should indigenous peoples have more autonomy?

The degree of autonomy enjoyed by indigenous peoples varies significantly from region to region.

In the Arctic, for instance, Sami parliaments exist in Norway, Finland and even Sweden, which traditionally has been among the most conservative Nordic states in recognizing Sami rights, according to Lars-Anders Baer, chairman of the Sami cultural organization Gáldu. In the last five to six years, he said, there has been "a dramatic shift in the Swedish position in favor of [the] Sami right to self-determination."²¹

In New Zealand, according to Margaret Mutu, head of the Maori Studies Department at the University of Auckland, "the Maori don't accept that the Pakeha [white settlers] are the legitimate colonizers, but rather are immigrant settlers invited by the Maori to stay there." In Chile, the Mapuche see themselves as a separate nation culturally and ethnically, says César Millahueique, a Mapuche poet and lan-

guage activist. The Mapuche want to reconstruct their territory, which the Chilean government confiscated in the 1880s and exploited, leaving them impoverished and marginalized, he says.

"Our government has programs today promoting bilingual education and better health services," Millahueique says. "But these are not enough. The Mapuche want political autonomy."

Some indigenous communities are split over what form their autonomy should take. For instance, a debate is raging among Hawaiians over whether

Hawaiians "favor autonomy only for the pure-bloods."

In some cases, granting autonomy to a regional indigenous community can create resentment among the group it was intended to satisfy. For example, in Nicaragua the indigenous Miskito, who live on the Atlantic Coast, were granted regional autonomy in the 1980s, but that apparently did not satisfy all group members. According to Danish conservationist Claus Kjaerby at the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, high abstention rates



AFP/Getty Images/Anoek de Groot

Aboriginal elder Dick Brown, 58, partially paralyzed from a stroke, lives in a rough camp in the Australian Outback town of Alice Springs. Aboriginals are one of the world's poorest indigenous communities. While many countries have bolstered indigenous groups' legal and political rights in recent years, they continue to have chronically high poverty rates, disproportionate shares of the prison population and life expectancies 10 years shorter than the general population.

everyone should have a special autonomous status or only those designated as "pure-blood" Hawaiians. About 400,000 of Hawaii's 1.3 million residents claim Hawaiian ancestry.²² Mililani Trask, a pro-autonomy activist, supports extending self-government to all Hawaiians but acknowledges that the state government, two U.S. senators and the Council for Native

in recent regional elections indicate that the Miskito reject the political party model of regional autonomy that has been imposed on them, saying it has not met their political aspirations.²³

Elsewhere, the level of autonomy granted to a group can end up being insufficient in practice. For example, Native Americans are responsible for their own policing and judiciary, but

their judicial system faces major obstacles because they cannot prosecute non-Indians, according to U.S. Assistant Attorney General Tom Perrelli. Yet four out of five people who commit sex crimes or battery against Indians are non-Indians, he said.²⁴

To fix the problem, Aaron Running Hawk, a member of the Black Hill Sioux Treaty Council, a pro-independence Lakota Indian group, says the council wants “to set up a traditional form of government based on treaties from 1851 and 1868, which the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in 1978 were still valid.” U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Interior Laverdure says the Obama administration would be amenable to reviewing the current model of autonomy. “If they want to re-do their framework, that is okay with us,” he says. “Some of them are thinking about this, and we want to assist them.”

Autonomy discussions are not as far advanced in some other countries. Indigenous peoples in Colombia have been caught in the crossfire of a vicious, decades-long civil war. The Regional Indigenous Council of Cauca, an advocacy group founded in 1971 in southwestern Colombia’s Cauca Department, has launched a protest movement to try to get the Colombian army and the rebel militia to dismantle the bases and camps they operate in Cauca homelands. “We don’t want to give either side a military advantage,” the group has said. “What we want is to defend the lives and the autonomy of our communities.”²⁵

Some Latin American indigenous groups have focused on the judicial dimension of autonomy. In Ecuador, groups increasingly use communal justice to combat violent crime, triggering a nationwide debate.²⁶ For example, some nonindigenous critics demanded limits on the practice of indigenous justice after a man who confessed to murder was sentenced to receive corporal punishment and make financial payments to the victim’s mother.

But researchers and sociologists countered that communal justice, such as a public flogging or a dousing in cold water, “are more effective than sending a young man away for a four-year prison sentence that is devoid of social context and lacks rehabilitation measures,” noted Maurice Bryan, information officer for the Minority Rights Group International.²⁷ Similarly, in Guatemala the Mayans seem more interested in judicial and cultural autonomy, according to Arturo Arias, the Guatemalan novelist and critic. “They want to be judged under Mayan law. This was written into the 1996 peace treaty that ended the civil war, but implementation has been slow.”

Should indigenous peoples be integrated into mainstream society?

When indigenous peoples become more socially integrated with the general population — for example through intermarriage or by living in closer proximity — it sometimes leads to a dilution or loss of indigenous culture. However, the recent experience of native Hawaiians shows how an indigenous people can integrate and function in mainstream society while keeping one of their main cultural carriers, their native language.

In the 1970s, incredibly, fewer than 50 children under age 18 were fluent in the Hawaiian language. Since then, the number of fluent children has skyrocketed, according to language activist Namaka Rawlins.²⁸ The Hawaiian Language College, where she teaches, offers 57 undergraduate-through doctorate-level courses in Hawaiian and operates a school for pre-K through grade 12. The graduating students are fluent in English as well as Hawaiian.

But Hawaii’s positive experience hasn’t been replicated in many other native U.S. communities. For instance, a settlement of Meskwaki Indians in Iowa has only a “dwindling number of fluent Meskwaki speakers,” according to resident Larry C. Lasley, Sr.

Specifically, only 16 percent of tribal members are fluent in Meskwaki, while 63 percent understand only a few or no words. He attributes the decline, which has accelerated since the 1960s, to the need to learn English to deal with local authorities to gain water, food, sanitation and housing.²⁹

In Canada, Chief Atleo of the Assembly of First Nations says only three of the assembly’s 52 indigenous languages are expected to survive: Inuit, Cree and Ojibwe. His own Nuu-chah-nulth language has only 24 fluent speakers left, most in their 60s or older, he notes.

Plaut, the researcher studying Sami culture in Norway, regrets that a corollary question — Should mainstream society become more fluent in indigenous languages? — is never asked. “This is a more interesting question,” she says. “I have never met a mono-lingual Sami person in my time here.”

