



# Critical Indigenous Disaster Studies: Doomed to Resilience?

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## INTRODUCTION

Just as disasters are indissolubly social events, in settler colonial societies, vulnerabilities to hazards, and the impacts from consequent disasters, are inextricably racist. Are Indigenous disasters, like the Bible's portrayal of the poor (Mathew 26:11; Mark 14:7), “always with us”? As Matthewman (2015) points out, disasters “lift the veil” on how a society works, or does not work, revealing what is tolerated, and who or what is privileged. The post-contact experiences of Indigenous Peoples can be read as a litany of disasters and yet systemic vulnerability does not stem from a *lack* of attention. As Dunbar-Ortiz (2014) argues, Indigenous Peoples are not peripheral to state legislation. Rather, the violent oppression and

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discrimination against Indigenous Peoples by state and private forces situates Indigenous societies at the very centre of state philosophising and operations.

Yet Indigenous communities are positioned (often by themselves) as the epitome of resilience. Indeed, “resilience” has become the default term for Indigenous individuals and communities who, despite the genocidal tendencies of imperial and colonising states, are not dead. Reid (2019) eviscerates this ascription of resilience as “a mantra being repeated by colonial states and deeply powerful western actors worldwide” (p. 262). Indigenous discourse elevates care for community and ecosystems as “a governing cliché” whereby neoliberal systems maintain their extraction of wealth from Indigenous and, of course, non-Indigenous subjects. To tease out this apparent paradox of simultaneous vulnerability/resilience, this chapter unpacks the impacts of a major disaster on urban Indigenous Peoples. Indigenous Peoples are increasingly urban (United Nations [UN] Housing Rights Programme, 2010); 85% of Māori are resident in towns and cities (Ministry of Social Development, 2010), and these built landscapes contain (and produce) complex risks (Mitchell, 1999). What is remarkable about so many modern disasters (including COVID-19) is first, their predictability, and second, how little was done to prevent or prepare for them.<sup>1</sup> We could add a third concern: the slow, often limited, sometimes counterproductive support for Indigenous communities. I have previously ventured a proto-law in a field bereft of theory (Lambert, 2022) that states, in any given disaster, Indigenous communities will be more impacted than non-Indigenous communities, and their recovery will be slower and less effective. This chapter gives the genesis of this law.

## APPROACHES TO INDIGENOUS DISASTER STUDIES

Indigenous Peoples have lived in the most interesting times for the last 500 years and the lay down misère for any critical sociology is to insert “Indigenous” in the title. At the level of community and neighbourhood, household and family, many Indigenous peoples are experiencing the physical, economic, social and cultural collapse of their space and place. This has happened while *non*-Indigenous spaces and places have

<sup>1</sup> Several reports modelled the damage to Ōtautahi Christchurch city from an earthquake. See Lamb (1997).

continued their expansion. The two trends are directly connected with colonisation the epitome of Smith's (2007) "disastrous accumulation".

Urban Indigenous communities add to the difficulty of understanding this modern riskscape as their proportion of Indigenous populations grows, and the hazards they face multiply (Albala-Bertrand, 2003; World Bank/UN, 2010). How do Indigenous communities navigate multiple systems during cascading and overlapping disasters? Do past events provide any lessons, or is the current situation so much more complex that we need to abandon or at least dilute tradition and the value of Indigenous Knowledges (IK, plural)? At heart, what do Indigenous Peoples need to know to survive? And how does critical disaster studies (CDS) support critical Indigenous disaster studies within the complexity of intersectionality and transdisciplinarity?

### *Indigenous Knowledges*

IK is increasingly accepted as important and sometimes fundamental to addressing environmental and other issues (Ataria et al., 2018). For this chapter, I interpret IK as a form of expertise, admittedly one primarily accessible from within self-identifying communities of practice (that practice being the corollary Indigenous culture). In this, I follow scholars of knowledge who question the impacts of codifying previously tacit knowledge in the service of new economies based on intellectual property, innovation, and digital technologies. The separation of knowledge as a "unit of analysis" came out of the realisation by capitalists that knowledge needed to be managed, just as land and resources, labour, and capital were managed, if economic growth was to continue (Chumer et al., 2000).<sup>2</sup>

By centring expertise, I intentionally ignore the boundaries of what Hull (2000) called "any particular understanding of the nature and characteristics of knowledge or information" (p. 50). As can be seen in Indigenous interpretations of the environment, of relational narratives beyond the merely human, hazards are personified as familial features of land, water, animate and inanimate companions whose names are still known and exploits still retold.

