



Telling and Teaching the Truth: The Church's Obligation to Education about the Ongoing Legacy of the Doctrine of Discovery

From Churches Beyond Borders: Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, Anglican Church of Canada, The Episcopal Church, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

As another school year commences, we are reminded that the educational systems we have handed down to our children often teach national narratives that perpetuate white supremacy by deleting and ignoring the histories and contributions of Indigenous People and other marginalized communities and peoples in both Canada and the United States. The ongoing legacy of the Doctrine of Discovery and the sinful acts of racism in North America are rarely if ever taught in our school systems or churches with the fullness and import that is necessary and just.

When Christians engage history with honesty, humility and a spirit of confession, it is clear that the church was and is complicit:

- In the hunting and killing of Indigenous Peoples,
- In the dishonorable breaking of thousands of treaties that federal governments made with First Nations and Native nations,
- In the forced removal of Indigenous Peoples from their original homelands,
- In the relocation of Indigenous Peoples into reserves and reservations where poverty, starvation, desperation, missionization, addiction, and suicide were allowed to become the rule for generations of Indigenous people,
- In the making of long-term federal policies that enforced family separation,
- In the stealing of Indigenous children away to brutal assimilation camps known as Indian boarding schools in the US and residential schools in Canada,
- In the ongoing plight of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls,
- In the coverup of all of these evils, including through systemic efforts to erase Indigenous Peoples from our collective memory.

Scripture reminds us that the truth is costly. In Proverbs 23:23 we read, “Buy truth, and do not sell it; buy wisdom, instruction, and understanding” (NRSV). Our churches’ work to repudiate the Doctrine of Discovery begins with the costly work of telling the truth.

Only then will we be able to start making good on our promises as churches and, together across borders, to seek truth and healing for Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples by:

- Providing educational opportunities for all of our churches’ people,

- Leading advocacy efforts for legally mandated inclusion of accurate and truthful history and narratives of Indigenous people in our educational systems at all learning levels,
- Standing in solidarity with residential and boarding school survivors and their descendants,
- Doing the necessary research to reveal as much truth about this shameful part of our churches' histories.

As a sign of our cross-border commitments to the work toward truth, healing, justice and accurate education, we invite all members of our churches to commemorate September 30, 2021 (www.orangeshirtday.org) as a day for truth and healing. We encourage you to learn about residential and boarding schools, honor survivors, and remember those who never made it home from the schools. On September 30, we invite you to wear orange as a sign of remembering, solidarity, and commitment to seeking healing. You may also choose to wear orange to Sunday worship on September 26.



Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America



National Bishop Susan C. Johnson
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada



Presiding Bishop Michael B. Curry
The Episcopal Church



Archbishop and Primate Linda Nicholls
Anglican Church of Canada

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

[ELCIC Resolution on the Doctrine of Discovery 2015](#)

[A Renewed Call to Reconciliation 2021](#)

[ELCIC Resolution on Encouraging Right Relationships with Indigenous Peoples 2011](#)

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

[Repudiation Doctrine of Discovery SPR16.pdf \(elca.org\)](#)

[March 2017: Doctrine of Discovery - Journal of Lutheran Ethics \(elca.org\)](#)

[Dismantling the Doctrine of Discovery | Rocky Mountain Synod \(rmselca.org\)](#)

The Anglican Church of Canada

[Doctrine of Discovery: Stolen lands, Strong Hearts - The Anglican Church of Canada](#)

The Episcopal Church

[Doctrine of Discovery Archives – The Episcopal Church](#)