

Indigenous peoples as international political actors: presenting the INDIPO project

Indigenous peoples have emerged as active participants in international relations. They claim the right to participation and to consultation in international political decision-making and to represent their interests based on principles of self-determination. Indigenous peoples' organizations in the Arctic have been in the forefront of the political mobilization of indigenous peoples in different international forums. The aim of the INDIPO project is to study the dynamics of interactions between states, international organizations, and indigenous peoples. This research project draws on theories and practices in international politics and international law in order to analyse how 'indigeneness' is used politically as a claim to self-determination and sovereignty in the international system and what the political consequences of this claim will be. The research objective consists in seeking answers to two interrelated questions. Firstly, how relations between states, international organizations and indigenous peoples have been and are currently constructed as legal and political practices? Secondly, how indigenous peoples, through different strategies, construct political agencies to further their political interest? The research project advances knowledge about the construction of the political agency of indigenous peoples and their participation in international policy-making. The researchers seek to establish a constructive dialogue with the representatives of major stakeholders and to organise two workshops with them in order to discuss the objectives and results of the project. The first one was held in Inari, Finland in January 2006.

The INDIPO project organized also a panel at the annual convention of the International Studies Associ-

ation in March 2005 at which several relevant papers were presented. Some of these papers will be published in *Polar Record* and the first appears below. The project has three-year funding from the Academy of Finland (2005–2007). The research group includes Professor Monica Tennberg, Scott Forrest and Marjo Lindroth (all of the Arctic Centre, University of Lapland), Merja Pentikäinen (Northern Institute of Minority and Environmental Law, University of Lapland), Heidi Sinevaara-Niskanen (Faculty of Education, University of Lapland) and Tamara Semenova (Russian Research Institute for Natural and Cultural Heritage under the Russian Academy of Sciences). In addition, a group of researchers will participate in the activities of the research network. The members of the research network are: Professor Bård A. Berg (Sami Studies Centre, University of Tromsø), Director Jens Dahl (International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, Copenhagen), Professor Timo Koivurova (Northern Institute of Environmental and Minority Law, University of Lapland), Professor René Kuppe (Institute for Law and Religion, University of Vienna), Natalia Loukacheva (University of Toronto) and Sanna Valkonen (Arctic Centre, University of Lapland).

Correspondence from readers of *Polar Record* would be welcome and should be addressed to the undersigned.

Monica Tennberg
Arctic Centre
University of Lapland
Finland
(monica.tennberg@ulapland.fi)