Plaut likes the Sami model of self-determination. They have preserved their language and culture, but they still function in their home country societies. They also benefit from various privileges. For example, reindeer husbandry is reserved for the Sami, all laws in Norway must be translated into Sami and the Sami language can be used in communicating with public officials and the judiciary.³⁰

Governments have learned that coercive integration policies can damage indigenous societies, as occurred among Aboriginal Australians in the 1900s. In an effort to integrate indigenous children — primarily those with lighter skin color — into mainstream society, the Australian government forcibly took many of them from their parents and placed them in institutions or with white foster families.

The program was a dismal failure. The Aboriginals remained marginalized and suffered from discrimination. A 1997 report cataloged the pain inflicted on Aboriginal society by the coercive practices, spurring the Australian

government, 11 years later, to issue its 2008 apology.³¹

Yet, others contest the notion that Aboriginals are better off being separated from the rest of society. Helen Hughes, a senior fellow at the libertarian Centre for Independent Studies, a think tank with offices in Australia and New Zealand, argues that “communal property rights have prevented development” among the 80,000 Aboriginals living on remote reservations, characterized by “dismal shops and public housing . . . reminiscent of communist Russia.” Furthermore, Hughes writes with her son Mark, an independent researcher, “Aboriginal curriculums and poor teaching have denied indigenous children basic schooling, [and] so-called bilingual education has been an excuse for no education at all.”³²

Integration often occurs when indigenous and nonindigenous people intermarry, but the frequency of intermarriage differs from country to country — and sometimes from region to region inside a country. For example, Nicaragua’s three main ethnic groups are the indigenous Miskito, the Ladinos (people of mixed Spanish-indigenous ancestry) and the Afro-Caribbean community. According to the Rev. Norman Bent, a minister of the Moravian Church who is of mixed Miskito/Afro-Caribbean ancestry, although “there is a lot of intermarriage and not much conflict between the Miskito and Afro-Caribbean peoples, . . . there is more of a cultural conflict with the Ladinos.”

The University of British Columbia’s Lightfoot says intermarriage between indigenous and nonindigenous people, which has always been common, should not be used to deny indigenous peoples their right to nationhood. “No other group or nation faces this very unreasonable expectation that they should somehow retain ‘purity of the blood’ in order to be entitled to the same rights that all other peoples on Earth already possess,” she says.

“For indigenous peoples, intermarriage is often read as a forfeiture of nationhood,” she adds, calling the concept a “strangely colonial and racialized way of thinking.” ■

ica, roughly from 1000 B.C. to A.D. 900. The Maori first arrived in New Zealand around A.D. 800.³³

European conquest began with the arrival of Viking leader Erik the Red,



Reuters/Scanpix/Bertil Ericson

Leading one of their iconic reindeer, Sami people march through Stockholm on Nov. 23, 2007, to demand protection of their herding rights. Formerly called Laplanders, the Sami live above the Arctic Circle and enjoy a relatively high degree of autonomy, with their own parliaments in Norway, Finland and Sweden.

BACKGROUND

Conquest and Settlement

Indigenous peoples lived in the Americas, Australasia and the Arctic for millennia before European settlers showed up.

Aboriginal Australians are thought to have arrived on the continent up to 60,000 years ago. The earliest residents of the North American Arctic probably arrived about 14,000 years ago. Scandinavia’s Sami culture is around 5,000 years old, while the Inuit first arrived in Greenland from modern-day Canada some 4,500 years ago. The Mayan civilization flourished in Central Amer-

ica, who set up a Norse colony in Greenland in A.D. 986. The Europeans left in 1450, but a permanent Scandinavian presence was re-established by Danish-Norwegian priest Hans Egede in 1721.

After Christopher Columbus landed in the Caribbean in 1492 on behalf of Spain’s King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, the Spanish went on to conquer and colonize much of Central and South America in the 1500s.

Over the next three centuries the French, English, Portuguese and Dutch competed with the Spanish to control the Americas, and their policies toward the indigenous peoples differed considerably. The Northern Europeans — the French, British and Dutch — tended to negotiate treaties with aboriginal peoples rather than conquering them militarily.³⁴ The Southern Europeans — the Spanish and Portuguese

— relied more on papal bulls (orders from the Roman Catholic pope) to claim indigenous lands and forcibly convert natives to Christianity.³⁵

European whalers began exploring the Inuit's Arctic homelands in the 1700s, while Russians explored the western Arctic around Alaska, converting some of the Aleut and Inuit peoples to Orthodox Christianity. Australia and New Zealand came under European influence starting in the late 1760s, after the discoveries of English explorer Capt. James Cook. Many of Australia's earliest immigrants were convicted criminals, sent over to do hard labor in penal colonies.

Post-Colonial Assimilation

From the late 1700s, indigenous peoples increasingly found themselves living in newly independent countries established by descendants of European settlers. One of the first was the United States, which won its independence from Britain after the eight-year Revolutionary War. As the new nation expanded westward in the 1800s, whites began hunting and settling on Indian lands, fomenting bitter and bloody conflict.

In 1830, Congress adopted the Indian Removal Act, which led five large Southern Indian tribes — the Cherokee, Chickasaw, Creek, Seminole and Choctaw — to be forcibly moved to Indian Territory west of the Mississippi River.

Forty years later, the U.S. government essentially replaced its policy of treaty-making with Indian nations with a policy of assimilation. The process was accelerated by the Dawes Act of 1887, which led to parcels of Indian land being sold off to private individuals, badly fragmenting the Indian tribes.³⁶ By 1900, the Indians had lost 95 percent of the land they had held in 1800, when they controlled 80 percent of the land in today's continental United States west of the Eastern Seaboard.

Meanwhile, the United States continued to expand its dominion over indigenous peoples, notably by buying Alaska from Russia in 1867 and invading and occupying Hawaii in 1893, when U.S. forces and business interests forced Queen Lili'uokalani to abdicate.

From 1871 to 1921, Canada signed 11 treaties with its aboriginal nations — the Inuit, Cree, Métis and others. A key piece of Canadian legislation was the 1876 Indian Act, whose ultimate goal was to assimilate Canada's indigenous community.³⁷ In Latin America, indigenous peoples saw ever-increasing incursions onto their homelands — such as the Chilean government's seizure of Mapuche lands in the 1880s.

Meanwhile, the conversion of indigenous peoples to Christianity was proceeding apace. The Roman Catholic Church sent many missionaries to Central and South America in the 1500s. In the mid-1800s, Moravians from Germany, England and Sweden converted many of Nicaragua's indigenous Miskito. Christians also converted a large share of North America's Inuit.

