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THE GREAT SPIRIT OF THE FEMALE SIDE OF LIFE OF ALL THINGS

KCI-NIWESQ

NATIVE WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION OF CANADA MAGAZINE

MAY • 2021



SILENT NO MORE | NO MÁS SILENCIO

*An inside look at the International Summit of the Americas
on Violence Against Indigenous Women, 2021.*

WHAT MUST BE DONE

ISSUE N° 03



INSIDE THE SUMMIT

2021

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WELCOME TO THE THIRD VOLUME OF KCI-NIWESQ THE MAGAZINE OF THE NATIVE WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION OF CANADA (NWAC).

This edition is quite different from the two previous offerings.
We will return to the regular format next month.

When we were considering which stories would best fill these pages, we knew we had to recount the words of the speakers at the remarkable, online International Summit of the Americas on Violence Against Indigenous Women, which NWAC hosted on March 29 and 30.

The Summit came together so quickly—about six weeks from conception to reality. But we managed to put together a roster of guests from all over the Americas who were eager to share their thoughts and, in some cases, their pain.

It turns out that Indigenous women and their allies really do want to work together across national boundaries to put an end to the violence, the genocide, that stalks us all.

In this edition of Kci-Niwesq, you will hear from public officials like Luis Almagro, the Secretary General of the Organization of American States, and Anita Bhatia, the Deputy Executive Director for Resource Management, Sustainability and Partnerships at UN Women.

You will also read the words of Indigenous women who are making a difference on the ground, like Nelsy Ku Chay, the Coordinator of the Houses of Indigenous and Afro-American Women in Mexico, and Marize Vierade Oliveira Guarani, the President of the Associação Indígena Aldeia Maracanã in Brazil.

You will read about the best practices that were discussed, and the traditional healing methods that are providing hope and health to those who have been abused.

You will hear that the word 'genocide' was repeated time and time again in relation to the violence being directed at Indigenous women across the Western hemisphere. One of our speakers was Marion Buller, the Chief Commissioner of the National Inquiry in Canada that concluded a genocide is being perpetrated.

The Summit was a time for sharing information. But it was also a time for coming together, as Indigenous women, to chart a unified course for addressing the violence.

We know it must be stopped. We know we cannot allow future generations—our granddaughters and great-granddaughters—to live with the fears that have haunted us and our ancestors.

We hope, as you read the words contained in these pages, you will understand the imperative that lies before all of us to say 'no more' to the deaths and disappearances. We hope they will inspire you to join us in this mission.

Thank you for reading the third edition of Kci-Niwesq. Please drop us a line and let us know what you think at reception@nwac.ca.

MIIGWETCH.

LYNNE GROULX LL.L., J.D. | CEO

NATIVE WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION OF CANADA
L'ASSOCIATION DES FEMMES AUTOCHTONES DU CANADA



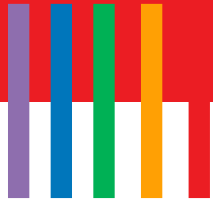
INTERNATIONAL SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS ON VIOLENCE AGAINST INDIGENOUS WOMEN

Native Women's
Association of Canada



Asociación de Mujeres
Indígenas de Canadá

‘WE WILL BE SILENT NO MORE’



The knowledge that the violence suffered by Indigenous women in Canada is occurring with similar tragic results in every country of the Americas prompted the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) to call an international meeting to discuss ways to end it.

That meeting, the International Summit of the Americas on Violence Against Indigenous Women, was held online over two days at the end of March. It drew human rights experts, academics, law enforcement officials, Indigenous leaders, and women working on the ground in their respective nations together to share ideas and information.

In all, nearly 1,000 people registered to take part in the event, which was intended to be the genesis of an international movement to end the deaths and disappearances of Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people.

“The issue of violence against women and girls is both a serious human rights violation and, frankly, a major global public health issue on the order of the pandemic,” Anita Bhatia, the Deputy Executive Director for Resource Management, Sustainability and Partnerships at UN Women, told the Summit.

“This is an issue that affects all women and girls in all countries across all ethnicities, races, socioeconomic groups, and education levels,” said Ms. Bhatia. “However, the limited data that we have demonstrates that Indigenous women are even more affected than other groups.”

Multiple speakers at the Summit decried the lack of verifiable numbers available across the continents to demonstrate the size and scope of the problem that a national inquiry in Canada has determined to be a genocide. But some statistics suggest Indigenous women in the Americas are murdered or sexually assaulted at rates that are 10 times higher than the rates experienced by non-Indigenous women.

“THIS IS AN ISSUE THAT AFFECTS ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS IN ALL COUNTRIES ACROSS ALL ETHNICITIES, RACES, SOCIOECONOMIC GROUPS, AND EDUCATION LEVELS,”

- SAID ANITA BHATIA

“We're talking about our relatives, and we're talking about the inner connections with what they call intimate partner violence, trafficking, every form of violence—that continuum,” Brenda Hill, the Director of Technical Assistance and Training of the National Indigenous Women's Resource Center in the United States, told Summit participants.

The Summit ended with the presentation of a draft outcome document that urges an international response to the crisis. It calls upon Summit participants to, among other things, work together to collect data about the violence, collect best practices for combatting it, condemn states that fail to address it, and draw on the knowledge of human rights experts.

The document, which was prepared by NWAC for the consideration of other Summit participants, urges follow-up meetings and the creation of a pan-Americas working group to explore ways to end the killing.

(Continued on page 6)



ANITA BHATIA
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
UN WOMEN



JOSÉ FRANCISCO CALÍ TZAY
UN SPECIAL
RAPPOREUR



KARINA GOULD
MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT



MICHELLE SAUVE
ACTING COMMISSIONER,
ANA

(Continued from page 5) “In Colombia, the armed conflict has led to the forced displacement of Indigenous women and girls who are commonly subjected to systematic patterns of sexual exploitation and rape in the context of the occupation of Indigenous land,” said Ms. Bhatia. “And reports also suggest that Indigenous women are at greater risk of trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation and violence caused by armed groups, particularly in the northern triangle of Central America, comprising Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, and Mexico.”

