Introduction

Editor's Introduction *aboriginal policy studies*

Chris Andersen

Editor, aboriginal policy studies

aboriginal policy studies Vol. 5, no. 2, 2016, pp. 1-3

This article can be found at:

<http://ejournals.library.ualberta.ca/index.php/aps/article/view/27095>

ISSN: 1923-3299

Article DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5663/aps.v5i2.27095>

aboriginal policy studies is an online, peer-reviewed and multidisciplinary journal that publishes original, scholarly, and policy-relevant research on issues relevant to Métis, non-status Indians and urban Aboriginal people in Canada. For more information, please contact us at apsjournal@ualberta.ca or visit our website at www.nativestudies.ualberta.ca/research/aboriginal-policy-studies-aps.

Editor's Introduction

Chris Andersen

We would like to welcome our readers to volume 5, issue 2 of *aboriginal policy studies*, an issue dedicated specifically to a complex engagement with the Aboriginal Peoples Survey (APS). The first Aboriginal Peoples Survey (1991) was created as a post-censal survey (following the Canadian census collection for that year) to collect more specific information on the demographic and social conditions of Aboriginal peoples in Canada. The 1991 APS became the central statistical source for data used in the 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. In their Aboriginal Action Plan in reply to the RCAP report (titled *Gathering Strength*), the government of Canada highlighted the need for current, robust, and meaningful data on Aboriginal social conditions. These calls remain relevant today in light of the recently concluded Truth and Reconciliation Commission.¹ That is, any meaningful dynamics of reconciliation must include technically and interpretatively robust data.

The 2001 Aboriginal Peoples Survey, conceived under similar RCAP auspices, was conducted in late 2001 and early 2002. Since 2001, the Aboriginal Peoples Survey only collects information on Aboriginal respondents living “off-reserve.”

The 1991, 2001, 2006, and 2012 Aboriginal Peoples Surveys have now amassed a wealth of information on various Aboriginal demographic and social conditions pertaining to Aboriginal adults and children. In 2012, the latest Aboriginal Peoples Survey was carried out. Its survey included a wide range of questions on education, employment, and health, as well as on language, income, housing, and mobility. In 2014, as editor of *aboriginal policy studies*, I was contacted by senior policy analysts from the then-Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development Canada who asked whether *aboriginal policy studies* would be willing to “host” an issue specifically dedicated to findings and analysis from the APS. We agreed, and this issue is the result of the submission, peer-reviewed evaluation, and selection of articles and commentary that used data from (or analyzed issues that resonated with) the 2012 APS. This issue is a slight departure from the journal's usual format of three articles of between 6,000 and 10,000 words, three commentaries of approximately 3,000 words each, a book review, and a set of foundational documents. Given the larger volume of articles and the longer length of the commentary, issue 5(2) contains six peer reviewed articles, two 5,000–6,000-word commentaries, and a set of foundational documents.

The first article, written by Dr. Marika Morris, pieces together a number of statistical sources (including the 2012 APS) to provide a complex statistical portrait of the Inuit population – particular in urban contexts. Though the Inuit population remains too small to allow for city-by-city comparisons, Morris provides an overall portrait of the urban Inuit population and ends her article by providing a number of policy-specific recommendations,

¹ See the foundational documents from the previous issue of *aboriginal policy studies* (issue 5.1) for a list of the TRC's calls for action. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5663/aps.v5i1.25647>.

particularly the importance of infrastructural support for Inuit-run urban organizations to assist with necessary political and service-delivery desires in locales otherwise heavily First Nation (and to a lesser extent, Métis) in their orientations. Following Morris, Rubab Arim, Benita Tam, Evelyne Bougie, and Dafna Kohen use the 2012 APS to examine statistical factors that lead to positive schooling outcomes for Inuit living in Inuit Nunangat (i.e. Inuit territory). They found, in short, that the positive involvement of family, school and Inuit language had obvious and important policy implications.

