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# Transcript

**Bishop Mark MacDonald**

**August 18, 2015**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ygk3X5Xjjh4>

**Title: Bishop Mark MacDonald on the Doctrine of Discovery**

**Summary:**

National Indigenous Anglican Bishop Mark MacDonald talks to Sacred Circle on the Doctrine of Discovery. This talk introduced an afternoon plenary session from the Primate's Commission on the Doctrine of Discovery, Reconciliation and Justice.

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I want to take this opportunity to say a few words about the doctrine of discovery. Because even though it affects every single one of us here, not all of us understand it because they're big words. We think of doctrine as something that you believe about God that something that the church teaches but, this is a little bit different.

Paul when he was writing in 2 Corinthians talked about how, "We aren't at war," he said, "With human and physical things." He says, "We do not wage war according to human standards," he said, "For the weapons of our warfare are not merely human but they have divine power to destroy strongholds." He says.

"We destroy arguments and every proud obstacle raised up against the knowledge of God and we take every thought captive to obey Christ." What he's describing as strongholds are ways of thinking, patterns of thinking, habits of thinking that hurt people. That create division between people.

The Doctrine of Discovery is one of those strongholds. It's an idea that has been around for quite a long time. It begins as far as we know back when a number of Europeans discovered the land of Iceland. Because it wasn't known to be owned by anyone the person who discovered that land was the owner and ruler of that land.

If you discover the land it becomes yours. You can do with it whatever you want. It's all yours, you're the grand poobah, the king, the queen and everything else of this land when you discovery it.

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When they moved to Turtle Island they couldn't say that they discovered this land because there were people already here, at least not in the way that they normally had. What they did however is that overtime they said that this land was terra nullius, meaning it was not inhabited. While you would say, "Our relatives, our ancestors, our elders were here. How could you say that it's not inhabited?"

Here's where the Doctrine of Discovery becomes evil and where it begins to hurt people. Where it becomes a stronghold against the people of the land. They say that the people of the land are so primitive, are so savage they actually say that ... some of the early documents say, "They are like the beast of the field or the forest."

You can discover these people because they are so primitive, so savage that they are better off living in your civilized way. You have the right to take their land, to take over whatever they're doing and to basically take control. You can discover the people and lots of time people will think that repudiating the Doctrine of Discovery or putting down the Doctrine of Discovery is making people feel bad for using the word discover.

What we're really talking about is this stronghold of ideas of hatred, of prejudice, of bad feelings. That have been put upon the people of the land here in Turtle Island for a number of centuries.

Even though it isn't used in courts so much anymore it is still then referred to as recently as the last court case in BC. It was used in the 1990s, it was referred to ... over and over again they will say that the people of the land here were so primitive that they're better off under the rule of the people from somewhere else.

It was the Doctrine of Discovery and the ideas around it, the stronghold that lead to the residential schools. It was said that the people were so savage and so primitive that they would be better off being schooled and separated from their families. So this idea was used again.

We see it also in the past when indigenous people would move into urban areas. Quite often people would say, "Well you don't want to have a special church because the best thing for them is to fit in and to become like us." That's a Doctrine of Discovery idea. Chinese people might come and we build a church for them. People from Africa come and we build a church for them but, when indigenous people come we say, "Fit in to our program, be like us, act like us."

The Doctrine of Discovery is an idea that can influence and can impact and control people's lives quite a bit and has done quite a bit. It's still in people's minds today. We never know when we're speaking to somebody if they're thinking in that way or not. Because it isn't something ... people don't say, "Well now I'm thinking in the doctrine of discovery." They don't think in that way.



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When they look at an indigenous person then they say, “Well that person is primate they’ll be better off being like me.” That’s the Doctrine of Discovery and it is one of the strongholds of spiritual wickedness that we can see has created misery and death for centuries.

When we talk about repudiating the Doctrine of Discovery we’re talking about all the aspects of it. The way it’s been used in law, the way it’s been used in theology, the way it’s been used in teaching, the way it’s been used in controlling people’s lives. Sadly also in the way that the church is organized.

We are freeing ourselves from this doctrine, from this stronghold and entering into the freedom of Christ that’s what this is about.