



ANISHINABEK NATION

E'DBENDAAGZIIG (CITIZENSHIP) REPORT

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INTRODUCTION

E'Dbendaagzijig means Those Who Belong. These Anishinaabe words carry a great deal of meaning because they bring us back to a very basic question: Who are we, and who belongs to us?

Our families and First Nations have different experiences of belonging:

- Some people have status, some do not.
- Some belong to a First Nation under its membership code but are not registered under the Indian Act.
- Others may be registered but disconnected from their community.

We have children and grandchildren who know exactly who they are, yet Canada does not recognize them. This is why we must always be clear: Indian registration and First Nation citizenship are not the same thing.

As we exercise our own jurisdiction, we must also make sure that Canada does not use that as an excuse to walk away from the discrimination it created or from its fiduciary and fiscal responsibilities.

Our work must come from a place of inclusion, not exclusion. We must never leave anyone behind.

MANDATE AND BACKGROUND

In January 2025, we gathered at Baawaating (Sault Ste. Marie) and developed a draft Anishinabek Nation Declaration on E'Dbendaagzijig. After virtual engagements in all four Regions, the Chiefs-in-Assembly unanimously adopted the Declaration at the June 2025 Grand Council Assembly.

In ceremony, the 2009 E'Dbendaagzijig Naaknigewin was amended by adding the Declaration as its preamble. A scroll was prepared during the Pipe Ceremony and placed in our Nation Bundle.

In November 2025, the Chiefs-in-Assembly approved the E'Dbendaagzijig Strategic Work Plan. It supports our external advocacy with Canada and our internal work to develop and implement citizenship laws in our First Nations.

As Southeast Regional Chief and the Leadership portfolio for E'Dbendaagzijig, I have focussed on the external political work. I continue to work closely with our Citizenship Commissioner, Dr. Jeannette Corbiere Lavell, and the E'Dbendaagzijig (Citizenship) team.

Immediate priorities are Bill S-2, including the Senate amendments; Indigenous Services Canada's Collaborative Process on the Second-Generation Cut-Off and Section 10 Voting Thresholds; and the implementation of our own E'Dbendaagzijig laws.

For generations, Canada has tried to answer the question "Who belongs?" for us through the Indian Act. Those decisions have divided our families and continue to affect our children and grandchildren, and now our great-grandchildren.

Canada created both the categories and the discrimination:

- Canada decided who in our families could be registered and who could not.
- Canada decided who could pass entitlement to their children.
- Canada created enfranchisement.
- Canada created section 6(1) and 6(2) categories.
- Canada created the second-generation cut-off.

Long before there was an Indian Act, our Nations knew who belonged. Our families knew. Our clans knew. Our communities knew. Our laws knew. That is why E'Dbendaagzijig- 'Those Who Belong'-is so important.

This work is not simply about changing federal registration rules. It is about restoring belonging according to Anishinaabe law, renewing our responsibilities to one another, and exercising our inherent jurisdiction as Nations.

Our right to determine who belongs to our Nations does not come from the Indian Act.

It does not come from a federal policy, and it is not something Canada can give to us. It is inherent. At the same time, Canada remains responsible for correcting the discrimination it created.

Those two things must not be confused.

We can and must exercise our own jurisdiction over citizenship, while Canada must fix the discriminatory registration system that continues to harm our families.

STRATEGIC WORK PLAN

Because the Collaborative Process became closely tied to Bill S-2, we needed a strategy with two connected parts:

1. External political advocacy with Canada and ISC, and
2. Internal work to develop and implement First Nations citizenship Laws grounded in Anishinaabe law, particularly the Anishinaabe Chi-Naaknigewin 2012 Ngo Dwe Waangizid Anishinaabe.

The External Political Strategy

- Assert recognition of Anishinabek Inherent Rights, laws and jurisdiction to determine citizenship.
- End the second-generation cut-off and address the Section 10 Voting Thresholds.
- Work with ISC, the Assembly of First Nations, Chiefs of Ontario and other political bodies while maintaining our own position.
- Monitor legal and political developments involving identity theft, fraud and external assertions, including those advanced by the Metis Nation of Ontario.
- Defend the Senate amendments to Bill S-2, including the one-parent rule.
- Press the House of Commons to pass Bill S-2 with those amendments intact.

Bill S-2 – Update

In November 2025, the Senate committee amended Bill S-2 to include a one-parent rule that would end the second-generation cut-off. The Senate passed the amended bill in December 2025. Since then, our advocacy has focused on having the House of Commons pass Bill S-2 without removing those amendments.

We carried out a focussed political and citizenship campaign in support of that position.

