

S04E04: Reckoning with the Legacy of Colonization:
A Dialogue on Native American Erasure and Resilience with Tink Tinker

Jordan Brady Loewen-Colón ([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 ([00:32](#)):

Welcome back everyone to Mapping the Doctrine of Discovery. My name is Phil Arnold. I'm faculty in the religion department at Syracuse University for faculty in Native American Indigenous studies and the founding director of the Skä•noñh - Great Law Peace Center.

Sandy Bigtree ([00:49](#)):

And I'm Sandy Bigtree, a citizen of the Mohawk Nation at Akwesasne. I'm on the collaborative of the Indigenous Values Initiative and the Skä•noñh - Great Law Peace Center.

Philip P. Arnold ([01:02](#)):

And we're brought to you today by the Henry Luce Foundation who are supporting these podcasts and this work, and the Doctrine of Discovery really appreciate the Henry Luce Foundation. Today, we're blessed really to have an old friend with us, Professor Tink Tinker, who has been a stalwart in Native American issues for decades and decades. And one of the primary features of his work has always been on the excesses of Christianity among Native American peoples. So Tink, thanks for coming and I'll let you introduce yourself to our audience.

Tink Tinker ([01:52](#)):

Always good to be with both of you, Sandy and Phil. [inaudible 00:01:57] would say [foreign language 00:01:58]. I'm a citizen of the Osage Nation and belong to the Eagle Clan. That's how I position myself whenever I speak and people need know who I am in order to put what I have to say in context. I'm also the emeritus professor of American Indian Studies at Iliff School of Theology, a Christian institution with inter-religious interests. Of course, a fairly liberal school. But even as a liberal school, they had to figure out whether to hang on to me when I renounced Christianity after I wrote *Missionary Conquest: American Indians and the Genocide of the Gospel*.

Philip P. Arnold ([02:59](#)):

And that was about 30 years ago, something like that.

Tink Tinker ([03:02](#)):

Exactly, 31 years ago. Yeah.

Philip P. Arnold ([03:05](#)):

Wow, great book.

Tink Tinker ([03:07](#)):

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1993. But once I wrote that book, I knew I could no longer profess that Christian myth. It no longer hung together for me. There were so many worldview differences, pulling Indians and white Christians in different directions. Christianity is first and foremost, at least if you believe Martin Luther. How about the salvation of the individual soul? Justification by faith, right?

Sandy Bigtree ([03:46](#)):

Right.

Tink Tinker ([03:49](#)):

For American Indian people, it's never about me. It's always about community, all about the whole. And that's the first big tension that you have to move beyond in order to make that Christian confession that the colonizer and all the missionaries pressed Indian people to do from the very beginning. From John Eliot in Massachusetts to all the other missionaries I talk about, four of them, in *Missionary Conquest*. All of them really good at what they did. And what they did more than anything else was function to destroy American Indians, grasp on their own worldview and replace it with a Christian worldview. As one commissioner of American Indian Affairs said in the middle of the 19th century, we must teach Indians to say mine instead of ours, me instead of us, I instead of we. That says it all in a nutshell. So that's who I am.

Philip P. Arnold ([05:23](#)):

Wonderful. And of course, when we talk about the community talking about all the natural world, right? All of the other than human beings as well as human beings in our community.

Tink Tinker ([05:40](#)):

Yes and no. My caveat would be we have no word for nature in [foreign language 00:05:44]. That's one of those nominal abstractions. It works for white people like that, but has no meaning in an Indian world because all people are related to me. All people has to be inclusive of, as you said, other than just human beings.

Sandy Bigtree ([06:11](#)):

It was amazing with how little time it took the Jesuits and the early missionaries to change the orientation of native people and the way they were thinking. And they used such brutal force to accomplish that. And so they knew what would be effective. And because it must've played out in Europe, they must've been doing this to all the indigenous people in Europe as well because everyone has indigenous ancestors at some point. But when they came here, they knew exactly what they were doing and exactly whom to target.

Tink Tinker ([06:48](#)):

I suspect that's right, Sandy. We don't know of course, because the Christians did such a great job of erasing indigenous people in Europe. And they're still there, even some is in the way north, and we have pockets of people trying to reclaim their pagan selves in the rest of Europe, especially in England say, or in the UK.

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Sandy Bigtree ([07:20](#)):

I think in a large part, they have such an interest in Native American history and being indigenous that they hold powwows all over Europe, and they wanted-

Tink Tinker ([07:35](#)):

Yeah, Germany.

Sandy Bigtree ([07:35](#)):

To claim in Germany and Lithuania and Russia even. And they've lost their own connection to their own heritage and they're just having this need to try to reclaim something in their DNA, I think.

Philip P. Arnold ([07:51](#)):

Yeah, we went to something like that in Karl May's hometown. There was a big Native American festival. We had to check it out. It was really the strangest experience.

