



BRITISH COLUMBIA ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS

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NEWS RELEASE

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BCAFN REGIONAL CHIEF CELEBRATES INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

(Nlaka'pamux and Syilx Territory, Merritt, BC – Mar. 8, 2019) – BC Assembly of First Nations (BCAFN) Regional Chief Terry Teegee celebrates International Women's Day and acknowledges the dynamic and powerful role Indigenous women play within our families, communities, and Nations. We live in an exciting time with grassroots activism sparking worldwide action, however, despite significant gains elsewhere, Indigenous women in Canada continue to fight a decades long battle against gender discrimination. This year the United Nations Human Rights Committee ruled that Canada still discriminates against Indigenous women and their descendants through status requirements under the Indian Act despite several amendments since 1985. At the 15th Annual Special Chiefs Assembly, held this week in Nlaka'pamux and Syilx territory, Merritt, the BCAFN declared their full support of Bill S-3, *An Act to Amend the Indian Act in response to the Superior Court of Quebec decision in Deschenueaux v. Canada*. The provisions of Bill S-3 will remove all sex-based discrimination within the Indian Act.

"Recent events in Canada, and public displays of the experiences of Indigenous women, demonstrates the challenges for women to assert their voice and power in their work and everyday lives." states Regional Chief Terry Teegee. "It is critical that all leaders in Canada commit to and model gender-balance and not revert to patriarchal bias when challenged or opposed."

Many Indigenous women in Canada are confronted with and experience serious situations including overrepresentation rates of incarceration and violence. While Indigenous women make up less than five per cent of the overall Canadian population, they account for 38 per cent of women in prison. Indigenous women make up 50% of federal segregation placements. In addition, Indigenous women and girls are five times more likely to experience violence than any other population in Canada and three times more likely than non-Indigenous women to be victims of violence. Despite these, and other challenges, Indigenous women have demonstrated tremendous strength and resilience in defeating overwhelming situations and are reclaiming their distinct roles and responsibilities. Indigenous women are once again taking their place as the backbone of their communities and Nations.

The human rights struggle for equality is not only a women's battle, it requires the attention of all women, men, elders and children as we all share in the responsibility to drive our world towards one that is gender-balanced. A balanced world is a better world.

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