

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples



Commission royale sur  
les peuples autochtones

To His Excellency  
the Governor General in Council

May It Please Your Excellency

We have the honour to submit to you, pursuant to paragraph 10 of Order in Council  
P.C. 1991-1597, dated 26 August 1991, the Report of the Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples.

Respectfully submitted,

Handwritten signature of René Dussault in cursive script.

René Dussault, j.c.a.  
Co-Chair

Handwritten signature of Georges Erasmus in cursive script.

Georges Erasmus  
Co-Chair

Handwritten signature of Paul L.A.H. Chartrand in cursive script.

Paul L.A.H. Chartrand  
Commissioner

Handwritten signature of J. Peter Meekison in cursive script.

J. Peter Meekison  
Commissioner

Handwritten signature of Viola Robinson in cursive script.

Viola Robinson  
Commissioner

Handwritten signature of Mary Sillett in cursive script.

Mary Sillett  
Commissioner

Handwritten signature of Bertha Wilson in cursive script.

Bertha Wilson  
Commissioner

October 1996  
Ottawa, Canada

## Looking Forward, Looking Back

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### Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples

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|  3 Conceptions of History                 |  4 Stage One:<br>Separate Worlds                  |
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|  9 <i>The Indian Act</i>                  |  10 Residential Schools                           |
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|  13 Conclusions                         |  14 The Turning Point                           |
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### A Note About Sources

Among the sources referred to in this report, readers will find mention of testimony given at the Commission's public hearings; briefs and submissions to the Commission; submissions from groups and organizations funded through the Intervener Participation Program; research studies conducted under the auspices of the Commission's research program; reports on the national round tables on Aboriginal issues organized by the Commission; and commentaries, special reports and research studies published by the Commission during its mandate. After the Commission completes its work, this information will be available in various forms from a number of sources.

This report, the published commentaries and special reports, published research studies, round table reports, and other publications released during the Commission's mandate will be available in Canada through local booksellers or by mail from

Canada Communication Group — Publishing  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1A 0S9

A CD-ROM will be published following this report. It will contain the report, transcripts of the Commission's hearings and round tables, overviews of the four rounds of hearings, research studies, the round table reports, and the Commission's special reports and commentaries, together with an educators' resource guide. The CD-ROM will be available in libraries across the country through the government's depository services program and for purchase from

Canada Communication Group — Publishing  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1A 0S9

Briefs and submissions to the Commission, as well as research studies not published in book or CD-ROM form, will be housed in the National Archives of Canada after the Commission completes its work.

## **A Note About Terminology**

The Commission uses the term *Aboriginal people* to refer to the indigenous inhabitants of Canada when we want to refer in a general manner to Inuit and to First Nations and Métis people, without regard to their separate origins and identities.

The term *Aboriginal peoples* refers to organic political and cultural entities that stem historically from the original peoples of North America, rather than collections of individuals united by so-called 'racial' characteristics. The term includes the Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada (see section 35(2) of the *Constitution Act, 1982*).

*Aboriginal people* (in the singular) means the individuals belonging to the political and cultural entities known as 'Aboriginal peoples'.

The term *Aboriginal nations* overlaps with the term *Aboriginal peoples* but also has a more specific usage. The Commission's use of the term *nation* is discussed in some detail in Volume 2, Chapter 3, where it is defined as a sizeable body of *Aboriginal people* with a shared sense of national identity that constitutes the predominant population in a certain territory or collection of territories.

The Commission distinguishes between local communities and nations. We use terms such as *a First Nation community* and *a Métis community* to refer to a relatively small group of *Aboriginal people* residing in a single locality and forming part of a larger *Aboriginal nation* or *people*. Despite the name, a *First Nation community* would not normally constitute an *Aboriginal nation* in the sense that the Commission defined the term above. Rather, most (but not all) *Aboriginal nations* are composed of a number of *communities*.

Our use of the term *Métis* is consistent with our conception of *Aboriginal peoples* as described above. We refer to the *Métis* as distinct Aboriginal peoples whose early ancestors were of mixed heritage (First Nations, or Inuit in the case of the Labrador Métis, and European) and who associate themselves with a culture that is distinctly Métis. The more specific term *Métis Nation* is used to refer to Métis people who identify themselves as a nation with historical roots in the Canadian west. Our use of the terms *Métis* and *Métis Nation* is discussed in some detail in Volume 4, Chapter 5.

Following accepted practice and as a general rule, the term *Inuit* replaces the term *Eskimo*. As well, the term *First Nation* replaces the term *Indian*. However, where the subject of discussion is a specific historical or contemporary nation, we use the name of that nation (e.g., Mi'kmaq, Dene, Mohawk). Often more than one spelling is considered acceptable for these nations. We try to use the name preferred by particular nations or communities, many of which now use their traditional names. Where necessary, we add the more familiar or generic name in parentheses — for example, Siksika (Blackfoot).

Terms such as *Eskimo* and *Indian* continue to be used in at least three contexts:

1. where such terms are used in quotations from other sources;
2. where *Indian* or *Eskimo* is the term used in legislation or policy and hence in discussions concerning such legislation or policy (e.g., the *Indian Act*; the Eskimo Loan Fund); and
3. where the term continues to be used to describe different categories of persons in statistical tables and related discussions, usually involving data from Statistics Canada or the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (e.g., status Indians on-reserve, registered Indians).

*COMMISSIONERS APPOINTED to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples held close to one hundred meetings, each usually lasting several days, between the fall of 1991 and the fall of 1995. On these and other important occasions, such as the public hearings, opening and closing ceremonies were held and a prayer or thanksgiving address was offered to the Creator for the safe arrival of persons to the meeting or their safe return home to their families, for the start or ending of a day, and for all the living things that are part of the Circle of Life.*

***If a meeting was about to begin, those who participated were asked to approach the day with a good mind, to speak clearly and honestly with each other, and to listen carefully to what was being said. It was emphasized that, when people come together for high purposes and to deal with difficult issues, their minds must be clear.***

Those associated with the Commission experienced the strength gained when people come together in a supportive manner and for a common purpose. They felt the power that is generated when people use a good mind to come to one mind. It is in this spirit that the Commission begins its final report with a thanksgiving address that, in one form or another, was spoken many times at the Commission and from time immemorial among the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois).