

Is Violence against Indigenous Women in “Canada’s interest”? Liquified Natural Gas in B.C., Sexual Violence & Narratives of Terra Nullius

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A RENEWED PUSH for resource development is underway in British Columbia (B.C.). We can expect violence to follow.

The recently passed [Bills 14 and 15](#) and Federal [Bill C-5](#) have contributed to fast-tracking projects considered to be in “Canada’s interest” (the economic, environmental, cultural, and legal considerations of Liquified Natural Gas (LNG) development are outlined in a [recent Yellowhead Institute report](#)). But there is more to the conversation including how the expansion of LNG within Northern B.C. — Coastal GasLink (CGL), Ksi Lisims LNG, and the Prince Rupert Gas Transmission (PRGT) project — contributes to an increased threat of violence against Indigenous women.

Colonialism requires the dispossession of Indigenous Peoples from their territories for settlement and access to “natural resources.” In this process, Indigenous women are specifically targeted.

We are dehumanized, our bodies and lives considered unworthy of care. We bear the brunt of environmental, colonial, and genocidal violence. This unfolds against the normalization of racism, which exacerbates societal indifference, perpetuating harm.

Resource Development & Sexual Violence

The interconnection between resource extraction projects and violence against Indigenous women is well-documented. As [Melina Laboucan-Massimo \(2016\)](#) states, “with the expansion of extractive industries, not only do we see desecration of the land, we see an increase in

violence against women. Rampant sexual violence against women and a variety of social ills result from the influx of transient workers in and around workers’ camps” (p. 31). In these spaces, hypermasculinity, or what [Daggett \(2018\)](#) deems petro-masculinity, combines with racism, patriarchy, colonialism, and dehumanization.

Both [Amnesty International \(2016\)](#) and the [National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls \(2019\)](#) outline the impacts of resource development on Indigenous communities including safety concerns for Indigenous women and girls, noting an increase in fear. The [National Inquiry \(2019\)](#) concluded that Indigenous women’s safety should be of the utmost concern in “decisions about resource extraction on or near Indigenous territories” (p. 584).

Resource extractive projects require transient workers and the construction of work camps or what have been deemed “man-camps.” These camps provide temporary housing facilities. Man-camps have been connected to [hypermasculine and sexualized environments](#) and the increased targeting of Indigenous women for violence and human trafficking.

In the case of Ksi Lisims, workers would be [housed in a “self-contained floating camp” or floatel](#) during the construction phase (p. 747). Rights impact assessments of affected Nations and communities contained within the Environmental Assessment Office’s report [EAO \(2025\)](#) outline concerns about the safety of Indigenous women, including risks of increased sexual and physical violence and human trafficking. The [EAO \(2025\)](#) conditions and Ksi Lisims mitigation measures include the creation of a “gender and cultural safety plan” as well as health and

safety plans, employee training, and a code of conduct (p. 78). However, safety plans and policies may be inadequate, as in many instances “it is not clear that these policies are being consistently implemented in any meaningful way” (*National Inquiry*, 2019, p. 591).

Police Indifference

As an Indigenous woman, and as a criminologist, I am acutely aware that I am more likely to be sexually assaulted, abused, trafficked, and murdered than non-Indigenous women. If I were targeted for violence, I know that my life would likely not be considered worthy of adequate investigation by those who are meant to serve and protect.

Police indifference and complicity towards the harms against us is rooted in structural racism and colonialism — leading to inadequate investigations and responses to violence against Indigenous women and to missing family members. Police have been found to be indifferent (*National Inquiry*, p. 630), contributing to our well-founded distrust. A *National Post* article (2000) reported “on the use of an Indigenous woman’s image for target practice at a Saskatoon police range” (as cited in *National Inquiry*, 2019, p. 628). In addition to using images of Indigenous women as literal targets, police have also been perpetrators of sexualized and physical violence against them. Additionally, police and private security interactions with Wet’suwet’en land defenders have been colonially violent, with instances of aggressive, racist, and sexist words, threats, and actions.

In Northern B.C., many LNG projects and work camps are on or near Highway 16, also known as the Highway of Tears because of the number of Indigenous women who have been murdered or gone missing in the area. These projects, and the influx of workers that come with them, could have devastating impacts. With existing LNG development, reports from women and community service organizations in Kitimat and Terrace, B.C. cite an increase in stalking, harassment, and unease and increased violence against Indigenous women.

Resisting Exploitation

What safeguards are in place to protect those of us who did not consent to these projects?

Beyond plans and promises, what is actually being done to protect women whose lives are in peril because of the violence, toxic masculinity, and threats to our health and safety that coincide with LNG project construction and development?

In the case of LNG projects, colonialism and capitalism intersect with genocide to contribute to marginalization, sexualization, and discrimination against Indigenous women. Despite community concerns about the health and safety of Indigenous women, the response from industry and government includes ongoing approvals of resource extractive projects, construction of man camps, and surface-level promises, which demonstrate a callous indifference for the safety, health, and lives of Indigenous women and girls.

Indigenous territories — lands and waters — and women are not simply sites of colonial capitalist extraction; they are interconnected and valuable sources of life, laws, and knowledge. It is not too late to resist the extraction of our lands, waters, and bodies — we are not terra nullius.

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