



**Forum:** Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee

**Topic:** Discussing the rights of indigenous populations and measures to preserve indigenous cultures

**Student Officer:** Dandoura Natalia

**Position:** Co-Chair

## PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

Dear Delegates,

My name is Dandoura Natalia and I am a 16-year-old IB1 student at Pierce – The American College of Greece. It's my utmost honour to serve as the Co-Chair of this year's St Catherine's MUN Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee and I'm looking forward to meeting all of you in February!

I have been involved in MUN for the past 3 years and this will be my sixth conference overall as well as my first time chairing. After years of experience, I believe that MUN gives teenagers from around the world the chance to delve into current affairs, discuss topics that interest them and meet like-minded individuals. Personally, through MUN I've had the opportunity to research and learn more about topics of my interest as well as make friendships that I hope will last a lifetime. Meeting people from all over the world and gaining experience in debate and diplomacy has been one of my greatest privileges. This year's agenda includes two really interesting topics of high importance that all of you will get the chance to discuss in depth.

The role of this study guide is to assist you in your research but is by no means the only source of information regarding your preparation. I advise you to conduct further research regarding the topic and if any questions arise please feel free to contact me at:

[N.Dandoura@acg.edu](mailto:N.Dandoura@acg.edu) .

I look forward to working with you all!

Sincerely,

Natalia Dandoura



## TOPIC INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, the rights of indigenous populations have been violated in numerous situations and continue to do so even today. Earlier this year, it was stated that the government of Panama had failed to meet its obligation to protect the rights of indigenous people as a project to build the country's fourth electrical transmission line has moved forward without first ensuring that the project will not violate the territorial rights as well as their right to maintain their traditional ways of life, livelihood and culture.

Indigenous people are thought to be some of the world's most oppressed and marginalized communities who possess unique cultural heritages and traditional knowledge. This issue is of major concern and has stimulated discussion both on a local scale as well as internationally concerning the recognition of indigenous rights, the protection of their land and languages and most importantly the preservation of their honoured traditions.

The issue is deeply connected to the general pursuit of social justice and to the elimination of social discrimination. That is exactly why major organs of the United Nations as well as others have created relevant committees, treaties and resolutions, pursuing to solve the issue at hand.

Indigenous populations are located in multiple countries around the world with higher numbers of them in countries such as Samoa, Greenland, Africa, French Polynesia, Guatemala and Morocco. Both the indigenous populations as well as national governments, international organizations and legal institutions are directly linked to the issue and can help explore and find solutions that will eventually benefit these populations.



**Figure 1:** Countries/territories with the largest share of indigenous populations<sup>1</sup>

## DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

### Indigenous populations

Used to refer to the people who originally lived in a place, rather than people who moved there from somewhere else. Related to the earliest known inhabitants of a place and especially of a place that was colonized by a now-dominant group.<sup>2</sup>

### Cultural preservation

The act of keeping something the same or of preventing it from being damaged. The prevention of the distortion and damage of a culture.<sup>3</sup>

### Cultural heritage

Cultural heritage includes artefacts, monuments, a group of buildings and sites, and museums that have a diversity of values including symbolic, historic, artistic, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological, scientific and social significance. It includes tangible heritage, and intangible cultural heritage embedded into cultural, and natural heritage artefacts, sites or monuments.<sup>4</sup>

### Reconciliation

<sup>1</sup> "Just a Moment..." *Just a Moment...*, [www.visualcapitalist.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Mapped-The-Worlds-Indigenous-Peoples-Full-Size.html](http://www.visualcapitalist.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Mapped-The-Worlds-Indigenous-Peoples-Full-Size.html).

<sup>2</sup> "Definition of Indigenous." *Merriam-Webster: America's Most Trusted Dictionary*, 8 Nov. 2023, [www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/indigenous](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/indigenous).

<sup>3</sup> "Preservation." *Cambridge Dictionary | English Dictionary, Translations & Thesaurus*, [dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/preservation](http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/preservation).

<sup>4</sup> "Cultural heritage." *UNESCO UIS*, 12 Sept. 2023, [uis.unesco.org/en/glossary-term/cultural-heritage](http://uis.unesco.org/en/glossary-term/cultural-heritage).



A situation in which two people or groups of people become friendly again after a dispute. The process of making two opposite beliefs, ideas, or situations agree.<sup>5</sup>

### Traditional knowledge

Traditional knowledge is knowledge, know-how, skills and practices that are developed, sustained and passed on from generation to generation within a community, often forming part of its cultural or spiritual identity.<sup>6</sup>

### Land rights

The inalienable ability of individuals to freely obtain, use, and possess land at their discretion as long as their activities on the land do not impede on other individuals' rights. Up to 2.5 billion people worldwide depend on indigenous and community lands to survive. These lands, which are held, used or managed collectively, cover more than 50% of the world's surface. Yet, Indigenous People and local communities who have protected these lands for centuries, legally own just one-fifth. Land rights are not to be confused with access to land which allows individuals to use land for economic purposes.

