

Fundamentals of Indigenous Feminisms

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Indigenous Environmental Network's Indigenous Feminisms Program:



Our **mission** is to uplift and integrate Indigenous matriarchal and feminist frameworks into the environmental justice movement, ensuring they are recognized as vital, real solutions to climate chaos and environmental injustice. We advocate for Indigenous feminist economic models, bodily autonomy, reproductive justice, food sovereignty, and more. We are committed to the protection and elevation of Two Spirit and femme voices in global, national, and local spaces, including the United Nations. Through education, media presence, and action, we fight against false climate solutions and highlight the connection between violence on the land and violence on Indigenous bodies, particularly in the context of MMIW and extractivism. We work to ensure that climate justice includes the rights and leadership of Indigenous women, femmes, and Two-Spirit people. IEN uses the plural, **Indigenous Feminisms** to honor diversity among Indigenous nations.

Indigenous feminism is a framework that centers the experiences, struggles, and perspectives of Indigenous women, femmes, and Two-Spirit peoples. It integrates the fight for gender equity with the broader struggle for decolonization, addressing how colonialism, imperialism, capitalism, patriarchy, and racism intersect to affect Indigenous communities. Indigenous feminism emphasizes the importance of sovereignty, land rights, cultural preservation, and community well-being.



Indigenous Feminist Leadership in Climate Activism:

Indigenous women, femmes and Two-Spirit individuals are often at the forefront of climate activism, leading movements to protect sacred lands, halt environmentally destructive projects, and advocate for climate policies that respect Indigenous rights. From standing against pipelines like Line 3, Keystone XL and Dakota Access to advocating for global climate action at forums like the United Nations, Indigenous feminists are reshaping the climate justice narrative to include the responsibilities, rights, and knowledge of Indigenous peoples.



“Climate justice is an issue of Indigenous peoples rights, because as community feminists have taught us, Mother Earth, body and territory are intersected. We have to defend the sovereignty of our land from extractive industries, as our life and ways of living depend on it. Our liberation depends on the liberation of all beings.”

Xananine

The Role of Youth in Indigenous Feminism:

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Youth are significant in advancing **Indigenous feminisms** within social, environmental, and climate justice movements. Indigenous youth are reclaiming their identities, culture, and traditional knowledge while integrating gender equity and decolonization into their activism. Their leadership demonstrates the power of youth in driving social and political change, and they are essential voices in the ongoing struggle for justice across the globe.

Western Patriarchy



Prior to colonization, many Indigenous societies in the Americas were matrilineal or had more balanced gender relations. Women and Two-Spirit people held significant roles of power, influence, and responsibility in almost all spheres of society. However, the arrival of European settlers brought patriarchal systems rooted in Christianity and European social norms that marginalized women and criminalized anything outside of the heteronormative.

The process of colonization also sexualizes, exploits, and commodifies Indigenous bodies. European settlers exploited us through forced marriages, kidnappings, sexual violence, and enslavement. This violence is part of a broader ongoing strategy to dehumanize Indigenous peoples and dismantle our social structures; the ultimate goal always being the theft of our lands, waters, and bodies.

Extractivism; What is taken from the land is taken from the body



The extraction of oil, gas, timber, and minerals from the body of Mother Earth leads to profound and disproportionate harm to Indigenous communities, particularly affecting women, children, and Two-Spirit people. The extraction of what Western culture calls “natural resources” but who we call our **relatives**, results in environmental degradation, such as water and air pollution, which directly impacts the health of Indigenous peoples. We acknowledge ourselves to be part of Mother Earth and as such anything that is disruptive to her cycles of life is destructive and disruptive to Indigenous Peoples. We are not stewards of the land, we are the land. We do not steward Mother Earth, we are a part of her.

“When the earth thrives, we thrive, and when we thrive she celebrates the life in us.” Simone Senogles, Anishinaabekwe, Red Lake Nation.



