

QUEBEC NATIVE WOMEN (QNW) ADDRESSES

Point 8: Panel discussion on the impact of development projects on Indigenous women

Mr. President, dear panelists and delegates,

Quebec Native Women (QNW) wishes to underline **the importance of Indigenous women and girls' participation in all development projects**. For 48 years now, QNW has been actively working to restore balance between Indigenous women and men, Indigenous or not, by giving a strong voice to women's needs and priorities.

QNW seeks respect by Canada for the right to consultation and participation and that the voice of Indigenous peoples be accounted for in all development projects. Our organization also asks the Expert Mechanism on the rights of Indigenous peoples to examine Canada's action accordingly. Finally, this must be done with the **specific rights and needs of Indigenous women and girls** in mind, as prescribed by the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, as well as the *Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women*.

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Indigenous women are recognized as keepers and transmitters of Indigenous knowledge and cultures. Therefore, they must be stakeholders in all development projects, as well as all Indigenous individuals should be. The duty to consult is guaranteed by articles 18, 19 and 32 of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* and by the precept of the honour of the Crown invoked in Section 35 of Canada's *Constitutional Act, 1982* as well as by the *Sparrow* and *Delgamuukw* [Supreme Court of Canada's] judgments; this duty to consult must therefore be respected so that specific Indigenous interests be taken in consideration and that their needs be reflected in practise. **QNW considers that in the absence of honourable consultation and unless Indigenous women's voices are heard, the implementation of all types of projects is greatly deficient.**

Needless to say, their non-participation and exclusion from all stages of the processes surrounding development projects **stifle their human rights guaranteed by international law.**

Articles 21 and 22 of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* recognize that, in the implementation of the *Declaration*, particular attention must be given to the specific rights and needs of Indigenous women and that States must make sure to take such necessary measures to protect them against all forms of violence and discrimination. With the adoption of *Bill C-15: An Act respecting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, Canada must also take measures to protect the rights of Indigenous women and girls and respond to their specific needs. **QNW is of the opinion that this must be done in keeping with gender-based analysis and an intersectional approach.**

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Impacts of development projects have **major consequences on Indigenous ancestral territories and resources**. Aboriginal people, more specifically Indigenous women, must be able to **share their knowledge** so that the territories occupied by Indigenous peoples be **preserved for future generations**.

Thank you for your attention.

