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Introduction: Mainstreaming Indigenous Geography

KATE A. BERRY

In 2000 the American Indian Specialty Group of the Association of American Geographers changed its name to the Indigenous Peoples Specialty Group. Motivated to be more inclusive of Native peoples around the globe and recognize the intersections of different Indigenous projects, the statement of purpose for the group was also redefined:

To foster pure and applied geographic research and geographic education that involves the indigenous peoples of the world, past and present. To encourage approaches to research and teaching that empower indigenous peoples, and to help build relationships of mutual trust between communities of indigenous peoples and academic geographers.¹

Changing the name and reconceptualizing group goals signaled recognition of the evolving roles of geographers as learners, teachers, researchers, and activists, not only in the United States but also in many Native places throughout the world. Instead of passive studies, reflection was needed. Instead of working alone to create independent research questions, academics were to engage with Indigenous groups and for sovereign tribal nations. Instead of seeing research and education as neutral, they were recognized as powerful with the potential to be connective or destructive. Specifying these goals in ways that could enhance the overall potential of Indigenous geography was seen as important.

Geographers are not alone in rethinking these matters. Changes within the discipline also reflect larger currents in intellectual thought about Indian country and throughout Native and Indigenous studies more generally. Books such as Linda Tuhiwai Smith's *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* and Donald L. Fixico's *The American Indian Mind in a Linear*

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World: American Indian Studies and Traditional Knowledge explore how Native and American Indian studies could, should, and/or might reconnect with the struggles of Native communities and make a difference.² Such writings and dialogues have a palpable appeal, not only to geographers but also to political scientists, anthropologists, historians, legal scholars, literary critics, and others. As the millennium turned, many—especially graduate students and young scholars—found inspiration in ideas being generated about linking research and teaching methods with respect for Indigenous peoples.

Many of the ideas were not so novel, however, having been worked into the implicit logic of understanding, reading, working in, and writing about Indian country and topics of discussion in Native studies in geography for decades.³ Rundstrom, Deur, Berry, and Winchell reviewed geographic work on Native studies in the United States and Canada and identified many themes and notions in work from the 1990s that crossed over into more recent scholarship as well, including work on material landscapes, the biosphere, sovereignty, dispossession, land claims, land restoration, sacred lands, economic development, planning, gambling, tourism, postcolonialism, landscapes of the mind, maps, geographic information systems (GIS), research, writing, and teaching.⁴ Many geographers—both in the past and present—try respectfully to negotiate relationships with Indigenous people, explore Indigenous perspectives of environments and societies, investigate non-Native interpretations of Indigenous worlds, and make comparisons between Native communities. Times change and, along with the infectiousness of antiracist, postcolonial, and feminist studies, Indigenous geography has moved forward. Perhaps the most unique thing about geographers in the past decade has been the reflexiveness of scholarly writing and attempts to make connections with other projects around the world.

However, the audience for work in Indigenous geography remains limited. Most interest in Native studies in geography is from others involved in some capacity with Indigenous studies. Yet there is much to share about why and how Indigenous geography is being done. Geographers with other specialties, Native studies scholars, practitioners in Indian country, tribal governments, and others may find such work useful or provocative. The focus in this special issue is on mainstreaming Indigenous geography. Mainstreaming, in this sense, means incorporating ideas, practices, concepts, and information that draw on geographies of Native places in meaningful ways into larger and different discussions. The collection highlights practical issues rather than abstract research, but several of the articles meld theory with practice or empirical case studies.

One theme that appears in several articles is the generation of approaches that extend beyond nation-to-nation (Indigenous to national government) relations within fixed territorial state boundaries. In the context of responding to climate change, Zoltán Grossman identifies many of the means developed by Indigenous communities and nations in order to cooperate with one another and handle Native actions at the international level as well as dealings between Native nations and national governments. Steven Silvern takes to task state-centric concepts of exclusive territorial sovereignty in his analysis

of conflicts between the state of Wisconsin and the Ojibwe regarding Native treaty rights to fishing and hunting. Anne-Marie d’Hauteserre undertakes a postcolonial analysis of tourism initiated by the Kanak of New Caledonia by examining economic development that is not fully circumscribed by state imprimatur, colonial rule, or tourist demands.

Another theme found in these articles is the evolving role of technological change in Indigenous communities and Native nations. Laura Smith outlines how the technology of GIS fits into the initiatives of the Bois Forte Reservation in northern Minnesota. Kenneth Madsen examines how information flows generated by Native communities are linked to research writing and proprietary publication rights. RDK Herman considers how Internet-based projects can represent Indigenous geographies and project Native voices. Margaret Wickens Pearce and Renee Pualani Louis reimagine cartographic techniques and language with the goal of exploring the depth of Native place in Kaua‘i.

Embedded in these articles is a consciousness about how research with Native people and in Indigenous spaces occurs. Stephen Davis provides insights into the details of conducting fieldwork by using examples from his years of experience with Australian, African, and Asian natives. Jay Johnson considers how being Indigenous, but being from Native lands far away, influenced the process of his research with Maori people in New Zealand. Each of the other authors addresses, in various measures, whether, how, when, or why geographic research is appropriate in Native lands and with Indigenous people.

This special issue brings together articles from geographic scholars and practitioners working in, with, and for tribal lands; tribal or Indigenous governments; and Native peoples. We hope that these articles will contribute to broadening the audience for Indigenous geography and identify pathways for new approaches and ideas.

NOTES

1. Indigenous Peoples Specialty Group of the Association of American Geographers Web site, <http://www.pacificworlds.com/ipsg/index.html> (accessed 4 December 2007).

2. Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London: Zed Books, 1999); Donald L. Fixico, *The American Indian Mind in a Linear World: American Indian Studies and Traditional Knowledge* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

3. There is some irony in the rejection of older approaches, given the renewed interest in the voices of elders and the value of tradition.

4. Robert Rundstrom, Douglas Deur, Kate Berry, and Dick Winchell, “Recent Geographical Research on Indians and Inuit in the United States and Canada,” *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 24, no. 2 (2000): 85–110. An earlier review is Dick Winchell, James Goodman, Stephen Jett, and Martha Henderson, “Geographic Research on Native Americans,” in *Geography in America*, ed. Gary Gaile and Cort Willmott (Columbus, OH: Merrill, 1994), 239–55.

