

Intersections

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Overcoming the Doctrine of Discovery

2 What would justice look like? by Sarah Augustine

4 Changing education in Labrador by Sylvia Moore

6 Overcoming the Doctrine of Discovery at Opwashemoe Chakatinaw/Stoney Knoll by Eileen Klassen Hamm

8 Do justice and do what you love to do! by John Stoesz

9 Why the Doctrine of Discovery matters in the journey towards reconciliation by Sue Klassen and Josie Winterfeld

11 Reflecting on the blanket exercise interview with Sara Anderson, Ed Bianchi, Erica Littlewolf and Miriam Sainnawap

14 Reflections from Standing Rock by Katerina Friesen

The Doctrine of Discovery is a philosophical and legal framework dating back to papal bulls of the fifteenth century that provided theological justification and a legal basis for Christian governments to invade and seize Indigenous lands and dominate Indigenous peoples. Rooted in colonialism, capitalism, patriarchy and white supremacy, the Doctrine of Discovery imagined Indigenous lands to be *terra nullius*, meaning “land belonging to no one.” The patterns of oppression that continue to dispossess Indigenous peoples of their lands today are rooted in those papal bulls and perpetuated in numerous historical documents such as Royal Charters and U.S. Supreme Court rulings as recent as 2005.

This political and legal framework, rooted in Christian theological justifications, paved the way for colonial expansion in contemporary Canada and the United States in the name of Christ. As European settlers took more and more land, their governments restricted Indigenous peoples to increasingly smaller areas. Settler governments enacted laws to confine Indigenous movement to reservations or reserves. At the same time, these governments sought to forcibly assimilate Indigenous peoples to European Christian society: so, for example, in both Canada and the U.S., governments took Indigenous young children from their families and placed them in Christian-run boarding schools. In the United States, the vision for these schools was summarized by the stark phrase, “Kill the Indian, Save the Man.”

The Doctrine of Discovery framework has had a myriad of death-dealing ramifications for Indigenous peoples around the globe, providing justifications for the theft of Indigenous land and the suppression of Indigenous cultures. Yet even in the face of ongoing legacies of dispossession, Indigenous communities, joined by settler allies, seek to dismantle the Doctrine of Discovery. In Canada, for example, First Nations peoples have led the push for the Canadian government to pass parliamentary bill C-262 which would require the Canadian government to harmonize its laws with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. In the United States, Indigenous determination to protect water and earth from oil pipeline construction at Standing Rock in Oceti Sakowin (Dakota, Lakota, Nakota) territory in present-day North Dakota called attention to the ongoing dispossession of Indigenous

“As European settlers took more and more land, their governments restricted Indigenous peoples to increasingly smaller areas. Settler governments enacted laws to confine Indigenous movement to reservations or reserves.”

Learn more

The Dismantling the Doctrine of Discovery Coalition, a grassroots Anabaptist movement, has a wealth of information about the Doctrine of Discovery at www.dofdmennon.org.

peoples. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission on Indian Residential Schools in Canada, meanwhile, has pressed Canadians to ask what justice and a future of reconciliation and right relationship might look like in the wake of the devastation to Indigenous families and communities wrought by residential schools. In this issue of *Intersections*, Indigenous and settler authors critically examine the harms perpetrated by the Doctrine of Discovery framework. Their reflections do not confine themselves to analysis, however, but push beyond it, charting paths forward on the journey of overcoming the Doctrine of Discovery.

Erica Littlewolf works with the Indigenous Visioning Circle of MCC Central States. Pam Peters-Pries is the Associate Program Director at MCC Canada.

What would justice look like?

Churches struggling for justice alongside Indigenous peoples sometimes ask: “What would justice look like?” The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), I would argue, provides answers to that question. UNDRIP articulates minimum standards for survival, dignity and well-being from an Indigenous point of view. Created by an international commission of Indigenous leaders to serve as a comprehensive body of policy that could be adopted by the nations of earth, UNDRIP can be incorporated into any national system of law or policy. Although the United Nations General Assembly adopted UNDRIP in 2007, the resolution is not legally binding on member states. Individual nations must incorporate it into their own legal and policy structures for it to become binding. While some nations have taken steps to do so, the United States has resisted adopting UNDRIP provisions. Churches in the United States seeking justice for Indigenous peoples, I contend, should press for the U.S. to adopt UNDRIP provisions as an amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

The U.S.’s historical and current policies toward Indigenous peoples serve as the backdrop of my life. Indigenous leaders created UNDRIP because many countries, including my own, have not provided survival, dignity or well-being to Indigenous peoples. My father, a Pueblo (Tewa), never knew his mother. In 1943, he was removed from his people at birth. He grew up in a home for Indian boys, subjected to habitual abuse, forced labor and malnutrition. He was not one of the exceptions that was able to rise above his conditions. As his daughter, I grew up facing abuse, homelessness and hunger. Like many Indigenous people of my generation, I came to understand my own story in middle age, through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) process that took place in Canada.

I learned much about the TRC from Chief Wilton Littlechild, whom I met in New York City at a World Council of Churches expert consultation in conjunction with the annual UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. Chief Littlechild, a former member of Canadian parliament, was there as one of the three TRC commissioners. About a dozen of us sat in a small space, in the Church Center for the United Nations, in a room just big enough for the conference table at its center. A lifelong athlete, Wilton (known to his friends as Willie) is a tall, muscular man with a proud bearing. He filled the room, dwarfing the setting. Although he spoke quietly, the rest of us were overwhelmed by his presence and the power of his words.

