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**FSIN AND FIRST NATIONS REJECTED THE DOCTRINE OF DISCOVERY FOR DECADES**

Treaty 6 Territory, Saskatoon SK – The Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations (FSIN) says the Vatican's statement today paves the way for Canada to remove the “cede and surrender” notion from Treaty.

“This lie must stop today. These racist legal doctrines have allowed Canada to unilaterally claim sovereignty over our peoples and our lands and further use it as an excuse to commit genocide. And today, the Vatican finally said what our peoples have always known,” said FSIN Chief Bobby Cameron.

For decades First Nations governance has stated that the *Doctrine of Discovery* was a papal statement and not a law or a justification for genocide, the robbery of lands and colonization of First Nations people here and other places around the globe, says FSIN Chiefs.

“FSIN has said from the beginning that the *Doctrine of Discovery* is a colonialist and racist legal doctrine. Upon European arrival, it devastated our people and still devastates our Nations today. Our people were already living here on Turtle Island in distinct societies. We were not ‘discovered.’ The papal bull is a vile decree that led to the slaughter and genocide of Indigenous peoples around the world. These racist, and illegal doctrines have allowed Canada to unilaterally claim sovereignty over our peoples and our lands and further used it as an excuse to commit crimes against our people. And today, the Vatican finally said what our people have always known. The honour and intent of Treaty must be upheld. The Treaties must form the basis of laws surrounding our waters, lands, and resources, not the manipulated documents that the Vatican denounced today, nor the Crown’s misguided interpretations. The lands, waters, resources and animals never belonged to any government. These are the Creator's gifts to our First Nations; Inherent and Treaty rights holders,” said FSIN Chief Cameron.

Both French and English colonial powers, in what would later be known as Canada, used the *Doctrine of Discovery* to claim Indigenous lands and form the basis of some property laws in use today. It also forced foreign cultural and religious beliefs on Indigenous peoples throughout North America and the world, and led acts of genocide, says FSIN.

“The Vatican today admitted that documents had been “manipulated” for political purposes by colonial powers when referring to the *Doctrine of Discovery* and the papal bulls. We must demand that the First Nations in this province receive what is rightfully ours because our territories were never “ceded or surrendered” at the signing of Treaty. It may have been the Crown’s interpretation of Treaty but that does not make it fact. The “cede and surrender” clause is fraudulent, and the world must see that. The basis of Canada's land claim to our lands was done through genocide. In the meantime, both levels of government assert sovereignty over our waters, our lands and our resources, and that needs to end,” said FSIN Fourth Vice Chief Heather Bear.

“The lands, water and resources never belonged to the federal and provincial governments. The Crown has used papal bulls and the *Doctrine of Discovery* as legal justification to support their claim. With the Vatican denouncing the doctrine, there is no legal justification to bar us from our ancestral lands,” said FSIN Chief Bobby Cameron. “We have always been here and today we are still here. We won’t stop defending our rights and our existence as the first peoples of these lands. Colonization’s tool, the *Doctrine of Discovery*, was not legitimate but was relied on to take our lands and our lives.”

In a joint statement, from the Dicastery for Culture and Dicastery for Integral Human Development acknowledges that:

*“Many Christians have committed evil acts against indigenous peoples.” Papal bulls from the fifteenth century that granted the goods of aboriginal peoples to sovereign colonizers are political documents, instrumentalized for immoral acts. Already in 1537, Pope Paul III solemnly declared that indigenous peoples should not be enslaved or robbed of their possessions.*

*“Doctrine of Discovery” – a theory that served to justify the expropriation by sovereign colonizers of indigenous lands from their rightful owners – “is not a part of the teaching of the Catholic Church.” It further affirms that the papal bulls that granted such “rights” to colonizing sovereigns have never been a part of the Church’s magisterium.*

*“Thanks to dialogue with indigenous peoples, “the Church has acquired a greater awareness of*

*their sufferings, past and present, due to the expropriation of their lands … as well as the*

*policies of forced assimilation, promoted by the governmental authorities of the time, intended*

*to eliminate their indigenous cultures,” according to a “Joint Statement” issued by the Dicastery*

*for Culture and Education and the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, and*

*published on Thursday, March 30, 2023.*

About FSIN

The Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations represents 73 First Nations in Saskatchewan. The Federation is committed to honouring the spirit and intent of the Treaties, as well as the promotion, protection and implementation of the Treaty promises that were made more than a century ago.

**- 30 -**