



MNIBA's Statement Regarding Political Distinction, Sovereignty, and Self-Determination

Political Distinction

As Native people we are not a racial or ethnic class – we are a political class because of Native Nation sovereignty. Through the U.S. Government we are given a racial classification, as well as political distinction.

In terms of political distinctions, Native people are recognized through treaties as sovereign nations with their own governments, laws, Cultural Lifeways, language, and territories.

As a result, Native peoples have been treated as a political class with distinct rights and responsibilities, rather than simply as members of a racial or ethnic group. This political classification has been enshrined in treaties, which have shaped the relationship between Native Nations and the U.S. Government.

It is worth noting that while Native peoples are often classified as a political class, this classification does not negate the cultural dimensions of Native identity. Native peoples have unique cultural, linguistic, and ancestral ties to specific lands and regions, and these factors are integral to their political and social identities.

Another example of political distinction of Native identity is to present oneself in introductions as a citizen or enrolled member of i.e., Red Lake Nation, or Lower Sioux Indian Community, etc.

Sovereignty and Self-Determination

It is the Native Nation that holds sovereignty. Sovereignty and self-determination are related concepts, but they have distinct meanings.

Sovereignty refers to the supreme power of a Native Nation to govern itself and make decisions without interference from external sources. It involves the ability of a Native Nation to exercise control over its territory, people, and resources. Sovereignty is typically associated with the idea of a Native Nation-state, which is a political entity that is defined by a common language, culture, and history.

Self-determination, on the other hand, is the right of a people to determine their own political status and to pursue their own economic, social, and cultural development. It is a principle that recognizes the importance of allowing individuals and communities to have a say in the decisions that affect their lives.

While sovereignty and self-determination are related, they are not interchangeable. Sovereignty refers to the legal and political authority of a Native Nation, while self-determination refers to the right of people to determine their own destiny.

Sovereignty can be exercised without self-determination, but self-determination cannot be achieved without sovereignty.

Self-determination is the right of individuals to have the freedom to choose their own path in life and make decisions about their own wellbeing.

Self-determination is considered a fundamental human right and is enshrined in international law, such as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People.