



Parallel Event – NGO CSW Forum  
UN Commission on the Status of Women 66th Session

## Climate Change and Indigenous Women's Rights: Brazil, Guatemala, and the United States

March 22, 2022 at 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. (Eastern)

### PROGRAM

#### Welcome

**Christopher T. Foley** (Cherokee Nation), Senior Attorney, Indian Law Resource Center

#### Panel

##### Situation of Indigenous Women in Brazil

**Cristiane Baré** (Baré Indigenous Peoples), Indigenous Lawyer and Representative of COIAB

**Rosimere Maria Vieira Teles** (Arapáço Indigenous Peoples), Indigenous Activist and Representative of COIAB

##### Situation of Mayan Women in Guatemala

**Juanita Cabrera Lopez** (Maya Mam), Executive Director of the International Mayan League

**Elodia Castillo Vasquez** (Maya Ch'orti') president of COMUNDICH (Coordinator of Communities and Associations for the Integral Development of the Ch'orti' People)

##### Situation of Indigenous Women in the United States

**Michelle Demmert** (Tlingit, Eagle, *Kaax'ooos.hittaan* (Man's Foot) clan), Law and Policy Director at the Alaska Native Women's Resource Center

**Carmen O'Leary** (Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe), Director of Native Women's Society of the Great Plains

**Dolly M. Tatofi** (Indigenous Hawaiian), MSW, LCSW, Representative of the Pouhana 'O Nā Wahine

#### Questions and Closing Remarks

**Christopher T. Foley** (Cherokee Nation), Senior Attorney, Indian Law Resource Center

## Biographies

**Miranda Carman** graduated from the University of New Mexico in 2012 with a Bachelor's degree in Latin American and Caribbean Studies and holds a Master's degree in Latin American Studies from



Georgetown University. Currently, Miranda serves as the Program and Administrative Assistant for the Indian Law Resource Center's DC Office where she focuses on strengthening indigenous rights in Brazil, holding multilateral banks accountable for their impacts on indigenous peoples, and coalition building of indigenous organizations throughout North, Central, and South America, and the Caribbean.

**Elodia Castillo Vasquez**, is a Maya Ch'orti' Indigenous authority and president of COMUNDICH (Coordinator of Communities and Associations for the Integral Development of the Ch'orti' People).



COMUNDICH has been working to “revitalize their identity, empower legitimate Indigenous Ch’orti’ authorities through councils and communal juntas, and promote spirituality, and reclaim territory.” She is currently working with her peoples to reclaim their ancestral lands in Guatemala while facing climate change, environmental disasters, extreme poverty and forced migration. *Photo by: El Pais, T.T.*

**Michelle Demmert**, Tlingit, Eagle, *Kaax’oos.hittaaan* (Man’s Foot) clan is the Law and Policy Director at the Alaska Native Women’s Resource Center. In the recent past, she was the appointed Chief Judge for



the Tulalip Tribes and the elected Chief Justice for the Central Council Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska. While the Chief Justice for her tribe, she served as the co-chair of the National Congress of American Indians’ Violence Against Women Task Force. Judge Demmert has devoted her legal career to advancing improvements and practices in tribal courts and has also worked in various capacities of advancing domestic violence protections for women and children. She has testified to Congress regarding legislation and current issues affecting women and children. She is the past Chief Judge at the Chehalis tribe and was their Presiding Judge for over 12 years while working at the Northwest Intertribal Court System. Judge Demmert worked for nearly 10 years in the Reservation Attorney’s office for the Tulalip Tribes. In that position, she served as the Tulalip Tribes’ primary

point of contact for the special domestic violence jurisdiction intertribal working group on domestic violence and has presented about this process at many tribal, state, federal and university forums, including a presentation to the Department of Justice staff during Domestic Violence Awareness month in October 2015. Judge Demmert is a graduate of the University of Washington for both her Juris Doctorate and her Bachelor of Arts in Psychology. She actively engaged in the Alaska commercial fishing industry prior to her practice of law.

