

**OPENING REMARKS
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**Parliament Hill Demonstration against the
Security and Prosperity Partnership -
Sunday August 19, 2007**

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Thank you to the organizers of this event for inviting me to join you here today on Parliament Hill. Some of you may know I am now ninety-three years old, and it is not always possible for me to do all the things asked of me. Hence I am not able to be with you in person.

However, I am pleased to send you greetings, and to welcome you to Algonquin Territory, the homeland of the people of the Ottawa River Watershed. You may be interested to know that the Montebello/Papineauville area was the traditional territory of our ancestral First Chief Majeki, contemporary of my great, great grandfather Pakinawatik, when my ancestors inhabited this area freely.

You may be aware that I carry three ancient Sacred Wampum Belts, upon which my ancestors inscribed their prophecies, agreements, and history.

The **Seven Fires Prophecy Wampum Belt** warned of the changes that would come into our lives with the arrival of the newcomers to North America, *Turtle Island*, and told of the important choices we would have to make at the time of the Seventh Fire – choices regarding our relationship with Mother Earth and each other – that time is upon us, and we have to choose wisely to ensure a meaningful heritage for all humanity and life forms. I am encouraged today to see so many young people thinking mindfully, and finding non-violent ways to express their deep concern for our collective future.

In 1700s, with the **Three Figure Welcoming Wampum Belt**, my ancestors in the centre welcomed the newcomers, then the French and English, joining their hands in friendship, agreeing to share our grand natural resources and our values in three equal parts; today, Indigenous Peoples still stand between the newcomers and the later settlers, and between federal and provincial/territorial governments. Across this vast land, we serve as the glue to link a fragile nation together. However, few will deny that we are the most disempowered and impoverished in the land of our ancestors, with our rights and heritage crushed; and the principle of sharing enshrined in the Wampum Belt has not yet materialized. We are marginalized not just by governments and institutions, but by citizens who now call this land home, and our history is little known to many of you.

But we are now *all* feeling the impact of the environmental crisis that has resulted from the reckless exploitation of our lands, in the air we breath, the

waters we drink, the contaminated earth, in the escalating climate change, and in our health. And now, some begin to bemoan the elimination of our traditional indigenous respect and responsibility for Mother Earth on the road to development.

But we also know the traditional values of the Aboriginal Peoples constitute the underlying safety net in Canada, reflected in its celebration of diversity, emphasis on social welfare, health, and justice, principles of equality of women, protection of children, and concern for the unborn generations – because *all* the peoples of the world came here to escape from lives of oppression and strife in their homelands. The recent identification of the *Seven Wonders of Canada* reveals that *our* love for this land is also reflected in the psyche of the nation. This realization is awakening in the hearts and conscience of the people in this land, and I believe that this is why you, workers, students, and concerned citizens, are now reaching out to me, an Indigenous spokesperson, and inviting my participation in this event. And I believe the spirit of the Wampum Belt is again speaking strongly today, for balance and sharing, respect and responsibility, because you are awakening to its message. Mother Earth needs the prayer of Indigenous Peoples.

The **Border Crossing Wampum Belt** was created between 1793 and 1796, when my country was divided without our consent, and my ancestors used the artificial white Hudson Bay beads with the genuine purple wampum in the creation of this belt – and many have heard me wonder how my ancestors knew the borders would one day dissolve; since 2002, many have seen me show the Globe and Mail Newspaper article which speculates about Canada becoming the 51st State of America. Today, you are gravely concerned about the implications of such changes across the borders, and rightly so. My prayer is for the igniting of indigenous values to safe guard us all across the continent.

My ancestors always knew we were all connected, and they knew that one day, the world would have to come to us in order to understand this. Even more, they knew that one day, the people would have to realize that they are also deeply connected to Mother Earth. Indigenous Peoples, though so few in number, have been making this statement repeatedly since the 1940s and the establishment of the United Nations, and even more urgently over the past twenty years – I believe we are the silent voice behind Agenda 21.

