

Book Review:

Indian Civil Rights

The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights has released its 71-page "American Indian Civil Rights Handbook."

Native Americans have the same protections under federal, state and local governments as do other Americans. Similar rights exist under tribal governments, which the tribal governments themselves enforce.

According to the Commission, however, "very little interpretative tribal law exists" that would provide guidance on how rights contained in the Indian Civil Rights Act of 1968 are to be applied. Because of this, the handbook uses federal law as a guide.

Where it is clear that Congress intended rights to be different in tribal settings, the booklet explains the differences. It notes that "the application of these rights will depend on both the current understanding of rights in the American justice system and the application of such rights in the historical and cultural context of each individual tribe."

The new booklet updates a previous one issued in 1972. Both booklets inform Indians of their basic rights on and off the reservation in such areas as credit, employment, housing, law enforcement and voting. The handbook further explains how Native Americans can go about getting help if they have complaints of discrimination. It contains regional and local addresses of agencies that accept complaints and instructions on how to file them.

Single copies are available, free of charge, from: USCCR Publications Warehouse, 621 N. Payne Street, Alexandria, VA 22314.

The Commission on Civil Rights is an independent, bipartisan, fact-finding agency concerned with discrimination or denial of equal protection of the laws because of race, color, religion, sex, age, handicap or national origin.

Members of the Commission are Chairman Arthur S. Flemming; Vice Chair Mary Frances Berry, professor of history and law and senior fellow in the Institute for the study of Educational Policy at Howard University, Washington, D.C.; Stephen Horn, president of California State University, Long Beach; Murray Saltzman, Rabbi, Baltimore Hebrew Congregation, Baltimore; Jill S. Ruckelshaus, former special assistant to the President for women's affairs, Washington, D.C.; and Blandina Cardenas Ramirez, director of development at the InterCultural Development Research Association, San Antonio.

Louis Nunez is staff director.