Willie began by telling us about the furs and boots made for the children of his native village by their parents for protection of little bodies against the winter in the extreme north. School administrators seized and burned these furs and boots when taking children away from their families to live in compulsory residential schools. The residential school leaders deemed these lovingly crafted clothes to be the garments of savages, replacing them with cloth coats and shoes, inadequate against harsh winters. Teachers cut the braids from Indigenous boys' heads. School administrators separated neighbors and even siblings. They forbade Indigenous children from speaking their tribal languages, inflicting corporal punishment on children who violated this norm. Teachers mocked and prohibited Indigenous spiritual practices.

All of this I knew already. But the visual image presented by Chief Littlechild of the piled-up boots and coats chilled me. Willie explained that these children knew viscerally that their comfort and protection were being stripped away. As he spoke, I pictured the piles of warm clothes heaped next to lines of exposed, humiliated children, shivering in their western clothes. Many would not see their families again until they were 18, and when they did, they would be unable to communicate with their parents, having been conditioned to speak only English. They would now lack the skills to survive in their Native communities. Willie endured this himself. He had watched his own leather and fur boots burn, the ones his mother had made for him. It hurt to witness the grief of a large and imposing man, a leader of his people, as he described a childhood of abuse and deprivation at the hands of the state.

Willie then began to describe the thousands of testimonies he had witnessed as a commissioner of the TRC. He recited the numbers of children who had died in residential schools. Of malnutrition. Of exhaustion and overwork. Of bodily injury from abuse. Of influenza and other viruses inadequately treated. Of criminal neglect. Many times, school administrators failed to inform parents that their children had died. Even when parents were informed, they were not given their children's remains by the school. The TRC went about the macabre work of searching for thousands of tiny bodies buried in unmarked graves on residential school grounds.

Willie's voice cracked as he described testimony after testimony where men stood and explained that they had never talked about what had happened to them at residential schools. Their stories of horror had rotted inside them. Many believed their parents would come for them and grew bitter waiting. Those who tried to run away were tied to their beds and beaten more severely for each attempt. Again and again, Willie heard fathers and mothers explain that they had never told their children, "I love you," because they had become incapable of feeling or expressing love. Others explained how they had hurt their own children with either the constant rage they walked with or through emotional distance. TRC witnesses shared struggles with substance abuse and depression. Many wept openly, unable to control what had never been told before, sobbing so hard they could not speak.

As Willie spoke softly into that small room, the volume of his stories was deafening. I wept uncontrollably. I wanted to run from the room, and probably would have if I had had the space to maneuver around the awkward conference table. I wanted to cover my ears. For the first time, I understood my own story clearly. So much of what Willie shared of the testimony of survivors—the abuse, neglect and cruelty passed on to

“ Indigenous leaders bothered to write minimum standards because many countries, including my own, have not provided survival, dignity or well-being to Indigenous peoples.”

“ As an institution with moral authority, the Church has a mandate to express what justice could look like.”



Learn
more

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People. Available at <https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/declaration-on-the-rights-of-indigenous-peoples.html>

For more about the Indian Residential School system in Canada and the TRC, see the reports at the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation's web site: www.nctr.ca

The Washington Office encourages policy makers to enact legislation that acknowledges and addresses the injustices (both historical and ongoing) to the Indigenous peoples of this land. Currently, this involves protecting reservations against environmental disturbances such as border walls and pipelines and preserving Indigenous monuments. To take action, sign up for MCC action alerts at http://org2.salsalabs.com/o/5764/signup_page/signup.

children—was the experience of my childhood. And I understood for the first time that my suffering and the suffering my father had endured growing up an orphan in a religious “boys home” were outcomes of U.S. domestic policy.

Most Americans are unaware of the history of compulsory boarding schools for Indigenous children in the United States. Children of Indigenous parents were forcibly removed as a matter of national policy, with the federal government paying Christian denominations to carry out the task of civilizing and assimilating Indigenous children. The work of Christianizing Indigenous children was believed to be the best way to relieve them of their Indigenous identities. Boarding schools in the United States existed until the 1990s: as a result, many Indigenous people my age and older grew up in boarding schools. Most people my age and older on the Yakama reservation, where I live, grew up in boarding schools, enduring childhoods without hope.

I often hear settler Christians who seek justice for Indigenous peoples ask: “But what can we do?” My answer: churches in the United States and Canada must press their governments to adopt the minimum standards for respecting Indigenous rights set out by Indigenous peoples in UNDRIP. Canada and the U.S. were two of the four countries that initially voted against the resolution when UNDRIP was passed. While Canada removed its objector status to the resolution in 2016 and the U.S. under the Obama administration in 2011 signaled its support for UNDRIP, the two countries have not adopted UNDRIP's minimum standards into their laws. We are societies of laws. If we want to change our context, we are able, in our democracies, to change our laws. What would our countries look like if we chose to incorporate UNDRIP's minimum standards for recognizing Indigenous rights into our legal systems? As an institution with moral authority, the church is called to advocate for justice. Pressing the governments of Canada and the U.S. to adopt UNDRIP's provisions is an essential way to follow the lead of and be accountable to Indigenous communities.

Sarah Augustine is the Executive Director of the Dispute Resolution Center of Yakima and Kittitas Counties in Washington state and adjunct professor of sociology at Heritage University. A descendant of the Pueblo people, she chairs of the structures committee for the Anabaptist Coalition to Dismantle the Doctrine of Discovery.

Changing education in Labrador

Change in education is evident in Labrador, particularly in the field of Indigenous education. Indigenous education can refer to: education of Indigenous students; education by Indigenous educators; education controlled by Indigenous governments; education using Indigenous instructional approaches; and curricula that reflect Indigenous worldviews, histories and values. Indigenous education is essential for overcoming the legacies of the Doctrine of Discovery by revitalizing Indigenous ways of knowing and being and contributing to decolonization for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

Three main influences are shaping changes to education in Labrador. The first is the growing awareness of the ways colonizers used education as a tool of domination and control and the impact this has had on Indigenous

people, families and communities. Pedagogies and curricula based in Eurocentric knowledge and values limited or negated Indigenous ways of knowing and being. The removal of Indigenous children from their families and communities to stay at residential schools represented colonial education in a stark form. The domination of one way of knowing over another in colonial education results in what Mi'kmaw scholar Marie Battiste calls the “cognitive assimilation” of Indigenous peoples (Battiste 6).

