

## Native Council of Prince Edward Island

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **The Native Council is pleased to hear that the federal government plans to eliminate sex discrimination in the *Indian Act***

**November 10, 2017 (Charlottetown, PE)** - The Native Council of PEI (NCPEI) applauds the recent announcement that the federal government will attempt to ensure complete gender neutrality in the *Indian Act* through strong recommendations from the Senate.

The proposed Bill S-3 amendment seeks to offer more comprehensive status based on past sex-based inequities, thus eliminating all sex discrimination in the *Indian Act*. The Bill will also seek to change the *Indian Act* to provide further inclusion of more descendants originating between 1869 and 1951. Before this measure, individuals with a status father born before Sept. 4, 1951 can acquire status and that status can go to descendants but if a status woman married a non-status man and had children before that date they could not pass on status.

Estimates show that the amendments may result in over 1 million new status individuals, but figures are still not clear. Bill S-3 was the government's response to the Superior Court of Quebec's *Descheneaux* case.

The Native Council of PEI sees this development as a positive signal to Status and Non-Status peoples in Canada. It reflects the federal government's acknowledgement of the issues that have perpetuated the disparities that Indigenous people face. Many have been deprived of their status because of the discriminatory structure of the *Indian Act* favouring men that can often leave women and girls without status. These inequities have often been directly attributed to increasing the murders and disappearances of Indigenous women and girls in Canada. There is no timeline yet on when the government will implement the changes, or what Indigenous groups they will consult with on the matter. Lisa Cooper, President and Chief of the Native Council of PEI, stated that "this measure signals the Senate's conviction to steer the House of Commons in the right direction, but no end date on these changes have been set. While this move is a positive step in recognizing the needs of all Indigenous peoples in Canada, it shows that the *Indian Act* has ensured the government can continue to assert who an Indian is and where an Indian belongs."

The Native Council of Prince Edward Island represents and advocates for Status, Non-Status, Inuit and Métis Peoples residing off-reserve on traditional Mi'kmaq territory in PEI. The Native Council continues to exercise its collective rights and independent recognition and distinction as a historical Aboriginal Representative Organization.

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To schedule an interview with President and Chief Lisa Cooper, or for more information, contact:  
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