

# The Native American Experience & the Doctrine of Discovery

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*A Workshop for Classis Grand Rapids East*  
**Saturday, January 23, 2016, 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.**

*Hosted by Church of the Servant*

Classis Grand Rapids East is sponsoring a morning workshop which will include an opportunity to participate in **The Blanket Exercise** and to hear more about The Doctrine of Discovery and its role in shaping the Native American experience since the early days of our country — and to consider how we, as contemporary Christians, ought to respond.

## The Blanket Exercise

Synod 2015 said “In obedience to Hebrews 12:14 and 2 Corinthians 5:18-20 to be reconciled, the Blanket Exercise is a proven method to enter into Native Peoples’ experience of inequality. The Blanket Exercise helps us live into other people’s story no matter where we live. The Lord calls us to walk TOGETHER as we experience the hurtfulness done to people groups even as God in Christ walked amongst us and experienced our pain.” Synod recommended that CRC congregations and classes participate in the Blanket Exercise before Synod 2016 ([crcna.org/BlanketExercise](http://crcna.org/BlanketExercise)).

## The Doctrine of Discovery

The Doctrine of Discovery is a series of papal bulls or declarations from the pope from the 15th Century. These papal statements gave European rulers official church sanction to claim a right of discovery over lands not held by Europeans and Christians.

The Synodical task force that will report to Synod 2016 learned that the papal bulls that make up the Doctrine of Discovery represent a common assumption of that time: That Europeans were superior to other peoples and charged to bring the light of the Church and civilization to backward and pagan peoples ([cna.org/ministries/initiatives/doctrine-discovery-task-force](http://cna.org/ministries/initiatives/doctrine-discovery-task-force)). It is behind the claim that Columbus “discovered” the Americas, even though there were people already present on this land. It is directly cited in modern court decisions on land use and property rights. The Doctrine of Discovery is a deep foundation for the last 500 years of history in North America with regard to Native Peoples’ rights.

## Speaker/Facilitator for the Classis workshop will be MARK CHARLES

**Mark Charles** is a thought-provoking public speaker, writer, and consultant. The son of an American woman (of Dutch heritage) and a Navajo man, Mark speaks with insight into the complexities of American history regarding race, culture, and faith in order to help forge a path of healing and reconciliation for the nation.

Mark is the founder and director of 5 Small Loaves, an organization that pursues racial reconciliation through honest education, intentional conversation, and meaningful action. He has served recently on the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church, and currently serves on the Synodical Study Committee on the Doctrine of Discovery and is an Associate with the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship. Mark blogs periodically at [wirelesshogan.org](http://wirelesshogan.org).



Contact Lori Wiersma at [lori.wiersma@coscrc.org](mailto:lori.wiersma@coscrc.org) with any questions.

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*Mark Charles will be preaching at Church of the Servant on Sunday, January 24, 2016, at both 8:30 a.m. and 11 a.m. services. From 3 to 5:30 p.m., he will also make a presentation and lead a discussion about The Doctrine of Discovery. All are invited and welcome.*