

Gendered Impacts

Indigenous Women and Resource Extraction

KAIROS Symposium
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



20 November 2014 | Ottawa, Ontario



Gendered Impacts: *Indigenous Women and Resource Extraction* EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Gendered Impacts: Indigenous Women and Resource Extraction brought together Indigenous women and organizations who are studying the impacts on communities of resource extraction and advocating for responsible mining. In addition to being an opportunity to share research and begin addressing the knowledge gap in this area, the symposium explored the important role of Indigenous women in defending collective rights and the environment. The featured presenters are leaders in their field:

- **Anne Marie Sam**, Nak'azdli First Nation, member of First Nations Women Advocating for Responsible Mining (FNWARM)
- **Elana Nightingale**, Acting Manager, Socio-Economic Development, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada
- **Naty Atz Sunuc**, Maya Kaqchikel, General Coordinator of CEIBA, the Association of Community Development and Promotion in Guatemala
- **Aurelie Arnaud**, Environmental and Sustainable development program, Quebec Native Women/Femmes autochtones du Québec

The symposium was chaired by **Ellen Gabriel**, an activist and artist from Kanehsatà:ke Nation - Turtle Clan, known for her involvement as the official spokesperson, chosen by the People of the Longhouse, during the Oka Crisis. About 25 representatives from Indigenous organizations, churches, unions, solidarity groups and academics, as well as a Member of Parliament and representatives from the mining industry attended the gathering

This initiative is part of KAIROS' integrated work on Indigenous rights, resource extraction and gender justice. While KAIROS has historically worked for some time on these issues with partners in Canada and the global South, recently they have been brought together in the Women of Courage program, with a focus on Indigenous women and collective rights.

In May 2014, KAIROS and Horizons of Friendship organized a delegation of eight Indigenous women from Canada, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Panama and the Philippines to the 13th Session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in New York. Delegates shared their communities' experiences





with resource extraction, in particular the specific gendered impacts, and spoke about the leadership role of Indigenous women in defending community rights. Recommendations from this delegation to the UN included supporting local research, more effective monitoring of these impacts, and organizing opportunities for women to come together to share experiences and strategize.

THE KNOWLEDGE GAP

The symposium was KAIROS' response to a significant knowledge gap in this area. While it is becoming increasingly clear that the impacts of resource extraction are not gender neutral, and that women play a key role in the defense of collective rights and the environment, there are few studies and even less support for local research. Evidence gathered by Indigenous women from Canada, Latin America and the Philippines shows an alarming increase in violence against Indigenous women and girls when resource extraction projects are present. There are also reports of persecution and criminalization of women involved in the struggle for land and collective rights, and of the acute environmental and social impacts of resource extraction on women. However, due to the lack of systematic research, and of support for women and organizations monitoring the situation at the local level, these reports often remain isolated and anecdotal, and the essential leadership role of women is not recognized or acknowledged. During the

UNPFII delegation Joan Carling, a member of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues said: *"In a lot of countries women are on the frontline of this resistance and logically so because they are the ones who know by heart and by their Indigenous knowledge how mining, for example, is going to impact... Yet, their contributions are invisible."*

THE PRESENTATIONS

The symposium featured four women who are monitoring the impacts of resource extraction in their communities and, in particular, on the well-being of Indigenous women. What follows are summaries of the presentations.


