

Mother Earth's Pandemic: The Doctrine of Discovery

It is our intention that this study guide will be used with the presentations from “Mother Earth’s Pandemic” to direct discussions about the Doctrine of Christian Discovery and Domination in your religious or community groups. We encourage you to create your own discussion groups, if you haven’t already, around the issues of social justice for Indigenous Peoples, environmental healing of land and water, religious reform, legal issues, advocacy for women and children, and a variety of other issues that emerge from this topic. Please keep in touch with us as your conversations develop.

Indigenous Values Initiative and American Indian Law Alliance Team

www.indigenousvalues.org

www.aila.ngo

Mother Earth's Pandemic Study Guide

Prepared by Phil Arnold and Grace Fritske

Doctrine of Discovery: Discussion Questions (Beginner)

Session 1:

General Questions:

- What values did you hear as being part of Haudenosaunee approaches and culture? How do they differ from European settler values? How do your personal values compare?
- Which concepts came up repeatedly in the presentations and seemed particularly important? Describe the significance of several of them based on their contexts in the presentations. (*for example: genocide, community, exceptionalism*)

Phil Arnold and Sandy Bigtree:

- Arnold and Bigtree describe how the “turning over” of land from the Onondaga to the Jesuits is one example of the Christian Doctrine of Discovery. In what way?
- How is the Doctrine of Discovery related to the treatment of women?
- How is the Doctrine of Discovery related to United States land rights?

- What are some of the results of the Doctrine of Discovery?

Betty Lyons:

- How did the 2005 United States Supreme Court case *Sherrill v. Oneida* use the Doctrine of Discovery?
- How is the Doctrine of Discovery related to the trans-Atlantic slave trade?

Jake Edwards part I:

- What are some of the duties of humans that Edwards discusses?
- How are these duties related to good relations with others? With a better future?

Jake Edwards part II:

- What are the constituent nations of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy?
- What are some of the Haudenosaunee values that Edwards shares?
- What is the historical relationship between Indigenous peoples, European settlers, and disease?

Oren Lyons:

- What does Lyons propose as the way to fix where we have gone wrong in our relationship with the earth? How might this look in your life?
- What instruction did the Peacekeeper give to the warring nations? How does this compare to the values espoused in the Doctrine of Discovery?
- Why did the First Peoples decide to use the term “Indigenous” to describe themselves at the 1977 United Nations in Geneva?

Session 2:

General Questions:

- What dynamic are you noticing between Indigenous rights and the United States’ Justice system? How does this dynamic relate to the Doctrine of Discovery?
- Summarize the relationship between Indigenous peoples and land, as presented. Contrast these approaches with settler approaches.

Joe Heath

- What is the significance of *Johnson v. McIntosh* in Indian law in the United States?
- What sorts of reasons do the United States courts give to dismiss Indian land claims?
- What is plenary power?

Dana Lloyd

- How are the understandings of law and nature that Lloyd describes, relate especially to the protection of the Klamath River, different from settler understandings of law in the United States?
- How does the Yurok Tribe's framing of the Klamath River in court relate to tribal sovereignty?

Steven T. Newcomb

- Why might the U.S. Supreme Court now be hesitant to directly cite the Doctrine of Discovery?
- How is the recent *McGirt v. Oklahoma* decision connected to the Doctrine of Discovery?
- From where does the United States draw its plenary power over Indigenous nations?
- What is the definition of genocide given by Newcomb?
- Why might federal Indian law attorneys replace the word "Christian" with "European"?

Makayla Loeb

- How is the Doctrine of Discovery related to the unsustainable and unregenerative use of land?

Eglutė Trinkauskaitė

- What function do maps perform in the context of colonialism?
- How does the colonization of Lithuania relate to the colonization of the Americas?

Rob Ruehl

- What is manifest destiny? How is it related to the Doctrine of Discovery? What is similar between the two of them?
- How was the Doctrine of Discovery used in the court case *City of Sherrill v. Oneida Nation of N.Y.*?
- What did Indian boarding schools attempt to do to Indigenous peoples?

Sarah Nahar

- How is the narrative power for police brutality related to the Doctrine of Discovery?
- Where does the concept of whiteness come from?
- What sorts of language shifts does Nahar suggest?

Angela Mooney D'Arcy

- What are the roots of climate colonialism in California?
- In what ways did climate colonialism Doctrine of Discovery manifest in California's early history? In its more recent history?
- What does the conscious recognition of a species reflect?
- Whose homeland are you on? How can you be a good guest?

Abel Gomez

- What does Gomez remind us must accompany land acknowledgements?
- Why did the Spanish inflict physical “punishment” on Indigenous peoples?

Session 3:

General Questions:

- How do economics and the push for profit relate to the Doctrine of Discovery?
- Several of the presenters discuss dismantling the Doctrine of Discovery. How might this look? How could you put this into action in your life and community?

Betty Lyons

- What is the role of Indigenous peoples in changing the role of the Doctrine of Discovery?

Eve Reyes-Aguirre

- What sorts of community-based events and actions steps has Tonatierra done to continue the work of educating about and dismantling of the Doctrine of Discovery? What other ideas they spark for you to do in your community?

Tupac Enrique Acosta

- What does Enrique Acosta argue is the ultimate effect of the Doctrine of Discovery?
- What role does water have in reminding us of our responsibilities to Mother Earth?
- Why is it important to talk about the Doctrine of Discovery as “dismantling the Doctrine of Discovery”?

Tina Ngata

- How has water been used by colonizers?
- What is the intrinsic state of water?
- How does thinking about the water in your bellies and its relationship to you make you feel?
- What community-based education actions does Ngata describe?

Eve

- How do trade agreements connect to asylum seeking and the Doctrine of Discovery?

Tina

- How do large organizations relate to the staying power of the Doctrine of Discovery?

Tupac

- What does Enrique Acosta remind us about colonization?

Sandy

- How does Bigtree describe the way the colonialists and the Doctrine of Discovery disrupt the structures of Indigenous nations in the Americas?

Betty Lyons (Iroquois Nationals and the Olympics)

- How can you raise awareness about the importance of lacrosse (the Spirit Game) to the Haudenosaunee and the refusal to let the Iroquois Nationals play in the Olympics?

Tink Tinker

- What does Tinker emphasize about the timing of the Doctrine of Discovery? Was it the “law of land” before or after the creation of the United States?
- Tinker mentions the sacred mountain into which Mt. Rushmore is carved. Do some research! Who took this land? From whom? When? What are some recent events related to it?

Jake Edwards

- What is the significance of the Two Row Wampum?
- What are some of the main messages given by the Peacemaker to the Haudenosaunee?
- What does the Canandaigua Treaty represent? How is it recognized today?
- How did the Haudenosaunee respond to the United States’ offer of citizenship in 1924?
- How does Haudenosaunee symbolism show up in the thirteen colonies and in what is currently the United States?

Online Resources

- Mother Earth’s Pandemic: <https://indigenousvalues.org/mother-earths-pandemic/>
- Indigenous Values Initiative: www.indigenousvalues.org
- American Indian Law Alliance: www.aila.ngo
- Doctrine of Discovery: doctrineofdiscovery.org