Sandy Bigtree ([08:05](#)):

It was so strange.

Tink Tinker ([08:07](#)):

I've been there.

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

Have you?

Tink Tinker ([08:09](#)):

Yeah.

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

Isn't that something?

Tink Tinker ([08:13](#)):

Yeah.

Philip P. Arnold ([08:13](#)):

It's an enthusiasm that I don't know really what to make of it. It's an enthusiasm for dressing up as native people. They bring native people over. We know some Haudenosaunee dancers that had come over there.

Sandy Bigtree ([08:30](#)):

Yeah, but they're managed.

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Philip P. Arnold ([08:32](#)):

In previous years.

Sandy Bigtree ([08:33](#)):

They're managed. They can only perform in a certain location. But the main show is reserved for the Germans who dress up like Plains Indians. It's just the most bizarre thing.

Philip P. Arnold ([08:47](#)):

I took lots of pictures.

Tink Tinker ([08:49](#)):

One of my mentors was Joe Eagle Elk, Sicangu Lakota from Rosebud. Joe went over to [inaudible 00:09:02] tree in southwest Germany. There was a group of Indian hobbyists who were doing exactly that, and they have a village there that they occupy in the summer. And all of these German families take their summer vacation. And if they don't come to the US to visit reservations, they go to this Indian village and they spend their one month of vacation living like Plains Indians.

Sandy Bigtree ([09:37](#)):

Isn't that something?

Tink Tinker ([09:41](#)):

Joanne had him do some talking about his people when he was there and he came back, he said, "Tink, they do better beadwork than we do."

Sandy Bigtree ([09:54](#)):

Academics will write about the histories of Native Americans. And many times there'll be a critique like you shouldn't romanticize about these ancient cultures. And it would always be offensive to me because being Haudenosaunee, I know these ancient traditions are still alive today, and they have great influence in the way we are being human beings in the world. So when I got to Europe and saw what they're doing over there and pretending to be Indian, then it opened up a whole new understanding. This romanticization of Native Americans really is that. Reclaiming them. So folks-

Tink Tinker ([10:37](#)):

But of course that-

Sandy Bigtree ([10:38](#)):

Application.

Philip P. Arnold ([10:38](#)):

Yeah.

Tink Tinker ([10:40](#)):

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That interdiction, don't romanticize yourself. There's another way of erasing us. It's tell us, "You don't really believe that, do you?" That's gone now. Just let it go because erasure is still part and parcel of the agenda of the colonizer discovery crowd.

Philip P. Arnold ([11:08](#)):

Yeah, absolutely. I mean, I hadn't really thought I'd ask you about this, but we've been through the Hollywood Awards season and one of the major films that's been out there deals with your folks, Killers of the Flower Moon. And I've never asked you about it, but I mean, I have different feelings about it, I guess, and I'd like to get your take on... I mean, I thought it was a good film in many ways. We've talked to other people who thought the book was better actually, because it pointed out a kind of structural racism rather than a kind of interpersonal problem, a racist issue within a family. But that story is now out there, which is something, I guess, but I'd like to get your take on that film.

Tink Tinker ([12:14](#)):

First of all, I was not a fan of the book.

Philip P. Arnold ([12:18](#)):

Why is that?

Tink Tinker ([12:19](#)):

I was a harsh critic of the book. Neither the book nor the movie is really about the Osage. The book was an FBI thriller. It's about Tom White, the FBI agent, who is heroized in the book. And Osages are bit players in the drama that unfolds in the book.

Philip P. Arnold ([12:50](#)):

Also the film [inaudible 00:12:52].

Tink Tinker ([12:52](#)):

I thought that Scorsese did a better job in that he reduced the role of Tom White, put him a minor character but important character. But the movie's about your two main stars, DiCaprio and De Niro, and not about the Osages. People were talking up Lily Gladstone's role as Molly, and I thought she was magnificent, but they could have done so much more with Molly. The last half of the film, she's comatose in most of the scenes she's in.

Philip P. Arnold ([13:36](#)):

Yeah. Yeah, true enough.

Tink Tinker ([13:40](#)):

And while Burkhart was trying to kill her, he was poisoning her. You still could have done much more than Scorsese did with that. Let's be honest, in order for Hollywood to produce a film about Osages, it's going to be about Osages. You got to have an Osage make the movie, and there's no money for that.

Philip P. Arnold ([14:07](#)):

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Yeah. No, it's got to have star power. I don't know, I don't know that world at all, but I do think that given that she did not win the Academy Award for Best Actress, and my feeling was that America still can't deal with its history. It still can't. I mean, that film was completely shut out of the Oscars. And it's like, yeah, we'll celebrate these fantastical films and things like that, but that one was a little too real for people.

Tink Tinker ([14:56](#)):

Yeah, it wasn't make-believe enough.

Philip P. Arnold ([14:58](#)):

Right.

