Land and Body: Indigenous Women's Defense of Safety and Sovereignty

Resource Guide

Land and Body: Indigenous Women's Defense of Safety and Sovereignty Resource Guide

Contents

Event Schedule	3
Panelists Information	4
Topic Overview	10
Co-Sponsor and Partners	14
Resources	17

UN CSW PARALLEL EVENT

Land and Body: Indigenous Women's Defense of Safety and Sovereignty

03.11.2026 | 06.30 PM - 08.30 PM

EVENT OVERVIEW:

A panel of Indigenous women, leaders, and advocates will provide insight and expertise on the role of extractive industries and states regarding violence against Indigenous land and bodies.

6:30 PM: Opening Prayer from Dolly Tatofi

6:35 PM: Introduction from Indian Law Resource Center Executive Director, Chris Foley & Opening Remarks from Director of Safe Women, Strong Nations, Caroline LaPorte

6:40 PM – 7:30 PM: Panel Discussion

- Kari Guajajara – Staff Attorney, Indian Law Resource Center
- Tami Truett-Jerue – Executive Director of Alaska Native Women's Resource Center
- Caroline LaPorte – Staff Attorney and Director of Safe Women, Strong Nations, Indian Law Resource Center
- Tatewin Means – Advocate and Attorney
- Gianella Sanchez – Staff Attorney, Indian Law Resource Center
- Lucy Simpson – Executive Director of National Indigenous Women's Resource Center
- Dolly Tatofi – Interim Executive Director, Pouhana O Nā Wāhine

7:30 PM – 8:25 PM: Panel Discussion Q&A led by Paula Julian and Nicole Matthews, plus a Community Weaving Session facilitated by Vera Ergeson

8:25 PM: Closing Remarks from Carmen O'Leary

Panelists & Organizations

Kari Guajajara

Tentehar from the Ypaw My`ym village in the Araribóia Indigenous Territory

Maria Judite da Silva Ballerio Guajajara (Kari Guajajara) is an Indigenous woman belonging to the Guajajara people, who call themselves Tentehar, located in southern Maranhão. She is a lawyer, educated in her own community and graduated from the Federal University of Maranhão (UFMA). She holds a master's degree in Law, State, and Constitution from the University of Brasília (UNB). She has extensive experience in public service, defending human rights and the rights of Indigenous peoples. She served as Deputy Secretary of State for Women in Maranhão. She worked as a parliamentary advisor to Brazil's first indigenous congresswoman, Joênia Wapichana. She coordinated the Legal Advisory Services of COIAB, COAPIMA, the Network of Indigenous Lawyers of the Amazon, and the Amazon Indigenous Rights Clinic. Along with her professional work experience she is also a member of OPI (Observatory of Human Rights of Isolated and Recently Contacted Indigenous Peoples), winner of the Innovare Award (Supreme Federal Court) in 2023, and has received the Global Anti-Racism Leaders Award from the US Department of State in August 2023. Kari is currently a staff attorney at the Indian Law Resource Center.

Maria Judite da Silva Ballerio Guajajara (Kari Guajajara), indígena pertencente ao povo Guajajara, autodenominado Tentehar, da Aldeia Ypaw My`ym da Terra Indígena Araribóia, localizada no Sul do Maranhão. Advogada, alfabetizada na própria comunidade e formada pela Universidade Federal do Maranhão-UFMA. Mestra em Direito, Estado e Constituição pela Universidade de Brasília - UNB. Possui vasta experiência no serviço público, na defesa dos direitos humanos e dos direitos dos povos indígenas. Atuou como Secretária Adjunta de Estado da Mulher do Maranhão. Trabalhou como assessora parlamentar da primeira deputada indígena do Brasil, Joênia Wapichana. Coordenou a Assessoria Jurídica da COIAB, da COAPIMA, a Rede de Advogados e Advogadas Indígenas da Amazônia e a Clínica de Direitos Indígenas da Amazônia.

Membro do OPI - Observatório dos Direitos Humanos dos Povos Indígenas Isolados e de Recente Contato.Ganhadora do Prêmio Innovare (Supremo Tribunal Federal) em 2023, na categoria Advocacia, com o projeto de acesso à justiça para povos indígenas isolados. Recebeu o Prémio Global de Líderes Anti-Racismo do Departamento de Estado dos Estados Unidos em agosto de 2023. Atualmente, advogada no Indian Law Resource Center.

