

# Virtual Forum

## Violence against Indigenous Women in the Americas

February 6-March 10, 2017

### FINAL SUMMARY REPORT

Canadian Association for Latin American and Caribbean Studies CALACS  
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We thank the Canadian Association for Latin American and Caribbean Studies (CALACS) for supporting our project and providing the virtual forum platform. We acknowledge the funding support of the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) that made the development of the virtual forum platform possible.

We dedicate this report to Indigenous women in the Americas affected by violence, who inspire us with their dedication, courage, and hope for the future.

Ce rapport est aussi disponible en **français**.  
Este informe también está disponible en **español**.  
Este relatório também está disponível em **português**.

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## Key Messages

The objective of this project is to bring greater awareness and understanding of the causes and potential solutions to the issue of violence against Indigenous women in the Americas by facilitating the cross-regional exchange of ideas, experiences, knowledge, and strategies for social change. The major accomplishment of this project is the coordination of a free-access international online forum to address the issue from a variety of perspectives. The Virtual Forum on Violence against Indigenous Women in the Americas (February 6-March 10, 2017) generated the following lines of analysis:

### 1. Geopolitics of Definitions of Femi(ni)cide and Other Conceptualizations of Violence

*Femicide* refers to a violent act of homicide due to one's identification as a woman, whereas *feminicide* refers to a systemic process that creates the conditions under which gendered violence can occur, such as colonialism. Feminicide is a term coined by Latin American activists concerned with bringing about justice against patriarchal violence that operates in a naturalized way against women and girls in a climate of total impunity. An important discussion among participants that took place in the virtual forum opened up and enlarged the definition of violence beyond aggression occurring in the domestic realm to include the results of long chains of social, structural, and colonial discrimination that commonly affect Indigenous women and their communities. An intersectional approach to the issue captures the multiple and overlapping dimensions of Indigenous women's oppression as racialized, gendered, and classed subjects as well as the domination, exclusion, and discrimination to which they are subjected by the larger power structure.

### 2. "Colonization is Violence": Exclusion of Indigenous Bodies and Territories

The links between colonialism, capitalism, patriarchy and violence against Indigenous women in the Americas were made evident throughout the virtual forum. Participants underlined more than once the fact that colonization and exploitation of Indigenous lands and resources further deepen colonization and exploitation of their bodies, communities, culture and spirituality. Violence of colonization and exploitation is reproduced at different scales starting with homes to international scene.

### 3. Value and Limits of Transnational Indigenous/Ally/Intercultural/Multi-Sector Dialogues

The merits of holding transnational exchanges on the topic of violence against Indigenous women include: a) working collectively to provide multiple ways of addressing a pressing issue; b) providing a forum to debate concepts, experiences, and strategies across geographical, identity-based, linguistic, digital and epistemological divides; and c) creating a network that will work to provide policy recommendations based on local contexts, communities and languages. The limits include: a) the lack of Internet access for some communities; b) significant time constraints for participants given their gendered roles in their communities, families and work; c) the difficulties of discussing an embodied subject in a disembodied format.

### 4. Strategies for the Prevention, Visibilization, and Elimination of Violence against Indigenous Women

Violence against Indigenous women in the Americas is a multifaceted problem, requiring a multifaceted solution. A major finding was that recommendations and strategies for the prevention and elimination of violence against Indigenous women must be culturally appropriate and community-based. Alternative solutions based on cultural models of conciliation and dialogue may more effectively guarantee access to justice for Indigenous women.

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## INTRODUCTION

Missing and murdered Indigenous women (MMIW) is a crucial issue for Canada as a settler state. Aboriginal women aged 25-44 in Canada are five times more likely to experience a violent death than their non-Aboriginal counterparts (Gilchrist 2010). In 2010, the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) published a report documenting 582 cases of missing or murdered Indigenous women across Canada. In 2014, a report by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) identified 1,181 such cases (Dean 2015). On December 8, 2015, the Government of Canada formally announced the launch of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls to seek recommendations on concrete measures to address and prevent violence against this vulnerable sector of the population. As the country celebrates its 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2017, Canadians must come to terms with our past, present, and future. The issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women provides an important lens through which to analyze this historic occasion.

The issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women is not unique to Canada. There is an epidemic of violence against Indigenous women in the Americas. The March 2016 murder of Indigenous environmental activist Berta Cáceres in Honduras is but one recent example (Lakhani 2016). Statistics on missing and murdered Indigenous women in Latin America are practically non-existent. While much attention has been paid to the phenomenon of female homicide in Ciudad Juárez in northern Mexico, with more than 400 documented cases of murdered poor and Indigenous women workers since 1993, Guatemala now exceeds Ciudad Juárez in numbers of women killed (Speed 2016). Clearly, we are witnessing a broad social dynamic that crosses national and regional borders. Women's rights organizations in Latin America, such as the National Coordinator of Indigenous Women of Mexico (CONAMI), are working tirelessly to document cases of violence against rural and Indigenous women and to pressure governments and lawmakers in the region to take action on this pressing issue.

The project brings an intersectional and multi-scalar approach to bear on the issue of violence against Indigenous women and girls. Intersectionality captures the multiple and overlapping dimensions of Indigenous women's oppression as racialized, gendered, and classed subjects, as well as the dominating, exclusionary and discriminatory systems to which they are linked. The multi-scalar approach eschews simple dichotomies between national and transnational spaces to analyze local, regional, and trans-Indigenous strategies and experiences for social change.

Violence against women has a very broad and complex spectrum that includes domestic violence, rape, forced disappearance, human trafficking, and murder. To address this complexity, we proposed a multi-directional dialogue on the issue, one that incorporated the voices, experiences, and expertise of Indigenous women, rights activists, leaders, and scholars from Canada, Latin America and the Caribbean. We also welcomed the participation of people from any gender orientation or identification. This virtual space served as a forum for exchanging and sharing narratives, experiences, works, initiatives and research on violence against Indigenous women throughout the continent.

CALACS's Virtual Forum followed three major foci:

1. Defining violence against Indigenous women from decolonizing perspectives
2. Contexts, structural roots and social processes
3. Strategies for prevention, defense and visibilization of all forms of violence against Indigenous Women

## **Overall Goal and Objectives**

The goal of the project was to bring greater awareness and understanding of the causes and potential solutions to the issue of violence against Indigenous women in the Americas by facilitating the cross-regional exchange of ideas, experiences, knowledge, strategies for social change, and concrete steps for improvement. We aimed to link scholars and activists working on this issue in Canada and Latin America. We expect this project to be the beginning of a long-term transnational partnership between the project participants. We hope to contribute to the important public debate currently taking place in Canada as part of the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women national inquiry process.