<sup>2</sup> Gramsci (1971) saw the elevation of knowledge as emerging from medieval Europe where "education" reflected two dimensions. At the level of the individual, "intellect" could be both broadened and deepened; at the scale of society, specialisations were simultaneously multiplying and narrowing.

The myth of Rūaumoko, the clinging ever-turning unborn child of Papa-tu-a-nuku, provides a cultural framework for Māori to appreciate a fundamental geophysical characteristic of our land (the whenua, a word that also stands for the placenta). This wilful child will never be born, will never cease his turning, and must be accepted as a part of the extended family. Similarly, Inuit scholar Sheila Watt-Cloutier (2015) notes the Inuit term *uggianaqtuq* describes a friend who is behaving unexpectedly or in an unfamiliar way. “The weather, which we had learned and predicted for centuries, had become *uggianaqtuq*. Our sea ice, which had allowed for safe travel for our hunters and provided a strong habitat for our marine mammals, was, and still is, deteriorating”. One informant (Scott, 2019) offered the proverb: *Harahara aitu, harahara te tai*. This translates as complete devastation on land and on sea, a destructive loss of resources.<sup>3</sup>

I recall a conversation with a Ngāi Tahu scholar on the 2011 Christchurch Earthquake which had devastated areas of Ōtautahi Christchurch (unironically called the most English city outside of England) (Ōtautahi hereafter). We were discussing the traditional knowledge—the *mātauraka*—of Ngāi Tahu, on whose territories the city was located. Ōtautahi was built on land that was historically comprised of extensive wetlands, a fantastic resource for the tribe who actually settled on more solid ground to the north as well as several coastal sites and many temporary sites (Tau, 2003). Drained by European settlers for farming and the new city, the soils were prone to liquefaction, a phenomenon where the land literally turned to liquid when violently shaken as in an earthquake. This geological phenomenon was a significant factor in the damage and disorder wrought by the earthquake. When I asked what this *mātauraka*<sup>4</sup> said of building a settlement on the chosen location, he laughed aloud and answered “Don’t”! QED.

Indigenous communities continue to assert the validity of their knowledges in the face of ongoing, and still violent, racism. This includes the assertion of their sovereign rights that empower them to decide how *any* knowledges are to be integrated into, *inter alia*, disaster risk reduction (DRR). Policy-makers and scientists increasingly see IK as important and perhaps fundamental to how Indigenous and possibly non-Indigenous

<sup>3</sup> See Mead and Grove (2001, p. 60) who records this as “Calamity on land, ruination at sea” and cites the scholars Ngata and Williams.

<sup>4</sup> The Ngāi Tahu dialect for *mātauranga*.

communities can better manage a complex and interconnected world. But is there a risk that when we are allowed to talk of “IK”, we follow not in the footsteps of our ancestors but in the wake of imperial and colonial attempts to wring evermore wealth out of people and places?

### *Political-Economies of DRR*

As Latour (2007) said of actor-network theory, the hyphen is important, and, for Žižek (2011), the “political/economy” dyad serves to signpost the site of a political struggle. Dismissing any disputes over processes, people, power and so on in disaster management as “politics” de-politicises that space as a possible site for contending outcomes. COVID-19 merely provides the latest examples: the British government awarded a £250 million (US\$332.3 million) contract for personal protective equipment (PPE) to a US jewellery company, with no PPE manufacturing or government contract experience. A middleman evidently pocketed \$50 million for their role (Mahase, 2020). Of \$11.7 billion awarded to new contracts by the US government, \$7.7 billion was excepted from “full and open competition” (Boyd, 2020).

Of course, regulators do identify and punish gross corporate negligence and malfeasance, albeit haphazardly. Naomi Klein (2007) presented disaster capitalism in all its naked logic although, as Rivera (2020) points out, Klein’s thesis began with the disaster whereas the risks were created many years earlier, embedded through colonisation. Žižek (1994, p. 1) points out it is “easier to imagine the end of the world than then end of capitalism”, a concern first raised by Jameson (1994, p. xii).<sup>5</sup> For Žižek, most people see liberal capitalism as more “real” than any alternative, “even under conditions of global ecological catastrophe”.

