REGIONAL STUDY

The situation of Indigenous Women in the Arctic Region in the Framework of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

25th Anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

April 8, 2020
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<tr>
<th>AIAN</th>
<th>American Indian or Alaska Native</th>
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<tr>
<td>BDPfA</td>
<td>Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action</td>
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<tr>
<td>CEDAW</td>
<td>Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women</td>
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<td>CERD</td>
<td>Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination</td>
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<td>CESCR</td>
<td>Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights</td>
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<td>CRC</td>
<td>Committee on the Rights of the Child</td>
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<td>CSW</td>
<td>Commission on the Status of Women</td>
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<td>ELCC</td>
<td>Early Learning and Child Care</td>
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<td>FAO</td>
<td>Food and Agriculture Organization</td>
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<td>FGM</td>
<td>Female Genital Mutilation</td>
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<td>GREVIO</td>
<td>Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence</td>
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<td>ILO</td>
<td>International Labour Organization</td>
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<td>IP</td>
<td>Indigenous Peoples</td>
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<td>IW</td>
<td>Indigenous Women</td>
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<td>IWG</td>
<td>Indigenous Women and Girls</td>
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<td>IWGIA</td>
<td>International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs</td>
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<td>MMIWG</td>
<td>Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls</td>
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<tr>
<td>NAO</td>
<td>Nenets Autonomous Okrug</td>
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<td>SNF</td>
<td>Sámi Nisson Forum</td>
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<td>STI</td>
<td>Sexually Transmitted Infections</td>
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<tr>
<td>U.S./USA</td>
<td>United States of America</td>
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<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<td>UNPFII</td>
<td>United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues</td>
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<td>UNDRIP</td>
<td>Universal Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples</td>
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<td>UIHI</td>
<td>Urban Indian Health Institute</td>
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<td>VAWA</td>
<td>Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act</td>
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1. INTRODUCTION

The main objective of this study was to provide an overview of the situation of Indigenous Women (IW) in the Arctic region according to the 12 areas of concern of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. As a tool for advocacy, this report has been prepared as a political and strategic document, focusing on the main advances and challenges in terms of the human rights of Indigenous Women in the region over the last 25 years, with a specific focus on those critical issues emerging in the last five to six years.

From a methodological point of view, the report is based on an extensive document review focused on official information from international and regional human rights systems, state reports in compliance with international human rights commitments, specialized national and international studies, documents and material from Indigenous Women’s organizations and academic research and studies. Two interviews with two Sámi Indigenous women from Norway were undertaken. The document was also submitted to an advisory group of the International Indigenous Women’s Forum (IIWF) in order to be validated, and comments and suggestions have been included.

This report examined the situation of Indigenous Women in 7 countries in the Arctic region, namely Norway, Sweden, Finland, the Russian Federation, Greenland and the Faroe Islands, Canada and the United States of America, focusing especially on Sámi Indigenous women, Inuit Indigenous women, American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) women of Alaska and, in much more limited terms, Russian Nenets Indigenous women.

It is important to outline that comparative studies on issues related to Indigenous Women and Girls (IWG) of the Arctic region are very limited and most of the time they never consider all the states where Indigenous Peoples live. Furthermore, no regional assessment of Arctic states’ compliance with the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action has ever been written, and references to the situation of IWG in country reports or civil society’s parallel reports to the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) are almost absent, except for Canada. In addition, national and global statistics frequently lack disaggregated data to capture socio-economic and cultural inequalities that may affect IWG. This issue encompasses all areas: education, health, economic empowerment, political participation and violence. Nevertheless, Indigenous Women’s organizations, in spite of limited economic resources, are working diligently to document and bring visibility to the situation of IWG at the national, regional and international levels, through a variety of research, studies and dedicated projects.
Indigenous Peoples (IP) have lived in the Arctic for thousands of years. According to the FAO (2019), their total population is estimated to be 500,000, representing approximately 10% of the total population of the Arctic. They comprise more than 40 different cultural groups, including the Sámi people in the circumpolar areas of Finland, Sweden, Norway and Northwest Russia, and Inuit people in Chukotka (Russia), Alaska, Canada and Greenland. Other Indigenous groups native to the Arctic region include, among others, Nenets, Khanty and Evenks in Russia. Greenland (Kalaallit Nunaat) has been a self-governing country within the Danish realm since 1979, and Indigenous Peoples are the majority of its national population: 89.6% Greenlandic Inuit out of 57,691 inhabitants (IWGIA, 2019). The Self-Government Act of 2009 recognizes the right to self-determination of the Greenlandic people, whose government is composed of the Inatsisartut (Parliament) and the Naalakkersuisut (Government). The Kingdom of Denmark ratified ILO Convention 169 in 1996 (IWGIA, 2019).

According to the IWGIA (2009), there is no reliable information on the population of the Sámi people, but it is estimated to be between 50,000 and 100,000. Around 20,000–50,000 live in Sweden (counties of Norrbotten, Västerbotten, Jämtland and parts of Härjedalen and Dalarna), representing 0.22% of Sweden’s total population of around 9 million. Around 50,000–65,000 live in Norway (counties of Finnmark, Nordland, Troms, Nord-Trøndelag, Sør-Trøndelag and Hedmark), which is around 1.06-1.38% of the total Norwegian population of 4.7 million. Around 8,000 live in Finland (Lapland), representing approximately 0.16% of the total Finnish population of around 5 million. Finally, around 2,000 live in Russia (oblast of Murmansk). The Sámi people enjoy special constitutional protection and autonomy in Finland, Norway and Sweden. They are represented by three Sámi Parliaments in Sweden, Norway and Finland, while on the Russian side, they are organized into NGOs (IWGIA, 2019). The Nordic states have not yet developed an action plan for the implementation of the UNDRIP, and ILO Convention 169 has been ratified only by Norway (IWGIA, 2019).

In Russia there are more than 160 distinct peoples, 40 of which are officially recognized as “small-numbered Indigenous Peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East”, with the rights to consultation and participation in specific cases. These groups have fewer than 50,000 members, who still preserve their traditional ways of life and continue to inhabit their
territories across the northern and Asian parts of the country (IWGIA, 2019). According to the IWGIA (2019), the Russian constitution and national legislation do not recognize IP as such and do not include the concept of free, prior and informed consent. Russia has not endorsed the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, nor has it ratified ILO Convention 169.

In Canada, Indians, Inuit and Métis are the three groups of Aboriginal peoples recognized by the Constitution Act of 1982. According to data provided by the IWGIA (2019), there are 1,673,785 Aboriginal people in Canada (2016 census), representing 4.9% of the total population. The Inuit population in Canada amounts to 65,030 and the majority live in 51 communities in Inuit Nunangat, the Inuit homeland, which includes the Inuvialuit Settlement Region in the Northwest Territories, Nunavut, Nunavik in northern Quebec and Nunatsiavut in northern Labrador. Inuit are represented at the national level by Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) and at the international level by the Inuit Circumpolar Council-Canada (IWGIA, 2019).

The Indigenous population of the United States of America is estimated to be between 2.5 and 6 million people, of whom 23% live in American Indian reservations or Alaska Native villages (IWGIA, 2019). According to the IWGIA (2019), 573 tribal entities were recognized as American Indian or Alaska Native tribes by the United States in July 2018. 40% of the federally recognized tribes in the United States are in Alaska, and Alaska Natives represent one fifth of the total population of the state. Alaska Natives and other Native Americans are the second-largest group of women in the state and represent 16% of the female population of all ages. The Eskimo nations (including Yup’ik, Cup’ik, Inupiat and St. Lawrence Island Yup’ik), Alaskan Athabascan nations, Southeast Alaska Natives (including Tlingit, Haida, Tsimshian and Eyak) and Aleut nations comprise the largest proportions of women in the state among the Alaska Native and other Native American populations (Institute for Women’s Policy Research, 2004).

Although Indigenous Peoples of the Arctic are very different in terms of political, cultural, institutional and economic backgrounds, as well as in their legal and constitutional status and political participation in national or regional governance (Svensson, 2017), they share common traditional practices, cultural heritage, value systems and spiritual beliefs. Their livelihoods are related to hunting, fishing and herding, and they live in deep connection with their lands, territories and resources (FAO, 2019). As a consequence, climate change and the increased presence of extractive industries in the region are among the most pressing challenges for Arctic
Indigenous Peoples, significantly affecting Indigenous Women and Girls (Kohut and Prior; 2016).

3. INDIGENOUS WOMEN’S ORGANIZATIONS IN THE ARCTIC REGION AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BEIJING DECLARATION AND PLATFORM FOR ACTION

Indigenous Women of the Arctic (Sámi women, Indigenous women of Canada and American Indian and Alaska Native women of the United States) took part in the Beijing Conference in 1995.

In Canada and the United States there are many Indigenous Women’s organizations advocating for Indigenous Women’s rights. In Scandinavia there are some Sámi women’s local organizations, but the Sámi Nisson Forum (SNF), active since 1993, is the only one that works at the regional level with Sámi women from Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia. Every year since 1997, the SNF has gathered Sámi women from the 4 countries. In Greenland there are no formal Indigenous Women’s organizations working in the human rights field, while in Russia the first Indigenous Women’s organization—the Research Centre for Cultural Heritage—was registered in December 2019.

The first Indigenous Circumpolar Women’s Gathering was held in Yellowknife in November 2014, bringing together 80 Indigenous women from across northern Canada and Alaska (Kohut and Prior; 2016). This meeting was aimed at opening a dialogue on issues facing Indigenous Women in the Northern territories to establish a supportive network of knowledge sharing and cooperation geared towards creating Arctic-based solutions to Arctic issues. Unfortunately, no report of the gathering has ever been published and no follow-up activities have been implemented.

In Nordic countries, financial support for women’s organizations is generally scarce, limiting their ability to attend international conferences, advocate for IW’s rights or secure political influence for women. Moreover, there is no formalized regional Indigenous Women’s organization in the Arctic, neither a regional forum that can bring together Indigenous Women from all Arctic states, like in Asia, America or Africa.

