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Representing: **Salamanca High School Model UNPFII**

**11th Annual Session of UNPFII**

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Nya:wëh Sgë:nö' gagwe:goh. Thank you Mr./Madame Chairman/woman, and to all the people who have worked to allow us to speak today. We are the Salamanca High School Model Permanent Forum. We are here today representing the youth of the Ohi:yo territory of the Seneca Nation of Indians in New York State. We are honored to be here to learn from all the wisdom at this forum. We spoke last year on the effects of dams in indigenous communities, and that issue is still important to us. Today, however, we wish to join the indigenous peoples of the world in discussing the effects of and proposing solutions to the Doctrine of Discovery.

This year, in preparation for today, our group studied the Doctrine of Discovery and learned about the Papal Bulls that created it. It was not a great surprise that the Pope made these rules 560 years ago but it is a surprise they are the legal foundation of U.S. Supreme Court decisions today. We were shocked by that, but the idea that made us the angriest was the concept of "Terra Nulles" . . . meaning empty land. The land taken from Indigenous Peoples by the Christian Empire was NOT, and is NOT empty. We are still here despite 500 years of pressure to make us disappear. Today, we would like to stress that "Terra Nulles" went further. It includes not just the land, but our minds and our souls. When we savages would not die, the leaders of this country decided to "Kill the Indian and save the man." It almost worked but Indigenous peoples are strong. We survived because of the few "bad Indians" who refused to give up our traditions and beliefs.

Many Indigenous peoples have experienced, or are experiencing the devastation of Boarding Schools. Even though it is not taught in national history books, boarding schools are a direct attempt to take our languages and cultures. As a representative of Indigenous youth, we can attest that today we are searching for our connection to our

culture and language, something that boarding schools almost took away from us. Our elders that were sent to boarding schools say that anyone who would not surrender their language or their ceremonies was called "bad Indians". My grandfather was a "bad Indian". As a young boy, he and some of his friends would sneak behind the school buildings and speak in their language and do our ceremonies. He went on to become a Faithkeeper and leader in our community. He spent his life teaching others what he knew. It is because of him and others like him that we are still able to call ourselves Indigenous peoples. To us, he and others like him including many people in this room are not bad Indians but are "ögwe'oweh" or the real people. They are the role models that we, the youth, look to in finding our way as we walk about on this earth. Do the youth, like our elders, have to be "bad Indians" to be good people? If so, is it any wonder that we don't excel in schools that have taught us this lesson?

Last year Pope Benedict XVI spoke to immigrants and said he hoped for a future where all people consider themselves part of "one human family." The Seneca and Iroquois people have long understood this way of living. It is our belief that Our Creator intended for all the people in the world to have love for one another. We understand that all the people of earth are connected. They, like us, are watched over by grandmother moon and protected by heavenly beings. Isn't this like Christian brotherhood and many other beliefs in the world? Why does a person and a religion that speaks of brotherhood still hold on to the Doctrine of Discovery?

In every statistic of education and wellbeing Indigenous peoples are at the bottom. This is a direct result of the attempt to discredit and annihilate our existence. In Seneca Territory, our leadership has a firm commitment to making our language and culture strong again. They have set up many programs where elders can more easily pass on their knowledge, and Indigenous history is not forgotten. We are trying to do our part to change the state of the indigenous world. We know that indigenous peoples around the world are doing the same kinds of things. All we ask is that the non-indigenous world support our goals and allow us to continue.

First, we ask that the Permanent Forum in their recommendations to ECOSOC go beyond article 28 and 37 of the UNDRIP. Make it known that the Papal Bulls which make up the Doctrine of Discovery, and the laws that used them as precedent are at the root of the destruction of millions of lives and untold numbers of cultures. Every wrong that led to every article in UNDRIP can be traced to the laws and the beliefs that come out of the Doctrine of Discovery.

Second, we ask that the U.S. government follow through on their promise to support the UNDRIP. We are glad to hear that the U.S. has set forth a plan to implement the UNDRIP. We hope that the end result comes from Indigenous peoples, not people who think they know what is best for us. It should, however, go further than this. The Doctrine of Discovery should never again be allowed to be used as a precedent for any decision.

Finally, we talk to the Pope. We ask you on behalf of your people to meet with Indigenous Peoples. To hear what a 500 year old statement means today. Even as youth we know that if you listened with a good mind you would not let it continue. Therefore we join the indigenous peoples of the world and those in the Christian community like the World Council of Churches in asking that the pope apologize for the Doctrine of Discovery and denounce it and its use as rationalization for hurting others. Five hundred years is enough. It is time for this part of history to be over so that the healing may begin. Sga:d hädwa:yë' ögwa'nigoe dëdwadahnö:nyöh ha'deögwe'da:geh da:ne' hoh di:h neyögwa'nigo'deök. Let's make our minds as one as we honor each other the people, so let it be that way in our minds.

Everyone: NYOH!