The establishment of Indigenous rights such as self-determination is the second influence on educational change. The final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission established to address the harmful legacies of residential schools concludes that Indigenous peoples must lead and control the reform of education and that self-government is important in this reformation (TRC 148). The 2007 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), meanwhile, insists that “Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions, providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning” (Article 14).

Indigenous rights within Canada are also recognized through land claim settlements. The Innu of Labrador had their claim settled in 2008 and now govern their schools in the communities of Sheshatshiu and Natuashish. Innu educators are teaching the Innu language, Innu-umin, in schools and weaving Innu culture into curricula from kindergarten through grade 12. The Nunatsiavut land claim, on the north coast of Labrador, was settled in 2005. Although it has jurisdiction over education, the Nunatsiavut Government (NG) has not yet taken over the school system. NG does, however, have an agreement with the Labrador School Board to offer their language, Inuttitit, in the schools and has begun offering traditional skills courses from kindergarten through grade 9. The NunatuKavut Community Council (NCC), representing the Southern Inuit, is advocating for the settlement of their land claim on Labrador's south coast. In the 2016-2017 school year, nine schools piloted a project to integrate traditional skills into the school curricula. Meanwhile, the NCC is developing a locally-approved course that teaches the history of the area.

Finally, the third influence on educational change in Labrador is Indigenous teacher education. The Inuit Bachelor of Education (IBED) began in fall of 2014 through a partnership between the NG and Memorial University (MUN). The training of this cohort of teachers is a step towards NG taking control of education in its region. The IBED infuses Inuit culture in the teacher education program and focuses on developing teaching skills in culturally relevant education. The Labrador Inuttitit Training Program, developed by NG as part of its language rejuvenation strategy, prepares future teachers for a role in the ongoing rejuvenation of Inuttitit.

In addition to undergraduate courses, MUN offers two graduate education courses developed for Labrador teachers enrolled in a master's of education program. Both Indigenous and non-Indigenous teachers participate in graduate courses offered in Goose Bay, courses also accessible through videoconferencing to all communities in Labrador. In the Perspectives in Indigenous Education course, teachers critically examine how a curriculum framed by a dominant worldview can negate Indigenous worldviews and how approaches to teaching may exclude



Battiste, Marie. “Enabling the Autumn Seed: Toward a Decolonized Approach to Aboriginal Knowledge, Language and Education.” *Canadian Journal of Native Education* (1998): 1, 16-27.

Battiste, Marie. *Indigenous Knowledge and Pedagogy in First Nations Education: A Literature Review with Recommendations*. Apamuwek Institute, 2002. Available at: http://www.afn.ca/uploads/files/education/24._2002_oct_marie_battiste_indigenousknowledgeand-pedagogy_lit_review_for_min_working_group.pdf

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*. 2015. http://nctr.ca/assets/reports/Final%20Reports/Executive_Summary_English_Web.pdf

Kovach, M., Carrier, J., Montgomery, H., Barrett, M.J., and Gilles, C. *Indigenous Presence: Experiencing and Envisioning Indigenous Knowledges within Selected Post-Secondary Sites of Education and Social Work*. Available at <https://www.uregina.ca/socialwork/faculty-staff/FacultySites/MontgomeryMontySite/Indigenous%20Presence.pdf>

Black, C. *Schooling the World*. (film). 2010. <http://schoolingtheworld.org/>.

The Aboriginal Healing Foundation. *From Truth to Reconciliation: Transforming the Legacy of Residential Schools*. Available at <http://www.ahf.ca/downloads/from-truth-to-reconciliation-transforming-the-legacy-of-residential-schools.pdf>

“ Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions, providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning.”

Indigenous pedagogy. Battiste defines decolonizing education as “a process that includes raising the collective voice of Indigenous peoples, exposing the injustices in our colonial history, deconstructing the past by critically examining the social, political, economic, and emotional reasons for silencing of Aboriginal voices in Canadian history, legitimating the voices and experiences of Aboriginal people in the curriculum, recognizing it as a dynamic context of knowledge and knowing, and communicating the emotional journey that such explorations will generate” (Battiste 20). In the Decolonizing Pedagogies course I teach, educators consider ways that individual teachers, schools and communities can contribute to decolonizing education. In a recent course, students collaboratively listed 144 ways for educators to be involved in decolonizing work. They have drawn on this list to create posters and brochures for colleagues. This sharing will have ripple effects through their schools and continue the work of educational change that helps to overcome the Doctrine of Discovery in Labrador.

Sylvia Moore is an Assistant Professor of Education at Memorial University and the faculty lead for Indigenous Community-based Teacher Education in Labrador. A member of the Mi'kmaw nation, the mother of four children and grandmother of six, she is also part of the KAIROS Blanket Exercise facilitation team of MCC Newfoundland and Labrador.

Overcoming the Doctrine of Discovery at Opwashemoe Chakatinaw/Stoney Knoll

“ We as settlers need to return again and again to humble learnings. We need our Indigenous relations to help us to a more interdependent understanding of the land and its resources and of the strengths of community and memory.”