Involvement of Indigenous Women’s organizations of the Arctic region in the follow-up of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BDPfA) has been documented in Canada, where Indigenous Women have contributed to the preparation of the civil society shadow report submitted to the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). No similar information has been compiled for the other countries.
Country reports submitted to the CSW for the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action,\textsuperscript{14} except for Canada, contain very little or no information related to public policies or programs implemented to advance the situation of Indigenous Women.\textsuperscript{15} In addition, no regional overview of the progress and challenges of the BDPfA has been compiled for the Arctic region, as has been done for America, Africa and the Asia-Pacific region (CSW 64 preparation).\textsuperscript{16} The Beijing+25 Regional Review prepared by the Economic Commission for Europe does not mention progress or challenges related to the situation of the Indigenous Women of the Sàpmi region.\textsuperscript{17}

At the intergovernmental level, the Arctic Council is the leading intergovernmental forum “promoting cooperation, coordination and interaction among the Arctic states, with the involvement of the Arctic Indigenous communities and other Arctic inhabitants on common Arctic issues, in particular issues of sustainable development and environmental protection in the Arctic.”\textsuperscript{18} The Arctic Council has recognized the importance of women in developing Arctic communities in its 2002 Inari Declaration\textsuperscript{19} by urging “the integration of gender equality and women and youth perspectives in all efforts to enhance human living conditions in the Arctic.” (Kohut and Prior; 2016).

Since the creation of the Arctic Council in 1996, two conferences on gender equality in the region were held: the first, called the “Taking Wing Conference”, was organized in 2002 by the Gender Equality Unit of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health of Finland, in collaboration with the Arctic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers,\textsuperscript{20} while the second, entitled “Gender Equality in the Arctic: Current Realities and Future Challenges”\textsuperscript{21} took place in 2014 in Akureyri, Iceland, sponsored by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iceland, the Icelandic government’s Equality Action Fund, the Foreign Ministry of Sweden and the Nordic Council of Ministers, with the support of the Arctic Council. In both conferences, Indigenous Women were invited and specific issues regarding them were addressed, especially political participation, participation in climate change resilience and access to and control over resources.

The Declaration of the Arctic Council’s Taking Wing Conference recommended the implementation of “…a project to analyze and document the involvement and role of women and Indigenous Peoples in natural resource management in the Arctic”. According to this recommendation, a project called “Women’s Participation in Decision-Making Processes in Arctic Fisheries Resource Management” was established at the initiative of
the Northern Feminist University and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (AC, 2002-2004). As a continuation of this project, a second was developed, “Women and Resource Management in the Rural North”, focusing again on women and gender equality (ACSDWG, 2004-2006). Both were gender equality projects, specifically aimed at analyzing women’s participation in fisheries and other natural resource industries, without an in-depth analysis on the situation of Indigenous Women.

The second conference on gender equality, held in 2014, laid the foundation for a formal cooperation network of stakeholders focused on gender equality in the Arctic. Although documents and studies related to Indigenous Women in the Arctic region can be found in the publications section of the website²², it is important to note that Indigenous Women’s organizations were not included in this project.²³

4. THE SITUATION OF INDIGENOUS WOMEN ACCORDING TO THE 12 CRITICAL AREAS OF CONCERN OF THE BEIJING DECLARATION AND PLATFORM FOR ACTION

Among the 12 critical areas of concern of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the following issues have been analyzed: poverty and economy have been considered in a single chapter, as have decision-making and institutional mechanisms; statistics and data (belonging to the institutional mechanism area) have been considered in a separate chapter, due to the importance that this issue has for Indigenous Women’s political advocacy strategies; women and armed conflicts were not prioritized for the Arctic region, while human rights and youth were considered as cross-cutting issues; and in the chapter dedicated to Indigenous Women and the environment, challenges related to land, territories, natural resources, climate change and extractive industries have been covered.

4.1 Indigenous Women and Poverty

According to Kuokkanen (2015a), in Scandinavia, there is no information indicating that the poverty rates of Sámi women are higher than those of Sámi men or of other Scandinavian women. One illustrative example provided by the author refers to the Sámi village of Kautokeino, which in 2007 was the only Norwegian municipality where women earned more than men. Related social challenges like unemployment, inadequate housing and limited access to basic services are not pressing issues among the Sámi, probably due to their integration into the Nordic welfare state after World
War II, which has led them to enjoy the same standards of living as their non-
Sámi counterparts (Kuokkanen, 2015a).

On the contrary, Indigenous Women and Girls in Canada and the United
States continue to face significant social, economic and political inequalities
and do not share the same standard of living or have the same access to
health and social services, food, housing, employment, education or socio-
economic development as most other Canadians and U.S. citizens.

According to one informant, Sámi Indigenous communities living in Russia
also suffer from precarious economic conditions and limited access to
education and job opportunities, resulting in a high level of alcoholism
and violence. Indigenous Peoples in Russia remain one of the poorest
populations and their social and economic development, as well as their
life expectancy, are far below the national average. Indigenous families
in Russia, especially in rural areas, have extremely low cash incomes
(Berezhkov, 2013), being two to three times lower than the national average
and 25-30% lower than the average of the inhabitants of the same regions.
In some areas of the Russian Federation, Indigenous Peoples’ incomes do
not even reach the half of the cost of living (Chistyakova et al., 2009).

In Canada, poverty among Indigenous Women is much higher than among
non-Indigenous women. According to the Canadian Centre for Policy
Alternatives (2019), data from the 2016 census show that First Nation
women experience poverty at a rate of 31.2%, Métis women at 18.8% and
Inuit women at 19.6%, while the rate among non-Indigenous women is
14.5%. Moreover, for Inuit, the median individual before-tax income in Inuit
Nunangat is $23,485, while for non-Indigenous people in the same region
the figure comes to $92,011, a gap of more than $68,000.

In addition, both food insecurity and inadequate housing have been identified
as two major problems for Inuit women. The Inuit Health Survey found that 70%
of Inuit households in Nunavut are food insecure. This is six times higher than
the Canadian national average, representing the highest documented food
insecurity rate for any Indigenous population residing in a developed country
and disproportionately affecting Inuit women. Canadian Inuit communities
are also experiencing a severe housing crisis, resulting in overcrowding,
substandard homes and a lack of affordable and suitable housing. Statistics
Canada data show that in 2016, over half (51.7%) of the Inuit in Inuit Nunangat
lived in crowded housing compared to 8.5% of non-Indigenous Canadians. It is
very important to mention that overcrowded housing is often linked to higher
rates of family violence (Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2019).
In the United States, multidimensional poverty and social exclusion disproportionately affect Native peoples. The 2016 poverty rate among American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) peoples was 26.2%, the highest among all ethnic groups, as is the unemployment rate of 12% in 2016, compared to the national average of 5.8%.24

Alaska Native and other Native American women have a lower social and economic status than white women in Alaska and nationally, with lower earnings, lower employment in managerial and professional occupations, less political representation, less education, more poverty and worse health status (Castro et al., 2013). In Alaska, Native women experience more poverty than any other racial and ethnic group in the state. Only 76.6% of Native American women lived above the poverty line between 2011 and 2013, compared with 92.3% percent of white women, 86.7% of Hispanic women, 85.7% of Black women and 94.1% of Asian/Pacific Islander women. In addition, 57.6% of Native women in Alaska have no health insurance (the lowest figure compared to all other racial or ethnic groups) and only 9.3% have a Bachelor’s Degree or higher, compared to 36.9% of white women, 32% of Hispanic women, 28% of Black women and 22.3% of Asian/Pacific Islander women. Native women’s participation in the workforce is around 56%, being the lowest in the state compared to the percentage of white women (67.4%), Hispanic women (76.5%) and Asian/Pacific Islander women (71.5%), while their median annual earnings (full-time, year-round, 2011–2013) come to $37,697, compared to $46,000 for white women.25 Like African-American and Hispanic women, Native American women are also highly represented in lower-paying jobs such as service and domestic work (Castro et al., 2013).

Current barriers to obtaining quality educational, employment and housing opportunities on tribal lands represent major reasons for Native American people to migrate to urban areas. According to ILO data, the majority of Indigenous Peoples in North America live in urban areas (70%) (ILO; 2020), and 50.2% of the urban Native population in the U.S. has been identified as female (UIHI, 2017).

According to Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada (2017), the decision Indigenous Peoples take to migrate to urban centres is not only related to economic opportunities in cities, but involves a number of factors including social conditions and cultural dynamics as well as overcrowded housing and limited employment opportunities within reserves. Those factors are part of a social context that makes women’s migration seem inevitable. Indeed, many women have expressed the view that living in the city was
a “consequence” rather than a personal choice. Women’s migration stories are often linked to the need for public housing in northern communities, as well as basic services to address social and health issues (Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2017).

The employment rate of Indigenous Women in Canada is 11% below that of non-Indigenous women and 6% below that of Indigenous men. The size of the wage gap is also critical; for example, in 2015, Indigenous Women earned $17,000 less than non-Indigenous men and $5,700 less than non-Indigenous women (Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2019). A 2016 study by Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada (2016) found that the most significant barriers to Inuit women’s economic participation were, among others: limited level of education and skills; overcrowding and poor housing conditions; social issues (like family violence, substance abuse and mental health issues); geographical isolation; scarcity of jobs; and the absence of affordable and reliable child care, which is particularly pressing as the vast majority of single-parent households in Inuit Nunangat are formed by women.

**BEST PRACTICES**

*In 2018, the Canadian federal government released an Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) Framework, co-developed by the federal government and national Indigenous organizations, which makes broad commitments to support, co-ordinate and guide the design, delivery and governance of Indigenous ELCC that is anchored in self-determination, centred on children and grounded in culture, through new policies, processes, partnerships, authorities, capacities, programs and investments that will strengthen Indigenous ELCC in Canada. This framework should complement the Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework and reflect the unique priorities and cultures of the First Nations, Inuit and Métis (Canada’s National Review, 2019; pp. 13-14).*

4.2 Education and Training of Indigenous Women

According to Jessen and Vizina (2017; p. 1), “Indigenous Peoples of the Arctic region, such as the Aleut, Arctic Athabaskan, Gwich’in, Inuit and Sámi, face significant challenges in protecting their traditional cultures and languages in the face of contemporary environmental, social and economic pressures.”

