Reflections on Indigenous sovereignty

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It has been just over two years since the edited volume *Indigenous Data Sovereignty: Toward an Agenda* (Kukutai & Taylor, 2016) was published. Since then, Indigenous Data Sovereignty (ID-Sov) research and advocacy have grown in strength and are becoming an important feature of the *Aotearoa* (New Zealand) research, policy, and datascape. ID-Sov is concerned with the rights of Indigenous peoples to own, control, access and possess data that derive from us, and which pertain to our members, knowledge systems, customs, or territories (First Nation Information Governance Centre, 2016; Snipp, 2016). These rights are supported by the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* and have been endorsed by the Special Rapporteur on the right to privacy (Cannataci, 2018). Underpinning ID-SOV is the desire for data to be used in ways that support and enhance the collective wellbeing and self-determination of Indigenous peoples. Here in Aotearoa the Māori Data Sovereignty network, Te Mana Raraunga (TMR)[1], advocates for the realisation of Māori rights and interests in data, and for the ethical use of data to enhance the wellbeing of our people, language and culture. It is thus both fitting and timely that the *Journal of Indigenous Wellbeing: Te Mauri – Pimatisiwin* feature a special issue dedicated to ID-Sov.

The 'data revolution' has ushered in an era of exponential change. Digital data are the world's most valuable resource, and with that comes both risk and opportunity. Digital technologies, including monitoring and information technologies and Artificial Intelligence, can drive innovation and improve human health and wellbeing in profound ways. But the distribution of benefits is far from equitable. ID-Sov is an important lever for us as Indigenous peoples to assert our collective rights and interests in data, and to share in the benefits and value that can be generated from it.

There have been multiple developments in Māori Data Sovereignty (MD-Sov) in recent years. Foremost among them has been the establishment of TMR and the Data Iwi Leadership Group (Data ILG) of the Iwi Chairs Forum. TMR has been active in advocating for Māori data sovereignty and data governance across the public sector and has developed its own set of Māori data sovereignty principles to guide the ethical use of Māori data (Te Mana Raraunga, 2018). The network draws together more than 100 Māori researchers, practitioners, and entrepreneurs across the research, IT, community, and NGO sectors. Many of them are working with their communities, *iwi* (tribes), *hapū*

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[1] https://www.temanararaunga.maori.nz/

(subtribal groups), and Māori businesses to give tangible expression to MD-Sov as a key enabler of wellbeing. The Data ILG provides a national platform for intertribal collaboration to advance shared aspirations in the data space and is leading a co-designed Treaty-based Māori approach to data governance across the official data system. Building Māori data capability and capacity, and designing systems that move us from a state of data dependence to data sovereignty, is a shared goal.

Internationally there have also been important developments. The ID-Sov pioneers are First Nations in Canada[2]. Tired of non-Indigenous data users assuming the mantle of 'experts' on First Nations peoples, community activists developed a new model which provided for First Nations collective control over their own data. The trademarked OCAP® principles assert their right to retain collective ownership, control, access, and possession of First Nations data and, twenty years on, have become the defacto standard for how to conduct research with First Nations (First Nations Indigenous Governance Centre, 2016). ID-Sov networks have also been established in Australia[3] and the United States[4]. The Australian ID-Sov network Maiam nayri Wingara is working with other Indigenous organisations such as the Australian Indigenous Governance Institute to transform the ways in which Indigenous data in Australia is conceptualised, purposed, deployed, constructed, analysed, and interpreted. Their goal is to activate the contribution that data can make to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander well-being, in ways that are controlled and determined by Indigenous communities. ID-Sov networks are increasingly collaborating to share challenges and learnings across their respective contexts. The establishment of the Research Data Alliance International Indigenous Data Sovereignty Interest Group[5] has provided a formal mechanism for this to occur. These activities at 'flaxroots', national, and global scales have generated an important body of research that has begun to conceptualise, describe, and evidence

ID-Sov in varied contexts (Carroll Rainie, Rodriguez-Lonebear & Martinez, 2017; Garrison et al., 2019; Hudson et al., 2017; Kukutai & Taylor, 2016; Kukutai & Walter, in press; Lovett et al., 2019; Schultz & Carroll Rainie, 2014; Walker et al., 2017). This special issue marks an important contribution to this evolving body of knowledge.

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[2] https://fnigc.ca/
[3] https://www.maiamnayriwingara.org/
[4] https://usindigenousdata.arizona.edu/
[5] https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/international-indigenous-data-sovereignty-ig

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