

# Money no remedy to Native woes: Metis historian

By James Parker  
of The StarPhoenix

The problems of Indian, Metis and Inuit people won't be solved by governments spending billions more on aboriginal programs, says a respected Metis historian.

Olive Dickason said Tuesday a call by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples for increased spending on Natives is neither politically possible, nor desirable.

"People can't just come in and rescue those people," Dickason said by telephone from her Ottawa residence.

"They have to rescue themselves. They need help. But it must be the kind that encourages them to help themselves."

The commission released its long-awaited report last Thursday.

It recommends the federal government make sweeping changes in how it deals with aboriginal people. It suggests federal and provincial governments spend \$1.5 billion to \$2 billion more on aboriginal programs each year in addition to current spending of more than \$10 billion.

The report also recommends the creation of an aboriginal parliament.

"The idea of spending money on the scale they are recommending I don't think is realistic," said Dickason, the author of *Canada's First Nations*, a history of aboriginal people frequently used in university classes.

"They say you have to spend money to save money in the long run. I don't disagree with that principle, but it's not realistic to recommend this type of spending at a time when everyone else is being cutback and hurting."

Dickason, a 76-year-old Manitoban who earned her PhD in history after finishing a 25-year career in journalism, said the Department of Indian Affairs hasn't experienced the same cuts as other federal departments.

She said current budgets probably could be spent more efficiently. In any event, rebuilding aboriginal communities isn't just an economic task, but also a spiritual challenge, Dickason said.

Dickason said the report does have value in that it may prompt Canadians to "internalize" the aboriginal factor in Canadian history.

"Some people say we have a young country, but there are elements within Confederation that are ancient. I find the concept of two founding nations insensitive to say the least."



**Dickason**