

## **ASINABKA SACRED CHAUDIERE SITE: CANADA'S SINGULAR CULTURAL HERITAGE SITE**

### **Critical Imperatives for the Protection of Asinabka Sacred Chaudiere Site – a unique site of singular geological, cultural, Indigenous, historical, heritage, sacred and contemporary within the National Capital Region and the Capital City**

We write on behalf of the Legacy Vision of Late Indigenous Elder William Commanda, regarding the return of Chaudiere Island for the creation of the Asinabka Eco Peace Park at the site of the Sacred Chaudiere Falls. We commence with his words:



William Commanda's ancestors from Lac Commandant/Lac Papineau, Quebec met the first occupier of this site, Philomenon Wright, at the very beginning of the 1800s, and they asserted the special significance of the place, as documented in Wright's own papers; the fact that it was considered a sacred site to the Algonquins of this watershed was already affirmed in Champlain's records in 1613. During the last twenty-five years of his life, commencing with the 1987 Constitutional Debates, William Commanda repeatedly asserted attachment and responsibility in this area.

Consistent with his Wampum Belt Indigenous heritage, William Commanda envisioned a place of reconciliation of First Peoples, the founding nations, (English and French), and all others in the heart of the national capital region and he worked hard to enlist people of diverse backgrounds in this plan. In addition to the public space of a "central park" at Chaudiere Island, and a restored Chaudiere Falls, (once considered second in magnificence only to the Niagara Falls), he projected a complementary Indigenous Centre/Hotel and Conference Centre for the Sacred Site of *time immemorial*: public and not privatized space. His vision is one of global importance and potential; further, it is not one without the financial potential of the *Golden Goose*, with benefits to flow to all.

We are writing of the intangible wealth of the Sacred Site reconfigured as public space, built around the vision of the rightful heir of the site, Algonquin Elder William Commanda. We include background information regarding new international United Nations priorities with respect to heritage sites, Indigenous sites, Indigenous Rights, a listing of sites now being recovered as sacred as well as key information on this particular site, with the interest to engage you as a critical change agent in these times of transition in global thinking.

We invite you to engage actively in the consideration of the benefits to accrue to the global family, today, in the face of unprecedented human strife and climate change, in dire need of a new vision for humanity and our global home.

The documentation on this file is extensive: we wish to engage diverse partners to examine and develop contemporary global policies and priorities, and project William

Commanda's larger views. We have highlighted pertinent sections of the international instruments on cultural sites and other relevant material for ease of reference; we also include a listing of the key points.

Again, on behalf of Elder Commanda's legacy, we reiterate that we urgently seek better ways of moving forward together in this critically important area..

Sincerely,

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## **William Commanda's Legacy Vision for the Sacred Chaudiere Site**

### **Key Points Raised**

#### **A. Background**

1. Backgrounder on Heritage and Historical Imperatives of William Commanda's Legacy Vision for the Sacred Chaudiere Site
2. Preamble regarding the Ancient Peoples
3. Backgrounder on some key provisions in global instruments endorsed by the United Nations with respect to world heritage, Indigenous Rights and Memories of the World Initiatives, of pertinence to the Sacred Chaudiere Site, as articulated in the work and legacy vision of late Indigenous Elder William Commanda
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  - ii. The 6<sup>th</sup> Montreal Round Table (2011) on the Impact of Sustainability Strategies on Heritage Conservation Practices
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3. Unparalleled potential of an accessible Chaudiere Falls
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5. Sacred importance: a meeting place from time immemorial, in the Elder's words
6. National/international historical prominence
7. Land issues and Algonquin territorial claims
8. A critical consideration – First Peoples/Canada relations in 2014
9. Peace building and contemporary multiracial/multicultural animation
10. Critical contemporary and international and relevance and importance of Late Algonquin Elder, Dr. William Commanda's (OC) legacy indigenous vision for the area.

## **A. BACKGROUND**

### **A 1. Mini Backgrounder on Heritage and Historical Imperatives of William Commanda's Legacy Vision for the Sacred Chaudiere Site**

In view of the challenges being presented by condominium development plans at the Sacred Chaudiere site, there is an urgent need for the reconsideration of the William Commanda Legacy Vision at this Ancient Indigenous Sacred Site of historical and international significance, at multiple high levels of authority.

The recent Supreme Court Tsilhqot'in ruling adds credence and insistence to such an exhortation.