The objectives of the dialogue were threefold:

- (1) Strategically, we sought to link academics and activists working on the issue of violence against Indigenous women from across the Americas to develop a research action network that will inform public policy debates and decisions;
- (2) Conceptually, we aimed to identify the social and structural nature of violence affecting Indigenous women's lives in the region. We expected to share and compare the struggles of Indigenous women at different scales and spaces and reflect on how Indigenous women activists relate to their home communities, the state, and international forums and global governance institutions;
- (3) Substantively, we proposed to examine which strategies for social change work and why. We planned to analyze the extent to which Indigenous women's organizations and activists adopt and make use of domestic and/or international human rights law to bring justice to their communities. In other words, we hoped to address the increasing judicialization of Indigenous women's politics in Canada and Latin America.

## **Research Activities**

CALACS's Virtual Forum was an initiative of the Indigenous Studies Network of the Canadian Association for Latin American and Caribbean Studies (CALACS). CALACS was founded in 1969 for the purposes of: a) facilitating networking and information exchange among Canadians engaged in teaching and research on Latin America and the Caribbean; b) fostering within Canadian universities, colleges, and other centres of higher education the expansion of information on and interest in Latin America and the Caribbean; and c) representing the academic and professional interests of Canadian Latin Americanists. CALACS is Canada's premier organization dedicated to the advancement of Latin American and Caribbean Studies. It fosters the ongoing development of a dynamic intellectual community through a variety of events,

publications, and communications media. It disseminates and mobilizes knowledge of Latin America and the Caribbean and their Diasporas through networks and partnerships in Canada and abroad. CALACS is a significant source of expertise to scholars, researchers, NGOs, policy makers, educators, and private sector organizations with an interest in Latin American and Caribbean countries and peoples. Through its activities, CALACS contributes to the understanding of the cultural, political, social, and economic experiences of the region's peoples.

CALACS' Indigenous Studies Network was established in 2013 and is now its most robust section. We count on more than 40 members from across Canada and the Latin American and the Caribbean region. The network has been active in organizing panels and workshops on contemporary Indigenous issues at the CALACS' annual conferences as well as hosting virtual forums for scholarly exchange. The virtual forum titled "Indigenous Territorial Rights and Aquatic Resources in Latin America: Recognition, Adaptation and the Challenges of Resource-based Economics," was launched in November 2014 and involved 35 participants from 15 countries.

The idea of a virtual forum about Indigenous women's struggles was born at the 2015 Congress in San José, Costa Rica. It was clear to us that this forum should address both the issue of endemic violence suffered by Indigenous women and the resistance, initiatives and strategies to address it. We are very pleased that this virtual forum is finally born.

The research exchanged through the project contributes to the emerging literature on Indigenous women's rights movements by addressing such debates as the merits and limits of state-sponsored multicultural policies for advancing Indigenous women's rights, Indigenous governance structures, traditional justice and women's rights, and effective strategies for bringing about social change and ending violence against Indigenous women, including direct action tactics, participation in electoral politics, and making use of the courts and legal system to protect and enhance Indigenous women's rights.

### **Target Audience and Participation**

CALACS's Virtual Forum was organized and facilitated by four members of the CALACS Indigenous Studies Network: Dr. Dolores Figueroa Romero, Dr. Vivian Jiménez-Estrada, Dr. Stéphane Guimont Marceau and Dr. Roberta Rice.

The virtual forum was intended to facilitate critical dialogue and exchange among Canadian and Latin American scholars, graduate students and activists; to establish the bases for further collaboration among participants, particularly through the CALACS Indigenous Studies Network; to encourage participation in CALACS' activities, especially future virtual fora, from non-academic communities such as government and not-for-profit organizations; and to contribute to the discussion on the issue of violence against Indigenous women in the Americas.

Given that the forum was inspired and derived from the historic celebration of the 150th anniversary of the founding of Canada, discussion on the effects of Canadian assimilation policies and the long-term social effects of residential schools were at the center of our debates on the causes of violence against Indigenous women in Canada. It is crucial that Canadian



organizations and institutions learn more about initiatives on preventing and addressing violence against Indigenous women in Latin America and vice versa. Addressing state violence, family violence, and all forms of social violence, means not only examining local and national contexts, but also the underlying structural nature of gendered violence. We need to learn more about how Indigenous women cope with physical, social, cultural, political and economic exclusion and violence in order to improve their life chances, strengthen our communities, and enhance our societies.

The Virtual Forum on Violence against Indigenous Women in the Americas ran for five weeks and counted on the participation of over 80 individuals from 10 different countries (see Table 1.1). The majority of our participants were women from Latin America (45), followed by women scholars and activists from Canada (17). The forum also counted on the active participation of men, mainly from Latin American countries (9). Our discussions benefited from the participation of individuals from the United States and the United Kingdom. We were pleased with the interest and enthusiasm displayed by the participants. Our initial goal of having 40 registered participants was surpassed. The participation of women from across the Americas allowed us to compare diverse conceptualizations of the causes and consequences of violence against Indigenous women. To better understand the views of women in Canada as compared to those from Latin America on the topic of violence, we performed a content analysis of key terms and phrases used in the virtual forum discussions in English and in Spanish in the form of word clouds (see Figure 1.1). The results indicate some interesting areas of convergence (e.g. the role of colonialism) as well as some divergences (such as the greater emphasis on men and gender dualism in the Latin American context). The concepts, themes, and ideas derived from the virtual forum debates and discussions form the basis of our analysis in this summary report.

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<b>Region</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>Latin America</b>	45	9	54
<b>Canada</b>	17	1	18
<b>United States</b>	8	0	8
<b>United Kingdom</b>	1	0	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>81</b>

Table 1.1  
Participants by Gender and Region,  
Virtual Forum on Violence against Indigenous Women in the Americas



## II. APPROACH

The dialogue on violence(s) against Indigenous women was the initial theme of CALACS's Virtual Forum. This debate was thought of as a space of exchange between multiple voices and actors. In order to carry out this exercise, we provided launching questions, academic and non-academic readings, videos and artistic work, that helped locate a series of key issues or themes to characterize the problem and to understand it from different points of view.

This exploration included a reflective effort on the effects of structural violence both at the individual level and in the collective lives of Indigenous communities and peoples, as well as in the broader societies of which we are a part. In this vein, extensive reflections on the effects of institutional racism and economic and social discrimination against Indigenous peoples were also elicited. Linked to the structural theme, we sought to discuss the specificity of discrimination against Indigenous women, that is, to discuss gender violence from an inter-sectional, decolonizing perspective and from concrete activist experiences. This debate sought to prioritize reflection on the complexity of contexts where acts of (extreme) violence attack the bodies of Indigenous women and where acts of resistance are also generated.

### Relationality

Working in a virtual space presents many issues and concerns. The first tension we encountered was the contradiction of embodying a crucial issue through a virtual, disembodied process. The relationality on which and through which we built this space was limited by the virtual aspect of it. At the same time, the women in the forum would not have had access to one another without this virtual space. The virtual forum offered an opportunity of expression to persons that could have had trouble doing so in a more direct form.