A pivotal moment in Maori history occurred in 1840, when tribal leaders established their future political relationship with the English settlers by signing the Treaty of Waitangi. In 1867, four seats in the New Zealand parliament were designated for the Maori. The introduction of guns into Maori society, acquired from British settlers, exacerbated intertribal warfare. The Maori also lost much of their best land to white settlers in a war that lasted from 1860 to 1872. The Maori population declined dramatically, hitting a low of around 45,000 in 1901. (It is 575,000 today.)³⁸

At the same time, in Scandinavia, the Sami also faced challenges: As Sweden, Finland, Norway and Russia consolidated their borders, they cut through Sami homelands, making travel and reindeer herding more difficult.

In the early 1900s, some governments adopted assimilation policies, en-

couraging — or coercing — indigenous peoples into shedding their distinct identity. In Australia, for instance, between 10 and 30 percent of Aboriginal children were removed from their families and placed in institutional or foster care, a policy that lasted until 1970. Moreover, the movement of Aboriginals who were not removed and assimilated was tightly circumscribed.

“In the name of protection, Indigenous peoples were subject to near-total control,” a 1997 government investigation said. “Their entry and exit from reserves was regulated, as was their everyday life on the reserves, their right to marry and their employment.” Partly to convert them to Christianity, “children were housed in dormitories and contact with their families strictly limited.”³⁹

The United States also embraced an assimilation policy. In 1906, for example, Congress ordered food rations withheld from Indians unless they agreed to cut their hair, traditionally worn long. Indian children in the West were taken into towns and forced to attend schools where they were prohibited from speaking their native languages.⁴⁰

In 1953, Congress passed Concurrent Resolution 108, marking the beginning of the so-called termination policy, which revoked the recognition and support the government had given to many Indian nations via the reservations system.⁴¹ The change led to the displacement of more than 10,000 Indians, many of whom moved from their reservations into large cities; the San Francisco Bay area was a popular destination.

Also in 1953, Denmark made largely Inuit Greenland an integral part of the country. Similarly, six years later, Alaska and Hawaii became U.S. states.

In Norway, the government tried from 1905, when Norway became independent from Sweden, until the 1960s to assimilate the Sami. As part of the new nation's “Norwegianization”

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Chronology

**60,000 B.C.-
A.D. 900** *Indigenous peoples populate Australia, America and the Arctic.*

60,000 B.C.-800 A.D.

Aboriginal Australians migrate to Australia from Micronesia. . . . Inuit ancestors begin to populate North American Arctic. . . . Sami culture emerges in Scandinavia in 5,000 B.C. . . . Mayan civilization flourishes in Central America. . . . Maori migrate from Polynesia to New Zealand.

986-1768 *Europeans conquer and colonize indigenous lands.*

986

Norse explorer Erik the Red establishes first European settlement on Greenland.

1492

Italian explorer Christopher Columbus leads a voyage to the Americas on behalf of the Spanish government, marking the beginning of European colonization in the Americas.

1700s

European whalers hunt and explore in the Arctic. . . . Russian fur traders and missionaries settle Alaska.

1760s

British and Irish settlement begins in Australia and New Zealand.

1800s-1950s *Settlers of European descent assimilate indigenous peoples in the New World.*

1830

U.S. Congress passes Indian Removal Act, which forcibly relocates five large Indian tribes from the South to territory west of the Mississippi River.

1840

Maori tribal leaders sign Treaty of Waitangi with English settlers, establishing the terms for white settlement of the territory.

1887

Congress passes Dawes Act permitting the sale of Indian lands to non-Indians, further fragmenting Indian territories.

1880s

Chilean authorities seize lands from the indigenous Mapuche in a so-called pacification campaign.

1901

Australia gains independence from Britain and institutes aggressive assimilation policy toward Aboriginals, including forcibly removing children from their parents and putting them into institutions or foster homes.

1953

Denmark annexes its largely Inuit colony, Greenland.

1959

Alaska and Hawaii, both with large indigenous populations, become states and are fully integrated into the United States.

1960s-2011

Indigenous peoples worldwide mobilize politically. Many governments replace assimilation policies with greater recognition and autonomy for indigenous peoples.

1969

American Indians occupy Alcatraz Island in San Francisco Bay in effort to force U.S. government to give greater autonomy to Native Americans.

1979

Inter-American Court for Human Rights is established in Costa Rica, eventually ruling on indigenous-rights cases from Paraguay, Suriname, Guatemala and Brazil.

1987

Norway establishes Sami parliament. Sweden and Finland later follow suit.

1988

Congress passes Indian Gaming Regulatory Act, paving the way for Indians to set up casinos and fostering rapid growth in the casino industry and much-needed revenues for Indian communities.

1992

“Mabo” ruling by Australia’s high court says Aboriginals have the right to claim title over traditional lands, triggering passage of the 1993 Native Title Act establishing tribunals to examine indigenous land claims.

2007

U.N. General Assembly approves Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States, which initially opposed it, later endorse the measure.

2008

Passage of a referendum grants enhanced autonomy to Greenlanders.

2011

Energy and tourism development plans on indigenous lands cause mounting tension between indigenous and nonindigenous populations in Brazil, Peru, Russia, Canada and Chile.

Continued from p. 458

policy, citizens wanting to buy land had to be able to read and write in Norwegian. The policy triggered a decline in the use of the Sami language until the government ended the policy in 1959.⁴²

Self-Determination

As the 1900s progressed, indigenous peoples slowly began to find

their political voice and to win some recognition and concessions from the governments ruling their homelands. In the United States, for instance, the government's initial move toward self-government for Native Americans was the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, which created a system of tribal government on certain Indian reservations.

In the 1960s, however, the Civil Rights movement provoked a political awakening among American Indians. In 1969

several dozen Indians occupied Alcatraz Island in San Francisco Bay, site of an abandoned maximum-security prison. The Alcatraz occupation, which lasted until 1971, attracted public attention — and some sympathy — to Indian demands for genuine autonomy. In the end, the government in the 1970s adopted a policy of self-determination for Indians and a raft of legislation aimed at promoting their autonomy, land rights, economic development and cultural preservation.⁴³

Aboriginals and Maori Took Different Paths

Political, cultural and social progress has been uneven.

New Zealand's Maori and Australia's Aboriginals are a study in contrasts. The two neighboring groups have asserted themselves differently — and been treated differently by their European colonizers — with varying degrees of political, cultural and sociological success.