As such, while the initial appeal is being made to Domtar, to return the lands already depleted and rendered an industrialized brownfield over a mere two hundred year period, and engage as partners in its reclamation of its heritage and identity as a multi-century gathering place, it will also be submitted to a range federal, provincial and municipal authorities for urgent consideration and action. William Commanda, a single old man in his nineties, called for a multi disciplinary team to address this vision of tremendous scale.

Immediate attention and firm resolution to do so will constitute the establishment of an irreplaceable acknowledgement of Canada's true history and also facilitate reconciliation and fully inclusive 150 birthday celebrations within the heart of the country on multiple levels.

**Additional information on the overall work is available at [www.asinabka.com](http://www.asinabka.com)**

## A 2. Preamble

### **Spring 2014: Ancient Artifacts from 6000 years ago uncovered at Rue Jacques Cartier on the North Shore of the Ottawa, affirming a Sacred Landscape of Global Significance dating back to the Paleolithic Peoples**

This spring the voice of the really Ancient Peoples awakened people in Canada's National Capital Region. A bus falling into a hole in the road at Jacques Cartier Boulevard on the Gatineau side of the Ottawa River, (the *Kichissippi*, once known as the Grande Riviere of Canada), necessitated the installation of a new storm sewer system, which in turn required deeper excavation and repositioning; the repositioning took place over a house that had never had a basement. Hydro Quebec was engaged with the construction company to execute the plans – as per legislation, any findings of potential archaeological significance would require formal investigation. Well, the ancient occupiers of the land were about to present themselves.

Indeed, findings of significant interest were uncovered in the relatively untouched site – and municipal officials engaged the services of one of three archaeological companies with capacity to study the findings to undertake the required investigation. After a nineteen day archaeological dig, numerous articles were uncovered and removed for further study. An article published in the Hydro Quebec May 2014 publication provided a preliminary report on the findings.

The storm sewer construction was to continue as planned, but then, the voice of the Indigenous Peoples was raised. They had been noting the proceedings over the months, and were determined that findings and a site of such significance be thoroughly examined and properly acknowledged – and they occupied the site with two tipis.

Messages from Indigenous peoples alerted us to this most significant prehistorical find.

For the purposes of this note, the meeting arranged with the archaeologist as negotiated by the Indigenous peoples, and his report on the preliminary key findings, are principal interest. (The archaeological artifacts retrieved from the site will be studied over the course of the upcoming months, and the Indigenous Peoples apprised of findings).

The preliminary findings are of paramount importance to William Commanda's decades of effort see the ancient, extremely significant, meeting place of his ancestors acknowledged formally, right here where the National Capital Region now sits, encompassing Canada's capital city, Ottawa, and the "twin" city, Gatineau, and drawing together the provinces of Ontario and Quebec in what used to be an integrated landscape.

At this time, we know that a copper tool (originating in Lake Superior), 30 finely tooled arrowheads, several larger hammers and graders, and thousands of pieces of flakes dated to 2500 and 6000 year ago time periods are under study; these appear to have come from a range of locations across the American North East and even beyond. We were informed that there are four others such sites acknowledged to date – on Allumette and

Morrison Islands, in Southern Lake Ontario, and in New York State. This then is obviously a tremendous find!

The latest findings confirm the repeated presence of the Paleolithic Peoples, dating back to 2,500 and 6,000 years, at this confluence of the Ottawa River.

Here, this river and its peoples were of singular historical importance to the history and development of Canada – Canada was built on the original fur trades, the logging, the pulp and paper industry and the hydro-electric generation in the Ottawa River Watershed. Flowing west to east, with the Gatineau entering from the North and the Rideau from the South, at the site of the circular pipe bowl shaped rapids, the Chaudiere Falls, with a voice that could be heard two furloughs off, was acknowledged as a sacred place by the first historical and colonial recorder of the emerging story of Canada, Samuel de Champlain; William Commanda's contemporary and ancestral history and knowledge, recorded in language, legends and mythology, wampum mnemonic items, and practices, and passed down over countless generations, date back that far and further.

For him, the latest findings would come as no surprise – he raised his voice to protect and acknowledge ancient forests on the Ontario side of the river only a few years ago. Further, his colleagues from Massachusettes were already in communications with him this past decade regarding new astro-archaeological inquiries, scientific research and emerging understandings of the people of the American North East – his Algonquin ancestors and the more ancient Paleolithic Peoples - whose presence in this area was noted with the retreat of the Champlain Sea nine to eleven thousand eight hundred years ago – William Commanda himself had already viewed and studied documentaries such as *Before the Lake was Champlain* and *Turner's Falls* ([www.hiddenlandscape.com](http://www.hiddenlandscape.com)) as well as the writings of Dr. William Sullivan and Kenneth Leonard, Jr. Now, even public broadcasts like CBS's series on the Geological History of the Great Lakes and the eastern seaboard begin to realize the significance of this landscape to the Earth's evolution, and also begin to note knowledge of this geological history registered in the legends of the First Peoples.

