Author’s response to reviews

Title: Indigenous well-being in four countries: An application of the UNDP’s Human Development Index to Indigenous Peoples in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States

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Dear Editors,

Re: Indigenous Well-Being in Four Countries: An Application of the Human Development Index to Indigenous Peoples in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States

Thank you for asking us to revise and resubmit our paper. The comments of the reviewers were both encouraging and helpful. We have revised the paper considerably and have tried to address the specific concerns of both reviewers, as described in detail below.

1. As part of the discussion about data quality, we have clarified the changes made to the Australian educational data, as suggested by reviewer Blakely. We have also added an explanatory note to Table 6 to make it clear how we have used these data in those calculations.

2. Tony Blakely’s comments about the potential numerator-denominator bias in life expectancy estimates, and which were echoed in those of Danny Dorling, were very helpful. In addition to the sources Blakely has suggested, we have also referred to a recent Australian paper that finds problems with the estimates of life expectancy for Australian Aboriginal peoples. We have included these in an expanded data quality section where we note that the revised estimates of Blakely and his colleagues show a slight increase in the gap between Maori and non-Maori, non-Pacific Islanders, between the 1980s and the late 1990s. We note that their estimates for the early 1990s are quite close to those we have extrapolated from the later life tables. However, we have opted to retain our usage of the original life table estimates and point out in the paper that the use of
the revised estimates for New Zealand and Australia would not change the major outlines of our findings, in terms of the general pattern of well-being in Indigenous populations.

3. Blakely raises an interesting point with his comment regarding the effects of age-standardization on income. We agree that the younger age structure of these Indigenous populations may be responsible for some part of the income difference between Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations, and that the changes in age structure might affect these gaps over time. In the framework of the Human Development Report, the average income of a country is taken as a measure of material standard of living. A younger age structure would presumably reduce average income because of a higher proportion of young people not in the labour force, or in the labour force but not yet able to command higher earned incomes. At the same time we might speculate that a given median income might represent a lower level of material well-being for a younger population with higher fertility than the same income would for an older population, because of larger families and a greater number of children with no money income. In the end, because the UNDP's original HDI methodology does not standardize income for age even when comparing countries with dramatically different age structures, we have also taken this route and have left the income figures as they are. We have, however, included a note in the data limitations section to point out the potential importance of age in addition to the other limitations of this income measure.

4. In response to reviewer Dorling's question about why these four countries have been chosen, we have inserted some explanation in the methods section. Indeed, it would be interesting to compare Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations in a larger number of countries. However, as we have described in our paper, finding comparable data for even these four countries is difficult, and it would likely be impossible to include many more. We have taken his comment to mean that we should be clearer that we have chosen these countries because they have broadly similar histories with respect to Indigenous-state relations, and have tried to do that on page 4 of the manuscript. We have also included a mention of the other UNDP measures, including the Human Poverty Index.

5. Dorling's point about the recent changes in the political and legislative situation in New Zealand has led us to add a paragraph mentioning these potential changes, and indicating that they, along with the recent changes in Australia, might represent some retrenchment of Indigenous rights.

6. We have also made changes to the methodology section to address Dorling's concern about the wording on page 9, and to make the differences between the UNDP's HDI and our own adaptation somewhat clearer.

7. In addition to these specific changes suggested by the reviewers, we have made improvements to the writing throughout the paper. We have also removed reference to the Canadian Registered Indian population in the text and the tables, as we felt that this unnecessarily complicated the presentation. We have also tried to adhere to the formatting specifications for the journal, and hope that
you will be able to provide guidance as to where we might have erred in this respect. Please note that there has also been a change in the order of authorship, which is now Cooke, Mitrou, Lawrence, Guimond, and Beavon. Also authors Guimond and Beavon ask that their affiliation be changed to refer to two organisations they are associated with, not just the one originally included in the first version of the paper.

Thank you for considering this resubmission of our paper. We look forward to your further comments.

Yours faithfully,

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