This tells us that there is an urgent need for more concerted joint action on behalf of all states and the international community, particularly in the context of COVID where all of the risk factors for violence against women and girls have been exacerbated tremendously, said Ms. Bhatia.

Karina Gould, Canada’s Minister of International Development, who was one of two Canadian federal ministers to speak at the meeting, said the Canadian government believes there is a collective duty to ensure that Indigenous women and girls have the opportunities, space, and respect they deserve.

“Gender-based violence is a barrier to the full achievement of gender equality, peace, and development, and these issues have only been exacerbated by the social, health, and economic impacts and movement restrictions of COVID 19,” said Ms. Gould.

Jose Francisco Cali Tzay, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, said the reality is that women do not enjoy equality because of the paternalistic structure of societies, and Indigenous women, in particular, face a wide variety of multifaceted and complex human rights violations that are mutually reinforcing.

This creates multiple avenues for vulnerability, said Mr. Tzay. Numerous forms of discrimination, he said, are related to gender, class, ethnicity, socioeconomic circumstances, and the right to the control of resources.

Michelle Sauve, the Acting Commissioner for the Administration for Native Americans and a member of the U.S. presidential task force Operation Lady Justice, said, “The first step in addressing any problem, especially the problem of violence against women and girls and gender-diverse people, is admitting that there is a problem.”

This was the chief aim of the Summit of the Americas on Violence Against Indigenous Women. It was an international acknowledgement that the murders and disappearances are happening and that they must stop.

“We are coming together, across the Americas, to fight this evil. Things are moving ahead, things are happening. This meeting is a demonstration of that,” Lorraine Whitman, the President of NWAC, said in her closing statement. “Now I have hope that the future may be brighter. I have hope that, working with all of you, we can bring this genocide to an end.”

"WOMEN DO NOT ENJOY EQUALITY BECAUSE OF THE PATERNALISTIC STRUCTURE OF SOCIETIES, AND INDIGENOUS WOMEN, IN PARTICULAR, FACE A WIDE VARIETY OF MULTIFACETED AND COMPLEX HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS THAT ARE MUTUALLY REINFORCING.

THIS CREATES MULTIPLE AVENUES FOR VULNERABILITY."

- SAID JOSÉ FRANCISCO CALÍ TZAY

OAS SECRETARY GENERAL URGES ERADICATION OF ALL FORMS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST INDIGENOUS WOMEN



Photo: Luis Almagro, OAS Secretary General visits Fort Albany

Luis Almagro has been fighting to win justice for victims of violence for nearly four decades, first in his home country of Uruguay and now on the international stage as a defender of Indigenous women.

Mr. Almagro the Secretary General of the Organization of American States (OAS), gave the keynote address on the opening day of the International Summit of the Americas on Violence Against Indigenous Women.

He said it is time for elected leaders of the countries in the Western hemisphere to put a stop to the deaths and disappearances.

The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples says Indigenous women must be afforded freedom and human rights, but violence nullifies those freedoms, Mr. Almagro told Summit participants.

“As a result,” he said, “states should adopt the necessary measures, in conjunction with Indigenous Peoples, to prevent and eradicate all forms of violence and discrimination, particularly against Indigenous women and children.”

The Summit speech was not the first time Mr. has spoken out about the need to stop the murders and assaults that Canada’s National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls determined to be a genocide.

In December 2019, he visited Canada to gain a first-hand perspective about the issues confronting Indigenous women in rural and remote communities. He ended that trip by urging the Canadian government to accelerate its action on the National Inquiry’s 231 Calls for Justice.

“I went to remote First Nations communities such as Kashechewan and Fort Albany in northern Ontario. Being on the ground, I became an eye witness, and I talked to witnesses, and I talked to victims of multiple forms of violence against Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse persons,” Mr. Almagro said at the Summit.

“Although we acknowledge the advances in Canada to redress this problem,” he said, “we also see that there are many challenges ahead.”

“We know that Indigenous women are the life givers, therefore they know how to heal the land and the people,” said Mr. Almagro. “That is why women must regain their place of power in our patriarchal society. As I declared during my visit in 2019, we need to heal the past so we can fix the present.”

The former Uruguayan foreign minister and ambassador is a lawyer whose rise to prominence included successfully fighting to repeal a law that granted amnesty to those who committed civil rights abuses and crimes during Uruguay’s civil-military dictatorship of 1973 to 1985, a time when torture and unexplained disappearances were rampant.

As head of the OAS, Mr. Almagro has reported on the systemic murder, torture, imprisonment, and rape of government opponents in Venezuela, and helped to launch an international investigation into whether crimes against humanity were taking place in that country.

He has also lobbied for human rights in Nicaragua and democratic rights in Bolivia. And he has been an ally of Indigenous women’s groups as they lead the fight to create a safer world for themselves and for their daughters, sisters, mothers, and aunties. (Continued on page 8)

"INDIGENOUS WOMEN ARE RESILIENT, BUT THEY ARE ALSO VULNERABLE. THEY NEED ADVOCATES, THEY NEED ALLIES, THEREFORE, NO MAN ANYWHERE CAN TURN A BLIND EYE. EVERY ONE OF US HAS A RESPONSIBILITY TO CONFRONT VIOLENCE AND THE ATTITUDES THAT TOLERATE IT."

- SAID LUIS ALMAGRO

(Continued from page 7)

Among the most surprising findings of his trip to Canada, said Mr. Almagro was the reproductive injustice directed toward Indigenous women through forced sterilization and the human rights abuses taking place against Indigenous people in correctional facilities.

Those were themes that were echoed throughout the Summit by other speakers.

The United Nations 2030 sustainable development goals call for empowerment of Indigenous Peoples, Mr. Almagro told the summit.

"But how can we achieve sustainable development, and include Indigenous Peoples if we still have not stopped the prevalence of violence against indigenous women?" he asked. "I believe that now is the moment to create more awareness about this urgent problem in our hemisphere and emphasize the need to fix it."

Significant gaps in gender equality remain, said Mr. Almagro, and the disparities are sustained in Indigenous communities by widespread social and economic exclusion.

