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CENTRE FOR INDIGENOUS CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT ALTERNATIVES

KRAPAVIS Organizes National Workshop on Orans and Devbanis: Heritage and Biodiversity for Sustainable Conservation

By Aman Singh and J.P. Singh (KRAPAVIS)

Krishi Avam Paristhitiki Vikas Sansthan (KRAPAVIS), with the generous support of Rohini Nilekani Philanthropies Foundation, convened a three-day National Workshop “Orans and Devbanis: Heritage and Biodiversity for Sustainable Conservation” from 13–15 February, 2026 at KRAPAVIS Oran Training Centre, Alwar, Rajasthan, India. The workshop, themed “Uniting Culture, Nature, and Communities for Inclusive Action” focused on Orans and Devbanis—community-conserved areas (CCAs) that embody India’s ancient tradition of ecological stewardship, particularly across the Thar Desert and the Aravalli Range. Recognizing these ecosystems as integral to India’s biodiversity conservation and climate resilience agenda is both timely and imperative. Around 60 distinguished participants from across India—including representatives of government departments, academic and research institutions, civil society organiza-

tions, community representatives and Oran custodians—contributed to rich deliberations and strategic dialogue throughout the workshop.

The distinguished participants included Dr. C.R. Meena, Chief Conservator

of Forests and Member Secretary of the State Oran Committee constituted as per the direction of the Hon’ble Supreme Court judgement dated 18.12.2024, (in IA No. 41723/2022; Re. Aman Singh); Dr. Neema Pathak, Global Policy Coordinator of ICCA; Prof. Purnendu



Aman Singh, Founder of KRAPAVIS, addressing the National Workshop on Orans, highlighting the importance of community-led conservation. Photos Courtesy: KRAPAVIS Team

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Kavoori, Director, CenSE, Jaipur; Dr. Archana Godbole, Director, AERF, Pune; Prof. Aaditeshwar Seth, IIT, Delhi; Prof. Yogesh Gokhale from AIPRIS, MSU, Vadodara; Dr. Prabhakar Rajgopal, Director, Metastring Foundation, Chennai, Shri P. Vivekanandan, Director, SEVA & Chair of the IYRP South Asia; Shri Manu Bhatnagar, Director, INTACH, New Delhi, Dr. P.C. Moharana, Principal Scientist, ICAR-CAZRI, Jodhpur; Smt. Alka Tirkey, FES, Bhilwara; N.K. Bohra, Scientist-D, ICFRE-AFRI, Jodhpur; Adv. Shankar Pani, Bhunveshwar; Mrs. Pratibha Sisodia, Director, KRAPAVIS; Dr. J.P. Singh (Advisor, KRAPAVIS) and Shri Aman Singh, Founder of KRAPAVIS.

The first technical session focused on Policy and Legal Frameworks for Conservation of Orans—Sacred Groves. It brought together legal experts, academics, and practitioners to critically examine the evolving jurisprudence and policy landscape surrounding community-conserved sacred groves. The session underscored that strengthening legal clarity, improving institutional coordination, and securing common rights are central to safeguarding the future of Orans as vital socio-ecological systems. The second session addressed Biodiversity and Ecological Studies on Orans- Sacred Groves. The discussions highlighted the ecological richness of Orans and emphasized science-based strategies for their conservation and restoration. The session reaffirmed that strengthening ecological research, integrating traditional knowledge, and investing in restoration infrastructure are critical for sustaining Orans as resilient biodiversity hotspots in India's dryland landscapes. Participants also emphasized that blending technology, ecological science, and community stewardship is essential for evidence-based conserva-



Participants gathered for a group photograph during the National Workshop on Orans.

tion planning.

Resource Management and Indigenous Traditional Knowledge (ITK) in Sacred Groves was discussed in the following session. This session underscored the critical role of community stewardship, traditional ecological knowledge, and scientific tools in strengthening the conservation efforts. It highlighted the need for integrated approaches—combining policy support, sustainable livelihoods, and geospatial mapping—to ensure the long-term resilience of these culturally and ecologically significant landscapes. The fourth session centered on Cultural Heritage and Community Practices in Commons and Orans, while also celebrating the IYRP 2026. The session reinforced the importance of integrating cultural traditions, pastoral knowledge, and supportive policy frameworks to strengthen commons governance. It called for greater recognition of community-led conservation models and enhanced institutional support to ensure the sustainability of rangelands and pastoral livelihoods.

