

A VISION FOR VICTORIA ISLAND

Victoria Island Comprehensive March 2003 Report

Presented by William Commanda

Algonquin Elder

-

A MESSAGE FROM ELDER WILLIAM COMMANDA

March 11, 2003

As many of you know, we have been working for several years to develop the proper vision for work at Victoria Island, the sacred, spiritual meeting grounds of our Anicinabe ancestors.

A two fold vision has emerged. It is focused on

- healing, strengthening and uniting Aboriginal peoples, and
- sharing indigenous values and culture with all others.

The time is now ripe to advance this work. We need to identify young people who will work with the Elders and the communities to bring this vision to life.

I invite each of the Bands to send representatives to a one day meeting at my Lodge in Kitigan Zibi on April 17, 2003 to address this matter. All

other interested parties are also invited to participate. Unfortunately, there is no funding available for this gathering. However, lunch will be provided.

Please confirm your attendance before April 10,2003 to info@circleofallnations.com or call 613-599-8385.

Thank you for your interest in and support of this work.

William Commanda

231 Pitobig Mikan

Maniwaki, Quebec

J9E 3B1

Commencing in April, information about the Victoria Island Initiative and related events will be posted on the Circle of All Nations web site – www.circleofallnations.com; information is also available at Douglas Cardinal's web site - www.djcarctitect.com

VICTORIA ISLAND HEALING AND PEACE BUILDING CENTRE INITIATIVE

CONTENTS

1. SECTION I BACKGROUND

A. OVERVIEW

B. A CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND

C. OUTREACH AND CONSULTATION

D. SUPPORT

2. SECTION II PLANS AND PRIORITIES

CORE OBJECTIVE, STRATEGIC PLAN AND
PRIORITIES

3. SECTION III PROPOSED WORKPLAN

A. PROPOSED SHORT TERM TIME FRAME

B. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENTAL RESOURCE REQUIRMENTS

4. APPENDICES (See Website:www.circleofallnations.com)

1. Victoria Island – The Central Two Fold Vision

2. March 27-28 Meeting Report (excerpts)

3. March Meeting Final Report

4. Chronology on Elder Commanda's work

VICTORIA ISLAND HEALING AND PEACE BUILDING CENTRE INITIATIVE

SECTION I BACKGROUND

A. OVERVIEW

Victoria Island has been the traditional spiritual meeting grounds of the Algonquin peoples for countless centuries. Over the past three decades, Aboriginal peoples have reclaimed their right to bring ceremony and gatherings back to this land. Many individuals and groups, both Algonquin and non Algonquin, have held meetings and sacred ceremonies on the Island, retrenching the indigenous spirit in its soil.

Along a separate path, the National Capital Commission, manager of the site, has, over the past decade, contracted Aboriginal Architect Douglas Cardinal to develop a vision for an Aboriginal Centre within the nation's capital. Various parties have been involved in these discussions.

It is generally acknowledged that Victoria Island is unceded Algonquin Territory. As is evidenced in a painting of a prayer ceremony at the Chaudiere Falls dating back to 1613, this area served as an important sacred ceremonial place for the original peoples of the land. And it seems that the land has been waiting for these people to ignite the ancient communal fires again.

William Commanda is the senior Algonquin Elder in this territory, and since 1970, has been the Keeper of three sacred wampum belts of spiritual and historic

importance, the Seven Fires Prophecy Belt, the 1700s Belt and the Jay Treaty Border Crossing Belt. In the late nineties, Elder Commanda and Firekeeper Peter Decontie approached Algonquin Anishinabeg Tribal Council leaders with a vision for the Island:

Returning the grounds to its spiritual purpose by the building a healing centre.

Immediately, five communities expressed their support in writing. Elder Commanda also commenced sharing this vision at his International 2000 Millennium Peace Gathering and his annual Circle of All Nations Gatherings.

In August 2001, Elder Commanda turned his fuller attention to the Victoria Island vision, and of his own motivation, accompanied by Romola and Douglas Cardinal, visited many Algonquin communities to seek their input. Douglas Cardinal translated his spiritual vision for a place of healing into preliminary conceptual designs. These are of such grace and fluidity and are so fully attuned to the spirit of the land and indigenous peoples that they have drawn wide spread respect from Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples.