A report by the World Bank found that 43 percent of Indigenous people in Latin America were poor in 2011, meaning they were living on less than \$5.50 US per day, and that 24 were extremely poor, meaning they were living on less than \$1.90 a day. That was more than twice the rate of poverty for non-Indigenous people.

"Indigenous women suffer the most under these unjust conditions, leaving them more vulnerable to becoming victims of all forms of violence," said Mr. Almagro.

In recent years, Latin America has seen an alarming increase in killings of environmental and social defenders, with Indigenous leaders the most targeted.

"The situation has worsened with COVID-19 and the lack of protection of their communities in isolated areas," he said. "These cases of extreme violence must end. We must defend the defenders. I call on national authorities to take special actions to prevent such horrible acts."

In addition, said Mr. Almagro the absence of the rule of law in some places has forced Indigenous people to flee their homes and become migrants, with Indigenous women carrying the largest burden of such displacement.

Indigenous women's organizations across the Americas have been working to counterbalance these injustices, and the rest of us must do what we can to help them, he said.

**"INDIGENOUS WOMEN ARE THE LIFE GIVERS,
THEREFORE THEY KNOW HOW TO HEAL THE LAND AND
THE PEOPLE, THAT IS WHY WOMEN MUST REGAIN THEIR
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AS I DECLARED DURING MY VISIT IN 2019, WE NEED
TO HEAL THE PAST SO WE CAN FIX THE PRESENT."**

- SAID MR. ALMAGRO

"Indigenous women are resilient, but they are also vulnerable. They need advocates, they need allies," said Mr. Almagro "Therefore, no man anywhere can turn a blind eye. Every one of us has a responsibility to confront violence and the attitudes that tolerate it. That is why it is time for all of us to look inside our own hearts and examine our own actions so we're going to stop our abusive behaviour and, instead, stand side by side with women to stop gender violence, especially against Indigenous Peoples."



LUIS ALMAGRO

SECRETARY GENERAL, ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES



ELDER ALMA BROOKS
NATIVE WOMEN'S
ASSOCIATION OF
CANADA, ELDER



AMANDA TASCÓN PANCHI
TECHNICAL COORDINATOR OF
THE DEPARTMENT OF WOMEN
AND GENDER, INDIGENOUS OR-
GANIZATION OF ANTIOQUIA



OLGA MONTÚFAR CONTRERAS
PRESIDENT, INDIGENOUS
PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES
GLOBAL NETWORK



PATRISIA GONZALES
PROMOTORA OF INDIGENOUS
MEDICINE & HERBALIST DEPART-
MENT OF MEXICAN AMERICAN
STUDIES, UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

TRADITIONAL HEALING PRACTICES KEY TO RECOVERY FROM LONG-TERM EFFECTS OF COLONIZATION

THE SCARS OF COLONIZATION RUN DEEP IN THE INDIGENOUS WOMEN OF THE AMERICAS.

Feelings of inferiority, hopelessness, self-sabotage, and self-destructive behaviours are natural responses to the genocide and campaigns of assimilation that have been waged against them, and the deplorable conditions in which many are forced to live, says Alma Brooks, a Maliseet grandmother from the St. Mary's First Nation in New Brunswick who is the East Elder of the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC).

The result, Ms. Brooks told the International Summit of the Americas on Violence Against Indigenous Women, is frustration, anger, high rates of suicide, cancer, addiction, and imprisonment, along with hostile attitudes and resentment towards white people.

But, she and others told the Summit, there is a reawakening interest in traditional healing to help Indigenous women find the balance, harmony, and peace that has been missing from their lives.

"Traditional healing methods utilize ancient ceremony, story, songs, dance, teaching, sound frequencies, and other culturally significant tools that carry the elements of our genetic memory," said Ms. Brooks, who works with NWAC's Resiliency Lodge to provide counselling and support to Indigenous women.

"A healing of the people and a healing of the land are synonymous," she said. "All life is connected. And life is resilient."

Olga Montúfar Contreras, who is President of both the Indigenous Persons with Disabilities Global Network and the Fundación Paso a Paso, told the Summit that many Indigenous women prefer to access health care based on traditional medicine, which has been handed down from generation to generation.

And Amanda Tascón Panchi, the Technical Co-ordinator of the Department of Gender and Women at the Indigenous Organization of Antioquia in Colombia, said her group employs an Indigenous psychologist and traditional healer to help Indigenous women maintain their soul and spirit.

"Traditional methodology has helped us move forward," said Ms. Panchi. "We have worked closely with plants, and elders have led this transformation."

Patrisia Gonzales, Promotora of Indigenous Medicine and Herbalist in the Department of Mexican American Studies at the University of Arizona, is the granddaughter of Kickapoo, Comanche, and Macehual peoples, and specializes in Indigenous ways of knowing and Indigenous medicine.

"For the last 25 years," Dr. Gonzales told the Summit, "I've done traditional clinics, I've done traditional treatments at powwows with survivors of torture and violence, peace bearers and peace gatherings." And she has held traditional clinics in collaboration with centres for domestic violence.

Dr. Gonzales said she helped to launch a promotora project in Albuquerque in which Nahua elders gave their permission for her group to build a ceremonial sweat lodge, based on the Nahua tradition, that incorporated traditional medicine. That led to other sweat lodges in which healing comes through plants as well as treatment that looks like massage but is actually a form of ceremony connecting the recipient to their light and the sun.

That evolved into a clinic where there is a healing room in which elders and health promoters offer traditional treatment. And that eventually grew into an annual medicine gathering.

"We had to re-teach ourselves and reconnect each other to what our grandparents had taught us," said Dr. Gonzales. "We came together to share what we knew because the power of our hands is why we were persecuted as Indigenous Peoples. Not only for our plant knowledge and our connection to our ceremonies, but the very power that connected us to our ability to heal ourselves and others was through our own bodies. And so, we really have reclaimed that power."

As a professor, she said, she was able to get a grant to research Indigenous critical thinking circles that are intended for the prevention of gender violence. (Continued on page 10)

**"ALL LIFE IS CONNECTED AND THAT ANCESTRAL
MEMORY IS TRANSMITTED EPIGENETICALLY FROM
ONE GENERATION TO THE NEXT."**

- SAID ALMA BROOKS

(Continued from page 9) “We call them sage circles,” said Dr. Gonzales. “We’re talking and sharing stories and we’re thinking about how to strengthen our self-determination as that cultural shield. We drink our medicines, do our storytelling, and create a network to respond to violence against Indigenous Peoples, with a particular focus on female-identified peoples but knowing also that we include all our community in that solution.”

