

Proclamation of the Continental Commission of the Great Turtle Island, Abya Yala  
September 24, 2015  
Wampum Lot a.k.a. Welcome Park, 2<sup>nd</sup> & Walnut Streets, Philadelphia PA

Indigenous representatives from Argentina, Colombia, Guatemala, and various parts of the United States gathered at the Wampum Lot. This piece of land in central Philadelphia was given to the Six Nations by a grandson of William Penn in 1755 as a place where they could camp when doing business with the colonial government. Now called Welcome Park, the lot is lined with displays about the life of William Penn. In the photos below, you'll notice the Penn story portrayed on the wall behind the Indigenous speakers.

The Indigenous representatives gathered as the Continental Commission, dedicated to dismantling the Doctrine of Discovery. They proclaimed their message to Pope Francis during his visit to Philadelphia, urging him to rescind the papal bulls that constitute the Doctrine of Discovery and justify European Christian domination of non-Christian peoples and their lands.



Their proclamation reads, in part:

*Lenape leader Rev. John Norwood welcomes all. "Let us work to overturn the Doctrine of Discovery, and be as one people."*

*"We have been called to the lands of the Lenape to unite and reaffirm our ancestral responsibilities as caretakers of Mother Earth in a time of severe climate change.... We acknowledge and recognize the ongoing impacts of climate change which affect us all, and that the most severe **impacts will befall** future generations. The denial of this reality by political leaders at the highest level in the world today amounts to the criminal violation of the human rights of future generations which we will not allow to continue...We are calling again to our younger brothers of the immigrant settler republics of the Americas to recognize the collective trauma of colonization, and the ongoing destruction of the natural world which has brought the human species to the threat of extinction.... As children of Mother Earth may we all find the courage and vision to address these challenging issues in peace, friendship and justice. "*



*The youngest delegates from Guatemala*



Tadodaho Sid Hill, Haudenosaunee spiritual leader, offered a shortened version of his people's traditional Thanksgiving Address, greeting and expressing gratitude to the Creator, the sun, the moon, the stars, the animals, the birds, the fish, the people, the wise teachers, the thunder, lightning, and all things on the earth. This prayer brings our minds together as one. Today, more than ever, we need to bring our minds together as one to face the challenges of a changing climate.

In New York City, security officers disrespectfully removed the Tadodaho's Gustoweh (headdress), his sacred tobacco, and his gift for Pope Francis. Even though he had been invited, they did not seat him on the stage with other religious leaders at the Ground Zero memorial site.



*Tricia Shore*, co-clerk of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting's Indian Committee, said it was an honor to host the Indigenous guests at the Arch Street Meetinghouse. She pledged to continue walking on the path of friendship that began with the Lenape people and William Penn hundreds of years ago.

*Angela Mooney D'Arcy*, founder of the Sacred Places Institute for Indigenous Peoples, spoke on behalf of the Indigenous peoples of California for whom September 23 was a very sad day: Pope Francis

canonized the Catholic priest Junipero Serra, who captured, imprisoned, and enslaved millions of Indigenous people in California. This canonization shows that the Doctrine of Discovery is alive and well in the Catholic church today, and we must keep up the struggle to dismantle it.



*Shannon Rivers*, of the O'Odham Nation in Arizona, reported on a tribunal held by Indigenous people last week in Phoenix. They carried out a mock trial of the governments and corporations that continue to act according to the Doctrine of Discovery today, persistently violating the rights of Indigenous peoples. The consequences of these abuses are visible in Native communities today, in the prevalence of suicide, degradation, violence, and chronic poverty. The Pope could do a lot of good by rescinding the Doctrine of Discovery, but will he?

A Mayan woman from Guatemala, *Lola Marina*, testified to the Catholic church's repression of Indigenous people, especially women. *Tupac Enrique Acosta* translated for her. She said she is proud to practice and defend traditional Mayan spirituality, but that it is dangerous to do so in Guatemala. Five of her brothers are currently in jail there for defending life, and she fled to this country to protect her family. "I join with the Continental Commission of Abya Yala in calling for an end to the Doctrine of Discovery."



*Felix Diaz*, Qarashe Comunidad Qom Potae Napocna Navogoh, from Argentina, said that by being here today we can all realize we are not alone in the struggle for justice and for life on earth. "We bring you our strength," he said, "and we gain strength from you in our struggle to defend life. The Catholic church in South America is silent about the injustices committed against Indigenous peoples, removing us from our land. We need to recuperate our territories. Our land is our life, our medicine, our food, our ancestors, our spiritual home. It is time now for us to speak the truth. Countries must stop the wars, stop the prisons, stop building walls on our borders. We Indigenous people must strengthen ourselves to take leadership for the sake of the whole world. We are the moral reservation of humanity."



*Ari Maco* (note: I'm not sure of his name), Arhuaco, said his people in Colombia's Sierra Nevada mountains consider Europeans their "little brothers," who came into the world later than the Arhuaco and still have a lot to learn from their "older brothers and sisters." "Sometimes it seems that the little brothers are crazy, the way they destroy everything, the way they tell lies. My people know we must teach our younger brothers how to take care of the earth. In Colombia right now oil companies are coming into our mountains, into the mountains that are our guardians. This is happening to Indigenous peoples everywhere. Our little brothers are not paying attention to our teaching. But we are one family made by the same Creator. I hope I don't offend you. This is the truth we are saying."



*Tupac Enrique Acosta*, O'Odham Nation, Arizona, leads the non-profit organization Tonatierra and calls together the Continental

Commission of the Great Turtle Island, Abya Yala. He has hosted a series of intercontinental conferences on Dismantling the Doctrine of Discovery. He said the doctrines of the church and state have no power compared to the laws of the universe. The church and the state can make their laws and their doctrines and carry them out at the expense of all the Indigenous peoples of the world – but they cannot escape the laws of the universe. Indigenous peoples live by the laws of the universe. Now, throughout this hemisphere we are committing ourselves to keep hope alive for all life.



*Betty Lyons*, Onondaga Nation, read the proclamation of the Continental Commission.

*Kate DeRiel* of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting's Indian Committee, reminded us of William Penn's first letter to the Lenape people where he assures them of his good will, respect, and fairness, and his intention to live with them as brothers. She renewed this vow and thanked the Indigenous participants for the opportunity to work together as brothers and sisters.



*Paul Ricker*, co-clerk of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting's Indian Committee, called for renewed commitment to call on all the churches to repudiate the Doctrine of Discovery, which has caused so much harm throughout the world.



Steven Newcomb, Lenape/Shawnee, is author of *Pagans in the Promised Land*, a book that is also the basis of a new film called "The Doctrine of Discovery: Unmasking the Domination Code," by Dakota film maker Sheldon Wolfchild. He cautioned us to not perpetuate mythologies about William Penn and other "Founding Fathers." He reminded us that Penn received proprietorship of the entire territory that became the state of Pennsylvania from Britain's King Charles II, and how could a king across the ocean "give" Penn this land? Only because of the Doctrine of Discovery. "It's all about domination," Steven said, "assumed superiority and domination. We can see it throughout the history of this land and we can see it in the US government's actions still today. "



*The Continental Commission of the Great Turtle Island, Abya Yala,*



*Members of the Continental Commission with members of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting's Indian Committee.*