



Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council

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AT LONG LAST POPE REPUDIATES DOCTRINE OF DISCOVERY

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Thursday, in Rome, the Vatican formally repudiated the Doctrine of discovery. This doctrine was based as far back as the 15th Century “papal bulls”. These papal bulls legitimized the colonial-era theft of First Nations territories which still is in effect to today in relation to aboriginal title and property ownership.

First Nations have been around since time immemorial and so this doctrine was required to “legally” take our lands and resources for the colonizer on the pretext that no one was there – the lands was barren- as First Nations people were not “civilized”. In Canadian law, the courts legitimize this taking by saying when Canada asserted its title they had a right to the lands even if there was no treaty, cession or war.

Judith Sayers, President, states that “This doctrine has been detrimental to the development of our peoples, taking away our most valuable lands and resources, destroying our most sacred places, limiting our right to hunt, fish, trap, gather and right to a livelihood. The fact is that we have had to prove our title which was already ours, while the Canadian government denies our rights to our own lands. The court have had to rely on the laws based on the doctrine of discovery in any rulings on ownership to land. This now has to change as of today. The damage of this doctrine on our lives cannot be valued as it is in massive proportions.”

Les Doiron, Vice President says that “First Nations have for years been continually demanding the Vatican and the government of Canada to repudiate this doctrine of discovery and rightfully recognize our ownership to our own lands. It has taken the Vatican far too long to take this step and we have suffered being deprived of our lands and resources.”

The Vatican must take full responsibility for the far-reaching negative effects of this doctrine which they say colonial powers “manipulated” for political purposes. Both the Vatican and Canada should work with First Nations to reconcile the immense damage of this doctrine.

Judith Sayers adds “The Nuuchahnulth Tribal Council calls on the government of Canada to acknowledge the repudiation of this doctrine, take immediate steps to remove any laws that recognize and utilize the Doctrine of Discovery and revoke any policies based on this including mandates to negotiate treaties, and all other forms of agreements. This must be done with the free, prior and informed consent of First Nations.”

NTC also demands that Canada and BC look at any court cases, including the Nuchatlaht title case to reform any arguments to the court that in any way relied on the doctrine of discovery.

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About Nuuchahnulth Tribal Council

The Nuuchahnulth Tribal Council (NTC) provides programs and services to over 10,000 registered members. The role of the NTC is to represent 14 First Nations in three regions stretching 300 kilometers of the Pacific Coast of Vancouver Island from Brooks Peninsula in the north to Point-no-Point in the south. The NTC represents Ahousaht, Ditidaht, Ehattesaht/Chinehkint, Hesquiaht, Hupacasath, Huu-ay- aht, Kyuquot/Checklesah, Mowachaht /Muchalaht, Nuchatlaht, Tla-o-qui-aht, Toquaht, Tseshah, Uchucklesaht and Ucluelet First Nations and provides a variety of programs and services to them.

For more information, please visit www.nuuchahnulth.org.