**Christopher T. Foley**, an enrolled citizen of the Cherokee Nation, is a senior attorney with the Indian Law Resource Center in its Helena, Montana office. Founded in 1978, the Center is a nonprofit



organization established and directed by American Indians that is dedicated to protecting the rights of Indian and Alaska Native nations and other indigenous peoples throughout the Americas. Chris works on the Center's international projects to build and strengthen human rights standards relating to indigenous peoples within the United Nations and the Organization of American States, and on the Center's domestic law reform efforts. He focuses much of his time on the Center's Safe Women, Strong Nations project which works to end violence against American Indian and Alaska Native women. Chris received his B.A. from Swarthmore College, his J.D. from Temple University, and he is admitted to practice law in Pennsylvania.

**Paula Julian** serves as a Senior Policy Specialist with the National Indigenous Women's Resource Center. She works with a team of staff and partners to develop and maintain NIWRC's policy agenda to



support governmental, nonprofit, and community responses to violence against women, including researching and drafting policy priorities, policy analysis, advocacy and monitoring, providing technical assistance and training and developing partnerships to strengthen laws, policies and responses addressing violence against Native women. Paula assisted Alaska Native advocates to establish the Alaska Native Women's Resource Center and Native Hawaiian advocates who formed the Pouhana O Na Wahine (Pillars of Women), dedicated to establishing a Native Hawaiian Resource Center on Domestic Violence. Formerly, she also worked with the La Jolla Band of Luiseno Indians to develop the Tribe's response to violence against women; organizations aimed at addressing violence against Native women including Sacred Circle and the White Buffalo Calf Woman Society; and the

Office of Violence Against Women at the U.S. Dept. of Justice.

**Juanita Cabrera Lopez** is Maya Mam from the Western Highlands of Guatemala. She is a survivor of the internal armed conflict in Guatemala and a former political refugee. She has both personal and



professional work experience in the defense of indigenous peoples' human rights. Her focus has been to use international law and organizations and traditional knowledge for the development of an indigenous human rights response in the areas of immigration, land rights, and environmental protection. She works with Maya leaders and elders in Guatemala and the United States through their traditional institutions. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and its full and effective use and implementation is a key pillar to her work. She holds a Master of International Public Policy from Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies.

**Carmen O’Leary** is Director of Native Women’s Society of the Great Plains. She is a citizen and a resident of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe where she has gathered her experience and expertise to develop programs that serve Native women experiencing violence. Carmen is a trainer on advocacy around sexual assault and domestic violence and is certified with the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center for Law Enforcement on Domestic Violence. Carmen has worked at providing insight on Tribal Codes in relation to sexual assault, domestic violence and the issuance of protection orders. In 2000, she worked as a consultant for the State Court Association in providing training on full faith and credit to Judges and courts on the VAWA provision. She has worked as a social services aide in a hospital setting, as a child protection worker, and as the coordinator for the Women’s Shelter for seventeen years. Carmen is a Tribal Legal Lay advocate for the Cheyenne River Tribal court and has served as a part time magistrate for Tribal court. She has facilitated reeducation classes for domestic violence offenders and also for women’s support groups and adults molested as children. Currently, Carmen is the regional representative for the National Indigenous Women’s Resource Center where she is the Vice Chair, and is on the Sacred Heart Center board, a local program that governs a women’s shelter and an adolescent program.



**Cristiane Soares** is a member of the Baré indigenous people from the Alto Rio Negro Indigenous Territory in Amazonas, Brazil. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Law from the State University of Amazonas and has a Postgraduate degree in Public Management, also from the University of Amazonas. Christiane is a militant of the Brazilian indigenous movement, working with youth, university students and the women's movement. Currently, she serves as a lawyer and legal advisor for the Coordination of the Indigenous Organizations of the Brazilian Amazon, the Assistant Secretary of the Special Commission for the Defense of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples with the Federal Council of the Brazilian Bar Association and is part of the Indigenous Lawyers Network of the Articulation of the Indigenous Peoples of Brazil (APIB).



