

## **Latvia and Indigenous Affairs**

Indigenous peoples make up almost six percent of the world population, estimating a total of 370 million Indigenous people in over seventy countries. They are described as the people who originally inhabited a specific region. Indigenous people face racism, discrimination, and human rights violation. Three of the biggest threats that Indigenous people have are poverty, poor healthcare, and the bad impact of climate change.

Latvia is a country that resides in Northern Europe surrounded by Russia, Estonia, Lithuania, Belarus, and a maritime border to the west. Indigenous people in Latvia are known as Livonians. With a population of over 1,950,000 people, there are approximately 250 people who claim to be Livonian. Livonians have a special region that is a nationally protected area. With that being said, Latvia still supports its Livonians.

Indigenous peoples are one of the poorest populations in the world. Governments of the world put little effort into making schools for the Indigenous people, they don't have proper education systems. This makes it harder for Indigenous people to get well paying jobs, not including the fact that people will turn them away just because of their race. Indigenous people have a 19% higher poverty rate than non-indigenous people. There isn't a specific number of Livonians that are poor, but in 2014, 22.4% of the people in Latvia were in poverty. The percentage has gone down 10% since 2012 because of the improvement of its economical situation and increase of the population's disposable income. Before the 1990's poverty was seen as something that would only occur when someone didn't want to work or create their own business. During the mid-90's, after Latvia regained Independence, large business shut down causing a lot of unemployment throughout Latvia. The poverty risk is different for each age groups, and is most common throughout the ages sixteen to twenty-four.

Healthcare is one of the biggest threats if not the biggest threat to Indigenous people. Lack of medical attention, higher rates of suicide/suicide attempts, and fast spreading diseases. They experience isolation from medical attention and proper healthcare. Not getting this attention results in more deaths, diseases spreading throughout the communities, and more long term threats to their body. Mental health also plays a big role in the Indigenous peoples community. Depression is common amongst Indigenous people because of how the rest of the world treats them. This unfortunately has created a big toll on suicides in Indigenous communities. From November 2014 to January 2015 a reported 40 of Indigenous people took their lives in Canada. As this isn't a big issue in Latvia, it is still a serious matter that needs to be addressed. Latvia's healthcare system is universal program which means it provides healthcare to all citizens. It's one of the lowest ranked healthcare systems in the world because of its lack of medicine and long waiting times.

Indigenous people use the words natural resources for their food, clothing, and houses. As the climate change gets worse over time, the Indigenous people will suffer dramatically as those are some of the only resources they have access to. To cope with the climate change their only options are to move to different area or invest in modern technology to help them through the process. This is a tough decision for Indigenous people because they don't want to leave their land but most of them can't afford newer/modern technology. Latvia has a temperate climate which means warm summers and cool winters. It's described as "*a mosaic of vast forests alternates with fields, farmsteads, and pastures.*". There are over 700 state-level protected natural areas in Latvia, including a biosphere reserve. Latvia has done a good job of protecting it's lands and the climate change won't have a big impact on its Livonian people.

Overall, Latvia has a good relationship between them and the Livonian people. The threats that affect Indigenous people in other places of the world don't have as much of an impact on the Livonian people in Latvia. Latvia is a proud country and would help improve not only its own problems with Indigenous peoples, but also help other countries in the world.

## Bibliography

- Statistics', By Kenya Bureau of. "Latvia." *Data*. N.p., n.d. Web. 05 Nov. 2016.
- "Indigenous Peoples." *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, n.d. Web. 05 Nov. 2016.
- "Virtual Livonia -- Livõmo Internetõs -- Livzeme Interneta." *Virtual Livonia -- Livõmo Internetõs -- Livzeme Interneta*. N.p., n.d. Web. 05 Nov. 2016.
- @worldbank. "Why Are Indigenous Peoples More Likely to Be Poor?" *The Data Blog*. N.p., n.d. Web. 05 Nov. 2016.
- "Latvia." *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, n.d. Web. 05 Nov. 2016.
- "Livonians." *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, n.d. Web. 05 Nov. 2016.
- "Each Fifth Person in Latvia Is At-risk-of-poverty." *Latvijas Statistika*. N.p., n.d. Web. 05 Nov. 2016.
- "Aboriginal Suicides to Be Addressed at UN Gathering - APTN National News." *APTN National News*. N.p., 2015. Web. 05 Nov. 2016.