Following the successful completion of

the two-day Technical and Concluding Sessions, a field visit was organized for around fifteen enthusiastic workshop participants. For those visiting from outside Rajasthan, the experience offered exposure to a distinctive geographical and ecological setting markedly different from their native regions. One of the most impactful aspects of the visit was the understanding of the integrated “Oran-Devbanis and Water Conservation” system. Participants observed how local communities harvest rainwater using traditional techniques, regulate grazing and biomass extraction through customary norms, and maintain the sanctity of the *Devbanis* through faith-based stewardship. Overall, the field visit proved both informative and inspiring. In addition to observing diverse flora and fauna, participants gained practical insights into community-driven conservation models, motivating them to apply similar culturally rooted and ecologically sound approaches within their own landscapes.

Based on the deliberations, technical

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presentations, and stakeholder consultations during the National Workshop, the following key priorities emerged for strengthening long-term ecological resilience and sustainability of these community-conserved landscapes: (i) Mapping, delineation, and legal recognition of Orans; (ii) Vegetation assessment and tree density estimation; (iii) Strengthening institutional collaboration; (iv) Documentation of socio-cultural traditions and traditional ecological knowledge; (v)

Establishment of indigenous seed banks and restoration material systems; (vi) Promotion of community-led ecological restoration; (vii) Ecosystem services valuation; and (viii) Development of a framework for drafting a National Policy on Sacred Groves in India, following the judgement of the Supreme Court dated 18.12. 2024, (in IA No. 41723/2022; Re. Aman Singh).

This National Workshop also wit-

nessed the release of a new Hindi publication by KRAPAVIS along with the launch of the Digital Calendar 2026, and a documentary titled “Oran - The Story of Rajasthan’s Sacred Groves”. The event further featured the KRAPAVIS Oran Prahari Award-2026 ceremony.

New publication by Étienne Roy Grégoire and members of Lagopède

By Étienne Roy Grégoire (University of Quebec at Chicoutimi)

Can an extractive company obtain Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) by bypassing local Indigenous authorities? Members of Lagopède, led by Étienne Roy Grégoire, a professor of political science in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at the Université du Québec à Chicoutimi and a member of CICADA, explore this question in a re-

cent article published in the *Business and Human Rights Journal*.

Co-authored with Marc-André Anzueto (Université du Québec en Outaouais), Bonnie Campbell (Université du Québec à Montréal), Mélisande Séguin (University of Victoria) and Nancy Tapias Torrado (United College, University of Waterloo) and with a contribution from Karen Hamilton, director of Above Ground, the article ‘Do-it-Yourself FPIC’: *The Political Grammar of Canada’s Normative Entrepreneurship*

in the *Global Extractive Sector* (<https://doi.org/10.1017/bhj.2025.10044>) describes normative devices that purport to enable extractive companies to ‘produce’ FPIC in jurisdictions deemed deficient in terms of rights protection. Under this logic, however, these ‘FPIC kits’ grant companies a degree of authority over local Indigenous governments – in contradiction to a conception of FPIC rooted in Indigenous self-determination.



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The Roles and Perspectives of Inuit Women on Land Governance in Nunavik

By Allie Miot-Bruneau (Laval University)



Harvesting *uviluit* (mussels) at low tide. Kuujjuaarusik, Kuujjuaq region, August 2023.
Photos Courtesy: Allie Miot-Bruneau

In Nunavik, as elsewhere in Inuit Nunangat, Inuit women hold knowledge about the land – knowledge related to berry picking, fishing, and the processing of hunted game among other activities. Yet their perspectives are sought out less often than those of men when it comes to the land. Observations of the environment that form the basis for wildlife management plans, decisions regarding regional development, or infrastructure construction are often documented from the perspectives of Inuit men and their activities, as they are identified as the primary hunters, those who travel across the land.

