

Indigenous News Flash ARCHIVE: JUNE 2009



News:

"Indigenous Peoples Issues Today" blog

If you are looking to keep up-to-date with Indigenous issues from around the world I recommend you keep an eye on this blog page.

For more information: <http://indigenousissuestoday.blogspot.com/>

Gerald Taiaiake Alfred: Resurgence of Traditional Ways of Being (Canada)

A podcast lecture with Taiaiake Alfred who is known for his research in the fields of Indigenous governance.

For more information: http://lib.asu.edu/librarychannel/2009/04/20/ep96_taiaikealfred/

New Recommended References:

1. Kingsley J, Aldous, D, Townsend M, Phillips R. and Henderson-Wilson C (2009) Investigating health, economic and socio-political factors that need consideration when establishing Victorian Aboriginal land management projects. *Australasian Journal of Environmental Management*, Vol. 14, pp. 34 - 44

2. Berkes F. and Berkes, M.K (2009) Ecological complexity, fuzzy logic, and holism in indigenous knowledge. *Futures*, Vol. 41, Issue 1 pp. 6-12

3. Ladio A.H. and Lozada, M (2009) Human ecology, ethnobotany and traditional practices in rural populations inhabiting the Monte region: Resilience and ecological knowledge. *Journal of Arid Environments*, Vol 73, Issue 2, pp. 222-227

Education Centre:

'Ecohealth Skype Book Club' to start late July

By Jonathan "Yotti" Kingsley

As some Ecohealthers maybe aware the Ecohealth Student Section will be starting a Skype Book Club in late July. I will be running the first session of the book club and have chosen the book the *Reindeer People* by Piers Vitebsky. This book focuses on the Reindeer people of northern Siberia, Russia.

I understand some people maybe busy so I will make the first session appropriate both for those people who haven't and have had time to read the book. All you need is Skype, coffee/hot chocolate, pen, paper, your ears and mind. If you want to be included in the book club please add me on Skype (Skype name: Jonathan "Yotti" Kingsley) or email me at jk470@cam.ac.uk.

What I have done to make it easier is to paste some quotations for the book to start you thinking about the meeting (if you haven't had a chance to read it) so we can have a good discussion:

p. 27 "A social contract between reindeer and humans... This is a long-term relationship of kindness in which the human is no longer a predator like a wolf, but a partner... Indigenous peoples' legends explore why and how reindeer were domesticated, but their narratives are set in a mythic realm".

p. 34 "As with European colonialism elsewhere, native peoples became labourers for an imperial economy, using their special skills to exploit their own natural resources for the profit of others. The Russians created new needs, supplying them with tobacco, tea, vodka..."

p. 72 "We Grew up in this place, we were born here, this is where we spent our childhood, everything here is connected with our children... Our land, our mountains tug at us" - The old man

p. 107 "Ivan and his animals mirrored each other in a symbiotic ecology of mood. He was like a barometer, but he registered conditions as perceived not by a meteorologist but by the reindeer."

p. 112 "Like other Europeans as well as North Americans, Russians talked of the taiga as a pristine wilderness where a city person went to seek purification of the soul. But for Lidia the Taiga was not an empty space of white man's adventure travel. It was the basic setting for one's life, the place where one new what to do, how to be... 'someone can appear to have a strong spirit when they're in the village,' Lidia continued, 'but working in the taiga reveals a persons weakness... Here in the camp, you see each other directly.'"

p. 184 "The very oldest people I met... recalled riding thousands of miles over the hunting trails of diverse clans and peoples, encountering their spirits, adapting to their ecologies, and speaking something of their languages. But recent generations became cosmopolitan in quite a different way. Their attentiveness to the world was drawn away from the land and funnelled through the village airstrip to the life that could not be reached on the back of a reindeer."

p. 195 "For these young girls, taiga values are inverted. To them the communication with animals, river, and mountains, which makes much speech unnecessary, seems maladaptive. Instead of a talent, it is now interpreted as a deficiency. Young herders with their shy eyes are perceived as blank people and the taiga, with its finely grained textures which only they can read, as a dead space."

p. 203-4 "The institutionalization of people also institutionalised cruelty on a level that the teachers would not inflict on their own children at home."

p. 209-210 "But the most terrible deaths of men were not accidents, nor even their murders, but their suicides. Everyone had suicide stories..."

p. 212 "Until recently, The Russian public was unaware of the distress of the native peoples living in their own far North. Most people knew only of happy 'children of nature', who danced in exotic costumes and supposedly lived in harmony with their harsh but beautiful environment. As soon as press controls were relaxed in the late 1980s, it emerged that the north natives suffered from cancer, depression, and a poisoned environment, and that their

life expectancy was eighteen years lower than that of Russians."

p. 221 "Siberian reindeer people paid for the cold war twice over. Once in areas of uranium was mined and the earth ripped open to spill the tailings, and then in every single community when the bombs were tested..."

p. 238 "Nice people, people who had been my friends for years, people who cared about their families, became unrecognizable. Each time I returned, I found someone I thought would hold out forever had gone under. I would listen to the new tally, just as I listened to the list of people who died..." Vodka and sugar the major killer

p. 261 "The relationship set up at the beginning of time between the Eveny and their animals is different from the relationship in Genesis, where God gave Adam 'dominion' over every kind of creature. For the Eveny, animals are spiritually and psychologically more complex. In the biblical text, wild and domestic animals are not distinguished and the purpose of all animals are subordinated to those of humans. But in the taiga, wild and domesticated animals each relate to humans in their own distinctive way."

p. 390 "Instead of the spirits of animals, land, and sky, modern native leaders must understand regional and federal government agencies and international organizations."