QEW Statement on the Doctrine of Discovery

QEW Steering Committee

In the days of European exploration and colonization, governments relied on what we now call the Doctrine of Discovery to extinguish all rights of indigenous peoples. The doctrine has not disappeared or been revoked. Instead it has evolved into common property law, providing the underpinning of US and Canadian chains of title.

In 2012 the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) will focus on encouraging global repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery.

The Indigenous Peoples are our allies in protecting the Earth, and we need to be theirs. There is much to be learned from indigenous earth-connected wisdom and spirituality. We renounce what amounts to a policy of domination and instead join with indigenous people to protect and restore the health of our planet.

Quaker Earthcare Witness (QEW) joins other Friends, and Unitarian and Episcopal churches in repudiating the Doctrine of Discovery. We encourage Friends’ Monthly Meetings and Churches, and Yearly Meetings, to renounce the Doctrine of Discovery.

Approved by the QEW Steering Committee, January 9, 2012.