When Indigenous languages are analyzed, she said, it becomes clear that Indigenous Peoples are connecting to their stars, to the sun, and to the body and its relationship to the water within it, and the water of the land.

“We’re healing the land and the water when we’re healing our bodies, and we’re connecting back to the stars in the sky world, and all of the unseen processes that are in place, that we experience through our ceremonies,” she said. “Our ceremonies are more powerful than colonization and, when our ceremonies work, we heal and we undo the past and we undo the trauma.”

In Canada, NWAC’s Resiliency Lodges are places where Indigenous women can gather to provide and receive traditional healing programs, as well as take part in support groups and opportunities to recharge.

Ms. Brooks said this corresponds with what the ancestors have always known and what science is now corroborating—that “all life is connected and that ancestral memory is transmitted epigenetically from one generation to the next.”

What that means, she said, is, that memory is inherited biologically and meaningful information can be passed that way from generation to generation. But science is also verifying that intergenerational trauma can be genetically transmitted from one generation to the next, and that has significant implications for Indigenous women who are healing from the violence that has been perpetrated against them, said Ms. Brooks.

“Traditional indigenous societies had methods of healing those traumas built into their way of life,” she said.

“Harmony and balance within and among the extended family was fundamentally important for the survival of the people. ... Traditional healing practices are key to recovery from the long-term effects of colonization.”

**“OUR CEREMONIES ARE MORE POWERFUL THAN
COLONIZATION AND, WHEN OUR CEREMONIES
WORK, WE HEAL AND WE UNDO THE PAST
AND WE UNDO THE TRAUMA.”**

- SAID ALMA BROOKS



Photo: Resiliency Lodge, MMIWG2S Commemoration

SUSAN AGLUKARK

NUNAVUT'S FIRST EVER JUNO-AWARD-WINNING
INUK SINGER AND SONGWRITER

WE NEED TO BETTER UNDERSTAND OUR TRAUMA

Susan Aglukark is Nunavut's first ever Juno-Award-winning Inuk singer and songwriter. But she is also a victim of abuse. In 2018, she appeared before the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls to name the man who assaulted her in her hometown of Rankin Inlet when she was eight years old.

On the final day of the Inquiry's hearings, Ms. Aglukark broke into sobs saying, "Norman Ford, you didn't win. Now the community knows what you did."

Mr. Ford was sentenced to 15 months in jail for assaulting Ms. Aglukark and other victims in the 1980s. But Ms. Aglukark said she received a life sentence as a result of the abuse—as well as the haunting memories.

She provided a video played during the International Summit of the Americas on Violence Against Indigenous Women featuring her recently recorded song, *Forgiveness*.

And she delivered this statement:

I'm going to talk very, very briefly, about one of the major hiccups and turning points in my healing journey.

I have been very fortunate that my career has also become my healer, so there have been these parallel journeys over the course of my career.

I hit a major wall partway through when I came to understand that my greatest challenge was overcoming emotional fear. When I hit this wall, there was not necessarily this tangible thing I could do to work through it like I would with writing, or with art, or with singing.

It was this hidden piece inside of me that I was in the grips of, caused by trauma ... understanding it was a big part and big step towards addressing it.

And then I've been slowly peeling back the grips of this institutionalized fear. I was kind of walking through the motions as people would expect me to versus really truly living my life. Emotional fear, afraid to take risks, to take chances, to get better, because we don't know what the other side looks like.

I think we need to spend a lot more time understanding the effects, emotionally, of trauma on all of us.

We know the physical trauma. We know the generational trauma. But what does each one carry in terms of emotional trauma.

And I think we know best, so we collect that information. We write the programs, we share that information, because we know how it affects us individually and collectively.

NATIONAL TASK FORCE TO ADDRESS ‘COLD CASES’: LONG OVERDUE IN CANADA?



MICHELLE SAUVE

ACTING COMMISSIONER,
ADMINISTRATION FOR NATIVE AMERICANS (ANA)

The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG), which examined why so many Indigenous women and girls go missing in Canada, left the families of many victims feeling hollow.

Despite 231 Calls for Justice and a report of more than 1,000 pages, the questions about what happened to their loved ones have gone unanswered.

The Inquiry commissioners recognized the shortcomings of their mandate, which required them to explore the root causes of the crimes but did not include the reopening of cold cases. Halfway through their work, they issued an interim report calling for the federal government to set up a national police task force to look at why some investigations were mysteriously halted or why promising leads were not followed.

That was reiterated in the Inquiry's Calls for Justice, which demanded that the government establish an independent, highly qualified, and specialized team of investigators, to review and, if required, to re-examine each unresolved case of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQIA people across Canada.

But, so far, no such investigative body has been established.

Silas Blackned's mother, Rose-Ann, was killed on November 16, 1991, when she was 24 years old. Her frozen body was found nine days after she was last seen alive in Val d'Or, Que.

Mr. Blackned said the creation of a national task force to look at cases that have gone cold would be welcomed by families of the victims. The Quebec provincial police have never laid charges against the people who beat her and then allowed her to freeze to death, he said.

Like other family members, Mr. Blackned said he hoped that the Inquiry would bring some resolution. "But it broke my heart

when they did the closing ceremony" and there had been no movement in the investigation, he said in an interview. "I had really high hopes and I was really counting on them."

Some of the cases of murdered and missing women in Canada have gone cold because there were no more leads for police to follow. And some were abandoned by law enforcement because the investigators were not convinced that a crime had been committed.

In both situations, families are left not knowing what happened to their loved ones. And some are left searching alone.

Carolyn Bennett, the federal Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, has said such a task force—one that would oversee all the police forces in the country—would be difficult to set up.

Meanwhile, the same sorts of questions that are being asked by the families of missing and murdered Indigenous women in Canada are also being asked in the United States. And while the U.S. has not held its own inquiry, task forces are being created across that country to look into the crimes, determine the factors that allow them to happen, and find solutions.