The default critique for Indigenous Peoples is to argue, at minimum, for the enrolment of Indigenous voices in state processes and the integration of IK in research. The goal is of course the acknowledgement of collective Indigenous rights (as reiterated in the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 2007). Beyond this remains the tantalising and often treasonous aspiration of Indigenous *sovereignty*.

<sup>5</sup> “It seems to be easier for us today to imagine the thoroughgoing deterioration of the earth and of nature than the breakdown of late capitalism” (Jameson, 1994, p. xii).

Let us circle back to Žižek. His critique of capitalism provides a teasing glimpse of what relationality looks like when reduced to an economic framework. And so when the New Zealand Minister of Earthquake Recovery, 13 months after the 2011 Christchurch earthquake and in the midst of residents struggling to function and rebuild their broken homes, expressed untrammelled confidence that the market will provide solutions (Berry, 2012), he was absolutely correct. Ongoing seismic activity delayed a quick rebuild, but ultimately the market simply priced out a comprehensive recovery; delay and obfuscation were successful tactics by the insurance sector that was contractually committed to the majority of the estimated \$40 billion costs (Miles, 2012). One of this market's first moves was to increase premiums, to cover "losses". Dare we say, the rich got richer, and the poor got poorer?

The COVID-19 pandemic shows that the extremely rich get nauseatingly wealthier, and the poor get ridiculously poorer (Neate, 2020). Thomas Picketty's thesis (2014) has the inequities of this current age resulting from the rate of return on capital exceeding the rate of growth in output and income, a phenomenon last seen to this extreme in the nineteenth century when Indigenous territories provided an easy fix for capitalism's hunger (Lenin, 1916). Perhaps we need to look again at disaster studies and wonder why it might not be more critical of this society.

### *Disaster Studies*

The 2015–2030 Sendai Framework (UN, 2015) saw important advances for Indigenous Peoples as their knowledges were accepted within the broad church of disaster sciences, "complementing" and "contributing" to DRR (Lambert & Scott, 2019). This is a belated advance from disaster research in the 1970s that sought engineering societal resilience to "exceptional" events, such as floods that would come once in a hundred years (Smith, 2000). The legislative equivalent is the use of emergency powers; McCormack among others note the significance of German jurisprudence scholar Carl Schmitt's statement that "Sovereign is he [sic] who decides on the exception" (McCormick, 1997, p. 163). A defining feature of sovereignty being the control leader has over a sovereign territory and people, what comprises an emergency, and what can be done in response to it.

When newly-minted US President Biden spoke with the slogan “Build Back Better” (BBB) from his lectern, some might sigh in relief that the White House has at least one staffer familiar with the UN’s Sendai Framework. More cynically, we might read the first two thirds as a real estate ad, and the last third as a floating signifier: disasterologists have achieved meme status. (This is not to be mocked, for how else is the science to influence the taxpayer?) Yet the 46th US President’s appearance was framed by the second wave of COVID-19, with the third wave evident in just the third month of his term. The COVID-19 health crisis repeats the scratched record of historic failures of environmental management, local planning, state investment, and industry profiteering.

It is a short journey to authoritarianism, devaluation, and printing money as enablers of capitalism. Do not forget that in response to what became known as the global financial crisis (GFC), the global political and financial elite was to coordinate the bail out of multiple banks with *hundreds of billions* of dollars, euros and whatever else was needed *in a matter of hours*.<sup>6</sup>

To show the ease with which Indigenous voices can disrupt discourse, Indigenous Peoples challenge the legitimacy of state and private structures, societal controls, and the methodologies that might be used in researching, inter alia, disasters. I argue that Indigenous communities occupy a post-disaster world by definition. As inhabitants (and often traditional owners) of these post-disaster landscapes, Indigenous Peoples are still responding, and barely—if at all—recovering from colonisation, the uber-disaster that provides a template for ongoing capital accumulation. Therefore, although they have important technical support roles, it will not be the geophysical sciences that solve the challenges of DRR. With that in mind, what can we say about Ōtautahi and its still rumbling landscape?

## RU WHENUA A ŌTAUTAHI

My personal experiences of the Canterbury earthquake sequence were mild and non-dramatic. In fact, I wasn’t even in the city for the two

<sup>6</sup> Lest this be used to support a conspiracy theory, we should not necessarily be surprised that in a pandemic that has depressed *all* economies, several vaccines appear within months of the initial shock. Coronavirus research was well-advanced before this current manifestation.

biggest tremors. On 4 September 2010, I was with 30 Māori researchers in Wellington, participating in a professional development programme (Ataria et al., 2013). During the 22 February 2011 Christchurch earthquake, I was being hosted by Waikato-Tainui who kindly put me up an extra night in their new hotel in Hamilton until the Christchurch airport reopened the following day. My strongest memory from that night was being implored by a (long) retired Australian cricketing star to “take my chances” in a black jack promotion at the local casino, also part-owned by the local iwi.