In Sápmi, Indigenous Peoples enjoy almost full access to education and most of them are highly educated. One of the interviewees affirmed that
in her experience, being a highly educated woman meant difficulties in finding a job and in being accepted by her community. Furthermore, desk review and interviews show that Indigenous Peoples suffer limited access to quality education that is culturally and linguistically relevant, jeopardizing the preservation of their language and culture. In Finland, the CERD notes that “75% of Sámi children under the age of 11 live outside the Sámi homeland and, despite an allocated budget increase, the number of qualified teachers of Sámi languages remains insufficient.”\textsuperscript{29} The CRC is also concerned about the inadequate level of educational services and recreational activities in the Sámi language and the fact that such services and activities are limited to the principal areas of domicile of the Sámi peoples.\textsuperscript{30}

In Sweden, the CEDAW affirms that a large number of girls suffer from discrimination and sexual harassment in schools and that, despite progress achieved, migrant girls and girls belonging to minority groups, in particular Sámi peoples, continue to face difficulties in gaining access to education.\textsuperscript{31} In addition, the CESCR recommends that the state take immediate steps to provide Indigenous children and children belonging to minorities with educational opportunities that allow them to develop their mother tongue skills. The CESCR also recommends that the state expand access to bilingual education in areas populated by Indigenous Peoples and minority groups, and increase the availability of Sámi and minority language teachers.\textsuperscript{32} Interviews stressed the importance for children to be educated in the Sámi language, building a strong and positive Sámi identity. The ability to pass on culture and language influenced important personal and family decisions for one of the two women interviewed for this study, who moved back to her Sámi community to give her children the possibility to study and learn the Sámi language.\textsuperscript{33}

In Canada, despite positive gains in post-secondary education among IP, significant gaps in educational accomplishment persist. Inuit women have the lowest levels of educational attainment and less than one third of women aged 15 and older (29%) have a post-secondary credential. The equivalent figure for First Nations women is 39%, while for Métis women it is 49% (Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2019). In research conducted by Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada (2016), educational achievement was identified as a critical barrier to economic participation. Inuit women without a secondary education enter the local job market with limited levels of education and skills and therefore
struggle to find employment or manage an independent business. The primary reasons identified for not completing secondary school were pregnancy and the need to look after children (linked with the scarcity of available childcare), limited support and lack of engagement with schools and education curricula.

On the contrary, women across the Russian Federation typically achieve a higher standard of education than men, and this is also true for Indigenous Women, who tend to leave isolated communities and nomadic lifestyles, and move to more urban areas in order to pursue academic studies and find more secure jobs (Cultural Survival, 2015). Nevertheless, one of the main problems related to formal education is the closure of kindergartens and schools in remote rural settlements due to governmental budget optimization programs. This has led to the migration of Indigenous families to larger settlements, or to increasing transportation costs to access such educational centres. In some regions, Indigenous Peoples have to pay for additional services or school meals that they cannot afford due to low incomes. Higher education is least accessible to representatives of Indigenous Peoples because universities are located in regional centres and big cities and accessing them entails high costs of living and transportation costs (RAIPON, 2013).

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The Common Curriculum Framework for Aboriginal Languages and Culture Programs, Kindergarten to Grade 12 (Western Canadian Protocol for Collaboration in Basic Education, 2000), was established by provincial and territorial governments in Western and Northern Canada as a framework for developing curricula. The developers are given the freedom to interpret and select outcomes and correlate them with culture and language strengths. The overall aim of the framework is to help students “find balance within themselves to live peacefully and respectfully with themselves, one another and the land” and “play a role in revitalizing aboriginal languages and cultures.” Target goals and outcomes are designed for grade groups around three “laws of relationships”: Laws of Sacred Self, Laws of Nature and Laws of Mutual Support, supplemented by suggestions for activities to develop culture and language skills. The integration of Indigenous principles of law helps educators and learners explore the meaning of traditional knowledge in a contemporary world (Jessen and Vizina, 2017; p. 50).
4.3 Indigenous Women and Health

Access to culturally appropriate health services

In Sápmi, one of the most important challenges is lack of access to culturally appropriate health services, resulting in poorer health conditions for Sámi people and Sámi women.

In Finland, the CERD was concerned that “the provision of health and social care services in the Sámi languages remains insufficient, despite the state party’s efforts to strengthen knowledge of those languages and culture [sic] among health and social care personnel.” In Sweden, given the special status of the Sámi people, the Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health was surprised to find that the Sámi language was not used in the health-care context.

Sámi women in Finland, as elsewhere in the Nordic countries, experience cultural and language barriers when using health and social care services. The Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO) stated that “cultural interpreters exist in some places to help steer Sámi users of social services through the system, but research indicates that, in general, public welfare services lack a sufficient understanding of Sáminess, and of the special style of communication and way of life in Sámi culture.” Another pressing issue is that, in the Sámi Homeland, public welfare services are scarce and available only in bigger towns, which means travelling long distances, especially for Sámi women in rural areas. The CEDAW notes that maternity clinics, hospitals and daycares rarely provide services in Sámi languages, while the CRC is concerned that children who belong to Sámi Indigenous groups do not receive health services, including mental health treatment, in the Sámi language.

In Norway, Sámi women describe their health as poorer than that of ethnic Norwegian women. In this context, the CEDAW is concerned that “the self-reported health condition of Sámi is still poorer than that of the majority population, including suffering from consequences of the radioactive fallout after the Chernobyl disaster of 1986, that the health condition of Sámi women is poorer than that of Sámi men, and that the health condition of Sámi women living outside the defined Sámi area is the poorest overall, which may also be due to discrimination in the public health care system.”

In northern Norway, a woman interviewed for this study expressed her concern about the Western mental health approach applied by mental
health professionals and services to Sámi women, without being aware of or considering their cultural background.

Access to health facilities

Life expectancy among the small-numbered Indigenous Peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East is much lower than that of the Russian population overall, being perhaps the lowest in the country. Among small-numbered Indigenous Peoples of the North, the mortality rate due to external causes is three times higher than the world average (Bogoyavlenskiy, 2010). In the rural areas of the Chukotka Autonomous Okrug, life expectancy is 50 years (on average) for men and 60 years for women. The Center for Demography and Human Ecology has provided even lower numbers: 44 years for men and 48 years for women (Zubarevich, 2005). In addition, many remote, rural communities lack access to health care. In recent years, public services, including health facilities in many remote settlements, have been closed when the overall population has fallen below a legally defined threshold. In communities that have no local health facility, all members of society are affected; however, this can pose specific and alarming challenges in the case of maternal care (Cultural Survival, 2015).

Mental health

Mental health issues and a high suicide rate are alarming problems among Indigenous Peoples living in the Arctic region. According to the IWGIA (2019), men and women in Greenland have shorter life expectancies than the average in the Western world, due to a high mortality rate caused by accidents and suicide. In 2015, 32 out of 435 deaths were suicides and a comparative assessment of the population’s suicide rates published by Statistics Greenland in 2011 exceeded those published by the World Health Organization for Guyana, the country that had the highest population suicide rates internationally that year. Suicide thus continues to be an extreme challenge for Inuit society (IWGIA, 2019).

In the U.S., according to the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights on his mission to the United States of America (2017), even though disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples’ health status are well-known, they have not been sufficiently addressed. Illnesses such as heart disease, cancer, chronic liver disease and diabetes are more prevalent in the AIAN population than in non-Hispanic white people, resulting in a 50% higher death rate. Social and economic conditions such as poverty, unemployment, social exclusion and loss of cultural identity may have significant mental health consequences for IP, causing higher prevalence of substance abuse,
domestic violence and high suicide rates, particularly among young people. Suicide represents the second-largest cause of death among AIAN people aged between 10 and 34. In addition, the age-adjusted suicide rate in the United States in 2017 (14.0 per 100,000 standard population) was 33% higher than the rate in 1999 (10.5). For females, age-adjusted suicide rates grew significantly between 1999 and 2017 for all race and ethnicity groups except non-Hispanic Asian or Pacific Islander (API). The largest increase occurred for non-Hispanic American Indian or Alaska Native (AIAN) females (139%, from 4.6 to 11.0) (Curtin et al., 2019).

Sumarokov et al. (2014) found that according to the Russian Federal State Statistics Service, the Nenets Autonomous Okrug (NAO), a region where Indigenous Nenets constitute about one sixth of the population, has one of the highest suicide rates in Russia. Based on autopsy data, 252 suicides were identified in the NAO in 2002-2012, resulting in a suicide rates of 49.2 per 100,000 persons per year (PY) in the non-Indigenous population and 79.8 per 100,000 PY in the Nenets population. Males showed substantially higher suicide rates than females in both the Nenets population and the non-Indigenous population. The highest suicide rate in Nenets females was observed in the 30-39 age group (106.1 per 100,000 PY). According to the authors, “The strongest positive associations with the suicidal risk in the Nenets population were observed for the ages of 20-29 years, male, urban residence and high education level for both sexes, being divorced or a widower for males, and being married for females. These characteristics may have connections to a lack of a ‘sense of Indigenous belonging,’ lack of cultural identity and problems of resilience.” (Sumarokov et al., 2014; p. 7).

In Canada, for First Nations girls and young women, the suicide rate is 7 times the rate for non-Indigenous girls and young women, with 35 deaths per 100,000 versus 5 per 100,000. The prevalence of suicide has been related to intergenerational trauma from residential school experiences, including child sexual abuse, the destruction of culture and loss of cultural identity, and the lack of basic living conditions (Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2019).

A 2018 study on the well-being of Indigenous children and youth in the Arctic (Ingemann and Lytken, 2018) affirms that, compared to the Nordic majority populations, young Sámi and Inuit in Greenland experience a higher rate of violence, abuse, suicidal thoughts and suicide. Among both Sámi people and Greenland Inuit, suicide rates are highest among men, whereas suicide attempts are highest among women. In both populations, youth suicide is most prevalent.
Indigenous Women in the Arctic region still face enormous challenges related to their sexual and reproductive rights. In Canada, according to Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada (2007), Inuit women deal with serious health issues related to reproductive and sexual health, such as high rates of sexually transmitted infections (STI) and challenging circumstances surrounding childbirth. Moreover, wellness, suicide and stress represent more significant issues for Inuit women compared with non-Inuit women (Healey, Meadows; 2007). Although there is limited Inuit-specific statistical information available on sexual health knowledge, attitudes and behaviours, and prevalence rates of STIs, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada (2007) has reported that the chlamydia rate in Nunavut (where 85% of the population is Inuit) is over 14 times the national average, and the gonorrhea rate is over 50 times the national average. Over one quarter (27.3%) of all reported HIV infections are among women and youth (between 15 and 29 years of age). Nunavut’s teenage pregnancy rate (for women between 14 and 19 years of age) is over 11 times the national rate and increased 14% between 2009 and 2013. According to Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada (2007) precarious living and health conditions create high levels of risk and vulnerability for some Inuit, because women experiencing crowded housing, very low incomes, mental health issues and/or family violence are not in a position to make sexual health a priority in their lives.

Indigenous Women in Canada have also been subjected to forced sterilization in public hospitals. The full scale of the problem is unknown due to the lack of comprehensive investigation and public data available. However, it is possible to affirm that this practice has disproportionately, and probably exclusively, targeted Indigenous Women going back many decades and up until 2018.

