

### Introduction 「共生」は要らない.

A former classmate from a university that I briefly attended in Kansai relayed her recent experience in chaperoning students to Hokkaido for a study tour on the Ainu. “At the beginning of our visit, when we first had exchange with the OOO family, they told us right off the bat, ‘We don’t need your talk of 共生. It doesn’t even begin to touch upon what’s necessary to improve our situation.’ My students were shell-shocked.”

Why would educators from one of the most progressive centers of human rights advocacy in the country of Japan, whose institution has been involved in human rights research and education for over half a century, experience such a shocking reception? Through examining this matter, I hope to shed light upon how such experiences reveal two large divergences in regards to actualization of Indigenous human rights : 1) That between the Indigenous human rights standards of Japan and the world; 2) That between the ideals and tenets of the IP rights movement and reality, and to touch upon how the former may reflect the latter.

Addressing this matter involves an examination of the general question of what can be done to improve the situation of Indigenous peoples<sup>1</sup>, a question which I believe has great import for citizenship education, particularly global citizenship education (GCE). Although the crucial situation of IP in many countries is one which is reflective of problems on a global scale which are in turn manifestations of human dis-ease such as disrespect for the environment and human and biological diversity, to simply acknowledge Indigenous peoples in GCE as one type of global issue intricately connected to issues of the environment, peace and sustainable development is insufficient to achieve the transformation they need at the ground level.

The problem lies within the challenge of bringing Indigenous peoples to par socially, economically, and politically with non-Indigenous residents of the world according to Indigenous standards, especially through the restoration of Indigenous peoples’ ownership and free use of their lands, resources and territories. To not do so ignores how IP have continually stressed the special characteristics of Indigenous cultures and societies, philosophies and histories as deriving from their particular relations to said lands, resources and territories (UNDRIP, 2007), and thereby stands to extinguish the very contribution that Indigenous peoples could make. Given the transformations to the status quo called for in order to achieve such a revitalization of Indigenous rights, I submit that the current notion of 「共生」 is one which is not sufficient to improving the IP situation.

Globally, much needs to be done in terms of getting IP to the “starting line”, through a return to IP of the rights to their lands and resources. Although many of the challenges involved therein are equally faced by Japan, I have hope that in particular the situation of IP in Japan can change for the better. In terms of GCE aimed at improvement of the IP situation in Japan, staying abreast of global developments, alongside cautious recognition of the victories of IP on the international level, will be key.

The author is employed as a faculty member of Hokkaido University who has been active in support of the Ainu rights recovery movement for over 15 years. I have been involved with three international Indigenous conferences held in Hokkaido, have testified to the UN on Ainu issues, and am a member of a number of mailing lists related to Indigenous peoples. I am therefore someone who is personally involved in the IP rights recovery

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<sup>1</sup> Perhaps counterintuitively, issues of who Indigenous peoples are and how their rights and aspirations differ from those of other minorities, are secondary to this question.

process, but not necessarily a researcher or practitioner of GCE, and therefore the views that I prefer here on GCE and IP are descriptive rather than prescriptive, and formative rather than well-developed. In any event, I hope that the sharing of my experiences in this paper may be of benefit to educators everywhere, no matter what pedagogical ideology they espouse.

### **Who are Indigenous Peoples? “A World You Do Not Know<sup>2</sup>”**

As a result of historical and contemporary colonial processes, IP have been stripped of their lands, resources and territories, and continue to be excluded and marginalized socially, economically and politically within contemporary nation-states that formed on their traditional territories.

Due to the unique spiritual relation of IP and their territories which forms the basis of their cultures and societies, this is a situation which cannot be rectified simply by injection of funding or projects aimed at social welfare. It is one which can only be resolved by return of IP lands, resources and territories to IP, and full recognition of IP self-determination, whereby they can freely determine their own development according to their own systems, needs and aspirations.

But return of lands, resources and territories is a project which is thwarted by the neo-liberal capitalist aims of transnational megacorporations, whose vested interests are at odds with those of IP.

And, systems for the participative parity (Fraser and Nash, 2014) of IP in contemporary national and international politics are hindered by laws and ideologies based on notions of universality, the individual as the core unit of society, and the Westphalian state as the norm of international politics. In turn, transforming these ideas, values and contexts is a matter of upturning world educational systems to ones which would include IP worldviews, or recognition of what has otherwise been referred to as “pluriverses” (Mignolo, 2009).

While slight gains have been made to IP inclusion/parity in some liberal Western democracies and in Taiwan, amidst the situation described above, to most, the world’s Indigenous peoples are at best an exotic fascination, and at worst, invisible, or at least a large percentage of the time, a “world we do not know” (Samson, 2013).

In sum, 共生, as it would be envisioned by IP, is something which will only be achievable through major concessions in law and international politics, which in turn will require a major transformation in consciousness regarding the unique worldviews and values of IP that guide their social, political and economic institutions, and thus how they participate in diplomatic affairs. That these transformations are not yet happening is evident through the wording and standards of international documents drafted by IP, and, in turn, the limited effect that these instruments are wielding in global politics, a situation I describe below.