Tink Tinker ([15:01](#)):

Right?

Philip P. Arnold ([15:02](#)):

Yeah. Yeah.

Tink Tinker ([15:04](#)):

Well, I think that's true. And I think Vine hit it half a century ago when he said it's about the land and white Americans cannot let go of the fact that their position of Indian land is still questionable.

Philip P. Arnold ([15:26](#)):

At best. I mean, it's clear from all the legal cases that we've been studying in this project that we live on unceded land from coast to coast. And it's a dilemma that we'll say it's just a dilemma. It's just like something that Americans just cannot grapple with. And it's really the heart of the Doctrine of Discovery issue that we're trying to-

Tink Tinker ([15:59](#)):

Oh, let's not remind people of that. They just would rather sweep it under the carpet.

Philip P. Arnold ([16:05](#)):

Exactly. Exactly. Not just the United States, of course, we're talking about lots of colonial outposts around the world.

Tink Tinker ([16:13](#)):

Australia, New Zealand, Canada. Those big four along with the US.

Philip P. Arnold ([16:21](#)):

Yeah. So I don't know. I don't know if that film marks some kind of a small awakening. There are more native filmmakers now. We know some of those people. They're making inroads. There are other stories that are emerging. So I don't know if it marks a change or if it's just-

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Tink Tinker ([16:48](#)):

Let me say this much about Martin Scorsese. Scorsese really tried, and DiCaprio and De Niro. They spent time with Osages on the Osage reservation trying to learn as much as they could about the people. They did do that. So I really need to give them credit for that, even as I criticize the film for its shortfall.

Philip P. Arnold ([17:20](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, I think there's a lot to consider. But it just happened, so just trying to figure it out. So Tink, I know you've been really an important a central figure, say in the Denver area, Colorado, that whole native community out there. I wonder if you could just give us a sense of your work over the years. I know this could go on for a long time if we wanted to, but we both have been so impressed with what you've been able to accomplish there in Denver from creating community organizations and institutes and things to commemorating the Sand Hill Massacre. So there's a lot of things that you've been involved with and I wonder if you could just introduce some of our listeners to that history.

Tink Tinker ([18:32](#)):

Yeah, I guess I would have to say that being an American Indian academic is challenging in different ways from being an ordinary white academic. My white colleagues, or as I prefer to call them your Christian colleagues, never had to be active outside of their university post. They were free to go home and watch TV or write a book and get a big jump in their salary. While Indian academics have a tendency to feel the need be active in the community itself. And from the very beginning of my time here in Denver in 1985, I was active in the community, knew all the key players of the key agencies back then. I'm not as public now, I'm getting old, so I don't circulate as much, but I'm still recognized when I walk in the Indian Center.

Philip P. Arnold ([19:44](#)):

Yeah, we've seen that. Yeah.

Tink Tinker ([19:46](#)):

Yeah. But back in about 1989, 1990, I guess, I took over this organization. It was called back then Living Waters Indian Episcopal Mission. And we lost our Lakota Episcopal priest, and it wasn't clear that they had money to bring someone in, and it just fell to me to take it over and to take it over without an honorarium, without pay. So I ran it for 25 years, and it was shortly after I took it over that the people renamed it Four Winds instead of living Waters to give it an Indian name. And convinced me right at the point why I renounced Christianity that we need to do away with that Sunday worship service mentality and replace it with ceremony. So when I first moved in to taking it over, we brought a drum in for the first time and one of our singers thought, sure, he was going to be struck dead by lightning. He'd never sung one of those drum songs in a church.

Sandy Bigtree ([21:22](#)):

Wow.

Tink Tinker ([21:24](#)):

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I said, "Well, God don't burn this place." And we started referring to it as the place formerly called Church. And the young crew that have taken it over now call it a liberated zone, and they're doing good.

Sandy Bigtree ([21:49](#)):

You think when the conquistadores came in all over Mexico, they would level all the pyramids and sacred sites and use the very rubble to construct the churches-

Tink Tinker ([21:59](#)):

To build their own churches, yeah.

Sandy Bigtree ([22:01](#)):

In this way, you're deconstructing the structure of a church in reverse.

Tink Tinker ([22:07](#)):

And we're building our ceremonial site on top of their sacred space.

Sandy Bigtree ([22:16](#)):

Right. Which was your sacred space probably.

Tink Tinker ([22:18](#)):

Before, yes, it was. We've always known that, it's grandmother. And we feel that when we're there because for the past 30 plus years now, 35 years, we've buried people there, married people there, celebrated sobriety, anniversaries, everything for the community right there.

Philip P. Arnold ([22:46](#)):

Wow.

Sandy Bigtree ([22:47](#)):

Well, people need to gather in a city.

Tink Tinker ([22:49](#)):

They do.

Sandy Bigtree ([22:51](#)):

There's power in that. We need one another.

