

Circle of All Nations®



circleofallnations@sympatico.ca
 www.circleofallnations.ca -archival sites;
 www.asinabka.com
 Mailing Address:
 506 Stratas Court, Kanata, Ontario,
 Canada K2L3K7
 Find us on Facebook Too!



SEGIMAI- SQUIRREL
 Seed Planter and
 Gatherer
 Head First Up and Down
 The Tree of Life



A William Commanda Indigenous Languages Commemorative Poster

William Commanda, PhD, OC, Wampum Belt Carrier, Canoe Maker, and Founder of Circle of All Nations, a global eco peace community, was a spiritual and political leader of note who employed multiple linguistic and performative mapping techniques to communicate with a diversity of peoples. Many still remember Algonquin, French and English being spoken with fluid interchange in the Commanda home. He regularly commenced every address directly to his Creator, feather in hand, then translated his words into English and French. Elder Commanda, was also passionately engaged in advocacy for the protection, preservation, revitalization and animation of Indigenous language. He described his language in a land based word: "vast". Other languages did not have the words for the spirit, passion, ideas and thought that his earth-emergent language held. With the passing of every Indigenous language speaker he saw libraries of knowledge disabdearino. Consistent with his Wampum heritage, he challenged this on the local, national and global stage at every turn, perhaps primarily so we could understand Mother Earth as he did.

At the United Nations level, William Commanda formally and pointedly put Indigenous languages on the global stage in 1993 at the first UN Conference of Indigenous Peoples, fittingly and prophetically called Cry of the Earth, by delivering the opening presentation in Algonquin, the original language of the Peoples of Eastern Seaboard of North America. Then he had his assistant Late Elder Frank Decontie translate his words into English via written text. He delivered the messages of the Sacred Wampum Belts (mnemonic record keeping devices we describe as spirit text in an article on William Commanda's Oral Storytelling). At this time his growing preoccupation with the looming environmental crisis and pressing social justice issues is readily evident (E-link available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5NANaKYxfZY>)



Cry of the Earth - Part 2 of 12 - Algonquin Delegation



"In 2010, Canadian Commissioner of Official Languages Graham Fraser asked to meet William Commanda; they met him at my home, accompanied by Marie Louise Perron. Attached is a clip from their website and a photograph from my collection. This was the first time that Indigenous Languages formally entered Canadian priorities. Thereafter, to ensure ongoing systemic shift, we introduced the Official Languages team to Algonquin Elders who were working on revival of the language in Quebec, then under the leadership of Late Elder Pauline Decontie. We also acknowledge his relative and friend Bernice Wagoush McGregor: she was another passionate advocate for the Algonquin Language. Her grandmother Philomena Commanda, challenged the Indian Agent of the early 1990s, breaking language and gender boundaries." Romola Thumbadoo, Coordinator Circle of All Nations (https://www.clo-ocol.gc.ca/en/cyberbulletin_newsletter/2011/may-24)

At a more grassroots and contemporarily re-animated level, here are two Circle of All Nations colleagues at our 2014 Fall Equinox Peace Event (two central figures). More than two decades ago, Serena d'Agostino (now in Italy), met William Commanda, and they talked about endangered languages; years later they met again, and she was startled to find he remembered her clearly in the context of language. She stated that Elder Commanda had inspired her passion for her work with the Foundation for Endangered Languages (FEL)! Dawn Ferguson (US) founded Children Singing Peace Around the World, and planted seeds for this ideology in 30 global locations in local languages. William Commanda did the first translation of her song!! (<http://childrensingingpeace.com/>)



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