

# Listening and learning

This special theme issue of *Biodiversity* documents the progress of Indigenous Peoples since the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, and sets out our hopes for the future.

Rio was a pivotal point in our history, as Indigenous Peoples and as members of the global community. The world realized in Rio that truly “sustainable” development could only occur through a deep understanding of the connection between environment and development. That understanding is expressed in the traditional knowledge of Indigenous Peoples, a point confirmed by the 1987 Brundland Report prepared by the United Nations Commission on Environment and Development, which linked sustainability to the Indigenous Peoples knowledge of the earth. For many years that knowledge has been undervalued, ignored, or threatened; but at the Rio Earth Summit, and in the decade that followed, the world has begun to listen.

We have always understood the need to make our choices in consideration of future generations, a perspective Indigenous Peoples refer to as “making decisions for the seven generations to come”. We believe this approach embodies and reflects the concept at the heart of “sustainable development”. We hope the world will come to share our view that Mother Earth is sacred, and that we have a responsibility to keep her waters, air, and land pure...for the generations that will follow us.

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We believe this is the first time, in an international juried journal, that Indigenous Peoples’ perspectives on biodiversity and sustainable development are heard. This is an opportunity to listen and learn from Indigenous voices.

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**We use the terms Aboriginal Peoples, Native Peoples and Indigenous Peoples synonymously: Aboriginal Peoples is primarily used in Canada, Native Peoples in the USA and Indigenous Peoples in the International community. In all cases, Peoples is in the plural to emphasize the collective character of Indigenous cultures and rights.**