Climate Special Issue Foreword

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Climate change brings environmental, social, and cultural disruption to peoples and communities globally. Indigenous peoples experience these impacts most intensely (Reyes-Garcia et al., 2024), ranging from atoll islanders' diminished access to traditional reef fishing sites, to loss of lives and livelihoods because of drought-induced bushfires. While climate disruptions perpetuate long standing marginalisations and oppressions (Ngcamu, 2023), Indigenous resurgence, resistance, and resilience is evident. There is a need to dislodge the centre position of Western science and to centre Indigenous knowledge, perspectives, action, and lived experiences of climate disruption response. This calls for greater intersectionality to drive innovation in decolonising and Indigenising climate scholarship (Johnson et al., 2022). Indigenous knowledge is key to reversing the trajectory of climate disaster – not merely for Indigenous communities but all of humankind.

This special issue of the *Journal of Indigenous Social Development* (JISD) brings together a global collection of Indigenous voices to examine the resurgence of Indigenous thought and action amidst climate disruption. The five contributions in this issue examine how Indigenous communities in different parts of the world are leading their own climate responses and 'just transitions', grounded in their connections to territory, ancestral knowledges, and responsibilities to current and future generations.

Williams, Awasis, and Ramnarine's (2025) contribution highlights the unique challenges Indigiqueer individuals face in the climate emergency, rooted in historical and ongoing colonial legacies. The authors argue that Indigiqueer perspectives disrupt mainstream

climate justice narratives, including those within non-Indigenous queer communities, in transformative ways. They highlight the distinct roles and contributions of their communities in fostering cultural-ecological and climate resilience (CECR). CECR recognizes the climate crisis as a cultural emergency and asserts that true resilience can only be achieved by revitalizing connections between human and more-than-human worlds.

Colonialism has historically erased diverse gender and sexual identities in Indigenous societies, leading to marginalization and environmental dispossession. However, Indigiqueer individuals possess unique knowledge and agency that can contribute to climate adaptation and resilience efforts as well as in transnational and diasporic contexts. Their perspectives challenge dominant Eurocentric and heteronormative climate justice frameworks, instead promoting relational, land-based approaches to sustainability. Indigenous knowledge systems inherently value diversity and interconnectedness, positioning Indigiqueer individuals and agencies as contributors to cultural-ecological restoration and climate resilience. Overall, the authors argue that Indigiqueer agencies contribute to climate justice in three main areas: 1) land-based relationality and kinship; 2) diversity of tactics and methodological praxis; and 3) multiplicity of Indigenous cosmologies, epistemologies, and ontologies.

Writing from a South Pacific context, **Raisele, Waqa, and Lagi's** (2025) article explores the psychological, cultural, and ontological impacts of the climate crisis on two Indigenous Fijian communities - Nukui and Vunisavisavi - facing the immediate threats of rising sea levels and environmental change. Their paper highlights the often-overlooked mental health consequences including eco-grief, solastalgia, and pre-traumatic stress associated with potential displacement of Indigenous communities.

Employing the Vanua Research Framework and the Na Bu Ni Ovalau Research Framework, the study follows a community-engaged, Indigenist approach, incorporating *veitalanoa* (dialogue-based discussions) with youth, women, and men. Thematic analysis identifies three core themes: 1) Effects of climate crisis on communities' ancestral land (e.g. changing weather patterns impacting traditional weather forecasting and cultural preservation efforts, with emphasis on ancestral burial sites); 2) Psychological reactions to these effects (e.g. concerns about their children's future and anxiety over impact on livelihoods which rely on fishing); and 3) Ontological and epistemic shifts within the community (e.g. sense of self in relationship to land).

Despite these challenges, the study highlights community-driven resilience strategies. The authors advocate for policy interventions that integrate mental health support, Indigenous-led climate adaptation, and legal protections for ancestral lands. It calls for recognizing Indigenous knowledge in climate governance, ensuring solutions are culturally sensitive and community-driven.

Extending the focus on mental wellbeing, **Hill, Russette, Steinberg, and Fernandez** (2025) write on the role of Indigenous Traditional Ecological Knowledge (ITEK) in sustaining ecosystems and promoting Indigenous health. The research introduces Indigenous Eco-Relational Engagement as a framework that measures the impact of land-based cultural and spiritual practices, as well as Indigenous language use, on mental health. The study utilized data from the Healing Pathways Project, drawing on American Indian or First Nations peoples from four U.S. reservations/nations and four Canadian First Nations. Zero-order correlations indicate Indigenous Eco-Relational Engagement (IERE) and nature-based activities are positively associated with positive mental health. The study shows significant positive association between

participation in IERE and positive mental health. While cultural participation was found to be a strong determinant of mental health, socioeconomic factors, particularly low income, were negatively associated with well-being. The authors emphasize the importance of policy efforts that restore Indigenous cultural traditions, sovereignty, and access to land-based practices as essential components of climate and health interventions. This research contributes to a growing body of literature advocating for the integration of Indigenous knowledge systems into environmental and public health initiatives.

Carroll, Redvers, and McGregor's (2025) contribution examines the role of Indigenous Knowledge (IK) in addressing climate change through a comparison of the policy approaches of the U.S. and Canada regarding IK inclusion. The authors highlight that Indigenous Peoples have stewarded their environments for millennia through deep-rooted knowledge systems grounded in Natural Law. Despite this, state-generated climate policies often fail to meaningfully incorporate IK in decision-making. As such, the article seeks to compare the White House's guidance for federal agencies on Indigenous Knowledge policy with Canada's Indigenous Knowledge Policy Framework (IKPF), while also examining the broader policy implications for Indigenous Nations and communities. The authors propose five policy recommendations to enhance the rights-based inclusion of IK in Canada, emphasizing the need for Indigenous leadership, ethical engagement spaces, cooperative knowledge systems, reconciliation through Indigenous values, and stronger protections for Indigenous lands and knowledge. The article concludes that while policy inclusion of IK is an essential step, true effectiveness will only be achieved when Indigenous rights, relationships, and values are fully recognized and respected in climate governance.

Finally, **Pierson (2025)** explores the practice of visiting with land as an act of restful resistance. Adopting a Métis-feminist approach and autotheory methodology, the author stories

their experience and learning from a father who guided and modelled the practice of visiting with land. Such practice encompasses both care for land and the reciprocal healing for self, relationships and community. Storying includes critical reflection on different times in the life journey where capitalist, colonial concepts of land and productivity took prominence, and a disconnect from land was experienced. The narrative includes the way-finding back to relationality with land. These experiences underline how visiting with land resists colonial and capitalist expectations of 'productivity' and centres knowledge and relationships flowing from Indigenous ways of knowing and being. Rest as resistance, through visiting with land, it is argued builds and maintains sustainable communities and activism.

In summary, this special issue adds to Indigenist scholarship offering Indigenist solutions to global climate disruption. Collectively, the articles illustrate the rise of Indigenous thought and voice amidst climate disruption, with two shared themes strongly reflected across the contributions. First, there is an ontological grounding in the relationality between humans and the more-than-human. It is this ontology which surfaces hopeful solutions. Second, intersectionality is promoted in the analysis and response to climate disruption. Climate disruption responses must include critical linking between varied experience, between once-siloed disciplines, and across time and space. In the current moment, there is an urgent need to resist the perpetuation of coloniality which ultimately fuels climate disruption; it is timely to further cement our Indigenous solidarities.

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