



FEMMES AUTOCHTONES DU QUÉBEC INC.  
QUEBEC NATIVE WOMEN INC.

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### **Government of Canada to Amend Indian Act**

**Kahnawake (June 4, 2009)** - Quebec Native Women warmly congratulates Sharon McIvor for successfully fighting for the equality of Aboriginal women's rights. Her commitment and convictions will allow thousands of Aboriginal men and women to regain their Indian status. For this achievement, Sharon McIvor deserves our deep admiration and gratitude.

On June 2, 2009, Minister Chuck Strahl of Indian and Northern Affairs of Canada announced that the Government of Canada will not appeal the decision of the British Columbia Court of Appeal ruling in the Sharon McIvor case of April 6, 2009. The judge found sections 6(1)(a) and 6(1)(c) of the *Indian Act* to be discriminatory and unconstitutional. The federal government has 12 months in which to comply with the ruling.

It is a major victory for the equality of Aboriginal women in Canada and will pave the way for full restitution of their rights. For over a century, since the imposition of the *Indian Act*, Indigenous nations have had to endure discriminatory legislative norms that caused the disruption of their health, identity and nationhood.

QNW remains hopeful that this will be the beginning of a decolonization process whereby Indigenous ways, institutions and nationhood will be respected and reinforced. QNW also hopes that this decision provides further incentive for the Government of Canada to endorse the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

However, we question if there will be sufficient time for all of the communities and organizations to participate in the government's consultation process. A transitional plan must be developed and financially supported, in order to facilitate the arrival of newly reinstated Indigenous peoples. The federal government must also respect its duty to consult and accommodate Aboriginal peoples, in good faith and in a transparent manner. QNW calls upon the Government of Canada to hold large-scale consultations to ensure a process of free, prior and informed consent of Aboriginal communities before making any amendments to the Indian Act.

QNW is also urging the federal government to include in their amendments to the *Indian Act*, provisions for additional land and financial resources to accommodate for the increased membership that will occur as a result. Otherwise, any such amendments will only serve perpetuate the hardships and challenges faced by many Aboriginal communities and nations. QNW is also appealing to all Aboriginal organizations and communities to unite to rectify this historical injustice which was not corrected with the passing of Bill C-31 in 1985.

This is a great moment for Indigenous women in Canada and we owe it to women like Sharon McIvor, who continue the fight despite of discrimination and oppression, to guarantee the rights of the next generation. We hope that the federal government will seize this opportunity to adequately counter the historical discrimination faced by Indigenous women.

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