

LOCAL NEWS - Cont'd.....

NATIVE WOMEN LOSE INDIAN STATUS

Equal rights for women suffered a setback Monday, August 27, 1973, when the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that Indian women who marry Non-Indians lose their Indian Status.

Under this section of the Indian Act when an Indian woman marries out of the Indian race, she is automatically taken off the band list and no longer considered an Indian. She is no longer able to own property on a reserve nor is she allowed to reside on a reserve without permission from the governing body of the reserve.

However Indian men who enter mixed marriages retain their Indian status and their non-Indian wives and children are automatically put on the band list and become instant Indians.

This particular section of the Indian Act is currently under investigation by the Indian Organizations across Canada for a proposal of revision in the near future.

The Supreme Court decision came after the hearing of the case of Mrs. Yvonne Bedard of Six Nations who claimed legal Indian status under the Bill of Rights. Mrs. Bedard married, but separated from a non-Indian, claimed the right to reside on the Six Nations Reserve. However, The Six Nations Council had informed her otherwise.

Even though all Indian women are raised with the knowledge of this section of the Indian Act, Mrs. Bedard with her two children, moved back to the reserve about three years ago. After several disagreements with Council about her right to stay, she initiated a court case, claiming her right to reside, with the help of a Toronto lawyer, Malcolm Montgomery.

Judge Ritchie said that earlier decisions of the Supreme Court striking sections of the Indian Act did not apply in the cases now before the court. As a result, lower court decisions which had reinstated the Indian status of Mrs. Bedard were reversed. All 10 Indian

Organizations had hired lawyers to intervene at the Federal Court Hearing. Many women's organizations across Canada agreed that women, Indian or other should have equal status with men. Under the Supreme Court judgment Mrs. Yvonne Bedard will now be considered a non-Indian. Mrs. Bedard, however, has not been requested to leave the reserve because of a decision by Mr. Justice Osler declaring the Indian Act inoperative and discriminatory. He also ruled that the Confederacy should be the ruling body on Six Nations Reserve. Therefore, leaving the Elected Council with no authority to request Mrs. Bedard to move



Mrs. Yvonne Bedard, Mark and Lisa