Introduction

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INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGES: RESURGENCE, IMPLEMENTATION, AND COLLABORATION IN SOCIAL WORK

On July 8th to 11th, 2013 the Second International Indigenous Voices in Social Work Conference was held in Winnipeg, Canada with 346 registered participants from over 13 different territories in the world, 125 presentations, more than 70 volunteers, four organizing committees from the Faculty to international levels, 10 volunteer organizations/communities who provided site visits, and 19 individual, corporate, and government sponsors. The conference theme of Indigenous knowledges focused on three areas: resurgence, implementation, and collaboration. The presentations demonstrated the resurgence of Indigenous knowledges, how Indigenous knowledges have been implemented in social policies, social organizations, programs, practice, education, research, and social action, and the emerging collaboration between Indigenous Peoples, settlers, and social work.

The conference organizers and participants recognized that these themes are impacted by a key contextual factor, that colonialism, where the following Indigenous based definition was evident:

> Colonialism is the evolving process where we, as peoples of this land, face imposition—from genocide, to assimilation, to marginalization—of views, ideas, beliefs, values and practices by other peoples at the cost of our lives, views, ideas, beliefs, values practices, lands, and resources. It is when we, as peoples of this land, are stopped, hindered, cajoled, and/or manipulated from making and enacting decisions about lives, individually and as a group, because of being a person of the peoples of this land. These decisions include how we are going to be who we are, and how, if at all, we are going to incorporate the ideas, beliefs, values, and practices of other peoples (Hart & Rowe, 2014).

As identified in the inaugural 2007 conference in Hawai'i, and in many of the presentations given at the 2013 conference, settler social work is not an innocent bystander in the colonial oppression. But, as the field of social work continues to evolve, Indigenous peoples are standing up to these challenges and creating positive changes to confront the oppression.

A few of these efforts are demonstrated in these eight articles that are based on presentations given at the conference in Winnipeg. Kimberly Hart, Gladys Rowe, Michael Anthony Hart, Yvonne Pompana, Deana Halonen, Gwen Cook, Gwen Gosek, Lawrence Deane, and Kip Coggins outline their efforts to establish a new social work graduate program that centres Indigenous Knowledges. They outline the structure processes of the program that reflects traditional Indigenous cultural perspectives and incorporates critical theoretical perspectives that challenge oppressive colonial structures. They conclude by noting that while the program is still in the proposed phase, it has risen to address the need for social institution, including universities, to incorporate Indigenous languages, values, beliefs, and practices. Awhima Hollis-English and Rachel Selby address the recent presence of Māori social workers in New Zealand schools. Through such processes as incorporating Māori values and beliefs into their practice, being part of the communities they are serving, and valuing Māori Elders, families and communities are experiencing and recognizing positive and empowering impacts. While they noted that these services are challenged by the lack of focus on bilingual Māori social workers, they conclude with the recognition that school social workers have the potential to make significant contributions to Māori social work. Shelly Johnson addresses the development of First Nations courts in Canada and how Elders are foundational to Indigenous court proceedings. She begins by explaining how Elders are, "the embodiment of Indigenous law" and how Indigenous law rests on millennia of development and implementation. Despite this deep and rich foundation, Indigenous peoples and our laws have been negatively impacted by the colonial oppression that continues to exist today. Johnson explains that movement to a meaningful justice system for Indigenous peoples is politically, economically, and socially urgent. This needed change requires the re-establishment of Indigenous problem solving approaches. She provides overview of recent initiative to establish and implement First Nations Court processes. While she recognizes that these processes cannot address all issues related to colonial oppression, these initiatives that have a focus on collaboration move to make the Canadian justice system relevant and effective for First Nations peoples.

Vinnetta Patricia Mosby's article is focused on research and the process of data gathering in remote communities of the Torre Strait. She explained the full process that started with reaching out to the local authorizes of participating communities for their approval and support for her project. She explains the process that evolved from within this project and key experiences of taking off your researcher hat, maintaining trust and participant safety, and "taking a walk" through the community with the participants to get a deeper sense of the community. These processes reflect the careful balancing that Indigenous researchers must manage in order to ensure respectful, appropriate, and safe research takes place. This focus on research continues in

Gladys Rowe's article where she focuses on the role of "inner knowing and dreams as catalyst activities" supporting a Muskeko Inninuwuk research methodology. She explains fundamental points that Muskeko Inninuwuk knowledge is relational where it rests in relationships and accountable where it is based on respecting and maintaining balance within these relationships. She moves on to describe a Musheko Inninuwuk research methodology and the role of inner knowing and dreams within the methodology. She concludes by stating that attention to spirit established through processes of inner knowing and reflection is important in the search for knowledge.

Zulfiya Tursunova's article focuses on the gendered aspects of social-economic and political transformation of Indigenous women's lives in post-Soviet Central Asia. She describes the colonial experiences of the Uzbek, Tajik, Kazak, and Kyrgyz peoples with a particular focus on the oppression of the women by the Soviet campaign which was meant to "liberate and emancipate" women in Central Asia. Tursunova explains how these processes misrepresent the women's lives, marginalize them, and serve to enrich the colonial powers and impoverish the Indigenous population. Notwithstanding the oppression, Indigenous women demonstrate their strength and resiliency by being able to strengthen their livelihood and well-being. They are able to redefine themselves and increase their self-esteem, pride and self-assertion as Indigenous women. Inara Walden, Brianna Dennis and Walgett Gamilaraay address how Aboriginal people in Australia stand up for their own priorities in light of government policies. They present a case study of a remote New South Wales community where many Aboriginal people strongly express the view that socio-economic policies should build on community strengths, and promote Aboriginal identity, knowledge of culture, and attachment to country. These factors are considered by the Aboriginal people of Walgett as essential for their well-being. Despite identifying the priorities for themselves, they still have to fight to ensure these priorities are part of government policies impacting their community. The authors conclude that while spending considerable energy and effort, the community is able to maintain hope for the realization of their longer, self-determining goals. In her article addressing the well-being of young Māori parents, Felicity Jane Rachel Ware also notes the impacts of colonialism. She describes government perspectives of young parents that tend to see such parents as contradicting what is "appropriate," where appropriate reflects a Western construct of parenting. She outlines the importance of traditional Māori perspectives around childrearing and how concepts stemming from such perspectives would be useful for policy development, research, and practices supporting young Māori parents.

In their effort to stand up to the colonial challenges Indigenous peoples face throughout the world, these authors and many, if not all of the conference presenters, have focused on creating positive changes in Indigenous communities throughout

the world. To create these positive changes, they have included and expressed the continuing need for significant attention to and recognition of Indigenous people establishing their own goals, directions, and practices that are rooted in their traditions and cultures. These processes of confronting oppression by relying on our traditional knowledges, values, beliefs, and practices reflect Indigenist social work where we, as Indigenous Peoples, are creating space for the resurgence of our knowledges and developing new ways to implement our long held understandings and practices in the current context.

It was our intention that the Second International Indigenous Voices in Social Work conference would support our global learning of Indigenous knowledges and practices, support people in their local efforts, and bring us together for meaningful connections as we look forward positively for our children's children and our grandchildren's grandchildren. With the publication of this special issue of the Journal of Indigenous Social Development, we are certain that, together, we are continuing to fulfill our intentions.

Hart, M. A., & Rowe, G. (2014). Legally entrenched oppressions: The undercurrent of First Nations peoples' experiences with Canada's social welfare policies. In H. N. Weaver (Ed.), *Social issues in contemporary Native America* (pp.23-41). Burlington, VT: Ashgate.