The openness showed by a great many Indigenous women in sharing their experiences of violence and of resistance is unsettling the western vision in which intimacy and vulnerability are perceived as embarrassing and to-be-hidden. The patriarchal structure of power places these stories in the so-called private sphere. But if the personal is political, if the personal and the collective are so entangled, personal stories of violence might well represent an interstice from where to destabilize power relations of this structure. As Nahanni Fontaine says, these personal stories come from their "collective story of struggle and the long, ongoing discourse of being constructed as "less than," as "savage," as "disposable" or as "squaw." (Macdonald 2017). Could it be that to share these stories as well as to hear them represents a profound empowering experience, personal and collective?

During the course of the project, the National Coordinator for Indigenous Women of Mexico (CONAMI) emerged as our major partner. A number of CONAMI members participated actively in the virtual forum and two leaders participated in our roundtable on Violence against Indigenous Women in the Americas at the Latin American Studies Association (LASA) conference in Lima, Peru (see Appendix). Thanks to the Social Sciences and Humanities

Research Council of Canada (SSHRC)'s funding, the leaders of CONAMI met with their membership in Mexico to prepare for the round table and discuss the main points of their talk. In this way, the transnational dialogue we began on-line served to encourage in-person meetings and discussions that we hope will continue to make a difference in women's lives.

### **Intersectionality**

We also chose to work from an intersectional approach, since it can provide important insights into understanding the complex articulations of power structures. Colonization and exclusion were made from the entanglement of different identities / positions. They have been deepened by the superposition of different marginalized positions. Race, gender and class are the main identities / positions used to socially, economically, politically and spatially marginalize the bearers of these identities / positions. The intersection between personal and political, between class and race, between space and society, between body and territory, is vital for Indigenous women because this too often places them at the heart of many forms of violence. It is crucial to understand both the intersection between the different contexts and processes that affect Indigenous women, and the multiplicity of struggles and strategies to address them. Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) highlights these "multiple layers of struggle across multiple sites."

The intersection concerns as much the multiple positions experienced by marginalized and violated people, as the intersection between the forms of domination. Marginalization is made all the more profound by the multiplication of forms of domination: racist, sexist, capitalist, colonial. "To find solutions to rampant violence against Indigenous women necessitates approaches that address sexual, physical and state violence together and simultaneously" (Smith 2005, cited by Kuokkanen 2008: 223).

Participants actively denounced the lack of intersectional statistics in all the countries concerned to paint a picture more representative of lived realities. Inter-sectional and qualitative methodologies are needed in order to reconstruct the social complexity of circumstances that convey violent acts against women, such as the family victims' testimony.

### **Multiscalarity**

As a transnational forum, we also put forward a multiscalar approach to understand violence against Indigenous women because we aimed to encompass actors and voices from various Latin American countries and Canada who work in different scales of power. It appears to us that this issue cannot be deeply understood and addressed from a local or a national perspective. It needs to confront global neoliberal and colonial processes to start to paint a better picture of the landscape in which violence takes place. That said, local contexts are crucial, various and should be taken into consideration. The multi- scalar approach eschews simple dichotomies between national and transnational spaces to analyze local, regional, and trans-Indigenous strategies and experiences for social change. To understand the intersectional impacts of marginalization, one must start from experience and anchor it in structural contexts at different scales (Léger 2015). In this sense, the virtual forum allowed direct and trans-local contact with some of these experiences and analysis.

### III. PRINCIPAL LINES OF ANALYSIS

The outcomes of the five-week CALACS's Virtual Forum can be grouped into four main themes: competing conceptualizations of violence against Indigenous women; multiple and overlapping geographies of exclusion; the merits and limits of transnational, on-line dialogues; and effective strategies for bringing about change. Our analysis is based on what participants shared on-line as well as in the literature. We quoted the participants with the username they provided to register to the forum.

#### A. The Geopolitics of Definitions of Femi(ni)cide and other Conceptualizations of Violence

This section contains a summary of the reflexive exchanges in the virtual forum on the structural causes of extreme acts of violence against Indigenous women's bodies through the use of concepts such as "feminicide" and "femicide". The debates critically assess the importance of their use to frame the disappearance and murders of Indigenous women both in Canada and Latin America. *Femicide* refers to a violent act of homicide due to one's identification as a woman, whereas *feminicide* refers to a systemic process that creates the conditions under which gendered violence can occur without any kind of meaningful intervention from state institutions to prevent or bring justice to the victims and their families (Lagarde 2008, Fregoso and Bejarano 2010, Martin and Carvajal 2015).

##### Defining violence against Indigenous women

One important line of debate came from Indigenous women leaders and activists who were crucial in opening up and enlarging the scope of the debate to define violence not just as aggressions that occur in the domestic realm, but as the result of long chains of social, structural, and colonial discrimination that commonly affect Indigenous women and their communities (IIFW 2006, Agenda CONAMI 2012, ECMIA 2013). Violence against women has a very broad and complex spectrum that includes domestic violence, rape, forced disappearance, human trafficking, and murder.

The participation of Indigenous women in the debates opened the door to the possibility of thinking about the collective impacts of State action and inaction to tolerate and even facilitate the dispossession of material and immaterial goods that are vital for the reproduction of Indigenous communities. The introduction of terms such as genocide, ethnocide and cultural genocide politically enriched the conversations on the geographies of violence as colonial contexts where displacement, dispossession and serious human rights violations of Indigenous women take place. Modern ethnocides not only refer to wars, mass robberies, displacement of populations and forced migrations of groups of human groups who are ethnically and culturally distinct, but also includes assimilationist policies that seek to erode the social, symbolic and linguistic elements that differentiate Indigenous from non-Indigenous peoples.

A key message that was transmitted in CALACS's Virtual Forum conversations came from Mapuche (Chile) and Mayan (Guatemala) activists who argued for the need to build alternative categories that better explain the annihilation of Indigenous peoples, that is, their own categories of dispossession. From the experiences of young Mapuche migrant women in urban areas in Chile, violence against Indigenous women was named "Hetero-wingka patriarchal violence" (Doris Quiñimil, Feb. 22). In introducing the term Wingka, the participant meant rape, dispossession, and in general the excessive violence of capitalism (Colectivo de Mujeres Indígenas Mapuches Urbanas). This term echoes Zapatista conceptualizations of various resistances that include the human and the cosmogonic (Wright 2017).

Indigenous definitions do not seek to disqualify the defining feminist exercise of gender violence and femicide, but to unveil the epistemological and political limitations of these concepts. First, a whitening of the concept of femicide is denounced, because it somehow applies to a sociological type of racial victim that does not necessarily correspond to the cases and / or vulnerability of Indigenous women (Sequeira's input). Second, the femicide debate revealed a central tension: the divergence between the action of generalizing the term to have a social impact and the pressure to specify a legal utility (a legal use) (Fregoso and Bejarano 2010). These two actions emphasize awareness of the centrality of women's vulnerability to violent acts and women as a uniform social category. The legal term femicide contains a legal aggravating factor that sometimes is difficult to prove.