In the U.S. in 2014, the estimated rate (per 100,000 population) of HIV infection diagnoses in the United States among AIAN females (5.1) was greater than for white females (1.7). The gonorrhea rate among AIAN was 159.4 cases per 100,000 population, which was 4.2 times the rate among whites. The disparity between gonorrhea rates for AIAN and whites was larger for AIAN women (5.6 times) than for AIAN men (2.9 times). In 2014, the chlamydia rate among AIAN was 668.8 cases per 100,000 population, a decrease from the 2013 rate of 697.9 cases per 100,000. Overall, the rate of chlamydia among AIAN in the United States was 3.7 times the rate among whites. In 2014, the rate of primary and secondary (P&S) syphilis among AIAN was 7.6 cases per 100,000 population, which represents 2.2 times the rate for whites. This disparity was
larger for AIAN women (9.6 times the rate among white women) than for AIAN men (1.6 times the rate among white men).\textsuperscript{46}

In Alaska, the infant mortality rate (deaths of infants under age one per 1,000 live births) for 2010–2012 was 5.7 for Native and Indigenous Women, compared to 3.2 for white women. Native women have the highest rates of breast and lung cancer and mortality for heart disease in comparison to white, Hispanic, Black and Asian/Pacific Islander women.\textsuperscript{47} The limited access to health care resources for Native American women is related, at least in part, to a legacy of discriminatory policies and inadequate funding through Indian and government health services (Castro et all; 2013).

\begin{quote}
\textbf{BEST PRACTICES}

The Inuulitsivik Midwifery Program in Nunavik. Across Inuit Nunangat, there are several culture- and land-based programs that have been created and are being successfully implemented by Inuit for Inuit. These community-based programs are proving to help strengthen cultural identity and healing, returning control to Inuit through the design and delivery of culturally and linguistically appropriate sexual health education. One of many Inuit-led, community-based promising practices that has demonstrated great success in bridging Inuit and Western approaches is the Inuulitsivik Midwifery Program in Nunavik. Within this program, teams of Inuit midwives offer prenatal, birth and postnatal care, enabling Nunavik communities to reclaim the experience of pregnancy and childbirth. Rather than following a biomedical risk-scoring system to determine who needs to be evacuated for birth, the Inuulitsivik Midwifery Program follows a community-based birthing system with a community-centred risk-scoring process, prioritizing the use of Inuit knowledge. Their system provides evidence that restoring traditional Inuit knowledge and communal authority over childbirth can meet, if not surpass, biomedical standards for infant and maternal health before and after birth. Inuit are in a unique position where they can embrace and combine the strengths of traditional knowledge and Western knowledge into their sexual health programming (Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2007; p. 22).
\end{quote}

\section*{4.4 Violence Against Indigenous Women}

Violence is one of the most compelling issues affecting Indigenous Women in all states in the Arctic region. Nevertheless, availability of data and research on violence varies greatly among countries.
In Scandinavia, with a few exceptions in the case of Norway, there is a lack of research on violence against Sámi women. In Finland, no survey specifically dedicated to violence against women exists so far. While measures have been taken to assess the prevalence rate of forced marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM), no measures have been taken to identify Sámi women’s exposure to violence. In Sweden there is a worrying absence of knowledge and research into the specific experiences of violence against Sámi women, despite numerous calls on Sweden made by international human rights mandates and treaty bodies. Although specific survey-based research exists on the health of Roma women, there is none aimed at identifying Sámi women’s exposure to sexual, domestic or other forms of gender-based violence. On the other hand, in Canada and the United States, it is widely recognized that American Indian and Alaska Native women experience violence at much higher rates than non-Indigenous women. On top of this, hundreds of Indigenous women in Canada and Native women in the U.S. have gone missing or been murdered in the past thirty years and an extensive amount of research has been undertaken on the subject.

Interviews conducted by Kuokkanen (2015a; p. 274) in several Sámi communities revealed that “various forms of gendered violence, including physical, sexual, psychological and structural, are a pressing problem that is hidden and not properly addressed by political institutions and public policies.” The same observation was made by the two informants interviewed for this study.

In Norway, according to the Norwegian National Human Rights Institution and to the 2017 Norwegian shadow report to the CEDAW, 49% of Sámi women reported that they were exposed to violence, compared to 35% of non-Sámi women. In addition, 22% of Sámi women reported that they had been victims of sexual violence, compared to 16% of non-Sámi women. These figures may indicate that Sámi ethnicity can increase the risk of being subjected to violence. The CEDAW remains concerned about “cultural and linguistic barriers, and the distrust of the Sámi communities towards public authorities, which prevents Sámi women and girls from having access to effective prevention, protection and redress from the authorities against domestic violence and sexual violence.” In 2017, the Norwegian Centre for Violence and Traumatic Stress Studies (NKVTS) released a report regarding Sámi victims of violence, documenting that, in general, few people with Sámi background report violence due to their lack of trust in the state
apparatus. The reason for this is that those working within the support system have limited knowledge of Sámi language and culture, and that violence and abuse are highly taboo in Sámi communities. Finally, the CRC recognized the particular vulnerability of girls to sexual abuse and exploitation, which is further exacerbated in the case of Sámi girls.

In Finland, the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO) has observed a number of barriers faced by women from national minorities, women with disabilities and other women exposed to intersectional discrimination in seeking quality interventions when experiencing violence. For example, many women might be barred from communicating via telephone because of language barriers, as the services are available only in Finnish, Swedish and English. Moreover, in Northern Finland, Sámi women who are victims of domestic violence have no access to shelters and services that they may need.

In Sweden, reporting rates of intimate partner violence and sex offences are generally low and Sámi women are even less likely to seek help from law enforcement agencies due to lack of confidence in the Swedish authorities, fear of discriminatory attitudes and secondary victimization. According to the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, women’s groups report that “Sámi women exposed to violence are often hesitant to obtain help from mainstream Swedish institutions and authorities, which they consider alien to their culture and language.” Although there is some recognition in policy documents of the particular vulnerability of women belonging to national minorities, the GREVIO has not observed any specific action addressing the identification and consequent reduction of the obstacles that Sámi women who are victims of violence face in accessing culturally sensitive support from local authorities and social services.

In Canada, according to The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (2019), Indigenous Women and Girls experience an extremely high rate of violent victimization, being three times more likely than non-Indigenous women to be a victim of spousal violence (2014 General Social Survey). Indigenous Women and Girls are 12 times more likely to be murdered or missing than other women in Canada, and 16 times more likely than Caucasian women. One quarter of all female homicide victims in Canada in 2015 were Indigenous, up from 9% in 1980. Moreover, Indigenous Women and Girls are overrepresented as victims, comprising about 5% of the population in Canada but 36% of women and girls killed by violence. The levels of violence are also alarming among Indigenous girls and teens. A larger proportion of Indigenous people self-report being physically or sexually
assaulted before the age of 15 (40%) than non-Indigenous people (29%). Of this group, Indigenous girls are more likely to report experiencing both physical and sexual maltreatment compared to Indigenous boys (Boyce, 2016).

For Inuit women, gendered violence represents a leading cause of morbidity and mortality, posing a problem of massive proportions. In Nunavut, women and girls are more likely to be killed than in any other jurisdiction in Canada and a woman’s risk of being sexually assaulted is 12 times higher than the provincial/territorial average (Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2020). In 2016, Nunavut had the highest rate of female victims of police-reported family violence in Canada, but 70% of the 51 Inuit communities across Inuit Nunangat do not have a safe shelter for women (Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2019). It has also been documented that IW encounter challenges in finding safety and security when violence occurs and that racialized policing persists, reflecting a systemic problem which is embedded in institutional policies and practice (Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2020).

The National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) has recognized that violence against IWG is a human rights crisis, rooted in the history of colonization and in racialized policies that have shaped Canadian society. As summarized by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (2019; pp. 12-13), the final report of the National Inquiry on MMIWG identifies those forms of violence and injustice affecting IW that should be effectively addressed:

- Over-representation of Indigenous children in foster care;
- Racial discrimination in Canada’s justice system from police officers to courts and prisons;
- High rates of sexual violence, including sexual exploitation and human trafficking and many forms of violence associated with “man camps” related to extractive industries;
- Forced sterilization of Indigenous Women;
- Criminalization and over-incarceration of Indigenous Women and Girls;
- Overt sex discrimination in the Indian Act which excludes Indigenous Women and children from membership in their communities and access to critical programs and services;
- Underfunding of basic services like access to water, food, housing and adequate health care.
Violence against American Indian and Alaska Native women in the U.S. is an alarming problem. More than 4 in 5 AIAN women (84.3%) have experienced violence in their lifetime. This includes: 56.1% who have experienced sexual violence; 55.5% physical violence by an intimate partner; 48.8% stalking; and 66.4% psychological aggression by an intimate partner. Compared with non-Hispanic white women, American Indian and Alaska Native women are 1.2 times as likely to have experienced violence in their lifetime and are 1.7 times as likely to have experienced violence in the past year (Rosay, 2016). AIAN women are 2.5 times more likely to be raped or be victims of sexual assault compared to the rest of the country (Amnesty International, 2006).

Alaska Native women are over-represented in the population of domestic violence survivors in the State of Alaska by 250%. In tribal villages and Alaska Native communities, Alaska Native women report rates of domestic violence up to 10 times higher than the rest of the country, as well as physical assault victimization rates 12 times higher. Of 12 females murdered in Alaska in 2016, 8 were Native, according to the Violence Policy Center.65

Violence against Native women on reservation and village lands is critical, especially because Native and Alaska Native women are denied meaningful access to justice and are less protected from violence than other women. The systemic root of this problem is the discriminatory legal framework that exists in the United States. For decades, United States law has prohibited tribal governments from prosecuting non-Native offenders who commit many violent crimes against Native women, leaving Indian and Alaska Native nations and tribes without legal authority to protect their own citizens from violence perpetrated by any person. Especially critical is the situation for Alaska Native women. A special rule in the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act (VAWA) of 201366 excluded all but one of Alaska’s 229 tribes from the new increased protections.67

Nevertheless, lack of prosecution, lack of proper data collection, prejudice and institutional racism are factors that also occur in urban areas. In its research report, the Urban Indian Health Institute (UIHI, 2017) identifies 506 unique cases of missing and murdered American Indian and Alaska Native women and girls across 71 selected cities; 128 (25%) were missing, 280 (56%) were murder cases and 98 (19%) had an unknown status, and the median age of women and girls was 29 years. The UIHI report shows that Alaska was the fourth U.S. state with the highest number of cases (52) after New Mexico (78), Washington (71) and Arizona (54). Anchorage in Alaska was
the third city with the highest number of cases (31) after Seattle, WA (45) and Albuquerque, NM (37). It is also estimated that there were between 800 and 1,200 homicides of Alaska Native women since 1940 (UIHI, 2017).