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## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### Early history

There are mentions of indigenous people that go all the way back to the Classical period in Greece. The acknowledgement of indigenous populations who were referred to as "Pelasgians" by ancient writers gives us the idea that there was a group of people who inhabited Greek land before the Greeks. In Europe of late antiquity, north Africans converted to various forms of Christianity under Roman rule but retained elements of traditional religious beliefs. During the age of discovery, 15th- 17th century, Europeans,

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<sup>5</sup> "Reconciliation." *Cambridge Dictionary | English Dictionary, Translations & Thesaurus*, dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/reconciliation.

<sup>6</sup> "Traditional Knowledge." *WIPO - World Intellectual Property Organization*, www.wipo.int/tk/en/tk/.

<sup>7</sup> "Why Indigenous and Community Land Rights Matter for Everyone." *Oxfam International*, 25 May 2022, [www.oxfam.org/en/take-action/campaigns/stand-land-rights/why-indigenous-and-community-land-rights-matter-everyone](https://www.oxfam.org/en/take-action/campaigns/stand-land-rights/why-indigenous-and-community-land-rights-matter-everyone).



motivated by multiple factors such as trade and exploitation of natural resources, started spreading Christianity and establishing military bases and colonies all along the Americas. The well-known Christopher Columbus as well as other colonizers enslaved the Arawak people of the Caribbean islands and forced them to work in a system of labour called *encomienda*.

Europeans used a number of means to colonize such as encountering lands that were populated by indigenous people. They felt like it was their duty to spread the gospel to non – non-Christians and bring civilization to barbarian people. They believed that what they called “*terra nullius*”, “no one’s land”, was an uninhibited and uncultivated land in which they had the right to settle and cultivate.

### **Indigenous populations around the world**

There appear to be two different types of indigenous people in today’s world. Firstly, those who have been significantly exposed to the colonizing activities of other societies such as the Mayan people of Mexico. Secondly, the ones that still remain in isolation from any external influence, up to a specific extent, such as the Sentinelese.

There are many difficulties when it comes to identifying indigenous populations due to the variances and inadequacies of available data. That is why it has been stated that no precise estimates have ever been compiled. The United Nations estimates that just a little under 6% of the world's total population are indigenous people which is equal to just over 370 million people. <sup>8</sup>

In many parts of the world, indigenous populations have faced a dramatic decline and some even extinction. There are also cases in which they have been assimilated by other populations and have undergone major changes. Fewer are the cases in which despite the changes that they have undergone, certain societies have survived even without their traditional lands, after relocation and after forced resettlement. Obviously, in such cases, it is typical for cultures to experience distortion, loss of language and lands and disruption of traditions.

### **Benefit to the economy and environment**

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<sup>8</sup> "World Population Prospects - Population Division - United Nations." *Page Redirection*, [population.un.org/wpp/](https://population.un.org/wpp/).



As mentioned above, indigenous people hold over 50 to 65 per cent of the world’s land. Governments though, recognize only 10% as legally belonging to these populations.<sup>9</sup> It has been stated that this is a lack of economic policy since lands that are legally held by Indigenous people are of great value to the world economy as well as the environment. More specifically, in the countries of Colombia, Brazil and Bolivia, indigenous lands generate billions and even sometimes trillions of dollars worth of benefits in the form of carbon sequestration, reduced pollution and clean water.<sup>10</sup>

One of the benefits of tenure, secure indigenous lands is the provision of sequestering carbon which reduces CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and helps reduce climate change. In the countries mentioned above, these lands can provide significant global carbon mitigation benefits that would amount to a total of \$25-34 billion over the next 20 years because the annual CO<sub>2</sub> emission release of an average of 55% would be avoided. That would be equal to removing 9 – 13 million passenger vehicles off roads for just one year.<sup>11</sup>

SECURING INDIGENOUS FORESTLAND IN:

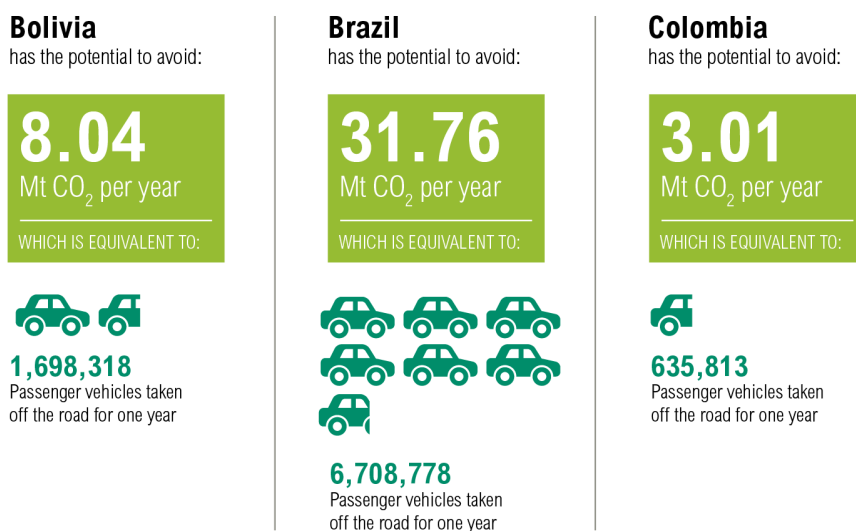


Figure 2: Tenure – secure indigenous lands offer potential to avoid carbon emissions<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> "By the Numbers: Indigenous and Community Land Rights." *World Resources Institute*, 20 Mar. 2017, [www.wri.org/insights/numbers-indigenous-and-community-land-rights](http://www.wri.org/insights/numbers-indigenous-and-community-land-rights).