This is the starting point for my doctoral research. These perceptions play a decisive role in how Inuit view authority and leadership. They result in women's unequal participation in decision-making forums related to land management, and public policies in the region are sometimes implemented at the expense of their activities. This participatory research project therefore aims to document, analyze, and promote the roles and perspectives of Inuit women in land governance.

During fieldwork conducted from June 2023 to May 2024 in the communities of Kuujjuaq and Kangiqsujuaq, I mapped the networks of individuals,

organizations, and practices involved in land governance from a broad perspective. I conducted 26 interviews with Inuit women. I also spent time in community spaces frequented primarily by women, such as sewing centers and family houses. This allowed me to observe gender relations, the dynamics and solidarity among women, and the ways in which land governance issues manifest in non-institutional spaces. I also had the privilege of accompanying women on several occasions on the land to participate in berry and mussel picking, or simply to admire the land and the sense of well-being it inspires. In the summer of 2025, I spent three months in Nunavik in the same communities to present preliminary findings to the participants and conduct 10 follow-up interviews.

Inuit women's perspectives on the land and its governance stem from their own experiences and are rooted in their responsibilities within the social organization. While their voices are diverse, they share a common focus on prioritizing well-being and adopting a holistic view of the land and social and community issues. This approach plays out in a variety of settings, reshaping the contours of land governance in Nunavik. From their roles in education and cultural transmission within their families, to their community involvement to encourage engagement with the land, to a range of roles in regional organizations, their contribution is essential and often takes place in spaces less visible than those occupied by men. The Nunavimmiut women I met

are implementing, on multiple levels, an inclusive and relational model of governance that fully embraces the collaborations and relationships characteristic of Indigenous worlds.



A woman from Kangiqsujuaq preparing *nikkuk* (dried beluga meat). Near Kangiqsujuaq, August 2025.



Gathering on the beach in Kangiqsujuaq during an event organized by the women members of the local cultural committee, on the occasion of the annual general meeting of the Qarjuut Youth Council. Kangiqsujuaq, September 2025.

Picking *paurngait* (crowberries) and *kigutangirnait* (blueberries). Kuujjuarusik, Kuujjuaq region, August 2023.



A James Bay Cree Vision Conservation and

By Cecil Chabot (MRHHA Executive Director)

In 2008, a community workshop was held in the James Bay Cree community of Moose Factory, Ontario that led to the creation of the Moose River Heritage and Hospitality Association (MRHHA). This unique non-profit brings together co-founding jurisdictional members – Moose Cree First Nation, MoCreebec Eeyoud Council of the Cree Nation, and the majority Cree Town of Moosonee – as well as grassroots community members and friends. Its mission of “building a future with our shared past” envisions

Indigenous conservation and development alternatives centred on a rich tangible and intangible heritage that includes a strong ethic of intercultural reciprocity and hospitality.

I was one of the co-founders in 2008 and I have also been a CICADA Collaborator since about 2017. Although non-Indigenous, I was born and raised in Moose Factory and most of my scholarship and social/idea entrepreneurship is connected with the region. In 2020, I stepped

down as a volunteer board member to take on what was initially a part-time Executive Director role in order to advance a major new initiative.

The year before, in 2019, the MRHHA Board foresaw that the upcoming 350th anniversary of Moose Factory, in 2023, offered a unique opportunity for revisioning our shared past and building a better future with it, not only for Moose Factory and the Moose Cree Homeland, but also for the wider James Bay Cree region (Omushkego Aski and Eeyou Istchee), and beyond.

This anniversary had major regional, national, and international importance. Moose Factory is a traditional gathering site in the Moose Cree Homeland within the broader Omushkego Aski region. It is also Ontario’s oldest English-speaking permanent settlement and one of the oldest continuous sites of Indigenous-European “middle ground” in Canada and in the global subarctic.