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In Canada, following long-term pressure by families of survivors and Indigenous Women’s movements, the federal government finally carried out an inquiry into murdered and missing Indigenous Women. The inquiry was launched in December 2015, and the final report, Reclaiming Power and Place, was officially presented to the government in June 2019. The report, based on extensive evidence, testimony, independent research and legal analysis, concluded that Canada has committed genocide against Indigenous women, girls and two-spirit persons. In addition, it also affirmed that Canada’s federal, provincial and municipal laws, policies and practices have formed an infrastructure of violence resulting in thousands of murders and disappearances as well as other serious human rights violations against IWG (Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2019; p. 12).^68^

In 2017, the Alaska Native Women’s Resource Center (AKNWRC) was awarded a federal grant by the Family and Youth Services Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Administration for Children and Families to serve as the first ever Alaska Native Tribal Resource Center on Domestic Violence (ANTRC). In 2010, the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act was amended to include funding for state resource centres dedicated to reducing tribal disparities in domestic violence in states with high proportions of Indian populations in a culturally relevant manner. The ANTRC is the first ever funding authorized under this specific federal amendment.^69^

Tribal Resources to end violence against native women. The Strengthening Tribal Response to Violence Against Native Women Initiative provides training, technical assistance and resources for tribal governments and programs that do not currently have grant funding from the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW). The goal of the initiative is to enhance victim services and assist tribal criminal justice systems to more effectively address victim safety and offender accountability. The initiative is led by the Tribal Law and Policy Institute in collaboration with three project partners, including the Alaska Native Women’s Resource Center (AKNWRC). The project also has an Alaska-specific web page with dedicated resources regarding domestic violence cases or protection orders.^70^
4.5 Indigenous Women and the Environment

According to Kuokkanen (2019), individual integrity and freedom from violence is not limited to interpersonal physical and sexual violence but also includes freedom from structures and relationships of violence and dispossession related to land and natural resources. Indigenous Peoples’ cultures, traditions and ways of life have evolved over hundreds of years through a very close connection to nature and the land. Access to land and natural resources is essential to the ability of Indigenous Peoples to maintain and develop their distinct identities and cultures, as well as to develop economically. Kuokkanen (2019), in her research conducted in Canada, Scandinavia and Greenland, explains that Indigenous Peoples, regardless of the region, commonly describe self-determination as a relation with the land. The collective integrity of Indigenous Peoples depends on the integrity of the land, and relations with the land are considered central to the survival and well-being of Indigenous Peoples. Those relations are inevitably gendered, and many Indigenous Women affirm that it is the role of women to look after the land as well as the water and medicines that it provides.

Climate change

According to data from the Arctic Centre, the land and natural resources of the Arctic region have been increasingly affected by climate change, which is significantly impacting the traditional harvesting activities of Indigenous Peoples, threatening their survival. Weather changes, thin ice and severe weather conditions are making hunting more dangerous, and disappearing sea ice affects many species that are subject to harvest, such as polar bears, seals, whales and some fish stocks. Additionally, the ice plays an important role in sea temperature regulation and productivity. As a result, the livelihoods related to hunting, fishing and herding are under threat. Considering the particularly strong connection of IP with nature, those changes in harvesting activities may have deep implications on Indigenous Peoples’ economy, society, culture and health. For instance, global warming is posing a serious danger to the Inuit way of life: rising sea levels, melting ice and the disappearance of animals on which their sustenance is based are some of the alarming effects that are already apparent in Inuit territories (IWGIA, 2019; FAO 2019).

Indigenous Women are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change due to geography, land rights and ownership, and patriarchal structures, among other factors. Climate change endangers their food
security and traditional subsistence food sources. In Canada, although women, especially Indigenous Women, hold important knowledge for both mitigation and adaptation, they remain underrepresented in environmental policymaking at multiple levels (Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives; 2019). The lack of representation of Indigenous Women in national and international political arenas on climate change has been recognized as a major challenge in the region (Prior and Heinämäki; 2017). For this reason, in its note presented to the members of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) visiting the Sámi Parliament of Norway, the Sámi Nisson Forum (SNF) recommends that information regarding the impact of climate change on Indigenous Women be disseminated to a greater extent in Sámi communities and organizations. The perspective of women should be strengthened in the work of the Arctic Council, and women’s organizations should be included in a collaboration to gain increased knowledge and solutions.72

**Extractive industries**

Like elsewhere, but particularly in the Arctic, extractive industries represent a pressing threat to Indigenous Peoples’ lands and territories, way of life and spiritual well-being. According to the IWGIA (2019), in Greenland there is an increased interest in exploring natural resources, and there are currently six exploitation licences, 61 exploration licences, nine prospecting licences and 56 small-scale licences around the country. Although economic development and employment are considered important, the increased mineral resource extraction was not supported by a broad-based engagement by civil society, and citizens’ participation in deciding and planning large-scale projects was limited (Kuokkanen, 2019).

In recent years, in the Sápmi Region, high prices for minerals and energy commodities have led to an increase in natural resource investments. While locally this has been welcomed as a source of employment, it has also been a major cause of social conflict, especially in areas where Sámi communities find themselves competing for their land with other economic interests, including the construction of mine infrastructure, power lines, oil and gas installations, forestry projects and tourism activities, among others.73 For example, in one of the interviews, it was outlined that after the historic verdict in the Swedish Supreme Court that awarded Girjas Sámi Village exclusive rights to issue licences for hunting and fishing in its management area,74 Sámi people have been the targets of brutal hate speech on social media.75
Large-scale development projects may also have a devastating impact on the environment. Norway is one of the few countries that allow the dumping of toxic mining waste into the sea, and this threatens industries such as reindeer husbandry. The food chain shows that women’s health, especially that of pregnant and breastfeeding mothers, is particularly at risk. Regarding the planned copper mine in Kvalsund Municipality on the shore of the Repparfjord, a nature protection site in Finnmark County (Northern Norway), it is estimated that 2 million metric tons of waste will be dumped annually over the next 15 years, having serious consequences on the sustainable development of the Repparfjord’s resources.

The IWGIA (2019) has discussed numerous conflicts over resource development and pipeline projects undertaken in Canada and the United States without respect for Indigenous Peoples’ rights. In Russia, Article 31, which explicitly states that local governments must inform the population of the possibility of land requisitioning through public meetings and referenda before making decisions, was removed from the Land Code. In 2015, after protests, it reappeared in a weakened form in Article 39, which does not specify who has to inform the population, organize the public meetings or take the results into account. Because of this, companies have tended to withhold information on their projects, refraining from public consultations with Indigenous Peoples and their representative authorities (IWGIA, 2019).

Extractive industries in Indigenous territories have critical impacts especially on the environment, health, food security, personal safety and economy, enormously affecting Indigenous Women. In the Arctic area, an Indigenous Chukchi woman from the north of Siberia stated that companies dispose of oil barrels improperly in their territories, resulting in soil contamination and affecting the fauna and reindeer’s subsistence. The shrinking reindeer population has resulted in a rise in unemployment among Indigenous Peoples, exacerbating the precariousness of their lives, their lack of food security and higher levels of violence against women. In Qamani’itua, Nunavut (Canada), community members reported a loss of caribou directly connected to the Meadowbank mine. They also declared that the dust from the road leading to the mine had ruined the roadside vegetation, impeding fishing or gathering near the mine. Women in the community had to spend money on food that would normally be hunted or gathered (Sweet, 2014).

The Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous Peoples (2014) stated that Indigenous Women living in communities near oil, gas and mining
operations are vulnerable to sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS, which are often introduced by outside workers that move into the area. Finally, the increase in trafficking of Indigenous Women and children can also be related to extractive industries. Research by Victoria Sweet (2014) highlights how a growing interest in resource extraction might heighten the risk of trafficking in the northern region of Canada and the United States.

Military contamination has been documented in the Arctic region, along with its adverse effects on Indigenous Women’s health. According to a 2012 UNPFII report in St. Lawrence Island, Alaska and the Arctic, contamination from military waste and the global transportation of persistent chemicals has resulted in the contamination of traditional food, water supplies and medicinal and food plants used by Yupik women, further affecting their reproductive health and the right to survival of their future generations.

Due to contamination, there are disproportionately high rates of health problems in the Alaskan Arctic, including high levels of birth defects and neonatal deaths among Alaska Native infants. Data from the Alaska Birth Defects registry show that the prevalence of birth defects in Alaska is twice as high as in the United States as a whole and that Alaska Native infants have twice the risk of birth defects as white infants born in Alaska. Mothers residing in villages with high hazard rankings are 43% more likely to have a baby with a low birth weight, 45% more likely to give birth prematurely and more likely to have babies afflicted with intrauterine growth retardation.

All these data demonstrate that the exploitation of Indigenous lands and the exploitation of Indigenous bodies, especially those of Indigenous Women, are interconnected (Kuokkanen, 2019). Indigenous women activists and Indigenous young women have been at the forefront of important campaigns aimed at dismantling the system of exploitation, rooted in colonialism and capitalism, that arises from extractive industries and continues to dispossess Indigenous Peoples of their territories. Some best practices mentioned by Koukkanen (2019) are described in the box below.

**BEST PRACTICES**

*Idle No More Initiative. Idle No More is an ongoing protest movement, founded in December 2012 by four women: three First Nations women and one non-Native ally. The initiative began as a protest against the introduction of Bill C-45 by Stephen Harper’s Conservative government. C-45 was an omnibus legislation that affected over 60 acts, including*
the Indian Act, Navigable Waters Protection Act and Environmental Assessment Act. Idle No More activists argued that the Bill weakened environmental protection laws, diminishing the rights and authority of Indigenous communities before the development of large scale national and private projects. The movement gained huge support nationally and internationally and grew to encompass environmental concerns and Indigenous rights more generally.\textsuperscript{82}

ReZpect Our Water Initiative. This initiative was led by young Standing Rock Sioux activists to oppose the Dakota access pipeline through their territories and rivers. ReZpect Our Water has been working to amplify Native voices through social media and by organizing people in their hometowns for clean water.\textsuperscript{83}

Violence on the Land, Violence on our Bodies Project. In 2014, the Women’s Earth Alliance (WEA) and the Native Youth Sexual Health Network (NYSHN) began a multi-year initiative to document the ways in which North American Indigenous Women and Youth’s safety and health are impacted by extractive industries. It also aimed at supporting their leadership in resisting environmental violence in their communities. The WEA invests in training and supporting women to drive grassroots solutions to pressing ecological concerns concerning water, food, land and the climate. In order to support communities, a toolkit was developed, which includes workshop activities, resources on how to care for bodies while doing frontline land defence work, strategies for addressing rape culture and land trauma, and a tool to document environmental violence.\textsuperscript{84}

4.6 Indigenous Women in Decision Making

During the First Global Conference of Indigenous Women held in Lima in 2013 (FIMI, 2013), an increase in political participation of Indigenous Women in the Arctic was highlighted. Nevertheless, Indigenous Women continue to face significant barriers to their full and equal participation in Indigenous and non-Indigenous national and international institutions, as well as in Indigenous Peoples’ self-government institutions.