They were greatly encouraged by the interest in and support for the vision as expressed by both old and young Algonquin people. Hundreds have affirmed this support in writing. The Algonquin Anishinabeg Nation Tribal Council (Abitibiwinni, Eagle Village, Kitchisdakik, Kitigan Zibi, Lac Simon and Long Point) passed two resolutions endorsing the initiative in November 2001 and 2002.

They also initiated contact with various Aboriginal organizations engaged in healing initiatives in the Ottawa/Hull area, with the national Aboriginal political organizations, as well as with several senior federal department representatives or ministers. They discussed the matter with the Governor General and His Excellency on two occasions. They have also discussed the project informally at numerous other meetings, both individually and collectively.

There has been overwhelming support for the establishment of a Healing and Peace Building Centre as envisioned by Elder Commanda.

Preliminary ideas for the focus of such a centre include:

1. healing of the Mother Earth and environmental and sustainable development;
2. individual and community healing: spirituality, substance and sexual abuse treatment, language retention, arts and crafts, cultural revival;
3. healing programs for offenders;
4. indigenous education;
5. youth empowerment;
6. anti-racism, and nation to nation peace building.

In short, the focus is on programs and processes that can lead to earth, individual and group healing, development and peace.

These ideas have been developed as a two fold vision, consistent with views of the Elders and peoples of the territory and the sacred prophecies of indigenous peoples.

The two fold vision focuses

- first on the healing, strengthening and unification of the Aboriginal peoples, and
- second on sharing indigenous ideology, values and culture with all others, in order to develop a circle of all nations and a culture of peace.

The time is now ripe to develop and advance these ideas more formally.

B. A CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND

The vision for a healing and peace building centre in the heart of the country emerges out of the ashes of the colonization of this land. A short overview of the historic and current conditions of the lives of Aboriginal peoples is presented to underline the imperative need for an autonomous indigenous vision and actualization of the work on Victoria Island and its relevance for the whole country.

Our Home on Native Land

Our land is more valuable than your money. It will last forever. It will not perish as long as the sun shines and the waters flow, and through all the years it will give life to men and beasts. We cannot sell the lives of men and animals, and therefore we cannot sell the land. It was put here by the Great Spirit and we cannot sell it because it does not really belong to us... As a present to you we will give you any thing we have that you can take with you, but the land we cannot give.

Crowfoot

The presence of the

Four legged and winged people

Reminds us

That we are all children of Mother Earth

She nurtures us

As the mother nurtures her child

Walk upon her softly

With reverence and respect

The air is precious to the Red Man,

For all things share the same breath

The beasts, the trees, the man

Chief Seattle Dwamish

The land speaks of its purpose to the people who belong to it in a way that those who believe the land belongs to them cannot ever really understand. That is the fundamental reality of all colonized lands and here in Canada, it is the central truth that many people of diverse heritage must understand in order to reconcile the great angst in our national identity.

For the Great Divide in Canada is not the conflict between the French and the English, the east and the west, the earliest settlers and the other immigrants, its lighter and darker skinned peoples, or this country's historic

tensions with its neighbours to the south; rather *it lies hidden in the deep and profound alienation from the original peoples of the land*, peoples who invariably live a more anguished life at every level than all the other inhabitants of the country.

Canada, governments and citizens both, needs to take a close and honest look at the history of the exploitation of the resources of the people who occupied this continent for countless centuries, the expropriation of the land, and the attempted cultural genocide. Then it needs to make genuine amends for these abuses. Only then will it be able to acknowledge and respect what the original peoples can teach and contribute to our joint development.

Elder Commanda expressed this in a profound and moving way in a meeting with the Governor General and His Excellency, and the Chairman of the National Capital Commission:

I ask you to look within and ask who you are, what you are doing here and who was here before you. Only then will you be able to forgive yourselves for what you and your ancestors have done. After that, you will be guided to do the right and honourable thing by the indigenous peoples, and we will all find healing together. (William Commanda)

In 1990s, the ancestral voices spoke from the land. They aroused and commenced the difficult process of unifying the first children; and they held up a mirror to the rest of the country in which governments and citizens could see both their darker selves and history as well as the potential for a better trail into the future.

This year, the Honourable Robert D. Nault, P.C., M. P., Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, in his presentation to the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs, Northern Development and Natural Resources stated that "Geographically, my riding is bigger than France." (January 27, 2003). It is an interesting reminder of how this great continent might have looked to the earliest newcomers.

