Maya Land Rights Activist to speak at UWI

ST. AUGUSTINE, Trinidad and Tobago. 29 March 2017 – What, then, is our responsibility to Indigenous people’s claims to sovereignty here in the Caribbean? The Institute for Gender and Development Studies (IGDS) and Department of Geography of The University of the West Indies (The UWI) hope to address this question at a 3-day symposium from March 30 – April 1 at the Faculty of Social Sciences Lounge. The symposium titled “Indigenous Geographies and Caribbean Feminisms: Common Struggles against Capitalism” will feature panelists from across the Caribbean, Latin America, Canada and the United States. The symposium is supported by the Antipode Foundation, a social justice organization that promotes social scientific research, education, and scholarship in the field of Critical Geography.

Spearheaded by Dr. Gabrielle Hosein of IGDS and Dr. Levi Gahman of Department of Geography, Indigenous Geographies aims to amplify and document the voices of Indigenous people from the Caribbean. It will focus on their perspectives on political representation, economic justice, gender, the environment, governance, and sovereignty while living under the postcolonial nation-state.

The stories of Indigenous women throughout the region who are engaged in community organizing, gender justice, advances in reproductive rights, resistance to resource extraction, and struggles for land will be shared at the conference. According to organizers “the right of Indigenous people to independence is a legitimate political query with real consequences, which are bore out in everyday life. It is an issue that needs to be explored, analyzed, and resolved despite the complexities that arise”.

Members of the public are invited to hear Cristina Coc, director and co-founder of the Julian Cho Society. She has been an activist for Maya Land Rights and forest conservation since 2003 and has worked directly over the last four years with the Maya villages of Toledo in southern Belize to mobilize for the campaign to secure indigenous land rights. The opening ceremony takes place at the Noor Hasanali Auditorium, The UWI from 6pm and is free of charge.
About Antipode Foundation:

The Foundation also produces ‘Antipode: A Radical Journal of Geography’, a leading international scholarly journal in the discipline of Human Geography and the world's flagship publication for the sub-field of Radical Geography. This publication recently conferred a grant to Dr. Gabrielle Hosein and Dr. Levi Gahman to convene a symposium on the topic of decolonization, social justice, Indigenous geographies, and Caribbean feminisms; with a specific focus on gender equity, ecological protection, and resistance to global capitalism.

About the IGDS

Institute for Gender and Development Studies, St. Augustine Unit, formerly known as the Centre for Gender and Development Studies, has its origins in the work of the Women and Development Studies Group at The UWI. Our mission is to produce and disseminate knowledge on gender-related issues in the Caribbean in support of The UWI’s Mission and to enhance Caribbean development. We offer disciplinary and interdisciplinary courses in Gender across faculties within The University of the West Indies at both the undergraduate and postgraduate levels. We initiate collaborative research projects that address the relationship of gender to all areas of society. We pursue a program of outreach activities that includes seminars, workshops and networking events.

About the Department of Geography

The Department of Geography aims to become a leader in its core areas of education and research in key relevant specialities of the environment, society, and the interactions between them. In line with the Core Strategic Focus of the UWI as embodied in its Strategic Plan, the Department is focusing its activities in the areas of:

- Teaching and Learning at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels with emphasis on Curriculum Renewal and Quality Assurance;
- Graduate studies with the emphasis on expanding student numbers and improving graduation times on the MPhil and PhD degree programmes;
- Research and Innovation with the emphasis on the development of cutting-edge and progressive research on issues of climate, environmental, and social change;
- Outreach in terms of cultivating more pre-degree and post-degree contact with schools, community liaisons, and alumni, as well as improving the employment trajectories of all graduates.

About The UWI

Since its inception in 1948, The University of the West Indies (The UWI) has evolved from a fledgling college in Jamaica with 33 students to a full-fledged, regional University with well over 40,000 students. Today, the UWI is the largest, most longstanding higher education provider in the Commonwealth Caribbean, with four campuses in Barbados, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, and the Open Campus. The UWI has faculty and students from more than 40 countries and collaborative links with 160 universities globally; it offers undergraduate and postgraduate degree options in Food & Agriculture, Engineering, Humanities & Education, Law, Medical Sciences, Science and Technology and Social Sciences. The UWI's seven priority focal areas are linked closely to the priorities identified by CARICOM and take into account such over-arching areas of concern to the region as environmental issues, health and wellness, gender equity and the critical importance of innovation. Website: www.uwi.edu

(Please note that the proper name of the university is The University of the West Indies, inclusive of the “The”, hence The UWI.)