



FEMMES AUTOCHTONES DU QUÉBEC INC.
QUEBEC NATIVE WOMEN INC.

**Press release
For immediate distribution**

Bill C-15: Another step towards a better relationship between Indigenous peoples and the Canadian government

Kahnawake, June 17 2021 — Introduced in the House of Commons on December 3, 2021, the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (hereinafter UNDRIP) was finally passed by the Canadian Senate on June 16, 2021. The Bill supports the implementation of the UNDRIP by requiring the Government of Canada, in consultation and cooperation with Indigenous peoples, to take measures to achieve the objectives of the Declaration. Among other things, Bill C-15 proposes to prepare and implement an action plan while taking the necessary steps to ensure that Canada's laws are consistent with the UNDRIP.

Quebec Native Women (QNW) welcomes the adoption of this bill. It aims to do exactly what Indigenous peoples have been calling for over the years: to recognize, respect, protect and fully implement the rights of Indigenous peoples. "*QNW is pleased to see that Bill C-15 has finally been passed. The timing is perfect for the International Day of the World's Indigenous People on Monday, June 21,*" said Viviane Michel, President of QNW.

New Democrat MP Romeo Saganash has dedicated his career to ensuring that the rights of Indigenous peoples are recognized. For the past 25 years, he has worked hard to ensure that his *Bill C-262, An Act to ensure the harmonization of federal laws with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, introduced in the House of Commons on April 21, 2016, was passed by the Parliament of Canada. Unfortunately, *Bill C-262* died on the order paper after Conservative senators blocked it in 2018. Needless to say, its hard work has finally come to a successful conclusion.

However, the work is not yet complete, and it will be many years before federal laws are standardized and amended to comply with the UNDRIP. It will take even longer before the fundamental rights of indigenous peoples, which have been denied for too long, are recognized and effectively implemented. In order for this to happen, it is essential that Indigenous peoples be involved and consulted in the process of changing federal laws. We will continue our struggles to be heard and listened to, at the risk that new laws will be imposed on us without our agreement. Government decisions have been imposed on us for too long.

For our organization, the fact that governments are making decisions without considering our recommendations is clearly a continuation of the patriarchal, colonial and assimilationist system. We have high expectations for the changes that will follow the adoption of *Bill C-15*. We hope that the words of the Trudeau government will be

transformed into concrete actions for the improvement of the situation of Indigenous peoples in Quebec, especially for Indigenous women.

Although QNW welcomes this news, which comes just before the end of Parliament, we are concerned about the length of time it will take before all federal laws are standardized and reviewed to comply with the UNDRIP. In the meantime, Canada's Indigenous peoples, and in particular Indigenous women, are still not being treated equally with all Canadians. Nor can their socio-economic conditions improve.

"Indigenous women are doubly discriminated against compared to Indigenous men in many aspects of their lives. They must not be forgotten in all aspects of the implementation of the UNDRIP. We call on governments to consult us and to consult widely with Indigenous nations to learn about their interests, as only they can truly address these issues. QNW is reaching out to work with the Government of Canada on the interests of Indigenous women in Quebec," says Viviane Michel, President of QNW.

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