Indeed, when the French first arrived in the New World, and realized its vastness and resources, France's first objective was to subject the Aboriginal peoples to its authority and to assimilate them. But commerce, in the form of the fur trade, became the defining quality of the relationship, and *exploitation of the resources of the land through the people* rather than theft of the land guided the initial spirit of colonization.

When the British looked to these the northern lands, it was the French whom they conquered in 1760. But the great Algonquin chief Pontiac resisted this invasion into his country and drove the British back to the sea. Fearful of this strong resistance to occupation, King George 111 of Britain issued the Royal Proclamation of 1763. More than a third focuses on relations with the Aboriginal peoples, who were acknowledged as organized societies with which treaties must be negotiated. The key elements of this founding constitutional document include *the acknowledgement of the nations and tribes as politically distinct groups, acknowledgement of the Crown's responsibility to provide 'protection', and establishment of a treaty procedure to obtain 'consent' for land settlement.*

The treaty process was the peaceful and not "warring" mechanism to establish relationships between peoples and nations, to reconcile their interests, and it implied a consent, a voluntary adherence, a reciprocal acknowledgement and a mutual respect by the parties. The Proclamation has remained so important to Aboriginal peoples because it confirms that they have an incontestable right over the land.

Aboriginal peoples of the east recorded such agreements in their sacred, ceremonial artifacts – wampum belts and strings; for them, the sacred, the spiritual dimension was an integral component governing all arrangements of life, and they trusted that the agreements would be honoured and respected accordingly. Sadly, many of these sacred items were stolen, confiscated or destroyed, and their stories and records lost, forgotten, ignored or denied. But three Wampum Belts carried by Elder Commanda remain vital and relevant to the indigenous issues of these times: one a prophecy belt and the other two agreement belts. They have guided the work of the Elder for thirty years, and are particularly relevant to this initiative:

THE SACRED WAMPUM BELTS

In 1970, Elder William Commanda became Keeper of three sacred wampum belts of historical and spiritual importance. These belts, together with another one which disappeared many decades ago, were held by his great, great grandfather, Pakinawatik, and they carry testimony of significant prophecies, agreements and understandings which have

guided the Anicinabe peoples for centuries. They have inspired the Elder's work over the past thirty years. In 1987, he began sharing the messages of the Wampum Belts publicly during the constitutional debates, and he has continued to do so since. Elder Commanda notes that the three belts he carries are living belts, since they are not housed in museums, and of late he has shared their messages with increasing urgency. This is consistent with the prophecy that speaks of the return of the voice of indigenous peoples.

The core messages of the three Wampum Belts is shared here.

The Seven Fires Prophecy Belt

Elder Commanda is believed to be the keeper of this ancient sacred belt dating back to the late 1400s at the time of the unfolding of its final message – the message of CHOICE – about our relationships with each other and with all creations of Mother Earth. Will we be guided by values of sharing, balance and harmonious co-existence?

The 1700s Belt

In this three figure belt about equitable SHARING, William Commanda's ancestors inscribed their understanding about sharing the resources of their native land and their values and ideology with the newcomers, the French and the English, in the spirit of a confederacy. The inherent value of sharing remains the elusive quest of our times.

The Jay Treaty Border Crossing Belt

This belt underscores the fundamental spiritual message of indigenous peoples about BORDERLESSNESS: the Elder's people, the Mamuwini, the nomads, belong to North America, and as such they retain a sacred connection and responsibility to the land they are born to. As Elder Commanda puts it, "My territory is as the river flows, as the bird flies and as the wind blows."

(What is fascinating and intriguing right now is that on 6 March 2003, Victor Thursky faxed Elder Commanda a copy of a photograph from the 1920s of a group of Algonquin peoples holding the four wampum belts and a string of wampum beads. The fourth (missing) belt is longer than the Jay Treaty Border Crossing Belt, has two borders of darker (purple) wampum beads and a central band of white beads around a thin centre thread of dark beads. It is obviously distinguishing two paths. When one considers the two fold vision that is emerging for Victoria Island, the question arises – is the missing wampum belt guiding this work as well?

