

# AN ELCIC RESOLUTION ON THE ROYAL COMMISSION ON ABORIGINAL PEOPLES REPORT

---

Approved at the Sixth Biennial Convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada  
July 23-27, 1997

MS That the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada commends members of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples for their final report, Nation to Nation, People to People and calls upon members of the ELCIC to study and seriously consider the recommendations of the Royal Commission with the hope of developing a renewed relationships with the Aboriginal Peoples of Canada.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

On November 21, 1996, after five years of study, the Aboriginal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples released its six volume report. In their address for the official release of the report, the commission co-chairs, George Erasmus and René Dussault, emphasized the need for fundamental change in the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in Canada.

A Royal Commission investigating the situation of aboriginal peoples was originally offered by the Mulroney government as an incentive for native peoples to accept the Meech Lake Accord. The Commission was established following the Oka crisis, as a means for the federal government to elude questions on government policies concerning First Nations. In the introduction to the report the Commissioners briefly summarize the reasons for this Royal Commission,

*"Canada is a test case for a grand notion that the notion that dissimilar peoples can share lands, resources, power and dreams while respecting and sustaining their differences. The story of Canada is the story of many such peoples, trying and failing and trying again, to live together in peace and harmony.....But there cannot be peace or harmony unless there is justice. It was to help restore justice to the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Canada, and to propose practical solutions to stubborn problems; that the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples was established."*

The RCAP Report is a visionary document that stresses the need for the recognition of aboriginal nations and mutual respect. The Commissioners describe the report as a comprehensive strategy over 20 years based on four interconnected concepts: the reality of societal and cultural difference; the right to self-government; the nature of Aboriginal nationhood; and the requirement for adequate land, resources and self-reliant Aboriginal economies.

The Commissioners point out that a principal cause of the failed relationship has been policies of assimilation toward aboriginal peoples. They write that,

*"Assimilation policies have done great damage, leaving a legacy of brokenness affecting Aboriginal individuals, families and communities. The damage has been equally serious to the spirit of Canada, the spirit of generosity and mutual accommodation in which Canadians take pride."*

The Report of the Royal Commission is a very lengthy document. In proposing that members of the ELCIC consider its recommendations, delegates recognize that not everyone will read it nor will members all agree with every recommendation. The importance is that members encourage a generous spirit as well as a fair and honest discussion about how to proceed in rebuilding a relationship central to the life of the Canadian community. The Aboriginal Rights Coalition will be developing educational resources for use across the churches.

In commending the Commissioners we share their hope for this report.

*"We hope that our report will also be a guide to the many ways Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people can begin, right now, to repair the damage to the relationship and enter the next millennium on a new footing of mutual recognition and respect, sharing and responsibility."*