



CIRCLE OF ALL NATIONS 2016 YEAR END REPORT

2016 was another hectic and challenging year for *Circle of All Nations!*

1. Overview

We were glad to continue our connection with so many, many people deeply interested in and committed to the work initiated by Grandfather Commanda over the past decades, and were also grateful to be joined by so many new friends drawn to understand and connect with his legacy work.

We have had to engage on two levels to continue with our efforts to advance Elder William Commanda's work – and this has continued to be a challenging experience. His *Circle of All Nations* work is committed to advancing Indigenous wisdom and environmental stewardship, social justice, racial harmony and peace building; unfortunately at the same time, we have had to engage in a multilevel challenge, including in the courts, to protect (actually to project) his vision for the Asinabka Indigenous Healing and Peace Building Centre at the Sacred Chaudiere Site. This latter issue has held challenges for *Circle of All Nations* to both affirm William Commanda's vision for peace and assert his views and truths, to reconcile diverse approaches to responding to the challenge, and also to address contentious and questionable practices of development interests.

To the extent possible, we have continued with our *Circle of All Nations* agenda and priorities at one level, and engaged in the Asinabka/Sacred Chaudiere Site challenge at another. We know that the past years have been difficult for many.

This part of the report is primarily focused on the Circle of All Nations *CAN TEACH 102!* work of 2016.

Over this past year, against the backdrop of the growing local, national and global challenges (viz, climate change, environmental crises, wars, terror attacks, refugee crises, murdered and missing men, women and children, suicide and posttraumatic stress disorder, sacred site protection, including at Standing Rock), the peace and healing work that William Commanda and others worked so hard to animate seems more desperately needed than ever, yet the challenges are also daunting: we are indeed living in times of prophecy, and when we see water crises loom, note the contamination of the oceans, the extermination of overwhelming numbers of species, the poaching of wildlife, witness the demise of the polar bear, the challenges of mining and the oil industry, some of begin to understand better why Indigenous elders spoke with such passion, persistence and urgency about Mother Earth and All Her Relations at Grandfather Commanda's annual *Circle of All Nations gatherings* during the past two decades. I have just marked papers

for a *global connections* class, and, in the vast diversity of issues researched by young students, note the overwhelming collective challenges facing the globe and future generations – and one might almost despair when one considers the scale, as these young students already are. With social media driving our awareness of the critical issues of our day every minute on my facebook pages, it seems like all Grandfather Commanda’s concerns have spilled over onto the global first page. Certainly he tried to awaken us to the gravity of our collective situation with his last breath. Not many have understood the breath and depth of the concern that drove him to work so hard – frankly, I don’t myself know of anyone else who saw the emerging picture so clearly.

The *Circle of All Nations* is a global eco-peace-healthy community *idea*. There are significant limitations to its potential to influence, and in the absence of a funding base or formal organizational structure, it is not possible to do project and program work. Nonetheless, it still raises issues on the larger stage, and via a range of *Circle of All Nations* colleagues and folk still inspired by Grandfather Commanda’s teachings, asserts its voice on critical themes of the day. This attests to the timeless relevance of his passionate efforts and commitment to inspire the evolution of a *Circle of All Nations, A Culture of Peace*, and the on-going courage and determination of diverse voices to kindle fires of hope for all – and all over the globe – France, Germany, South Africa, Japan, South America and North America.

We hope you will keep the fire spreading! Ideas change the world. I have been thinking about the four Algonquin words I associate with Grandfather Commanda’s teachings:

Ginawaydaganuc – All is connected

Sogywaywin – Love

Poninjegaywin – Forgiveness

Megwetch – Gratitude

They are enough to keep one very busy clearing the trail to his *Circle of All Nations, his Culture of Peace!*

2. Key *Circle of All Nations* Events of 2016

Circle of All Nations hosted five gatherings this past year, focused on the year’s top priorities. The summer activity report will give you a sense of the types of events engaged in, including the special event with Abuela Margarita from Mexico! Unfortunately, I have not yet completed our reports on our March and September Equinox Peace Events and Grandfather’s November Birthday Celebration yet - However, I shall post a photo album on our *Circle of All Nations* Facebook page SOON, so you can embrace the energy!

3. Here are a few of our key reports for the year:

[2016 CAN Summer Activity Report Bilingual final.pdf](#)

[CAN Child and Youth Care Worker Workshop Report](#)

[2016 CAN August 3 Commemorative Note on the Water Stewardship Work of William Commanda](#)

[2016 Circle of All Nations August UN International Indigenous Day Blog](#)

Circle of All Nations Storytelling

[AUROVILLE CANADA AVI Canada Yearly Report](#)

[Mark Lipman's Poem about the 2010 Gathering](#)

[CIRCLEOFALLNATIONS/Colleen Gray's 2002 Memory of Meeting Grandfather William](#)

AND ALREADY IN 2017, note the mini-reports of the following the activities!

January 14 [2017 Luma's GWC Peace Event Event with Association Sacred Circle France](#)

January 28 [2017 KINDERGARTEN DROPOUT Book Discussion at Singing Pebble](#)

February 19 [The Awakening Documentary Screening](#)
[The Awakening Report](#)

February 25 [Elder Evelyn Commanda Dewache at the Hope for the Living International Fashion Show Fundraiser](#)

February 28 *Circle of All Nations* presentation at the University of Ottawa Indigenizing and Decolonizing the Academy Symposium (I shall post notes soon!)

