

S03E03 - Indigenous Advocacy and Climate Change: A Conversation with Evie Reyes-Aguirre

Jordan Brady Loewen-Colon ([00:07](#)):

Hello, and welcome to the Mapping the Doctrine of Discovery Podcast. The producers of this podcast would like to acknowledge with respect the Onondaga Nation, Firekeepers of the Haudenosaunee, the Indigenous peoples on whose ancestral lands Syracuse University now stands. And now, introducing your hosts, Phil Arnold and Sandy Bigtree.

Philip P. Arnold ([00:30](#)):

Welcome back to Mapping the Doctrine of Discovery. My name's Phil Arnold. I'm a faculty in the religion department at Syracuse University, and founding director of the Skä·noñh Great Law of Peace Center, and...

Sandy Bigtree ([00:44](#)):

And I'm Sandy Bigtree, a citizen of Mohawk Nation at Akwesasne, on the Academic Collaborative Committee, and also on the board of the Indigenous Values Initiative. We're glad to have you back.

Philip P. Arnold ([00:58](#)):

The podcast is sponsored by the Henry Luce Foundation. Today, we're super excited to have Eve Reyes-Aguirre. Evie is an Izkaloteka Azteca Indigenous woman who has been a community organizer at Tonatierra, an embassy for Indigenous peoples, for over 25 years. In that time, Evie has been at the forefront in advocating for human rights, women's rights, Indigenous peoples' rights, and environmental rights on the local, national, and international levels. Evie has worked tirelessly to bring awareness to the political, social, economic, and environmental challenges affecting Indigenous peoples globally. She's also organized at the grassroots level, regionally and locally, to strengthen traditional identity, equality, and wellbeing of Indigenous women, Indigenous peoples, and the protection of water and the environment. Evie has represented her community annually at the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. She has served the Global Indigenous Women's Caucus as co-chair and/or Rapporteur since 2009. In April of 2013, Evie was a co-organizer of the First International Conference on Dismantling the Doctrine of Discovery held in Phoenix, Arizona, with over 430 Indigenous participants from all over the globe.

Sandy Bigtree ([02:28](#)):

It's good to see you. We know Evie. We've seen her many times at the United Nations Permanent Forum for the rights of Indigenous peoples, so we've been... It's just such an overwhelming gathering of Indigenous people from all over the world, so challenging to get that message heard at the UN, and you work tirelessly writing these documents-

Philip P. Arnold ([02:55](#)):

It's not easy work, as we all know. We really appreciate your being a real leader at the United Nations in this regard.

Eve Reyes-Aguirre ([03:08](#)):

Thank you.

Philip P. Arnold ([03:08](#)):

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Can you just catch us up where we are with the international work and what you're doing there at Tonatierra?

Eve Reyes-Aguirre ([03:16](#)):

Absolutely. Well, thank you both for having me. It's a real honor to be a part of the podcast. Tonatierra has continued to work tirelessly around bringing awareness around the doctrine of discovery. As you mentioned, it's been 10 years since our gathering on the dismantling the doctrine of discovery, and now we're looking at moving into the next phase around awareness and what we're calling and we're coining as superseding the doctrine of discovery. We've come to a point where we've educated people on what the doctrine is, and it's wonderful to see so many people now becoming aware about the doctrine of discovery. There's more interest, there's more studies, there's more information, both on the grassroots level and around the effects of the doctrine, but also on the academic level, where we're looking at various lawsuits and information that's coming out that just proves that the doctrine is still affecting Indigenous peoples to this day.

[\(04:43\)](#):

I think people tend to have the attitude of it all happened in the past, this was such a long time ago, it's not relevant anymore, but those of us who are affected by it, we absolutely know that it is. It's wonderful that the conference is happening, that all of the conferences that are going on by various people are bringing awareness to make that connection, and to have people know that there is still work being done around it and why it's important that we dismantle it, and now, moving into the next phase, focus on what superseding this doctrine is going to look like. As you mentioned, that conference was 10 years ago, and Tonatierra, since 1990, has been participating in continental encounters with Indigenous nations globally. There's been five summits since the 1990 gathering where we get together as Indigenous nations and talk about strategies and how we can work together on various issues, not just the doctrine of discovery and dismantling it, but also all of the issues that Indigenous peoples face globally.