Responding to the Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that addressed the ongoing legacies of residential schools that separated Indigenous children from their families, MCC in Canada declared that it “repudiates concepts used to justify European superiority over Indigenous peoples, such as the Doctrine of Discovery. Such concepts of superiority, coercion, violence and abuse are opposed to the gospel of Jesus Christ and to the inherent dignity and equality we believe all people have received from God.” This repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery is a fairly straightforward task on paper: it fits with our biblical and theological understandings of justice and reconciliation. However, extricating superiority from our settler souls, expunging discovered lands from our accumulated assets and exorcising the doctrine of dominance from our minds are daunting and elusive. The story of Opwashemoe Chakatinaw/Stoney Knoll, land in Saskatchewan of the Young Chippewyan Band, upon which German Lutherans and Mennonites settled, illustrates how challenging overcoming the Doctrine of Discovery can be.

Opwashemoe Chakatinaw sits at the centre of 78 square kilometres of land near the present town of Laird, Saskatchewan. This fertile land, on the east banks of the North Saskatchewan River and close to the land of Beardy's Band (relatives of the Young Chippewyan Band), was chosen by Chief Chippewyan and his people in 1876 when the chief signed Treaty 6 with the Canadian Crown at Fort Carlton, creating the Young Chippewyan Band #107. Shortly after the treaty's signing, the Young Chippewyan Band moved south to Cypress Hills, following the remaining buffalo and staying away from the turbulent conflict at Batoche, Cutknife Hill, Frog Lake and Battleford.

In 1897, with the Young Chippewyan absent from their land due to conflict and starvation, the Canadian government unilaterally erased Young Chippewyan Band #107 from the reserve map, in turn offering that land to German-speaking Mennonite and Lutheran settlers. The government never consulted the Young Chippewyan Band, nor did it offer compensation. Over the ensuing generations, Mennonite and Lutheran farming families have labored and loved on this land—tending the earth, harvesting its bounty and burying their dead on what they named Stoney Knoll. The Young Chippewyan have lived exiled from their land amid endless bureaucratic plodding, seeking safety with relatives on reserves such Sweet Grass and Ahtahkakoop and in the diaspora. While settler farmers bequeathed their government-issued land titles to the next generations, the Young Chippewyan passed down oral stories of a great wrong done to their ancestors at the hands of the Canadian government.

On August 22, 2006, on the 130th anniversary of the signing of Treaty 6 and at the invitation of Chief Ben Weenie of the Young Chippewyan, Mennonite and Lutheran settlers and Young Chippewyan members gathered to share their stories of and love for Opwashemoe Chakatinaw/Stoney Knoll, to name losses and the devastating impact of government actions and inaction, to share food and gifts and to imagine a future of justice and sufficiency for all their children. Representatives of the three communities signed a Memorandum of Understanding that day entitled, “Declaration of Harmony and Justice,” which named shared understandings and desires:

1. We are deeply grateful for the goodness of the Creator and the blessings which gave us this land and which give and sustain all our lives.
2. We respect the sacred nature of covenants, which order our relationships and bring harmony to our communities and nations, including Treaty 6 which was entered into on our behalf, for the purpose of mutual benefit and maintaining our livelihood.
3. We wish for ourselves and for future generations to live in conditions of peace, justice and sufficiency for all our communities. We will work together to help bring about these conditions through a timely and respectful resolution of the issues which history has left to us.

This memorandum of understanding has offered a guiding framework over the last decade as Mennonites and Lutherans have attempted to support the land claim of the Young Chippewyan, holding the Canadian government responsible for the injustice it created. The settler communities have raised funds to prepare a genealogy of the Young Chippewyan Band to document the band as an “identifiable community” meeting land claim requirements.

The 2016 documentary, *Reserve 107: Reconciliation on the Prairies*, tells the story of Opwashemoe Chakatinaw/Stoney Knoll. Created with input from the Young Chippewyan, Mennonite and Lutheran communities, the documentary dismantles the settler mythology that the land, prior to European arrival, was empty (*terra nullius*), uninhabited by people and memories. This story teaches us that reconciliation requires respectful relationships and restitution of resources.



Friesen, Jeff and Heinrichs, Steve. Eds. *Quest for Respect: The Church and Indigenous Spirituality*. Winnipeg: Mennonite Church Canada, 2017.

Heinrichs, Steve. Ed. *Wrongs to Rights: How Churches Can Engage the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. Winnipeg: Mennonite Church Canada, 2016.

Reserve 107: Reconciliation on the Prairies. (film). Rebel Sky Media, 2016. Available at <https://www.reserve107thefilm.com/>.

Much remains undone in the journey toward justice envisioned by the Young Chippewayan, Mennonite and Lutheran representatives who gathered in August 2006 at Opwashemoe Chakatinaw/Stoney Knoll. Repudiating the Doctrine of Discovery is not done with a pen, but rather through community and responsibility, through conversation and struggle. We as settlers need to return again and again to humble learning. We continue to want to control and manage the process. We still think we know what is best for the land. We need our Indigenous relations to help us develop a more interdependent understanding of the land and its resources and of the strengths of community and memory. We take courage from Ezekiel's image of hearts of stone turning to hearts of flesh (Ezekiel 36:26). We can learn to be human together on this good earth.

Eileen Klassen Hamm is the Executive Director of MCC Saskatchewan.

Do justice and do what you love to do!

I have two passions: riding my recumbent tricycle and Indigenous justice. A couple years ago, I decided to combine them to address the painful, destructive legacies of the Doctrine of Discovery.

In 2012, my family decided to sell my grandparents' farm in Minnesota. My portion as one of the grandchildren was about 13 acres. Prior to white settlement, the land was Dakota homeland. Having learned about the Doctrine of Discovery and the resulting unjust benefits for white settlers and their descendants (like me), I asked my colleagues with the Indigenous Visioning Circle at MCC Central States for help. With their assistance, I decided to "pay back" half the proceeds from the land sale to Indigenous groups working for land justice. The largest reparations amount went to a Dakota non-profit group named Makoce Ikikcupi (Land Recovery).