One further scene I offer is the day after, at Auckland airport, as I was flying back to a clearly devastated city, two uniformed US military personnel sat at a desk over which hung a sign as simple and as loaded as “US Citizens”. This image is the epitome of modern geopolitical power, namely the ability, responsibility, and *need* to repatriate roaming citizens in the midst of a foreign disaster.

Given the growing demands for Indigenous sovereignty, the disaster serves as a particularly powerful case study of urban Indigenous communities “behind the veil”. Initial snapshots provide important insights. On the one hand, cultural approaches underpinned a rapid and cohesive response through a recognisable Māori recovery network (MRN) (Kenney et al., 2012; Lambert et al., 2012). On the other hand, inequities soon became apparent. Potangaroa et al. (2011) identified the inequitable distribution of portable toilets to poorer suburbs, where Māori are a significant minority. Yanicki (2013) described socio-economic differences in recovery with the networking of poorer/browner Aranui organisations coordinating important resources into their neighbourhoods, while wealthier/whiter Sumner accessed their already existing, and considerable, resources.

Māori media publicised many positive “response” experiences of Māori. A bi-monthly news magazine published by the Ministry of Māori Development featured Māori response efforts in the April 2011 edition (Te Puni Kokiri, 2011). Headlines included “First team in”, “Ngāi Tahu kicks in”, “Getting it right culturally”, and “Marae helping out”. Help came from other tribes, notably medical personnel from Te Arawa, Raukawa, and Tainui, three prominent North Island iwi (Phibbs et al., 2015). The quarterly magazine produced by Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu (TRoNT), did the same (Triegaardt, 2011) and included a prescient

warning by one elder that despite Ngāi Tahu's significant residential property developments, housing was increasingly difficult for Māori to access, either as owners or renters.

Local newspaper *The Press* presented updates on the emergency response and recovery, although Māori input and perspectives were minimal. A December 2013 article (McCrone, 2013, p. c5) described the ongoing hardship experienced by many residents and quoted a former Ngāi Tahu strategy manager who criticised “vested interests” that were being consulted “behind closed doors” as part of a “stakeholder democracy” approach. The Chairman of TRoNT thought the early commitments to a “sustainable city” were diluted: “[I]f you go through the subdivisions, including our own, it's the same old, same old”. Yet the tribal asset portfolio continued to grow significantly, helped by the residential rebuild (Waatea News, 2016). The market for New Zealand property remains perhaps the country's most resilient edifice.

My own research revolved around three projects examining the Māori response and recovery experiences to the disaster. In interviews with Māori participants, many noted the distinction between traditional Indigenous owners, Ngai Tahu, and outsiders or “visitors”, even where those visitors are Māori and resident as a second, or third generation. This fact offers one of the rare dichotomous variables in Indigenous disaster studies as the distinction noted was between those Māori who had an ancestral right to the territory affected (what we term *mana whenua*) and those visitors from other tribal territories, most often North Island, (*ngā maata waka*) like myself.

This was teased out by Hauauru Rae (2013) who compared post-disaster planning in Ōtautahi after the 2011 event, and Taiwan after the 1991 earthquake. The Taiwanese approach was somewhat participatory, and included Indigenous voices, but was not as extensive or as formal as Ngāi Tahu's key stakeholder role in the rebuild through the Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Act 2011 (CER), enacted within two months of the disaster. Yet a corollary role for those Māori who do not trace their lineage through Ngāi Tahu (and who comprised a majority of Māori in the city) relied on ad hoc community and committee representation.

Let me declare this is absolutely within Ngāi Tahu's traditional (that is cultural) and modern legislated authority and was never questioned by participants. However, too many studies, including the Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Authority (CERA) surveys, framed the “Māori” response and recovery to the disaster as a somehow pan-Indigenous experience,

as if Māori identities were irrelevant. The nuances of tribal membership were not lost on Māori and would be noted and respected by any Indigenous group occupying any other Indigenous territories. Indigenous statistical data is poor and rarely disaggregated. The interplay between Indigenous rights holders, exemplified by Ngai Tahu’s tribal corporation being formally included in recovery strategies, and the vulnerability of those Indigenous community members who have migrated onto another People’s land, is a barely acknowledged dynamic that can only escalate as Indigenous diasporas increase in number and mobility.