When the new people first arrived in the new world, they were largely motivated by greed, the realities of the day were war and genocide, and the ramifications were environmental exploitation and destruction; my ancestors were near destroyed. Today, three documentaries of the present day – *Corporations*, *Fahrenheit 911* and *An Inconvenient Truth* – show that we are still embroiled in the same struggles. But now, the *Law of Nature* is revealing herself as the great equalizer, with ominous implications for us all and for future generations. It is no wonder that health care is the primary concern of people in this country, for life itself is under attack. But still too often, we see the issues as separate. We need to realize how deeply interconnected these issues are, in order to develop a new blueprint for our collective future.

I say we need to move from greed and corporate domination to generosity and sharing; from fear and war to racial harmony and peace building; and from relentless environmental exploitation and abuse to the three Indigenous Rs – respect, responsibility and reverence for Mother Earth – the values enshrined in the Three Figure Welcoming Wampum Belt.

(I attach charts that depict these ideas graphically.)

We need to inspire others to embrace these values. First we look within to transform ourselves; and, recognizing that we are all connected, we reach out to transform our brothers and sisters and leaders. We strive to humanize institutions, a dilemma also for some of us trapped within, as the phrase goes, the *Machinery of Government*. This is the great challenge of our times – this is what the Seven Fires Prophecy warned us about. This is the task for which we have to strengthen ourselves.

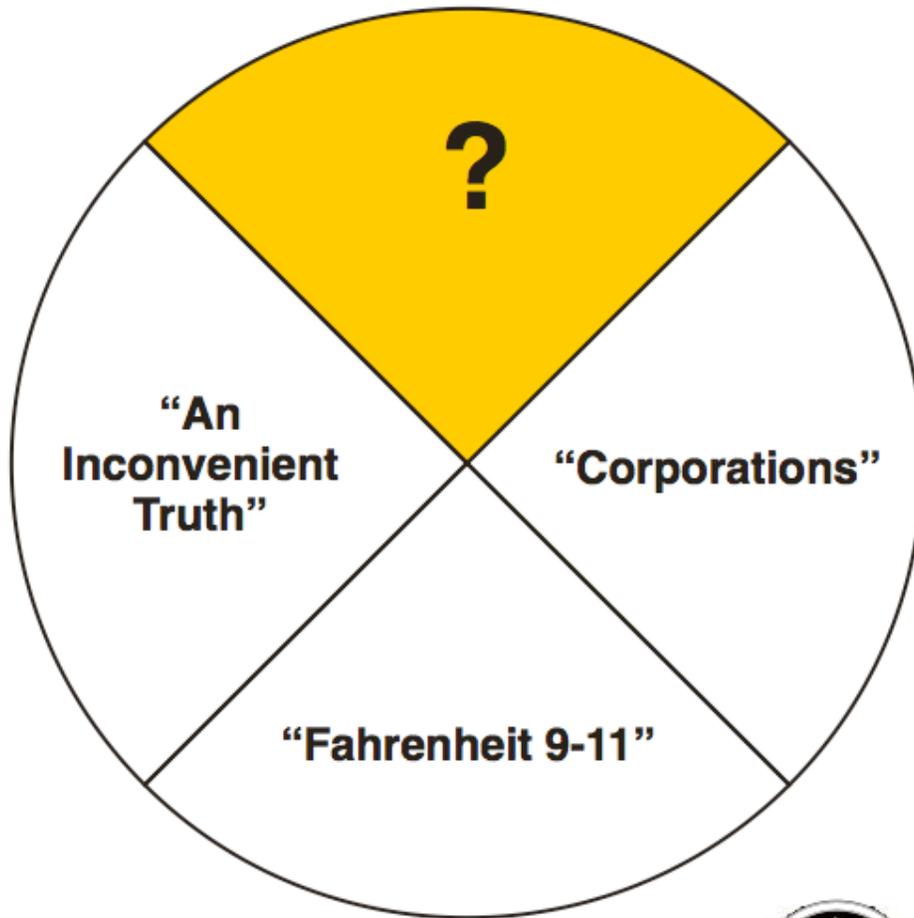
We have to walk around the Medicine Wheel to come to the proper centre – balancing our emotional, physical, mental and spiritual capacities, individually and collectively, as we spiral towards our potential strength together. We have to inspire people to come together with *One Mind, One Heart, One Love and One Determination*. We are now a global community.