In Norway, between 2005 and 2016, the Sámi Parliament was the only elected assembly in the region that had an even gender balance; however, after the election of 2017, the proportion of men rose again, from 51\% to 56\%. The Sámi Parliament is also the only elected assembly that has gender representation requirements for the approval of candidate lists: parliament may establish that at least 40\% of the proposed candidates
on each list be of each gender.\textsuperscript{85} According to the people interviewed, a high representation of women in the Norwegian Sámi Parliament does not necessarily mean a real interest in gender issues, nor the implementation of effective strategies tackling discrimination and violence affecting Indigenous Women. Being consultative bodies, Sámi Parliaments do not have an effective advocacy capacity to influence political decisions at local and national levels.

In Sweden, the CEDAW recognized the insufficient representation of disadvantaged groups of women, including young women and women belonging to Sámi peoples, in decision-making positions.\textsuperscript{86} At the local level, in general, women have less influence in the reindeer “siida” (reindeer pasture district)\textsuperscript{87} than men. Fewer women than men have mandates in siida, and women often work outside the community in order to contribute economically to the family.\textsuperscript{88}

In Finland, according to the CEDAW, due to discrimination experienced by women, Sámi women seldom seek top positions in their community or in wider society, resulting in a low representation of Sámi women in the Sámi Parliament and in other political decision-making bodies.\textsuperscript{89} The Coalition of Finnish Women’s Associations (2008) has stated that it is a historical fact that the Sámi political community is predominantly male and that Indigenous issues of land and livelihood rights have been of primary concern to the Sámi community (and the Finnish Government in matters concerned with Sámi people), at the expense of issues related to youth and women. As a consequence, studies on the social, political and working lives of the Sámi have completely ignored the gender perspective.\textsuperscript{90}

In Canada, Indigenous Women are particularly under-represented in democratic leadership and politics, including in Indigenous governments where they make up 94 of the 545 chiefs. Canadian governments exclude Indigenous Women’s groups, as well as other Indigenous Women experts, from deliberations on issues that directly affect Indigenous Women (Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2019).

In the United States, from the local to federal level, Native Americans are greatly under-represented among elected officials.\textsuperscript{91} It’s important to note that sources of data on Native American/Alaska Native elected officials are not 100% reliable due to challenges with identification, data collection and reporting for Native Americans. According to Castro et al. (2016), when taken together, the data tell that there is a gross underrepresentation of Native American elected officials at every level of government and that
Native American women experience the most severe underrepresentation. In Alaska, as of 2015, there were no native Indigenous Women in statewide elected executive office in Alaska, nor were there any representing the state in the U.S. Congress.\(^92\)

Very different is the situation in the Nenets Autonomous Okrug (NAO) of Russia. Remote regions of the Arctic North and Far East, due to their richness in oil, gas and minerals, are subject to industrial development promoted by the Russian state and international investors. As a consequence, in some cases, Indigenous men find employment away from home and women are left to manage community life, holding important positions in the spheres of politics, religion, business and education (Cultural Survival, 2015). For example, the NAO ranks “medium” in women’s participation in regional and municipal elective bodies and “very/extremely high” in Indigenous Women’s representation in self-government institutions in Indigenous municipalities. In these municipal districts, where Nenets and Komi represent more than 40% of the total population, the local elections of 2016-2018 saw a majority of women elected in 8 out of 10 municipalities, forming a vast majority in 7 municipalities. Overall, as of 1 January 2020, elected women hold 51 municipal seats (72.9%) and men only 19 (27.1%) (Rozanova and Mikheev; 2020). According to Rozanova and Mikheev (2020; p. 7), “these results demonstrate a special importance of ‘Indigenousness’ in the processes of female empowerment in the Arctic region of Russia.” Nevertheless, the situation is very different at the national level. In the State of Duma, in 2015, there were only two male Indigenous members and no females, while in the Federation Council, there was only one Indigenous female member (Cultural Survival, 2015).

As Kuokkanen states (2015a; 2015b; 2019), issues of concern for Indigenous Women have been commonly constructed as being in opposition to self-determination, and women’s concerns have not been part of Indigenous self-government institutions. For example, for Sámi leadership, gender equality issues and violence against women have not been considered a priority. The Parliamentary Sámi Council, established in 2000 by the three Sámi Parliaments of Norway, Finland and Sweden, was active in promoting the 2007 adoption of the Universal Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) in the United Nations, as well as the Nordic Sámi Convention,\(^93\) but it has not set strategies or priorities regarding gender equality (Svensson, 2017).

The Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC)\(^94\) is an international Indigenous Peoples’ organization representing approximately 160,000 Inuit living in
the Arctic regions of Alaska, Canada, Greenland and Chukotka. Indigenous Women have been elected in high-level positions, while three out of four executive council members are women. Nevertheless, no specific strategies regarding Indigenous Women have appeared among the publications of the ICC, and the Utqiagvik Declaration (2018), which represents a roadmap of actions that will guide the ICC’s work over the next four years, does not refer specifically to gender equality measures or Indigenous Women’s issues and priorities.

According to the research of Eva-Maria Svensson (2017), the Arctic governance bodies have not, so far, given their attention to any great extent to gender equality and the impacts of economics, policies and governance on women. She considers that there is a lack of domestic, regional and even global political awareness or political will to focus on women in Arctic and northern regions and that “it is also clear that Indigenous Peoples’ interests remain secondary to other interests, even when compared with concerns regarding women as a general class.” (Svensson, 2017; p. 57).

In the Arctic Council, six international organizations representing Arctic Indigenous Peoples have permanent participant status, but no Indigenous Women’s organization is represented. Indigenous Peoples’ organizations that have participant status, such as the Sámi Council, have not developed strategies to inform and include women’s organizations and to strengthen the position of Indigenous Women in the Arctic Council. On top of this, according to Svensson (2017), there have been very few activities directed to gender equality within the work of the Arctic Council since 2002, and no specific strategies addressing Indigenous Women have been developed. As stated by the SNF, the “women’s perspective is not visible when challenges are defined, strategies are developed and processes are initiated.”

However, Indigenous Women from the Arctic region have managed to be quite active at the international level, especially in the framework of the activities of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII), two of whose current members are Arctic Indigenous Women.

Political violence has been documented as a barrier to Indigenous Women’s participation at all levels. In Canada, various forms of gender-based violence and discrimination, such as hateful and misogynistic comments and sexual assault, especially affect young women and Indigenous Women (Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2019). In Finland, discriminatory language has become more manifest and Sámi women who take part in public politics and discussions are particular targets of online harassment.
BEST PRACTICES

Gender is not Plan B. On September 2018, the University of Helsinki hosted Women of the Arctic: Bridging Policy, Research and Lived Experience, a side event of the UArctic Congress 2018. To better understand gender in the Arctic, this initiative sought to bring conversations about gender and women’s issues outside of research circles. More specifically, its aim was to explore the roles and contributions of women (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) to northern policymaking, research, exploration, art, activism and daily life in the form of a dialogue between invited guests, with the active involvement of the audience. To maintain a long-term focus on women in the Arctic and to better inform gender-oriented policymaking across the Arctic, organizers documented the event and hosted the collected materials on a digital storytelling platform at www.genderisnotplanb.com (Smieszek et al.; 2018).

Young Indigenous Sámi women and new forms of activism. Kuokkanen (Knobblock, Kuokkanen; 2015) documents the presence of different initiatives led by young Sámi activists. According to the author, young Sámi women are very active in creating and strengthening the LGBT community in Sápmi, addressing the question of structural gender violence. There are also different organizations, including Sáminuorra in Sweden, where young women want to do politics differently, through a consensus approach, challenging the status quo and conventional politics. Young Sámi women are also involved in grassroots activism, building alliances with other movements such as Idle No More and the global climate movement 350.org to fight against the pressures of both climate change and accelerated resource extraction in the Arctic (Knobblock, Kuokkanen; 2015).

4.7 Indigenous Women in Data and Statistics

National and global statistics frequently lack disaggregated data to capture socio-economic and cultural inequalities, jeopardizing the visibility of Indigenous Peoples, Women and Girls through official data. This critical problem encompasses all areas: education, health, economic empowerment, political participation and violence.

As Jessen and Vizina (2017) have stated, there is a lack of accessible statistical data on contemporary Arctic Indigenous education. Key statistics across culture groups are not available, which makes a comparative
analysis of Arctic Indigenous Peoples’ education impossible. In the case of the Sámi, for example, whose territories include regions in Finland, Norway, the Russian Federation and Sweden, statistics on population and education are not provided, due to the lack of comprehensive citizenship registration for Sámi. Among other Arctic Indigenous Peoples, while some population statistics are available, disaggregated data on education are not.

Legislation in Finland does not permit the collection of data on ethnicity. However, data is available on the basis of native language: persons who speak one of Finland’s official languages (Finnish, Swedish, Sámi) as their native language and those who speak another language as their mother tongue. In Sweden, due to the horrendous race-based politics of the European Nazi regime during World War II (WWII), the Swedish state prohibited data collection and ethnicity-based statistics after WWII. According to the Committee against Torture (CAT), this absence has deep effects on statistics regarding domestic violence rates within different populations in Sweden. Unfortunately, this lack of disaggregated state data and statistics also leaves women who are from other ethnic and non-majority groups in Sweden with very few opportunities to discuss common problems such as domestic violence with Sámi women in Sweden, while limiting the capacity of the state to define relevant public policies.

There is no Sámi, Norwegian or Nordic institution that has a particular responsibility for collecting and documenting knowledge and source material about the historical life and work of Sámi women. For decades, the SNF has been working to secure permanent financial resources and a base for developing and documenting knowledge and communicating the history, cultural heritage and social role women have had and currently have in Sámi communities. Thus, the SNF’s work is necessary to ensure continued cooperation among Sámi women in the four countries where Sámi peoples live.