[\(06:08\)](#):

One thing that I think is important to note is working on the international level, you get to understand how Indigenous peoples have so much in common globally. The issues that we're facing here as Indigenous peoples in North America are very similar issues that our relatives are experiencing in the south, in Africa and Asia, in all parts of the world. I think the work that we do at the UN, yes, it's very intense and it's very difficult, but it's also very empowering knowing that we're coming together and we're working to share best practices and to figure out how we can navigate the system, the UN system, our own local systems, and figure out how we can collaborate and work together and support each other's work. This coming year, in just September, we had a gathering here in Phoenix, Arizona, and we had a lot of our relatives coming to visit.

[\(07:22\)](#):

One of the goals of superseding the doctrine is to bring us together in a spiritual way. What that looks like is going back to the roots of our understandings as Indigenous peoples and the cycles of life. In this case, we're talking about the equinoxes, we're talking about the solstice times. Those are very sacred times for Indigenous peoples, and it's something that we share globally. Our focus is not to just look at the work, that is absolutely important, but it's also to be together as one spiritually and ceremonially. What we're calling the [foreign language 00:08:06], the time of those solstices and those equinoxes, we are sharing in ceremony with our relatives from all over the globe. We're asking them that they be in ceremony with us at that time in their respective communities.

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[\(08:24\)](#):

This last September, we were very fortunate to have our relatives from the Yaqui community in the south, we had our relatives from the Yaqui community in the north, we had our Lakota relatives join us, we had our Shoshone relatives join us in Phoenix, and as well as our Maya and Aztec relatives. It was a beautiful time, and knowing that our relatives from other parts of the world were sharing in that sacred time with us for that ceremony is something that we see as superseding that doctrine. We're staying strong together, we're praying spiritually together, and that's part of the work in dismantling and superseding this doctrine.

Sandy Bigtree [\(09:08\)](#):

It is the environment that connects you all, and the natural world and the cosmos. It's grueling work, indeed because traditional people have always been silenced by colonialism, and so trying to forge ahead and make these connections among Indigenous people is very difficult work, and I credit you with that. We see that at the UN. When people gather, they're suffering in the same ways because multinational corporations are going in there and destroying their cultures and destroying the environment, and often forcing them to flee their territories. If we could get the root as to why there are so many immigrants around the world fleeing their countries, maybe we could start solving some of these issues, but they're not able to exist freely as Indigenous peoples.

Philip P. Arnold [\(10:06\)](#):

That's one of the areas that you're doing the best work, really, on the border working with Indigenous peoples that are having to flee. Maybe you could talk about that a little bit, too, because people just don't realize that these aren't Spanish-speaking people. That's not their first language. These are the people that you are engaged with, you kind of know what's happening there, and I think our audience would like to hear more about that.

Sandy Bigtree [\(10:34\)](#):

Yeah. Why would Indigenous people want to flee their homeland when their environment, their land, identifies who they are, so something is really wrong?

Eve Reyes-Aguirre [\(10:45\)](#):

Absolutely. That's the hardest part. With mainstream media, they're not giving the entire story of what's happening with our relatives in the south. They like to demonize them and use them as scapegoats. They have this narrative around these people are coming and taking our jobs and they're putting a burden on our healthcare system, and all of these things that are not true. No one ever asks the question, "Why? Why is it that our relatives are coming from the south? What is it that's happening?" I think Western society has this way of putting Band-aids on issues and not really addressing them at the root cause, and this is one of those situations. Our relatives that are coming from the south, they don't want to leave their homes. Just like us here in the north, we're connected to our homes, we're connected to our land, we're connected to our neighborhoods.

[\(11:50\)](#):

I try to explain that to our non-Indigenous relatives, when you grow up in a home or a neighborhood and you move away, and you come back and you feel this nostalgia and you feel something, you feel something, that's that connection that you have to the land. That's something that Indigenous peoples, that's their whole being is their connection to their land. Unfortunately, through doctrines, like the

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doctrine of discovery, where land is a big thing, a big commodity, they see it as a commodity. Like our sister says, Tonya Gonnella Frichner, Mother Earth is not a commodity, she's a relative. She is our mother, she takes care of us, and that connection is not something that Indigenous people want broken. They don't want to leave their homes. They literally come with a backpack, and whatever they can fit in that backpack is what they have.