The More than 350 Initiative emerged as our response to this unique opportunity. This two-pronged Initiative envisioned an anniversary celebration – entitled *More Than 350 Years in the Making: Moose Factory in Omushkego*



2023 Nipin Celebration Transatlantic Concert. Photos courtesy: Roger Lamothe

ision for 360° (Holistic) nd Development



2023 Nipin Celebration - L to R Bernice Kapashesit and Virginia Barter (More than 350 Committee Co-Chairs), Cecil Chabot

Aski from Time Immemorial to 1673 to 2023. The More Than 350 Initiative then became a catalyst and key component for a larger *360° Vision Plan for Building a Future with our Shared Past.*

After a three-year lead-up phase, the commemoration was launched in March 2023 and followed the Cree Lunar calendar. Major heritage celebrations were organized for each of the six

traditional Cree seasons. Recentring this European chronological reference point within the Cree calendar emphasized the larger Cree, intercultural and international history and context in which it must be understood, which also gives it more significance, locally, nationally and internationally. In reframing the anniversary this way, the MRHHA also wanted to build and propose the model for reciprocity that

anchors the second prong of this initiative: our 360° Vision Plan for Building a Future with our Shared Past.

This *360° Vision Plan* continues to emerge organically from the pilot projects and partnerships developed around the commemoration. 360° refers to the targets that the plan is setting for 2033, Moose Factory's 360th anniversary. It also refers to the holistic vision of our shared past that we want to promote. Most importantly, it refers to the goal of envisioning and building a regional hub and Canadian model for *holistic* (360°) conservation, innovation and development founded on a rich and deeply integrated cultural, historical, natural heritage and a tradition and ethic of Šawelihcikewin, a Cree term that translates literally as: "receiving with gratitude and a desire to give back." Plans include an International Knowledge-Keepers conference that we hope to undertake with CICADA and other partners. I look forward to sharing more in this regard later this year.

Embroidering Words that Matter in Mexico and at McGill: Political Embroidery Workshop

By Emilia Vera Romero (McGill University)

Across various cultural and historical contexts, embroidery has been viewed as a gendered activity relegated to domestic work. The recent Embroidering Words That Matter: Political Embroidery Workshop on March 18 challenged such notions – including notions about who can embroider. The session, facilitated by Brenda Ojinaga Zapata (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México - UNAM) and led by Mexican textile artist Teresa Olmedo, highlighted the rich political history of the craft and its power as a catalyst for community building and social change.

This event is part of the work of

TRANSFORM: Engaging with Young People for Social Change, a 6-year SSHRC Partnership Grant led by CICADA co-investigator, Claudia Mitchell from the Faculty of Education, McGill University. The event serves as a milestone for the TRANSFORM Learning Series as our first bilingual Spanish-English session, featuring live translation by UNAM language student Thes Gabriel. The enthusiasm was palpable both online and in person, with over 20 virtual attendees joining from Mexico, El Salvador, Colombia and Canada, alongside 16 in-person participants who gathered to embroider at the Participatory Cultures Lab in Montreal.

Eyes on the screen: Participants tuning into the webinar at the PCL. Photos Courtesy: Twisha Singh



Participants worked on a pattern created by Olmedo depicting a burning house with the words: “IT’S NOT DESTINY, IT’S A POLITICAL DECISION.”

Olmedo explained that the concept of “destiny” is often used to justify the unjustifiable. For women, destiny is frequently framed as motherhood, silence, or self-sacrifice. For the working classes, it can mean conformity and the inability to dream of alternatives.

“Patriarchy, colonialism and capitalism, need us to believe in destiny, because destiny is immutable. But if it is a decision, we can organize” - Teresa Olmedo

What echoed throughout participants’ comments was not only the embodiment of critical thinking and change, but self-care, love, patience, and slowing down.

An online participant commented:

“Listening to teacher Teresa Olmedo made me realize that besides [embroidery] being political, it is also therapeutic. We live in a reality in which social media and TikTok overstimulate us. We need to build relaxation and calm spaces. I think embroidery allows us to do that, to politically express ourselves, while also being able to relax.”

