



LIARD ABORIGINAL WOMEN'S SOCIETY
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May 9, 2022

Attention: Alexie Labelle, Clerk, and
House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women, Members and Associate Members
By email: FEWO@parl.gc.ca

Re: "Study on resource development and violence against Indigenous women and girls"

The Liard Aboriginal Women's Society (LAWS) submits to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women four reference documents, summarized below. LAWS requests the Committee to fully consider these findings in its deliberations on how to address the prevalence of violence against Indigenous women and girls, that affects women in nearby communities as well as those who are employed in extractive industries. Indigenous women and girls are reluctant to report this violence to police. The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) and Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action's May 2022 reportⁱ provide evidence of RCMP misogyny, racism and sexualized violence against Indigenous women.

For as long as the resource extraction industry has claimed the unceded territories of our peoples, Indigenous Nations have resisted the unsustainable colonial state and extractive industry practices, enforced by the RCMP, of land theft, dispossession and violence against women. We thank the Committee for undertaking a study on this national crisis, and present recommendations for action for your consideration.

Kaska Dena are a matriarchal society with Tsíyōné' Dena (Wolf Clan) and Mésǵâ Dena (Crow Clan). LAWS upholds Kaska Dena traditional law of Dene Ā'Nezen, to care for the lands and waters as our relations. LAWS rejects the unjust free entry mining regime that allows anyone to put up stakes to act over Indigenous lands without free, prior and informed consent. This has resulted in significant harms to women and caused environmental, social, cultural, economic and spiritual damage in Dene Kēyeh, Kaska Dena unceded traditional territories. The 25 square kilometer abandoned Faro lead zinc mine site is one example of this destruction, contamination reaches far beyond the mine site. LAWS opposes the violence against Indigenous women and girls and environmental damage that accompany colonial "resource development" practices. We want to heal the scars on our women and our lands.ⁱⁱ

1. The 2021 report *Never Until Now: Indigenous & Racialized Women's Experiences Working in Yukon & Northern British Columbia Mine Camps* (Moodie, Mason and Moorcroft) offers Committee members an understanding of the impacts of extractive industry's operations on the lives of Indigenous women and girls. The study demonstrates the mining industry's colonial ethic of exploitation by revealing the degrading ways that Indigenous and racialized women mine workers are treated in the male-dominated workplace and in camp living conditions. Women's jobs were concentrated in typically low-paying and gendered roles like cooking and cleaning. Women experienced high rates of harassment, discrimination, abuse of authority and violence in mine camps based on sex, gender, race and Indigeneity. Workplace health and safety legislation, regulatory requirements and employer policies failed to prevent violence against women. Women developed their own strategies to keep safe at remote isolated work camps, in the absence of safe reporting mechanisms or respectful policies to respond to reports of violence at many of these sites. Police were never called. Some women reported being fired after making complaints about male violence. Respondents said economic benefits to First Nations were limited, environmental practices were poorly rated. Few women chose to remain employed in the sector.

2. LAWS asks the Committee to review its written [Submissions](#) for an analysis of the violence against Indigenous peoples that occurs within the context of ongoing colonial violence (2018, pp. 3 - 7) and of the correlation between the violence of resource extraction and violence against Indigenous women and girls (pp. 12, 27). LAWS Calls to

Action urge “zero tolerance for hatred, racism, sexism, and violent colonial concepts” and calls for government and industry investment to address racism and violence against Indigenous women and girls (p. 30).