<sup>10</sup> "RELEASE: Secure Land Rights in Amazon Brings Billions in Economic and Climate Benefits, Says New WRI Report." *World Resources Institute*, 6 Oct. 2016, [www.wri.org/news/release-secure-land-rights-amazon-brings-billions-economic-and-climate-benefits-says-new-wri](http://www.wri.org/news/release-secure-land-rights-amazon-brings-billions-economic-and-climate-benefits-says-new-wri).

<sup>11</sup> "Coastal 'Blue Carbon': An Important Tool for Combating Climate Change." *The Pew Charitable Trusts | The Pew Charitable Trusts*, 20 Sept. 2021, [www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/issue-briefs/2021/09/coastal-blue-carbon-an-important-tool-for-combating-climate-change](http://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/issue-briefs/2021/09/coastal-blue-carbon-an-important-tool-for-combating-climate-change).

<sup>12</sup> "Protecting Indigenous Land Rights Makes Good Economic Sense." *World Resources Institute*, 7 Oct. 2016, [www.wri.org/insights/protecting-indigenous-land-rights-makes-good-economic-sense](http://www.wri.org/insights/protecting-indigenous-land-rights-makes-good-economic-sense).



It was pointed out at the United Nations' International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples (August 9th 2023) <sup>13</sup>how indigenous people are experts at small-scale community food production. In modern days, where the globalization of the food system is a fact, it is beneficial to learn how to produce healthy food while protecting the environment, especially since the threats of both COVID-19 and war are still present. Maintaining biodiversity is a crucial step in ensuring a sustainable food supply and one that comes paired with protection from pollution and flooding. It is clear that small-scale producers and farmers are vulnerable to the effects of climate crisis but at the same time truly beneficial to the economy of countries and that is exactly why IFAD has invested in the Slow Food initiative, to help small producers increase output and market their products to a wider audience on both national and international scale.

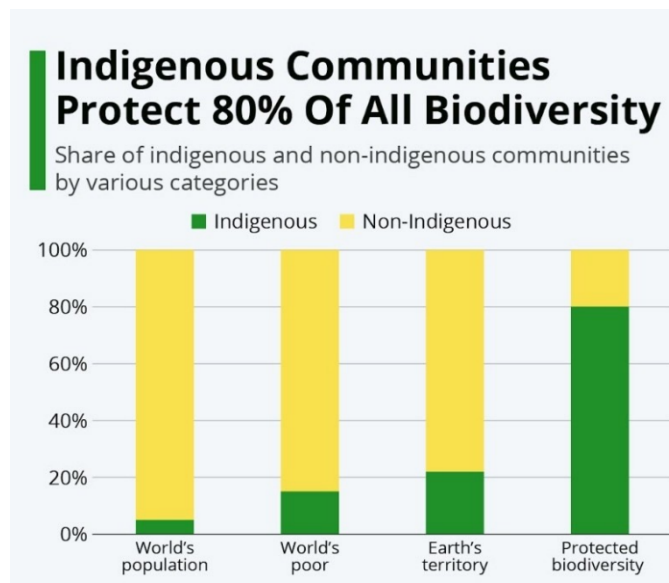


Figure 3: The importance of Indigenous communities for the protection of biodiversity<sup>14</sup>

### Indigenous rights

Indigenous rights belong to those who, being indigenous people, are defined as being the original people of a land that has been conquered and colonized by outsiders. Indigenous rights are those rights that exist in recognition of the specific condition of

<sup>13</sup> United Nations. "International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples." *United Nations*, [www.un.org/en/observances/indigenous-day](http://www.un.org/en/observances/indigenous-day).

<sup>14</sup> "5 Ways Indigenous People Are Protecting the Planet." *World Economic Forum*, 3 Aug. 2023, [www.weforum.org/agenda/2023/08/indigenous-people-protecting-planet/](http://www.weforum.org/agenda/2023/08/indigenous-people-protecting-planet/).



Indigenous people. This includes the basic human rights of physical survival and integrity as well as the rights over their land, language, religion and other elements of cultural heritage that are part of their identity.

During the period of the Renaissance, paired with the justification of colonialism with a higher purpose for both the colonists and the colonized, there were some concerns expressed over the way indigenous people were treated. In the Spanish empire, the General Indian Court was established in Mexico and Peru by the crown. This court dealt with cases that involved the Indigenous and aimed at protecting Indians from maltreatment.

Multiple organizations on both national and international levels fight for indigenous rights as well as Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and political groups that address the issue. Their mission is to protect the rights of indigenous people without states imposing their ideas of development. The major problem at stake is, according to these organizations, the interference with their way of living by the state's disrespect for their rights and the invasion of traditional lands for the exploitation of natural resources.