For instance, only three Aboriginals have served in the national parliament during Australia's 110-year history. Two national Aboriginal representative bodies created in the 1970s and '80s were ultimately disbanded amid claims they did not truly represent the Aboriginals. The Maori, by contrast, have had specially designated seats in the New Zealand parliament for more than a century, and today their 15 percent representation in parliament corresponds to their population share. Aboriginals constitute just 2 percent of Australia's population.

Many of the 80 Aboriginal languages are on the verge of extinction, and only 30,000 Australian students are learning an indigenous language.¹ In New Zealand, the Maori language is also at crisis point, according to Valmaine Toki, a member of the U.N. Permanent Forum on Indigenous Peoples and a law lecturer at the University of Auckland, who is of Maori descent.

"At school, the proportion of Maori children participating in Maori-medium education [schools where Maori is the language of instruction] has dropped from a high point of 18.6 per cent in 1999 to 15.2 per cent in 2009," she says. Fewer young people speak Maori, she notes, so older native speakers are not replaced as they die.

The gap between the two groups is also less obvious with regard to social indicators. Social and economic conditions among the Maori put them at an "extreme disadvantage . . . across a range of indicators, including education, health and income," according to James Anaya, a Native American, who is the U.N. special rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples. After leaving secondary school, for example, only one in five Maori students is qualified to attend university.² Similarly,

the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples "continue to rank as the most disadvantaged peoples in Australia," particularly with regard to education, employment, health, life expectancy, domestic violence and child abuse, according to Jacqui Zalberg, author of a paper on indigenous peoples in Oceania for the U.K.-based advocacy organization, Minority Rights Group International.³

As for securing land rights and control of natural resources, the Maori have had a head start, but the Aboriginals are catching up. In 1975, the New Zealand government set up the Waitangi Tribunal, which gave the Maori a legal forum to pursue land claims. By mid-2010, the tribunal was wading through 3,490 claims. "Overall, the Waitangi Tribunal has provided enormous benefits for all of New Zealand by helping to provide redress for Maori grievances," reported Anaya.

Australia's government created a similar legal forum for Aboriginals in 1993, spurred on by a landmark 1992 court ruling in the "Mabo" case, which overturned previous case-law by insisting that Aboriginals had the right to claim title to their traditional lands. So far, Aboriginals have succeeded in reclaiming some of their lands in the 145 tribunal rulings.⁴

There have been bumps along the road for both peoples, such as the 2004 Foreshore and Seabed Act in New Zealand, which limited the Maori's ability to claim shoreline areas. The government in 2009 agreed to repeal the act after fierce Maori opposition, but Parliament has yet to repeal the measure.

Aboriginals — Australia's original inhabitants — have lived on their homelands for more than 50,000 years, having migrated there from Micronesia, while the Maori are believed to have arrived a little over 1,000 years ago from Polynesia. But after the British and Irish began to arrive in New Zealand and Australia in the 1800s, both populations plummeted — almost to the point of extinction by 1900. Both native populations

have rebounded in recent decades, as the governments replaced assimilation policies with an acknowledgement of their right of self-determination.

Australia has recently shown itself a leader in making amends for historical injustices. In February 2008, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd delivered a lengthy and heartfelt apology to Aboriginal peoples for previous governments' policies of removing Aboriginal children from their parents. The forcible placement of Aboriginal children in state-run institutions or with non-Aboriginal foster parents was part of a policy aimed at assimilating Aboriginals into white Australian society. Rudd then instituted several policies aimed at improving the Aboriginals' lives.

The Closing the Gap program, for example, requires the government to make detailed yearly status reports on Aboriginals' status and establish concrete targets in areas such as health services, school attendance and employment training.⁵ The targets include closing the 10-year gap in life expectancy between indigenous and nonindigenous populations within a generation and halving child mortality rates by 2018.⁶

— **Brian Beary**

¹ "Indigenous Language Programmes in Australian Schools — A Way Forward," Australia Department of Education, November 2008, pp. x-xii, www.dest.gov.au/NR/rdonlyres/FBEAC65B-3A11-41F0-B836-1A480FDD82F9/25487/LPfinal130109NP.pdf.

² James Anaya, "Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Addendum, The situation of Māori People in New Zealand," United Nations, Feb. 17, 2011, http://unsr.jamesanaya.org/docs/countries/2011_report_new_zealand_advanced_version.pdf.

³ Joanna Hoare, ed., "State of World's Minorities and Indigenous People 2011 (Events of 2010)," Minority Rights Group International, July 6, 2011, p. 174, www.minorityrights.org/10848/state-of-the-worlds-minorities/state-of-the-worlds-minorities-and-indigenous-peoples-2011.html.

⁴ "National Perspective," Native Title Tribunal, www.nntt.gov.au/Native-Title-In-Australia/Pages/National-Perspective.aspx.

⁵ Kevin Rudd, "Tjukurpa: For the Indigenous People of the World," speech



AFP/Getty Images/Antony Dickson

A Maori dancer performs during a traditional welcoming ceremony for the Australian rugby team in Auckland, New Zealand, on Sept. 6, 2011. The Maoris have achieved greater political representation than Australia's Aboriginals.

at Adelaide Town Hall, July 26, 2011, www.foreignminister.gov.au/speeches/2011/kr_sp_110726.html.

⁶ "Closing the Gap — Prime Minister's Report 2011," Government of Australia, February 2011, www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/closing_the_gap/2011_ctg_pm_report/Pages/part_a.aspx.

In New Zealand, Maori sovereignty claims over their land and natural resources got a boost in 1975 when the Waitangi Tribunal was established to examine such claims. But the Maori suffered a setback in 2004 when the parliament passed the Foreshore and Seabed Act denying Maoris sovereignty over coastal areas. Maori anger over the edict forged a new sense of political unity and sparked the creation of the Maori Party in 2008.

Aboriginal Australians' scored a major legal victory in 1992 when the High

Court rejected a notion espoused by successive Australian governments, known as "terra nullius," which held that no one owned the land until white Australians settled it. The case had been filed by Eddie Mabo, an Aboriginal from the Torres Strait Islands, which separate Australia from Papua New Guinea. The ruling led to the 1993 passage of the Native Title Act, which increased Aboriginal land rights and set up tribunals to look into Aboriginal land claims.