Similarly, in the third article Anne Guévremont, Rubab Arim, and Dafna Kohen use the 2012 APS to explore the complex relationship between First Nation youth mental health and schooling outcomes, demonstrating the powerful impact of schooling environment to exacerbate or lessen the presence of psychological distress, anxiety, and suicide ideation. More specifically, they point to the importance of positive peer associations, participation in sports, and overall positive perception of school environment as factors that contribute to positive mental health. The authors end their discussion with an appeal for policymakers to account for the importance of school factors when promoting mental health among First Nation youth. Making use of the Aboriginal Children's Survey supplement of the 2006 Aboriginal Peoples Survey, Anne Guévremont, Evelyne Bougie, and Dafna Kohen next examine the relationship between housing conditions and the physical and mental health of pre-school aged First Nation children living off-reserve. Demonstrating the complex relationship among these variables, Guévremont et al. suggest that even after controlling for various factors, home ownership, parental satisfaction with housing, and mobility (as determined by the number of household moves per year) were associated with certain child physical and mental health outcomes.

In the fifth article, Eva Jewell examines the specific contexts that increase the likelihood that urban Indigenous residents will perceive the importance of Indigenous language use and retention. She proposes a number of hypotheses relating to the relationship between, on the one hand, language use and retention, and on the other, sex, education, household type and exposure to language inside and outside the home. Jewell then demonstrates a significant relationship for each of these factors, with the exception of age, and particularly emphasizes the importance of exposure to Indigenous languages inside and outside of the home. In the final article, Jacqueline Quinless and Ricardo Manmohan make use of the 2012 APS data to conduct two path analyses to explore the effects of several demographic factors on the mobility patterns of off-reserve Aboriginal people across Canada. Quinless and Manmohan's research (and more specifically, their use of path analysis models) demonstrates a more complex relationship between socioeconomic factors and mobility than previous research has presented, highlighting the power of work and family in particular as important contributing factors in addition to the effects of age that are normally emphasized.

Following the articles, the journal issue has published two commentaries. The first commentary, also written by Dr. Marika Morris,² seeks to position Statistics Canada's collection of data, through the 2012 Aboriginal Peoples Survey, in the broader context of the recently completed Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The APS is powerfully embedded in the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, and Morris makes a compelling argument for how the Aboriginal Peoples Survey – as well as other Statistics Canada survey instruments – can be improved to meet the calls to action of the TRC. Additionally, and in some ways more importantly, however, Morris makes an equally compelling argument for understanding the findings in the broader context of the Aboriginal statistics field – not just the surveys themselves, but the conception, collection, interpretation, dissemination, and consultation that comprise the fuller complexity of the valuable and justifiably lauded work that Statistics Canada undertakes.

Following Morris, Jeannette Steffler, the Director for Strategic Research at Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), offers a fascinating overview into the “Indigenous data landscape in Canada” from the perspective of an organization that makes extensive use of various data pertaining to Aboriginal demographic and social conditions. Steffler lists, in addition to the Aboriginal Peoples Surveys, the widespread sources of data that INAC makes use of in producing evidence-based policy (including, for example, the Canadian Census and its use in the creation of Community Well-Being Indexes, health and socioeconomic surveys such as the Regional Health Survey, and the First Nations Early Childhood and Education and Employment Survey), as well as discussing the importance of collaborative and consultative ideals in data creation, collection, and dissemination.

Finally, we present a set of foundational documents. The 1991 Aboriginal Peoples Survey documentation might have been the most obvious choice as a foundational document for this issue, but we instead chose selections from the 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, the real impetus for the continued importance of the Aboriginal Peoples Survey in its subsequent 2001, 2006, and 2012 iterations. As mentioned earlier, the RCAP Report made specific recommendations about the importance of robust data for respectful relationships with Indigenous people, not to mention evidence-based policymaking. The foundational documents lay out some of these initial principles.

We thank all of you for your continued support of *aboriginal policy studies* through downloads, sharing on various social media platforms, and use in academic and non-academic contexts. We plan to publish our next issue, 5.3, at the end of March, 2016.

² We felt that splitting Dr. Morris's article into two pieces and turning one of them into a commentary fit better with the argument she was making. We contacted Dr. Morris, who graciously agreed to our suggestion – we thank her for her collegiality.