On February 27, 2026, Bill S-2 passed second reading in the House of Commons and was referred to the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs known as INAN. That is where the Anishinabek Nation became directly involved in the parliamentary study.

In April 2026, the Anishinabek Nation submitted a written brief to INAN. Our message was clear:

- We support immediate action to eliminate discrimination.
- We do not support another incremental approach that knowingly leaves discrimination in place.
- Parliament must keep the Senate amendments, including the one-parent rule.

We also made important points:

- Bill S-2 cannot be treated as only a registration bill.
- Changes to registration have consequences for First Nations.
- They have consequences for land.
- They have consequences for housing.
- They have consequences for infrastructure.
- They have consequences for programs and services.
- They have consequences for governance.
- They affect the ability of our Nations to bring our people home.

On May 7, 2026, I appeared before the House of Commons Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs as the Anishinabek Nations' Citizenship portfolio holder. I spoke for our 39 First Nations and approximately 70,000 citizens. Again, our message was clear:

- Pass Bill S-2.
- Keep the Senate amendments.
- End the second-generation cut-off through the one-parent rule.
- Finish the job.

I also challenged claims about the potential number and cost of people who may become newly entitled. Canada cannot use numbers or cost as a reason to continue discrimination.

House of Commons Adjournment

The House of Commons adjourned for the summer on June 18, 2026, without passing Bill S-2.

As of September 9, 2026, the official parliamentary record shows Bill S-2 still under consideration by INAN. The committee has not yet reported Bill S-2 back to the House of Commons. It must still complete its study and then perform a clause-by-clause review. This is the stage where the committee could keep the Senate amendments, modify, remove or add other amendments. A report is then prepared and submitted to the House of Commons.

MPs consider the committee's report and further amendments may be proposed. Third reading in the House of Commons will see debates and votes on the final version. If the House passes the bill exactly as the Senate passed it, it can proceed to Royal Assent. If the House changes it, the bill must return to the Senate, and both must agree on identical text before it can become law. Once both chambers approve the same text, Bill S-2 receives Royal Assent and becomes law.

The Senate amendments therefore remain part of the bill currently before Parliament including the one-parent rule that would end the second-generation cut-off. We must continue pressing parliamentarians to ensure the amendments remain intact.

Enfranchisement and Nicholas v Canada

Bill S-2 responds in part to the Nicholas litigation concerning inequities created by enfranchisement. Since Canada did not pass Bill S-2 by the court-imposed deadline of April 2026, Canada has taken limited steps to process registration for applicants affected by enfranchisement who have the required connection to British Columbia.

Applicants affected by enfranchisement who are connected to First Nations in other parts of Canada are being advised that their applications cannot be processed until Bill S-2 becomes law.

A proposed class action seeking compensation for people affected by enfranchisement was filed in August 2025. As of the date of this report, the proposed class action has not been certified by the Court.

The Collaborative Process on the Second-Generation Cut-Off and Section 10 Voting Thresholds

In 2018 and 2019, Canada conducted the Collaborative Process on Indian Registration, Band Membership and First Nation Citizenship. First Nations and Indigenous organizations participated across the country.

The Minister's Special Representative reported in June 2019 that the second-generation cut-off was the inequity raised most often during that process.

In November 2023, ISC launched the Collaborative Process on the Second-Generation Cut-Off and Section 10 Voting Thresholds. The Anishinabek Nation continues to participate while advancing our own position.

This work has included an Indigenous Advisory Process, information sharing, community data, First Nation-led proposals and the Registration Reform and Legal Solutions Committee.

The stated purpose was to examine solutions to the second-generation cut-off and the section 10 voting thresholds. That work continued through 2024 and 2025 and into 2026.

Our position remained consistent throughout:

- Consultation can inform implementation, but it must never be used to delay equality.

Canada's Change in Direction

While Bill S-2 remains before Parliament, ISC has broadened the Collaborative Process. The work of the Registration Reform and Legal Solutions Committee helped move the discussion beyond simply identifying the problems and toward examining concrete solutions and implementation.

In July 2026, ISC released a Reference Guide addressing possible solutions to the second-generation cut-off and Section 10 voting thresholds. The consultation has not ended, but the discussion now includes implementation, First Nations jurisdiction and a more self-determined approach beyond the Indian Act.

Canada is now also raising:

- First Nations jurisdiction over membership and citizenship.
- Traditional systems and First Nation citizenship laws.
- Possible future legislation that could move First Nations toward determining citizenship outside the Indian Act.

