

The Deadly Intersections of Resource Extraction and Gender-Based Violence in Canada

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Status of Women Committee of House of Commons:

Study on Resource Development and Violence Against Indigenous Women and Girls

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The Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) is a nongovernmental organization that represents more than half of First Nations in British Columbia, Canada and since 1969 has advanced a mandate of working towards the implementation, exercise, and recognition of our inherent Title, Rights and Treaty Rights. UBCIC has a long history of advocacy on the issue of gender-based violence and the crisis of Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-Spirit+ People (MMIWG2S+). UBCIC is pleased to be providing this submission to *the Study on Resource Development and Violence Against Indigenous Women and Girls*; this submission will address the intersections between resource extraction and gender-based violence, and their shared roots in colonial violence which are contributing to the MMIWG2S+ Crisis and the Climate Emergency.

UBCIC has spoken out widely on the issue of gender-based violence and made significant contributions at the provincial, federal, and international levels including at the United Nations Permanent Forum, with the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, The UN Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women.

UBCIC is an integral coordinating member of the Coalition on MMIWG2S+ (the Coalition) in BC. The Coalition is an alliance of organizations and individuals with deep knowledge, expertise, and lived experience of discrimination and violence, including family members and friends of murdered and disappeared women, girls, and Two-Spirit+ people. The Coalition has strategized and advocated to present viable policy solutions to end violence against Indigenous women, girls and Two-Spirit+ people at all levels of government and has borne witness to the ongoing impacts of state violence against the land and Indigenous women.

Colonial Violence: Resource Extraction & Gender-Based Violence

Extractive industries fueling the climate crisis have been directly linked to violence against Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people by the National Inquiry and reports through hyper masculine cultures and industry settings where misogyny and white supremacy are prevalent, through physical and sexual violence and abduction, and militarization of police forces upholding the colonial agenda in service to extractive industries against land defenders. The risks posed by extractive industries to the planet and to Indigenous peoples are compounding in conditions of violence and insecurity.

In Canada the impacts of the climate crisis have both contributed to and amplified a confluence of environmental challenges and socio-economic inequities that imperil the full enjoyment of Indigenous People's Title and Rights, cultural heritage, jurisdiction, and self-determination. For Indigenous peoples in Canada, the industry-fueled climate crisis exacerbates and strengthens the systemic discrimination and violence enacted by colonial laws, institutions, frameworks, and processes. In particular, the climate crisis in Canada has aggravated specific forms of violence, discrimination, and injustices that target and impact Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+1 individuals. The Canadian state has long created and supported structures that operate through coercion and violence against Indigenous women and girls to advance resource extraction and other activities that imperil the environment and climate.

“Man Camps” and Industrialized Settings

The de-legitimization and violation of Indigenous women and girls' rights, a practice used to weaken Indigenous peoples' ties to their lands and communities, and to cement socioeconomic barriers, is especially prevalent in militarized and industrialized environments. These environments invariably support the creation of hyper-violent, hyper-masculine structures and institutions – in Canada it has led to the construction of industrial camps or “man camps.”

Man camps are temporary housing facilities made for predominantly male workers on resource development projects in the oil, pipeline, mining, hydroelectric, and forestry industries. Research has proven that there is a direct correlation between these encampments and violence against women. The presence of these camps in rural and remote areas, which have little or no access to safe transportation options, heighten precarity for women and children who are forced to travel.

Militarized Violence Against Land Defenders

As various types of environmentally destructive resource developments proceed unabated within Indigenous territories, long standing Indigenous Title and Rights issues persist, forcing more land dispossession, threatening cultural heritage, and enacting violence upon Indigenous women who have assumed traditional and novel roles as land defenders. The [RCMP Community-Industry Response Group \(C-IRG\)](#) “was created in 2017 to provide strategic oversight addressing energy industry incidents and related public order, national security and crime issues.” However, in practice C-IRG has been weaponized as a tool of colonial violence in service to extractive industry and has been at the heart of [Indigenous Rights violation](#) across BC.

In line with Indigenous laws, obligations and sacred relationship to the land, waters, and environment, Indigenous women protect the environment within their territories from climate change impacts and emissions-intensive projects as a climate mitigation strategy; however, this role has been delegitimized by industry and state interests through violence led by colonial state actors such as the RCMP.

The militarization of Indigenous land as a means of protecting state and private sector interests violates Indigenous Title and Rights and creates an environment primed for violence against Indigenous women and girls. To further the Crown’s project of undermining Indigenous sovereignty to maintain access to resources, armed police forces invade Indigenous lands to criminalize and disempower Indigenous land defenders, including women and girls.

In exercising their inherent right to protect the environment within their territories from climate change impacts and human activity – in alignment with *Articles 29, 32 and 23 of the UN Declaration* – Indigenous land defenders face excessive physical force from the state, undergo state surveillance and scrutiny in their travels, confront coercive methods by state and non-state actors to create division amongst Indigenous communities, endure harassment and racism, and experience a systemic lack of access to justice while land dispossession and colonization continues.