As the recovery stalled and residents became frustrated, I started to interpret resilience through a more fundamental, if less romantic, framework of endurance.<sup>7</sup> In an effort to better understand this endurance within urban Māori, I analysed pre- and post-disaster well-being across economic, environmental, social, and cultural contexts. I drew on Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) that identifies causal configurations and accepts equifinality, that is, there is often (in fact usually) more than one causal pathway to any particular outcome. Resilience was calibrated according to participants’ self-reported increases, or at least the maintenance, of their well-beings across the four contexts of environment, economy, society, and culture (Lambert, 2014). Resilient individuals—those whose self-reported well-being improved or was maintained—fell into two groups. The first was comprised of those who experienced no impacts from the disaster, did not have to move house, had high household incomes, and also had strong pre-quake economic well-being. The second “pathway” were those individuals who did experience significant impacts from the disaster, including having or choosing to move, but still had high household incomes and strong pre-quake economic well-being.

All I can say is that, in a small sample of urban Māori, they indicated their overall well-being had improved, or at least not significantly declined, in the first year after a significant disaster, their pre-disaster economic well-being had more explanatory power than their pre-disaster cultural well-being. Who reading this chapter does not recall when simply having more money (or credit) would have solved some rather pressing issues? So it is with disasters, to an extreme degree.

These results are easily disputed, have not been replicated, and beg more questions than they answer. The preponderance of studies, most

<sup>7</sup> Māori scholar Mason Durie made this connection between resilience and time in his 2005 “Ngā Matatū: Tides of Māori endurance.”

of them qualitative and revolving around orality, dominate the citations. I would say such findings follow a proud history of research that recognises the central role of the state, private capital, and the nexus of ill-gotten colonial power as the key causal factor in Indigenous vulnerability. Anthony Oliver-Smith (1994, p. 86) foreshadowed Naomi Klein's political-economic tagline for post-disaster recoveries in recording Peruvian earthquake survivors' experiences of corrupt recovery/rebuild practices: "first the earthquake, then the disaster". While Indigenous communities are usually the most sidelined and ignored, those individuals who begin a disaster with more economic security might be expected to do better than those who are economically insecure.

The importance of economic security was threaded throughout the series of seven well-being surveys conducted by the CERA (2020) from 2012 to 2015 provide a particularly important set of data. The six surveys saw over 2,500 residents participate, of whom 100–150 were Māori, with about half of these Ngāi Tahu (Morgan et al., 2015). Māori participants were disproportionately reporting experiences of stress and anxiety, financial hardship, and a declining well-being over the recovery period.

The third study I participated in, funded by the Māori Centre of Research Excellence, Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga, was a collaboration with a Māori mental health provider. This project involved a series of interviews with managers, staff, and "clients", a terrible term that was eschewed in favour of the Māori term of tangata whaiora, an individual or group "seeking health". Their often harrowing accounts were of trauma, pain, suffering, and poverty, but there was also survival, joy, and personal growth (Lambert et al., 2014). As well as recording their stories, we undertook a social networks analysis (SNA) of whaiora support, and found older participants to be less connected than younger, and managers and staff (most of whom were also whaiora) being more connected than their "clients".

Many whaiora would not access primary response services such as police or hospitals and were primarily and sometimes solely reliant on Māori service providers such as Te Awa o te Ora. But this engagement does not necessarily extend to their own tribal communities. Indeed, many were not in any direct or regular contact with tribal institutions. Again, assuming that traditional Māori cultural institutions are fundamental to the "Māori response" as our own earlier work did (see also Paton et al., 2014) risks ignoring the diversity of Māori, many of whom remain physically, socially, and culturally distant from these networks.

Further, although many whaiora drew on whānau support, a significant minority *deliberately* excluded whānau from their support network. The success of the organisation was in filling this void by providing localised and individualised attention.

What can be seen across the disaster experiences of Māori is the overlapping response and recovery efforts to past and present disasters; individuals, families, and communities are primarily reactive in the face of urgency. The resources (not least time) to understand and implement longer term DRR strategies are rarely available.

## DISCUSSION

IK certainly deserve, and increasingly receive, positive attention in the research literature, including the ever-promiscuous disaster studies. But assumptions that the knowledge to resolve this is solely Indigenous is as circumspect as the presumption that Western science (alone) will do the same for non-Indigenous people.