[\(12:54\)](#):

What happens is people don't recognize that these doctrines are what guide a lot of the principles of these colonizing states, and they develop trade agreements. For example, the USMCA, or the North American Free Trade Agreement is what it was once known as before, really displaced a lot of Indigenous peoples, and it continues to do so with the renewal. Part of that, and I don't think people understand that, is the government of Mexico needs to free up land in order for these other countries, the US and Canada, to come in and work and establish their corporations there, and the land that they go after belongs to Indigenous peoples. Of course, we also have Canadian mining companies that are also looking at natural resources in Mexico and further south, as you all know, in the Amazon, which is a wealth of resources. They are trying to tap into that through these false solutions like red and carbon credit capturing, which we all know that is a false solution to climate change.

[\(14:20\)](#):

What happens is these people are displaced, they're forcefully removed, and a lot of times, they are murdered and assassinated for defending their lands, their territories, and their waters from these hydroelectric companies, from the mining companies. When they do come here, they don't necessarily speak Spanish. A lot of times, these are smaller communities, Indigenous communities, that don't have that understanding of what's happening. All they know is that they have to leave in order to survive. I think there's this misconception that the people that are migrating north are just coming here to make a better life. Really, it's not to make a better life, it's to have a life. It's to survive. It's a survival situation.

[\(15:21\)](#):

A lot of times, we work with these communities and it's even difficult for us because sometimes they come from areas where only a small population speak their language, and we have to reach out to other relatives and sister organizations to help us with interpretation, because they're not given the information that they need to be successful in this country through the refugee process to have a successful way of living here. They're dropped off, literally dropped off, with information on court and processes only in English, and they don't understand what it is, so we have to help guide them and make sure that they understand what their responsibilities are for their next steps. Unfortunately, they leave, and we're a stopping point for their next destination. It's really difficult to ensure that there's follow-up.

[\(16:27\)](#):

But the main thing is that people don't understand that these people don't want to leave their homes. They're being forcefully removed. They're being forcefully displaced. Believe me, they do not want to be working in the fields in North America for \$6 an hour, and here in Arizona, in excruciating heat. This last summer, we lost four farm workers, Indigenous farm workers with families, because of heat exhaustion and heat stroke. It's very difficult because the issues don't end once they cross the border. The advocacy continues on here to ensure that they have the exact same rights that the rest of us do, and one of them is the right to worker protections, which unfortunately, the system here and corporations and businesses take advantage of the fact that they don't have these rights, and so they tend to exploit their people, the Indigenous people from the south.

Sandy Bigtree [\(17:36\)](#):

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Well, this goes right back since first contact, the Spaniards coming in and reciting to them in Spanish, a language they couldn't understand, that they were going to have to accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, and then they proceed to just topple every sacred site and use the rubble to create churches. To survive through that kind of trauma over hundreds of hundreds of years and to still have to deal with this, it's just never-ending. It's never-ending.

Philip P. Arnold ([18:10](#)):

Yeah. It must be a tremendous diversity of people that you're working with, too. I think of the countless languages in Mexico, in Central America, in Latin America, Indigenous languages, variations of Nawat, different dialects, Maya, there's a tremendous diversity which you deal with on a daily basis, Tonatierra. For all of you listening, I would urge you to donate to Tonatierra because their work really is very important for sustaining these communities across the border.

Sandy Bigtree ([18:52](#)):

Yeah, grassroots. Absolutely.

Philip P. Arnold ([18:55](#)):

Yeah. Can you talk more about the NAHUACALLI and what it's like and what life is like there? What's the ceremonial life of the NAHUACALLI?

