

## Fourth World

indigenous peoples nations indian

The term Fourth World traditionally refers to marginalized and oppressed groups such as the indigenous peoples living either in Third World (relatively undeveloped) or First World (developed and capitalist) countries. (The term Second World is used to designate developed and predominantly socialist countries.) Specific definitions for these terms are provided by documents and conventions of the United Nations (UN), the International Labour Organization, and the World Bank. According to the Draft United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (adopted without a vote on August 26, 1994, by the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities) and the International Labour Organization Convention concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries (adopted in 1989; came into force in 1991), the contemporary working definition of Fourth World includes cultural groups and their descendants who can claim a historical continuity or association with a given region, or parts of a region. These groups must currently inhabit or have formerly inhabited the region before its subsequent colonization and annexation. Alternatively, they must have inhabited the region alongside other cultural groups during the formation of a nation-state, and yet done so independently or largely isolated from the influence of governance practiced by this state. Furthermore, groups and communities constitutive of the Fourth World are distinguished from other minorities based on having maintained, at least in part, their distinct linguistic, cultural, or sociological characteristics, and in doing so have remained separate from the surrounding populations and the dominant culture. In related debates on the status of indigenous peoples, it is also expected that peoples of the Fourth World are self-identified as indigenous as well as being recognized by others as such.

Other related terms for the Fourth World include Native Peoples, First Peoples, and First Nations. Fourth World has become the preferred term due to its relatively neutral perspective on the history of such minority groups, particularly in contrast to the negative connotations associated with terms such as aborigines. However, the term also suffers from historical ambiguities. Indigenous societies cover a wide range of peoples. The Fourth World includes those who have suffered tremendously following colonization by European societies, sometimes to the point of total disappearance (including many native tribes of eastern North America, such as the Beothuk), and those who remain in comparative isolation from external influence, such as those in the Andaman Islands in the Bay of Bengal. Consequently, estimates for the total population of the world's indigenous, or Fourth World, peoples are difficult to determine, both because of the difficulties in the identification of these groups and the lack of available census data. Most nation-states refuse to mark indigenous populations as a separate category, fearing subsequent claims that could be made on land and resources or for the settlement of historical injustices. Taking these factors into account, according to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights at the United Nations and the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA), conservative estimates of the population of the peoples of the Fourth World range from 300 million to 370 million persons, including at least 5,000 distinct peoples in more than 72 countries.

Most often, contemporary indigenous communities and societies live amid and among populations that have historically been engaged in practices of grave injustice toward them. Their rights have generally been negotiated as part of the scheme of minority rights to be guaranteed and protected by the state. In select instances such as in Australia and Canada, compensation has also been sought and received for the forcible loss of land and resources and the eradication of cultural livelihood. Despite these developments, the majority of the world's indigenous peoples continue to see a decline in population. It is only in very few cases that indigenous populations are undergoing a recovery or expansion in numbers, such as in Canada's Northern Territories.

The majority of indigenous societies no longer inhabit their traditional lands, owing to migration, relocation, forced resettlement, or having become a minority among other groups that arrived in the territory. As a result, the lands-claim issue constitutes the major bone of contention between the Fourth World and other municipalities, provinces, and national governments. An exemplary case for the examination of these conflicts is Canada. There is a specifically Canadian term of ethnicity referring to the indigenous peoples and their descendants in Canada who are neither Inuit nor Métis: the First Nations. Collectively, First Nations, Inuits, and Métis (the descendants of Indian and French ancestors) are known as Aboriginal Peoples, First Peoples, or Indigenous Peoples. The national representative body of the First Nations in Canada is the Assembly of First Nations. Other terms used in the Canadian context include "Status Indian" and "non-Status Indian," the latter designating a member of an indigenous community who is not entitled to benefits from the Canadian state.

Indigenous peoples are officially recognized by the Government of Canada as a separate group of citizenry. They are entitled to benefits as well as distinct communal legal rights under the Indian Act administered by the Ministry of Indian and Northern Affairs. Created in 1966, the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) is a decentralized organization established to respond to the changing needs of culturally, economically, and geographically diverse peoples. The legislation establishing the department, as amended in 1970, made its minister responsible for Indian and Inuit affairs, as well as the residents of the Yukon and Northwest Territories and their resources. The rights exclusive to indigenous peoples defined by the Indian Act are beyond legal challenge and are protected by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Meanwhile, according to international law covenants, First Nations or First Peoples are terms that have no distinct standing.

Thus, what worked for the Canadian society internally does not necessarily find direct translation in other societies with indigenous populations.

At the level of international politics, indigenous peoples were able to represent their interests more directly to a major body of the United Nations following the establishment of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in 2002. The UN uses the term indigenous despite its earlier “negative connotations” due to a mixture of institutional clemence and legal precedents in addressing the relevant issues. The aforementioned UN Permanent Forum is an advisory body to the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), with a mandate to discuss indigenous issues related to economic and social development, culture, the environment, education, health and human rights. In 1982 the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations (WGIP) of the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights (then called Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities) was established by a decision of the ECOSOC. The Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is a result of the work of this UN Working Group between 1985 and 1993. Following the WGIP, the new Permanent Forum reports and makes recommendations to ECOSOC. Its mandate includes raising awareness, promoting the integration and coordination of activities relating to indigenous issues within the UN system, and, preparation and dissemination of information on indigenous issues.

Organizations of indigenous peoples that have consultative status with the ECOSOC include the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, Asociación Kunas Unidos por Nabguana, the Four Directions Council, the Grand Council of the Crees (Quebec), the Indian Council of South America, the Indian Law Resource Center, the Indigenous World Association, the International Indian Treaty Council, the International Organization of Indigenous Resource Development, the Inuit Circumpolar Conference, the National Aboriginal and Islander Legal Services Secretariat, the National Indian Youth Council, the Saami Council, the Sejekto Cultural Association of Costa Rica, Yachay Wasi, and the World Council of Indigenous Peoples.

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