Nevertheless, and without neglecting the activist work done, it became important to note that the politics of femicide –which implies the push to specify a juridical utility based on a concrete contexts and specific type of victims - probably fails to address the social complexity of contemporary Indigenous women's experience of horror, violence, and hate that is related to deeper structures of colonial discrimination, state terror and capitalist exploitation.

### The politics of femi(ni)cide and the role of the State in the North and the South

An important element of the debate was to reflect on the geo-political differences in naming and understanding violence against Indigenous women in the North and South. With geo-politics we refer to regional differences marked by different histories of formation of state relations and Indigenous peoples, and how this has determined different policies of assimilation of Indigenous peoples and their cultural matrices into national societies.

The participants of the forum provided many elements of analysis to better understand the intentionality of Latin American feminist activism in creating legal and conceptual terms such as "femicide" and "femicide" to make visible the violent deaths of women in very specific geopolitical contexts, such as in Ciudad Juárez. The feminist reflexive effort has focused on giving a specificity and legal and punitive name to gender homicide, which ultimately aims to make the state responsible to act in such areas as: a) Prevention of violence; b) Elimination of impunity that characterizes the acts of violence against women; and c) Social and symbolic compensation for the damage done (Radford and Russel 1992, Lagarde 2008).

The absence of an official use of the term “feminicide” (much less forced disappearances) in the Canadian context, was addressed by the participants as a void / absence in the use of the appropriate political lexicon. This absence was interpreted as an indicator of a different political logic. In any case, adopting the term “feminicide” would mean recognizing its own responsibility for realizing violence against Indigenous women and perpetuating terror against the most vulnerable citizens of their society (Wright 2017). It is because of this denial by the Canadian state and its institutions that the cases of missing and murdered Indigenous women are (were) taken as isolated and individual facts and are framed in a criminal logic that avoids any structural responsibility on the part of the government.

In Latin America, the feminicide of Indigenous women is not easy to name either, but for different reasons than in the Canadian context. As already mentioned, the deaths of women due to the fact that they are women responds to a legal definition that specifically refers to a particular type of victim, that is, poor urban women who are working. The murders of Indigenous women are often not considered as feminicides because there may be other motives involved that do not necessarily fit the specific legal definition. The defense of communal and / or rural property or violent acts related to the militarization of rural areas and extortion activities of organized crime may not necessarily be classified as feminicide but rather as a result of several orders of discrimination in the context of legal gray zone and lack of State presence. Even though there are national and regional observatories that map cases of feminicide, these statistics do not record the ethnicity of the victims. By deduction, one can suppose the ethnicity of the victim by the municipality where the appearance of the bodies occurred. As reported in the virtual forum, to fill this information gap, Indigenous women's organizations such as the Coordinator of Indigenous Women of Mexico and the Network of Indigenous Women Lawyers of Mexico are trying to document and map cases in their territories.

One of the forum participants also highlighted that national differences are not the only ones since regional and local particularities, as well as rural and urban contrasts, are to be considered.

*The notorious difference between the feminicides of Indigenous women and mixed-race or urban women is that Indigenous women killed by their peers, partners or family are treated with communal customs and practices as if it were a private matter, but the Indigenous peoples murdered by actors outside the communities have been activists, human rights defenders, defenders of territorial rights, political actors (dpattyt, Feb. 19).*

Another participant underlined the need to open bridges of dialogue and collaborative work between different activists that are located at the margins of the state in such a way that de-constructing categories and concepts can be created in more inclusive ways (Ibgreen, March 8).



## **B. “Colonization is Violence”: Exclusion of Indigenous Bodies and Territories**

The links between colonization, capitalism and patriarchy are clear, as are the geographies of exclusions that result from these systems and violences in all their forms. The former president of the Canadian Aboriginal Women's Association, Beverly Jacobs (2013), highlights this in the quote used in the title of this section: “Colonization is violence”. As participants from the virtual forum expressed: “Feminicide is direct, lethal expressions of multiple systems of oppression on the bodies of women” (Francisco Sequeira, Feb. 19) and “Today colonial genocide is translated into feminicide.” (Doris Quiñimil, Feb. 22).

The Native Women’s Association of Canada states: "To address the issue of violence, one must understand the history and impact of colonization on Aboriginal peoples in Canada. It is the ongoing narration of violence, systemic racism and discrimination, purposeful denial of culture, language and traditions, and legislation designed to destroy identity that has led to the realities facing Aboriginal peoples” (NWAC 2010: 1).

Violence against Indigenous women continues to mark them, their families and communities, but also our entire societies. According to a participant: “Historically constructed violence is magnified in the bodies of Indigenous women, including the loss of territory, class violence, sexual violence, economic violence and symbolic violence” (María José Pérez Sián, Feb. 19). Another participant added: “Violence that is physical, psychological, economic, patrimonial, social, communitarian, political, as well as institutional and structural racism and discrimination makes our bodies disposable” (Patricia Torres Sandoval, Feb. 19).

This objectification, which makes Indigenous women disposable, alongside multiple discriminations and profound marginalization, represent the roots that make violence possible. Participants in this virtual forum have spoken extensively about these geographies of exclusion that affect them.

### **Geographies of Exclusion**

The geographies of exclusion concern all the social, political, economic and physical spaces from which certain citizens are excluded. The systems of oppression and domination rely on social exclusion as well as on the spatial marginalization of the most deprived. A participant of the forum explained how colonization has deprived Indigenous peoples of their identity, autonomy, knowledge and territories: “Colonization implies the invasion of our territories and when I say territories, I am including our own bodies, our spirituality, our worldview and all of the areas of our individual and collective lives” (Norma Don Juan, Feb. 18).

The Nation-States of the continent have been built upon the violation of certain subjects and territories. The racist and patriarchal theories have marked these states and the construction of their subjects. They have formed "naturalized geographies of violence" where violence against Indigenous peoples is "normalized, embedded in the social fabric of colonial relations" (Holmes, Hunt and Piedalue 2014: 551).

CALACS's Virtual Forum's participants shared some of these experiences, as: "Acts of territorial sovereignty on the body of a woman" (Norma Don Juan, Feb. 18). Bodies and territories placed in these spaces of exclusion evolve in fact in a reign of impunity; since they do not serve the progress of the Nation, they are not protected by the State and its rules of law, and are condemned to violence. These spaces are physical, marginalized, but also created by different economic, cultural or social policies. In the words of Kuokkanen (2008: 220): "As the poorest and most disenfranchised segment of society, Indigenous women are at the receiving end of not only physical or sexual violence, but also structural, political and economic violence all of which reinforce and reproduce one another."

Participants also addressed the issue of increasing violence against women in areas affected by major development projects such as mines and those related to energy production. One participant explains: "A territory that is appropriated by laws, decrees, and police corps and that leaves women on the margins is that which receives the weight of the law and the force of the police in the form of submitted violence" (Paz Escalante Ambar, Feb. 24). Elsewhere the same participant asked: "How much blood of "disposable" persons will soak the land?" (Paz Escalante Ambar, March 9). This pouring of blood is clearly linked to what Wright (2006) calls the "deadly exclusion of women from public space".

