



STUDY GUIDE 5

Module 5 **Undoing the Doctrine of Discovery**

To accompany film from 29:49 - End

Opening Prayer and Song

Key Terms: Structural injustice, Free Prior and Informed Consent

Activity: Transforming the Cross

Materials: Paper, whiteboard/ chalkboard, writing utensils, tape. Optional: paper cut-outs of leaves and flowers with space to write on them

During the activity in Module 2, we named the impacts of the cross of conquest and its foundation in the Doctrine of Discovery. In this exercise, we look for signs of hope and resurrection. Jesus rose to life and conquered the cross as the firstborn of the new creation, and so our Christian hope compels us to proclaim that the cross is not the end of the story! Invite participants to decorate the cross with leaves and flowers symbolizing the hope for resurrection that we see:

1. Write words or phrases on the leaves and flowers, representing the ways in which people have resisted or are currently resisting the Doctrine of Discovery and are living into resurrection. Include Indigenous groups as well as settler communities.
2. Ask each participant to share what they've written on their leaf or flower, and place it on the cross. The leaves and flowers on the tree may be sparse: a sign of our need to seek hope and enact it all the more!
3. As a final step with your group, write one or more commitments that your congregation or a small group representing your community would like to pursue in the work of undoing the Doctrine of Discovery and add this to the cross as a leaf.

You may also wish to invite individuals to share one way they commit to resisting the Doctrine of Discovery in solidarity with Indigenous peoples. We invite you to share images of these transformed crosses and/or your study group on our [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/dismantleddiscovery) page (www.facebook.com/dismantleddiscovery).

Discussion questions:

1. Rich Meyer offers a list of questions that every white settler ought to know about the land where they reside. If you are a settler, can you answer these questions? If they are difficult to answer, what are some steps you might take to learn the answers? (See HANDOUT 7 for Rich Meyer's Resource Guide).

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Module 5

- Whose land was it before settlement?
 - By what mechanism did the people lose it?
 - Where are their descendants today?
2. How can we as part of the global church support the struggles and respond to the requests of Indigenous peoples like Pya Macliing Malayao, Joan Van der Bosch and Erica Littlewolf? How do we see these struggles as interconnected with others we face on planet Earth today?
 3. Pya defines the flourishing of love as part of the search for social justice, recognition of Indigenous peoples' collective rights to ancestral lands, and self-determination. How does her definition connect to our Biblical understanding of the mandate to love our neighbor as ourselves?
 4. Erica Littlewolf says, "I have a lot of hope in Mennonites... because they seem to love the land as well." How does your love for the land compel you to work for reparative justice? How might you nurture your love for the land in your current context?

Suggested Bible Reflections:

"Market Culture and the Image of God," Wati Longchar

"Lessons from Deuteronomy in Communal Justice and Solidarity," Elaine Enns and Ched Myers

"Justice is the Fast that God Requires," Jennifer Henry

Resources:

- [Paths for Peacemaking with Host Peoples](#), by Steve Heinrichs. Practical tips and suggestions for those looking for ways to nurture better relationships with host peoples. Intended for Canadian audience, but applies to U.S. as well. (Available through CommonWord Bookstore and Resource Center for free download: <http://www.commonword.ca>).

- Examples of Indigenous organizations working for justice:

[Idle No More](#)

Idle No More is one of the largest Indigenous mass movements in Canadian history – sparking hundreds of teach-ins, rallies, and protests across Turtle Island and beyond. It was started by Indigenous women and is focused on Indigenous sovereignty and the protection of land and water.

[Indigenous Environmental Network](#)

IEN is an alliance of Indigenous People whose mission is to protect the sacredness of Earth Mother from contamination and exploitation, maintaining and teaching Indigenous Teachings and Natural Laws.

[KAMP: Alliance of Indigenous Peoples of the Philippines](#)

KAMP strives to work for the attainment of genuine ancestral land rights and self-determination for the indigenous peoples of the Philippines.