The Reference Guide identifies the following options for discussion:

Second-Generation Cut-Off

- Solution 1 - Single Parent Rule
- Solution 2 - Transfer Control to First Nations
- Solution 3 - Blood quantum and DNA
- Solution 4 - Elimination of the section 6(1) and 6(2) registration categories

Section 10 Voting Threshold

- Solution 1 - Simple majority vote
- Solution 2 - Transfer control to First Nations
- Solution 3 - Double-majority threshold

The current Section 10 voting thresholds can make it extremely difficult for First Nations to assume control of their own membership lists, particularly where large numbers of eligible electors live away from the community or cannot be reached.

These are Canada's listed options, not the Anishinabek Nation's endorsement of each one. Our position is that blood quantum and DNA must not determine who belongs. Citizenship must be grounded in our Nations, families, clans, laws, relationships and responsibilities.

Minister Gull-Masty has indicated that she intends to report to the House of Commons after it returns from the summer recess. Parliament resumes on September 21, 2026, and we will continue to hold Canada to the commitments and timelines it has announced.

IMPLEMENTING E'DBENDAAGZIIG NAAKNIGEWIN

Bill S-2 would restore registration entitlement to descendants affected by enfranchisement and, through the Senate amendment, introduce a one-parent rule to end the second-generation cutoff.

These changes would increase the number of people entitled to registration. First Nations will need resources and support to exercise their own citizenship laws and to prevent further confusion between federal Indian status and First Nation citizenship.

Even with these amendments, registration would remain a federal legal classification. It is not the same as belonging under Anishinaabe law.

Our communities need clear citizenship laws, but that work must be led by each First Nation and supported with proper resources. Canada cannot download its responsibilities onto First Nations.

The revised Anishinabek Nation E'Dbendaagzijig Naaknigewin provides an Anishinaabe framework for this work. It supports First Nations in protecting their rights and determining belonging through their own laws, rather than through federal definitions or external claims.

Our message and direction remain straightforward:

- First, Bill S-2 must move forward.
- Second, the Senate amendments must remain intact.
- Third, the second-generation cut-off must end through the one-parent rule.
- Fourth, enfranchisement must be addressed not only as a registration issue, but also for the loss of land, belonging and community connection.
- Fifth, Canada must properly fund implementation, including registration administration, programs, services, housing and infrastructure.
- Sixth, the Additions to Reserve process must be modernized so First Nations have the lands needed to accommodate population growth and bring people home.
- Finally, Canada must recognize the distinction between “Indian registration” and “First Nation citizenship”.

Indian status is Canada’s legal classification. E’Dbendaagzijig is about us.

- It is about our people.
- Our families.
- Our Nations.
- Our laws.
- And our inherent right and responsibility to determine ‘Those Who Belong’.

The Anishinabek Nation is not waiting for Canada to decide whether we are capable of exercising our jurisdiction. The Chiefs-in-Assembly adopted the E’Dbendaagzijig Naaknigewin in 2009 and are moving forward with its implementation as a Nation.

At the June 2025 Grand Council Assembly, the Chiefs-in-Assembly adopted the Declaration on E’Dbendaagzijig. It affirms our inherent right to determine our own citizens and our responsibility to bring our people home.

Canada has work to do, and we have work to do. The work is connected, but it is not the same work:

- Canada must correct the discrimination it created and meet its fiduciary and fiscal responsibilities.
- We must continue rebuilding and exercising our own laws of belonging.

At the end of all of this, we are not talking about numbers on an Indian Register.

- We are talking about our children.
- Our grandchildren, and now our great-grandchildren.
- Our lands.
- Our communities.
- And our future as Anishinaabe Nations.

NEXT STEPS - EXTERNAL POLITICAL STRATEGY

1. We must continue building a Nation-to-Nation relationship with Canada that recognizes Anishinabek citizenship laws and provides the fiscal arrangements First Nations need to implement those laws. Canada must not be left off the hook for its fiduciary responsibilities and fiscal responsibilities.
2. Continued political advocacy for the passing of Bill S-2, with the Senate amendments intact.
3. Monitor the Nicholas v Canada litigation, related decisions and Canada's implementation of any remedy.
4. Continue participating in the follow-up work of ISC's Collaborative Process and the Registration Reform and Legal Solutions Committee while maintaining the Anishinabek Nation's position.
5. Monitor any proposed legislative framework addressing the second-generation cut-off and Section 10 Voting Thresholds, including legislation Canada has indicated may be introduced before the end of 2026.
6. Continue working with our Citizenship Commissioner and the E'Dbendaagzijig team to implement the Strategic Work Plan.
7. Continue coordinating with First Nations, the Assembly of First Nations and Chiefs of Ontario.
8. Provide regular, plain-language updates to Anishinabek Nation Leadership, First Nations and E'Dbendaagzijig citizens.

Respectfully submitted,



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Anishinabek Nation