Participants also discussed their struggles against endemic domestic violence, which highlights the fact that this exclusion is active not only in public spaces, but also in so-called "private", "at home" spaces. As Norma Don Juan expresses: "We have been converted into the property of men and of society and in this way we are violated in public and private spaces [...] We are left in a state of vulnerability and invisibility" (Feb. 18).

### Violence against Women and Mother Earth

Participants clearly underlined the links between violence against Indigenous women and violence against the Earth, Nature and Territories. For example, a discussion raised the etymological link between rape and *rapiña*, the first word in English being used to talk about physical rape and the second in Spanish to talk about the devastation of natural resources. As one participant in the forum puts it: "Women, as well as land, are submitted, abused, raped and assassinated for no other reason than being in a space and living with dignity" (Paz Escalante Ambar, March 9).

To place oneself in a space of life, to place oneself on the earth, can represent a brake on colonization, capitalism and patriarchy, as this participant emphasizes. The structural nature of modern violence against female bodies shows dynamics deeply intertwined with capitalism, racism, and colonialism, in such a way that they victimize the most vulnerable and disrupt vital social fabrics. Andrea Smith (2005) analyzes in greater depth this link between colonial control over women and capitalist control over nature.

Several authors show how current neoliberal processes produce exclusion and involve individuals, communities and territories in complex private sector processes (Kuokkanen 2008, Altamirano Jimenez 2010). This acceleration in the exploitation of resources and territories is

pushing more and more people already marginalized in places of high vulnerability. One participant recalled the “feminization of poverty on our continent” (FredrizC, Feb. 28) which has radical consequences for many people and communities, placing them in a position of vulnerability to violence. Of course, Indigenous women are among the most affected by these processes. Some factors include, but are not limited to, the dispossession of Indigenous lands and territories resulting from processes of colonization and the impact of extractive industries, drug trafficking and development on Indigenous lands and territories.

The readings by Rita Segato (2013) and Beverly Jacobs (2013) demonstrated a clear connection between dispossession and violence against nature and natural resources with violence committed against the bodies of Indigenous women and their cultures. Segato's (2013) structural analysis leads us to relate capitalism to the patriarchal order of power in society, a fusion that manifests itself in systematic violent acts against specific groups of women. According to Segato, the impunity that accompanies the death of women is part of a larger machinery that protects the perpetrator(s) and ensures that horror messages silence those who are alive.

Jacobs (2013) and Altamirano Jimenez (2010) note the importance of creating a community of solidarity that goes beyond Indigenous women as a means to counteract acts of terror that threaten the survival of Indigenous women. Violence against Indigenous women's bodies is violence against Indigenous nations and points to the gradual disappearance of Indigenous Nations, land and territories, as well as their right to live in dignity and respect.

In a video material provided for the discussion, Rita Segato (2013) poses crucial questions: “Why can’t we take women out of that place?”, “What part of this grand edifice of power is held up by women’s bodies?”.

### **C. The Value and Limits of Transnational Indigenous/Ally/Intercultural/Multi-Sector Dialogues**

What came to light in CALACS’s Virtual Forum is that gendered colonial violence is directly related to many issues. Furthermore, Indigenous issues in the North and South, although similar in terms of lived experiences, embody complex institutional processes that tend to make it difficult to determine the comparable factors underlying the issue of violence against Indigenous women in both regions. As already stated in the rationale for this project, gendered, colonial violence is not unique to the geographical North and it is clear that the struggle is waged at a grassroots and community level that at times feeds into institutional support processes and networks through bodies like the Native Women’s Association of Canada, the National Coordinator of Indigenous Women of Mexico and the International Forum for Indigenous Women in the Americas.

Notwithstanding the increasing support and efforts on the ground, there are legal processes and frameworks that rely on normative instruments and legal frameworks in both North and South contexts. In Canada, the constitutional commitments as outlined in Section 35, which acknowledges the existence of Aboriginal land and title prior to Confederation as exemplified by numbered and modern Treaties. In addition, the recommendations proposed by the Truth and

Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action provide a particular political and economic leverage not available to Indigenous peoples in Latin America. In contradistinction, Indigenous peoples in the geographic South or Latin America rely on constitutional reforms that recognize their existing rights within a Western legal framework. On the other hand, as stated by one participant:

*It is interesting that the patriarchal mandates that decide on women's bodies, culture and actions can be perceived at different levels. For Indigenous women in Canada, I can say that although patriarchal violence is present to a lesser extent than in Ciudad Juarez, it is evident that the cultural genocide inflicted by the Indian Act is also an important issue to address (Paz Escalante Ambar, Feb. 24).*

In Canada, the establishment of the Indian Act in 1876 continues to serve as a way to alienate and control Indigenous peoples until they become assimilated (Voyageur 2011). In addition, colonial laws and genocidal policies specifically targeted Aboriginal women and men's roles. Women have been the stronghold of community and devaluing their roles and limiting their participation by imposing new governance structures created havoc (Wolski 2011). "Prior to first contact, many Aboriginal societies were ... [matriarchal] in nature and focused on family, community and the continuity of tradition, culture and language; Aboriginal women were central to all of this as teachers, healers, and givers of life. While Aboriginal men and women had distinct roles, their roles were equally valued (Wolski 2008, in Wolski 2011: 248).

Social change and recognition relies on legal advances based on national constitutional reforms and international human rights frameworks, such as ILO 169 and UNDRIP. The pressure exerted by Indigenous organizations have impacted national legislation that recognizes Indigenous and collective rights. Combined, these bodies provide oversight and some guarantees to Indigenous peoples in general and to some extent, to women in particular. In this sense, analyzing the issue of gendered and colonial violence in the South necessitates an understanding of the histories and particularities of the geopolitical, legal and socioeconomic contexts for Indigenous women to deconstruct assumptions of how women experience the issue in the North and South. These context-based realities point to a methodological necessity to rely on analytical tools that make room for multi-vocalities, multiple ways of seeing/understanding/being in the world as espoused by Indigenous discursive frameworks and fittingly, intersectional theory (Lugones 2015, QNW 2012a, 2012b).

The pluri-vocality of this project is a strength that enriched our discussions and understandings of the issue of violence and yet, contributed to the difficulty in choosing / determining entry points to discuss gendered and colonial violence. This included identification of processes of gendered and colonial violence as well as further deconstruction of how geographies, political boundaries and even semantics come to bear on the issue and the direction to follow in addressing it.

The socio-political context, according to the forum participants, impacts the ways in which legal frameworks and penal processes are established, which in turn, determine resolutions to the issue of femicide and feminicide (see above for a discussion on the definition of these terms). Women and girls across the Americas are impacted by gendered and colonial violence. The roots of systemic processes that produce and maintain these relations are embedded in Eurocentric legal

systems which approach justice from a position of understanding Indigenous peoples and women as individual rights subjects, whereby individualism and self-preservation for economic gain and profit reign.

