



E'Dbendaagzijig Update

Waawaashkesh (Deer)



BACKGROUNDER

What You Need to Know About Bill S-2

What is Bill S-2?

- It is a proposed federal law that changes how **Indian Status** is determined under the Indian Act.
- It restores registration rights lost due to **enfranchisement**.
- It removes the **second-generation cut-off**.
- It removes rules about **unknown or unstated paternity**.
- It introduces the **One Parent Rule**, whereby a child can be recognized if either parent has status.
- It expands **eligibility** for Indian Status but **does not** change Nation-based E'Dbendaagzijig (citizenship-belonging to your Nation).

Why Does This Matter?

- Indian Status means recognition by Canada and access to certain federal programs and services.
- E'Dbendaagzijig means belonging to your Nation. Each Nation decides its own E'Dbendaagzijig rules.
- More families who were excluded under the old Indian Act rules may now be eligible for Status.
- First Nations will need to clearly explain the difference between Indian Status and Nation E'Dbendaagzijig (Those Who Belong).

A Look Back

- Before 1985, many people lost Indian Status through enfranchisement (for example, to attend university, to serve in the military, or those who willingly gave up their status).
- In 1985, Bill C-31 created Sections 6(1) and 6(2) and introduced the second-generation cut-off.
- Over time, Section 6(2) excluded many families and was called a “bureaucratic extinction formula.”
- Court cases like *McIvor v. Canada* (2010), *Descheneaux v. Canada* (2017), and *Nicholas v. Attorney General (Canada)* (2025) challenged discrimination in the *Indian Act*.



What Changes Now

- The Senate amended Bill S-2 in November 2025 to remove the second-generation cut-off and replace it with the One Parent Rule.
- The bill passed the Senate in December 2025 and is now before the House of Commons where it will be debated, and further changes may be made.
- Once Bill S-2 receives Royal Assent, Canada will begin implementing the new rules.

Key Impacts

- **More families included:** Bill S-2 opens the door for tens of thousands of individuals nationally who were previously excluded to finally be recognized. This strengthens family connections and ensures that children with one Indian Status parent are no longer left out.
- **Stronger communities:** With more people eligible for Indian Status, Nations will see renewed engagement from citizens. This creates opportunities to strengthen communities and cultural ties.
- **Clearer recognition:** The One Parent Rule simplifies the system and removes confusing barriers. Families will have a clearer path to recognition, reducing uncertainty and frustration.
- **Momentum for self-determination:** The changes highlight the need for Nations to continue leading conversations to determine their own E'Dbendaagzijig. This is an opportunity to affirm inherent jurisdiction and educate E'Dbendaagzijig on the distinction between Indian Status and Nation-based “citizenship”.
- **Opportunity for advocacy:** As more Anishinaabe people gain Indian Status, Nations are in a stronger position to advocate for fair funding and resources, including land. This ensures that growth is matched with support for housing, health, and education.

Moving Forward

- Nations are advocating for elimination of restrictive rules in the Indian Act and recognition of inherent jurisdiction over E'Dbendaagzijig.
- Clear communication will be provided to families so that they understand timelines, impacts, and the difference between status and E'Dbendaagzijig
- Advocacy will continue for fair funding and resources, including, but not limited to, land and Additions to Reserve to support housing, health, and education as more E'Dbendaagzijig gain status.
- Engagement with E'Dbendaagzijig will remain ongoing to protect youth, strengthen family recognition, and affirm Nation-based E'Dbendaagzijig laws grounded in Anishinaabe values.
- Our people are our assets. We should never view our people as liabilities. We cannot leave anyone behind.