In fall 2013, I pedaled my tricycle 2,000 miles in southern Minnesota to raise awareness about what can and should be done to return Minnesota land to Dakota people. I passed through 40 counties, stopping at the newspaper office in the county seat. I tried to get an article with a picture of me on the trike. I didn't always succeed, but I ended up getting 29 articles. My goal was 30, so I fell one short.

At present I am living in Minnesota. I have a part time job with Clean Water Action, which allows me a lot of time to do education and fundraising among white Minnesotans for Dakota land return. I'm on my trike whenever possible, of course!

I know most people are not into cycling. But you probably have something you love to do. Is there a way for you to combine your passion with working for Indigenous justice? When I speak in churches on the topic of Indigenous justice, I offer several suggestions for what people can do:

- Start with your location and your own family history. Find out who lived there before white settlement. Where and how are these people today? If possible and appropriate, make contact and start relationships.
- Read. There are lots of good books. See the books in the *Learn More* sidebar for examples of books that rocked me.

“I decided to ‘pay back’ half the proceeds from the land sale to Indigenous groups working for land justice.”

- Tell the truth about what happened and is happening. We white people have ignored these issues for too long.
- Teach your children, your children’s friends and their teachers. Let’s fight back against what James Loewen has called *Lies My Teacher Told Me*.
- Repudiate the Doctrine of Discovery. Let’s release ourselves from a sense of entitlement to stolen land and develop a sense of fairness.
- Take down symbols of racism. Let’s rename lots of things, like “Columbus Day,” “Redskins” teams, and “Custer” streets and parks.
- Make reparations. Pay a portion of real estate sales and “back rent” to Indigenous groups working for land justice.

Those are seven practical suggestions. What do you love to do? How can you combine that with work for Indigenous justice?

John Stoesz previously worked with MCC Central States and currently devotes much of his time to Native land return.

Why the Doctrine of Discovery matters in the journey towards reconciliation

Focus on the Doctrine of Discovery? Really? Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church, located on the Haldimand Tract in Kitchener, Ontario, has journeyed for several years in building relationships with our Indigenous neighbours on the nearby Six Nations reservation. We were motivated after hearing searing stories of residential school harms and becoming aware of Indigenous land claims. A Stirling delegation traveled to Ottawa for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) closing events in spring 2015. Another delegation participated in an ecumenical retreat at Six Nations that fall to talk about how we as settler Christians and Indigenous peoples (both Christian and traditional) could live out the TRC Calls to Action on the Haldimand Tract. Arising out of that, we formed our own working group to lead our mid-sized congregation in working on some of the TRC’s 94 Calls to Action—particularly those addressed to churches.

Call to Action #49 asks all religious denominations to “repudiate concepts used to justify European sovereignty over Indigenous lands and peoples, such as the Doctrine of Discovery and *terra nullius*.” While we agreed the concepts of the Doctrine of Discovery (DoD) were reprehensible, we questioned whether focusing on “outdated” documents should be a priority in our congregation’s reconciliation journey. We concluded that studying and repudiating the DoD as a congregation was a key piece of the journey towards truth and reconciliation. This article describes our journey with the DoD that has created a platform for addressing colonialism in partnership with our Indigenous neighbours.

Why should we look backwards, learning about the DoD, rather than focus on the future? If the DoD was a priority for the Indigenous voices who wrote the TRC Calls to Action, we realized it needed to be a priority for us. We planned two adult education classes on the DoD in April 2016. At the same time, we considered sponsoring a resolution to the Mennonite Church



Waziyatawin (Angela Cavender Wilson). *What Does Justice Look Like? The Struggle for Liberation in Dakota Homeland*. St. Paul, MN: Living Justice Press, 2008.

Stannard, David. *American Holocaust: The Conquest of the New World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.

Loewen, James W. *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong*. New York: Touchstone, 2007.



Learn
more

Cober Bauman, Rick. "Unlearning the Doctrine of Discovery." Available at <https://mccottawaoffice.wordpress.com/2016/04/20/unlearning-the-doctrine-of-discovery/>

Heinrichs, Steve and Woelk, Cheryl. Eds. *Yours, Mine, Ours: Unravelling the Doctrine of Discovery*. Winnipeg: Mennonite Church Canada, 2016.

Keefer, Tom. "A Short Introduction to the Two Row Wampum." Available at <https://briarpatchmagazine.com/articles/view/a-short-introduction-to-the-two-row-wampum>.

Venables, Robert. "Guswenta and the Covenant Chain." Available at <http://www.onondaganation.org/history/2013/guswenta-and-the-covenant-chain/>.

The Canadian parliament has moved to second reading of Bill C-262, a bill that will ensure Canada's laws are in harmony with the UNDRIP. Learn more about Bill C-262 and how you can support it at <https://mcccanada.ca/get-involved/advocacy/campaigns/why-support-bill-c-262-undrip-act>.

Canada delegate assembly repudiating the DoD. For several months, our TRC working group focused primarily on the DoD. As we studied, we learned that the DoD forms the basis of much of Canada's legal system for Indigenous peoples.

Two adult education classes with biblical scholar Derek Suderman allowed the packed room of participants to study the documentary foundation of the DoD: the papal bulls *Dum Diversas* (1452) and *Romanus Pontifex* (1454). Issued half a century before Europeans arrived in North America, the papal bulls speak of subjugating the enemies of Christ, namely Saracens (Muslims), giving full and free authority to invade, capture, vanquish and reduce these enemies to perpetual slavery. Used first in Africa, this same logic gave license to settle North America. The land was considered empty (*terra nullius*) because there were no Christians in it. We also examined how the so-called Royal Psalms (such as Psalm 2:8-9), when taken out of context from the broader biblical narrative of Christ's love for all people, could be used to justify the theology of conquest enshrined in the DoD.