But in 2007 the Australian govern-

ment took back some of the autonomy it had granted Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory after the government found widespread child abuse at indigenous settlements. Specifically, the government seized control of alcohol and welfare-payment distribution, as alcohol abuse was considered a major contributing factor to the abuse.⁴⁴

In Latin America between the 1960s and 1980s, indigenous peoples were buffeted by a power struggle between militant leftist groups and autocratic,

Levels of Autonomy Vary

Indigenous peoples around the world have achieved varying degrees of autonomy or self-government, some only recently. For instance, the Greenlandic Inuit have enjoyed an increasing degree of autonomy since 2008, when its home-rule government was allowed to operate independently from Denmark in nearly all matters except defense. Many of Canada's Inuit, meanwhile, live in a special Inuit-majority province called Nunavut, created in 1999 under its "provincial autonomy" style of government.

Selected Examples of Indigenous Self-Government

- Tribal government on government-approved reservations (American Indians)
- Provincial or territorial autonomy (Canadian Inuit, Nicaraguan Miskito)
- Self-declared autonomous municipalities (Zapatista rebels in southern Mexico)
- Enhanced autonomy (Greenlandic Inuit)
- Indigenous parliaments (Sami in Norway, Sweden and Finland)
- Designated seats in national parliament (Maori in New Zealand)

Source: Brian Beary

often military-backed, right-wing governments. Peru's indigenous Amazonian communities greatly suffered at the hands of the Shining Path, a rebel Maoist group that controlled large parts of the country in the 1980s. Three-quarters of the 70,000 people killed during Peru's conflict with the Shining Path were Quechua-speakers.

In Paraguay, the country's 20 different indigenous peoples were nearly wiped out during the long dictatorship of Gen. Alfredo Stroessner (1954-89), when their lands were aggressively confiscated for agricultural use and workers were brutally exploited.⁴⁵ In Guatemala, Mayans were associated with an anti-government insurgency in the 1970s, which prompted the government to conduct widespread massacres in Mayan villages.

A new, somewhat brighter era began in the late 1980s, when Latin American countries began transitioning from autocracies into pluralist democracies. In Chile, for example, after Gen. Augusto Pinochet's dictatorship ended in 1990, the new government recognized the distinctness of Chile's indigenous communities. In the 1990s Mexico's Mayans cre-

ated about 30 autonomous municipalities in the southern state of Chiapas as part of the so-called Zapatista insurgency. Ancestral government policies — including communal land ownership, indigenous education and the practice of traditional medicine — were restored. Although the Mexican government did not recognize the autonomy of the new municipalities, it did not use military force to suppress them.

In Norway, the Sami sought to mobilize politically in the 1970s after plans were announced for a hydropower project on the Alta River, which would have interfered with their fishing and reindeer herding. Although they failed to halt the power project, the Sami campaign — including hunger strikes outside parliament — ultimately persuaded the government to establish a Sami parliament in 1987.

Sweden and Finland, with smaller numbers of Sami, followed suit, and in 2000 the three Sami parliaments formed the joint Sami Parliamentary Council. Further west, Greenland was granted its own parliament in 1979; and in 2008 a referendum to grant Greenlanders further autonomy was approved by 76 percent of voters.⁴⁶

International Forums

While indigenous peoples historically tended to negotiate with colonial and later national governments, the emergence of international justice and similar concepts has prompted native peoples to advocate for their rights in international forums. In the 1920s, for instance, an indigenous Canadian group made its case for self-government to the League of Nations, only to see Britain take the issue off the agenda by declaring it an internal matter.

When the League of Nations was succeeded after World War II by the United Nations, Bolivia tried unsuccessfully to create a panel to study the social problems of aboriginal populations.⁴⁷ In 1982, the United Nations formed a Working Group on Indigenous Populations.⁴⁸ The International Labour Organization, another U.N. agency, adopted a landmark treaty in 1989 recognizing indigenous peoples' right to control their cultures, economic development, language and religion.⁴⁹ In 2000, the U.N. established the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, which held its first meeting in 2002.

A major breakthrough on the international stage occurred on Sept. 13, 2007, when — after more than 20 years of negotiations — the U.N. General Assembly passed the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, approved by 144 countries.*⁵⁰

In April 2009 Australia reversed its earlier opposition and endorsed the declaration, with New Zealand, Canada and the United States following suit in 2010. They carefully qualified their support by declaring that they would apply the declaration only within the limits of existing legal and constitutional frameworks.

* Eleven countries abstained, and four nations — Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States — opposed it, mostly because they feared its impact on control of natural resources.

According to Lightfoot at the University of British Columbia, the declaration has had “very limited” impact so far, as is generally the case with human rights declarations. However, “it will hopefully grow over time,” she says.

Bolivia, a leading advocate of the declaration, and Ecuador have since enshrined the declaration in their constitutions, while Belize’s high court has cited it in a case. The World Conference on Indigenous Peoples in 2014 will examine how to meet the goals set out in the declaration.

On a regional level, the Inter-American Court for Human Rights — established in 1979 in Costa Rica — has heard indigenous-related cases from many countries, including Paraguay, Suriname, Guatemala and Brazil. It has moral and political authority over such cases because regional governments have signed the American Convention on Human Rights, the core document interpreted by the court.

“Indigenous peoples are using the courts effectively,” says the International Center for Transitional Justice’s Gonzalez. In fact, some Mayans recently pursued claims in Spanish courts, he notes, because Spain applies the principle of universal jurisdiction, meaning it hears cases involving human rights violations that allegedly occurred outside of its territory. ■

CURRENT SITUATION

Development Dilemma

The rising demand for natural resources found in their homelands is a significant challenge facing indigenous peoples today. Tensions are inevitable, given the reluctance

of national governments to give indigenous groups a veto over local development projects.

In Danish-owned Greenland, exploration of subsurface resources is intensifying, with the Scottish oil-drilling company Cairn Energy moving 600 foreign workers each month to the town of Aasiaat in Disko Bay.⁵¹ In Russia, the state-owned gas company Gazprom is building pipelines that would cut through ancestral lands of the Evenks, a small indigenous nation. In Canada, oil sands operations threaten to pollute the Athabasca River, which runs through lands occupied by the Athabasca Chipewyan and Mikisew Cree peoples.⁵² In Mexico, a Spanish company is installing 410 wind turbines that encroach on the homelands of the Binniza and Huaves peoples in the Tehuantepec Isthmus.⁵³

In South America, both Peru and Brazil are proceeding with plans to build hydropower stations that could flood indigenous communities and destroy tropical rainforests.⁵⁴ The Peruvian government also plans to give oil and gas companies access to lands occupied by a remote Indian nation in the Kugapakori Nahua Nanti nature reserve, which lies about 60 miles from the 15th-century Inca settlement of Machu Picchu.⁵⁵ Machu Picchu, Peru’s biggest tourist attraction, attracted 800,000 visitors in 2010 and provides 70 percent of Peru’s tourism revenue.

