



DEHCHO FIRST NATIONS

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The “Doctrine of Discovery” Must be Repudiated

There has been a great deal of talk in recent years about reconciliation between the Indigenous peoples of Canada and the colonial institutions which have governed and controlled our peoples’ lives for generations. So far, there has been much more talk than action towards reconciliation, but we remain optimistic that concrete measures will be taken to give meaning to the formal apologies that we have recently heard from some of these institutions.

It is important to remember that the colonial assault on our nations and cultures was justified and legitimized by the so-called “doctrine of discovery” which falsely claimed that our nations were not already governing the lands and waters of Turtle Island long before Europeans arrived. This fraudulent and evil doctrine was promulgated and promoted by the Vatican and other churches in order to claim that the destruction and genocide of colonialism was justified as “God’s will” rather than a criminal exercise in the destruction of nations.

The Dehcho First Nations, representing eight Dene First Nation communities and two Metis communities in the NWT, now call on the Vatican, the Government of Canada and the Crown to clearly and unequivocally reject and repudiate the doctrine of discovery and acknowledge what we all know to be true: that the land now known as Canada was not vacant or ungoverned when Europeans arrived and that it was actually governed by sovereign nations with our own institutions and laws.

Reconciliation between Indigenous nations and the Crown is in the interests of all Canadians and we are committed to engaging in good faith relationships with our Treaty partners and with the churches and other institutions which impact our communities.

For more information, call (Interim) Grand Chief Stanley Sanguetz at (867) 695-2355.