Michelle Sauve, Acting Commissioner for the Administration for Native Americans and a member of the presidential task force Operation Lady Justice, told the International Summit of the Americas on Violence Against Indigenous Women that the issue needs collective action from all levels.

"For many years the crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in the United States was invisible to the general public, even though it was a known issue to many Native peoples," said Ms. Sauve, who is Mohawk.

Just as in Canada, she said, Indigenous activists in the United States spent years arguing that the numbers of murdered and missing Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people are being under-reported, and that there is a lack of investigative urgency when Native women or girls were reported missing or were murdered.

A witness once told the National Congress of American Indians that Alaska state troopers are faster to respond to the rural villages if they hear someone has hunted out of season than if they are notified about a missing person, Ms. Sauve told the Summit. "This perception that an Alaskan Native life was worth less than game was deeply traumatizing to the community."

The presidential task force on which she sits was struck in 2019 to address the concerns of American Indian and Alaskan Native communities regarding missing and murdered people, particularly missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. Its scope is wide-ranging, she said, and includes the development of model protocols and procedures to apply to new and unsolved cases of missing and murdered persons within American Indian and Alaskan Native communities.

Seven "cool case" offices have been opened within the Bureau of Indian Affairs, said Ms. Sauve. In an effort to solve cases before they go cold, the Department of (Continued on page 13)



(Continued from page 12) Justice is working with tribes to develop their own community response plans for dealing with new missing persons cases. And there is now a program to help Indigenous communities round up volunteers for a search when someone disappears.

"We're also to develop best practice guidance for law enforcement related to communication with affected families and, particularly, making sure that those communications are done in a trauma-informed manner and are culturally responsive," said Ms. Sauve.

In addition, Operation Lady Justice has been charged with developing and executing an outreach campaign for communities affected by crime and developing a public awareness campaign about the needs of affected families and resources.

"I cannot stress enough that this issue was invisible for too long," said Ms. Sauve, "so public awareness is a key component to ensuring that the issue is addressed at not just a national level, but at the community level as well."

In tribal consultations and listening sessions, task force members have been told about a lack of data related to the crimes and challenges in identifying race, as well as the interconnection of human trafficking and missing and murdered Native Americans.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, she said, recognizes that the violence is not just a crime, but also a public health problem. As a result, the department has been trying to address the underlying factors that make individuals more susceptible to human trafficking, domestic violence, going missing, or being murdered.

Navajo Nation First Lady Phefelina Nez is the Navajo representative on the New Mexico Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Relatives Task Force that was created in 2019 to address jurisdictional and resource gaps that perpetuate the deaths and disappearances and to bring attention to this crisis in New Mexico.

It is just one of a number of task forces that now exist at the state level to shine light on the crimes and to learn from stakeholders, especially families and survivors, about ways to improve prevention efforts, reporting, investigations, and support services.

It is clear from the work done in New Mexico to date that many gaps remain, Ms. Nez told the Summit, right down to the fact that many community members are unclear on protocols for reporting a loved one who has gone missing.

The data that do exist show that a disproportionate number of murder victims in America's border towns with Mexico are Indigenous, she said.

Further research must be done to understand the unique barriers that prevent families in border towns from obtaining justice when their relatives are missing or are murdered. But she said, it is apparent that "a broad spectrum of training is needed for law enforcement across the state, especially in rural areas, in terms of managing crime scene investigations,

trauma-informed response, and culture and community sensitivity."

Law enforcement needs to include community-based organizations to respond to incidents of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, and to incorporate culture and community into their response efforts.

It is time to start putting the measures being developed by MMIWG task forces in the United States into effect, said Ms. Sauve.

"Every life is sacred and every life has value and matters," she said. "We cannot accept these disproportionate levels of violence. The scourge of missing and murdered Native Americans requires a coordinated federal response ... that is informed, first and foremost, by Native American populations,

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COMPONENT TO ENSURING THAT
THE ISSUE IS ADDRESSED AT NOT
JUST A NATIONAL LEVEL, BUT AT
THE COMMUNITY LEVEL
AS WELL."**

MICHELLE SAUVE

SHARING BEST PRACTICES TO ERADICATE VIOLENCE, KEEP WOMEN SAFE AND BUILD THEIR RESILIENCE



DET. SGT. ALANA MORRISON
SURVIVOR ASSISTANCE
SUPPORT PROGRAM,
NISHNAWBE ASKI
POLICE SERVICE

When a romantic partner is threatening physical harm, and the remote community outside the door is populated by his friends and family members, Indigenous women can find themselves with nowhere to turn for help.

The male officers at the small, local policing stations on reserves can sometimes seem more foreign and frightening than the abusers themselves.

But in First Nations communities in northwestern Ontario, a program recently introduced by the Nishnawbe Aski Police Service (NAPS), is connecting women who are victims of violence with caring, female, Indigenous members of the force who provide a shoulder to cry on and a guiding hand out of harm's way.

"We find that the calls we receive are basically a woman just wanting to hear that voice on the other end of the line that's comforting, that's supportive, that says, it's going to be okay," Alana Morrison, the Detective Sergeant of the NAPS Survivor Assistance Support Program who is a survivor of abuse herself, told the International Summit of the Americas on Violence Against Indigenous Women.

The women who have been hired to help abuse survivors all have backgrounds in social service work and are educated on intricacies of the judicial system, Det. Morrison said on the second day of the two-day online summit. "We decided that [the regular] officers can be better to focus on the investigation," she said, "and then our workers can deal with the issues at hand [for the abuse victim] and whatever is going to help her feel safe."

Innovative programs, like this one developed by an Indigenous police service in a remote part of Canada, are being created all across the Americas to reduce the extraordinary number of deaths and disappearances among Indigenous women. But, too often, they operate in silos.

The primary goal of the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) in hosting the Summit is to break down knowledge barriers and to share best practices that can be deployed in other jurisdictions to keep more Indigenous women safe.

"It is so very important to share best practices across the Americas because of what we all have been through for so many generations," said Alma Brooks, a Maliseet grandmother from St. Mary's First Nation in New Brunswick who is NWAC's East Elder.