3. LAWS March 3 2021 submission to the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board (YESAB) re BMC Minerals “Kudz Ze Kayah” mine project application (YESAB Registry [2017-0083](#)) asserts Indigenous sovereignty over unceded Kaska territories and urges YESAB and government Decision Bodies to reject the current BMC mine proposal. Kaska Dena have opposed this “development” for decades because it would destroy Finlayson Caribou Herd calving grounds and sensitive habitat, food sources, plants, medicines, and special areas that, in Indigenous culture, women are responsible for protecting to sustain life for future generations. YESAB’s conclusion that proposed “mitigation measures” would “eliminate, control or reduce” all of the identified “significant adverse effects to water resources, wildlife, traditional land use, economy and human health and safety” rejected the arguments that these measures were not grounded in Indigenous women’s scientific and traditional knowledge nor scientifically proven to be effective. Following mining activities, the lands and waters are never restored (YESAB Document Number: 2017-0083-7967).

4. Please refer to LAWS April 6, 2022 slide presentation to the Gender-based Violence Knowledge Centre webinar (Women and Gender Equality Canada), attached, for a summary of the findings of *Never Until Now*, additional recommendations, and an overview of LAWS responsibilities and programs.

Finally, we ask the Standing Committee to recognize that use of euphemistic terms like “development” and “resource development”, which imply “growth, progress and positive change”, fail to account for the reality of the colonial project in Canada - Indigenous peoples are displaced in order to steal lands and resources for the economic, political and social benefit of private corporations, settlers, and “the state” provincial, territorial and federal governments. The historical settler colonial practices of extracting furs, forests, fish, minerals and other resources have enacted violence on Indigenous peoples, devalued the social, cultural and political role of Indigenous women in our communities, and harmed the physical environment, plant and animal habitat, and human existence. These practices continue. This violence must stop.

LAWS respectfully asks the Standing Committee on the Status of Women to take the following recommended ACTIONS:

1. **Financial Resources** – Advocate for all-party support to provide adequate government funding for a) long-term sustainable core funding for Indigenous women’s organizations; b) creation of industry-wide and enforceable policies informed by women with lived experience, women’s advocacy NGOs to respect Indigenous sovereignty and the safety of Indigenous women and girls; and c) more research studies per *Reclaiming Power and Place*.
2. **Accountability** –Ensure that a) Canada complies with its obligations to respect, protect and fulfill women’s equality rights and the human rights of Indigenous peoples under domestic and international law, through its UN Universal Periodic Review (UPR) & Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) reports, law and policy reform; and b) Use GBA+ policy analysis, fund Indigenous women’s participation, and include Indigenous women in decision-making roles for environmental and socio-economic assessment reviews of extractive industry proposals.
3. **Implementation** – TRC, MMIWG, Aboriginal Justice Inquiry, Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoplesⁱⁱⁱ. Ensure government adequately funds the work to implement Recommendations, Calls to Justice, and Calls to Action.
4. **Reconciliation, Restoration, Recommendations**. The costs for implementing recommendations for justice and reconciliation, and for the restoration of lands alienated from Indigenous peoples, should be covered by government and industry that have reaped and continue to reap the profits from extractive industry projects.

The Liard Aboriginal Women’s Society is a non-government organization established in 1998 that advocates for Indigenous women’s well-being, offers cultural, educational, youth, and leadership programs, works with community, governments, police and the legal system to improve institutional responses to domestic and sexualized violence, and contributes Indigenous women’s scientific and cultural knowledge to YESAB environmental and socio-economic assessment processes.

Ann Maje Raider, Executive Director

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LIARD ABORIGINAL WOMEN'S SOCIETY March 3 2021 submission to the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board (YESAB) re BMC Minerals "Kudz Ze Kayah" mine project application. YESAB Document Number: 2017-0083-7967, Online at YESAB Registry [2017-0083](https://www.yesab.ca/registries/2017-0083)).

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ⁱ *The Toxic Culture of the RCMP: Misogyny, Racism and Violence against Women in Canada's National Police Force*. May 2022. FAFIA. See also Moorcroft, 2011, *Yukon Women and the RCMP*.

ⁱⁱ Witness Statement. Mary Maje, Kaska Dena Knowledge Keeper and LAWS Board Member. May 6, 2022.

ⁱⁱⁱ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC). 2015. See Bibliography.