Sex-Based Discrimination and Land Dispossession by Extractive Industry and Canada

Colonization, land dispossession, forced assimilation and violence towards Indigenous peoples are rooted in doctrines of superiority including *terra nullius* and *The Doctrine of Discovery* which wrongfully emboldened colonizers to steal land they deemed uncontested and claim sovereignty over it and its inhabitants. This colonial mindset of seizure, control and domination over the environment and Indigenous peoples has persisted through Canadian laws, policies, and practices. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the industrial sector that makes its profit off the destruction of the natural world.

The impacts of extractive industries and the climate crisis disproportionately affect Indigenous communities in rural areas and is exacerbating colonial violence, historic and present forms of forced land dispossession, and coinciding with rising rates of gender-based violence.

As a result of policies of sex-discrimination, Indigenous women and their descendants have been systematically denied the right to self-determination, undermining their participation in mitigation and adaptation decision-making within traditional and colonial governance structures. The ongoing presence of extractive industries represents an arm of colonial policies which have a far-reaching legacy of removing Indigenous women and their descendants from the land and their communities through policies of forced-assimilation, forced-relocation, and gender-based violence.

Ongoing extractive practices are intensifying the dislocation of Indigenous women from the land as they face scarcity of safe housing and an ongoing housing crisis, displacement from climate emergencies, and rising rates of gender-based violence. Women and children fleeing their homes and communities at the hands of an abuser, in the wake of climate change devastation, or influx of violence connected to man camps, face barriers in accessing safe emergency shelters and permanent housing options. During the COVID-19 Pandemic under these conditions, experiences of gender-based violence have only increased in what is known as the [Shadow Pandemic](#).

Recommendations

1. **Full Implementation of the Calls for Justice and UN Declaration:** At the direction of First Nations in BC, the UBCIC has worked with the BC Assembly of First Nations and the First Nations Summit as the First Nations Leadership Council, to develop a [BC First Nations Climate Strategy and Action Plan](#) which calls on specific individuals and entities to work towards implementing the Calls for Justice (CFJ) in the climate context – in particular, CFJ 13.1-13.5, which are centered on ensuring safety and security and reducing impacts to Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals throughout resource extraction and development projects. The Strategy also calls for the implementation of the CFJ to ensure equal access to: climate-related education, training, and employment, including climate leadership opportunities and stewardship roles; health, safety, and wellness, including access to healing and connection to healthy lands and clean waters; housing and food security; and meaningful participation and collaboration in climate-related decision-making, planning, and response. Canada must adhere to the Calls for Justice and UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People and follow through with a concrete, timely and actionable plan for implementation across all levels of government and within industrial sectors where violence is pervasive.
2. **Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery and terra nullius:** Canada must acknowledge its ongoing role in upholding doctrines of superiority and actively dismantle them with full recognition of Indigenous Title and Rights, including the rights of Indigenous people to their lands and waters.
3. **Accountability and safety of ‘man camps’:** Canada must work with the provinces and territories and private industry and stipulate as a condition of project approvals, that any employers that accommodate large camps of workers, have staff training, safety checks, and an accountability framework within the company’s policies to respect and uphold the rights and safety of

Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit+ people and of the neighbouring Indigenous communities. Worker accommodation camp regulations should limit the length of time temporary work camps can run and implement practices that increase safety for Indigenous women. Work camps must develop safe, responsible, and accountable relationships with Indigenous communities in close proximity.

4. **Education & training:** Provide mandatory education and training to government, private sector, and extractive industries on gender-based violence prevention and cultural training, including mandatory ongoing cultural awareness, anti-racism, anti-violence, and gender-equality training, along with services to address addiction and mental health wellbeing among workers.
5. **Expand funding for Indigenous-run transportation services in the north and throughout rural communities:** Access to safe reliable transportation throughout northern communities continues to be a barrier to health and well-being and contributes to the creation of conditions of precarity for Indigenous women. These actions to expand transportation service must include support for Indigenous-run transportation services in Northern communities. Safe, reliable, and low barrier transportation is a minimum requirement to creating healthy Indigenous communities, and must be available at no cost to Indigenous women.
6. **Healing supports:** Effective solutions to mitigate and prevent gender-based violence in the context of the climate crisis can be found in establishing a strong base of permanent, Indigenous-centered, and culturally appropriate health and wellness services that not only help Indigenous women and girls heal from violence and trauma, but facilitates (re)connection with culture, identity, and Indigenous ways of knowing and being (laws, medicines, land-based learning). Healing supports, addiction treatment, and mental health supports must be widely available for men and boys to prevent future violence.
7. **Community and cultural teachings:** States must acknowledge the interrelated impacts of colonialism and the climate crisis and include the social dimensions of the climate crisis as a part of robust climate change strategies. This includes full recognition of Indigenous Title and Rights and support for Indigenous peoples, organizations, and communities who are disproportionately affected in this context more than any other group in Canada.