## Health

The poor health of indigenous populations worldwide has been an issue of vast importance for quite a long time now. It has been proven that Indigenous people experience higher rates of illnesses, disabilities and reduced quality of life, all of which lead to a much shorter life expectancy compared to other citizens of the same countries. This is due to multiple factors such as their living conditions, employment status, poor income levels and inadequate access to clean water, food and sanitation services. There are other factors as well such as geographic isolation, discrimination and lack of cultural understanding that further contribute to structural barriers for indigenous populations to access health care.

According to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs for Indigenous Peoples: Worldwide, over 50 per cent of Indigenous adults over age 35 have type 2 diabetes, and life expectancy is almost 20 years lower (Guatemala 13; Panama 10; Mexico 6; Nepal 20; Australia 20; Canada 17; New Zealand 11.) and tuberculosis, a disease that primarily affects people living in poverty, affect numerous indigenous





peoples around the globe. The poor health of indigenous populations has also been linked to malnutrition.<sup>15</sup>

To address the root cause of indigenous peoples' health problems, indigenous peoples' collective rights ought to be fully recognized and exercised. Health systems must take into account the health of these populations and preserve and strengthen health systems as a strategy to increase access and coverage of health care.

### **Racism and Discrimination**

Racism is a phenomenon really common among indigenous people, especially those who live in urban areas. It has been noted that a significant number of indigenous people live in urban areas because they were forced to due to their seeking education, and employment or as a result of forced eviction, armed conflict and political instability. Any limitations on their rights can potentially sever their cultural and spiritual relationship with indigenous lands.

They have often been characterized as barbaric, primitive, savaged and uncivilized. These terms were more commonly used specifically during the heyday of European colonial expansion but are still being used by some societies today. It was after World War I that some Europeans came to realize that the means used to "civilize people" were immoral. At the same time, anti-colonial movements started taking place and advocates for the rights of Indigenous peoples pointed out that words such as "civilized" and "savage" were products of colonialism, which was utterly destructive. As time passed, leading to the mid-20th century, the attitude of Europeans began to shift to the view that Indigenous people should be able to decide what would happen to their ancient cultures and ancestral lands.

### **Racism and mental health**

Racism has been linked to mental health problems among multiple marginalized communities of the world and Indigenous ones as well. The trauma, forced migration, discrimination and segregation that Indigenous people have been exposed to have had a lasting effect on generations of Indigenous people.

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<sup>15</sup> "Health | United Nations For Indigenous Peoples." *Welcome to the United Nations*, [www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/mandated-areas1/health.html](http://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/mandated-areas1/health.html).



Events of discrimination have been noted to take place in health care, education and the criminal justice system, in a variety of forms including exclusion, oral harassment, microaggression and violence. Native Americans have reported to have faced issues such as poorer health, lack of quality health care, higher mortality rates, higher suicide rates, drug and alcohol use and sexual violence.

These forms of racism are what puts Indigenous people at a greater risk of developing a variety of mental health conditions such as depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Specifically, in children, the effects that racism can have when it occurs during childhood can be stigmatizing.

### **Use of indigenous knowledge**

Indigenous knowledge is a body of observations, oral and written knowledge, innovations, practices, and beliefs that promote sustainability and the responsible stewardship of cultural and natural resources through relationships between humans and their landscapes. Indigenous Peoples have developed their knowledge systems based on evidence acquired through direct contact with the environment, long-term experiences and extensive observations.

Just now, over the past 3 years has it been noticed that the recognition of the importance of Indigenous Knowledge is a necessary step to recognizing history and re – re-establishing relationships. There have been attempts such as the 2021 Presidential Memorandum on Tribal Consultation and Strengthening Nation-to-Nation Relationships that aim to strengthen the relationship between the federal government and tribal nations through actions such as the inclusion of indigenous knowledge across all levels of Federal agency decision-making.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> *The White House*, [www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/CEQ-Tribal-Consultation-Plan-04.26.2021.pdf#:~:text=On%20January%2026%2C%202021%2C%20President%20Biden%20is%20sued%20a,relationship%20between%20the%20United%20States](https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/CEQ-Tribal-Consultation-Plan-04.26.2021.pdf#:~:text=On%20January%2026%2C%202021%2C%20President%20Biden%20is%20sued%20a,relationship%20between%20the%20United%20States)

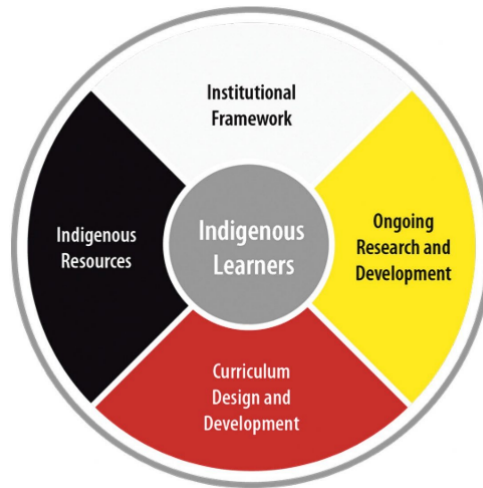


Figure 4: Photo from college Ontario created in response to the initiative to develop education strategies, Indigenous student centres, create a welcoming environment and provide additional support such as peer tutoring, sharing circles and dedicated bursaries to Indigenous students.<sup>17</sup>

### TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Date of the Event	Event
1492	Christopher Columbus arrives at Caribbean Island and orders six natives to be seized as servants.
1785	The Treaty of Hopewell <sup>18</sup> is signed in Georgia, protecting Cherokee Native Americans in the United States and sectioning off their land.