Tink Tinker ([22:56](#)):

Yeah. And we gave a different place than the Indian Center, a place where they could just come and sit and talk. And the ceremony that emerged that we forged began to evolve from 1991, everybody in the circle having a say. So we would actually go around that circle and give everyone there the opportunity to say what was on their mind.

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Sandy Bigtree ([23:29](#)):

So needed. Cities are so isolating.

Philip P. Arnold ([23:34](#)):

It seems like a lot of churches are closing. Maybe there could be more of these places.

Sandy Bigtree ([23:43](#)):

Yeah.

Philip P. Arnold ([23:44](#)):

So that-

Tink Tinker ([23:45](#)):

We would get calls from people because I've buried hundreds of people over the year. And I'd get call from a family, "We're members at Four Winds and our grandmother died. Can we have the funeral there?" And I'd have no idea who they were. Maybe they came once 10 years ago, I couldn't remember. And we don't have membership.

Philip P. Arnold ([24:15](#)):

Right.

Tink Tinker ([24:16](#)):

There's no membership there. If you're Indian, yeah, you belong. This is your place. And we never turned anyone away.

Philip P. Arnold ([24:30](#)):

Wow.

Sandy Bigtree ([24:31](#)):

Meaningful.

Philip P. Arnold ([24:31](#)):

Yeah. More on the Doctrine of Discovery side of your work. I know you were involved with commemorating that black event, the Sand Creek Massacre. I see it here, we see it in the East. It's much more part of our cultural geography than it was 30 years ago when you were working on it. So maybe you could tell our audience a little bit about that as well.

Tink Tinker ([25:17](#)):

Well, Sand Creek is here in Colorado. That's why it's important to us here. It's important to shine in Arapaho Peoples in Oklahoma and Montana and Wyoming. They haven't forgotten and they keep coming back. In fact, 30 years ago, they began having this Sand Creek healing run 25 years ago maybe it was. And when they first did that, we were their contact at Four Winds, and we would feed people at

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Four Winds at the end of it. Eventually it became too big for Four Winds. By the way, Four Winds always, from the very beginning, housed Colorado American Indian Movement. And Glen Morris Russ means that particular crew. And as far as I know, I'm still on the Elders Council of AM and that's like being a member at Four Winds. I don't think I ever get off of that.

Philip P. Arnold ([26:22](#)):

No retiring from that position, even though it doesn't give you any money.

Tink Tinker ([26:27](#)):

Yeah, right. No, Four Winds cost me 2K a year just to run it, I think, because it's such a low budget.

Philip P. Arnold ([26:36](#)):

Right.

Tink Tinker ([26:38](#)):

So from that point on, I was involved in Sand Creek. We've been out to the site multiple times. They've been out with contingents of the American Indian movement or contingents from four Winds. We've had pipe ceremonies out there. But what happened at Sand Creek, the murder of some 300 Cheyennes and Arapahos and maybe a handful of Lakotas in Kiowas is what happened across the continent. It wasn't a solo event. And what happened in Connecticut on the Mystic River in 1637 was the same sort of event. A Christian army attacking an undefended village at Mystic of women, children and old people, slaughtering 700 Pequots. All the Pequots were out in the field waiting for the ambush army to advance to meet them in fair, honest warfare. So from that point on, until Sand Creek and even beyond that wounded knee, these massacres are just a part of the genocide. And it's accruessional, the more it happens, the more it happens and the more effective it becomes.

Philip P. Arnold ([28:18](#)):

And there are different forms of genocide, of course, but these overt killings were perpetrated by Christians. And is it Chivington who is the minister... But general or something colonel?

Tink Tinker ([28:39](#)):

No, he was the commanding officer of the Colorado first and the Colorado third, which are US army units. And quite often I just read an online site where his units were called Volunteer militia. No, no, no, no. They were US Army Chivington had a US Army Commission. And the Colorado first volunteers were a unit like the Ohio volunteers or whatever. That were put together in order to fight during the Civil War. And the Colorado first did fight a Civil war battle in New Mexico the year before Sand Creek.

Philip P. Arnold ([29:32](#)):

Yeah. And wasn't there a monument to him in Denver that you... Well, the last time we visited, you were telling us about this statue or monument? Was it Chivington? I might be getting this wrong.

Tink Tinker ([29:47](#)):

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It was a Civil War [inaudible 00:29:49] statue, which on its plaque commemorated Sand Creek as one of the important warriors of the Civil War in Colorado.

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

Wow.

Sandy Bigtree ([30:01](#)):

Wow.

Philip P. Arnold ([30:03](#)):

Wow. What Civil War is that?

Tink Tinker ([30:07](#)):

And of course, it wasn't a battle, it was just a massacre. A sleeping village who thought they'd signed a peace treaty with the US, done everything they were told to do, to behave themselves according to the colonizers' interdiction. Woke up one morning to an advancing army.