Resilience became a trope for Ōtautahi residents, including Māori, who were coping with the most destructive disaster in Aotearoa New Zealand since the 1931 Napier earthquake. However, as Hayward (2013) and others point out, many residents in post-disaster Ōtautahi struggled with grief, trauma, anxiety, economic loss, and cultural isolation (McCrone, 2015; Spittlehouse et al., 2014). What is more, this suffering continued for years after the event and many of those most vulnerable (to an earthquake) remain the most vulnerable (to a pandemic) (Campbell et al., 2021).

And yet a decade on, these same neighbourhoods and communities are struggling to deal with ongoing poverty, discrimination (racism and the stigma of mental injuries). Housing ownership is beyond the reach of many New Zealanders, and mental health services remain under resourced. The racism in Aotearoa New Zealand continues, and indeed was livestreamed globally by one of the world's most successful companies as the murder of 51 Muslim New Zealanders by a white supremacist in 2019. Surely nobody, let alone people suffering mental injuries, should have to be resilient to the level of fear, degradation, and isolation of whaiora?

Haami Piripi (2011) reinforces that while the intent of public policy and services has varied considerably for Māori, the “methodology, focus and delivery” always served the government in office. This reality is

echoed around the Indigenous world: when Indigenous Peoples suffer, such as shown by Razack (2015) with the increasing rate of Canadian state incarceration of Indigenous Peoples, the system is not broken but merely functioning as it was intended. Indigenous communities have had their sovereign status, including the right to practice what we now label DRR, systematically and violently taken from them.

Kensinger (2019, p. 48) argues that the Ōtautahi rebuild “acted as a temporal nexus, opening a window onto the multiple spatio-temporal regimes” that were embedded in the city. The colonial and pre-neoliberal pasts were effectively erased by the disaster event “rendering the natural hazard the source of all social problems the city experienced in its recovery”. This erasure “rendered the longer history of colonial domination and capitalist expansion that characterized Christchurch’s past as inconsequential to the social vulnerability experienced by Christchurch residents, creating a misrecognition of the causal links between the deeper structural issues that contributed to Christchurch’s social vulnerability”. At the heart of a critical Indigenous disaster studies (CIDS) is not a cultural revelation but the dismantling and reversal of transfer between both public and private organisations who merely continue the imperial and colonial extraction of wealth from collective Indigenous worlds.

While traditional Māori institutions and practices were deployed to great effect in the Canterbury earthquake sequence, disaster studies rarely acknowledge that culture can also present as fault lines, of ancestry, knowledge, and access. Māori communities provide the same challenges and rewards through “fine grained” analyses, disaggregating relevant data from existing approaches remains an aspirational goal, a flaw not necessarily solved with the latest digital research platforms (Kukutai & Cormack, 2019). Indigenous Peoples are not to be included in intersectional approaches as a uniform autochthonous presence. A decolonising agenda in CDS need not default to a cultural lens to understand how social relationships are inscribed in Indigenous lands, waters, and peoples. But if poverty and marginalisation are the key indicators of vulnerability, then Māori and other Indigenous Peoples will remain the most vulnerable, and more vulnerable than their ancestors, until they are economically secure.

## CONCLUSIONS

Indigenous vulnerabilities are the flip-side of non-Indigenous resilience. But pan-Indigenous descriptions of Indigenous disaster experiences gloss over the fundamental identities of Indigenous Peoples, ignoring the diversity of communities and masking wider Indigenous societal dynamics that theoretically underpin the much lauded resilience. For Indigenous Peoples and their myriad communities, while sovereignty is vital to their security and well-being, this sovereignty is very specific to particular groups and locations, and not others. Disaggregating these experiences in a way meaningful to Indigenous Peoples is the *sine qua non* of recognizing and responding to their disasters.

While IK have much to contribute in DRR, the sheer mobility of Indigenous communities in the twenty-first century and their growing urban demographics challenge how knowledge is conceived and utilised. If we see the ongoing vulnerability of Indigenous Peoples as not a failure of neoliberalism but the epitome of its success, then opening discursive space for IK runs the risk of diluting efforts in transferring political-economic power. CDS can, indeed must, do more than attach “Indigenous” as a sign of critique. However, by beginning with the original risk managers of a hazardscape, perhaps disaster studies can agree on a unifying ethic.

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