<sup>17</sup> Gomes, Anna, and Reporter-editor. "Indigenous Knowledge in the Classroom." *The Dialog*, 16 Apr. 2018, [dialognews.ca/2018/04/13/indigenous-knowledge-in-classroom/](http://dialognews.ca/2018/04/13/indigenous-knowledge-in-classroom/).

<sup>18</sup> "The Hopewell Treaties." *Clemson University, South Carolina*, [www.clemson.edu/about/history/properties/hopewell/hopewell-treaties.html](http://www.clemson.edu/about/history/properties/hopewell/hopewell-treaties.html).



1812	President James Madison signs a declaration of war against Britain, beginning the war between U.S. forces and the British, French and Native Americans over independence and territory expansion. <sup>19</sup>
1879	The first students attended Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Pennsylvania. The school was designed to assimilate Native American students.
1907	Charles Curtis became the first Native American U.S. Senator.
1924	U.S. Congress passed the Indian Citizenship Act, granting citizenship to all Native Americans born in the territorial limits of the country. <sup>20</sup>
1975	Congress passed the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance <sup>21</sup> which provides recognition and funds to Indian tribes.
1991	The National Coalition of Racism in Sports and Media (NCRSM) is established to prevent the use of Indian

<sup>19</sup> VOA Learning English. "James Madison Declares War on Britain in 1812." *Voice of America*, 2 Jan. 2014, [learningenglish.voanews.com/a/madison-declares-war-britain-1812/1702038.html](http://learningenglish.voanews.com/a/madison-declares-war-britain-1812/1702038.html).

<sup>20</sup> "What is the Snyder Act of 1921 and Who Does It Apply To?" *Indian Affairs*, [www.bia.gov/faqs/what-snyder-act-1921-and-who-does-it-apply](http://www.bia.gov/faqs/what-snyder-act-1921-and-who-does-it-apply).

<sup>21</sup> "History and Culture: Indian Self-Determination and Education Act - 1975 - American Indian Relief Council is Now Northern Plains Reservation Aid." *Helping Native American People Improve the Quality of Life - Partnership With Native Americans*, [www.nativepartnership.org/site/PageServer?pagename=airc\\_hist\\_selfdeterminationact](http://www.nativepartnership.org/site/PageServer?pagename=airc_hist_selfdeterminationact).



	names, logos, symbols and mascots in sports. <sup>22</sup>
2020	The Washington National Football League franchise announces it is dropping its name, the "Redskins," as well as its Indian head logo.
2021	2021 Presidential Memorandum on Tribal Consultation and Strengthening Nation-to-Nation Relationships .

## MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED

### Canada

Indigenous peoples in Canada comprise the First Nations, Inuit, and Métis. Although Indian is a term still commonly used in legal documents, the descriptors Indian and Eskimo have fallen into disuse in Canada, and many consider them to be pejorative.

The characteristics of indigenous populations in Canada include a long history of permanent settlements, agriculture, civic and ceremonial architecture, complex societal hierarchies, and trading networks.

As of the 2021 census, the Indigenous population totalled 1,807,250 people, or 5.0% of the national population, with 1,048,405 First Nations people, 624,220 Métis, and 70,540 Inuit. 7.7% of the population under the age of 14 are of Indigenous descent.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup> "National Coalition on Racism in Sports and the Media NCRSM." *Wiser.Directory*, [wiser.directory/organization/national-coalition-on-racism-in-sports-and-the-media-ncrsm/](https://wiser.directory/organization/national-coalition-on-racism-in-sports-and-the-media-ncrsm/).

<sup>23</sup> "Indigenous Population Continues to Grow and is Much Younger Than the Non-Indigenous Population, Although the Pace of Growth Has Slowed." *Statistics Canada: Canada's National Statistical Agency / Statistique Canada : Organisme Statistique National Du Canada*, 21 Sept. 2022, [www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/220921/dq220921a-eng.htm](https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/220921/dq220921a-eng.htm).



