Reviewer's report

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

Version: 1 Date: 11 June 2007

Reviewer: Danny Dorling

Reviewer's report:

General

In general: Why these four countries and not those in Scandinavia, Latin America and no mention of countries that have obliterated their indigenous population (no Picts left in Britain)? Also in general although its good to use the HDI – the same body that uses it created two poverty measures HPI – on of these to use in rich countries. I’m not suggesting you do this – but I think you should mention that further research should as it is likely not to produce result as benign as yours (as the bar is raised).

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

On page 6 you says that “In New Zealand, the Treaty of Waitangi Act was amended in 1985 to strengthen the mandate of the Waitangi Claims Tribunal to hear claims of breaches to the treaty” – it was but recently there were attempts in parliament to end the claims – you need to check the current state of play in NZ. Also I found no reference in eth first eight pages of the paper to the multitude of “decades of disparities” reports from that country. And you do not make it completely clear that you are using linked census-death data in all cases (it is vague on page 10 – you need to explain data sources for all countries you talk of). Looking at your sources it looks as if you may have used NZ life tables that do not use the work of Tony Blakely and his colleagues who matched the death certificates there to census records and hence the life expectancies you report for Maori are too high. Its not clear to me – but it should be clear to any reader

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

Page 9: I’m not from North America so I don’t know what you mean by this: “The literacy rate was replaced by the proportion aged 15 and older with the equivalent of grade nine or higher education (in North American systems).”

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

Its a great paper - just please check with those in New Zealand and other countries you may be less familiar with that they agree with your findings or, if not, you know why not.

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

Level of interest: An article of outstanding merit and interest in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:
'I declare that I have no competing interests'