

## *Introduction*

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### *Editor's Introduction* *aboriginal policy studies*

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*Editor, aboriginal policy studies*

*aboriginal policy studies* Vol. 3, no. 1&2, 2014, pp. 1-4

This article can be found at:

<http://ejournals.library.ualberta.ca/index.php/aps/article/view/21716>

ISSN: 1923-3299

Article DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5663/aps.v3i1-2.21716>

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*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](mailto:apsjournal@ualberta.ca) or visit our website at [www.ualberta.ca/nativestudies/aps/](http://www.ualberta.ca/nativestudies/aps/).

# Editor's Introduction

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We would like to welcome our readers to volume 3, issues 1 and 2, of *aboriginal policy studies*. This double issue contains six peer-reviewed articles, seven commentaries, and several book reviews, in addition to two sets of foundational documents. The various contributions to this issue continue to follow 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." As we emphasized in the previous introductions, and as we will continue to emphasize here, *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 urban Aboriginal issues in central and eastern Canada. This is particularly the case with respect to urban Inuit issues, a lack we feel all the more, given that urban Inuit are among the most vulnerable of the Aboriginal population anywhere in Canada and urban Inuit policy concerns among the least well-understood in the Canadian Aboriginal policy field.

We will continue our attempts to increase submissions in these areas, and we invite peer-reviewed submissions and commentaries from interested scholars and policy actors. In the meantime, we are extending the reach of *aboriginal policy studies* through our rapidly growing social media campaign (administered by our social media guru, Kirsten Lindquist). Our current Twitter following is close to 3,000 people, spread out all over the globe. This speaks to the dissemination power of social media, but we like to think that it also speaks to the broad resonance of these policy issues beyond Canada's borders. We will continue to work to increase our online presence in Canada and internationally.

The articles and commentary in this double issue continue to speak to the broad array of policy issues that fall within the journal's scope. The first article, by Jacqueline Quinless, uses data from the 2006 Aboriginal Peoples Survey (Children and Youth supplement) to explore the effects of Aboriginal family structure and household composition on the well-being of Aboriginal children living off-reserve. Interestingly, Quinless found that, as the size of the household increases, children become more engaged in social activities, their parents have higher perceptions of their school performance, and the likelihood of these children having chronic health conditions actually decreases. Though we continue to be cautious with imputing causality in relationships that are only correlated, Quinless's path-breaking research nonetheless holds intriguing implications for understanding how to create policy that improves Aboriginal children's well-being. More specifically, her research raises important questions about the distinctiveness of Aboriginal family structures, as well as asking policy actors to reflect on what, exactly, the classic expression "it takes a village to raise a child" actually means in formal policy contexts.

In their own exploration of the 2006 Aboriginal Peoples Survey, Guèvremont and Kohen investigate the relationship between the health, social, and educational outcomes of First Nation children of teenage mothers in comparison to those of older mothers, though a series of Aboriginal People Survey questions to the mothers of these children. More specifically, the authors explored questions relating to physical health outcomes (health status, activity limitations, chronic conditions, dental care, and injuries); school outcomes (whether their child was doing well in school, maternal prioritization of post-secondary education, grade failure, and school satisfaction); social outcomes (how well mothers perceive their children as getting along with other kids, teachers, siblings, etc.), and offer policy recommendations based on their findings.

In the third article of this double issue, Mai Nguyen asks a question with important policy implications: Do Aboriginal-state public consultations allow for the effective participation of Aboriginal participants in the democratic process, given the group's political marginalization? Using as her case study the federal government's Urban Aboriginal Strategy (UAS) in Winnipeg—ostensibly geared toward providing investments in support of improving life skills; promoting job training, skills and entrepreneurialship; and supporting Aboriginal women, children, and families—Nguyen carefully traces the complex relationships involved in the delivery of UAS principles and policies. In essence, she answers her question with a qualified “yes,” but argues that meaningful participation is highly dependent on the level of power redistribution mechanisms—from government to stakeholders—in any given policy context, a mechanism largely present in the UAS–Winnipeg context.

The fourth article, by John Hansen and Nicole Callihoo, investigates a long-standing issue faced by most Aboriginal communities in Canada, including those in urban centres: addictions recovery. Exploring the complex relationship between addictions and associated elements of broader community well-being, Hansen and Callihoo undertake a qualitative analysis of stakeholders linked to the Saskatoon Friendship Centre to explore what elements are deemed relevant and important to that broader relationship. In particular, they explore factors that lead to addictions recovery or relapse; barriers to healing from addictions; and the sorts of broader actions, programs, and assistance needed in the community to promote addictions recovery. Hansen and Callihoo also detail the importance of effective support systems and community belonging to addictions recovery, and offer several recommendations key to building a social environment that encourages addictions recovery.

The fifth article, by Michelle Drieger and her colleagues, explores risk factors associated with disease pandemics. More specifically, they carry out an evaluation of the Manitoba Métis Federation and Manitoba Health door-to-door risk communication campaign that targeted at-risk Métis in Manitoba during the H1N1 pandemic of 2009–2010. They were interested in the degree to which Métis communities received targeted risk messaging that provided them with access to relevant materials and information. Their investigation, carried out through interviews with targeted communities and interested policy stakeholders, demonstrate that, despite the best efforts of the MMF and Manitoba

Health, the campaign did not meet its intended goals. The authors offer several important policy recommendations to provide more effective strategies should future need arise.

