Indigenous Governance Building: Mapping current and future research and practical resource needs

Indigenous Governance Bibliography

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Introduction

AIATSIS has compiled this bibliography on Indigenous governance as part of its Indigenous Governance Building: Mapping current and future research and practical resource needs project. It is to be read in conjunction with an AIATSIS bibliography on free, prior and informed consent, engagement and consultation, and other bibliographies relating to various aspects of Indigenous governance which have been included in the following pages and are also available via the project webpage.

The term ‘governance’ is wide reaching and it has not been possible to cover all Indigenous governance related topics comprehensively. Within the context of this project governance is broadly defined as a cultural construct where the principles and standards of what constitutes ‘good’, ‘good enough’, ‘strong’, ‘legitimate’, ‘ineffective’, ‘corrupt’ or ‘bad’ governance are informed by culturally-based values, traditions and ideologies; and vary significantly between different societies. There is no end-point goal of ‘perfect’ governance that will eventually be achieved in the future. Rather, governance is adaptive according to context and circumstances. This means it may swing between effectiveness and dysfunction. It is to be found as much in people’s daily self-determined practices, processes and relationships, as it is in visible structures and formal institutions.

The concept of governance is also associated and often equated with several others; for example, ‘management’, ‘incorporation’, ‘administration’, ‘compliance’, ‘service delivery’ and ‘leadership’. But governance cannot be reduced to these terms and related processes. Under such a reductionist approach within Indigenous affairs, governance tends to be seen as a matter of Indigenous people being assigned all responsibility, but no power. In contrast, many Indigenous people conceive of governance as involving self-determination, processes of Indigenous choice, and having substantive power over decisions about concerns that shape their daily lives.

Governance, then, is an inclusive concept — a unifying framework — that covers a wide range of components consisting both of formal mechanisms and structures, as well as how things are done: from law-making and enforcement; jurisdictional functions; leadership and representation; to members’ participation and voice; decision making, dispute resolution, institutional frameworks and constitutions; rights and relationships with others including governments and private sector players in the governance environment; and the organisation of sustained development.
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