Caroline LaPorte

Immediate Descendent of the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians

Caroline LaPorte, J.D. is the current Associate Judge for Little River Band of Ottawa Indians, an Associate Justice for Keewinaw Bay Indian Community, and a staff attorney for the Indian Law Resource Center, where she serves as project director for "Safe Women, Strong Nations." Caroline is a Texas Bar Licensed Attorney, a Fellow of the American Bar Foundation, and an Associate Professor of Native American Studies at Northern Michigan University.

Caroline previously served as the Director of the Indigenous Safe Housing Center at the National Indigenous Women's Resource Center and as NIWRC's Senior Native Affairs Policy Advisor in Washington, D.C. She also previously served as an attorney and the Judicial Advisor to the Seminole Tribe of Florida's Tribal Court. She graduated from the University of Miami School of Law, cum laude, was named a Henry Bandier Fellow for her Human Rights advocacy, and received the Natasha Pettigrew Memorial Award for child welfare advocacy work.

Her legal career has focused on Indian country—specifically—child welfare, housing, human rights, and gender-based violence. She served on the American Bar Associations Victim’s Rights Task Force, previously chaired the Victim’s Committee for the Criminal Justice Section of the ABA, and is the chair of the Board of Directors for StrongHearts Native Helpline. She is also a member of the Trilateral Working Group on Violence Against Indigenous Women and Girls and has worked on key federal legislation such as the Violence Against Women Act, the Not Invisible Act, and Savannas Act.

Gianella E. Sanchez Guimaraes

Shipibo-Konibo

Gianella is a Staff Attorney at the Indian Law Resource Center in Washington, D.C. She has experience in public interest law, indigenous and environmental rights, intellectual property concerning traditional knowledge, and the titling of ancestral territories. Ms. Sanchez holds a law degree from the Universidad Nacional de Ucayali, Peru. She brings extensive experience working with indigenous communities and organizations in the Peruvian Amazon, providing technical and legal assistance, as well as developing and implementing projects. As a Staff Attorney at ILRC, Ms. Sanchez has been supporting Indigenous land titling projects in Mexico, Central, and South America, works tirelessly to ensure the legal recognition and protection of the rights of indigenous peoples in the region. She is also leading capacity-building initiatives that empower indigenous women in leadership, legal rights and resource management, strengthening their participation in decision- making processes throughout the region.

Tami Truett Jerue

Citizen of the Anvik Tribe

Tami serves as the Executive Director of the Alaska Native Women's Resource Center (AKNWRC). Tami brings 40 years of direct services experience to this journey. In 2016, Tami joined a group of Alaska Native women passionate about ending interpersonal violence across Alaska. Tami and the Board of Directors believe interpersonal violence is a result of colonization and has no place in native culture.

Ms. Jerue has testified before Congress and the United Nations, bringing attention to the disproportionate rates of violence experienced by Alaska Native women and the lack of resources faced by tribes. She has previously

served as a commissioner on the Not Invisible Act Commission. Under Tami's management, the AKNWRC has become a voice for Alaska Native issues, particularly affecting women, children, and families, telling truths to promote understanding, building partnerships, and most importantly supporting Alaska Native tribes as they tackle the complex issues of interpersonal violence.
Ms. Jerue has a Bachelor's degree in Social Work and a Master's work in Community Psychology. She worked for over 28 years for the Anvik Tribal Council in Tribal Administration, Indian Child Protection, Domestic Violence/Sexual Assault, and Counseling/Advocacy. She is married to Carl Jerue, Jr. of Anvik, sharing four beautiful children and six grandchildren.

Tatewin Means

Sisseton Wahpeton Dakota, Oglala Lakota and Inhanktonwan Nations

Ms. Means is from the Sisseton Wahpeton Dakota, Oglala Lakota and Inhanktonwan nations in South Dakota and grew up in her father's homelands in Oglala Territory. Ms. Means received her Bachelor of Science degree from Stanford University in Environmental Engineering with a minor in Comparative Studies in Race and Ethnicity; JD with a concentration in Human Rights Law from the University of Minnesota Law School; and Master of Arts degree in Lakota Leadership and Management from Oglala Lakota College.

Ms. Means brings over 17 years of experience working for, and with, Tribes, Tribal organizations, and Indigenous-led movements. A longtime advocate for human rights, survivors, children, and families, Tatewin served as the Attorney General for the Oglala Sioux Tribe in the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota from 2012-2017 and was the first-ever Tribal Attorney General to be sworn in as Deputy States Attorney by the Seventh Judicial District of South Dakota for Oglala Lakota County. Tatewin sought the democratic nomination for South Dakota Attorney General – the first ever Indigenous woman to seek the office of a state Attorney General in the United States.