During the forum, participants had a chance to share their own experiences with the traditional systems and the imposed colonial legal systems and frameworks in what became transnational/Indigenous/ally/intercultural/multisector dialogues. The following are the key elements underlined:

1. First, in the literature reviewed, many Indigenous women activists, academics and allies both inside and outside of institutionalized contexts, have provided evidence that working collectively across geo-spatial and intellectual divides can provide multiple ways of addressing an issue that is pressing for all who seek social justice.
2. Second, the importance of this type of forum is the ability to debate concepts, experiences and strategies across geographical, identity-based, linguistic, digital and epistemological divides. This forum provided the chance for Indigenous and racialized women, gender conforming and non-conforming, and their allies, to connect in cyberspace to discuss this issue in depth, in spite of the geospatial distance between all the participants:

*I thank the coordination for the efforts they made to allow us to be part of this forum. As others expressed it, I also had difficulties on some occasions to access the internet, but that did not stop me from working with the proposed readings. The readings as well as the exchanges on the work experiences leave me more questions than answers, encouraging me to continue to deepen in this complex subject. That is why I would like to keep in touch with this network. (maramos, March 17th)*

3. Third, an important element gained from this exercise, as also underlined by the participant cited above, relates to the creation of a network that will continue the work to provide policy recommendations to address the issue in their own contexts, communities and languages. It is not common for a diverse group of women to connect and address some pressing issues while sharing this knowledge with each other about their experiences, perspectives and strategies. The strategic development and implementation of grassroots and institutionalized responses to gendered colonial violence is crucial to make clear links between conditions of inequality for women and their vulnerability to violence.

## Limits

We are aware of the limits of this virtual space we created, which include: the lack of Internet access for some communities; significant time constraints for participants given their gendered roles in their communities, families and work; language issue and others.

As flagged in the intervention by maramos (Feb. 24) Internet access proved to be a possibility as well as a limit. Although the Internet allowed the forum to reach a larger pool of participants, it did not provide an equal platform for all to participate equally and thus, the conversations did not fully engage everyone. Since the virtual forum addressed issues of social and economic inequality, it provided us with the opportunity to discuss how the participants' own economic reality impacted their participation. Participants expressed their limited and/or varying degrees of access to the Internet. Notwithstanding technological issues, the participants disclosed the importance of keeping up with the readings and the discussions, as this invigorates their own work.

Another tension we encountered, as stated earlier, was the contradiction of embodying a crucial issue through a virtual, disembodied process. The relationality on which and through which we built this space was limited by the virtual aspect of it. The virtual forum nevertheless represented a concrete space in which some could identify and express. As one of the participant testified at the end: "I have read all of your comments and feedbacks and I thank you from the bottom of my heart for this very "real" space, even it if is "virtual" (Doris Quiñimil, Feb. 22).

The virtual forum oscillated between academia and activism and between theory and practice, which could have represented a barrier for some participants coming from one world or the other. We were very conscious of that issue and tried to make the space as open as possible but we are aware it might still have sounded unwelcoming for some.

Likewise, the safe space we tried to create might not have felt safe for some. The presence of non-Indigenous peoples or of men for example might have turned some potential participants away. The issue around safe spaces and the place and role of allies needs to be further addressed. It is linked to issues concerning appropriation and construction of indigeneity, which might require a discussion about the parameters of the various ways in which indigeneity is lived today. In this process, talking about Indigenous women may become an abstraction of plural and diverse realities that should not be simplified. As Sarah Radcliffe (2015: 2) puts it: "indigeneity is to Indigenous peoples as cartography is to the earth's surface."

We created a methodology as coordinators of the forum first from our identities as women, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, scholars, mothers and others. For our organization and coordination tasks, we used a virtual space, mostly through on-line video calls, to work through our trans-local and transnational situations. We had late-night and weekend meetings, all while having to deal with the care of children and other duties. This highly relational methodology, even if limited, is rooted in the relationality needed to face structural and day-to-day violence.

The material provided to start-up discussions was either in English, in Spanish or both, and participants could answer in either of both languages. Even if we dedicated ourselves to the

translation in the other language of every comment from a participant, this restriction to two (colonial) languages represent, of course, an important limit. Nevertheless, we positively assess the efforts of translating from English to Spanish -and vice versa- of key documents and newspaper since this was point of entry in making sense of diverse realities whether to Latin American participants or North American readers.

The forum also highlighted the need to discuss how colonial and gendered violence also impacts Indigenous men and boys, and non-Indigenous racialized women as well. Since Latin American and Canadian analyses of colonial violence tend to differentiate and oversimplify the boundaries between Indigenous and non-Indigenous women, a limit to the forum points to working together to deconstruct colonial classifications and divisions between Indigenous and Afro-descendant populations. This is an important limit to address, since the legal definitions of Indigeneity vary from country to country.

#### **D. Strategies for the Prevention, Visibilization, and Elimination of Violence against Indigenous Women**

Violence against Indigenous women in the Americas is a multifaceted problem, requiring multifaceted solutions. While a list of policy prescriptions to address this complex issue is beyond the scope of this report, a number of recommendations and strategies to prevent, make visible, and address violence against Indigenous women in the Americas emerged from the readings and discussions in our virtual forum.

##### **1. Indigenous women's experiences, perspectives, and priorities must be at the heart of any programs, plans, strategies, or policies to address violence committed against them.**

Indigenous women's contributions to settler colonial societies have been rendered invisible for too long. As a number of participants in the virtual forum reported, the marginalization of Indigenous women's voices and ways of knowing and being in the world has made them "disposable," "less than," and vulnerable to myriad forms of violence. Solutions to ending violence against Indigenous women must be developed in consultation with Indigenous women. Putting Indigenous women at the centre of the process will not only create more effective public policies, but will recognize Indigenous women as social actors in their own right.

##### **2. Indigenous women's councils and organizations need to be meaningfully consulted about a subject matter in which they are deeply invested.**

The participation of Indigenous women's organizations, such as the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) and the National Coordinator of Indigenous Women of Mexico (CONAMI), is crucial to the search for solutions to end violence against Indigenous women. The research activities conducted by Indigenous women's rights organizations hold a number of advantages, including having greater credibility within Indigenous communities, shared languages, solidarity, capacity-building, and being based on lived experiences (IIWF 2017). Support for new and



existing Indigenous women's councils and organizations strengthens their authority within their jurisdictions and their ability to serve the needs of Indigenous women. It was also mentioned in the forum the relevance to include organizations of Aboriginal-Indigenous women in urban centers and Indigenous migrants in any kind of spaces wherein their condition of migrant and out-of their communities make them more vulnerable and invisible.

### 3. Recommendations and strategies for the prevention and elimination of violence against Indigenous women must be culturally appropriate and community-based.