"When we share with one another what has happened to us, we find that the experiences have been similar, which points to the fact that colonization is a well-crafted plan that was implemented across the board on Indigenous Peoples everywhere."

In Mexico, safe houses are being created by Indigenous women for Indigenous women. They are places where women can regain health and where they can share culture, customs, and life experiences, and build trust and raise awareness. (Continued on page 15)



NELSY KU CHAY
COORDINATOR, HOUSES
OF INDIGENOUS AND
AFRO-MEXICAN WOMEN



AMANDA TASCÓN PANCHI
TECHNICAL COORDINATOR
OF THE DEPARTMENT OF
WOMEN AND GENDER,
INDIGENOUS ORGANIZATION
OF ANTIOQUIA



JACQUELINE O'NEILL
AMBASSADOR FOR
WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY,
GOVERNMENT OF CANADA



BRENDA HILL
DIRECTOR OF TECHNICAL
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WOMEN'S RESOURCE
CENTER

"WHEN WE SHARE WITH ONE ANOTHER WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO US, WE FIND THAT THE EXPERIENCES HAVE BEEN SIMILAR, WHICH POINTS TO THE FACT THAT COLONIZATION IS A WELL-CRAFTED PLAN THAT WAS IMPLEMENTED ACROSS THE BOARD ON INDIGENOUS PEOPLES EVERYWHERE."

- SAID ALMA BROOKS

(Continued from page 14) Nelsy Ku Chay, who is the Coordinator of Houses of Indigenous and Afro-Mexican Women, told the Summit there are now 35 of those homes in more than 23 locations in rural areas of her country.

"We understand what resilience means," said Ms. Ku Chay. "And we find the strength to move forward by building social support networks, promoting systems that prevent violence, and promoting self-healing."

Among other things, the houses offer traditional ceremonies and practices and help Indigenous women gain spiritual strength from the earth and from their ancestors. They are helping women recover traditional practices that have been lost to many because of discrimination and a lack of respect for diversity, she said.

Amanda Tascón Panchi, the Technical Co-ordinator of the Department of Gender and Women at the Indigenous Organization of Antioquia in Colombia, told the Summit that it has been left to Indigenous women in her country to help themselves because state and federal governments have offered no support.

The best practices, she said, are those based on training and education for women, helping them understand their rights and familiarizing them with the resources that are available for protection and support.

In addition, said Ms. Panchi, it is important to promote the involvement of Indigenous women in local government so they can become their own political advocates.

Brenda Hill, the Director of Technical Assistance and Training at the National Indigenous Women's Resource Center in South Dakota, is a Siksika grandmother who is also a survivor of intimate partner violence.

"I say we're relatives, working with our relatives," Ms. Hill told the Summit. "And that's how we end violence against women in Indian country—by reclaiming our relationships, in the biggest, most intricate, and simple meaning of that [word], to relate to each other in that way."

Education, sharing knowledge and understanding, is important, said Ms. Hill, adding that her group is pushing for a national day of awareness of missing and murdered Indigenous women to be held in the United States on May 5.

But ending the violence means changing the laws to expand the ability to charge non-Indigenous offenders who come onto Indigenous land to sex-traffic, stalk, and assault women, she said. And it means addressing critical gaps in health care, housing, and supports, including shelters, that leave Indigenous women vulnerable.

Moving forward, said Ms. Hill, it's about reclamation of tribal sovereignty.

"Obviously, that means jurisdiction over our own lands connected to extractive resources or industries," she said, "and the reclamation of sovereignty of Native women, women as sacred beings, women as traditional leaders, and having the resources for homes, for clean water, for health care, all of those things."

Jacqueline O'Neill, Canada's Ambassador for Women, Peace and Security, told the Summit that one of the keys to ending the violence is for individuals within governments to fully understand and be held accountable for role they are expected to play. Canada has done that, she said, in mandate letters to federal ministers.

It is also critical, said Ms. O'Neill, to keep accurate data about the crimes. And it is important for non-Indigenous people to listen to what Indigenous women are saying.

"So many of us, myself included, have so much to unlearn from a settler culture, from what we've been taught in schools," she said, "and I want to see the stories of the power of Indigenous women much more in the core and at the centre of all of our work."

In northwestern Ontario, Det. Morrison and her team are rewriting the stories for some of the victims of violence.

"My heart goes out to everyone out there who's currently struggling, as we are, to provide empowerment and strength to the survivors," she said, "and it's all in the hopes of trying to change the view and impact on Indigenous women in the communities that we serve."



"SO MANY OF US, MYSELF INCLUDED, HAVE SO MUCH TO UNLEARN FROM A SETTLER CULTURE, FROM WHAT WE'VE BEEN TAUGHT IN SCHOOLS," SHE SAID, "AND I WANT TO SEE THE STORIES OF THE POWER OF INDIGENOUS WOMEN MUCH MORE IN THE CORE AND AT THE CENTRE OF ALL OF OUR WORK."

- SAID JACQUELINE O'NEILL



**MMIWG INQUIRY FORMER CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:
GENOCIDE “WAS AN INESCAPABLE CONCLUSION”**

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE





MARION BULLER

FORMER CHIEF COMMISSIONER
FOR THE NATIONAL INQUIRY
INTO MISSING AND MURDERED
INDIGENOUS WOMEN
AND GIRLS



GLADYS RADEK

PROMINENT AND LONG-TIME
ADVOCATE FOR THE FAMILIES
OF MISSING AND MURDERED
INDIGENOUS WOMEN



JANA L. WALKER

SENIOR ATTORNEY, DIRECTOR
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BRENDA HILL

DIRECTOR OF TECHNICAL
ASSISTANCE & TRAINING,
NATIONAL INDIGENOUS
WOMEN'S RESOURCE CENTER

IT WAS A WORD THAT DOMINATED HEADLINES AND DIVIDED CANADA: GENOCIDE.

Was it even remotely possible that this country, which takes such pride in its inclusivity (at least when compared to other world nations) could have been engaged for centuries in the systemic effort to wipe out a people based on their race and gender?

When the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls made its determination of genocide in the final report of a multi-year investigation, some Canadians dismissed it out of hand.