Sandy Bigtree ([30:29](#)):

When Haudenosaunee country, the Ligani, are speaking with the founding fathers on how to establish a better union of peacemaking. And then Washington uses a Joseph Brandt as a catalyst for declaring war on the Haudenosaunee. When Joseph Brandt, a Mohawk man was raised in British schools, his sister married the first British superintendent of Indian affairs, and he was groomed to be an infiltrator of the Haudenosaunee. He was not a Ligani of the Haudenosaunee, he was, in the British eyes, a war chief, and he was used as a war chief to dismantle the Confederacy. So after Washington has that scorched earth campaign and removes most of the Haudenosaunee from their territories, he deviates up all the land to pay his soldiers. So did this happen also in Colorado? Did the soldiers end up with the land? Was it a way of exterminating bodies so they could inhabit the space?

Tink Tinker ([31:41](#)):

It didn't work the same way in 1864, as it did in the 1770, 1780s. By then, the United States was much more established. And what you have going on in Colorado is the Homestead Act.

Sandy Bigtree ([32:03](#)):

Oh, they just named it something else, shifted it.

Tink Tinker ([32:11](#)):

So the legalities worked out differently. And what you have actually here on the Plains along the Platte River is one person who's cowboy, whose people a cattle barn, whose people go out and homestead all the water holes. See, in the land here, it's only useful if you have access to the water holes. Well, they homesteaded the water holes and eventually sold to himself so that he didn't own all of that part of Colorado from Denver North and east up to the Nebraska line, he owned all the water holes. So it didn't matter if other people homesteaded land, they couldn't make a living there. Hence, it was just open cattle land. And he could run his cattle through the whole territory, just making sure that he protected

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his properties, the water holes, so that only his cattle had access to water. His name, by the way, was John Wesley Iliff.

Sandy Bigtree (33:36):

Oh.

Jordan Brady Loewen-Colón (33:38):

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Tink Tinker (34:01):

Yes.

Philip P. Arnold (34:01):

Yes, no. So yeah-

Sandy Bigtree (34:01):

Maybe you could tell us a little bit about that.

Philip P. Arnold (34:01):

How you've been pushing against your own institution here.

Sandy Bigtree (34:03):

And you talk about the insignificance of an indigenous human body. Maybe you could tell the story about this history being encapsulated in a text.

Tink Tinker (34:16):

Next month we have five Lenape flying in to Denver to consult with Iliff. This will be their third trip to Iliff. And they come from all over Turtle Island, including Pat Noah, who comes down from Lenape Reserve in Ontario. From Oklahoma, from Wisconsin, and one lone Lenape from San Diego, Steve, somebody.

Philip P. Arnold (35:02):

Yeah, I think I might know that guy.

Tink Tinker (35:02):

You might, yeah. Yeah, Nukom. The world's foremost authority in the Doctrine of Discovery. What happened was in 1779 a Euro-Christian squatter, by the way, a Quaker nonviolent pacifist, right?

Sandy Bigtree (35:26):

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Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Tink Tinker (35:28):

Had squatted on the Monongahela River in what's now West Virginia. It was opening up that part of Indian land to a Euro-Christian frontier. So they were the first settlers in that region. And David Morgan on that, about the 1st of May 1779 saw an Indian man on what he called his farm that's his squatted home and Morgan was known as a good shot, famous for its accuracy, and he thought this is an easy kill. So he drew a bead with his musket and killed the man on site only to discover there was a second Indian with him. And he ends up in a hand-to-hand duel with this other Indian. In its own mere luck that he's able to kill that second Lenape, they're Lenape, both of them with a knife. Morgan's comrades down at the fort they built. This is Fort Pickett, and it's not a military fort, it's civilian, which the squatters built in order to protect their stolen land, right? Their property.

Sandy Bigtree (37:00):

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Tink Tinker (37:02):

Come out to help him finish the deed and skin both Indians and tan their skin and turn their skin into little trophy trinkets, shot bags, powder pouches, and the cover for a book. And since books are on short supply, it had to be one that they had with them. And evidently, David Morgan had this unbound copy of the history of Christianity written in Latin, [foreign language 00:37:51], written by a German theologian. He's so proud of his book that he gives it as a gift to a guy named Bill Barnes, a young man around 1800 who's decided to become a Methodist minister. Now only a couple of years before David Morgan, the Quaker, converted to the Methodist Church as well. Kind of like John Evans, the governor of Colorado, born to a strong Quaker family who in later in his life told an interviewer, "In retrospect, I'm really happy having converted to Methodism because I would not have been able to respond to Indian atrocities if I'd stayed a Quaker."

