

Appendix 1: AP Human Geography Topic III.C.4. Indigenous Peoples

According to the United Nations, there are an estimated 370 million indigenous people worldwide divided into about 5,000 ethnic groups.¹ There are various definitions of what “indigenous” means, but in general, an indigenous group is one that inhabited a region before people of different ethnicity arrived and became the majority. Because indigenous minorities are often marginalized and discriminated against, the United Nations, World Bank, and International Labour Organization have all established political rights for indigenous groups. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples states that indigenous groups should have, among other things, the right to self-determination, cultural identity, and non-discrimination. The right to practice their own religions and speak traditional languages is also upheld. Recent decades have seen numerous indigenous peoples advocate for more rights in their countries, including claims by Native Americans in the United States, Aboriginal Australians, and Maoris in New Zealand. Many of these claims have centered on land rights to areas that were traditionally controlled by indigenous groups but were later taken or settled by majority populations. Where indigenous groups still live on native lands, they are often critical stewards of undeveloped land as governments struggle with environmental concerns.

In the Americas, there are over 50 million indigenous people. Mexico and Peru have the largest populations. In Mexico, the southern states of Chiapas and Oaxaca have majority indigenous populations. In the United States, Native Americans, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians are all considered indigenous peoples and comprise about 1-2% of the population. In Canada, the indigenous groups include First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. See the figure on the next page for an idea of where native peoples live in Canada.

¹ http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/5session_factsheet1.pdf