Historic Context

If there is any doubt that the original peoples were in fact dealt with dishonourably and cruelly by the newcomers, the following itemization of the trials they were obliged to endure following the arrival of the earliest newcomers should be sobering.

The struggles commence with the land, and this remains an issue of great contention. The fundamentally opposed understanding of one's place and responsibilities on the Earth, the opposing viewpoints of owning land versus being owned by the land, and the new energy of 'comodifying' what had been viewed as sacred: these constituted the climate of confusion, misunderstanding, exploitation and expropriation under which the land treaties were negotiated, and they bred a legacy of distrust and conflict.

People are baffled today when Elder Commanda still says we cannot sell Mother Earth, 'for who would sell his mother?' Many, who had little or no lands in their countries of origin, have forgotten that only a few centuries ago, the land was the common resource of the peoples who resided upon her. Now people are faintly uncomfortable when Elder Commanda asserts, even your Bible says, in Leviticus Chapter 25, that the land cannot be owned.

Over the past year, he has also referred to this quotation from the Student Bible (New International Edition 1986) for this The Year of Jubilee:

The land must not be sold permanently, because the land is mine and you are but aliens and my tenants. Throughout the country that you hold as a possession, you must provide for the redemption of the land.

The complementary explanatory note entitled 25:28 Property Rights states, "God's law provided for a kind of redistribution of wealth every 50 years, when all land would revert to its original owners. The tendency for the rich to buy up all the property (which originally had been divided equally among families) was reversed in the Year of Jubilee. In essence, you could not sell your land, only lease it).

Yes, treaties were not negotiated in true faith here in Canada. And of course, over much of the country, there were no treaties at all. Certainly, this is the case for Victoria Island.

A full reconciliation seems beyond us at this time. But it is definitely dawning on many that in this time of crisis in the Earth's health and well being, we may need the prayers and forgiveness of the indigenous peoples of the land to lead us to the road of healing, balance and integration.

If divorce from the land was one devastating way of stripping the indigenous peoples off their homes, it was only matched by the Indian Act, conceived by the country's first Prime Minister, John A. McDonald (who also acted as his own minister of Indian Affairs). In 1876, he unleashed measures which were aimed at stripping them of their identity, by defining who was and was not Indian, and in that process dividing and

conquering them, destroying their political, judicial and cultural structures, and their spirit of self reliance and independence.

The third crucial blow, and perhaps the most destructive, came with outlawing of their spiritual ceremonies. Here government attacked what the priests could not eliminate – the profound and integrated spirituality that impacted every facet of their lives.

The next attempt at cultural genocide came in 1892 with the Residential School era when children were not only frequently removed by force from their homes and every vestige of their "Indianess", including their language, attacked and undermined, but they were also violated physically and sexually. Sixty years later it was the time of the "Sixties Scoop", when the families were further eroded as native children from across the country were forcibly removed from their homes and housed with white families. In 1968 there was the White Paper, designed to further erode the status of the First Peoples, and eliminate the federal government's responsibility to them.

Current Reality

For Aboriginal Peoples

The OKA crisis, fought over the issue of expanding a golf course over ancient aboriginal burial grounds, brought the different beliefs about land into sharp focus again, galvanized native peoples across the country into unity, and placed Aboriginal issues firmly on the front burner of the nation's attention. And in the face of the current reality, Canada was forced to see the ugly reflection of its racist and exploitative past.

The overt and systemic racism at the core of Canada's relationship with the indigenous peoples has become most graphically illustrated over the course of the last forty years in the criminal justice system. Several highly publicized cases served to draw attention to the disproportionate representation of indigenous peoples in all segments of Canada's justice system – contact with police, courts, prisons and release programs:

- the 1971 murder and subsequent travesty of justice in the investigation of the Helen Betty Osborne rape and murder case,
- the 1988 police shooting of J.J. Harper, and
- the blatant racism integral to the arrest, trial and conviction of Donald Marshall Junior for a murder he had not committed.

This is a sad irony. Elder Commanda's people are the Mamuwini, the nomads; he tells often of how the Algonquins comprise 84 nations who spanned the North American continent. Now, the crushing of the spirit of the peoples has come full circle as so many young Aboriginal people pound the confines of their cells.