4. **CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF GRANDFATHER'S PEACE BUILDING**

Fifty years ago, our inimitable William COMMANDA, the man ever in command of his own agenda, launched his own peace campaign on the occasion of Canada's 100th birthday – he hosted an international peace gathering of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples in Eganville Ontario in 1967!

Circle of All Nations continues to animate his blueprint for respect for his homeland, (now also ours, his larger family's), and peace amongst all.

We hope you will join us on the journey – we can see no better trail into the future ourselves, than the one he has already walked!

5. ASINABKA/Sacred Chaudiere Site

Overview

The Asinabka work has preoccupied us intensely since 2014, and our website, www.asinabka.com is a repository of archival materials detailing the development of the William Commanda Vision for the Sacred Chaudiere Site; the 2007 challenging of Domtar's plans for hydro development; and the more recent challenges of the Windmill development plans and the City of Ottawa's decision to make planning and rezoning decision that transform this geologically, culturally and historically unique site from public space to permit massive high rise condo development.

Of note here is the fact that there is no clarity on asserted land ownership; further that while Windmill who has claimed to own the lands and appears to be the developer, that it is noted that it was actually the Domtar lawyer who appeared in Ontario Superior court on March 9 and October 26, 2016.

Appeals against the City of Ottawa's motion to dismiss our original appeal of November 2014 to the Ontario Municipal Board were overthrown at two levels of hearing at the Ontario Superior Court level, in an strange judicial process of *declining jurisdiction*; (*it seems to operate like this: a large platform is presented to explain/address challenging issues*; appeals to decisions address only each of the previous decisions; imagine an inverted funnel; it is a mechanism that is hard pressed to accommodate Indigenous thinking and approaches, as is also evident elsewhere in the criminal justice system). Nonetheless, what is notable here is that the court (Justice Hackland) dismissed a demand of \$66,000 from Developers and City of Ottawa for the March 9, 2016 day in court, acknowledging three things of import: that the defendants, the City and Developer were in a much better position to handle costs than the five appellants, who were engaged in the legal challenge solely in the context of **public interest**; that the issue of public interest in the area was significant and relevant; and that more than the one group of Algonquins, the *Algonquins of Ontario*, had a legitimate vested interest in the area. Also, there is recognition that other constitutional rights and consultation issues are also of critical importance, in unsundered, unceded, unconquered Algonquin territory, and especially so in the growing recognition of the legitimacy of Indigenous communities on land and land protection matters.

The most recent actions now tossed into the works has been the serving of notice to the federal government by the Algonquins of Quebec (the Algonquin Anishinabeg Tribal Council, under the leadership of Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg), that it is pursuing title of lands in the capital city, including at the Chaudiere Site; and the challenges of Algonquin of Ontario decisions by Grandmothers of Pikwakanagan.

Contentious Issues

The past few years have been wrought with contentious practices that sadly, have perpetuated divisive colonial practices, political manipulations and duplicity,

questionable interventions in schools, organizations, governing bodies, and advancement of capitalist and neoliberal agendas.

These play out against a backdrop of high profile Indigenous items: Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women; Residential School Legacy and the Truth and Reconciliation; acceleration in youth suicide, First Nations children's welfare, Standing Rock and pipeline issues, land title assertions, Metis and Inuit issues, and more; and the larger global spectrum of climate change, famine, terrorism, war, migrations, refugees, racism, political strife, physical and mental health crises. While we are aware of the duplicities, we do not address them in this report. Many relationships have been fragmented despite Grandfather's decades of outreach and peace building.

The Chaudiere Falls resonate in many hearts. When William Commanda challenged expansion of the hydro dam here, (ironic to remember this now, given the breach of the dam in California), presenting instead a vision for healing of relations with consistent with the Laws of Nature, he was told, *What you are asking for will not happen*, the colonial will being that indomitable. He responded, *I love you anyway; we are not going to fight with boxing gloves, just with the truth.*

While William Commanda focused actively on the global Asinabka Indigenous Centre vision over the past two decades, in fact Indigenous interest in presence on the global stage was registered at the United Nations by him and his Indigenous colleagues in 1945; further, Ottawa was already the meeting place of the North American Indigenous Nations Government then. Even further back, the latest archaeological evidence confirms Indigenous gatherings here over seven thousand years ago. North America is now the home of the world. Without Indigenous embedded in the Centre, how can things unfold? Fifty years ago, Grandfather Commanda hosted his first international gathering of people in Eganville, and even the CEO of Weyerhaeuser joined the Indigenous tribes! Indigenous presence is growing in vibrancy and visibility in the Nation's consciousness and conscience, despite the odds.

In addition to presenting the legacy vision and challenging rezoning and privatization, we have also presented information that addresses the geological, cultural/heritage, Indigenous, sacred, historical and contemporary importance of this site as a singular public zone; we have also researched and documented its significance as a world "temple" site. We trust leadership will emerge to redirect us all to a vision of healing, inclusion and peace.

As noted, a separate document on the chronology of activities on the Asinabka file has been prepared for ease of reference, and is included as a link in this year end report. Extensive reports on all Circle of All Nations interventions are included in full in the website, including several from 2016.

[2016 CIRCLE OF ALL NATIONS YEAR END ASINABKA SACRED CHAUDIERE SITE REPORT](#)