

CIVIL RIGHTS AND HUMAN RIGHTS

The term “civil rights” usually means equality of treatment and the principle against non-discrimination. “Human rights” is a more modern term that refers to various norms to promote individuals as humans and substantive rights, and the term is also used to refer to the rights of indigenous peoples, including various kinds of collective rights.

The National Indian Youth Council has told the United Nations that we believe in human rights that are based upon personal “individual sovereignty.” What does that mean?

Each of us has potential as a human being. We start with self and try to develop respect for ourselves so we can achieve our full potential as humans and members of the Five-Fingered People. We then strive to develop respect for others, starting with our families and those around us, so that they too can achieve their potentials—along with us and in complementary ways with us. “Sovereignty” is a concept that speaks of control and the ability to do things. Maintaining good order and thinking and acting for self and others are key parts of sovereignty. We want that for our families, our communities, our indigenous nations and our nation-states.

When we call upon the United Nations to promote individual sovereignty we ask it to assure that we and those we speak with are accorded the dignity and protection of law so that state actors (countries) behave respectfully and properly toward us. We want our rights to participate in decisions made about us to be honored, and we want our liberties and properties to be respected.

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