The active congregational involvement in these classes, as well as strong engagement around Indigenous issues more broadly, empowered our church council to co-sponsor the Mennonite Church Canada delegate assembly resolution. After that resolution passed in July 2016, our focus on the DoD ended, but the insights we gained undergird our ongoing journey. What does it mean for us to continue to decolonize our church and ourselves? We continue to build relationships with our Indigenous neighbours, who help us see this path towards reconciliation.

In November 2016, we engaged the full congregation in a KAIROS Blanket Exercise. The blanket exercise is a participatory teaching tool to examine the historical and contemporary relationship between Canada's Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in which participants stand on blankets placed on the floor symbolizing Indigenous land, with blankets progressively removed and participants either forced off blankets or confined to ever smaller spaces to represent European colonization and its impact on Indigenous peoples. We incorporated it into our worship service so the maximum number of people could be involved, and continued with time afterward to debrief the powerful experience. The blanket exercise deepened our journey with the DoD. As we walked through Canadian history from an Indigenous perspective, we witnessed the scourge of colonialism as our territory disappeared one blanket at a time, smallpox decimated our people and residential schools took our children.

In January 2017, we continued our journey of decolonizing ourselves and our church with a four-week worship and education series entitled, "Covenants with God, Land, and Our Indigenous Hosts." We looked at foundational covenants to our faith, such as God's rainbow covenant with Noah, as well as foundational covenants with our Indigenous brothers and sisters, like the Two Row Wampum and the Covenant Chain of Friendship. Indigenous elder Myeengen Henry shared an Indigenous understanding of land. Studying Leviticus 25:10-13 and Luke 4 further challenged us to see the land as God's, not ours, and not held in perpetuity. We live and worship on the traditional territory of the Anishinabe, Neutral and Haudenosaunee peoples, land that is "ours" by the logic of the DoD. But what is the future to which these covenants and God's Spirit call us?

Within our Covenant series, we examined the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) as a new covenant into

which we are invited. The TRC Calls to Action identify the Declaration as the “framework for reconciliation.” When Steve Heinrichs, Mennonite Church Canada Indigenous Relations staff person, invited Stirling to participate in the Pilgrimage for Indigenous Rights, the congregation responded enthusiastically. Seventeen of us participated for part or all of this 600-kilometre pilgrimage from Kitchener to Ottawa in support of the Declaration and Bill C-262, a federal private member’s bill calling on Canada to adopt and implement UNDRIP. Many more church members participated in smaller ways, including hosting the send-off service for pilgrimage walkers, following the walkers on social media and praying for them.

Decolonizing our hearts, our churches and our country from the ravages of the DoD is not something we can ever check off a list. It is a generations-long journey of relationship with God, ourselves, the land and our Indigenous neighbours. Looking backwards at the DoD and recognizing our colonial lenses can help us walk forward towards reconciliation.

Sue Klassen and Josie Winterfeld are members of Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church in Kitchener, Ontario.

Reflecting on the blanket exercise

The KAIROS Blanket Exercise (KBE) is a tool developed in 1997 by KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives in which participants learn about European colonization of Turtle Island (North America), the accompanying dispossession of Indigenous peoples (reflected by the steady removal of blankets upon which participants stand) and Indigenous resistance and efforts to reclaim land and rights. Faith-based and secular groups across Canada and the U.S. have used the exercise, sometimes adapting it to reflect specific geographies and communities. Here, two KAIROS and two MCC staff members reflect on lessons learned from the blanket exercise. Their full conversations can be found on the *Intersections* blog (<https://mccintersections.wordpress.com>).

The KAIROS Blanket Exercise was created two decades ago in response to Canada’s Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP), but is only recently being widely used. What changed to spur this interest?

Miriam Sainnawap (MCC): What sparked the change was the need to connect Canadians to the grim side of Canada’s history regarding its relationship with Indigenous peoples, which has recently emerged into public consciousness thanks to growing social movements and as a way of responding to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s (TRC) Calls to Action.

Ed Bianchi (KAIROS): The TRC Calls to Action were released during a time of heightened awareness of Indigenous peoples and rights, the result of decades of activism by Indigenous peoples and their allies, including churches. Public response to the RCAP report in 1997 was very similar to the response to the TRC’s Calls to Action. After only a year or two, the momentum generated by RCAP dissipated. Now, two years after the release of the TRC Calls to Action, and after 22 additional years of education and advocacy, momentum remains strong. What has changed is that ongoing efforts to educate have created a receptiveness to the challenges presented by the TRC.

“Decolonizing our hearts, our churches and our country from the ravages of the Doctrine of Discovery is not something we can ever check off a list. It is a generations-long journey of relationship with God, ourselves, the land and our Indigenous neighbours.”

“The Truth and Reconciliation Commission brought the challenges of reconciliation to the forefront of the Canadian public consciousness.”

“ Prior to this exercise, it seemed Indigenous people were responsible to educate settlers about history. Now settler people have taken the lead in educating other settlers.”

“ Canadians resist confronting Canada’s racist history and policies, and that past still lives in the present day.”

Sara Anderson (KAIROS): The TRC brought the challenges of reconciliation to the forefront of the Canadian public consciousness. This movement towards learning and unlearning the truth of the history of this land has been augmented by the resurgence and amplification of Indigenous voices and views through movements such as Idle No More.

Erica Littlewolf (MCC): I think the interest has increased because of the TRC process. People were curious about boarding schools and began asking questions. The questions led to wanting to learn the underlying issues of how boarding schools came to be. Because of the interest in Canada, the exercise was translated into a U.S. context and now has gained traction in ecumenical circles.

What roles have Indigenous and settler peoples played in developing and implementing the blanket exercise? How does this compare to the historical roles of these peoples?