But this is not the only issue. Aboriginal peoples are denied any socio-economic and political power as an entity. While other ethnic groups have for decades been able to form associations to preserve and celebrate their diversity and individuality, the

indigenous peoples have been denied the same opportunities to preserve their identities, languages and traditions. They have also been denied the right to unity. They have been attacked at the core of their spiritual heritage, that fundamental belief that "*We are all related*", and this has weakened them immeasurably.

They are also amongst

- the poorest, and struggle with homelessness or impoverished living conditions, both on and off reserve,
- suffer significant health crises, and struggle with debilitating substance abuse, fetal alcohol syndrome and fetal alcohol effect,
- experience the highest youth suicide rates,
- experience the highest school dropout rates,
- struggle with unemployment, on and off reserves
- have more single mother families, and
- suffer high rates of sexual, physical and mental abuse.

For the Aboriginal and non Aboriginal peoples

It is on the land again that we can explore our common position. For the past twenty years, Elder Commanda has been reminding us of the worsening conditions of life on Mother Earth. This took a most poignant form when he offered the opening prayer at the first World Summit on Arts and Culture, hosted by Canada in 2000.

As always, he acknowledged Mother Earth. He pointed out how he could not drink the waters on his reserve any longer. He mentioned the people who were dying of lung cancer because of the poor quality of the air, and of skin cancers because we have no protection from the strong rays of the sun any more. And finally, he told how he could no longer practice his art of canoe making because the birch tree could no longer grow big enough. It was a sad eulogy to the four chief elements. (William Commanda)

Now, as the world is forced to address environmental issues collectively, and we debate the Kyoto agreement, more and more of us cannot help but feel a panic in our very personal lives as we begin to realize where our disrespect for the four sacred elements has left us.

Just a few reminders should provoke our attention:

- it is estimated that in about 150 years, we depleted the oil and gas it took the planet 300 million years to accumulate. In just 100 years, the world population has grown from 1.5 billion to over 6 billion people, who will have ever increasing energy resource needs,
- the climate is changing dramatically; reckless clear cutting of forests has destroyed air quality and water balances,
- the air that we breathe, drinking water and the seas are contaminated by the wastes of industrialization,

- soil is being eroded, modified by chemicals and is losing its fertility,
- farming is in crisis; mad cow disease is a new concern and we have now embarked on farming sealife; increasingly we use genetically modified foods, and
- old and new diseases threaten whole nations with annihilation.

As we transform the wild, we grow further estranged from the life sources that sustained humanity from its very beginnings. With this alienation from Mother Earth has also come greater anxiety about our physical, mental and emotional health.

Here in North America, we now see the fruits of our unquenchable self centred materialistic drive in the new crises – disproportionate distribution of wealth, homelessness, crime, violence, substance abuse, and the anger, violence and hopelessness reflected in today's youth. These struggles take their place against the back drop of a looming global war.

Yes, we are living in difficult times. But the spirit of the indigenous peoples is not extinguished. Despite the years of silencing, it is rising and presenting the world with new ways of understanding

- our relationship with Mother Earth (sustainable development),
- our relationships with each other (restorative practices),
- health (wholistic healing) and indeed,
- with an all encompassing spiritual dimension.

Many world spiritual leaders now recognize that the salvation of the Earth is inextricably connected with the salvation of the indigenous peoples, and few, spiritually inclined or otherwise, can deny that the Earth and all her creatures are in great agony.

Elder Commanda likes to quote this Native American Prayer whenever the occasion arises, because it is a dire and sobering warning about the irrevocable equalizer gaining on all our lives:

Only after the last tree has been cut down,

Only after the last river has been poisoned

Only after the last fish has been caught

Only then will you find that money cannot be eaten.

When the earliest newcomers arrived in North America, they, primarily the French, were dependent on the indigenous peoples first for their survival and later for their economic sustenance with the fur trade. Then, here in Canada, the British needed the military prowess of the Indians, and in particular the legendary Algonquin leader Tecumseh (the other Algonquin chief who like the great Pontiac worked so hard to unite the indigenous

peoples), to secure the north from encroachment by the Americans. Now, we find more and more people from across the world are beginning to seek out indigenous peoples for a spirituality integrated as "*the way of life*". Though it has been underground and dormant for many years, is now resurfacing; many believe it holds the promise of individual and global healing and survival.

Elder Commanda reminds his peoples that their ancestors welcomed the newcomers, and that they now have a responsibility to honour that commitment. This is the energy that drives his work for racial harmony and inclusion, and his efforts have sometimes been misunderstood.

