

**2013/2014 CORRESPONDENCE REGARDING PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT  
AT THE SACRED CHAUDIERE SITE – AS SHARED WITH CIRCLE OF ALL  
NATIONS**

**Ray Elgersma Letter to the Citizen Dec 13, 2013– as Shared with Circle of All  
Nations**

**Dear Editor**

I am expressing concern about Canada's vision and plans for the use of Victoria Island, Chaudiere Island and Albert Island. This letter is prompted in part by the vision of Grandfather William Commanda, an Algonquin elder.

He saw these three islands having such historical significance that they should only be developed as a public national historic site. They have served as a sacred meeting place for indigenous peoples for thousands of years. They have also served as a significant meeting place for some of our earliest French and English settlers.

These islands hold singular sacred archaeological and historic value for aboriginal people and needs to be respected. They are at the convergence of three rivers, significant during a time when focus by all on environmental sustainability is of utmost concern. They lie between the borders of Ontario and Quebec and are well placed to serve as sites of cultural convergence between the two dominant cultures that have given such a rich heritage to this land.

These islands sit on Algonquin land but they also sit in the shadows of the country's seat of power, the House of Commons. Grandfather William Commanda saw these islands as a truly sacred place in the nation's heartland that could continue to serve as a creative meeting place for collaborative thinking and

reflective contemplation for all people, indigenous and non-indigenous.

These islands have such potential for national significance that they should never be solely developed by private parties. There needs to be the political will to plan and develop a space that honours the role these islands have played for 1000's of years in the history of this land.

I recognize that the development of the vision for these islands spans many federal departments, political jurisdictions, the Algonquin Nation, and other responsibility centres. This development is not without its complexities and there must be public leadership shaping the vision and developing plans for these three islands.

I urge those in positions of power and influence to use their influence to stir the collective and collaborative national will to create momentum for development of public space that respects the sacredness of this meeting space for indigenous peoples and attracts citizens from across this country and abroad to a beautiful natural and national treasure.

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**Bryan Bowers' Letter to the Citizen Dec 13, 2013 – as Shared with Circle of All Nations**

Ottawa now has two divergent visions for the Chaudière/Asinabka region that will surely “change the way people look at Ottawa” as stated by Michael Wiggins of Windmill Development Group (Ottawa Citizen, Dec. 12). A vision that predates Windmill's vision was a healing vision that was put forward by the late Grandfather William Commanda. His vision called for “a sanctuary for all, a meeting place for all the world, a sacred space in the nation's heartland,” in other words, a Stanley Park in Ottawa.

Windmill's vision is a development vision and from where I was standing in the River View salon I did not hear the sustained applause as reported. Instead I heard a lot of whispers about how their development is ripping the heart out of Commanda's vision.

Windmill's vision metaphorically quarters the Chaudière/Asinabka region's apple, with Windmill ending up with three slices and Canada's First Peoples ending up with one.

Windmill acknowledged that the Chaudière/Asinabka region is one of the most important development sites in the country, a country that is still coming to grips with its past, a past rife with the negative outcomes of colonialism and in dire need of healing. Commanda's vision for the Chaudière/Asinabka region represents exactly that, an opportunity for healing. Being ideally situated between Canada's two founding colonial powers, French and English, it is Canada's quintessential diamond in the rough. Imagine Canada's First Peoples being allowed to develop their own sacred space in the nation's heartland, which would be representative of what Canada truly is, a tripartite nation.

The Chaudière/Asinabka region represents so much more than a development opportunity in the heart of Ottawa. It is after all the heart of our entire nation and in so being, is deserving of the input from all Canadians. Put the two divergent visions forward for all to see and let Canadians decide what they want at the heart of their nation, more condos or more trees?