Tink Tinker (38:51):

One stop, David Morgan. And of course, Indian atrocities are any attempt to defend their homes. Declared illegal on the face of it because we want your land. So anyway, William Barnes took this history of Christianity with him to Ohio where he continued his Methodist ministry right after the Ohio Territory became a state. And then after it, they pushed away the Confederacy there built around the Senecas in the north. And his son, Rosen Monroe Barnes are in Barnes, gets the book inherited, becomes a Methodist minister. And in the old Methodist system, remember ministers are moved every year by the bishop in this so-called itinerant system so that they would not have many belongings to move from one place to another. They've all got a fit inside one wagon, one buckboard, right?

Sandy Bigtree (40:20):

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Tink Tinker (40:21):

This book is so important that he has it with him every time he moves.

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Sandy Bigtree (40:28):

Wow. Oh my goodness.

Tink Tinker (40:31):

And in 1890, he moves to the Colorado Methodist Conference. And in 1893, when this new theology school opens its doors, he gives this gift of this important treasure, the skin of a murdered Indian mocking, "Our theft of the land to Iliff School of Theology." And they kept it on display in their library in case under glass for 80 years.

Sandy Bigtree (41:10):

Oh my goodness.

Tink Tinker (41:12):

So white people come in and enjoy themselves and enjoy the romance because here's the rumor that Sandy or that's of Christian conquest of-

Sandy Bigtree (41:24):

That's right. Oh my goodness. So horrific.

Philip P. Arnold (41:30):

As Sandy was saying, it epitomizes the entirety of-

Sandy Bigtree (41:34):

The Doctrine of Discovery.

Philip P. Arnold (41:35):

The Doctrine of Christian Discovery, really.

Tink Tinker (41:40):

That's right. That's right. Well, the Doctrine of Discovery is a romance. I mean, just as John Marshall articulates it in Johnson v. M'Intosh, it's a romance and he knows it is. It's a fantasy. It's entirely made up. And he says, "Clearly in the case, in the majority opinion, the unanimous opinion, as long as people believe it, it becomes effective."

Philip P. Arnold (42:13):

Diabolical.

Sandy Bigtree (42:18):

83 years, you said that was exhibit-

Tink Tinker (42:18):

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80 years.

Sandy Bigtree (42:18):

80 years. Oh my goodness.

Philip P. Arnold (42:18):

Until 1973-

Sandy Bigtree (42:21):

What a trophy.

Philip P. Arnold (42:23):

My math is right.

Sandy Bigtree (42:23):

How horrific.

Tink Tinker (42:24):

And Johnson '74.

Philip P. Arnold (42:25):

74.

Tink Tinker (42:29):

When the American Indian Movement forced Iliff to surrender the cover of the book.

Philip P. Arnold (42:36):

So where is the book now?

Tink Tinker (42:39):

Iliff still has the book without its cover.

Sandy Bigtree (42:41):

Oh, really? What happened to the cover?

Tink Tinker (42:47):

A young aim guy by the name of Wesley Martel took it up north to his Arapaho Sundance spiritual leaders, and they took it out somewhere on that Wind River Reservation and buried that person.

Sandy Bigtree (43:14):

My goodness. Wow, what a story. Just turns my-

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Tink Tinker ([43:19](#)):

Now to understand is, and this is what Indian people keep telling them, that man was attached to that book from 1779 to 1974.

Philip P. Arnold ([43:36](#)):

Yeah.

Tink Tinker ([43:38](#)):

He's monarchy. His energy is still attached to that book. Cut the cover off, but that didn't release that man from being with that book. And now we've got to do something. And people have always had these stories about Iliff is haunted. I had a colleague who was sure that there was somebody haunting her office at Iliff, and I never disabused her of that or told her what I thought. But that man was there. He was there.

Philip P. Arnold ([44:27](#)):

We get that too at the Skä•noñh Center because it was the previous site of the Jesuit fort. Horrific things happened there, and people are always coming out from the Onondaga Nation smoking the place, or there's things, I mean, it's still that energy is present in these places.

Sandy Bigtree ([45:00](#)):

Right where the Great Mof Peace was founded, right? Where the peacemaker landed, it's sacred land and then... Oh, the history with this fort, and it was a failed mission. The Onondaga had them leave within 18 months actually from 1656 to 1658. And yet, I grew up with people celebrating that fort and the Christianization of the Onondaga, which clearly was not true, never happened.

Tink Tinker ([45:32](#)):

Yeah.

Philip P. Arnold ([45:36](#)):

But the fact that you're having this meeting in the next month or so, just hold on until the helicopter goes over.

Tink Tinker ([45:44](#)):

When I found out about the book, and I didn't know about it when I came to Ireland, and in 1986, probably in the middle of winter, one of my colleagues pulled me aside and told me. None of my other colleagues would admit they knew anything about it. This is 11, 12 years after the aim repatriation of the cover. But the first thing I did was to go back over to the school on the Sunday morning because they're Christian, I knew it would be completely empty. Everybody would be in church. And I walked from the basement to the top, and every nook and cranny I could reach, I smoked with sage. Pushing negative energies away. Not to get rid of that man, but to get rid of negative energies and to enable me to at least talk to that man.