But with Elder Commanda's vision for the indigenous healing centre comes the opportunity for the reawakening and cleansing of the energy of the land and the incarnation of the fires of a circle of all nations and a culture of peace in an all encompassing spirit of unity.

OUTREACH AND CONSULTATION

Elder William Commanda, Romola and Aboriginal Architect Douglas Cardinal have worked formally and informally to make presentations on the Elder's vision for Victoria Island, and to seek input into and support for its development. (With the exception of one funded Elders Gathering, Elder Commanda has borne all the expenses for materials, meetings and travel in the development of this vision. He has undertaken this work in addition to his own Circle of All Nations work and demanding travel schedule, and without the support of any administrative infrastructure.)

The following is a breakdown of this outreach effort since 1998; please note that focused efforts to intensify this process commenced in August 2001.

Presentations at Meetings and Gatherings

Algonquin Anishinabeg Nation Tribal Council – 1998, 2001, 2002

Circle of All Nations Millennium Peace Gathering - 2000

March 2002 Victoria Island Healing Centre Algonquin Elders' Gathering – 2002

Circle of All Nations Annual August Spiritual Gathering – 2000, 2001, 2002

Circle of All Nations Annual August Spiritual Gathering – two formal workshops with international participants, one workshop with Algonquin peoples - 2002

Aboriginal Day Gathering of Nations Pipe Ceremony at Victoria Island – 2002

Circle of All Nations November Workshops - 2002

Presentations to Aboriginal Communities/Organizations

Lac Simon, Pikogan, Temiscaming, Winneway, Golden Lake

Kitigan Zibi

Aboriginal Organizations involved in healing programs in the Ottawa area

Aboriginal Healing Foundation

First Nations Confederacy of Cultural Educational Centres

National Aboriginal Health Organization

Aboriginal Community Healing Organizations

-

Presentations to Government

Formal presentations were made to Ministers or Senior Officials as follows; (many other ministries have been informed informally)

Governor General and His Excellency – 2000 and 2002

Heritage Canada

National Capital Commission

Public Works Canada

Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development

Health Canada

City of Ottawa

Elder Commanda has also shared the vision at international events in Germany, South Africa, United States and the Bahamas, and with indigenous Mayan, Hopi and Navajo elders. There is great interest and support for all the Elder's work from his diverse global community, which is exciting for the international peace building component of the Victoria Island vision.

-
-
-

C.

D. SUPPORT

Informal efforts to track the level of interest and support for this work has been undertaken by inviting people to sign the following petition of support. Thus far, over 500 people have signified such interest. In addition the Algonquin Anishinabeg Nation Tribal Council has passed two resolutions in support of the initiative, and several individual communities have also written letters of support.

In essence, there is an overwhelming outpouring of support for the proposal, though outreach efforts to date have been relatively low key.

We anticipate that support will grow enormously as others are engaged in the vision.

A HEALING CENTER AT

VICTORIA ISLAND

CONSISTENT WITH THE SEVEN FIRES PROPHECY,

**WE SUPPORT THE VISION FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A CENTRE
DEDICATED TO HEALING AND PEACE BUILDING FOR ALL NATIONS, AT**

VICTORIA ISLAND, THE TRADITIONAL SPIRITUAL MEETING GROUNDS OF THE ANICINABE PEOPLES

SECTION II PLANS AND PRIORITIES

CORE OBJECTIVE, STRATEGIC PLAN AND PRIORITIES

Core Objective

To reawaken indigenous ideology to advance healing at three fundamental levels:

- Healing, strengthening and unifying indigenous peoples
- Healing individual and collective relationships with Mother Earth
- Healing relationships with all others

Strategic Plan

A two pronged plan is envisioned to achieve this objective

- Create a Circle of Nations Spiritual Healing Centre for Aboriginal peoples to
 - Reclaim, develop and share programs designed to contribute to the healing of Aboriginal peoples in such fundamental areas as substance abuse, physical, mental and sexual abuse, suicide and self identity crises;
 - Promote the reclamation, retention and revitalization of language, education, culture, traditions and ways of life;
 - Unite and strengthen Aboriginal peoples in the spirit of the inherent indigenous birthright of interconnectedness (*We Are All Related*);
 - Reclaim ways of living in balance with Mother Earth

