

VICTORIA ISLAND INDIGENOUS CENTRE MAY 2005 UPDATE

Full Moon, May 23, 2005

**MESSAGE FROM WILLIAM COMMANDA,
ALGONQUIN ELDER, KITIGAN ZIBI ANISHINABEG**

RE: VICTORIA ISLAND INDIGENOUS CENTRE

1. I am writing to provide you with a status report on the Victoria Island Initiative.

2. These are the key activities and accomplishments of the past three years:
 - a. Presentation of vision to the Algonquin Tribal Councils and Bands
 - b. Community consultation
 - c. Elders' Gathering to develop vision
 - d. Unified expression of general support from Algonquin Nations in both Quebec and Ontario
 - e. Promotion to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal groups, including National Aboriginal Organizations, Governor General etc
 - f. Securing of funding in the amount of \$50,000 to
 - a. develop the architectural plans to the next level, and

- b. contract services of former Parks Canada Agency CEO to National Capital Commission to prepare a draft proposal to cabinet, in consultation with key responsible ministries
- g. Negotiation of the proposed plan, as attached, which generally positions the Algonquin nations to assume a strong leadership role in the initiative consistent with territorial rights and responsibilities, while affording all other Aboriginal peoples from across the country, First Nations, Inuit and Metis, their rightful place in this national initiative.

3. Since the finalization of this draft proposal, which, I stress, *has not yet been reviewed formally nor endorsed by Cabinet*, the federal government has been in turmoil, and this has hindered any further advancement of the initiative.

4. The attached proposal only addresses the portion of the vision that pertains to the Indigenous Centre on the eastern half of the island.

The parts of the vision that propose, one, the conference centre (hotel, concert hall, banquet complex) and two, the pow wow grounds, in this place our ancestors called

Asinabka, Place of Glare Rock, need to be developed to ensure indigenous control of the development in this traditional meeting area of our ancestors. We have recently lost much ground in the LeBreton Flats and Lac Lemay areas.

Likewise, the vision for the healing of our relationship with Mother Earth, by freeing the waters of the *Akikpautik*, the sacred Chaudière Rapids, and creating a park on Chaudière Island, which, we note, the principles guiding the work of Parks Canada Agency are consistent with, needs to be advanced. The current initiative to designate the Ottawa

River a Heritage River can serve to support this end.

5. The momentum building with the Olympics 2010 preparations, when the world comes to Canada, lends urgency to the need to develop the Victoria Island project, to capitalize on the opportunity for Aboriginal Peoples to take their rightful place in this land of our ancestry, in the spirit of unity that was our heritage and birthright.

6. Considerable interest in the project from Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals exists, and could be readily mobilized to advance the project.

7. I believe that it is time to assume our rightful responsibility in this land. This is consistent with the message of the Seven Fires Prophecy and the sacred Wampum Belt of our ancestors. We have lost much of our heritage over the past centuries, but it is time to find our strength and voices again. The future of our children demands this of us. Victoria Island offers us an opportunity to do this in a positive manner, and to heal the divisiveness within our communities. In unity lies our strength; as someone said, divided, we beg.

Since the national capital region falls within our unceded, unsundered, unconquered traditional territories, it is especially important for the Algonquin presence to be felt here. It is also important for indigenous values to influence the development of this country, as is inherent in the message of the Three Figure Welcoming Wampum Belt of our peoples.

We begin to see the influence of our traditional values taking hold globally:

Respect for Mother Earth (sustainable development, not exploitation)

Justice (restorative, healing practices, not just punishment)

Health (wholistic healing – spiritual, mental, physical and emotional)

Integrated spirituality, consistent with the Medicine Wheel.

But there is much more work to be done, to recover and entrench our old values in this land.

8. I am taking this opportunity to invite you to the **Fifth Annual Gathering of Nations Pipe Ceremony at Victoria Island at 10 a.m. on June 21, National Aboriginal Day**. I request that you forward this information and invitation to all the members of your communities.

9. Finally, I wish to invite you to participate in our **Annual Circle of All Nations Spiritual Gathering, this year scheduled for August 5, 6 and 7**, at my home on Pitobig Mikan, Maniwaki, Quebec. Again, the Victoria Island Initiative will be the subject of a special workshop. This year's theme is Celebrating Culture.

Thank you for your attention to and assistance with these matters.

Megwetch!

William Commanda

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