

The Restoration of Indigenous Rights and the Fall of the Colonial Hand

By [Michael Welch](#)

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“If the indigenes had advanced beyond the state of nature only so far as to have developed language and the community of the family, but no further; if they had not yet mixed their labour with the earth in any permanent way; or if the region were literally uninhabited, then Europeans considered it to be terra nullius (i.e., belonging to no one), to which they might gain permanent title by first discovery and effective occupation.”

- **Professor Alan Frost** [1]

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The age of great exploration and conquest began in the fifteenth century. This is when the first peoples living in the territories of Africa and Asia and of North and South America were approached by European explorers. The prospect of profit and pillage from the new resources of a foreign land finds itself at odds with respecting the dignity of the people who lived there originally. Consequently, it was not long before the former individuals living in lands the latter sought to colonize would be subjected to conquest, capture, exile and slavery. [2]

According to the historian and educator **Alfred McCoy** in his book *To Govern The Globe*, papal bulls such as the Treaty of Tordesillas in 1493 allowed European powers to claim vast expansion of territory and reduce the rights of the people living there. It is therefore no surprise the rapid pursuit of wealth is intertwined with racism. Further, the vast increases in knowledge, the development of new insights and the new ways of thinking that coincided with the brand new possibilities of “boldly going where no man has gone before” go hand in hand with destroying the lives of those in the way. [3]

Sadly, after more than five centuries, Indigenous peoples from all over the world have had challenges and shed oceans of bloodshed. But we have seen their resilience and are even starting to re-assert their rights again. This combined with growing awareness among the general population may lead to a different assessment of how these scales of justice are balanced. Though it should also be noted that the current economic system of capitalism continues to profit from the previous inequitable treatment.

On this episode of the Global Research News Hour, we are looking at the current global situation and try to assess the prospects for this dynamic between peoples to finally correct itself.

In our first half hour, we air a conversation with **Dr Rudolph Ryser**, chair of the Center for World Indigenous Studies (CWIS). Professor Ryser describes the similar realities Indigenous people tend to face in the world today, and describes how successful actions at the United Nations and other projects are helping to make a difference.

In our second half hour, we air a documentary recorded by **Michael Welch** about Camp Morningstar and its resistance to a frac sand mining project being pursued by today's corporate exploiters together with modern day colonialists to build a new industry at the expense of the people who will live with the resultant environmental disaster for generations. Ways to learn more and to contribute can be found at the Facebook site [What the Frack Manitoba](#).

***Dr Rudolph Ryser** is chair of the Centre for world indigenous studies. He sits on the faculty of the School of Public Service Leadership at Capella University, and is an adjunct professor of History and Culture at the Union Institute and University. He is a 2011 Fulbright Scholar. And is one of the leading spokespeople for Fourth World political development and governance, tribal/state conflict resolution and international cooperation between indigenous nations.*

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Notes:

1. Frost, Alan (1992). "Old colonisations and modern discontents: Legacies and concern" (PDF). Samuel Griffith Society Proceedings. 1. Chapter 11. "Papers by author". Samuel Griffith Society (samuelgriffith.org).
2. McCoy, Alfred M (2021), pg 10-11, "To Govern The Globe: World Orders and Catastrophic Change", Haymarket Books
3. *ibid*

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