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The Gospel of Conquest: 2015 Collins Lecture will explore Native Americans, Christianity and the Doctrine of Discovery

Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO) presents the 2015 Collins Lecture, “The Gospel of Conquest: Native Americans, Christianity and the Doctrine of Discovery,” on Thursday, Nov. 19, at Trinity Episcopal Cathedral, 147 NW 19th Ave., Portland, Ore. The day-long seminar will run from 10 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. There will be an additional evening lecture presentation from 7 to 9 p.m.

It’s not about discovery, it’s about domination

Little-known papal edicts issued in the 1400s granted European Christians dominion over all the lands in all the world occupied by non-Christians, stating that any land not inhabited by Christians was available to be “discovered,” claimed and exploited by Christian rulers. This principle came to be known as the Doctrine of Discovery and was used as justification for seizing the rich resources of the Americas.

The Western Hemisphere was home to tens of millions of First Peoples when European settlers arrived, but less than a century later the number had dropped by 95 percent—a survival rate of one in 20.

Now a principle of United States law

Those Natives who remained were stripped of their language, livelihoods and property under legal systems based on the Doctrine of Discovery, which was incorporated into United States law in 1923 in the U.S. Supreme Court decision *Johnson v. McIntosh*, effectively denying Native Americans their rights to property and independence.

The Doctrine of Discovery was cited by the U.S. Supreme Court as recently as 2005 to support decisions invalidating or ignoring Native possession of land and natural resources.

A faithful response

How do we as people of faith respond to this injustice? Three noted Native American scholar-activists—legal expert Robert Miller, theologian George “Tink” Tinker, and cultural historian Kim Recalma-Clutesi— will provide the background and lay the groundwork for an in-depth exploration of the Doctrine of Discovery and its continued influence on relations among church, tribe and state.

This will be more than an academic seminar; it will be an opportunity for spiritual growth. Protocol will be observed with a formal invitation from local Native representatives to the speakers and an exchange of gifts. Story, song and prayer will be woven into the day’s proceedings, creating a sacred space with room for reflection about issues that are emotionally and intellectually charged. Participants will be invited to consider: “What did I hear?” “What does it mean?” and “What can I do?”

Among the goals of this experiential learning event are deeper connection with one another and plans for positive action.

About the speakers

Robert J. Miller is professor of law at Arizona State University. He is an expert on federal Indian law, American Indians and international law, and American Indian economic development and natural resources. An enrolled citizen of the Eastern Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma, he is chief justice of the Court of Appeals for Oregon’s Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde. His book, *Native America: Discovered and Conquered*, proposes that Thomas Jefferson utilized Discovery principles in conceiving and launching the Lewis & Clark expedition to secure America’s claim to the Pacific Northwest.

George “Tink” Tinker is professor of American Indian Cultures and Religious traditions at the Iliff School of Theology, Denver, Colo. An enrolled member of the Osage Nation, he has been an activist and spiritual leader in urban American Indian communities for many years. He is interested in liberating both Indian people from their historic oppression and White Americans from their role as oppressors. Tinker is the author of *Missionary Conquest: The Gospel and Native American Genocide*.

Kim Recalma-Clutesi received the Ecotrust Indigenous Leadership Award for her work as an activist, political organizer, cross-cultural interpreter, reporter, photographer and historian. She has devoted her life to learning, teaching, interpreting and preserving the Kwagiulth/Pentlatch culture of

her people, whom she served as elected Chief in British Columbia. She is an expert on intellectual property rights and successfully advocated for the revision of Canadian policies on repatriating sacred artifacts.

Registration details

The registration fee for the Seminar and Lecture (includes lunch and dinner provided by Native American Youth and Family Center) is \$60 general and \$30 for Native Americans or Students (to cover the cost of the meals). There is limited capacity for the seminar; registration will close on Nov. 11 or sooner if capacity is reached. To attend the evening lecture only, the cost is \$25 general, \$15 students, and no cost for Native Americans. Learn more and register securely online at emoregon.org or call the EMO office at (503) 221-1054.

Event sponsors

The annual Collins Lectures have been a signature event of EMO and its predecessor organization the Portland Council of Churches since 1967. Sponsored by the Collins Foundation, the series explores contemporary issues related to religion, ethics and social justice.

This year's event cosponsors include the Central Pacific Conference of the United Church of Christ, Christian Church (Disciples) of Christ in Oregon and SW Idaho, Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, Eloheh Village for Indigenous Leadership Development (Eagle's Wings Ministry), Episcopal Diocese of Eastern Oregon, First Unitarian Church in Portland, Gorge Ecumenical Ministries, Linfield College, Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, Oregonians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty, Pacific University Center for Peace and Spirituality, and the Presbyterian Church (USA) - Presbytery of the Cascades.

Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon is a statewide association of Christian, congregations, ecumenical organizations and interfaith partners working together to improve the lives of Oregonians through community ministry programs, ecumenical and interreligious dialogue, environmental ministry and public policy advocacy.