## United States of America (USA)

The Indigenous people of the Americas were the inhabitants of the Americas before European colonization in the 15th century, and the ethnic groups who now identify themselves with those people. Some Indigenous peoples have traditionally depended heavily on agriculture, and others on a mix of farming, hunting, and gathering. At least a thousand different Indigenous languages are spoken in the Americas, where there are also 574 federally recognized tribes in the United States alone.<sup>24</sup>

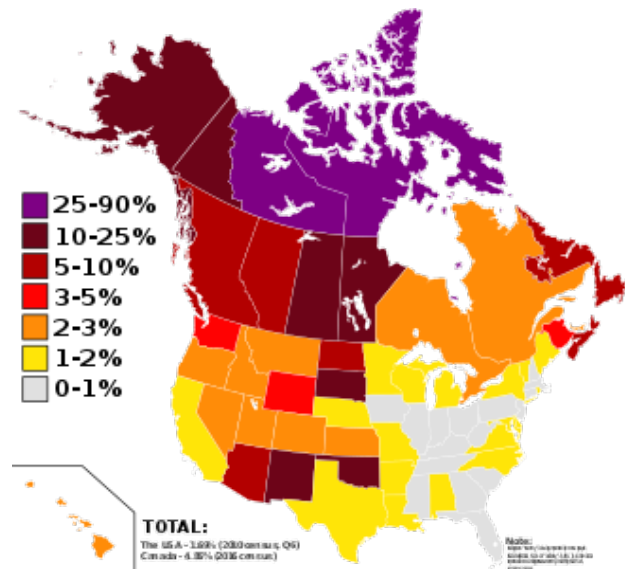


Figure 5: Indigenous people in Canada and the U.S., per cent of the population by area<sup>25</sup>

## Bolivia

Indigenous people in Bolivia are Bolivian people who are of indigenous ancestry. They constitute anywhere from 40 to 70% of Bolivia's population and belong to 36 recognized ethnic groups.<sup>26</sup> Aymara and Quechua are the largest groups. The geography of Bolivia includes the Andes, the Gran Chaco, and the Amazon Rainforest.

<sup>24</sup> GmbH, Lesson N. "What Was, And What Is: Native American Languages In The United States." *Babbel Magazine*, 8 June 2023, [www.babbel.com/en/magazine/native-american-languages-in-the-us](http://www.babbel.com/en/magazine/native-american-languages-in-the-us).

<sup>25</sup> "Indigenous Peoples in Canada." *Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, Inc, 20 Sept. 2023, [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indigenous\\_peoples\\_in\\_Canada](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indigenous_peoples_in_Canada). Accessed 12 Nov. 2023.

<sup>26</sup> Too, Kenneth K. "Ethnic Groups Of Bolivia." *WorldAtlas*, 4 Jan. 2017, [www.worldatlas.com/articles/ethnic-groups-of-bolivia.html](http://www.worldatlas.com/articles/ethnic-groups-of-bolivia.html).



In 1991, the Bolivian government signed the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, a major binding international convention protecting indigenous rights.<sup>27</sup> On 7 November 2007, the government passed Law No. 3760 which approved of UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.<sup>28</sup>

## African Region

Indigenous African cultures have existed since ancient times, with some of the earliest evidence of human life on the continent coming from stone tools and rock art dating back hundreds of thousands of years. Before the colonial period, the concept of specific indigenous peoples within the African continent wasn't widely accepted. It was some years after that it gained wider acceptance, although not without controversy. Most modern, independent African states are comprised of multiple ethnic groups and contain various people whose situations, cultures and lifestyles are generally marginalized and set apart from the dominant political and economic structures of the nation.

The Indigenous Peoples of Africa Co-ordinating Committee (IPACC) was founded in 1997. It is one of the main transnational network organizations recognized as a representative of African indigenous peoples in dialogues with governments and bodies such as the UN.

## International Labor Organization (ILO)

The International Labor Organization is a U.N. agency, active since 1919 that brings together governments, employers and workers of 187 Member States, to set labour standards, develop policies and devise programs promoting decent work for all women and men. It is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland, with around 40 field offices around the world, and employs some 3,381 staff across 107 nations.

The ILO has been engaged with indigenous and tribal peoples' issues since the 1920s. It is responsible for the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169), the only

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<sup>27</sup> "C169 - Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169)." *International Labour Organization*, [www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100\\_ILO\\_CODE:C169](http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C169).

<sup>28</sup> "Bolivia." *Forest Legality*, [forestlegality.org/risk-tool/country/bolivia](http://forestlegality.org/risk-tool/country/bolivia).



international treaty open for ratification that deals exclusively with the rights of indigenous populations.

### **Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR)**

The IACHR is an autonomous organ of the Organization of American States (OAS). It is a permanent body, with headquarters in Washington, D.C., that meets in regular and special sessions several times a year to examine allegations of human rights violations in the hemisphere.

Its human rights duties stem from three documents, the OAS Charter, the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man and the American Convention on Human Rights.

### **African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights (ACHPR)**

The African Charter established the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. The Commission was inaugurated on 2 November 1987 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The Commission's Secretariat has subsequently been located in Banjul, The Gambia.

The Assembly of Heads of State and Government, entrusts tasks to the ACHPR while it also deals with three primary functions, the protection of human and peoples' rights, the promotion of human and peoples' rights and the interpretation of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.

### **Amazon Conservation Team (ACT)**

Amazon Conservation Team is a non-profit organization that works in partnership with indigenous people of tropical South America to conserve the biodiversity of the Amazon rainforest, as well as the culture and land of its indigenous people. It was formed in 1996 by Mark Plotkin and Liliana Madrigal. The organization is primarily active in the northwest, northeast, and southern regions of the Amazon.