**Dolly M.I. Tatofi, MSW, LCSW**, has come to find that she is divinely guided by her kūpuna in each moment. Born and raised on the island of O’ahu, she has come learn and experience what connection is all about due to the rich and diverse upbringing that she had in the islands. She has been blessed to work with keiki (children) to kūpuna (elder) in various capacities throughout her life as a Social Worker. She has earned a B.A. in Ethnic Studies and also a Master’s in Social Work degree. She has worked in the Mental Health field for over 10+ years and continues to serve this population currently in an MCO setting. Although understanding who you are is a life journey, she has come to realize that at this moment that her kuleana (responsibility) is to connect and support people with restoring relationships through Aloha. She believes that through daily living and being Aloha this will create, maintain and enhance the relationships we have in any space and at any time not only with others but also with self; if we are able to know who we are deep inside we will see this reflected outside of us and then will we know what Lōkahi (unity/balance/harmony) truly means and feels like.





**Rosimere Maria Vieira Teles** is from the Arapaço indigenous peoples of the Loiro Community in the Médio Rio Uaupés region of the Alto Rio Negro Indigenous Land in the state of Amazonas, Brazil.



Rosimere is an indigenous leader, activist, artisan, and agriculturist. She has worked to promote and defend indigenous women's rights for over 20 years through the Indigenous Women's Movement of Brazil. From 2002-2007, Rosimere was the first Coordinator of the Indigenous Women Department of the Coordination of Indigenous Organizations of the Brazilian Amazon (COIAB). In 2008, she co-founded the Union of Indigenous Women of the Brazilian Amazon (UMIAB), an organization that aims to strengthen women's participation in advocacy. She also co-founded the Network of Indigenous Women of the State of Amazonas (MAKIRA E'TA) and the Podaali Fund. Currently, Rosimere serves as an advisor with the Podaali Fund, COIAB's representative to the Coordination of Indigenous Organizations of the

Amazon Basin's (COICA) Council of Women and Family, Political Consultant with COIAB on Gender, Childhood and Indigenous Youth, Vice Coordinator of MAKIRA E'TA, and a State Councilor for Women's Rights (CEDIM/AM).

**Jana L. Walker** is an enrolled citizen of the Cherokee Nation and Delaware Tribe and is of Loyal Shawnee descent. Jana is a senior attorney with the Indian Law Resource Center in Helena, Montana.



Founded in 1978, the Center is a nonprofit organization, established and directed by American Indians, that is dedicated to protecting the rights of Indian and Alaska Native nations and other indigenous peoples. Jana serves as the project director for the Center's Safe Women, Strong Nations project, which works to end violence against American Indian and Alaska Native women and its devastating impacts on Native communities. The project does so by raising awareness domestically and internationally, providing advice to Native nations and Native women's organizations on ways to prevent violence and restore safety to Native women, and assisting national and regional Native women's organizations and Indian and Alaska Native Nations in restoring tribal criminal authority and preserving tribal civil jurisdiction. Jana received

her J.D. *cum laude* from the University of New Mexico School of Law and is admitted to practice law in Montana, New Mexico and the District of Columbia.

## Co-sponsoring Organizations

Organized in 2015, the ***Alaska Native Women's Resource Center (AKNWRC)*** is a tribal nonprofit organization dedicated to ending violence against women with Alaska's 229 tribes and allied organizations. AKNWRC board members are Alaska Native women raised in Alaska Native Villages and have 141 years of combined experience in tribal governments, nonprofit management, domestic violence and sexual assault advocacy (both individual crisis and systems and grassroots social change advocacy at the local, statewide, regional, national and international levels), and other social service experience. AKNWRC's philosophy is that violence against women is rooted in the colonization of indigenous nations. ([www.aknwrc.org](http://www.aknwrc.org))