Tatewin was a German Marshall Fund Marshall Memorial Fellow, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and PolicyLink Ambassador for Health Equity Fellow, Rockwood Leadership Institute Leading from the Inside Out Fellow, and an Emerson Collective Dial Fellow.
Ms. Means currently works for Dragonfly Law Group based in South Dakota and specializes in Tribal Governance, Education, Jurisdiction, and Non-profit governance, and is licensed in South Dakota.

Lucy Simpson

Citizen of the Navajo Nation

Lucy Simpson, a citizen of the Navajo Nation, has served as the Chief Executive Officer of the National Indigenous Women's Resource Center since its founding in 2010. She earned her B.A. from Stanford University and her J.D. from the University of Colorado at Boulder.

Ms. Simpson began her career with the Navajo Nation Council, serving as Legislative Advisor to the Education Committee and later as an attorney in the Office of Legislative Counsel. She subsequently served as Special Prosecutor for the Northern Cheyenne Tribe, where she prosecuted crimes against children and addressed cases involving violence against youth. Following the Crow Tribe's constitutional reform in 2001, she became the first Legislative Counsel for the Crow Tribal Legislature.

She later joined the Indian Law Resource Center as a Staff Attorney, where she worked primarily on environmental law and international human rights advocacy. In her role as Senior Staff Attorney, she represented the Fort Belknap Indian Community in legal efforts to address gold mining pollution, represented Mary and Carrie Dann before the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on matters of Indigenous land rights, and helped establish the Center's Safe Women, Strong Nations initiative. Her leadership of this initiative directly informed the creation of the National Indigenous Women's Resource Center.

As CEO of NIWRC, she has served as an advisor to New York State's COVID-19 and Domestic Violence Advisory Committee and to the National Football League on domestic violence policy initiatives. She has testified before Congress on numerous occasions on issues related to the safety of Native women and tribal sovereignty and has contributed to the development of the White House National Plan to End Gender-Based Violence in prior administrations.
Ms. Simpson lives and works in Lame Deer, Montana, on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation. She is the mother of three, grandmother of two, and auntie-mom to countless nephews, nieces, adopted kids and youth to whom she has opened her home.

Dolly Tatofi

Kanaka Maoli

Dolly M.I. Tatofi, MSW, LCSW – Dolly is divinely guided by kūpuna, driven by kuleana, and carries forward the essence of ʻauamo hoʻomanawanui. She was born and raised on the island of Oahu and currently resides in Kalihilihiolaumiha. Her acquired ʻike consists of a B.A. in Ethnic Studies and a Master's in Social Work from the University of Hawaiʻi at Mānoa, and she continues her learning at Chaminade University. Dolly is a founding member and the Interim Executive Director of Pouhana O Nā Wāhine. She serves as the IVAT Sub-Committee Cultural Chair and is the Oahu Representative board member of the NASW Hawaii Chapter. Dolly enjoys sharing her love of oli with others and creates space for people to remember the sacred beings that they are. Through her years of experience, she has found the values of Pilina, Pono, and Aloha as the underlying factors in her hana. Be, Do, and Know Aloha.

Overview of Topics

United States - General

Dispossession and violence have been on of the foundational elements of colonial governments. The acts of extraction, displacement, and cultural erasure are all inextricably linked to the ongoing violence against Native and Indigenous bodies, specifically women and children. The intentional process of both extraction and ownership has become normalized and has also bolstered the similar normalization of dehumanization and dispossession of Indigenous peoples. This normalization has created weak systems that intentionally do not protect Indigenous peoples. The deprivation of agency on Indigenous women and their bodies, the dissipation of body sovereignty, further places Indigenous women at heightened risk of gender-based violence while simultaneously reinforcing colonial control of Indigenous lands.

United States - Line 5

The Line 5 pipeline, owned by Enbridge Energy, illustrates the environmental, legal, and social harms associated with transnational energy infrastructure in Indigenous territories. Built in 1953 and running 645 miles through treaty-protected lands in the Great Lakes region, the pipeline crosses beneath the Straits of Mackinac and poses significant risks to major freshwater ecosystems and Indigenous communities that depend on them. Tribes argue that the project violates historic treaties and has proceeded without meaningful Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC), despite international and domestic legal protections for Indigenous rights. In addition to environmental risks, pipeline development and associated worker camps have been linked to increased rates of sexual violence, trafficking, and other harms against Native women, highlighting how extractive infrastructure can exacerbate both ecological and gender-based violence in Indigenous territories.

