Reviewer's report

Title: PAHO’s Health of the Indigenous Peoples Initiative - A Broken Promise in Latin America

Version: 2 Date: 29 April 2009

Reviewer: Laurence Kirmayer

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This is an important statement of an ongoing neglect by PAHO and government agencies of the mental health needs of the Indigenous peoples of Latin America. To have the greatest impact, it needs some refinement and editing.

1. It would be preferable to refer to Indigenous peoples (plural) as there are many different cultural groups and populations.
2. First page, line 3: "their health status severely undermined" -- undermined by what?
3. "geographic spots" -- geographic regions
4. "economic conditions have been characterized by" is not clear -- "have been aggravated by" ?
5. Some actual statistics on different life expectancies, suicide rates or other health indicators would strengthen the argument about inequities
6. Is there a reference or other source to document that the national Intercultural Health program "quickly became a political entity rather than a mental health promoting institution"?
7. Why do Indigenous people fear they may be killed if they go to the health post?
8. The illustration of PAHOs distance from Indigenous people by the Ecuadorean representatives unwillingness to respond to the author’s invitations or meet with him is only one episode and presenting this makes it seem a bit anecdotal -- are there other examples that would make the neglect clear?
9. Recognizing traditional healers is a complex issue since national and transnational organizations are new levels of authority far removed from the local, village level at which most traditional healers practice. Some acknowledge of the challenges of working collaborated across different traditions (biomedical or psychiatric and indigenous healing systems) would be helpful.
10. Moral numbness is an evocative metaphor. What is the basis of this moral numbness?
11. The human rights issues could be broad forward by linking the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to those of health specifically.
12. The author directs an Indigenous healing clinic -- could the whole thrust of this editorial, this constitutes if not competing interest, as least a relevant
background that should be acknowledged.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

No competing interests.