Eve Reyes-Aguirre ([19:09](#)):

Absolutely. Well, one of the things about our organization is we are community-based and directed. The work that we do at the NAHUACALLI, which means the House of the Four Directions in our language, Nawat, and really is the foundation for the embassy that we house at the NAHUACALLI. Tonatierra is our organization, the NAHUACALLI is the name of the place that we have there. We've been very blessed to be able to own and operate that completely by our Indigenous community, but the work that we do there is definitely an international endeavor. We continue to host our relatives, we continue to have ceremonial gatherings and strategic planning gatherings there at the NAHUACALLI.

([20:10](#)):

It's a beautiful thing, because when we do our international work and we are forced to work in these various governmental arenas to advocate for our rights, we're always working on their agenda, and here at the NAHUACALLI, we're able to set our own agenda. We're able to work in the way that we know our ancestors did together. We're able to work with respect, we're able to make those spiritual connections, and we're able to share in ceremony and take a moment during the work that we're having to recognize those spirits and to recognize the ceremonial and the important part of the spiritual work because it goes hand in hand. People don't like to, they say, "Oh, well, we don't like to mix spiritual and political," but just as an Indigenous person and existing as such, you are political, you are a political thing, and so the work we're doing there is phenomenal.

([21:18](#)):

We have so many various projects where we're working with our relatives on the international level to work towards superseding the doctrine, to work towards addressing genocide, addressing climate change, and of course, environmental rights, the territorial integrity of Mother Earth, so that work continues, and then we still have our local community that needs us. Currently, we've been able to work directly with Indigenous farm workers that weren't receiving any assistance or help. These are families that work all day long in the excruciating heat to put food on the table nationally, and they have very

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little access to that same food that they're picking and packaging, and so Tonatierra this year has taken on the work of doing a foods distribution for our Indigenous farm workers.

[\(22:21\)](#):

In the last, I want to say seven months, we've been able to feed over 2,000 families. We work on a monthly basis doing that, and it's been incredible. Every month, we get more and more families that are hearing about it and are coming out. We have amazing partnerships with Arizona State University and local communities, AZ Land, others that are trying to support the work we're doing and helping with this particular project in feeding farm workers, and just amazing people that have come forward. It's very promising because now in the state of Arizona, there's a lot of talk around food sovereignty and Indigenous food sovereignty, and making sure that there are culturally appropriate foods available for Indigenous communities. There is a lot of buzz around it and a lot of other Indigenous nations that are working with us collectively to form coalition to continue that work and support each other, so it's been a very wonderful experience.

Jordan Brady Loewen-Colon [\(23:42\)](#):

Do you need help catching up on today's topic or do you want to learn more about the resources mentioned? If so, please check out our website at podcast.doctrineofdiscovery.org for more information. If you liked this episode, review it on Apple, Spotify, or wherever you listen to podcasts. And now, back to the conversation.

Sandy Bigtree [\(24:03\)](#):

It's all encompassing. We look to the Haudenosaunee and being able to have sustained this matrilineal clan system of representation since prior to colonialism, we always get critiqued that we are not a religion. We don't see ourselves as having a separate religion. We are who we are. Our identity comes from the land. There is no separation. You're connecting to the regenerative force of Mother Earth in all that you do, so you have to take that stand, you have to represent the land, you have to represent each other. That's not government, that's not religion. It's who we are as human beings. What you're saying is, yeah-

Philip P. Arnold [\(24:52\)](#):

I think that supersedes the doctrine of discovery.

Sandy Bigtree [\(24:53\)](#):

Yes, it does.

Eve Reyes-Aguirre [\(24:58\)](#):

Absolutely. Absolutely. It's funny that conversations I've had just recently about spirituality and religion, and as you know, there's a religious war happening in Gaza with Palestine, and of course, that is affecting Indigenous peoples, I think. In our hearts, we're seeing the genocide happening, and it definitely is bringing up historical trauma, I think. In our community, we definitely mourn with the lives that are being lost, and understanding that history and seeing it play out in real time, it's a difficult thing to watch. It's one thing to read it in history books, and it's something else to see it playing out.

[\(25:49\)](#):

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But the conversations around religion and just the misconceptions of what it means to be so and having that understanding of creation, it boggles my brain sometimes, because I think as an Indigenous person, it's so simple when it comes to creation and our creator is the Mother Earth. That's our connection. She is what most religions would call God. We had this conversation of when people think about God, they envision a man. They talk about he, and how is it that this spiritual entity has a gender? Of course, we can go down that rabbit hole for hours, but it really comes back to why we're so passionate about doing the work around climate change and environmentalism, because the whole foundation of who we are is our Mother Earth, and the reason why we exist is because of her.

