

The importance of context-relevant feminist perspectives in disaster studies. A case of multi-actor research on forest fires involving the Atikamekw First Nation

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My research is an analysis of the relationships between Indigenous and non-indigenous people involved in wildfires that occurred near the Atikamekw community of Wemotaci (Quebec, Canada). This presentation focuses on gender dynamics among Atikamekw people, as I realized during fieldwork that men and women had different experiences and roles during the fires that did not seem to be valued the same. As a result, I decided to include a feminist perspective in my research and later mobilized Indigenous feminist theories to understand the entanglement of multiple oppressions especially colonialism and the patriarchy.

If I had followed my Euro-North-American feminist perspective I would have analyzed the differentiation of roles between men and women as a sign of inequalities. Listening to Atikamekw women taught me that men and women always had different roles, but with no hierarchy. However, Indigenous feminist literature demonstrates how gender roles have been disrupted by patriarchal-colonialism. In this presentation, I will share the iterative process that I followed to understand the situations I was studying going from the deconstruction of my own feminist framework, to the experiences and thoughts shared by the participants to the Indigenous feminist literature. In the end, this process reveals the importance of adapting the feminist perspective to the local realities to expose how disasters are part of a larger context in a way that is meaningful to people experiencing the event but often ignore by disaster/emergency management.

Emerging voices and pathways to inclusive disaster studies