

Beat: News

Joint Statement by Trilateral Working Group on Violence against Indigenous Women

Following the 21st session of UN Forum

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USPA NEWS - The text of the following statement was released by the governments of Canada, Mexico, and the United States following the 21st session of the UN Permanent Forum for Indigenous Issues, which was held from April 25th to May 6th, 2022.

We recognize that Indigenous women, young women, and girls in all their diversity, and two-spirit and gender-diverse individuals face disproportionately high rates of gender-based violence. This violence is a multidimensional phenomenon that is predicated on histories of abuse and perpetuated by ongoing discrimination and racism, including multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. The violence includes, but is not limited to, murders, sexual assault, trafficking, and intimate-partner violence. Too often, the disappearance or murder of Indigenous women, young women, and girls in all their diversity and two-spirit and gender-diverse individuals is not met with swift, effective, and culturally relevant action, including the lack of processes in Indigenous languages, by government institutions to investigate and resolve these cases. Much work needs to be done to enhance intervention, access to justice, and to strengthen prevention efforts.

Statistics Canada indicates that 56 percent of Indigenous women in Canada have experienced physical assault while 46 percent have experienced sexual assault. According to the latest National Survey on the Dynamics of Household Relationships (ENDIREH), carried out in 2016 by the National Institute of Geography and Statistics in Mexico, it is estimated that 59 percent of Indigenous women have experienced some type of violence (emotional, physical, sexual, economic, patrimonial or labor discrimination) throughout their lives. According to the U.S. National Institute of Justice, 84 percent of Native American women in the United States have experienced physical, sexual, or psychological violence in their lifetime, often at the hands of non-Native perpetrators. Emerging data from UN Women shows that impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have intensified gender-based violence globally.

We know this is not a problem limited to our three countries or our region, and we welcome cooperation from other governments, civil-society organizations, and other entities in the elimination of all forms of discrimination and gender-based violence perpetrated against Indigenous women and girls in diverse communities.

First established as an outcome of the June 2016 North American Leaders' Summit, the Trilateral Working Group on Violence Against Indigenous Women and Girls (Trilateral Working Group) is an initiative to reaffirm and to advance our respective national and regional commitments to prevent and respond to gender-based violence impacting Indigenous peoples in North America through increased access to justice and services, with an intersectional, gender-responsive, human rights and culturally-responsive approaches.

In July 2022, the governments of Canada, Mexico, and the United States will convene the fourth meeting of the Trilateral Working Group, hosted by the United States. This dialogue, which will include the participation of Indigenous women experts, leaders, and advocates, will address the multi-faceted aspects, including root causes that increase vulnerability to gender-based violence, access to justice and enhanced accountability, and increased resources for survivors.

The themes of the 4th Trilateral Working Group meeting will be:

Strengthening access to justice, culturally appropriate approaches to safety and healing, and addressing the crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women, young women, and girls in all their diversity and two-spirit and gender-diverse individuals, including trafficking in persons;

Advancing Indigenous women's leadership and representation at all levels; and

Addressing the root causes of gender-based violence against Indigenous women, girls and two-spirit and gender-diverse individuals, including economic security and food insecurity related to the climate crisis.

The Members of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues issued recommendations in 2018 urging the Canada, Mexico, and the United States, to organize an international expert group meeting by 2021 on the issue of ongoing violence against Indigenous women

and girls in the region, including trafficking, as well as the continuing crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls and two-spirit and gender-diverse individuals.

At the North American Leaders' Summit on November 18, President Biden, President Lopez Obrador, and Prime Minister Trudeau committed to convene a meeting of Indigenous women leaders as part of the Trilateral Working Group on Violence Against Indigenous Women and Girls. To this end, in November 2021, we convened Indigenous women leaders from across the three countries of North America for a virtual engagement to center their expertise and recommendations on addressing these issues. The themes identified for the upcoming 4th Trilateral Working Group arose directly from this convening. We welcome opportunities in the future to engage with international experts from other regions following this next meeting of the Trilateral Working Group.

We recognize that ending violence against Indigenous women and girls requires a holistic, multidimensional, and multi-sectoral approach. We reiterate our unwavering commitment as our three countries continue working together, in partnership with Indigenous peoples from our three countries, to eliminate this epidemic of gender-based violence and attain our goals of safety, security, well-being, and empowerment for all members of Indigenous communities.

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