Bryan Bowers  
Kingston, Ontario

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**Bryan Bowers' Letter to the Citizen Dec 13, 2013– as Shared with Circle of All Nations**

[thunderbirdrising](#)

[The Voice of Fairness and Common Sense](#)

**Another Sacred Aboriginal Site become Developer's Target**

[Dec15](#) by [lloydfourmier](#)

**A Perfect Example of Greed and Another Sad loss of a Significant Sacred Site.....**

**This is troubling to hear. Word is that Montreal's Domtar Corporation is poised to sell land that they may "possess" but likely do not "own" along the Ottawa River. Specifically, the small islands at Chaudière Falls in the shadow of Canada's Parliament buildings is about to be purchased by Windmill Holdings. Windmill plans to disturb the sacred soil on Chaudière Island as well as Albert and Victoria Islands.**

**It is always interesting to try to understand the ethics of corporations. In creating a corporation, the key members shield their identity from public scrutiny and the rightful ridicule they properly deserve.**

**As interesting, is the attempt to select certain recent historical fact and use it to obliterate a much deeper picture.**

According to Windmill, the history of the “Cauldron” and its islands began when Philemon Wright, “entitled” British Empire Loyalist floated his first raft of lumber down the Ottawa River in 1806 and subsequently built a lumber mill utilizing power from the Chaudière Falls. Within 20 years, his small settler community (called Wrightsville) had grown to a population of 700 and boasted 7 such mills.

Windmill shows an uncanny facility for selective history in outlining the lineage of corporate ownership from E. B. Eddy Corporation who sold the “land” to the Weston group in 1998. And in all the historical “due diligence” undertaken by the Windmill development group, not a word or thought to what existed on the site before Philemon Wright showed up in 1806. This to my mind is a very selective treatment of history and, indeed one intended to marginalize Aboriginal history and legitimate title.

Conversely, corporate managing partner Jonathan Weisteinde certainly neglects the fact that even among the Europeans; it was Samuel de Champlain who first set eyes on the site in 1603. The River, then known as *Kitchi-sippi*, meaning “The Great River” had long served the Algonquin people along the valley as a hunting and trading route. The falls at, the islands nearby and the entire shoreline was the home of the Amerindian tribe. They were called the “*Outaouak*” or the “*Otaoaa*” a name later anglicized to “Ottawa” for simplicity.

Chaudière Falls and the neighboring islands possess great significance in the tribe’s history that predated Champlain by centuries. Cultural events, blessings and memorials for the dead have long been part of the history of these islands.

It is troubling to know that this Falls and the Islands now is the target of Windmill Developments was never ceded by treaty and that, in truth Philemon Wright and the subsequent “owners” were merely squatters on lands on which they held no legitimate title. In many other parts of Canada, land was ceded to the Crown by way of negotiated treaties. The Ottawas held great attachment to their lands and refused to relinquish ownership. Instead, the lands were simply confiscated and passed along to people like Philemon Wright by the British Crown in appreciation to Wright’s opposition to the Revolutionary War in the Thirteen Colonies.

I should say that Windmill Developments managing partner has not completely left the Ottawas out of his deliberations. He states, ““There are some great First Nations’ names we could use.”. Being “used” is the operative term and my mind flashes to the Washington Redskins and the Cleveland Indians etc etc. What shame.

The vision of Jacques Greber (“The Greber Report” in 1949) who envisioned these sites public space with trees and free at last from commercial development is a vision that I can accept as fitting use of Aboriginal lands: to return them to their earliest use. I happen to share the vision of the late William Commanda OC (November 11, 1913 – August 3, 2011) and ask/beg that the greed of corporations spare this last scrap of land from residential development.

The National Capital Commission **MUST** seize ownership and stewardship of these sites and preserve them for future generations out of respect for the rightful owners of Chaudière Falls and the islands nearby.

I call upon all Ottawas to resist financial opportunity and demand respect for the culture and history that quietly lives on those islands. Land is Mother – we do not sell Mother.

I ask all fair minded people to contact their Federal Members of Parliament and demand that Chaudière Falls and the islands nearby be immediately designated as a National Historic Site. I have heard it said many times that the vicinity is legitimately a cradle of Canadian culture. There is lots of land in Canada for Windmill to exploit. Certainly these little specs of land on the Ottawa River

between Ottawa and Hull can be spared the indignity of bulldozers and the sacred bones of Ottawa ancestors can rest where they have rested since before Samuel de Champlain cast eyes upon it over 500 years ago.

A fitting step toward truth and reconciliation would see, on this site a healing lodge and, most certainly a significant marker commemorating those thousands of lives that ended in the Residential Schools.