Indigenous women in Canada and Latin America tend to conceptualize their rights as women within a collective Indigenous rights framework (IIWF 2009, ECMIA 2013). The key concepts arising out of the virtual forum indicate that Indigenous women alongside men, youth, and Elders need to be included in an intergenerational, community-based discussion on the topic of violence against Indigenous women. Policies to address domestic violence and discrimination against women must be developed with an understanding of gender roles within Indigenous communities and be based on the perspectives of Indigenous women (Sieder and Sierra 2011). Too often programs developed by public institutions and non-governmental organizations seeking to promote Indigenous women's rights are based on a liberal vision of the individual rights of women. Such an approach fails to consider alternative solutions based on cultural models of conciliation and dialogue that may more effectively guarantee access to justice for women.

### 4. Governments in the region must take an integrated, whole of government approach to address the issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women and work with families and communities to end this violence.

Addressing violence against Indigenous women is a shared responsibility and will require collaboration between governments and communities. A 'whole of government' approach ensures that public agencies work together to achieve a common goal or response to a particular issue (Government of Ontario 2016). Most countries in the Americas have approved international conventions and accords recognizing and protecting the rights of women and Indigenous peoples. Nevertheless, significant gaps remain between official policies and their implementation. No civil society organization or government agency working alone can end violence against Indigenous women. This work must be done in partnership across levels of government and in collaboration with Indigenous peoples.

### 5. Public awareness campaigns on violence against Indigenous women are needed to educate Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples about this violence and how to stop it.

Raising public awareness with the aim of changing attitudes and practices that devalue and demean Indigenous women and girls is an important educational tool for violence prevention. Several virtual forum participants highlighted the fact that the invisibility of crimes committed against Indigenous women and girls throughout the Americas provides the perpetrators with impunity. The failure of governments and courts to act on behalf of the victims makes them complicit in the violence being carried out against Indigenous women. More research and



publicity is needed to make visible, denounce, and counteract such violence. The term “feminicide” must enter into the public lexicon.

#### 6. Private sector actors working in or near Indigenous lands must obtain Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) from Indigenous communities and in a way that respects gender roles and responsibilities.

The extractive sector as a whole has paid little attention to the impacts of its activities on women. Indigenous women who become active in defense of their lands and livelihoods do so at great personal cost. The 2016 murder of Honduran environmental activist and Indigenous leader Berta Cáceres allegedly at the hands of security forces is one example (Lakhani 2016). In addition to the risk of repression and criminalization of their activities, external pressures exerted by mining and other resource extractive industries can damage the social fabric of Indigenous communities and put women at greater risk of experiencing violence (Li 2008, Rondon 2009). Governments and corporations must do more to ensure that a regime of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) is implemented and includes Indigenous women’s voices in the decision-making process.

#### 7. Community safety and well-being is key to addressing violence against Indigenous women.

Improving the safety and well-being of Indigenous communities and the socio-economic status of Indigenous women will reduce women’s unequal vulnerability to violence in the long term. Unresolved trauma and abuse within Indigenous communities resulting from colonial legacies, such as residential school systems and the dispossession of land and language, creates a vicious circle of violence and undermines successful development outcomes (NWAC 2017). As noted by several participants in the virtual forum, oftentimes the rape of Indigenous lands goes hand-in-hand-with the violation of Indigenous women’s bodies. More holistic social support services and programs staffed by Indigenous peoples are urgently needed. Policies and programs to address violence against Indigenous women must be trauma-informed and culturally aware.

#### 8. Legal and technical assistance for marginalized individuals is an important first step.

The case of Jacinta Francisco Maciel of Mexico, an Indigenous woman who was falsely imprisoned for close to eleven years before authorities realized their error (*La Jornada*, Feb. 22, 2017) highlights the need for legal assistance in Indigenous languages for some of the most marginalized in the region. The work of the Native Women’s Association of Canada in preparation for Canada’s National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls revealed serious barriers to participation that need to be addressed for Indigenous women without regular or reliable Internet access given the challenges of navigating a highly technical registration process (NWAC 2017). More work also needs to be done to develop accurate and reliable databases to track the incidents of violence against Indigenous women. This work should be done in collaboration with Indigenous partners which means for instance offering methodological and technical support to community-based Indigenous organizations that aim to document and record violent acts using electronic means.

9. Work to improve the relationship between the justice system and Indigenous peoples needs to be done so that the police and legal professionals protect and assist Indigenous women who are victims of violence.

There was a fruitful discussion in the forum on how the criminalization of poverty and indigeneity in the Americas affects us all. The participants strongly suggested that such actions and attitudes endorses victim-blaming, creates divisions within our societies, and reinforces power imbalances. Clearly, more work needs to be done to visibilize the structural and historical roots of violence against Indigenous women and reject the false narrative that they are at fault. The collection of stories of thirteen brave Indigenous women (“It Could Have Been Me”) published by *Maclean’s* (2017) was felt deeply by the forum participants and coordinators and fortified our resolve to make violence against Indigenous women in the Americas a priority concern for all.

10. Processes of decolonization, de-patriarchalization, and de-heteronormalization will go a long way toward addressing the root causes of violence against Indigenous women.

The intersectionality of oppression faced by Indigenous women can only be addressed by efforts to decolonize states and societies by stamping out racism, male privilege, and discrimination according to sexual orientation. Given that colonial governments in the region have historically refused to work with Indigenous women (Lawrence and Anderson 2005), it is now time to put Indigenous women front and centre in public policies and programs. In the words of one forum participant, colonization means the invasion of territories, bodies, spirituality, minds and all areas of individual and collective life (Norma Don Juan, Feb. 18). We must reverse course. Nurturing our transnational network of academics and activists (see Table 1.1) dedicated to the prevention, visibilization, and elimination of violence against Indigenous women is a crucial step in the right direction.

## IV. FURTHER RESEARCH

More research is needed from marginalized perspectives, including non-institutionalized perspectives that stem from Indigenous worldviews. Important themes include the epistemological complexity of social identities as political representations of those speaking. For example, how do Indigenous peoples and women center their epistemic and ontological positions to advance their claims to self-determination and dignity? Epistemologically, Indigenous conceptualizations of gender are often dismissed as only an utopia. In working with Western feminists, it becomes difficult to incorporate the value of horizontal gender relations that complement, balance and seek equity based on different gendered roles. This concept of equity supposes that all genders have equal value as espoused by Indigenous knowledge systems. However, they are disregarded because Indigenous women too often face violent and repressive conditions, like what women in other societies face. The argument posited by many Indigenous feminist/tribal/woman-centered scholars calls for the use of Indigenous concepts in lieu of only Western, white stream gender relations (Monture 2009, Green 2007, Grande 2003). Our project tried to highlight the need for Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies to decenter the Western-Settler patriarchal order and stop the vilification of Indigenous cultures, peoples and societies.