In Chile, the government is trying to convert its Easter Island territory, located in the Pacific Ocean 2,000 miles west of the Chilean mainland, into a tourist attraction centered around the island’s 887 giant carved stone heads, known as Moais. Although the island was annexed by Chile in 1888, the Rapa Nui natives’ opposition to Chile’s occupation of their lands has resulted in regular and sometimes violent clashes, as well as a lawsuit filed with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.⁵⁶

Most indigenous peoples want to be consulted before decisions are

made regarding their resources. “There is no federal framework for getting prior consent,” says Chief Atleo, from the Assembly of First Nations in Canada. “There is no national plan for energy. Instead, we have a patchwork of jurisdictions.”

Indigenous groups are not universally opposed to resource development. For example:

- The Inuit of Greenland are keen to allow the extraction of oil and gas on their territory, which they see as crucial to their becoming more self-sufficient.
- Canada’s Inuit, who are zealously trying to safeguard their right to trade in sealskins, have sued the European Union over its decision to ban seal skin imports.⁵⁷
- Argentina’s Guaraní Mbyá indigenous community, near the city of Puerto Iguazu and its spectacular Iguazu waterfalls, is developing — with funds from both Argentina and Canada — a tourism industry centered around its traditional culture.⁵⁸
- In Brazil, the Suruí, a 1,300-member Amazon people, have forged a partnership with the government and the U.N. that will help them preserve some 925 square miles of rainforest and conduct carbon-friendly agriculture.⁵⁹

Meanwhile, Native Americans’ successful development of casinos on their reservations has produced remarkable results. Revenues from the still relatively young industry have grown rapidly.

“There has not been much downside” to the industry’s growth, says Assistant Secretary Laverdure, “apart from the social ills associated with gambling.”

But some U.S. lawmakers want tighter controls over how the casino revenues are used. After a 2006 U.S. District Appeals Court ruling limited the U.S. government’s oversight powers on Indian-run casinos, Arizona Republican Sen. John McCain called for new legislation allowing the federal



AFP/Getty Images/Stan Honda

Keith Anderson celebrates his Cherokee and Catawba heritage by competing in the men's traditional dance category at a Native American Pow-Wow in King William, Va. The Cherokee were among five Southern tribes forcibly moved to Indian Territory west of the Mississippi River after Congress passed the Indian Removal Act of 1830. Many Indians died on the journey, known as the "trail of tears."

government to more closely scrutinize gaming operations.⁶⁰ But Indian representatives are generally opposed to changing the status quo.

Jamie Hummingbird, chairperson of the National Tribal Gaming Commissioners/Regulators, says a 1988 law that gives tribal governments the exclusive right to regulate their gaming industries provides a "stable framework."

Further, he concludes, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it."⁶¹

Going to Court

Indigenous peoples continue to assert their identities and achieve their political goals through legal avenues.

For example, in April 2011 Sweden's Supreme Court ruled that Sami reindeer herders could continue to allow their animals to graze in the forests of northern Sweden, despite objections from more than 100 landowners. The Sami won because they proved that

their ancestors had grazed reindeer on the land since time immemorial.⁶²

In Australia, more than 400 legal claims by Aboriginals to secure native title to their traditional lands are being processed. Although the government is trying to settle the claims through negotiation, many of the cases are being referred to the National Native Title Tribunal.⁶³

Efforts continue in the U.S. Congress to grant native Hawaiians some form of political autonomy. Sen. Daniel Akaka, a Democrat from Hawaii, introduced a bill in March that he says "would simply put native Hawaiians on equal footing with American Indians and Alaska Natives." The bill would create a government specifically for those people registered on a still-to-be-compiled Native Hawaiian roll.⁶⁴

Meanwhile, in Canada about 70 land claims and self-government negotiations are ongoing between the government and indigenous peoples, while 17 agreements have been concluded with 27 communities. A typical agreement takes up to 25 years to conclude.⁶⁵

In Latin America, at least 10 countries have set up Truth Commissions to explore human rights violations committed by previous regimes, often against indigenous peoples.*⁶⁶

"The trend has received a mixed reception, both among transitional justice practitioners and Indigenous rights activists," according to Joanna Rice, associate of the Truth and Memory Program at the International Center for Transitional Justice.⁶⁷

Critics say the commissions merely give guilty parties a chance to say that the past is over and that any demands for legal redress should be dropped. On the other hand, the commissions can provide a forum to raise critical

* Latin American countries with Truth Commissions include Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Panama, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay.

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Should indigenous peoples be educated in their own languages?



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the living conditions of indigenous peoples vary across the world. In some countries they are integrated into society, while in others they are marginalized. Despite these differences, indigenous peoples share many experiences, including the attempt by nation-states to eradicate indigenous languages.

Since the 19th century countries have used schools to achieve monolingualism, or “one state — one language,” and all teaching in compulsory education was in the majority language.

As a result, indigenous children struggle more at school than children from the majority population, because they must learn not only their subjects but also a new language. The policy has signaled that indigenous languages are not valued, and such negative school experiences account in part for why indigenous peoples have a lower level of education than majority peoples.

One response among indigenous peoples has been to reject schooling as irrelevant, leading to low levels of education. Another strategy has been to adjust to the schools’ values. For example, parents may stop speaking the indigenous language with their children at home so that by the time the children start school they are more on a par with majority children. But this strategy halts the intergenerational transmission of indigenous languages, and the languages become endangered. In other words, both these strategies (rejection and adjustment) have a negative impact on indigenous societies.

A third strategy — to make schools in indigenous areas adjust to the children’s language and culture — has produced good results. It is now supported in Scandinavia, for example, where the indigenous Sámi people can receive primary education in Sámi as a separate subject, and they may choose to have Sámi as the language of instruction in other subjects. The level of education among the Sámi is no longer lower than among the majority peoples in Scandinavia, and the Sami language has been strengthened.

Those advocating indigenous peoples receiving education in their own language can find support for their view in international conventions. However, these formal rights are not the main issue. The key points are that education in indigenous languages gives children a positive experience of their own culture and also strengthens the traditional indigenous languages. In this way children are better prepared for life both in the wider society and in the indigenous society.

For this reason education in their own language must be an important right for all indigenous peoples.