Founded on April 19, 1989, the ***Coordination of the Indigenous Organizations of the Brazilian Amazon (COIAB)*** is the largest regional indigenous organization in Brazil, seeking to defend the rights of indigenous peoples to their land, environment, health, education, culture and self-determination. The organization also fights for the protection and recognition of indigenous peoples in voluntary isolation. The organization mobilizes roughly 160 distinct peoples, representing 440,000 individuals –

nearly 60% of the country's indigenous population – who collectively occupy approximately 110 million hectares of land across all 9 states of the Brazilian Amazon (Amazonas, Tocantins, Amapá, Maranhão, Rondônia, Acre, Pará, Roraima and Mato Grosso). However, these figures do not include indigenous peoples living in voluntary isolation. COIAB is a member of the Coordination of Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon Basin (COICA), one of the largest indigenous organizations in the world and of international representation, and is also a member of the Articulation of the Indigenous Peoples of Brazil (APIB), the largest indigenous organization in Brazil. ([www.coiab.org.br](http://www.coiab.org.br))

Founded in 1978 by American Indians, the **Indian Law Resource Center (ILRC)** is a nonprofit organization that provides legal assistance to indigenous peoples of the Americas to combat racism and oppression, to protect their lands and environment, to protect their cultures, to achieve sustainable economic development and genuine self-government and to realize their other human rights. Its Safe Women, Strong Nation's project works with indigenous women's organizations and Native nations to end violence against indigenous women. ILRC is in consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council. ([www.indianlaw.org](http://www.indianlaw.org))

The **International Mayan League (IML)** is a nonprofit organization whose purpose is to promote, preserve and transmit the culture, history and contributions of our ancestors in the defense of Mother Earth. Its work is guided by the vision and practices of the spiritual and traditional leaders, elders and authorities to address the root causes contributing to discrimination, inequality and oppression of the Maya and the destruction of these communities and their environment. IML partners with allies from other indigenous nations, human rights organizations, academics, scholars, scientists and faith-based communities to stand in solidarity with the struggle of the Mayan peoples. Jointly IML addresses the many critical issues affecting not just the Maya but all of humanity and Mother Earth. ([www.mayanleague.org](http://www.mayanleague.org))

The **National Indigenous Women's Resource Center, Inc. (NIWRC)** is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to ensure the safety of Native women by protecting and preserving the inherent sovereign authority of American Indian and Alaska Native nations to respond to domestic violence and sexual assault. NIWRC's Board consists of Native women leaders from American Indian, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian nations across the United States. NIWRC is a national resource center for Indian nations and Native organizations providing technical assistance, training, policy development, materials, resource information and the development of Native strategies and responses to end the violence. In 2015, NIWRC launched the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) Sovereignty Initiative to defend the constitutionality and functionality of all VAWA tribal provisions. ([www.niwrc.org](http://www.niwrc.org))

The **Native Women's Society of the Great Plains, Reclaiming Our Sacredness (NWSGP)**, is a coalition of domestic violence and/or sexual assault programs committed to the reclamation of the sacred status of women. The Society offers a vision that ends domestic and sexual violence against Native women, in all aspects – a vision of change. The Society works to support and strengthen sisterhood and local advocacy and program development efforts through culturally specific education, technical assistance training and resource implementation. The geographical area that constitutes the service area of the Society includes tribes in southern Minnesota, Montana, Wyoming, North Dakota, South Dakota and Nebraska. ([www.nativewomenssociety.com](http://www.nativewomenssociety.com))

***Pouhana 'O Nā Wahine*** (Pillars of Women - PONW) is a grassroots organization focused on opening a Native Hawaiian Resource Center on Domestic Violence to reduce disparities faced by Native Hawaiians. These disparities date back to the days of contact with foreigners resulting in the overthrow of our monarch to present day violence and injustice. Our vision is to restore balance of mind, body, and spirit, bringing our people to the state of well-being; and to preserve and promote Hawaiian culture to help families and communities heal from domestic and sexual violence and colonization. Our mission is to advocate for Native Hawaiian families who face challenges related to domestic and gender-based violence by exercising our inherent sovereign rights as Indigenous people of Hawaii to care for and protect our people. Collectively, the individuals of PONW have over 50 years of experience in the advocacy and social service field and are all Kanaka OIwi who have a passion for helping to heal generations past and present to ensure the healthiest future.