Addressing systemic colonial and gendered violence needs to go beyond an individual-based analysis of how violence against women happens, but rather look at the ways in which the colonial settler state, including the academy, does not acknowledge, value and refer to Indigenous ways of being, knowing and feeling as “proper” ways to address the issue of colonial gendered violence. An analysis of how colonial States need to step back and allow Indigenous communities their right to self-determination, education and welfare systems continues to be undervalued and ignored. Instead, Western approaches to solving issues continue to be applied and imposed.

## V. CONCLUSIONS

Through this forum, we hoped to hear everyone's unique experiences due to our multiple social locations and identities. We think that focusing on reclaiming, protecting and reinstating Indigenous knowledges and ancestral practices is also to try to see if we can build together "A world where many worlds fit" as the Zapatistas have declared. It is also important for us to understand how we actually support these logics and ontologies through our daily practices. To some extent, this implies disconnecting from the logic of the capitalist, patriarchal and heteronormative State. This relates to what the authors we proposed mention in their analysis. The challenge then is for all of us to ask how do we do it?

We think that participants left the forum with much to think about. We, as coordinators, have learned a lot. With any research project, it is important to review the process and address the limits, as done in a section above. The issues of time limitations and access to Internet, to name a few, relate to economic and social disparities not only between Canada and Latin America, but also within each region. Participants expressed their limited time, given their gendered roles in the community, their families, and their professional work. The analysis of the process of the forum highlighted some crucial information about the need to keep these factors in mind when working across national boundaries, social, cultural, economic and political contexts.

Another salient limit is that of attempting to have readings and videos that present multiple perspectives on the issue, while recognizing that Indigenous conceptualizations of gender relations have yet to be legitimized within Western academic and activist spaces. On this point, the forum reminded us that we need to acknowledge Indigenous knowledges and ways of being as valid ways of addressing these issues.

Further, echoing the work of Rauna Kuokannen (2008) and Rita Segato (2013), we must remember that trade liberalization and the marketization of women's productive and reproductive labour are couched within a development logic based on the exploitation of natural resources on traditional Indigenous territories. Women's bodies, lands/territories are then seen as the 'ultimate frontier' to conquer, that both undermine Indigenous peoples' inherent right to self-determination (Kuokannen, 2008; Segato, 2013).

Confronting racialized and gendered geographies of exclusion is crucial to making transformations in the lives of Indigenous women in the Americas. In the words of Bonita Lawrence and Kim Anderson (2005): "Because gender discrimination has been a central means through which the colonization of Native communities has taken place, particularly in Canada, addressing the marginalization and devaluation of women's voices becomes central to decolonization." By gathering Indigenous women's voices, experiences and knowledges into this virtual forum, we participated in "undoing" the colonial, capitalist and patriarchal systems of domination.

The vitality of the struggle is evident in the multiple forms of resistance evidenced from diverse parts of the Americas. Despite violence and exclusion, Indigenous women are not passive victims. The agency and commitment they demonstrate on a daily basis in the communities and

organizations of which they are a part are testimony to a profound resistance. The many initiatives shared in the forum show this vitality. Initiatives such as the Mujeres Sembrando Dignidad / Women Sowing Dignity (Encuentro 2016, San Pedro Tidaá, Nochixtlán, Mixteca Oaxaca) or the Observatory of Violence against Indigenous Women on the State's margins (CONAMI y ECMIA) express the strength of the resistance that women and communities deploy in the face of lived violence.

The project presented here contributes to the emerging literature on Indigenous women's rights movements by addressing such debates as the merits and limits of State-sponsored multicultural policies for advancing Indigenous women's rights, Indigenous governance structures, traditional justice and women's rights, and effective strategies for bringing about social change and ending violence against Indigenous women, including direct action tactics, participation in electoral politics, and making use of the courts and legal system to protect and enhance Indigenous women's rights.

One of the outcomes that stand out the most, as echoed by the participants, is the importance of continuously asking questions, as there are no monolithic identities, perspectives or realities. In this manner, the approach to the forum as multi-scalar, multi-lingual, and trans-Indigenous opened up the floor for analyzing the simplistic and dualistic analyses that fail to unveil the complexities of colonial, gendered violence, and specifically that of missing and murdered women and girls. The forum also highlighted the need to discuss how colonial and gendered violence also impacts Indigenous men and boys, and non-Indigenous racialized women as well. Again, an important lesson is the need to address the history, legacy and impact of legal definitions of Indigeneity, which vary from country to country.

Another important landmark highlighted by our discussions is that the change cannot start solely from Western ways of knowing, concepts, frameworks and languages, which includes different definitions of justice and using different legal frameworks. This issue needs to be addressed from Indigenous women's multiple perspectives.

Through this forum, the participants shared experiences, personal stories and analyses that led to a collective sense of responsibility for what has happened and what is happening, as well as a responsibility to find strategies to make it stop happening. Taking responsibility to end the root causes of this issue is not easy. As the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC 2010: 39) calls for: "Ending violence against Aboriginal women and girls lies with both men and women, with both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities, as well as all levels of government. It ends with recognition, responsibility and cooperation". As Beverly Jacobs demands: "for all of us, taking responsibility" (Jacobs 2013).

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## APPENDIX

CONAMI Bulletin, May 2017



### CONAMI-ECMIA REGIÓN MÉXICO



Volumen No. 15

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#### LASA2017 / Diálogos de Saberes

#### XXXV Congreso Internacional de la Asociación de Estudios Latinoamericanos

Lima, Perú 29, 30 de abril y 1 de mayo 2017

La investigación colaborativa para apoyar las luchas sociales que se están desarrollando en América Latina y la incorporación de las voces de activistas indígenas, afrodescendientes y de otros sectores populares fueron el centro de I Congreso, estos diálogos interdisciplinarios permiten ampliar las formas de producción de conocimiento.

CONAMI participo en el panel **Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women in the Americas (Mujeres Indígenas desaparecidas y asesinadas en las Américas)** organizado por Roberta L Rice de la Universidad de Calgary, Canadá; compartimos el panel con Vivian M Jiménez Estrada, de la Universidad de Algoma, Canadá quién hablo de la experiencia de Guatemala y Dolores M Figueroa Romero de CIESAS que comento sobre el foro virtual que implementamos en el mes de febrero y que hizo posible el dialogo entre mujeres indígenas de Canadá y América Latina entorno al tema de las violencias.

CONAMI presento el trabajo de documentación de las violencias que vivimos las mujeres indígenas en México el cual realizamos desde 2013 y que lleva por nombre "Emergencia Comunitaria de Género" que tiene como propósito visibilizar la gravedad y expresiones de la violencia que viven las mujeres indígenas en el ámbito comunitario y municipal y que no es atendido

por las autoridades a pesar de los avances en el marco legislativo nacional y estatal para prevenir y erradicar las violencias contra las mujeres.

Aunque son diferentes los contextos en Guatemala, México y Canadá los resultados son los mismos, las mujeres indígenas seguimos siendo violentadas, asesinadas y desaparecidas ante la inacción de las autoridades lo que nos urge a la alianza entre organizaciones hermanas y con la academia de las Américas.