In Canada, despite progress related to available statistics (Canada’s National Review, 2019), according to civil society organizations, it remains extremely difficult to find disaggregated data by sex and gender on indicators such as social location, belonging to an Indigenous community or residence in a rural, urban or remote region of the country, among others. As a consequence, First Nations peoples on reserves are often missing or excluded from national surveys (Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2019).

In its study, the Urban Indian Health Institute (UIHI, 2017) concludes that there is a lack of data, as well as insufficient accounting for Missing
and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) in urban areas in the United States. Among the seventy-one city police agencies and one state police agency surveyed in the country, nearly two thirds either did not provide data on MMIWG or provided partial data with significant limitations. Nine cities (13% of total) reported the inability to search for “American Indian”, “Native American” or “Alaska Native” in their data reporting systems. Through research methods outside of formal requests (government missing person’s databases, news reports, social media and advocacy sites, direct contact with families and community members who volunteered information), the UIHI found 153 cases that were not included in law enforcement records. Finally, according to the research, 95% of the cases in this study were never covered by national or international media. This lack of reporting, combined with the inaccessibility of law enforcement data, makes two thirds of the cases of MMIWG that happen in urban areas invisible, bolstering an inaccurate understanding of the problem.

According to the NGO Cultural Survival (2015), no disaggregated data on Indigenous Women across the Russian Federation exist, and little research has focused on their experience. Ignored by the media, the national political arena and academia, Indigenous Women are neglected and overlooked. They are also largely ignored in human rights reporting and monitoring. In addition, very few reports that concentrate on the Indigenous Peoples of the Russian Federation or Russian women discuss Indigenous Women.

**BEST PRACTICES**

Data Sovereignty. In Canada, Indigenous Peoples have been in the forefront of efforts to assert “data sovereignty” through the work of organizations such as the First Nations Information Governance Centre, as well as actively engaging historically marginalized communities in the production and use of information. The National Inquiry into Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls, for example, gathered the stories of thousands of women and their families, supporting their calls to justice and providing an extremely important record of women’s histories and data. (Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2019).

Decolonizing Data. In the U.S., the Urban Indian Health Institute, through its 2017 study, has brought to light the stories of urban American Indian and Alaska Native missing and murdered women and girls. The UIHI is working diligently to decolonize data by reclaiming the Indigenous values of data collection, analysis and research, for Indigenous people, by Indigenous people.
In the U.S., the MMIWG2 database, managed by the Sovereign Bodies Institute, logs cases of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people, from 1900 to the present. The database represents a comprehensive online resource, which is routinely updated, to support community members, advocates, activists and researchers in their work towards justice for MMIWG. The database originally included cases from the U.S. and Canada, but since 2019, it has expanded its reach to include all Indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people.111

Every five years since 1985, Statistics of Canada, the national statistical office of Canada, has been publishing Women in Canada: A Gender-based Statistical Report112, which is Canada’s largest compendium of gender statistics and analysis. It examines the experiences of women in Canada compared with their male counterparts. Women in Canada includes chapters on immigrant women, racialized women, Indigenous Women, senior women and women living with a disability. The chapter dedicated to Indigenous Women explores some of the specific characteristics of the Indigenous female population in Canada, namely, First Nation, Métis and Inuit.113 (Canada’s National Review, 2019).

4.8 Indigenous Women and the Media

Indigenous Women in media are usually underrepresented. Moreover, media coverage tends to bolster negative stereotypes of Indigenous Women and use language that may perpetuate racism and racial stereotyping.

In Canada, the 2019 report of the non-profit organization Women in View on women in Canada’s film and TV industry revealed that Indigenous Women remain seriously underrepresented as writers, directors and cinematographers. After analyzing 90 television series funded by the Canadian Media Fund (CMF) between 2014 and 2017 as well as 267 film productions and 831 development projects between 2015 and 2017, the report concludes that only 22 television contracts went to Indigenous Women between 2014 and 2017. Furthermore, out of the 24 television series created in 2017, none had any Indigenous Women on staff, and out of 1,637 film contracts issued between 2015 and 2017, just 12 were given to Indigenous Women (Women in View, 2019).

On the contrary, according to the statistics of the International Sámi Film Institute (ISFI) in Norway, as many as 70% of the producers and directors of Sámi films were women in 2018.114 The International Sámi Film Centre, founded in 2007 in Norway, provides the Sámi population with skills and
economic resources to develop, produce and screen their own films in the Sámi language. The International Sámi Film Institute is for all professional film workers all over the Sámi area, including Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia.115

The UIHI study (2017) on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) in 71 U.S. cities concludes that the vast majority of media coverage on MMIWG was focused on reservation-based violence, minimizing the problems in urban settings and reinforcing stereotypes of American Indian and Alaska Native people as exclusively living on reservations or in rural areas. In addition, it reveals that media sources have used language that could be perceived as violent and victim-blaming in their coverage of MMIWG cases. Out of 931 article examined, 31% media outlets used violent language in their coverage, revealing racist or misogynistic attitudes reflected in references to drugs, alcohol, sex work, gang violence and the victim’s criminal history, victim-blaming, racial misclassification, false information on cases, not naming the victim and publishing images/video of the victim’s death. Twenty-five (25%) of the media outlets reviewed used violent language in 50% or more of the cases they covered, and 15% used violent language in 100% of the cases they covered.

**BEST PRACTICES**

The Native American Journalist Association has created resources and specific material to assist reporters in evaluating their stories to determine if they rely on stereotypes. The aim is to help decrease, and ultimately end, the use of racist, victim-blaming and criminalizing language. NAJA encourages journalists to consider and critically think about the safety of victims, minors, families and tribal communities when reporting on the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). Journalists must not only analyze the statistics but also explore the personal and historical narrative when writing about VAWA cases.116

The magazine Gába (“skilled Sámi woman”) is promoted by the Sámi Nisson Forum.117 Written in the Norwegian and Sámi languages, the magazine publishes articles, interviews, short stories, poems and book reviews about Sámi culture, ethnicity and Indigenous issues as they relate to women.118 The SNF has also produced audiovisual material to give visibility to the situation of Sámi women in Russia, Finland, Sweden and Norway through the multimedia project “Gávavuohta time”.119
Arctic Indigenous Women and Girls (IWG) are not a homogenous group. However, although their situations and critical issues vary greatly between countries, it is possible to highlight some common aspects.

National and global statistics frequently lack disaggregated data to capture socio-economic and cultural inequalities that may affect IWG. This critical problem encompasses all areas: education, health, economic empowerment, political participation and violence. Available data show that, despite progress having been achieved in the last 25 years, IWG still suffer a colonial relationship with the state where they live. At the same time, they also experience other relations of domination and oppression, resulting in limited access to basic services and meaningful decision-making opportunities, unequal economic resources, legal discrimination and a high rate of violence.

Indigenous Women’s issues of concern have been commonly constructed as being in opposition to self-determination, and they have not been included in the political strategies of Indigenous self-government institutions. At the regional level, the knowledge and practices of IW are not adequately considered in Arctic regional policies, and gender issues and Indigenous Women’s concerns are not a matter of priority. In addition, Indigenous Women’s organizations receive poor financial support in Arctic states, limiting their ability to attend international conferences and build political influence for women. A women’s community in the Arctic is also lacking, affecting IW’s capacity to advocate for their rights at the national, regional and international levels.

Access to land and natural resources allow Indigenous Peoples to maintain and develop their distinct identities and cultures, as well as to develop economically. Research and studies have demonstrated that dispossession and exploitation of Indigenous lands through extractive industries and large-scale development projects have specific alarming consequences on the well-being of Indigenous Women and Indigenous communities. Moreover, climate change is profoundly affecting the ecosystem of the Arctic region, jeopardizing livelihoods, economic activities, food sovereignty and the physical and spiritual well-being of Indigenous Peoples. Although Indigenous Women hold important knowledge for both mitigation and adaptation, they are not adequately informed about climate change impacts at the local level, and remain underrepresented in national and international political decision-making arenas.
However, in the Arctic region, as everywhere in the world, there are also many positive examples of Indigenous Women and Young Women, as well as Indigenous Women’s organizations, being powerful actors of change and leading initiatives on a number of important issues such as violence and access to justice, sexual and reproductive rights, environmental justice and climate change, criticizing and challenging colonialism and capitalism, as well as male-dominated power structures within states, Indigenous Peoples’ self-government institutions and the international community.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations to Arctic states, Indigenous Peoples’ self-government institutions, regional intergovernmental bodies and the international community:

- It is very important to acknowledge and support forms of research and data collection that are explicitly designed around the needs and experiences of Indigenous Women and that rely on intersectional methodologies and diverse cultural ways of telling women’s stories;

- Prevent, investigate and heal all forms of individual and collective violence committed against Indigenous Women and Girls and guarantee access to justice for Indigenous Women and Girls, both in state-operated and Indigenous judicial institutions;

- The improvement of the political, social, economic and health circumstances of Indigenous Women and their families requires that Indigenous Women have equal primacy in all policy discussions on issues that concern them directly, especially on issues related to large-scale development projects and climate change that have a direct impact on land and territories, food sovereignty, economic sustainability, and the health and well-being of Indigenous Women, children and communities as a whole;

- Arctic states should encourage a human rights-based approach in all policies and laws regarding Indigenous self-determination and Indigenous Women’s social, economic, civil and political rights. Additionally, Indigenous Peoples’ self-government institutions and Arctic intergovernmental bodies, like the Arctic Council, should ensure that Indigenous Women and their organizations are represented politically, while prioritizing gender justice-related issues and IW’s issues in their agendas;
Arctic states, Indigenous Peoples’ self-government institutions, regional intergovernmental bodies and the international community should sustain and finance Indigenous Women’s organizations at the local, national and international levels in the Arctic region and involve them in meaningful political decision-making processes;

Arctic states should also develop participatory quotas for Indigenous Women, who are particularly underrepresented in high-level political positions on a global scale, especially in the process of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (Prior and Heinämäki, 2017);

Indigenous Women’s rights to own their history need to be prioritized by funding documentation centres for collecting and documenting knowledge and source material about the historical life and work of women, and to document the role of Indigenous Women in current policy-making and advocacy in developing human rights, Indigenous rights, women’s rights and gender equality in communities, and in regional and international cooperation.

Recommendations to Indigenous Women’s organizations:

Build relationships of collaboration and partnership throughout the Arctic region in order to lay the foundations for an Indigenous Women’s community of the Arctic, with strong advocacy capacity at the national and international levels.

