

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau
Prime Minister of Canada
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May 25, 2017

The Honourable Carolyn Bennett
Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs
carolyn.bennett@parl.gc.ca

The Honourable Jody Wilson-Raybould
Minister of Justice, Attorney General of Canada
Jody.Wilson-Raybould@parl.gc.ca

The Honourable Maryam Monsef
Minister of the Status of Women
Maryam.Monsef@parl.gc.ca

VIA EMAIL ONLY

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau, Minister Bennett, Minister Wilson-Raybould and Minister Monsef;

RE: *Bill S-3 and Eliminating Sex-Based Inequities in Indian Act Registration*

We write to ask you to support the amendment to Bill S-3 made by the Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples on May 17, 2017. We understand that this amendment (the "6(1)(a) amendment") would address the long-standing discrimination against Indigenous women and their descendants in the registration provisions of the *Indian Act*. We are writing to you today to ask you to support the Senate Committee's amendment.

My name is Pam Palmater, and my siblings and I write to you as Mi'kmaw citizens who have been impacted by the ongoing gender discrimination in the *Indian Act*. This not only impacted our parents and grandparents but now negatively impact our children and grandchildren. It is long past time to end gender discrimination in the *Indian Act* registration provisions. Our family should not be divided into status, non-status, 6(1)(a)(b)(c)(c.1)(d)(e)(f) or 6(2) when we are all Mi'kmaw citizens.

We are aware of the history of this sex discrimination; it has been a long-standing shame to Canada that Indigenous women and their descendants do not enjoy equality with their male counterparts with respect to Indian status and the transmission of status. This discrimination was commented on in reports on discrimination against women in Canada as early as 1970 when the Royal Commission on the Status of Women issued its report; Canada has been urged repeatedly by the United Nations treaty bodies to remove this discrimination completely and finally.

We honour the many Indigenous women, including Mary Two-Axe Early, Jeannette Corbiere-Lavell, Yvonne Bedard, Sandra Lovelace-Nicholas, Sharon McIvor, Lynn Gehl and many others, who have spent decades fighting to remove the discrimination and get the same entitlement to

full 6(1)(a) status as Indigenous men and their descendants. But we think that this is enough. We do not see why more generations of Indigenous women and their descendants should need to carry on this struggle.

We support whole-heartedly your Government's commitment to a new nation-to-nation relationship with Indigenous peoples, but we do not believe that this new relationship can be honestly forged until the colonizer history of using sex discrimination as a tool of assimilation is acknowledged and corrected. Indigenous women need to be recognized as equals by the Government of Canada, and accorded equal rights, if we are to, in fact, put the colonial relationship with Indigenous peoples behind us.

We understand that Bill-S-3 without the Senate Committee's amendment does not address the root of the problem of sex discrimination in the *Indian Act*, but only represents one more "piecemeal" fix for a group that had to battle for rights in the court. Bill S-3 without the Senate Committee's amendment is not an adequate response from your Government to the continuing discrimination. For that reason, we fully support the Senate Committee's amendment, which has been called "6(1)(a) all the way," because it will give Indigenous women and their descendants born prior to April 17, 1985 equal status with Indigenous men and their descendants born prior to April 17, 1985, and eliminate the sex-based hierarchy between 6(1)(a) and 6(1)(c) Indians.

You have made open and broad commitments to women and to Indigenous peoples, commitments which we fully support. This is a moment to demonstrate those commitments. We call on you to do so.

Sincerely,

Pam Palmater

Tanya Palmater

Tara Palmater

Patsy McKinney

Glenda Fraser

Phebe Noel

Nelson Palmater

Frank Palmater & Mary Louise Palmater

Sandra Piche

Norma Noel

On behalf of our ancestors, entire extended family, children and future generations

c.c.

Senator Lillian Dyck, Chair

Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples