

Guest Editorial

We are honored to be included in a special edition of the Journal of the International Association of Official Statistics (JIAOS) on “Measuring Indigenous Identification”. Many authors in this special edition are Indigenous. We look forward to sharing our research.

Too often, research about Indigenous people is not featured in statistical journals, but it should be. Statistics and data tell stories with numbers in a powerful way. Indigenous people have many stories to tell and some of these stories, as shown in this edition, have been difficult to tell, for statistical and non-statistical reasons – small sample sizes, data ownership or misinterpretation of results, to name a few. That is not to say that research has not been performed in Indigenous communities. Too often, research has been done to us or for us – but not by us.

This special edition did not come out of nowhere. For years, many of us have worked with Indigenous communities in our own countries and throughout the world, as members or as allies. For the most part, many authors in this edition met through the International Group for Indigenous Health Measurement (IGIHM), co-chaired by Sam Notzon and myself. Sam was one of the founders of IGIHM, along with Ian Ring and Richard Madden, both of Australia. We discovered that IGIHM is a valuable forum to share concerns and solve mutual problems facing Indigenous people in the four founding countries – Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States. We have held monthly conference calls and in-person workshops and conferences every other year or so. Much IGIHM research has been published, including in this journal and in this special edition.

The theme “Measuring Indigenous Identification” came from the work of an IGIHM Work Group on Identification. IGIHM members realized that research could be vastly improved by examining exactly how Indigenous people were identified in the four countries and other countries around the world. When identification methods varied (as they often did), results varied and so did the impact on programs, policy and the everyday lives of Indigenous people.

Some common themes have emerged from IGIHM and are elaborated upon in this special edition. After

colonization, Indigenous people tended to become a small part of the larger population in their own countries. Although we are still here, our stories and concerns are often subsumed in larger national dialogues. Our communities and traditions remain alive, but not without endurance and sacrifice encompassing many generations. Measures of health and socio-economic status tend to indicate that Indigenous people are worse off than their countrymen and women. We wish to take control of our own narrative and tell our own stories in our own way. This will help address the program, policy and legislative challenges faced by Indigenous people in their countries.

This edition contains a paper on the history of the IGIHM, one containing an overview of Indigenous identification, five on specific countries (Australia, Brazil, Canada, New Zealand and the United States), one containing a summation and next steps, and two papers focusing on services and suicide.

Indigenous people are not limited to the four countries in IGIHM. Indigenous people are found throughout the world and number over 300 million, with the majority in China and India, according to Dr. Ian Anderson’s landmark study entitled, “Indigenous and tribal peoples’ health (The Lancet-Lowitja Institute Global Collaboration): a population study” (Anderson et al.), published in the April 20, 2016 online edition of the Lancet. The Lancet study is a rich collection of data that includes comparisons in 23 countries between Indigenous people and the general population on a host of health and socio-demographic indicators. Many of the Lancet co-authors were Indigenous, which provided another venue for international collaboration among Indigenous researchers. This special edition owes much to Dr. Anderson’s work.

This edition could not have happened without the assistance and inspiration of Dr. Fritz Scheuren, a member of IGIHM and former editor of the JIAOS. He encouraged us to perform research and publish in this journal. Special thanks go to Dr. Kirsten West, the current editor, who approached us with the idea of a special edition. Dr. West remains a staunch ally and we are grateful for her support and guidance. She and her

team: Greta Cherry, Kim Willems and Katherine Condon, have gone above and beyond in bringing this edition to fruition. Thank you.

Finally, we are not done. We, as Indigenous people and our allies, have much to do and will continue our efforts to develop, analyze and present good solid data to tell our stories and improve the lives of Indigenous people everywhere.

We hope you enjoy these papers.

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