Overview of Topics

United States - Ambler Road

The proposed Ambler Road Project in Alaska illustrates the intersection of extractive development, Indigenous land rights, and violence against Indigenous communities. Approved in 2025 to facilitate access to mineral deposits in Alaska's Ambler Mining District, the 211-mile road would cross sensitive ecosystems, major river systems, and the migratory routes of the Western Arctic Caribou Herd, threatening subsistence practices central to Alaska Native communities. Tribal leaders have strongly opposed the project, citing risks to land, water, food security, and cultural survival, as well as a lack of meaningful consultation. Beyond environmental impacts, increased mining development and the influx of non-local workers are associated with heightened risks of violence against Alaska Native women, who already experience some of the highest rates of sexual and domestic violence in the United States while facing severe barriers to justice and law enforcement access in many rural communities.

United States - Hawaii

Hawaii provides a clear example of colonial land and body violence resulting from U.S. occupation and militarization of Indigenous lands. Following the overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom in 1893 and the annexation of Hawaii by the United States in 1898, vast areas of Native Hawaiian lands were transferred to the U.S. government and used for military bases, training grounds, and infrastructure. Today, Hawaii remains one of the most heavily militarized regions in the Pacific, with military activities, development projects, and extractive practices continuing to displace Native Hawaiians and damage culturally significant lands such as Mauna Kea. Environmental harms, including contamination from military installations like Red Hill, further threaten community health and resources. This ongoing occupation has also contributed to disproportionate levels of gender-based violence, human trafficking, and exploitation of Native Hawaiian women, particularly through the combined impacts of militarization, tourism, and colonial economic systems.

Overview of Topics

Guatemala - Palm Oil Extraction

In Guatemala, the expansion of palm oil plantations has intensified land dispossession, environmental degradation, and violence against Indigenous Maya communities. Large plantations are often established on ancestral lands through forced evictions, illegal land seizures, and state-backed security operations, displacing Indigenous families and undermining their livelihoods. Palm cultivation has contributed to deforestation, water contamination, and soil degradation, threatening food systems and cultural survival. Indigenous land defenders who resist these projects frequently face criminalization, threats, and violence. Indigenous women are particularly affected, experiencing heightened risks of sexual violence, labor exploitation, health impacts from agrochemical contamination, and limited access to justice, despite the existence of national and international legal protections.

Peru - Logging

Peru contains a significant portion of the Amazon rainforest, where Indigenous communities manage large areas of territory, yet their land rights remain limited and unevenly recognized. Although the Peruvian Constitution acknowledges Indigenous cultural identity, the state retains authority over all natural resources, allowing extractive industries such as mining and logging to operate on Indigenous lands. This has fueled environmental degradation, territorial conflicts, and violence against land defenders, including Indigenous activists. Indigenous women are particularly affected, facing high levels of gender-based violence, human trafficking, and criminalization when they oppose illegal mining and deforestation. Despite existing legal protections, systemic discrimination, weak enforcement, and lack of access to justice leave many Indigenous women without meaningful protection, reinforcing cycles of violence, poverty, and environmental harm.

Overview of Topics

Brazil - Land Defenders

In Brazil, violence against Indigenous land defenders is closely tied to the expansion of extractive industries and invasions of Indigenous territories. Illegal mining, logging, and large infrastructure projects have intensified conflicts on Indigenous lands, exposing defenders—particularly Indigenous women—to threats, displacement, sexual violence, and assassination. Although the 1988 Constitution recognizes Indigenous peoples' original rights to their territories and requires the state to demarcate and protect them, bureaucratic barriers, political resistance, and the controversial Temporal Framework law have weakened territorial protections. As a result, land defenders who oppose illegal activities and environmental destruction often face retaliation and criminalization, while weak enforcement and impunity allow violence against Indigenous communities—especially women defenders—to persist.