[\(27:01\)](#):

Spiritually, we say we're born from one mother into another. Our mother feeds us in her womb and she takes care of us and she keeps us warm. When we're born and birthed into this world, we depend on our Mother Earth for that, to keep us warm with her fire, to keep us fed with her food, to keep us nourished with her water as a medicine, and all of the plants and medicines that we need to survive. When we talk about religion and spirituality for Indigenous peoples, it is the Mother Earth, and that's why we are at the forefront of fighting against climate change, because it's not just a planet to us. It's our creator, it's our creation, it's everything, and so that work that we're doing around climate change is so instrumental and necessary when we're talking about advocacy.

Sandy Bigtree [\(28:05\)](#):

Mother Earth is real. It's not a faith that Mother Earth exists somewhere. We are being sustained by Mother Earth.

Eve Reyes-Aguirre [\(28:15\)](#):

I think people don't understand that we're not fighting for our own communities. Yes, we are, but we're fighting for the human community at this point, because we all depend on Mother Earth for everything. I think there's such a disconnect when it comes to that very simple understanding. It's also important that talking about the work around climate change and the work that we're doing internationally, I think even the UN's own experts are saying what we've been saying since time immemorial, we have to take care of our planet. We have to take care of our Mother Earth.

[\(29:10\)](#):

Even going to the UN for as long as we have, starting with our elders back when the UN was the League of Nations, and seeing our elders like Oren Lyons and others that have been there, Thomas Banyacya, and the way that they have paved that road for us to continue to go down, fighting for our mother at that level has only now become important to the United Nations, because now they're starting to see, through the studies that their own experts are conducting, they are saying the same thing that we've been saying all this time. The Synthesis Report that came out earlier this year that was put out by, let's see, it was the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, if you look through that report, it says, I will give you a little quote from it, "Cooperation and inclusive decision-making with Indigenous peoples and recognition of their inherent rights is integral to successful adaptation and mitigation across forests and ecosystems."

[\(30:29\)](#):

Their own experts are saying that Indigenous peoples have that knowledge of how to live in balance because we've done it, we had been doing it. In the last 500 years, we have seen this drastic change in our climate, even in the last 100, who are we kidding, in the last 10 years, we've seen the devastating effects of overuse and over everything that these governmental societies are doing to our planet, with

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only the thought of making more money at the front of that whole fight, so it doesn't make sense to me how these corporations and these governmental powers don't take this situation more seriously. We are at the end of our rope, and Mother Earth is making it known.

Philip P. Arnold ([31:29](#)):

As Oren says, the Earth is probably better off without us, and we're not really working on the destruction of the world, we're really working on our own destruction when we're involved in such extractive economies, the burning of fossil fuels and the poisoning of the water. We can live without fossil fuels. We can't live without water. It's just as simple as that. If there's a silver lining here, I hesitate to say that, but when it comes to the doctrine of discovery, it is a unifying issue. It is a horrible thing to go over. It's traumatic. It can be triggering for a lot of people. So many settler colonial people are really looking at that legacy, even within their own religions, the repudiations of the doctrine of discovery from various religious organizations, so it is a spiritual problem in many ways, but it's also a unifying problem. That's one of the things that we've come to appreciate.

([32:49](#)):

There's so many different constituencies that are kind of... The doctrine of discovery sort of helps pinpoint, in certain ways, the legacy of the trauma of the problem, and when students, for example, begin to understand that they can release their own feelings of inadequacy or somehow put it into its proper place, it's not something that's their fault. It's something that they have inherited in various ways, but an awareness of this problem helps them to deal with it, and that's what some of this conference is going to be dedicated to. I just wonder how you feel about the doctrine of discovery. Where are the roots of this conundrum? We could talk about religion, law, land, economic activity, it's all of those things simultaneously. I wonder how you or Tonatierra thinks about the doctrine of discovery. It's really just this multidimensional kind of issue that is connected with settler colonialism.