Sandy Bigtree ([46:52](#)):

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Yeah, clear the air for clear thinking.

Tink Tinker (46:55):

Tell him who I was anyway.

Sandy Bigtree (46:55):

Right.

Philip P. Arnold (47:00):

And so I suspect that you're going to be talking about what to do. I mean, with these Lenape visitors, right? How do you dispose of the book, how best to treat that book? I mean, in English, we really just don't have any way of talking about the living presence in these objects, right? Iliff, are they on board with this? Are they-

Tink Tinker (47:38):

So far.

Philip P. Arnold (47:38):

Helping you out?

Tink Tinker (47:40):

So far. The board, at least, and the administration have affirmed what the Lenape have asked them to do. Unfortunately, the faculty are not in step yet.

Philip P. Arnold (47:54):

Really?

Tink Tinker (47:55):

Left behind by our previous president, and the new president is trying to get them on board. I think they will eventually. But the Lenape have asked for four things before the Lenape have said, "We'll take the book." But they're heavy duty. There's no easy out for this institution having made this mistake.

Philip P. Arnold (48:22):

Shouldn't be.

Sandy Bigtree (48:23):

No.

Tink Tinker (48:24):

So they've got to now. They've committed themselves to raising enough money to endow a native activist professorship to develop an interpretive center for American Indian concerns, including the book and including Sand Creek on campus, to making that some part of that or traveling exhibit. They can go

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to other institutions and churches and fourth length to build a memorial to these two murdered Lenape. That is a permanent visible reminder to Iliff now and a hundred years from now.

Sandy Bigtree ([49:24](#)):

Absolutely. People need to know this story. And removing the literal flesh of an indigenous person from the book is pretty much what Americans have done through the ages, create this genocide and then not talk about it and put it aside and they think their churches are still going to stand. Well, they're not. They're suffering. And you can't remove the flesh from all these indigenous people from this narrative. So that's part of the story. I mean, how do we come together as human beings and move forward? Certainly not by brushing any of that under the table. I mean-

Philip P. Arnold ([50:08](#)):

Yeah, so you let us know. We'll definitely take that traveling exhibit. So Syracuse University for one thing is another former Methodist institution. But also I'd love to see that at the Skä•noñh Center because as Tata Daho says, the Skä•noñh Center part of our function is as a Holocaust Memorial, essentially.

Tink Tinker ([50:36](#)):

Yeah, yeah. And maybe we can figure out a way that this center at Iliff can work together with the Skä•noñh Center. Something more than a loose connection with one another.

Philip P. Arnold ([50:50](#)):

Exactly. I think we have to be working together more.

Sandy Bigtree ([50:55](#)):

Definitely.

Tink Tinker ([50:56](#)):

Syracuse sister university is University of Denver. And the bishop here in Colorado still sits on the board of trustees of the University of Denver. So it's normalized to a Methodist, even though nobody calls it a Methodist school.

Philip P. Arnold ([51:17](#)):

Right, right. That's pretty much us too.

Tink Tinker ([51:24](#)):

But in 1892, '93, when Iliff was formed, it was actually formed as the religion department of the University of Denver and became a separate institution only a decade later, a standalone institution.

Philip P. Arnold ([51:41](#)):

Wow. Well, this has been a wonderful conversation that was so much more we could be talking about and working together on.

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Sandy Bigtree ([51:51](#)):

I want to thank you so much for all your work. Stepping into the world of academia is a grueling, almost impossible task. Even good people are beyond comprehension of the level of disconnection there is in the world and how the past of history has really fractured everybody living on Turtle Island. It's never easy. It's a grueling life, and it's very difficult. We thank you for taking that step and being involved right where the problem lies, education.

Philip P. Arnold ([52:31](#)):

Always honor you, Tink.

Tink Tinker ([52:33](#)):

It's always good to see both of you and to visit with you. Appreciate you both. And the truth is, white academics can retire and their career is a wrap. It doesn't work that way for Indians.

Sandy Bigtree ([52:49](#)):

No, it doesn't.

Tink Tinker ([52:50](#)):

It's never done.

Sandy Bigtree ([52:53](#)):

It doesn't work that way for non-native academics who get involved in this work either. I mean, I don't see our work ever separating even after retirement. Once you're in it, you're committed because it's going to make a change. That's where it needs to lie. It's very difficult. But it's very rare that non-native academics even begin to understand the depth.

Tink Tinker ([53:20](#)):

Well, my colleagues basically don't have a clue. They've been my colleagues for nearly 40 years now. And to this day, they really don't have a clue.

Philip P. Arnold ([53:33](#)):

That's just sad.

Sandy Bigtree ([53:34](#)):

Yeah, tragic.

