

Introduction

Editor's Introduction *aboriginal policy studies*

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Editor, aboriginal policy studies

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We would like to welcome you to the second issue of the second volume of *aboriginal policy studies*, and our continuing exploration of the journal's broad scope, which is to publish "original, scholarly, and policy relevant research on issues relevant to Métis, non-status Indians and urban Aboriginal peoples in Canada." To state once again what is becoming a regular editorial feature of these introductions: *aps* welcomes relevant submissions from *all* geographical and political regions of Canada. We are still not receiving an adequate number of submissions on issues pertaining to Métis policy, nor are we receiving a satisfying number of submissions on Non-Status Indian and urban Aboriginal issues in central and eastern Canada, and are continuing to search out ways to increase submissions in these areas of scholarship. One particular strategy has been to step up our social media campaign, through the creation of a Facebook page and a successful effort to increase our Twitter follower numbers (@apsjournal), with the goal of both raising awareness of the journal and attracting new readers and submissions. We hope these efforts will increase our online presence in Canada and internationally; currently, we have more than a thousand Twitter followers.

The articles and commentary in issue 2.2 include discussions and examinations of a number of important policy issues that researchers are only now beginning to get an analytical handle on. The first two articles began their lives as research reports undertaken for the National Association of Friendship Centres. In partnership with Heather King-Andrews (Project Advisor, Urban Aboriginal Knowledge Network—Secretariat) these reports were vetted through the journal's peer review process. The reviewers found the submissions both timely and useful from a policy standpoint. After substantial changes to transform them from research reports to academic articles, we present them to our readers in this issue.

Issue 2.2 begins with an article by Amanda Parriag and Paul Chaulk, who look at the growing Aboriginal middle class, a burgeoning area of research in urban Aboriginal issues. Using data from the 2006 Census and the Aboriginal Peoples Survey, Parriag and Chaulk provide a demographic profile of this growing segment of the Aboriginal population, including information on geography, mobility, language, gender, age, and income. In exploring these characteristics, the authors point to education and training policies as important contributors to the growth of the Aboriginal middle class, though they suggest that future research must be undertaken to explore this in more detail.

Following Parraig and Chaulk, Yale Belanger, Olu Awosoga and Gabrielle Weasel Head present an examination of the existing "state of the field" when it comes to data on Aboriginal homelessness in Canada. The authors review the academic literature on urban Aboriginal homelessness, use existing data to present a portrait of urban Aboriginal homeless on a national level, and make a number of recommendations to improve our

understanding of urban Aboriginal homelessness, and which will allow relevant policy makers to make informed policies with regard to urban Aboriginal homelessness more generally. Specifically, Belanger et al. stress the need for policy makers to understand the complexity of Aboriginal homelessness—its causes and its current contexts.

Finally, Métis scholar Adam Gaudry undertakes an important analysis of the manner in which the myth of ambivalence, where Métis people are considered to be merely of “mixed ancestry,” has produced, and reproduced, the Canadian state’s colonial claims to unity. He explores two recent works on Louis Riel and the Métis in particular to argue that the “Canadianization” of Métis identity (and the Métis people) has important policy implications insofar as it encourages a dismissal of historical legal instruments (such as the Manitoba Act, 1870) through which the Métis people attempted to create formal political relationships with the Canadian state. That is, Canada does not represent a “metissage” of Indigenous and European traditions; rather, Canada is but one of two treaty partners that, together, can produce a more just society.

Following these three articles are a number of interesting commentary interventions. The first is Greg Finnegan’s statistical analysis that analyzes the rise of First Nations government employment and the wages earned by this sector since the rise of the self-government movement in the Yukon. Using data from the Survey of Employment and Payroll Hours (SEPH, which originates weekly with each payroll generated by private and public employers in Canada), Finnegan demonstrates the positive impact of land claims settlements and self-government in Yukon on the creation of jobs in, and wages earned by, Yukon First Nation government employees. Finnegan is followed by Ojibway scholar Jean O’Brien and her discussion about the importance of Indigenous Studies departments to the discipline of Indigenous Studies. Her argument has particularly important policy implications, as university campuses in many western Canadian cities hold some of the largest populations of Aboriginal people in a concentrated area, many of whom are students enrolled in Indigenous Studies programs.

The third commentary is from Kirstie Ross, lead curator for the Museum of New Zealand’s (*Te Papa Tongarewa*) exhibit on twentieth-century New Zealand social history, *Slice of Heaven*.¹ Ross explores, alongside other elements, the impact of Maori urbanization during this period. Museums—especially national ones like *Te Papa*—provide a major locale through which non-Indigenous citizens “consume” Indigenous culture. Until recently, this consumption was largely done in a manner that reduced the complexity of our histories to decontextualized bits and pieces that fit with well-worn narratives about the goodness (or, at least, the superiority) of the nation-state. *Slice of Heaven* is particularly relevant from a policy standpoint, then, in that it offers a more complex—and more recent—history of Maori. In particular, from the standpoint of *aboriginal policy studies*, this commentary is especially welcome for Ms. Ross’s discussion of the urbanization of Maori during the twentieth century. This museum exhibit, despite its inevitable limitations, is the envy of twentieth-century and urban Indigenous exhibits the world over.

Finally, we are pleased to present a commentary by retired Métis leader Tony Belcourt. Belcourt offers his thoughts on the formation of off-reserve political organizations in

1 <http://www.tepapa.govt.nz/WhatsOn/exhibitions/SliceofHeaven/Pages/SliceofHeaven.aspx>.

Ontario. Originally from *Ki sahkihin* (Lac St. Anne, Alberta), Belcourt has been a central figure in off-reserve politics not just in Ontario, where he eventually became president of the Métis Nation of Ontario, but Canada as a whole, playing an integral role in the formation of the Native Council of Canada in 1970. In his commentary, Belcourt provides a first-hand account about Métis Nation citizenship in Ontario from the 1970s. In particular, he details the close political relationship between Métis and Non-Status Indians, as well as their eventual split and subsequent attempts to deal with the political fallout.

In place of a book review, we offer Dr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette's radio interview with Dr. Jennifer Reid, University of Maine, where she talks about her book *Louis Riel and the Creation of Modern Canada—Mythic Discourse in the Post-Colonial State* and why, after it was published in 2008 with the University of New Mexico Press, it was reissued in 2011 through the University of Manitoba Press. Finally, we have focused on the groundbreaking City of Edmonton's Aboriginal Declaration and accompanying Urban Aboriginal Accord as the foundational document for this issue. These documents formally encapsulate the city's wish to acknowledge the past injustices and challenges faced by Aboriginal peoples, as well as their wish to create a more positive and respectful future relationship with Aboriginal residents.

We thank you for your continued support of the journal. Please feel free, as well, to add us (Facebook: *aboriginal policy studies*; Twitter: @apsjournal) to your own social media networks.

Enjoy issue 2.2. As always, if you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact us at apsjournal@ualberta.ca.