Anne Marie Sam described the impact of the Mount Milligan mine on her community of Fort St James, B.C., and also talked about the



creation of First Nation Women Advocating for Responsible Mining (FNWARM), a network of women chiefs and councillors in BC: *"The group came together*

after 2008. There was a mining conference where all the chiefs were called together and somebody realized how many women were standing up at these conferences saying what about the communities? Because it's not just about jobs. And what about our families? What about the food security issue? What about





the water?" Anne's people, the Nak'azdli, are matrilineal and martrilocal. She described how her ancestors resisted mining on their land. When the mining company arrived in 2006 Anne's community resisted, taking the company to the provincial and the federal courts and arguing that the environmental impact assessment was insufficient. The community was told there was not enough evidence to support their case. As well, the mining company argued it had community support because the community downstream from Anne's had approved the proposal. As a result, the mining project went ahead. Now that the mine is operating, Anne's community has been dealing with its impacts. Since the Environmental Assessment Committee is not required to monitor social and health impacts, the community has taken this on themselves. Anne does this as a community member and a member of FNWARM. Their research, which includes two years of data, can be found on the *10 Steps Ahead* website <http://www.piplinks.org/system/files/Nak%27al+Bun-Stuart+Lake+Mount+Milligan+Construction+Phase+Report+December+2014.pdf>

...we have been taught our identity comes from the land and our songs are from the land and when you do an environmental assessment that does not come up

—Anne Marie Sam

Elana Nightingale from Pauktuutit Inuit Women spoke about their participatory research with women from the Baker Lake area in Nunavut. (<http://pauktuutit.ca/wp-content/blogs.dir/1/assets/Final-mining-report-PDF-for-web.pdf>)



For the past 10 years Pauktuutit, which was formed in 1984, has been concerned about the impact of resource extraction on Inuit women. To date its research has focused on the Meadowbank gold mine. Five themes arose from the initial research, which was conducted in collaboration with the school of social work at the University of British Columbia: work environment, impact of influxes of money on the community, family relations, addictions and long-term socioeconomic concerns. While still in its preliminary stages, one of the central findings of this work is that the initial concerns were foreseen by women, yet women were not engaged in community planning and development processes. As a result these initial concerns were not addressed. The most important recommendation emerging from this research is the need to involve women throughout the environmental impact assessment, planning and development processes to ensure these impacts are recognized and addressed.



As well, the benefits have been very unequal in the community. Average income has increased greatly for men, it has increased by over 50%, but women haven't seen that increase. So there has been a gender inequality in the income benefits, and the unequal benefits are creating divisions in the community that weren't there before.—Elana Nightingale

Natalia Atz Sunuc spoke from her experience as a human rights defender and Indigenous



woman in Guatemala where policies aimed at the extermination of Indigenous peoples as well as the impacts of resource extraction are quite similar to those

in Canada. Naty challenged the view that Indigenous communities who oppose mining and mega projects are against development. Indigenous communities have many proposals for local development that are based on their culture and world view and an economy of *life*. Guatemala's Indigenous peoples are applying the concept of *buen vivir* (living well) to local development. According to Naty, the impacts of resource extraction on Indigenous women in Guatemala cannot be separated from the impacts on the land and territory because women feel the impacts

on the land more violently. When women mobilize to defend their communities and the land, they are criminalized. As well, women feel the impacts of violence against their husbands, children and other members of the community.


...we see that women are sexually harassed, raped, chased in their communities. But added to this, when they begin to mobilize and lead in defence of the water, in defence of the forests, there is a stigmatization from society itself to say that they're women who have left their home, that they only go to meetings to see men. So there are other ways in which women are living the violence once mines come to their communities—Natalia Atz

Aurelie Arnaud coordinates the new environmental and sustainable development



program at Quebec Native Women (QNW). It focuses on mining and its impacts on Indigenous women. She spoke about organizing a forum on Plan Nord, the provincial government plan to mine Quebec's far north. The forum asked: What kind of development





and what kind of jobs does Plan Nord propose? Specifically, QNW asked: Where are the Aboriginal women in this plan? Aurelie noted that while 30% of inhabitants in the far north are Indigenous, and half are women, in Canada only 3% of mine workers are women and in Quebec it is only 1%. Women must be at the table. They ask different questions and defend different priorities. QNW has also seen correlation between increased revenue from mining, increased alcohol and drug use, and increased violence against women.

