



MEDIA RELEASE, For Immediate Release | August 19, 2019

## **Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA) Welcomes Long Overdue Passing of Bill S-3 as Positive Step toward Constructive Reconciliation**

The Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA) considers the long overdue passage of Bill S-3 as a positive step toward constructive reconciliation. Following generations of gender bias and inequality, the Liberal government has passed Bill S-3. First Nations women will, at long last, be treated the same as men under the Indian Act - enabling them to obtain the same status and category of membership as their male counterparts and their descendants.

Activist and founding member of the Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA) Jeannette Lavell-Corbiere, has long been at the forefront of the movement challenging section 12(1)(b) of the Indian Act, under the reasoning that it discriminated by gender. Her landmark case progressed all the way to the Supreme Court in 1973. Although that specific case did not prevail, it paved the way for momentous change. Over a decade later, section 12 of the Indian Act was repealed.

Ms. Corbiere's commitment to the final passage of Bill S-3 placed her squarely on the national and international stage, fighting for the rights of Indigenous women. Ms. Corbiere stated from her home in Wikwemikong on Manitoulin Island, "I am totally happy and grateful to witness the passing of Bill S-3 and to be re-instated to the full status that I had prior to 1970. It has taken 49 years, and with the support and help of my Indigenous sisters, friends and family across Canada, the discrimination and inequality in the Indian Act towards Indian women is finally removed."

"The right to belong to family, community and nation is a human right. This never should have happened. A nation requires E'Debendaagzijing (citizens) and now, along with our language, spirituality, history, governance and land base, this can happen."

"Miigwetch to all my sisters in our Women's Organizations, both Indian and non-Indian, to the Senators who supported our struggle and to the Liberal government for fulfilling its promise."

"Now, it will be up to the younger generations to ensure that our Ogimaak, (leadership), draft citizenship laws that will reflect our traditions of respect, honour and inclusivity - so that we can regain our status as a strong Anishinaabek Nation."

The fight for Indigenous women to pass on status to their children, live on, own, or inherit reserve land, participate in community social and political life, and be buried in cemeteries with their ancestors is a passion shared in Jeannette's family, and through ONWA Leadership.

Corbiere's daughter Dawn Lavell-Harvard, ONWA Board President, Director of First People's House of Learning at Trent University and activist, knows the importance of this challenge and how the passage of Bill S-3 will improve the lives of Indigenous women and families. "These warrior women who fought for

[www.onwa.ca](http://www.onwa.ca)

[f @ONWA7](https://www.facebook.com/ONWA7) [@\\_ONWA\\_](https://twitter.com/_ONWA_) [@onwa\\_official](https://www.instagram.com/onwa_official)

Head Office: P.O. Box15-684 City Road, Fort William First Nation, ON P7J1K3 ·  
Toll Free:1-800-667-0816 · Phone: (807) 577-1492 · Fax:(807) 623-1104

half a century deserve to celebrate, and be celebrated for their courage to continue the struggle long after others would have given up, and to keep the pressure on the government after decades of denials, conflicts and failed court actions. Their persistence has finally paid off. The historic wrongs committed against these women will finally be set right.”

“Apologies are meaningless if the oppression of our people continues. With the removal of the 1950 cut off and the reinstatement of our Grandmothers, we can finally see the way forward as this represents the beginning of true reconciliation in this nation. The beginning of a brighter future for ALL our children!” stated Lavell-Harvard.

Ms. Lavell-Harvard’s daughter and Jeannette Lavell-Corbiere’s granddaughter Autumn, is an ONWA Youth Council Member who has grown up in the shadow of powerful women fighting for equality and justice. Autumn proudly shared, “This moment has been a long time coming, we can finally celebrate. My family and my community will be whole again. Women are the heart of our nations, the removal of our mothers, aunties, and grandmothers had left a gaping wound in our nations, a wound that can finally begin healing.”

The Ontario Native Women’s Association (ONWA) fully recognizes and honours the contributions of so many strong Indigenous women who over the years have fought for this historic and powerful day. Although there are many challenges ahead on the road to true equality and reconciliation, as Indigenous women we proudly continue to reclaim our traditional leadership role, one monumental change at a time.

**For more information, please contact:**

Andre Morriseau, Communications Manager  
Ontario Native Women’s Association (ONWA)  
Email: [amorriseau@onwa.ca](mailto:amorriseau@onwa.ca)  
Phone: (647) 970-7661

-30-