MMIWR - Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Relatives

The violence inflicted on the land by resource extraction increases violence against Indigenous bodies. The influx of transient workers into "man camps" at extraction sites is associated with higher rates of sexual violence, trafficking, drug use, and the abuse, death, and disappearance of Indigenous people, often women and Two-Spirit people. This violence reflects a deeper colonial mindset that views both Indigenous lands and bodies as expendable resources. The assault on Mother Earth mirrors the assault on the bodies of Indigenous peoples.

The extraction process, fueled by corporate interests, perpetuates cycles of displacement, poverty, and trauma, further entrenching systemic violence and exploitation.

Indigenous feminisms against false climate solutions

critiques and resists mainstream environmental strategies that claim to address climate change but ultimately perpetuate colonialism, patriarchy, and exploitation of Indigenous lands and peoples. These "false climate solutions" often prioritize capitalist interests, reinforce power imbalances, and neglect the cultural, environmental, and social needs of Indigenous communities. Indigenous feminists challenge these approaches by advocating for real solutions based on Indigenous knowledge, which leads to decolonization, gender justice, and ecological preservation.



“Indigenous feminisms call for a transformative approach to the climate crisis—one that challenges colonialism, capitalism, and patriarchy. Indigenous feminists reject market-based, extractive, and techno-fix solutions that harm Indigenous communities and fail to address the root causes of climate change.”

Indigenous Feminisms & Food Sovereignty

Indigenous women, femmes and Two Spirit play a crucial role in the movement for food sovereignty. Women are the primary caretakers of seeds, agricultural practices, and the passing down of food-related knowledge through generations. The UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) states that women produce more than 50% of the world's food, in some countries that figure is closer to 60% or 80%. In reclaiming food sovereignty, Indigenous women are at the forefront of restoring Indigenous agricultural practices, preserving heirloom seeds, and reestablishing connections with sacred foods. By doing so, they not only address food injustice but also strengthen community resilience and cultural continuity, making food sovereignty an essential pillar of Indigenous self-determination and decolonization.

Indigenous women, femmes and Two Spirit are central to the food sovereignty movement, traditionally serving as caretakers of seeds, agricultural practices, and food knowledge passed down through generations. As custodians of ancestral wisdom, they lead efforts to restore traditional farming, preserve heirloom seeds, and reconnect with sacred foods. Through these actions, Indigenous women address food injustice while strengthening community resilience and cultural continuity, making food sovereignty key to Indigenous self-determination and decolonization.

Indigenous Feminisms and Agriculture

Indigenous feminism and agriculture are deeply intertwined through the understanding of land, food, and community as sources of life and cultural identity. Indigenous women, femmes and Two Spirit, in many societies, have historically played vital roles in agricultural practices, ensuring food security and the well-being of their communities. This connection is more than just economic or practical; it is also spiritual and relational, tied to broader systems of knowledge about the land and its cycles.

Indigenous women, Femmes and Two Spirit often lead efforts to revitalize traditional agricultural practices, which are rooted in principles of reciprocity and care for the land. By growing native crops, practicing sustainable methods, and maintaining local food systems, they assert a form of resistance against the forces of colonization and globalization that threaten to homogenize food systems and deplete local resources.



Indigenous Feminisms and Self Care

Indigenous feminism and self-care are deeply intertwined, as both revolve around resisting colonialism, healing historical trauma, and reclaiming Indigenous ways of being. For Indigenous feminists, self-care is not just about personal well-being but also about communal survival and cultural resilience. It involves practices that honor the body, mind, spirit, and land, all of which are understood as interconnected.



Colonialism, patriarchy, and capitalism have inflicted profound harm on Indigenous peoples, particularly women, Two-Spirit, and gender-nonconforming individuals. These harms include violence, land dispossession, cultural erasure, and the imposition of patriarchal norms. Within this context, Indigenous self-care becomes a radical act of resistance. It counters the ongoing legacies of settler colonialism by reclaiming traditional knowledge, healing practices, and relational ways of living.

Self-care is not just an individual act but also community-based. Indigenous feminisms emphasize the responsibility of caring for one another. In many communities, healing is collective—families and communities come together to support each other, addressing the impacts of trauma, colonial violence, and dispossession.