Sainnawap: For Indigenous peoples, the challenge is finding a space to participate in the spirit of the promises, rights and ways of life gifted to us. Settlers need to stop taking up space for us and need to start listening. The exercise does play a role in retelling the stories of our remembered past, reaffirming the dignity and agency of Indigenous peoples and recognizing the active role of Indigenous peoples in reclaiming and restoring our communities and cultures and resisting ongoing injustices. While it is important for people to know our history, there is an underlying power dynamic around the issue of who owns the story and who gets to tell the story on behalf of Indigenous peoples.

Bianchi: From the beginning, the blanket exercise has involved Indigenous peoples and settlers. It was created with input from Indigenous peoples, including the education department of the Assembly of First Nations. Since then, the script has evolved in response to feedback from Elders and Indigenous and non-Indigenous facilitators and participants. In the last few years, the number of Indigenous facilitators, including Indigenous youth facilitators, has increased. Increased Indigenous leadership has resulted in respecting Indigenous protocols and ensuring that health supports are in place to respond to trauma the exercise might generate.

Littlewolf: Prior to this exercise, it seemed Indigenous peoples were responsible to educate settlers about history. Now settler people have taken the lead in educating other settlers. This approach has greatly reduced the stress on Indigenous peoples to educate settlers and has allowed Indigenous peoples to work within our own communities.

What role does education play in overcoming the Doctrine of Discovery? Is the role of education different for Indigenous and settler peoples?

Sainnawap: Canadians resist confronting Canada’s racist history and policies. That past still lives in the present day. In my opinion, the blanket exercise is not able to challenge the Doctrine of Discovery in practicality. It allows one to remain a passive learner, not an active doer dismantling the oppressive systems and confronting the racist attitudes held deeply in the national psyche.

Bianchi: RCAP said we cannot successfully address the current challenges in the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada without knowing how those challenges arose. This includes

the Doctrine of Discovery and how it continues to impact the beliefs, attitudes and behaviors reflected in our governments, legal structures, education systems, churches and society in general. Education addresses the ignorance at the root of the discrimination and racism that influences so much of what happens in our society and in the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

Anderson: I heard an Elder say there is a reason truth comes before reconciliation. If settlers are not aware of how the practices, policies and normative framework of the Doctrine of Discovery are still being implemented or how they themselves directly benefit from this Doctrine, then overturning this structure will be very difficult.

Littlewolf: Through education we begin to see the roots of the Doctrine of Discovery and how embedded in structures it has become. As an Indigenous person, education opened my eyes to a systemic world that I was taking on as my personal shortcomings. Through learning, I was able to separate what was mine to deal with from things that are out of my control and where I can advocate. Within MCC, we have developed a Doctrine of Discovery Toolkit for use by MCC workers in facilitating different types of workshops and learning events for both settler and Indigenous communities about the DoD and its destructive legacies. The educational task is a vital first step towards action to overcome the Doctrine of Discovery.

What impact does the blanket exercise have on participants? What do we know about how their attitudes or behaviors have changed as a result of participating in the exercise?

Sainnawap: Often participants experience strong emotional reactions such as guilt and shame. This is the beginning of the journey for them to question and analyze within, coming to understand the role of the privileged and confronting their prejudices. It is a choice how they want to change.

Bianchi: A Montreal police officer said the KBE helped him do his job better by helping him understand why so many Indigenous people are homeless and on the streets. After the KBE, he encountered an Indigenous person on the street and knew enough to ask, “Where are you from?” rather than “What’s wrong with you?” The heightened awareness that came from the KBE helped him take a more positive approach and reduced the risk level of the situation. Indigenous peoples undergo a similar transformation, especially those not aware of the history taught through the KBE. Following a KBE involving mostly young Indigenous men, one participant said, “This exercise helped me understand that it’s all about the land. It’s not about me.”

Anderson: The talking circle which follows every blanket exercise is the most powerful part of the whole experience. Some express anger that they didn’t learn about this before, or sadness at the injustice, while others feel guilt or a sense of shame. We always encourage people to move past those feelings of guilt and shame, because they are not productive, and often will not lead to concrete actions.

Littlewolf: A lot of settlers feel sad and guilty and are quick to want change, whereas Indigenous people have been sitting with it for lifetimes and look toward holistic healing. I have hope that people will change as a

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Learn
more

Learn more about the KAIROS
Blanket Exercise at
www.kairosblanketexercise.org.

result, but I remove myself from controlling this aspect as much as I can. As an Indigenous person, my job is to bring the perspective in a good way and allow for the spirit to move as it will. I feel good knowing that people can no longer claim ignorance and leave it all as a mystery.

Miriam Sainnawap is the National Indigenous Neighbours Program Co-Coordinator for MCC Canada. Ed Bianchi is KAIROS' Programs Manager. Sara Anderson is KAIROS' Blanket Exercise Regional Coordinator—Central. Erica Littlewolf works with the Indigenous Visioning Circle of MCC Central States.

Reflections from Standing Rock

I recently led college students in an exercise comparing two fascinating maps (see *Learn More* sidebar for links). The first, a map of the route of the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) near the Standing Rock reservation in North Dakota, was created by contributors to the Decolonial Atlas website. The place names are written in the Lakota language, with the four directions represented by the medicine wheel. South is at the top and north at the bottom, the reverse of what I'm used to seeing, yet a common Lakota custom. The second is a map of the DAPL route through North Dakota created by Energy Transfer Partners, the parent company of the pipeline already carrying crude oil from the Bakken shale in North Dakota to Illinois refineries. North is at the top. County and state boundaries are clearly marked. The DAPL path and terminal locations are prominent, with other place names barely legible. A comparison of these two maps is a compelling study in orientation and disorientation, what is being communicated and to whom and what map-makers view as important and unimportant.