I invite each of you to listen to the words of “Grandfather” William Commanda and his thoughts on this site, I can say those things no better

<http://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=william+commanda&docid=4908216808244154&mid=20441385BDE67C82CE3D20441385BDE67C82CE3D&view=detail&FORM=VIRE3#view=detail&mid=20441385BDE67C82CE3D20441385BDE67C82CE3D>

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### **Romola Thumbadoo’s Letter to the Citizen Dec 13, 2013 – as Shared with Circle of All Nations**

#### **The vision for the Sacred Chaudière Site as presented by Elder Dr. William Commanda, OC – by Romola Vasantha Thumbadoo, Coordinator, Circle of All Nations**

The Sacred Chaudière Site has come into some unprecedented attention this past week – unprecedented over recent decades that is, because the country’s greatest natural treasure, has been obscured from the reverence it used to be accustomed to receiving from time immemorial, and really, it never been seen or heard of by the vast majority of the people in the capital city. It was a meeting place of the Indigenous Peoples of North America for literally thousands of years, with evidence of human ancestors of the Paleolithic period marking their time here. Indigenous presence at the great circular rapids was noted by Samuel de Champlain on his first trip past the heart of the Medicine Wheel, where the Mighty Kichissippi (Ottawa) flows west to east and is joined by the Rideau and Gatineau. The Indigenous Peoples, rich in lives of symbol, knew this is where the wheel of life spins, and they honoured the place with prayer as they passed it on their canoes. How superstitious, pronounced Champlain, as he proceeded past the pounding rapids - that is till his canoe got caught on the rocks, he broke a leg and had to pray to his god for help; fortunately for him, nature was there, and a tree saved his life. But Queen Victoria too realized this was the power place, when she selected the *Asinabka, Place of Glare Rock*, for the capital city.

Immediately Philomen Wright arrived in this area in 1801, William Commanda’s direct ancestors were alarmed – their sugar bushes were being cut down and they challenged this. Wright produced a paper, an agreement signed by their ancestors, he said. They were horrified by this *Loup Gareau, this monstrous thing*. After the devastating two centuries of European attack on their lands, waters, trees, beavers, language, spiritual practices, lives and relationships, they were a decimated peoples, now facing a new threat at the sacred heart of their territory. Wright’s own daughter writes that the Algonquins responded with prayer, sacrifice and tobacco ceremony, to appease and transform the

acquisitive and destructive energy they saw in the felling of the precious maple medicine trees.

Two centuries later, William Commanda offered prayer and ceremony again to show the path to reconciliation and healing of relationships, with nature and amongst people. A humble and inspirational man from Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg, Quebec, beloved to people around the world as Grandfather and founder of the *Circle of All Nations*, he reclaimed the place of his people in the National Capital Region, and he presented a mighty, inclusive vision for the Chaudière Site. He saw it as public space, not private, and he ignited a fire and passion for this dream in many hearts and minds, not just Indigenous ones. William Commanda had many honours bestowed upon him during his long lifetime, none that he or his friends sought. He was a magnet and touchstone; he was presented with two honorary doctorate degrees from both sides of his ancestral river, appointment as Officer of the Order of Canada and the Aboriginal Achievement Lifetime award. But the most relevant to this story was the June 21 2006 Presentation of the *Key to the City of Ottawa* to him at Victoria Island. He shared his vision for the ancient sacred site of his ancestors publicly. In 2010, the City of Ottawa endorsed this vision and affirmed support for the Asinabka Indigenous Centre.

William Commanda presented a four-fold vision for *public* space: freeing the Chaudière Falls to the extent possible; city park and nature sanctuary; educational historical interpretive centre; peace building meeting site and an Indigenous centre on the Chaudière Site Islands. It is a profound, inclusive vision for transforming the devastating history of colonization but it is not a vision for replacing it with neoliberalism. It is a vision where all can play a role, Indigenous, citizens, governments, developers, artists, architects – and where all should.

The sacred site offers much to present a win-win situation for all on its waters and shores, and William Commanda supporters continue to affirm strongly, but not with “boxing gloves”, his vision for the Sacred Chaudière Site. Those of us who are not Indigenous believe it is our opportunity and responsibility to *Correct Mistakes of the Past and Look Towards the Future*.

Grandfather Commanda presented the sacred blueprint and legacy for reconciliation and healing and for: *vision not a mere plan, the golden goose, and not gold; public and not privatized space*. Countless people are grateful for his tireless efforts to awaken us to the true blessings of his land.

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