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Open ended, this is a nonsensical question. However desirable for children to learn to read and write in their mother tongues, in many situations it is impractical. In Papua New Guinea, for example, a developing country with just under 7 million people, it has not been possible to train teachers and develop reading materials in the more than 800 indigenous languages spoken there.

Pretending to do so has contributed significantly to the country’s failure of education. After nearly 40 years of independence, education is in crisis, with only about 20 percent of the population literate.

Some languages are dying out — not only in Oceania, but also in the Americas, India, China and many other parts of Asia and Africa — while new ones, such as Bahasa Indonesia, have been evolving. Countries must decide on language teaching that is best for their inhabitants, and this usually means compromises between resources and ideals.

Children must become articulate and literate in the principal language or languages of their country so they can function in its economy and society. They have to be able to qualify for jobs, participate in democratic decision-making and contribute to civil society. In countries made up of disparate groups, a national language or languages can make a contribution to stability, equity and economic and social development.

Fortunately, research on the human brain has demonstrated that children can absorb new languages at very early ages and can absorb several languages simultaneously when very young. Research also shows that linguistic development makes a special contribution to the development of children’s brains. Teaching several languages simultaneously in pre-schools that take in children at 3 years of age and (even earlier) has made a multilingual approach to teaching languages possible.

Equality of opportunity demands quality education from very early years so that children are fully articulate and literate by the end of their primary education in a country’s principal language or languages. The extent to which it is sensible to teach mother or traditional tongues in practice depends on a range of factors, including the extent to which such languages are developed and used, a country’s resources and parents’ wishes. There is no one-size-fits-all model.

SAVING INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

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indigenous issues, such as land reform, economic rights and cultural preservation, Rice notes.

Social Problems

While indigenous groups are making progress on the political front, the social situation continues to be dire.

likely to report family violence or to access existing services,” says Valmaine Toki from the U.N. Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

The Australian government recently reported that “progress is being made” in closing the gaps between indigenous and nonindigenous populations on several key measurements, with significant improvements in child mortality in recent years.⁶⁹ The government’s 2007 takeover of the management of

3,000 Indian police officers patrol 56 million acres of Indian land, which is 48 percent fewer than the average for the rest of the country. The new law aims to address this shortfall by, among other things, expanding police training opportunities and extending the hiring age of police officers from 37 to 47 in hopes of encouraging more retired Native American military officers to join.⁷¹

Those understaffed tribal police forces face a growing gang presence. Some 225 youth gangs — many involved in drug trafficking — operate in the Navajo Nation alone, which has a population of 250,000. On Pine Ridge, a Lakota Indian reservation in South Dakota, 39 gangs and 5,000 gang members have been identified in a population of 50,000. And Hispanic gangs have established a foothold on the Colville reservation in Washington State.⁷²



AFP/Getty Images/Geoff Robins

Inuit hunter Pitseolak Alainga (left) explains native seal hunting techniques to Canadian Finance Minister Jim Flaherty in Iqaluit, Canada, on Feb. 6, 2010. The Arctic’s Inuit worry about a resource grab by outsiders as the polar ice caps melt, making their region more accessible to international interests keen to develop the area’s abundant oil and minerals.

In Latin America, poverty rates remain significantly higher among indigenous populations than nonindigenous. In a report on malnutrition in Peru, UNICEF health officer Mario Tavera noted that “the gaps are large and have widened . . . one out of two [indigenous] children has chronic malnutrition,” compared to the national rate of 18 percent for children under the age of 5.⁶⁸ (See box, p. 454.)

In New Zealand, “Maori are over-represented as victims and perpetrators of family violence and are less

Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory has been loosened somewhat under a new law that took effect on July 1, 2010. Although the core 2007 framework has been kept in place, Aboriginal communities now have more flexibility in applying alcohol restrictions.

In the United States, the Tribal Law and Order Act of 2010 aimed to boost tribal governments’ policing resources in order to address the inadequate state of law enforcement services on Indian reservations.⁷⁰ Currently, only

OUTLOOK

Preserving Nationhood

The future of many indigenous languages is in doubt, although there is cause for cautious optimism in some places.

In Bolivia, President Morales has set up three indigenous language universities for Guaraní, Quechua and Aymara-speakers and is requiring government officials to learn one of the nation’s 36 indigenous languages. In Suriname, where the indigenous represent 4 percent of the population, there are plans to teach children from the Konomerume community some subjects in their native language rather than the official Dutch language.⁷³

In Greenland, Inuit is now being spoken in schools, homes, the media and churches, with Danish prevailing

only within the government administration. In Norway, the government has said, "it may . . . be necessary to take active steps to repair the damage inflicted on indigenous cultures and languages, and to lay the foundation for linguistic and cultural revitalization."⁷⁴

But in the United States, there is a general concern that indigenous languages are dying out. "There seems to be less and less of them spoken," says Laverdure from the Indian Affairs Department. While a majority of his own nation, the Crow, speaks the native language every day, that is more the exception than the rule for Indian nations, he says. Generally, only the older people speak the native languages.

Canada's Chief Atleo says his top priority is including the 52 indigenous Canadian languages into the country's education system. However, with little funding and a patchwork policy framework, he concedes it will be an uphill battle.

In New Zealand, the Maori television channel now has an average monthly audience of more than 1.6 million viewers, yet only 23 percent of Maori and 4 percent of New Zealanders can speak conversational Maori.⁷⁵ The government is not doing enough to provide for the use of Maori in courts and government departments nor has it trained enough teachers in Maori-medium education, says Toki, of the U.N. Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

Intermarriage between indigenous and nonindigenous populations is expected to continue. In some countries, such as the United States and Australia, the rise in census figures for the indigenous population is seen as a sign that a growing number of people of predominantly European ancestry are now acknowledging their aboriginal roots.

However, that does not necessarily mean that indigenous peoples are likely to shed their distinct identity and as-

similate. For example, First Nation peoples are beginning to identify who belongs to their community. Presently, the Canadian government makes those determinations. "We would like to change this system," says Chief Atleo, of the Ahousaht Nation near Vancouver Island in Canada.

While there is near-universal support among indigenous peoples for self-determination, few actually want to secede and form an independent country. When a group of disaffected Lakota American Indians, led by veteran activist Russell Means, declared an independent Lakota Republic in December 2007, the reaction from other Indians was decidedly muted.⁷⁶

In Nicaragua, a small group of Miskito have been calling for independence, says Rev. Bent, who has been a Moravian preacher on the Atlantic coast for 25 years. "But they are not taken seriously," he says. "Really, they are just frustrated because autonomy has not come fast enough."

