

**Address by Marjolaine Étienne**  
**Standing Committee on the Status of Women - House of**  
**Commons**  
**April 29, 2022**

Hello, kuei, Madam President,

I would like to thank the members of this committee for giving Quebec Native Women (hereafter QNW) the opportunity to speak out on the disturbing issues of violence experienced in all its forms by Indigenous women and girls in Quebec. My name is Marjolaine Étienne, President of QNW. I am from the Innu Nation of Mashteuiatsh. I am accompanied today by my colleague Stéfanie Sirois-Gauthier, legal and political analyst.

QNW has been contributing and working to restore the balance between Indigenous women and men, whether Indigenous or non-Indigenous, by giving a strong voice to the needs and priorities of women for 48 years.

The promotion of non-violence has been an important cause for QNW since its creation. In that respect, our organization thanks the

Standing Committee on the Status of Women for listening to QNW's priorities in terms of violence related to resource exploitation. Not to mention that Indigenous women and girls are disproportionately victims of violence in all its forms: physical, psychological, sexual, **but also** cultural, mental, spiritual, social, institutional, financial, etc. These forms of violence are present in communities, as well as in urban settings. Indigenous women and girls deserve to be and must be safe from this scourge of violence in all its forms, which has been an additional strain during the pandemic. This violence is the result of all forms of colonial policies that were and are meant to assimilate Indigenous people, especially Indigenous women.

The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (hereinafter referred to as NIMMIWG) mentions that resource exploitation was at the root of colonization policies. The objective was to develop international trade based on resources and territory that had never been conceded by the various Indigenous communities that occupied it, without consent or agreement.

The NIMMIWG reports that Indigenous women and girls are 12 times more likely to be murdered, particularly because they are

marginalized. Discriminatory, patriarchal and assimilative colonial policies and the establishment of Residential schools are prime examples that have had and continue to have severe and permanent intergenerational impacts. It is a slow but tremendously devastating genocide. I don't need to tell you how damaging it has been in communities and for Indigenous women. Without minimizing the violence that women experience in general, the statistics are very clear: Indigenous women are far more affected than their non-Indigenous counterparts.

On the one hand, the NIMMIWG's Calls to Action 13.1 to 13.5 make explicit reference to resource exploitation and impacts on Indigenous women, girls and 2ELGBTQIA + people. In general, the Calls to Action demand that the safety and protection of Indigenous women be taken into account when extractive and mining projects are being developed. To do so, they must be involved in the processes **before, during and after** implementation. Projects must also be subject to socio-economic impact assessments. Governments are also asked to fund research projects in this area, and the industries concerned are asked to expand and strengthen existing social infrastructure to enable greater service delivery.

Our organization questions whether these calls to action are really being implemented, considering that we are here today to talk about the violence experienced by Indigenous women and girls in a context of resource exploitation. Is the project analysis process comprehensive and multifactorial? What are the criteria for implementing or not implementing the project? Are Indigenous people, Indigenous experts and representative Indigenous organizations represented on the various committees? What about the ongoing monitoring provided for in the call to action 13.2? All of these questions lead to the same question: does the implementation of development projects really comply with the safety, protection and well-being of Indigenous women and girls?

Moreover, these calls to action also refer to the right to free, prior and informed consent guaranteed by Articles 18, 19 and 31 of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* and Canadian constitutional law. It is clear that the principle of Honour of the Crown is not being appreciably respected.

On the other hand, our organization is concerned about the fact that under the NIMMIWG's Call to Action 13.5, governments are supposed to fund more research projects to document the issue. Among other things, the Inuit Women's Association of Canada released a highly relevant study in March 2021. It reported that Inuit

women working in the resource extraction industries experienced events such as unwanted touching, emotional abuse, sexual comments, sexual harassment, violence, etc. The question remains: what other recent studies are pointing to the problem? Are there any current studies that deal with violence that takes place outside of the workplace? The answer of our organization is that **too few** studies are carried out for women to be heard.

In recent years, Indigenous women have become somewhat more present on the work sites, but it has previously been recognized that 99% of the jobs were filled by men. This places Indigenous women, either working or living in the vicinity, in a very vulnerable position.

In conclusion, the impacts of economic development and resource exploitation on Indigenous women, particularly when it comes to violence, are still not well documented. We cannot ignore the fact that in addition to experiencing violence related to resource exploitation, women are also subjected to colonial violence as they see their ancestral and traditional territory being overexploited for economic purposes. As a result, the impacts on the environment, the conservation of traditional knowledge and the preservation of fauna and flora are major.

QNW would have liked to submit concrete recommendations to the Committee. However, the time frame for the appearance did not allow for consultation with the women of our nations.

Thank you for listening, Tshinishkumitin, meegwetch.