The sixth and final article of volume 3.1&2 is the first francophone article the journal has published since its inception, and we thank Dr. Daniel Saleé for his editorial efforts in this regard and Catherine Couturier for her copyediting assistance. In their article, Nathalie Kermoal and Paulin Mulatris explore relationships between Aboriginal peoples and Edmonton francophone African immigrants. More specifically, they analyze how the two communities interact with one another: not just the misconceptions and misunderstandings that each has about the other, but the recognition—again, in both communities—about the importance of developing solidarities and facilitating dialogue.

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In addition to the peer-reviewed articles, this double issue has published seven commentaries touching on a wide array of issues of interest to the Aboriginal policy field in Canada. The first commentary, written by Alexander Hudson, explores the Idle No More movement—largely an urban phenomenon—from a public law perspective. Though a broad exploration of the movement's goals and efforts to achieve those goals, Hudson ultimately argues that, at least from a public policy perspective, First Nations groups have been much better served through a litigation strategy than they have through majoritarian policies (such as voting). In his discussion about improving off-reserve access to medical transportation funding, Michael Hankard explores several key differences in the way that medical transportation funding works differently for off-reserve First Nations people than for those on-reserve, despite the fact that this type of transportation is ostensibly covered under the same Health Canada Non-Insured Health Benefits program. Hankard provides recommendations from several front-line policy actors.

The third commentary is written by Darren O'Toole. His commentary provides an analysis of the recent Supreme Court of Canada decision *Manitoba Métis Federation v. Canada (A.G.)* (also known as “the MMF case”). Laying out the legal issues as pertaining to the extent to which land that Métis families were supposed to derive from the 1870 Manitoba Act provisions—but did not—was the fault of the Canadian government, O'Toole provides a jurisprudential analysis of how and why the Supreme Court of Canada framed the issues as they did, and the manner in which this framing produced the legal decision they ultimately wrote. The fourth commentary, following O'Toole's discussion, is Darren Prefontaine's explanation of the research activities of the Gabriel Dumont Institute in Saskatoon, SK, widely considered a “best practice” example of a Métis “educator, employment trainer, cultural resource producer and social justice advocate” over its three-decade-plus history. The very presence of GDI, not to mention its long history, has important implications for best practice policy as it relates to a number of facets important to Métis communities, in Saskatchewan, and more broadly.

The fifth commentary, written by Audrey Giles and her colleagues, explores the high rates of drowning in Aboriginal communities in Canada. I must admit that I personally knew little—nor did I particularly care—about this issue before reading Dr. Giles and her colleagues' work. However, they compellingly link these disproportionately (and needlessly)

high rates of drowning to the broader problem of disproportionately high rates of injury in Aboriginal communities, then tie it back to current government tendencies to treat such incidents as individual-responsibility issues, rather than attempting to grapple with the broader policy contexts within which they occur. The sixth commentary explores the issue of Aboriginal sport in the city, written by Dr. Janice Forsyth in her capacity as Director of the International Centre for Olympic Sport at Western University in London, Ontario. Using the archetypical moment of the recently concluded 2014 Olympic games in Sochi, Russia, Forsyth explores the manner in which Aboriginal Olympic athletes are portrayed. She argues that their backgrounds are homogenized in a manner that marginalizes their varied socio-economic backgrounds and sporting opportunities, all the while reinforcing the idea that mainstream sport “is the best and most appropriate way to do sport.”

The seventh and final issue, written by Tracy Bear, explains the creation and installation of the critically acclaimed “Walking with our Sisters” art installation, which is traveling to various sites in the coming years. In particular, Bear (who is currently the University of Alberta’s Special Advisor to the Provost on Aboriginal Initiatives) explains the manner in which the art installation was conceived but, more importantly, how it has been carried out under the auspices of Indigenous ceremony. For those who are unaware, the WWOS art installation was conceived of in 2012 by noted Métis artist Christi Belcourt, not just to honour the many missing and murdered Aboriginal women but their loved ones as well. The art installation itself includes 1726 pairs of “vamps” (the beaded “tops” of moccasins). Bear traces the evolution of the project, while demonstrating the central importance of ceremony along the way.

In addition to the commentaries, these journal issues have published three book reviews. First, Métis scholar Adam Gaudry reviews the recently published *Métis in Canada: History, Law & Politics*. The second, *Indians Wear Red: Colonialism, Resistance, and Aboriginal Street Gangs*, is reviewed by PhD student Marta-Marika Urbanik. Finally, the third is a review of *A Metaphoric Mind: Selected Writings of Joseph Couture* by John W. Friesen. In addition to these book reviews, this journal issue presents two sets of foundational documents. The first includes the founding principles and curriculum of the Indigenous Community Planning Specialization, part of the University of British Columbia’s School of Community and Regional Planning (SCARP) in the Faculty of Applied Science. This MA program, designed through a learning and teaching partnership with the Musqueam Indian Band, is the first—and still only—program of its kind in Canada. The second set of foundational documents lays out the principles behind the creation of the Rupertsland Institute (RLI), the education, training and employment arm of the Métis Nation of Alberta. RLI is widely considered a leader in the Aboriginal education, training, and employment field, as well as a “best practice” example of the federal government devolving responsibility for these efforts to Aboriginal organizations.

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 volume 3.1&2. As always, if you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact us at [apsjournal@ualberta.ca](mailto:apsjournal@ualberta.ca).