But Marion Buller, the Cree judge who was the inquiry's Chief Commissioner, told the Summit of the Americas on Violence Against Indigenous Women that genocide was an obvious conclusion.

"The finding of genocide and our other findings, less controversial perhaps, were well founded and well based in the evidence that we heard from families and survivors and from the research that we did," Ms. Buller said. And, she added, it was also derived from the testimony of Elders, Traditional Knowledge Keepers, and experts.

Speakers at the Summit made it clear that Canada is not the only country in this hemisphere where genocide is taking place.

"We are all in the same situation.," said Elizabeth González of the Consejo Nacional de la Mujer Indígena in Argentina. "We need to put an end to this today. We need to join forces and raise our voices against genocide, throughout all of our generations so that all of our leaders have the strength to go forward."

But governments have not been eager to accept the finding, even in Canada where Indigenous women, who make up just 4 percent of the female population, are still being murdered in numbers that are 50 percent higher than those of non-Indigenous victims.

"We need to force their hand to acknowledge the genocide," Gladys Radek, of the Gitksan/Wet'suwet'en First Nations in British Columbia who is a prominent and long-time advocate for the families of missing and murdered Indigenous women, told the Summit.

"I know it took two days for [Prime Minister] Justin Trudeau to spit the word out. But facts are facts, and we've proven through this National Inquiry that it is, in fact, genocide," said Ms. Radek. "That continues from the residential school era to the Sixties Scoop, to all the diseases that have been forced upon us, such as alcoholism, drug abuse, smallpox, all the germ warfare that has been done to us in the past 500 years. And here we are, as strong women, still fighting for our human rights."

Ms. Buller said the Inquiry found a past and present pattern of deliberate, systemic, racial, and gendered human and Indigenous rights violations and abuses in Canada. These abuses, she said, are designed to displace Indigenous Peoples and eradicate their existence as nations, communities, families, and individuals.

The United Nations defines genocide as any attempt to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group. That can be done by killing members of a group, causing them serious bodily harm, and inflicting conditions of life upon them that are calculated to bring about their physical destruction. It can also be perpetrated by measures to prevent births and to forcibly transfer children of one group to another group.

Genocide "was an inescapable conclusion when you consider that the residential school system in Canada involved taking children by force from their families for generations," said Ms. Buller.

Luis Almagro, Secretary General of the Organization of American States, said the Inquiry had plenty of evidence to prove that a race-based genocide was being meted out against Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people in Canada.

"This is a moral issue that shows all of us the courage of the victims and relatives of the victims who shared the testimonies [with the National Inquiry], the survivors[they] are heroes to me," said Mr. Almagro. "Their braveness should inspire us all."

Jana Walker, a senior attorney and director of the Indian Law Resource Center in the United States, told the Summit that violence against American Indian and Alaskan Native women and girls has reached unprecedented levels.

(Continued on page 18)

"TRIBES ARE GENERALLY STILL UNABLE TO PROSECUTE NON-INDIANS WHO RAPE, MURDER, STALK, OR TRAFFIC NATIVE WOMEN. AND STRANGERS CAN, AND STILL DO, ENTER RESERVATIONS AND COMMIT VIOLENT CRIMES AGAINST INDIGENOUS WOMEN WITH IMPUNITY."

- SAID JANA L. WALKER

(Continued from page 17) According to the latest statistics, more than four in five Indigenous women in the United States have experienced violence in their lifetimes and the murder rate for American Indian women is 10 times the national average on some reservations.

The violence is perpetuated, said Ms. Walker, by a discriminatory legal system that limits the ability of recognized Indian and Alaska native nations to protect their women and children, and also fails to prevent investigate, prosecute, or punish crimes and violations of human rights.

Despite some improvements that were made through a law passed in 2013, said Ms. Walker, “Tribes are generally still unable to prosecute non-Indians who rape, murder, stalk, or traffic Native women. And strangers can, and still do, enter reservations and commit violent crimes against indigenous women with impunity.”

COVID, she said, has only made the situation worse because measures intended to suppress the spread of the virus—like curfews, quarantines, travel restrictions— and checkpoints— prevent survivors from getting help and distancing themselves from abusers.

**“WE NEED TO FACE THE
HARSH REALITY OF NOT ONLY
GENOCIDE,” SAID MS. HILL,
BUT THAT “THE ENSLAVEMENT
OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLE IS
PART OF OUR HISTORY.”**

BRENDA HILL

The United Nations says victims of genocide have the right to reparations.

Antonia Urrejola Noguera, Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples for the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, told the Summit that when Indigenous women and children are the victims, they must have a say in the structure of any redress. But, said Ms. Noguera, Indigenous women have not, to this point, been represented in such mechanisms in the Americas.

Brenda Hill, the Director of Technical Assistance and Training at the National Indigenous Women’s Resource Center in the United States, said it is important that Indigenous Peoples, and also politicians, accept that the violence being directed at Indigenous women, and the sex trafficking, are facts.

“We need to face the harsh reality of not only genocide,” said Ms. Hill, but that “the enslavement of indigenous people is part of our history.”



Photo: Resiliency Lodge, MMIWG2S Commemoration

VOICES FROM ACROSS THE AMERICAS:

WE WON'T BE SILENT IN THE FACE OF VIOLENCE!



MARIZE VIEIRA DE OLIVEIRA

PRESIDENT, INDIGENOUS ASSOCIATION OF MARACANÃ VILLAGE (AIAM)

Indigenous women in Colombia's most remote regions are sexual prey for armed fighters who have been killing rights defenders amid a drug war that has gone on for decades.

Indigenous girls under the age of 12 are frequent victims of rape in Costa Rica, where child sex tourism is rampant and sexual assault is the highest of any country in the Americas.

Age is no barrier to violence in Mexico where it is not uncommon for very young Indigenous girls to die at the hands of killers.

These are the deadly realities for Indigenous women in Latin America.

The Indigenous women in Canada convinced the federal government to host a National Inquiry because of the extraordinary number of deaths and disappearances in their country.

But it was made clear by speakers at the International Summit of the Americas on Violence Against Indigenous Women that this tragedy is occurring all across the Western world.

