

Comment for the report by Prof. Jeff Gayman

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Preface

Professor Jeff Gayman's report had three objectives:

- 1) To explore models of support for Indigenous and ethnic minority education at the higher education level;
- 2) To examine the overall situation and quality of Ainu education for Ainu in Japan;
- 3) To re-examine the programmes offered by the respective institutions in Japan and Russia; The commentator is not a pedagogical expert. I would like to comment mainly on objective 2, as I am a member of the department currently involved in Ainu education within Hokkaido University.

### **1. The importance of the 'interface'**

Professor Gayman states that the importance of the interface is due to the fact that it affects the lives of indigenous/ethnic minority individuals and collectives in all aspects.

In other words, this may be seen to mean that the majority must first understand that it is in a dominant position.

This point is also consistent with the disproportionality in research that Indigenous Studies fundamentally seeks to recognize as a given. Researchers are less aware of the fact that they own their research by virtue of belonging to a university or research institution.

In this sense, Professor Gayman is principally correct in pointing out that historical imbalances need to be redressed if trust between Indigenous communities and the majority is to be restored.

Also, it is important to recognize the agency of Indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities.

Here it is not only necessary to emphasize points of view such as that of Edward Said, but also to consider how Indigenous methodologies can be incorporated within the normative disciplinary framework.

For example, in my research area, Indigenous archaeology is growing in prominence within the arena of contemporary archaeology. Here, the project of archaeology is one based not only on Indigenous peoples, but also conducted by Indigenous people, for Indigenous people, and with Indigenous people.

### **2. Indigenous (Ainu) Education in Japan**

Professor Gayman is probably correct in pointing out that there are currently very few institutions in Japan that can be classified as 'Indigenous education institutions'.

Hokkaido University has established the department of Ainu and Indigenous Studies in the Graduate School of Humanities and Human Science in 2019. This is the first postgraduate teaching program in Japan to offer Masters and PhD degrees in the field of Indigenous and Ainu Studies.

There are currently 11 graduate students, two of whom are Ainu students.

However, Indigenous studies is still very new in Japan and there are no academic societies. Many of the researchers are seeking to conduct Indigenous Studies while remaining affiliated with existing disciplines and academic societies.

Foreign language proficiency is required for admission to graduate schools and is imposed in the entrance examination. However, although the Ainu language is taught at Hokkaido University, it is not regarded as an independent language or research language

in the graduate school entrance examination.

### **3. What is required between the university and Ainu community in the future**

I agree with Professor Gayman's point that negative history has reduced the motivation of Ainu students to study at Hokkaido University and to research Ainu topics.

Our Centre currently has two faculty members, one PD researcher and one administrative staff member from the Ainu, and two graduate students are studying in our Graduate course. As a university located in the land of Indigenous peoples, we believe that it is our mission to increase the number of researchers from the Ainu and the number of graduate students from the Ainu.

### **4. In conclusion**

The efforts of faculty members at the individual level are insufficient and too limited to establish Indigenous education in an organized manner.

The university organization is essentially a community, and the knowledge provider, namely scholars (teachers); the learner, namely the student; and the operator of the educational space, namely, the administration staff, need to participate in the management of the community on the same footing. In Japanese universities, this structure of management is not yet established. The status of students, at least as learners, is not on a par with that of teachers and administration staff. This needs to be improved above all.

For Indigenous Studies to take place in universities, opportunities must be provided for Indigenous peoples to participate in the management of the organization. In my centre, the management committee consists of 16 members, 13 of them are university faculty members and three are Ainu individuals from outside the university.

For Hokkaido University to promote collaboration with Indigenous peoples, it is necessary to appoint an Indigenous Advisor to the President of the university from amidst Ainu scholars, in the manner of groundbreaking overseas universities.

Also, it will be necessary to establish an Indigenous Policy for our university that sets out future guidelines for how the university will engage with the Ainu, including the memory of a negative past.