Cosponsors and Partners

Alaska Native Women's Resource Center

The Alaska Native Women's Resource Center (AKNWRC) strengthens Tribal and local responses to violence through community organizing and advocacy to protect the safety of women and children, particularly from domestic and sexual violence. Grounded in the voices and teachings of Tribal communities, survivors, and advocates, AKNWRC works with partners to advance life-saving changes in laws, policies, and social norms at local, national, and international levels. The Center envisions Tribal women, families, and communities free from violence—healing trauma and drawing on ancestral wisdom to build effective responses to domestic violence, trafficking, sexual assault, stalking, and related injustices.

National Indigenous Women's Resource Center

The National Indigenous Women's Resource Center (NIWRC) is a Native-led nonprofit dedicated to ending violence against Native women, children, and communities. NIWRC supports Tribal Nations by amplifying grassroots advocates and providing training, technical assistance, resources, and policy support to strengthen Tribal responses to violence. Because federal laws have limited Tribal authority and resources to investigate and prosecute crimes against Native women, significant barriers to justice and safety remain. NIWRC works to advance Tribal sovereignty and ensure Native women have access to safety, justice, culturally grounded advocacy, essential services, and Indigenous healing practices.

Pouhana O Nā Wāhine

Pouhana 'O Nā Wāhine, established in 2015 as a grassroots effort, works to support Native Hawaiian families affected by domestic violence. The organization advocates for the Native Hawaiian community by providing resources and promoting culturally grounded responses rooted in Native beliefs, practices, and teachings. Pouhana provides training, technical assistance, and policy development at community, state, and national levels to prevent and address domestic violence while increasing safety for survivors and their families. It is the first federally funded Native Hawaiian Resource Center on Domestic Violence.

International Mayan League

The International Mayan League is a Maya refugee-founded, Indigenous women and youth-led grassroots organization based in Washington, D.C., on the ancestral lands of the Piscataway Nation. Founded in 1991 by Maya refugees fleeing the Guatemalan war and genocide, the organization works locally, nationally, and internationally to support Maya communities in the diaspora. The Mayan League advances Indigenous rights by educating about the root causes of forced migration, promoting Maya leadership in decision-making spaces, and advocating for human rights. Grounded in Maya cosmovision and a decolonial framework, its work centers Indigenous leadership, gender, and language justice, and the protection of Maya communities, lands, and cultures.

Cardozo Law School

The Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law, located in Greenwich Village, New York City, is a top-tier law school founded in 1976 and part of Yeshiva University. Known for its strengths in intellectual property, dispute resolution, and clinical education, Cardozo offers extensive hands-on learning through clinics and externships. These programs allow students to work directly with clients, organizations, and communities while developing practical legal skills and advancing access to justice. Situated in Manhattan, the school provides students with close proximity to courts, public interest organizations, law firms, and government institutions, creating opportunities to engage with complex legal issues and advocacy efforts at local, national, and international levels.

The Alliance of Tribal Coalitions to End Violence

The Alliance of Tribal Coalitions to End Violence (ATCEV) is a Native-led nonprofit organization founded in 2013 by Tribal Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Coalition leaders. ATCEV works to support and strengthen the services, training, and technical assistance provided by Tribal Coalitions to Tribal governments, Tribal communities, and direct service providers addressing domestic and sexual violence. By amplifying the unified voice of Tribal Coalitions, ATCEV advances Tribal sovereignty and works to promote justice, safety, and support for American Indian and Alaska Native survivors of violence.

The Minnesota Indian Women's Sexual Assault Coalition

The Minnesota Indian Women's Sexual Assault Coalition (MIWSAC) is a statewide Tribal coalition and national technical assistance provider working since 2001 to end sexual violence, sex trafficking, and support Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives (MMIR). Based in Minnesota, MIWSAC supports the state's 11 Tribal Nations, urban Native communities, and national partners through culturally grounded advocacy, policy work, training, and resources for survivors and service providers.

StrongHearts Native Helpline

StrongHearts Native Helpline was created to address the high rates of domestic and sexual violence experienced by American Indian and Alaska Native communities. Developed through a partnership between the National Indigenous Women's Resource Center (NIWRC) and the National Domestic Violence Hotline, it launched in 2017 as a Native-centered support service. StrongHearts provides free, confidential, and culturally grounded advocacy available 24/7 nationwide, offering crisis support, safety planning, and referrals to Native-centered services for survivors and their families.

Resources

- Chapter - Body Territory: The Body as Battlefield
- Article - “A philosophical conversation with Lorena Cabnal from Guatemala”
- Article - “Cuerpo-Territorio/Body-Territory”
- Report - “Reclaiming power and place: executive summary of the final report of the national inquiry into missing Indigenous women and girls”