Eve Reyes-Aguirre ([34:13](#)):

Absolutely, absolutely. I think it's important that our younger generations understand how the doctrine affected Indigenous peoples globally, but also understanding, like you said, that root connection, that root cause, of really a lot of the issues that we're facing today, not just as Indigenous peoples, but as a human race. But I think once they have the understanding, it's almost like you addressing issues of the root cause, being more mindful and recognizing how it has affected us and brought us to this point in time. Like you say, one of the things that my elder, Tupac Enrique Acosta, always says is we also have to take into consideration how colonization has affected the colonizers, because these young people, I see a lot of guilt and heaviness in their heart, and genuine love to try and help and fix the situation.

([35:31](#)):

Some of our best allies are our non-Indigenous relatives, and so being able to educate in a way that is effective, in a way that opens up opportunities for not making the same mistakes, in a way that is inclusive of Indigenous peoples addressing the doctrine. One of the things that Tonatierra is working on is developing a curriculum around the doctrine of discovery, around environmentalism, around Indigeneity, and making all of those connections, because we are past the point of our school systems teaching our children about Columbus Day and honoring that. We are past that, I think, as parents, as grandparents. We've seen the shift, we've seen it happen, and it's happened over a long period of time, but it's happening. Now, about 10 years ago, my son, who's 19 now, was in, I believe fifth grade, and his teacher had a module on the doctrine of discovery. I was completely shocked.

([36:51](#)):

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I was completely shocked, because it wasn't anything our organization initiated, which we have done. I think as young teachers, they are learning and they're trying to teach the younger generations, but with that learning also comes the responsibility of ensuring that you're learning the right information. The reason why that's so important is because I think about the work that we do on the international level and the work at the UN around climate change, and I see that there are false solutions that are being pushed. We're not turning a blind eye to that. We see that. I think it's important for the wider population to understand that when you hear about climate change solutions and things that the United Nations, or even the government states, are doing, it's important to ask the questions, are Indigenous peoples being protected when these climate solutions are being implemented?

[\(38:04\)](#):

What we're finding out, in the last two years of work that we've been doing at the UN, is they are not. There are communities that are being displaced in the name of climate mitigation. For an example, there is a community in Mexico who was displaced from their territory because the government wanted to come in and put a wind turbine farm on their territory, so yes, government is doing something, but yes, they are also continuing to harm Indigenous peoples in the name of basically doing what they say. This is what you're asking from us, but we're not asking for our rights to be trampled on. We're not asking for further colonization. We're not asking for further displacement that is rooted in the doctrine of discovery. We're not asking for false climate solutions. We're asking for real solutions, and we have the knowledge, we have the traditional knowledge, the ancestral knowledge to help with that, and their own experts are saying so.

Philip P. Arnold [\(39:21\)](#):

That's very powerful. Why is it that settler colonial people just cannot hear the obvious, right? That's part of what we're involved with, right?

Sandy Bigtree [\(39:36\)](#):

Well, they came here to take the resources. Indigenous people were in the way, then they had to convince everyone that Indigenous people were worthless, on the scale of manifest destiny. They were at the bottom rung, so you have to, first of all, educate the populace that Indigenous people are useless, because they need to get at the real value here, the resources that are in the land. Non-Native people really have lost a lot, and there's so much ancient knowledge among Indigenous people that can still be of value to turn this around. Who gives anyone the right to come in and say, "I'm going to reroute this river"?

Eve Reyes-Aguirre [\(40:20\)](#):

Absolutely. Absolutely.

Sandy Bigtree [\(40:22\)](#):

There are so many ecosystems attached to that river and all of the tributaries filtering off it. Who gives the right? The doctrine of discovery gave them the right to do that. It's crazy.

Eve Reyes-Aguirre [\(40:34\)](#):

Absolutely. One of the other things that we're seeing in regards to this false climate situation is the idea of these electric vehicles. Mind you, yes, we're not using gas and we're trying to move away from that, but in order to power these vehicles, you need lithium, and with lithium comes another resource that

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Indigenous people have on their territories that are now being looked at. For example, our relatives from the Western Shoshone in the Nevada area, the colonizers saw their territory as a wasteland. That's what they called it, and so they left them alone, and then they started to do these gradual encroachments into their territory. Now, the Biden administration is putting out permits for lithium mining on their territory.