"We won't be silent in the face of violence!" Amanda Tascon Panchi, the Technical Co-ordinator of the Department of Gender and Women at the Indigenous Organization of Antioquia in Colombia, told the Summit.

"There is a high rate of violence against Indigenous women in our communities," said Ms. Panchi. "Previously, violence had been made invisible because women were scared and there was pressure by male assailants and authorities who prevented women from reporting it. Women are starting to speak up."

But others from Latin America who spoke at the two-day conference painted a bleak picture of life for Indigenous women in their countries. They said the safety threats in South and Central America have only grown since the pandemic forced situations of isolation and reduced supports for victims.

Marize Vieira de Oliveira Guarani, President of the Associação Indígena Aldeia Maracanã of Brazil, said Indigenous women in her country are facing increased poverty due to COVID-19 because they are unable to sell their artisan works.

Meanwhile, said Ms. Guarani, conflict has increased, there is more violence and more rape, and there is a lack of portable water, food and medicine.

"If it were not for traditional medicine, the number of Indigenous deaths would be greater," she said. But "Indigenous women are overwhelmed by their own work and caring for the sick among us."

Even as the disease claims countless lives, resource development continues apace in Brazil's rural areas, which are home to Indigenous communities.

(Continued on page 20)



CLAUDIA JIMENA PAI

COUNCILOR FOR WOMEN AND THE FAMILY, ASSOCIATION OF TRADITIONAL INDIGENOUS AUTHORITIES - INDIGENOUS UNIT OF THE AWÁ PEOPLE (UNIPA)



AMANDA TASCÓN PANCHI

TECHNICAL COORDINATOR OF THE DEPARTMENT OF WOMEN AND GENDER, INDIGENOUS ORGANIZATION OF ANTIOQUIA



SARA MAYORGA VILLANUEVA

GENERAL COORDINATOR, ALLIANCE OF INDIGENOUS WOMEN OF CENTRAL AMERICA AND MEXICO



LAURA HERNÁNDEZ PÉREZ

NAHUA PUEBLA, COLECTIVO YEHCOA UM, MÉXICO

"THERE IS A HIGH RATE OF VIOLENCE AGAINST INDIGENOUS WOMEN IN OUR COMMUNITIES, PREVIOUSLY, VIOLENCE HAD BEEN MADE INVISIBLE BECAUSE WOMEN WERE SCARED AND THERE WAS PRESSURE BY MALE ASSAILANTS AND AUTHORITIES WHO PREVENTED WOMEN FROM REPORTING IT. WOMEN ARE STARTING TO SPEAK UP."

- SAID AMANDA TASCON PANCHI

(Continued from page 19) "Violence against Indigenous women has skyrocketed because many Indigenous women are in the areas that have been invaded by the lumber companies and mining companies that come in and obliterate who and what they are," said Ms. Guarani. "And the government is doing nothing, ZERO about this."

Brazil, she said, is not keeping track of how many of the people who are getting sick from COVID-19 and who are dying of the disease are Indigenous.

"We are just not there, not when we are sick, not when we are dead," said Ms. Guarani. "There are women, Indigenous women who are trying to speak up and say 'Hey, I'm here, I'm Indigenous, include me in the statistics.'"

Reports all over the southern continent suggest violence against women in general has dramatically increased since the arrival of the pandemic. By one count, 22 percent more Brazilian women were murdered in March and April 2020, a 22 percent rise over the previous year. Indigenous women are part of that grim statistic.

But COVID-19 is just the latest twist in the long story of violence against women in South and Central America. Poverty, armed conflicts, mass migration, remote topography, and uncaring governments have all contributed to create one of the most dangerous places in the world to be an Indigenous woman.

Claudia Jimena Pai, a member of the Awá integrante de la Asociación de Autoridades Tradicionales Indígenas- Awá, Unidad Indígena del Pueblo Awá (UNIPA) in Colombia, told the Summit that there has been a statistical extermination of her people, of whom 53 percent are women.

"We face many conflicts," said Ms. Pai. "The presence of illegal groups in the community has affected our women. People were murdered last week, and this means that women have to expose themselves and provide education for their children."

Deforestation and mining have contributed to the problem for the jungle and mountain people of her country, she said. "The focus needs to be on communication and support for young women and men so they can share their stories and raise their voices about what is happening."

Sara Mayorga-Villanueva, co-ordinator of Alianza de Mujeres Indígenas de Centroamérica y México, said her organization has seen problems facing Indigenous women being brushed under the rug since the start of the pandemic, including access to health care and education.

At the same time, there have been massive migrations throughout Mexico and Central America, she said, particularly of young women.

With no opportunities at home, said Ms. Pai, "these women understand they have to go. But they are risking their lives to do this. There are people out there who want to subject them to human trafficking and abuse."

Women are the principal targets, she said, but little girls under the age of 12 are often victims in Costa Rica.

Laura Hernández Pérez of the Nahua Puebla, Colectivo Yehcoa Um in Mexico said there is historically a lack of public policy and health services for Indigenous peoples in her country. The gaps have only increased during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"There is also an enormous increase in violence against Indigenous women, little girls, and children. The government of Mexico is missing in action," said Ms. Pérez. "Turning to those victims of violence, it is mainly very young girls. There are a number of cases of femicide. You do not feel that anyone is looking."

**COVID-19 IS JUST THE LATEST TWIST
IN THE LONG STORY OF VIOLENCE
AGAINST WOMEN IN SOUTH AND
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GOVERNMENTS HAVE ALL
CONTRIBUTED TO CREATE ONE OF THE
MOST DANGEROUS PLACES IN THE
WORLD TO BE AN
INDIGENOUS WOMAN.**



SILENT NO MORE | NO MÁS SILENCIO

KCI-NIWESQ

is a monthly magazine of the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC). Its objective is to highlight the work of the organization and to tell the stories of the Indigenous women of Canada.

NWAC, which was founded in 1974, is a national Indigenous organization representing First Nations (on and off reserve, with status and without), Métis, and Inuit women, girls, and gender diverse people in Canada. Its goal is to enhance, promote, and foster the social, economic, cultural and political well-being of Indigenous women within their respective communities and Canadian society.

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