In September of 2016, I went to the Standing Rock encampments formed in nonviolent resistance to DAPL as part of a delegation of settler Mennonites from the Dismantling the Doctrine of Discovery Coalition. Upon arrival, my map of the world was turned upside down (or perhaps right-side up). I was no longer in white-dominant space. There were different social protocols to follow as well as different understandings of the physical-spiritual world. Kitchen volunteers served food first to elders as a sign of respect, then to those of us waiting in line. The fire at the center of camp was not for chit-chatting around like a bonfire—it was a sacred prayer fire for offering tobacco.

Prayer was physical and a source of power, embodied in ceremony, daily prayer walks to the site of DAPL construction and even actions like chaining oneself to construction equipment. “They’re afraid of our prayers,” one woman told me matter-of-factly, explaining why the state police and DAPL private security forces were not disrupting the camp that week. In disarming contrast with the dominant culture where almost nothing is free, the whole camp operated by a gift economy. No money was exchanged and everything was shared, from food to supplies. When we arrived into camp at nightfall, we found that a woman had already set up a tent for us. She welcomed us, saying, “I knew people would come tonight who needed a place to stay.” We were camped on the frontlines of destruction, and yet were in decolonizing-territory, a place undergoing deep healing from centuries of capitalism and colonization.

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The most striking difference between decolonizing territory and the world to which I was accustomed was how people talked about water. Michael Sharpfish, a 23-year old descendant of Sitting Bull, told how he came to protect the Missouri River because water is sacred. He knows how precious water is because he grew up on a reservation without running water. Michael repeated the simple phrase that had become the rallying cry at Standing Rock, “Water is life: *Mni Wiconi!*” “We are the river, and the river is us,” Donna Brave Bull Allard wrote about why she founded the Sacred Stone Camp that prayed the other Standing Rock camps into existence and resistance. “Why would we hurt our sister, or our very selves, by channeling toxic oil underneath the river? We cannot be separated from water; she is sacred and very much alive, along with the rest of the earth.”

At Sacred Stone camp, I realized that the destructive disconnect between current colonizing and Indigenous perceptions of the world is nothing new to the Lakota people. They remember the long history of conquest as if it happened yesterday, just as they still remember the names their ancestors gave to the land and sacred sites. The name for Sacred Stone camp comes from the Lakota name for the river, *Íjyaŋwakağapi Wakpá*, “Stone-Make-For-Themselves River,” so named because of the round stones that once formed at the confluence with the Missouri River before the Missouri was dammed. The people called these stones *Ijyaŋ Wakháŋagapi Othí*, “Sacred Stones,” using them in prayer and ceremony and viewing them as enspirited, part of all our relations, like the river, plants and animals.

When European explorers and colonizers first came to the region, they also saw the rivers’ spherical stones shaped by the churning waters where they met the Missouri River. But instead of sacred stones, what did they see? Stones shaped like cannonballs. They saw stones akin to ammunition for war, so they re-named *Íjyaŋwakağapi Wakpá* the Cannonball River. Sacred stones or cannonballs?

Perspective shapes practice, from the re-naming of the Cannonball River to the 1874 expedition that led to a gold rush and the U.S. government’s illegal seizure of the Black Hills (an area long held as sacred by the Lakota people) to the more recent damming of the Missouri River by the Army Corps of Engineers in the 1950s. The hydropower dam flooded ancestral burial grounds and medicinal plant harvesting areas. The people say many elders died of heartbreak when they saw the flooded lands. This history on Lakota land unveils the colonizing perspective in which land and water are resources to be exploited and extracted. From an Indigenous perspective, land and water are living relatives to be respected and protected, sacred gifts of Creator inseparable from our very lives. Two vastly different perceptions, two very different maps of the world.

This history of difference in perception dates back to the Doctrine of Discovery, if not before, as globalized imperialism was birthed in Europe under the blessing of Constantinian Christianity. The Doctrine of Discovery was and is a profound invalidation of Indigenous cosmologies and ways of relating to the other-than-human world developed over centuries of learning how to live in life-sustaining balance. The United States, having assumed ownership of Indigenous lands through the “right of discovery,” imposed and continues to force its abstract maps and perceptions of the world upon already-named and intimately known homelands. And now profit-driven corporations like those building DAPL are given free reign to do the same, with perilous consequences. As climate



Brave Bull Allard, LaDonna. “Why the Founder of Standing Rock Sioux Camp Can’t Forget the Whitestone Massacre.” *Yes! Magazine*. Available at <http://www.yesmagazine.org/people-power/why-the-founder-of-standing-rock-sioux-camp-cant-forget-the-whitestone-massacre-20160903>

The Decolonial Atlas—Dakota Access Pipeline Indigenous Protest Map. Available at: <https://decolonialatlas.wordpress.com/2016/09/07/dakota-access-pipeline-indigenous-protest-map/>

Energy Transfer Partners’ Map of Dakota Access Pipeline route from North American Shale Magazine. Available at: http://northamericanshalemagazine.com/uploads/posts/web/2016/10/Dakota_Access_ND-map_14757039563483.JPG

change, resource depletion and the loss of biological and cultural diversity around the world testify, the colonized maps cemented upon the world are suffocating all life. Yet even cement can be cracked.

Surely one step toward dismantling the Doctrine of Discovery will be dismantling our internalized and externalized destructive maps by embracing a more life-giving way of seeing the world. For those of us who are not Indigenous, I pose the questions that my time at Standing Rock offered me: Will we wake up and perceive all Earth as sacred and alive? Will we allow ourselves to be disoriented and reoriented by Indigenous ways of seeing and being? Will we join Indigenous people, water and Earth herself in cracking the concrete of industrial civilization to make way for healing, decolonizing territories?

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