

THE ROYAL
COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL
PEOPLES



Editor's Introduction

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The Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples was released in November 1996 and marked a significant event in the history of the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Peoples in Canada. In its call for a renewed relationship, the Commission placed considerable emphasis on the need for economic development of Aboriginal communities, and for putting in place the conditions that would permit economic development to occur. These included major changes in areas such as self-government, lands and resources, treaties, and health and healing. The Journal of Aboriginal Economic Development plans to include a section on the Royal Commission Report in each issue. The intent is to offer a forum where the ideas of the Report can be communicated, where informed commentary can be encouraged, and where readers can be kept informed about the steps that are being taken to implement it.

With this issue, we make available the proceedings of a symposium held in the fall of 1997 and sponsored by CANDO and the Royal Bank of Canada. Titled "The Cost of

Doing Nothing: A Call to Action,” the symposium featured presentations both by CANDO Education Committee members and by senior representatives of the Royal Bank of Canada. In addition, presentations made at the Symposium by the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, and by the National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, are also included.

The Conference was notable for its central theme, which underlined the fact that a failure to change course in policy and relationship will be very expensive for Canada. Speakers made the case that, in John McCallum’s words, “... the economic state of Canada’s first peoples today is deplorable, ‘the costs of the status quo to the public purse are high and rising, and that any costs incurred by the federal government in addressing these problems are a lot more affordable today than was the case just a few years ago’” in the context of the anticipated fiscal dividend.