[\(41:32\)](#):

This goes back again to the contamination of the waterways and their way of life and their ecosystems. Again, like you said, Sandy, where do they get this right? It's this mentality, it's this psychoanalytical mentality that they have that they have this right to do so because that doctrine gave them that. It's just this feeling, and we're seeing it happen. We're seeing it happen in Israel with the Palestinian people. We're seeing it happen all throughout North America with the rights of Indigenous peoples to their waters and territories with these corporations and mining companies and fossil fuel industries, so it's this ongoing cycle. I think the important part is for our younger generation to not be fooled by these false solutions, to ask those questions, to find out are these solutions really solutions, or are they going to further harm us as human beings?

Philip P. Arnold [\(42:40\)](#):

Unfortunately, I think it's a divine right, they feel as if it is a right given to them by God. I'm speaking from my own kind of ancestral perspective as a settler colonial person, because that's the most pernicious. That's what we see operative in the Congress today, this notion that as the title... We saw Oren Lyons yesterday and I handed him the card of the conference, and he just laughed over that, because it was the religious origins of white supremacy. Really, that's what we're talking about here. It's not just a kind of divine right to mine, to exploit the world in various ways to make money, but it's really the origins of a kind of notion of white supremacy here. That, to him, was getting right at it, I think, and it was bold. As we have in the past had these conferences, the hardest conversations are between committed Christians who are trying to do the right thing and Indigenous peoples, and oftentimes they just can't be in the same room together. But I think that is really the core of what we really need to address, get a conversation that makes sense.

Sandy Bigtree [\(44:23\)](#):

When your theology is based on good conquering evil, it's based on warfare, it's based on conquering and holding dominion over everything. Where do you start to whittle that away?

Eve Reyes-Aguirre [\(44:42\)](#):

I'm hoping that the answer to that is with our younger generations. They are our future leaders, and I feel very responsible to make sure that I do everything in my power to educate our young people on the realities and the root causes, with the doctrine of discovery as the foundation and the root of all of our issues that we're facing, so absolutely, I have hope with our young people, and I've seen them. I've seen them getting engaged and involved in marches and politics, not by choice, but because they also see it and they also feel it. In Phoenix, mind you, it's always hot in Phoenix, our temperatures are always over 100 degrees, but in this last year, it has been the most extreme weather we've ever had. We need to figure out locally how we can survive, because I think there was something that was mentioned this summer about if the power grid was to fail, there would be a lot of people that would lose their lives from the heat, the extreme heat, in our city.

[\(46:16\)](#):

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In an urban environment in this day and age we're talking about, if that grid went down, it's inhabitable. We cannot live there without air conditioning, because it's just so, so extreme. I think our young people know it, they feel it, they see it, at least here locally. I do see nationally, as well, and even internationally, these young people are stepping up. I'm always proud of our young folks that go to the UN and are continuing to fight every year, because their voices, as you both know, when they speak, everybody stops and listens, so I have a lot of hope. I think bringing in students and educating them on this doctrine and the root causes of our issues is absolutely fundamental and instrumental in moving in a good direction.

Philip P. Arnold ([47:17](#)):

That's tremendous. That just seems like a great place to end our conversation. Evie, I want to just-

Sandy Bigtree ([47:25](#)):

Thank you so much for all the work you do, just tireless energy in this extreme heat.

Eve Reyes-Aguirre ([47:34](#)):

Thank you all for continuing to host these conferences and bring awareness. It's very, very important. I know our community, our larger community, really appreciates the way that you are all continuing to take the lead and making sure that we're addressing this situation at the root cause.

Jordan Brady Loewen-Colon ([48:03](#)):

The producers of this podcast were Adam DJ Brett and Jordan Loewen-Colón. Our intro and outro is Social Dancing Music by Orris Edwards and Regis Cook. This podcast is funded in collaboration with the Henry Luce Foundation, Syracuse University and Hendricks Chapel, and the Indigenous Values Initiative. If you liked this episode, please check out our website and make sure to subscribe.