As the Mahatma Gandhi once said, there is no way to Peace – Peace is the Way – it is my way to a *Circle of All Nations, a Culture of Peace*. I hope you will join me on this journey during this UN International Decade for a Culture of Peace.

Thank you deeply for welcoming my participation in this event. I see hope on the horizon, as we all grow into becoming our better, stronger selves, shaping our destiny with peace and hope here on the banks of the Ottawa River, the Mighty Kichissippi, drawing the others to our vision for a better future for all. I am sure my ancestors are taking note.

William Commanda
19 August, 2007

Dominant Ideologies



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A CULTURE OF PEACE

The Crucial Paradigm Shift

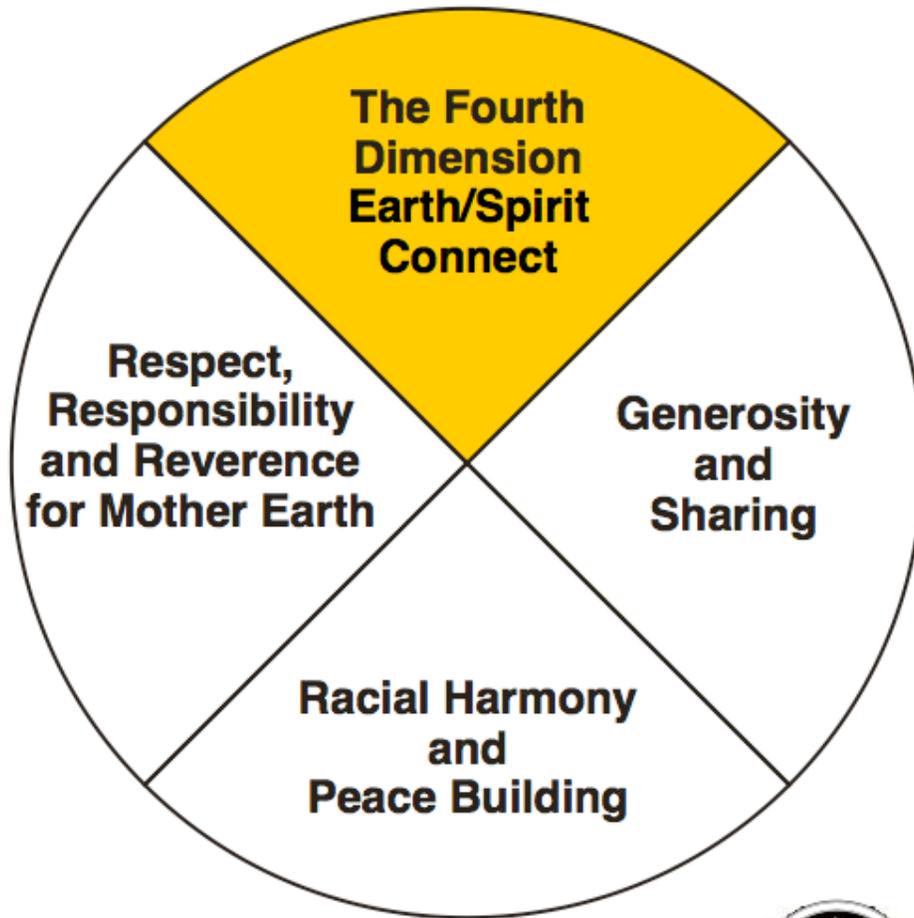


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The Light of The Eighth Fire



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