In their work, ACT pioneered a 'biocultural conservation model' which facilitates direct collaboration and consent with forest-dwelling communities. In addition to protecting the Amazon rainforest and the biodiversity of the region, ACT works to protect





indigenous medicinal traditions and related intellectual property rights of communities in South America.

## RELEVANT UN TREATIES CONVENTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS

### United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP)<sup>29</sup>

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People is a legally non-binding resolution passed by the United Nations in 2007. It delineates and defines the individual and collective rights of Indigenous peoples, including their ownership rights to cultural and ceremonial expression, identity, language, employment, health, education, and other issues. Their ownership also extends to the protection of their intellectual and cultural property. It "prohibits discrimination against indigenous peoples," and it "promotes their participation in all matters that concern them and their right to remain distinct and to pursue their own visions of economic and social development".

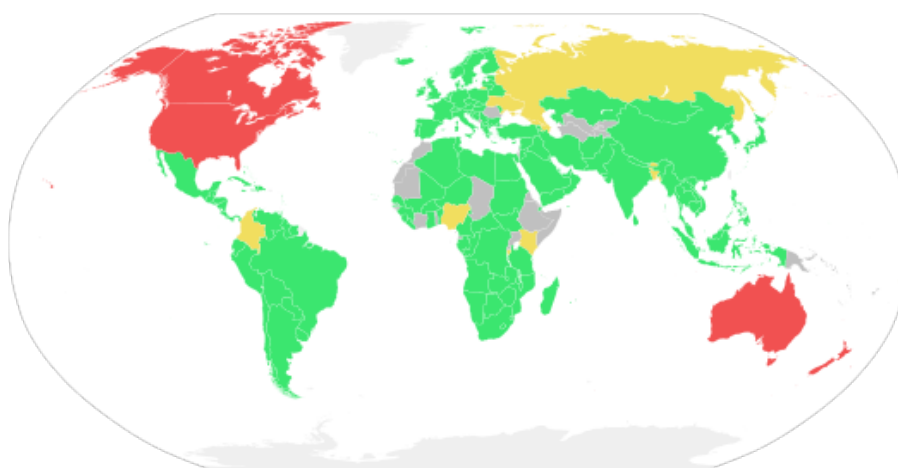


Figure 6: UN General Assembly Resolution 61/295 (Green: approved, red: rejected, yellow: abstained, grey: absent)<sup>30</sup>

### The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial

<sup>29</sup> *Welcome to the United Nations*, [www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP\\_E\\_web.pdf](http://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf).

<sup>30</sup> "File:2007 Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Voting Map.svg." *Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, Inc, [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:2007\\_Declaration\\_on\\_the\\_Rights\\_of\\_Indigenous\\_Peoples\\_voting\\_map.svg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:2007_Declaration_on_the_Rights_of_Indigenous_Peoples_voting_map.svg). Accessed 12 Nov. 2023.



### **Discrimination (ICERD) <sup>31</sup>**

The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) is a United Nations convention. Its main goal is the elimination of racial discrimination and the promotion of understanding among all races. The Convention also requires its parties to criminalize hate speech and criminalize membership in racist organizations. It includes an individual complaints mechanism, making it effectively enforceable against its parties.

The convention was adopted and opened for signature by the United Nations General Assembly on 21 December 1965 and entered into force on 4 January 1969. As of July 2020, it has 88 signatories and 182 parties.

### **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child<sup>32</sup>**

The Convention on the Rights of the Child is an international human rights treaty which sets out the civil, political, economic, social, health and cultural rights of children. The convention defines a child as any human being under the age of eighteen unless the age of majority is attained earlier under national legislation. The UN Committee is composed of 18 independent experts who are responsible for supervising the implementation of the convention by the states that have ratified it.

## **PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE**

### **American Indian Movement (AIM)**

The American Indian movement was a movement that occurred in 1968 in Minneapolis, Minnesota with the goal of protecting indigenous rights. Centered in urban areas, it was designed with the purpose of addressing systemic issues of poverty, discrimination, and police brutality against American Indians. It was formed as a response to police brutality and racial profiling and after the 1970s became the driving force behind the indigenous civil rights movement.

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<sup>31</sup> "Just a Moment..." *Just a Moment...*, [www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-convention-elimination-all-forms-racial](http://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-convention-elimination-all-forms-racial).

<sup>32</sup> "Convention on the Rights of the Child." *UNICEF*, [www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention](http://www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention).