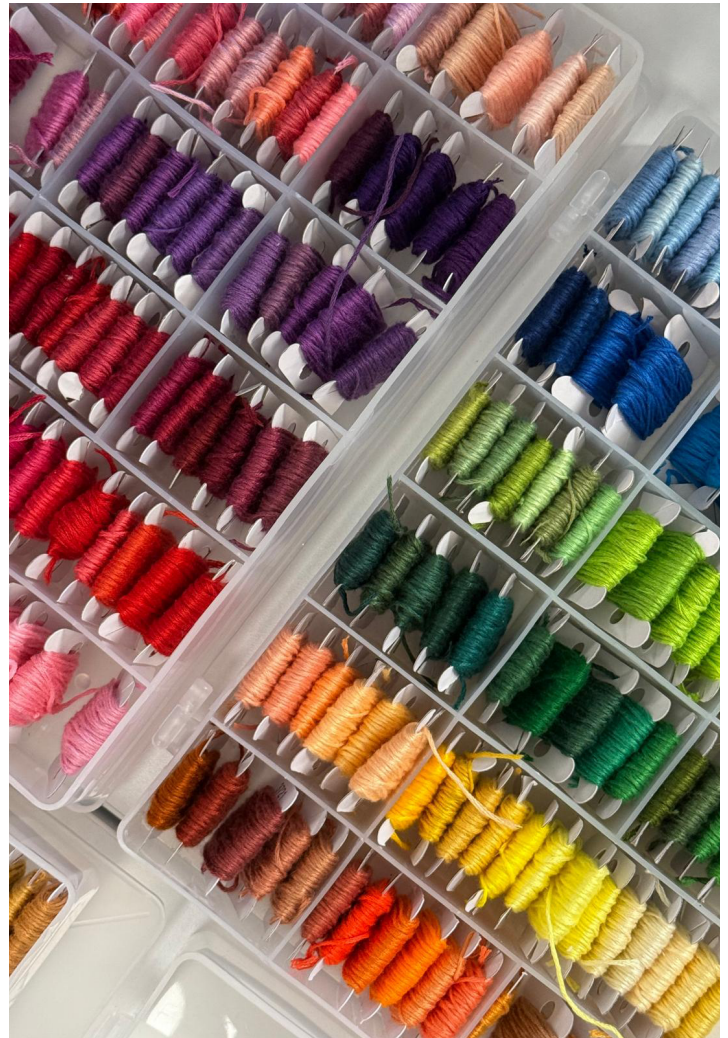
This workshop was a powerful reminder that when we slow down to stitch, we are also making space to organize and imagine different futures.

To join us for future hands-on workshops and webinars, please follow our journey on Instagram @participa-

torycultureslab. Want to learn more about Teresa and her work? You can follow her practice and upcoming projects on [Instagram](#).



Bringing art to life: a participant works on Teresa Olmedo's embroidery design.



A palette of possibilities: The colourful threads used in the workshop.

Congratulations!

We are thrilled to share that Leila Vaziri Zanjani successfully defended her PhD on November 11, 2025. Her dissertation, **Territories of Life: Reclaiming Indigenous Conservation Governance at the Land-Sea Interface**, was completed under the guidance of supervisor Dr. Monica Mulrennan and committee member Dr. Colin Scott.

Leila's work offers important insights into Indigenous-led conservation and governance at the land-sea interface. Well done, Dr. Leila Vaziri Zanjani! We look forward to seeing where your research takes you next!



Recent publications by CICADA partners

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- Mosharafian, S.,* **Jaeger, J.A.G.** 2026. Proposing targets and limits to urban sprawl: How likely are current greenbelt scenarios for Montreal to achieve proposed reference values by 2070? *Environmental Management* 76(2): 45. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00267-025-02330-y> and PDF visible at <https://rdcu.be/eV4X4> – Highlighted in the Concordia News on 20 Jan. 2026: <https://www.concordia.ca/news/stories/2026/01/20/limiting-urban-sprawl-requires-establishing-clear-targets-and-limits-to-expansion-new-concordia-study-proposes.html>
- Poirier, Sylvie. 2025. « Dreams, dreaming and the status of the imaginary in Indigenous world-ing practices”, p. 133-161. In Matthew D. Newsom, ed. *Dreaming and the Imagination. Theoretical Intersections in Cross-Cultural Perspectives*. New York et Oxford: Berghah

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