Tink Tinker ([53:36](#)):

I mean, internationally, I've got colleagues like Phil that get it. There are a handful of your film who do that, but I don't have one at Iliff.

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

Yeah.

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Philip P. Arnold ([53:53](#)):

That's really terrible.

Sandy Bigtree ([53:54](#)):

I was going to say that. It is. It's a handful. Pretty much.

Tink Tinker ([53:57](#)):

They're very kind people at Iliff that I was more or less collegial with. But by the time I retired, I have to say, almost all of them were glad to see me go.

Philip P. Arnold ([54:15](#)):

Wow. Well, I find that students, however, are really-

Sandy Bigtree ([54:25](#)):

Inspired.

Philip P. Arnold ([54:26](#)):

Connecting to this history and legacy in a way that maybe our older colleagues are not, because I think we're in an urgent moment and they're looking for something. I reflect on the '60s and '70s, and that was more, I don't know, just a jolly time, I guess.

Sandy Bigtree ([54:53](#)):

Well, it was hopeful to without understanding-

Philip P. Arnold ([54:53](#)):

It was helpful. People had hope. And I think now students are getting the memo that this is a real urgent moment for all of us.

Tink Tinker ([55:02](#)):

I have to say, my students at Iliff, are really appreciated. They did take this seriously.

Philip P. Arnold ([55:13](#)):

Good.

Tink Tinker ([55:15](#)):

They did pay attention, and I did change the way they see the world time and time again. But my colleagues [inaudible 00:55:27] my classroom.

Philip P. Arnold ([55:28](#)):

I know.

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Sandy Bigtree ([55:28](#)):

Yeah.

Philip P. Arnold ([55:30](#)):

I know. Well, I will finish with this because when you resigned from the American Academy of Religion very publicly, because you could not function in a racist Christian organization any longer, and I'm thinking that was probably 30 years ago now too.

Tink Tinker ([55:57](#)):

1993, I think, '94.

Philip P. Arnold ([56:01](#)):

Okay, 30 years.

Sandy Bigtree ([56:03](#)):

Just about.

Philip P. Arnold ([56:05](#)):

And that was an impressive... It certainly had an impact on me. Of course, I'm still a member of the AAR, and we've still tried to hold events there and give papers that have been, I hope, a little transformative for our grad students, but that single act, Tink, was transformative for a lot of people. And I don't know if you've heard about it, but-

Tink Tinker ([56:35](#)):

No.

Philip P. Arnold ([56:35](#)):

It's something that had an impact.

Tink Tinker ([56:38](#)):

I never looked back.

Philip P. Arnold ([56:41](#)):

I know. I know. But you rose to the moment, let's put it that way.

Tink Tinker ([56:49](#)):

The colleagues at Iliff who were deeply involved in AAR, Del Brown, Sheila Devaney, who assured me I had destroyed my career.

Sandy Bigtree ([57:02](#)):

Oh, wow.

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Tink Tinker ([57:02](#)):

And what I told them was, "My career doesn't depend on the white people at AAR."

Philip P. Arnold ([57:07](#)):

Right.

Sandy Bigtree ([57:10](#)):

Oh wow.

Philip P. Arnold ([57:20](#)):

Wow.

Sandy Bigtree ([57:20](#)):

Wow.

Tink Tinker ([57:20](#)):

And looking back on it, I think I've done okay.

Philip P. Arnold ([57:20](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. But yeah.

Sandy Bigtree ([57:20](#)):

Yeah, clueless. Clueless is the word.

Philip P. Arnold ([57:24](#)):

Del Brown?

Sandy Bigtree ([57:25](#)):

Wow.

Philip P. Arnold ([57:26](#)):

Okay. Well, great to see you, Tink. If you're ever through Syracuse Onondaga Nation territory-

Sandy Bigtree ([57:35](#)):

Let us know you.

Philip P. Arnold ([57:35](#)):

Will you please let us know.

Tink Tinker ([57:37](#)):

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I'd love to come up that way. I don't travel as much as I used to, especially discretionary travel. Discretionary travels back to the Osage.

Philip P. Arnold ([57:50](#)):

Yeah.

Sandy Bigtree ([57:51](#)):

Right.

Philip P. Arnold ([57:51](#)):

Yeah.

Sandy Bigtree ([57:53](#)):

Yeah. I understand.

Tink Tinker ([57:55](#)):

You all be well.

Sandy Bigtree ([57:57](#)):

Okay, you be well too.

Philip P. Arnold ([57:58](#)):

You too.

Tink Tinker ([57:58](#)):

[foreign language 00:58:00].

Jordan Brady Loewen-Colón ([58:02](#)):

The producers of this podcast were Adam DJ Brett and Jordan Loewen-Colón. Our intro and outro is social dancing music by Oris 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 like this episode, please check out our website and make sure to subscribe.