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1. To define the Arctic region, we have used official information from the Arctic Council websites. The Arctic Council is the leading intergovernmental forum promoting cooperation, coordination and interaction among the Arctic states, Arctic Indigenous communities and other Arctic inhabitants on shared Arctic issues. The members of the Arctic Council are Canada, the Kingdom of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, the Russian Federation, Sweden and the United States. https://arctic-council.org/index.php/en/


3. This is a collective term for peoples with populations of less than 50,000 each, which inhabit two thirds of the Russian territory in the Arctic and Asian parts of the country. In Russian legislation and legal traditions, the standalone term "Indigenous Peoples" is not used anywhere. It appears only in conjunction with specific qualifiers referring to the number of representatives of a specific ethnic group (Sulyandziga and Berezhkov, 2017).

4. ITK's board of directors is made up of the leaders of the four regional Inuit representational organizations and governments: Inuvialuit Regional Corp., Nunavut Tunngavik Inc., Makivik Corp. and the Nunatsiavut Government. In addition to voting members, the presidents of the following non-voting permanent participant representatives also sit on the board: the Inuit Circumpolar Council-Canada; Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada; and the National Inuit Youth Council (IWGIA, 2019).

5. The State covers 586,412 square miles, an area greater than Texas, California and Montana combined. Many of the 229 recognized tribes in Alaska live in villages located off the road system. Frequently, Native villages are accessible only by plane or, during the winter, by snowmobile. Villages are politically independent from one another and are managed through institutions such as village councils and village corporations (Indian Law and Order Commission, 2013).

6. Alaska has the highest proportion of Alaska Native and other Native American populations of all the U.S. states (14%) and 4% of all Native American women in the country live in Alaska; this is the 7th-largest proportion in the country (Institute for Women's Policy Research, 2004).


8. For example, see all the organizations that signed the Beijing Declaration of Indigenous Women in 1995.

10. In Greenland, according to information gathered through interviews, there are no women’s organizations except the March 8 group.


14. Reports reviewed were those of Canada, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark and the Russian Federation. The United States has not submitted any reports.

15. The Nordic states (Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Norway and Iceland) issued a Joint Statement for the Beijing+25 Regional Review Meeting held in Geneva on October 2019, in which they recognized that many women and girls with disabilities, women and girls who belong to ethnic or religious minorities and Indigenous peoples face intersecting forms of discrimination and violence. However, no further analysis has been provided.

16. CSW 64 preparation: https://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw64-2020/preparations#regional-review-processes


22. Project link: https://arcticgenderequality.network/index#phase-3


26. More recent research has drawn attention to the problems related to the relative invisibility of the living conditions of urban Indigenous peoples.
Urban Indigenous Women are vulnerable to disproportionate violence, sexual abuse and trafficking (Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2017).

27. According to the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (2019), a crisis in early childhood education and child care (ECEC) is hindering Canada's progress in advancing the status of women. Canada's reliance on a market-based approach to meet families' childcare needs has produced a system of scarce and inadequate services with unaffordable fees. Barriers to access are especially high for Indigenous communities.


30. CRC. Fifty-seventh session, 30 May – 17 June 2011. Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 44 of the Convention (Finland).

31. CEDAW. Concluding observations on the combined eighth and ninth periodic reports of Sweden, March 2016.

32. CESCR. Concluding observations on the sixth periodic report of Sweden, July 2016.

33. When she was a child, her parents were not allowed to teach her the Sámi Language. As an adult, she was determined to learn the language and give her children the possibility to do the same. She told us about the difficulties she has faced in guaranteeing Sámi language and cultural education for her children, due, especially, to the lack of teachers.

34. CERD. Concluding observations on the twenty-third periodic report of Finland, 8 June 2017. Paragraph 18.

35. Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, Paul Hunt, February 2007.


38. CEDAW. Concluding observations on the seventh periodic report of Finland, March 2014.


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43. In 2017, for the three age groups for which reliable rates could be computed for all race and ethnicity groups (15-24, 25-44, and 45-64), rates for females aged 15-24 and 25-44 were highest for non-Hispanic AIAN females (20.5 and 20.7, respectively) (Curtin et al., 2019).

44. The proceedings from the National Inuit Health Information Conference produced by Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami and Pauktuutit Inuit Women’s Association identified the following as important health issues for Inuit women in Canada: breast health; reproductive health (i.e., sexually transmitted infections, birth control and family planning, abuse and assault); life changes (menopause); childbirth (away from their community) and children’s health; parenting, traditional values and raising children; balance of work and family; caregiving for aging parents and services for elders; housing and economic development; food security; mental health and depression; primary role for health and well-being; addictions and substance abuse; and fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. The issues identified highlight concerns that are related to disease and illness as well as to health determinants and well-being.


47. The Status of Women in Alaska, 2015: Highlights.


55. CRC. Concluding observations on the combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of Norway, CRC/C/NOR/CO/5-6, 4 July 2018.


57. NGO Parallel Report on the implementation of the Istanbul Convention in Finland, May 2018.


62. Across Canadian provinces, the proportion of children in state child protection who are Indigenous ranges from 2 to 7 times their proportion of the population. In Manitoba, for example, 23% of the child population is Indigenous, yet 87% of children in state care are Indigenous. A significant percentage of young women who experience homelessness, which exposes them to exploitation and violence, were in state care as girls (Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2019).

63. Indigenous Women now account for 40% of all federally sentenced women but represent 4% of the total female population in Canada (Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2019).

64. From the Indian Act of 1876 until the passage of Bill C-31 in 1985, women were deprived of their Indian status upon marriage to a non-Indian man while Indian men were entitled to transfer status on their non-Indian wives. For Indian women, “marrying out” meant a reality of exile from their communities and from their rights and ties to their families, cultures, and identities. While Bill C-31 reinstated status to women who had lost it by “marrying out,” it also introduced the so-called “second-generation cut-off” clause, which denied those with reinstated status under Bill C-31 the ability to pass status on to their children (Kuokkanen, 2012; p. 233).


69. Description from the website of the Alaska Native Women’s Resource Center (AKNWRC): https://www.aknwrc.org/

70. Description from the website of the Tribal Response Project: https://www.tribalresponse.org/alaska-specific


73. Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous peoples on the human rights situation of the Sámi people in the Sápmi region of Norway, Sweden and Finland, 2016 A/HRC/33/42/Add.3. Among recent controversial cases are: the Gállok mining case in Sweden; the Nása mountain case, involving the company Elkem; the case concerned the mining company Nussir and the deposit of toxic mining waste in a protected national salmon fjord, Riehponvuotna/Repparfjorden (IWGIA; 2019).


76. FIMI: Draft Report on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Goals 10 & 16 regarding the situation of Indigenous Women.


78. Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous peoples (2017) affirmed that the rapid development of the Bakken Formation since 2011 has attracted thousands of oil workers to North Dakota (USA). One of the effects of the influx of oil and gas workers to the area has been a dramatic increase in violent crime, generally, and a notable increase in trafficking of Native women and children.

80. Ibid., supra.


82. Description provided by The Canadian Encyclopedia: https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/idle-no-more

83. ReZpect Our Water Initiative: https://www.facebook.com/ReZpectOurWater/


86. CEDAW. Concluding observations on the combined eighth and ninth periodic reports of Sweden, March 2016.

87. Sámi reindeer foraging area, a group for reindeer herding and a corporation working for the economic benefit of its members.

88. The Swedish Women’s Lobby. 2015. Living Up to CEDAW– What Does Sweden Need to Do?

89. CEDAW. Concluding observations on the seventh periodic report of Finland, March 2014.


91. Of more than 41,000 elected officials from county to federal levels, 90% are white, while only 3% are Native American (Castro et all, 2016).


93. The objective of this convention is to affirm and strengthen the rights of the Sámi people that are necessary to secure and develop their language, culture, livelihoods and society, with the smallest possible interference of national borders. It was signed in 2017 (January 13th) by Finland, Sweden and Norway. The only mention related to Indigenous Women refers to the importance of giving consideration to the role of Sámi women as custodians of traditions in the Sámi society, including when appointing representatives to public bodies. The Nordic Sámi Convention: https://www.sametinget.se/105173
94. Link to the ICC: https://www.inuitcircumpolar.com/
95. Ms. Dalee Sambo Dorough is the Chair of the ICC; in Canada, Ms. Monica Ell-Kanayuk was elected the new president of the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) – Canada in 2018
96. ICC: https://www.inuitcircumpolar.com/icc-international/executive-council/
98. The organizations are: the Arctic Athabaskan Council (AAC), Aleut International Organization (GGI), Gwich’ in Council International (GGI), the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC), Russian Arctic Indigenous People of the North (RAIPON) and the Sámi Council (SC).
100. Ibid., supra.
104. The CAT criticizes Sweden for the reason that, without such data, there is no way for the CAT and others to analyze Sweden’s adherence to the CAT treaty in different ethnic contexts within Sweden. CAT Concluding observations on the sixth and seventh periodic reports of Sweden, 2014.
107. For example, the report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of Indigenous people (2010) does not refer to Indigenous Women, and neither does the Russian Federation progress report on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (Beijing+25).
108. First Nation Information Governance Centre: https://fnigc.ca/

110. Urban Indian Health Institute: https://www.uihi.org/

111. MMIW database: https://www.sovereign-bodies.org/mmiw-database


115. International Sámi Film Institute: http://www.isfi.no/en/about/


117. The SNF works as a women’s resource centre, functioning through volunteer work and project funding.


119. “Gávavuohta time” multimedia project: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MCE6VyMFeB4&feature=share&fbclid=IwAR2jLicxMGf8bF_kkciPaxvRYoS2huzMIE5DU76GwpBYqqL6FLEs4HQd8
| 1. The symbols of life          |
| 2. The cloudberry (northern berry) |
| 3. The reindeer               |
| 4. Sami handicrafts           |
| 5. Tromsø (Norway)            |
| 6. The cloudberry is the queen of north berries |
| 7. Some reindeer does         |
| 8. Sami handicrafts           |
| 9. Group «Elle», the participants of the Week of the Sami Culture and Language in Karasjok (Norway) |
| 10. Bead embroidery. Brooches  |
| 11. A needle bank             |
| 12. Sami Madonna              |
| 13. The lingonberry (northern berry) |
| 14. A reindeer horn brooch    |
| 15. A beautiful woman from Karasjok (Norway) |
| 16. Sami women from Kola Peninsula (Russia) |
| 17. A reindeer collar         |

Photo 1 is from the Internet, photos 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 17 – by Valentina Sovkina, photo 3 – by Bolshunova Lydia, photo 6 – by Olga Tsyleva, photo 13 – from Yulia Allemann’s archive, photo 16 – by Anna Sakmarkina