What we see across the world and in Canada on mining projects that are already in existence is the increase in violence against women because of the increase of revenue which leads to an increase in alcohol and drug abuse which leads to an increase in domestic violence. We see the environmental restriction; we see how family territories are destroyed as it divides the community because some have jobs. In Quebec we've seen an increase in violence against women

—Aurelie Arnaud



THE FINDINGS/THEMES

- 1) There is a need to better identify and address the impacts of mining and resource extraction on Indigenous women. Women are disproportionately and differently affected by the negative impacts of mining. These include the social, health and environmental impacts that women often experience first and most acutely. For example, women are the first to feel the impact of water contamination and shortages. Indigenous women have also said that they experience ecological and environmental destruction as violence:

“So we’re talking about territory body/land because it is not just about defending women’s rights but also defending the land. This is because, like it was said, it’s not that men don’t live the impacts of mining, but women live it in a different way, we think it’s much more violent.” (Atz, 2014)

- 2) The correlation between resource extraction and violence against women was a recurring theme. This violence is in part related to changes in the social fabric in communities, an increase in male workers, loss of traditional mechanisms of social control, and an influx of money. Speakers noted a clear correlation between increased revenue, drug and alcohol use, and violence against women.

“Massive increases in personal income where there are existing addictions issues and where there is also family breakdown occurring has fueled alcohol consumption and alcohol related violence. The number of incidents that the RCMP has had to respond to has increased dramatically. It was around 500 incidents in 2008 before the mine opened and it has jumped to over 800.” (Nightingale, 2014).

- 3) Women derive little benefit from the positive impacts of mining, such as employment and increased income. The arrival of a mine tends to increase income disparity between women and men. A very small minority of the mining workforce is made up of women, and those are mostly employed in “unskilled” and poorly paid jobs:

"Because in Canada, only 3% of the mining workers are women and in Quebec it is 1%. What kind of jobs are you bringing to women, and how will women say yes to mining when they don't see the benefit but they see the problems?" (Arnaud, 2014)

- 4) Indigenous women are at the forefront of their communities' struggle for collective rights. Before the arrival of a mine, women are more likely to raise questions about its social, environmental and health impacts. After the mine is in operation, women continue to raise these concerns and, in some cases, to monitor the impacts. Often these are not issues that are raised in environmental impact assessments:

"You need to bring the women to the table because they won't protect the same things as men and it is equally important. We need the women to bring the issues of families and the water and children and to be able to say no to a development project on those grounds and then the community will decide." (Arnaud, 2014)

- 5) As women are often excluded from the official consultation process and impact assessment, these social, environmental and health concerns are not raised:

"... a lot of these concerns were foreseen by women in the community. But because women were not actively engaged in the community engagement processes and were not included in planning and developing for the mine, these issues were not addressed and many of them were exacerbated by the opening of the mine." (Nightingale, 2014)



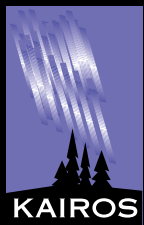
THE RECOMMENDATIONS

The symposium was an opportunity to hear and learn directly from Indigenous women and organizations engaged in monitoring the impacts of mining at a local level. It was a chance for participants to discuss cross cutting themes and concerns and to strategize about how to strengthen advocacy, research and education work on the gendered impacts of mining. Key recommendations include:

- increased intentional support for research and documentation led by Indigenous women and organizations, especially at a community level;
- increased visibility of the gendered impacts of resource extraction;
- increased capacity in the use of legal and human rights instruments that will allow Indigenous women to respond to the impacts of mining and defend their rights;
- sustained support for networks and exchanges of Indigenous women impacted by mining.

The strongest and most urgent recommendation emerging from the symposium was the need to have more gatherings, exchanges and symposia of this kind at regional, national and international levels.





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**Photos courtesy of CEIBA, FNWARM, KAIROS, Pauktuutit, Quebec Native Women and Allan Lissner.*