

Walter Echo-Hawk's Seminar Keynote:

Title: "Nation-Building Tasks for Healthy Democracies in the 21st Century: Coming to Terms with Indigenous Peoples and the Natural World."

Summary: Some modern democracies engulfed Indigenous Peoples during the Age of Colonialism. Today those nations face two related overarching and unfinished tasks to complete their nation-building processes: (1) After "Colonialism" ran its rough shod course and has now been repudiated as an oppressive institution, belated nation-building requires each emergent society to define, once and for all, the proper place of colonized peoples in its midst. It is incumbent upon free and democratic peoples to set aside and protect indigenous space in modern polities through effective laws and policies that establish a more just set of rights, responsibilities, and relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous citizens. This is belated nation-building work of the first order for former colonies that overran Indigenous peoples and lands during the rise and growth of modern democracies, because the process of bringing colonized peoples into the political order on a more just basis is necessary to effectuate the "consent of the governed" principle that underpins free and democratic nations. (2) Furthermore, the present slide toward impending worldwide environmental disaster requires rapacious Settler States to muster the political will to curb their unbridled exploitation of natural resources, and redress resulting harms that now threaten life as we know it. How nations address these paramount challenges demonstrates their national character, and will materially shape or reshape their exercise of sovereignty in the 21st century.

Echo-Hawk explores the roots of these problems from an indigenous perspective. Then he examines how fragmentation and frailty in U.S. law hinder the just resolution of these problems in North America. To more effectively address these challenges, he advocates a human rights approach. Derived from a United Nations framework that rests upon settled norms found in modern International Law, the approach outlined in UNDRIP is *designed* to bring colonized Indigenous Peoples into the body politic with the full measure of their inherent rights intact. Importantly, recognition and respect for Indigenous rights called for by UNDRIP produces a valuable environmental byproduct: favorable conditions needed by industrialized nations to forge a Land and Sea Ethic—that is, a widely-shared moral compass to guide adaptation to colonized lands, to restore harmony with the Natural World, and to impel positive programs aimed at solving environmental woes.