

Updates on International Advocacy to Restore Safety for Indigenous Women

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Human Rights

- Rights inherent to being human.
- Rights held individually and also rights held collectively by indigenous peoples.
- Rights to be enjoyed without discrimination.
- Rights to be free of violence.

International Human Rights Law

- Law governing how countries (“states”) treat individuals.
- Obligates countries to protect human rights and comply with human rights standards.
- Rooted in the United Nations and regional systems like the Organization of American States.

Using International Advocacy to Restore Safety to Native Women

- Raise global awareness.
- Educate U.S. about its international human rights obligations to Native women.
- Provide new arguments for law reform.
- Complement grassroots efforts with top-down pressure by shaming the U.S. in the international arena.



Global and Regional International Advocacy



United Nations Headquarters (Geneva, Switzerland)
(There is also a headquarters in NYC)

Global – 193 Member Countries



Organization of American States
General Secretariat Building
(Washington, D.C.)

Regional – 35 Member Countries in the Americas

UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples



World Support for the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

- First drafted in 1977.
- Finally adopted on Sept. 13, 2007.
- 143 countries voted for it.
- 4 countries opposed it, including the United States.
- The United States was the last of the 4 to reverse its position.
- On December 16, 2010, President Obama announced the United States' support for the Declaration.



Women's Rights: Article 22

- 22(1): Particular attention shall be paid to the rights and special needs of indigenous elders, women, youth, children and persons with disabilities in the implementation of this Declaration.
- 22(2): States shall take measures, in conjunction with indigenous peoples, to ensure that indigenous women and children enjoy the full protection and guarantees against all forms of violence and discrimination.

UN World Conference on Indigenous Peoples

(NYC - September 2014)



UN Headquarters in NYC
September 2014

UN World Conference on Indigenous Peoples Outcome Document



Decisions in the Outcome Document:

- Create an implementing body for the UN Declaration
- Enhance participation of indigenous governments in UN activities
- Address violence against indigenous women

Paragraph 19:

- Invites the Commission on the Status of Women to consider empowerment of indigenous women at a future session.
- Invites the Human Rights Council to examine the causes and consequences of violence against indigenous women and girls.

UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW60)

(NYC – March 14-24, 2016)



- Raise awareness with special attention to violence against Alaska Native women
- Press for action to end violence against indigenous women by carrying out decisions of the World Conference, and urge the Commission to consider the empowerment of indigenous women
- Develop contacts with key states and UN officials and staff
- Develop our alliances among NGOs, indigenous peoples and women, and others
- Increase our capacity to do this work

UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW60)

(NYC – March 14-24, 2016)



CSW60 Parallel Event (NYC – March 22, 2016)



Parallel Event - NGO Forum
UN Declaration on the Status of Women 40th Session

Indigenous Women's Movements to End Violence Against American Indian, Alaska Native, and Aboriginal Women

March 22, 2016 at 4:30 - 6:00 p.m.

UN Church Center Chapel
772 7th Ave. at E. 84th St.
New York City, NY



Together We Are Stronger

Indigenous women worldwide suffer from multiple forms of discrimination and violence, and murder, at rates far higher than other groups of women. Speakers from American Indian tribes, Alaska Native villages, and Canadian First Nations will share best practices indigenous women have used to organize and advocate for social changes and legal reforms to restore safety in their Native nations and communities. They also will share strategies to advance the rights of indigenous peoples and women affirmed in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Join Us



CSW60 – What did we achieve? (NYC – March 14-24, 2016)



- Empowerment of indigenous women as a focus area of CSW61 in 2017

- Agreed Conclusions include prevent and eliminate violence and discrimination against indigenous women and girls



Human Rights Council 32nd Session

(Geneva – June 13 – July 1, 2016)

Advocacy by Native nations and Native women's organizations at the 32nd Session of the HRC:

- Annual Full-Day Discussion on Women's Human Rights, including panel on violence against indigenous women
- Dialogue with Working Group on discrimination against women and Special Rapporteur on violence against women
- Annual resolution on violence against women, including indigenous women and girls



Working Group on Discrimination Against Women

(U.S. Country Visit – November 30-December 11, 2015)

The Working Group found:

- An “overall picture of women’s missing rights,” and
- “Alarming high rates of violence against Native American women.”



<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Women/WGWomen/Pages/WGWomenIndex.aspx>



The Working Group recommended that the United States:

“Empower Native American tribes to ensure justice in their communities through the exercise of full criminal jurisdiction within their lands” and fully implement VAWA 2013.

Organization of American States (Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic – June 15, 2016)

American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Adopted by the OAS General Assembly on June 15, 2016



Article 7 on gender equality addresses the right of indigenous women

How Can You Use International Advocacy to Promote Safety for Native Women Domestically?

- Educate the federal government about the United States' international obligations, especially under Article 22 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which calls on countries to take measures to ensure indigenous women and children are protected against violence and discrimination.
- Raise awareness.
- Educate Congress and their staffers about the United States' international obligations.
- Use it to advocate for improved legislation, policy, and practices.

Upcoming Dates for Advocacy and World Conference Follow-Up

Human Rights Council 33rd Session (Geneva, September 13-30, 2016)

- Half-day panel on causes and consequences of violence against indigenous women and girls – annual discussion on indigenous peoples' rights

UN General Assembly, 71st Session (NYC, September 2016-September 2017)

- High level event marking 10th anniversary of the UN Declaration

Commission on the Status of Women 61st Session (NYC March 2017)

- Violence against indigenous women and girls as a focus area

For more information, please visit us at:

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