[La Red Mexicana de Afectados por la Minería](#)

The Mexican Network of People Affected by Mining is a network of communities, movements, organizations, networks and individuals affected and concerned by the socio-environmental and bio-cultural impacts of mining in Mexico.

[Standing Rock](#)

In 2016, the Standing Rock Sioux tribe began encampments near the Missouri River to protect sacred lands and waters from the threat of the Dakota Access Pipeline. Thousands of allies from around the world joined these water protectors in prayer and resistance.

[Via Campesina](#)

La Via Campesina is an international movement which brings together millions of peasants, small and medium-size farmers, landless people, women farmers, indigenous people, migrants and agricultural

workers from around the world. It defends small-scale sustainable agriculture as a way to promote social justice and dignity. It strongly opposes corporate driven agriculture and transnational companies that are destroying people and nature.

[Wireless Hogan](#)

Mark Charles, the son of an American woman of Dutch heritage and a Navajo man, is a writer and speaker who is working toward a Truth and Conciliation Commission on the Doctrine of Discovery.

NOTES FOR FACILITATORS:

- Pass out Rich Meyer's page of resources available that are useful in research on land titles, treaties, and the peoples who lived where you live (HANDOUT 7)
- For congregations seeking culturally appropriate and humble ways of engaging Indigenous Peoples, we recommend the resource listed above, "[Paths for Peacemaking with Host Peoples](#)," by Steve Heinrichs. Mennonite Church USA also offers resources in undoing racism, such as the Intercultural Development Inventory, a tool that can help groups interested in growing toward greater intercultural competence as they seek relationships across cultural differences. See: <http://mennoniteusa.org/what-we-do/undoing-racism/intercultural-development-inventory/>



Miners adding mercury to sluice box to amalgamate gold. Image from www.sihfund.org.

Acts of Contrition and Reparative Justice Case Study: *Suriname Indigenous Health Fund*

My name is Sarah Augustine. My husband, Dan Peplow, and I co-direct Suriname Indigenous Health Fund (SIHF). SIHF endeavors to develop global health practices that address the root causes of conflict among the Indigenous Peoples who are our partners. We use technology to document human rights abuses and to get the world's attention. Whether using state-of-the-art scientific, health or video technology, putting these tools in the hands of communities who are the victims of human rights abuses redefines how affected communities can advocate for change. We call on an international network of human rights defenders from all walks of life to deploy technologies that protect civilians at risk.

In Suriname, SIHF has collected peer-reviewed scientific and video evidence of atrocities that are unacceptable and unnecessary. What has emerged is a horrifying situation in which infants are exposed to toxic levels of mercury beginning in-utero and extending throughout their adult lives. This leaves them neurologically impaired and causes unacceptable numbers of deaths and disabilities. The causes of this situation are traced to social, political and economic policies related to resource extraction, infrastructure development, and structural adjustment projects funded by multilateral development banks like the Inter-American Development Bank, the World Bank and others.

In French Guyana, SIHF continues to work with the Organization of Guyana Aboriginal Nations (ONAG) to document ongoing human rights abuses resulting from displacement, removal, disappropriation and resource extraction. We support community partners as they define self-determination by providing education and basic access to health for their people while seeking legal redress from France and international governance structures.

Among Miskitu communities in the trans-border region of Nicaragua and Honduras, we support a network of traditional and community leaders seeking relief from ongoing land-grabbing of their homelands by the Nicaraguan government. Each day children, families and entire communities lose their homes by forced removal. With their partnership and on their behalf, we advocate for a peaceful resolution to this mounting conflict with national and international actors.

Please partner with us. Are you willing to talk with a Senator or representative in your state in defense of Indigenous Peoples? If so, we will coach you through each step and connect you with our national network of Mennonites who are willing to do the same. Are you willing to invite us to speak with your congregation? If so, perhaps your peace and social concerns committee might be willing to start a support group. www.sihfund.org / sihfund@sihfund.org

—Sarah Augustine, Co-director, SIHF