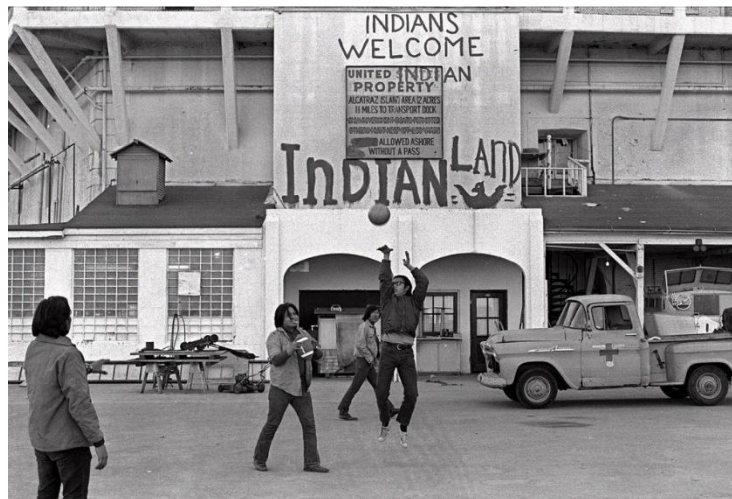
## Occupation of Alcatraz

The occupation of Alcatraz was a 19-month-long protest that took place on Alcatraz Island from November 1969 up until June 1971. The protest was led by Richard Oaks, LaNada Means and John Trudell who served as spokesman, while over 80 Native Americans with their supporters stayed on the island with them.

The protest group chose to be named "Indians of All Tribes" (IAT) and claimed that, under the Treaty of Fort Laramie between the U.S. and the Lakota tribe, all retired, abandoned, or out-of-use federal land was to be returned to the Indigenous peoples who once occupied it. Since Alcatraz had been closed since March 1963, the island has been declared surplus federal property in 1964 and many activists felt like it qualifies for a reclamation by Indians.

In its short span, the occupation had a minimal effect on federal Indian Termination policies and established a precedent for Indian activism. It was later targeted by the FBI and terminated by the federal government.

Figure 7:  
the  
Alcatraz as it  
today<sup>33</sup>



Graffiti from  
occupation of  
appears

## POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

### Legal protection – strong legislation

<sup>33</sup> "Nytimes.com." *The New York Times - Breaking News, US News, World News and Videos*, 25 Dec. 2012, [www.nytimes.com/2012/12/25/us/alcatraz-american-indian-occupation-graffiti-preserved.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/25/us/alcatraz-american-indian-occupation-graffiti-preserved.html).



Legal protection can play a crucial role in preserving indigenous communities. Legal frameworks that recognize the rights and interests of indigenous populations must be put in place in order to preserve their culture. The formal recognition of indigenous land rights, the protection of cultural heritage and the promotion of self-governance and autonomy are all measures that if implemented can help protect indigenous cultures.

The protection of indigenous land rights can help prevent forced displacement and encroachment on traditional territories while it can also aid in preserving the space essential for maintaining cultural practices tied to the land. Additionally, legal provisions can help maintain and support the preservation of indigenous languages by promoting their use in education, and media and including them in official documents. Linguistic diversity is essential for the transmission of cultural knowledge. Lastly, the implementation of legislation that requires the consultation and consent of indigenous communities in decisions ensures their involvement in processes that affect them, such as resource extraction while simultaneously respecting their autonomy and self – determination.

## Education

Education can significantly contribute to the empowerment of indigenous communities. The integration of indigenous knowledge, languages, traditions and cultural practices into educational curricula can lead schools to be more inclusive.

The inclusion of indigenous languages in education can help retain linguistic traditions and ensure continuity, use and understanding of indigenous languages within communities. Additionally, programs that focus on the cultural characteristics, traditions and customs of indigenous communities can aid in children fostering a broader understanding and appreciation among indigenous populations, reducing stereotypes, misconceptions and mistreatment.

The development of day schools, which would operate once a week and would be specifically tailored for indigenous children and adults as well could help them enhance their cultural identity and instil a strong sense of cultural identity. Taking pride in their



heritage, the traditions and the customs of their culture encourages the continuation of cultural practices.

### **Representation in governments**

Ensuring that the voices and interests of indigenous people are heard and considered in the formulation of legal frameworks, legislations and policies is a way to preserve indigenous populations. Indigenous representatives in legislative bodies can lead to the implementation of laws and initiatives that prioritize the protection of indigenous lands, languages, cultures and heritage.

The articulation of policies that address the specific needs and concerns of indigenous populations can be achieved through indigenous representation in policy development. Through this, it can be ensured that government decisions are culturally sensitive and respectful of the indigenous population's rights. Participation in decision-making can also aid in the correct resource management. That ensures that natural resources are exploited after taking into consideration the insights and perspectives on sustainable practices of indigenous local populations.

### **Cultural exchange programs**

Through the creation and development of respectful cultural exchange programs that would give the opportunity to children and teenagers of the indigenous population to live with the broader society as well as children of the broader local community to experience the life of indigenous people, a holistic understanding could be developed from both sides. That could aid in the minimization of discrimination and racism towards indigenous populations as well as towards a better appreciation for diverse cultures in communities.

### **Better healthcare access**

As many indigenous communities believe in unique and traditional healthcare practices, it is vital that healthcare institutions, provide culturally sensitive healthcare services that respect such traditions and healing practices. Simultaneously, they ought to remind and practice more broadly accepted and tested methods, especially in urgent situations, so indigenous people don't face such serious healthcare problems.



Creating a more understanding and friendly environment within hospitals and clinics that respects the opinions of Indigenous populations can lead to more and more Indigenous people making use of healthcare services since they won't feel scared, excluded or disrespected by them.

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