The amount of momentum necessary to achieve these transformations is something which will only be realized by systemic effort, not limited only to K-12 education.

In any event, human rights are an evolving affair, progress is being made, and, I have hope for the improvement of the IP situation in Japan.

### **The Depth of the Plight**

A perusal of the website Indigenous Peoples at the UN (UN) hints at the extent of IP poverty and marginalization. In order to overturn such a situation and restore Indigenous rights, global IP, through the drafting of the UNDRIP and by calling upon observance of international law, have called for, inter alia, recognition of their

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<sup>2</sup> From a book of the same title by Colin Samson.

ownership of their lands, resources, territories; free determination of their social, economic, and political futures through self-determination/ autonomy; and the future security of their lands, resources, and territories through processes of free, prior, and informed consent.

However, a quick glance at the mailing list of Indigenous support groups such as Cultural Survival or Indigenous Peoples' Rights International (hp) reveals an alarming lack of progress, and on the contrary, highlights the depth of the plight which contemporary IP face. In other words, murder, criminalization of Indigenous land and resource defenders, and continuing plunder of IP lands, resources and territories without prior consultation are occurring on a daily basis in most parts of the developing world.

In fact, major international situations such as the wars in Gaza and the Ukraine, and the burning of the Amazonian rainforest are all phenomena which could be construed as violations of IP human rights that are indicative of how little power international society has to uphold IP interests.

Alternatively, reports from the recent Uraho Conference on the Right to Fish in Rivers as Indigenous Right (Raporo Ainu Nation, 2024) indicate that even in so-called developed countries such as Taiwan and Australia which have codified the rights of Indigenous peoples within their borders in the Constitution or Indigenous Peoples' Basic Laws, Indigenous peoples' fishing rights are not being implemented.

### **Rays of Hope**

Amidst such a situation, allyships are all-important in the struggle to advance IP rights. Judges, politicians, scholars and others can be advocates for IP causes the resolution of which can have tremendous impact, and, in turn, knowledge of which motivates IP to continue their struggle, and GCE students to take up IP causes. For instance, Canada designated the Inuit-populated Nunavut Territory as a semi-autonomous province in 1999, and delivered an official national apology to its First Nations in 2008. Taiwan apologized to its IP in 2016. In 2017, the New Zealand parliament granted the Whanganui River, which the Maori recognize as sacred, the rights of a human, and provided \$30 million toward bettering the river's health.

These types of advancements deserve full attention in advocacy and education efforts.

### **Commonalities and Differences in the Situation of IP between Japan and Foreign Countries**

As we can see, globally, there is still a long way to go to achievement of IP goals. Does this mean that in Japan the situation is all the more so?

I would argue that many of the devices which serve to exclude and marginalize IP in other countries exist in Japan as well. Lack of awareness in general of the situation of IP globally, lack of knowledge of the difference between IP rights and those of other minorities (e.g., rights to lands, resources and territories), state discourses hallmarked by revisionist histories, a State broadcast which smokescreens Indigenous economic and political rights through purveyance of a discourse championing only Indigenous culture, and an assumption that since Laws exist, others must be dealing with the issues, are all phenomenon which can be seen in other countries to deter local progress of the international Indigenous rights recovery movement.

However, there is also hope in the fact that Japan is a developed country with one of the highest educational attainment levels in the world, and a human rights record which, while not sterling, is desirable in comparison with the atrocities happening to IP in some other parts of the world.

Importantly, the Ainu themselves are taking actions toward Indigenous rights realization. In May, 2023, the Raporo Ainu Nation, a group of local Ainu from Uraho Town in Hokkaido currently litigating against

Hokkaido Prefecture and the Japanese government for recognition of their right to collectively harvest salmon in rivers, held an international conference on Indigenous fishing rights, to raise awareness of the global Indigenous situation and facilitate the way to victory in their struggle for recognition of Indigenous rights.

I believe that GCE in Japan could capitalize on these developments by incorporating education units about them into the national curriculum. Awareness of global developments, alongside cautious recognition of the victories of IP on the international level, will be crucial to GCE's success in educating students to be change-drivers.

### Suggestions for the Future

How can we reconstrue the incident which happened to my former classmate and her students? Isn't 共生 a vital notion for the advancement of human rights in Japan? I would respond with a cautious, "Yes".

Teaching of the history which led to the current perilous economic conditions, structural racism and discrimination against IP, and exclusion in economic and political matters due to their lack of autonomy is important, but the instruction must go beyond that to calls for action to recognize Indigenous rights to lands, territories, and resources, self-determination, and resource security.

Allies on other human rights fronts, peace warriors and supporters of green movements can all be powerful advocates for IP rights, but conflation of support for IP with support for the environmental movement, peace education, and education for sustainable development will not suffice if all the while the situation for IP on the ground is not improving.

For starters, the teaching of IP matters as a global issue, combined with knowing the cutting edge in the international Indigenous rights recovery movement such as that described above, will allow for the crucial element of syncretizing educational initiatives with the situation on the advocacy front.

Meanwhile, creation of sufficient social consensus regarding the merits of supporting IP rights to lands, resources and territories will not be possible without systemic action beyond K-12 education. We adults must set the standard for the generations of the future.

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