- Establish a Peace Building Centre For All Nations, dedicated to sharing indigenous values and ideology with non Aboriginal peoples by
 1. Advocating on behalf of Mother Earth
 2. Offering cross cultural training
 3. Promoting racial harmony
 4. Serving as resource for national and international peace building
 5. Sharing Aboriginal culture and traditions

Priorities

The key priorities for each component of the overall plan are envisioned as either processes, programs or spaces. Together they constitute a living ecosystem from which indigenous ideology can retrench on the sacred land, strengthen and be shared with all, and take its rightful place in the governance and values of this land. It is seen as going without saying that both women and men and young people will be actively involved in developing this vision with the Elders.

THE CENTRAL TWO-FOLD VISION

CIRCLE OF NATIONS SPIRITUAL HEALING CENTRE TO HEAL, UNIFY AND STRENGTHEN INDIGENOUS PEOPLES	PEACE BUILDING CENTRE FOR ALL NATIONS, TO SHARE THE VALUES AND IDEOLOGY OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES
Spiritual/Ceremonial Centre	Peace Building ‘Think Tank’
Cultural Revival – Arts, Crafts	Cultural Sharing
Language Centre	Racial Harmony
Elders’ Gathering Place	Meeting Rooms
Healing Centre/Meeting Centre	Conference Centre
Archives/Library/Historic Research	Auditorium/Concert Hall
Medicines/Gardens/Greenhouse	Accommodations

Traditional Knowledge/Ideology	United Nations Meeting Space
Youth Developmental Centre	Restaurant/Gift Store
Children's Developmental Centre	Museum/Gallery
Research/Planning/Education	Children's/Youth Museum

info@circleofallnations.com

The vision and the land must be held in trust by all the Algonquin Elders in perpetuity, as custodians of the sacred land, and a unified Algonquin peoples must serve as the host nation.

SECTION III WORKPLAN

A. PROPOSED SHORT TERM TIME FRAME

**April 7
Comments/Feedback to
info@circleofallnations.com**

**April 17
Consultation
Meeting hosted
Elder Commanda
at his Lodge,
Kitigan Zibi**

**All interested
parties are invited
to participate;
please confirm
attendance by
April 10 to
info@circleofallnations.com or call
613-599-8385**

**May 24 Victoria
Island Planning**

**Meeting 1 –
Ottawa**

**Launch Reference
Document and
Brochure**

**June 21 Gathering
of Nations Pipe
Ceremony at
Victoria Island**

**August 4 Victoria
Island Planning
Meeting 2 – Elder
Commanda's
Lodge**

**Sept 2 Launch Set
Up Phase**

**November 10
Launch – Formal
Phase One
Development**

Please Note: At this time, Algonquin people must come forward to identify a team to advance this vision. A core team of at least three people is needed to secure developmental funding, develop a strategic plan, plan feasibility studies, initiate consultations, coordinate policy and program development and recruit staff for the developmental phase of this initiative.

Elder Commanda, now in his ninetieth year, has initiated the first steps, and prepared the soil for this undertaking. Younger Algonquin leaders are urgently needed to cultivate the seed.

B. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENTAL RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS

The following is a preliminary estimate of the resources required to advance the vision for the Victoria Island initiative during the program development phase. A separate estimate will be prepared for the design phase.

Consultation and Human Resources

Advisors, supporters and stakeholders

- Consultation on This Proposal (Algonquin communities, key stakeholders)
- April 17 Outreach (Algonquin communities, local Aboriginal Healing Organizations, National Aboriginal Organizations, other key stakeholders)
- Elders' Circle
- Advisory Team
- Community Circles
- Patrons' Circle

Staff

- Secretariat (3)
- Phase 1 Resource Team (10)

Work Focus (categories to be verified or modified in consultations)

Elders' guidance

Coordination

Administration

Secretarial/Reception/Technical Support

Communications/Public Relations

Research

Policy development

Program development

Legal services

Financial

Fund raising

Facility development/liaison with architectural design team

APPENDICES (See Website: www.circleofallnations.com)

1. Victoria Island – The Central Two Fold Vision
2. March 27-28 Meeting Report (excerpts)

3. March Meeting Final Report

4. Chronology on Elder Commanda's work