Greenland's Inuit are a possible exception: They may try to expand upon the enhanced autonomy they won in 2008 by moving toward full independence. But some other indigenous peoples want to emulate what Greenlanders already have accomplished.

"We are not looking for independence," says Victoria Hykes-Steere, an Alaska Native and autonomy advocate. "We would like to follow the Greenland model, where they still have ties to Denmark." She believes indigenous peoples should have more autonomy over such things as the right to hunt and trade in marine mammals like walrus and seals.

Thus, while the self-determination argument has, to some extent, been legally won by indigenous peoples, this may turn out to be a hollow victory if it doesn't translate into securing control over their natural resources, ensuring the survival of their culture and improving the economic conditions of their societies.

As Atleo of the Assembly of First Nations puts it, "We are moving in the right direction — we are being consulted more — but a lot more needs to be done." ■

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The Next Step:

Additional Articles from Current Periodicals

Autonomy

“Indigenous Townships Call for Autonomy,” *China Post*, Dec. 19, 2010, www.chinapost.com.tw/taiwan/national/national-news/2010/12/19/284236/Indigenous-townships.htm.

The Indigenous Peoples Action Coalition of Taiwan has called for the government to safeguard the interest of indigenous groups in five townships by granting them more autonomy.

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The Queensland government in Australia says it won't stand in the way if the Torres Strait wants to become a self-governing territory.

Tebay, Neles, “Papua Needs a Negotiated Affirmative Policy,” *Jakarta (Indonesia) Post*, Dec. 20, 2010, www.thejakartapost.com/news/2010/12/20/papua-needs-a-negotiated-affirmative-policy.html.

Native Papuans say gaining autonomy 10 years ago has failed to bring them prosperity.

Bolivia

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Bolivian lawmakers have approved a bill restricting indigenous traditional justice, after an outcry over the lynchings of allegedly corrupt Indian police.

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Bolivia's foreign minister says indigenous Andean attitudes about preservation could better inform the world about conserving nature and natural resources.

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Many indigenous Mexicans are taking a hesitant approach when it comes to socially integrating with the ruling classes.

Barnes, Taylor, “Brazilian Soap Operas Get Their First Black Lead Actor,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, June 9, 2011, www.csmonitor.com/World/Americas/2011/0609/Brazilian-soap-operas-get-their-first-black-lead-actor.

The introduction of a black Brazilian into one of the country's soap operas is indicative of the growing influence of the country's black population.

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Corrupt Russian officials are more unlikely to socially accept the country's indigenous groups into mainstream culture.

Natural Resources

“Colombian Indians Sign Own Version of Kyoto Protocol,” *EFE news service (Spain)*, Oct. 9, 2010, laht.com/article.asp?ArticleId=370486&CategoryId=12393.

Several Colombian indigenous groups have signed their own measure to control greenhouse gases.

Macalister, Terry, “Natural Resources Exploration in the Arctic,” *Guardian Unlimited (England)*, July 4, 2011, www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2011/jul/04/natural-resources-arctic-q-and-a.

Human rights advocates say indigenous groups should be consulted in any projects to develop natural resources in the Arctic.

Morrison, Joe, “Indigenous Fire Skills Blaze an Eco-Friendly Trail,” *Canberra (Australia) Times*, July 28, 2011.

Science suggests that the fire practices of indigenous Australians could help preserve the tropical savannahs in the northern part of the country.

CITING CQ GLOBAL RESEARCHER

Sample formats for citing these reports in a bibliography include the ones listed below. Preferred styles and formats vary, so please check with your instructor or professor.

MLA STYLE

Flamini, Roland. “Nuclear Proliferation.” *CQ Global Researcher* 1 Apr. 2007: 1-24.

APA STYLE

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Voices From Abroad:

CATHY FREEMAN

Aboriginal athlete and
2000 Olympic gold
medalist, Australia

The difficult past

"There's still an aura of racism and hatred and loathing. It's hard because it does bring up the past. Everyone's country has got a past they don't feel good about."

The Boston Globe, September 2010

BAN KI-MOON

Secretary-General
United Nations

A benefit to all

"The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples finally has the consensus it deserves. Now we need to make the declaration's principles a reality. . . . We must end the oppression, and we must ensure that indigenous peoples are always heard."

Speech before Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues May 2011

SANJEEB DRONG

General Secretary
Bangladesh Indigenous
Peoples Forum, Bangladesh

Self-identification is key

"No state can impose any identity on any people or community. This is a violation of human rights. Self-identification is considered as a fundamental criterion for the identification of indigenous and tribal peoples."

Daily Star (Bangladesh) June 2011

TEDDY BRAWNER BAGUILAT

Chairman, House Committee on Natural Cultural Communities, Philippines

Slow progress

"There is today intense demand by indigenous communities to evaluate and review the implementation of IPRA (Indigenous Peoples Rights Act). Our indigenous peoples have reported persistent violations of their Free and Prior Informed Consent requirement, the hasty manner in the approval of mining explorations, deployment of the military as a security force to mining and the unacceptably slow titling of their ancestral domains."

Philippine News agency August 2011

BEDE HARRIS

Senior Law Lecturer
Charles Sturt University
Australia

Stating the obvious

"A statement 'recognising' the existence of indigenous people would be simply to state the obvious, and would be no more useful than adding to the constitution a statement that Australia is in the Southern Hemisphere or that the sky is blue."

Canberra (Australia) Times November 2010

ADOLFO CHAVEZ
Leader, Indigenous
Peoples' Confederation
Bolivia

Ready for battle

"We want to live in peace, with development that respects our lands. Your shovels will crash into our children. That is why you do not want a binding consultation. So our spears and arrows will be ready for the mechanical diggers [that] want to destroy our virgin territory."

The Independent (England) August 2011

MARIA TOMASIC
President, Royal Australian
and New Zealand College
of Psychiatrists Australia

Long overdue

"The fact that our constitution does not recognise indigenous Australians is inexcusable, and it is an admirable

move for the current government to move to remedy this. Constitutional acknowledgement of indigenous people is long overdue."

Australian Associated Press October 2010

KENNETH DEER
Mohawk Indian, Canada

'It's up to us'

"As indigenous peoples it's up to us to hold Canada's feet to the fire on this Declaration. I'm cautiously optimistic. I'm not doing cartwheels, but we have to use it in the most positive way to advance the rights of indigenous peoples."

Indian Country Today (United States), November 2010



Dario La Crisis/Dario Castillejos