A new understanding of the ancient peoples and this particular area is just beginning to emerge – and it lends renewed urgency to the Commanda legacy vision for the Sacred Chaudiere Site. The story is of significance to human history – reflective of a culture more ancient than many other heritage sites around the world: the Pyramids, Stonehenge etc, and thus far, we know very little about it. But footprints and clues are presenting, and people are developing a more comprehensive understanding of this past. This particular site contains no human remains – it is a tool making workshop site – as such, it affirms the presence of a civilization with separate burial practices; further, this presence of calendrical stone makers in the Hidden Landscape series findings, along the coast of the American North East – from Cape Cod to Massachusettes, to Fort Drum, New York State – reveals a civilization that had detailed knowledge of the cosmic world, their landscape, maritime navigation, mapping and communication. Now, the French speaking archaeologist studying these artifacts was not yet aware of this scientific research being undertaken across the border, but William Commanda, who never lost sight of the

territorial integrity of his homeland, despite provincial and national boundaries, was; his communication style embraced the sharing of knowledge

William Commanda, a contemporary figure holding keys to a past (as well as to the Capital City) believed that it was not by accident that his ancestral homeland has become a global centre, now a home for people from all over the world. As such, the new findings, and their tremendous significance is not only of importance to his story, but also to all of us.

In late August, 2014, on the Ottawa River, Ontario side, two further reminders of its ancient past were found: a fossil likely dating back to the ancient sea floor of 450 million years, and a tool, likely an art making piece, of the Paleolithic People. The land itself demands that its history and heritage be acknowledged; this is such a critically important matter at this time.

### **A 3. Backgrounder on some key provisions in global instruments endorsed by the United Nations with respect to world heritage, Indigenous Rights and Memories of the World Initiatives, of pertinence to the Sacred Chaudiere Site, as articulated in the work and legacy vision of late Indigenous Elder William Commanda**

This material (abbreviated and annotated for focus) provides the background against which the re-presentation of William Commanda Legacy Vision for the Sacred Chaudiere Site is positioned. The specific case is embedded in its status as an unparalleled unique site of ancient, historical and contemporary significance and of *World Heritage* calibre and of *Outstanding Universal Value* in these times of unprecedented and escalating global human conflict, climate change and environmental catastrophe.

#### **i. World Heritage Sites of Outstanding Universal Value**

In 1972, UNESCO adopted the *World Heritage Convention*, endorsing the protection and conservation of natural and cultural heritage consistent with concept of “sustainable development”, aimed at the identification, protection, conservation, presentation and transmission to future generations of cultural and natural heritage of “Outstanding Universal Value”.

1.B. 1. Notes that such cultural and natural heritage is among the priceless and irreplaceable assets, not only of each nation, but of humanity as a whole. The loss, through deterioration or disappearance, of any of these most prized assets constitutes an impoverishment of the heritage of all the peoples of the world. Parts of that heritage, because of their exceptional qualities, can be considered of “Outstanding Universal Value” and as such worthy of special protection against the dangers which increasingly threaten them.

States Parties to the *Convention*, which includes Canada, are encouraged to ensure the participation of a wide variety of stakeholders, including site managers, local and regional governments, local communities, non-governmental organizations and other interested parties and partners in the identification, nomination and protection of World Heritage properties. States Parties also recognize the collective interests of the international community to cooperate in the protection of this heritage; further, they have the responsibility to (12. a) ensure the identification, nomination, protection, conservation, presentation, and transmission to future generations of the cultural and natural heritage found within their territory; (12. h) not take any deliberate measures that directly or indirectly damage their heritage; (12. k) consider and encourage the establishment of national, public and private foundations or associations to facilitate donations for the protection of World Heritage; and (12. m) use educational and information programs to strengthen appreciation and respect by their peoples of the cultural and natural heritage defined in Articles 1 and 2 of the *Convention*, and to keep the public informed of the dangers threatening this heritage.



With respect to the definition of World Heritage, specifically with respect to cultural and natural heritage, Article 1 notes that ‘the following shall be considered as “cultural heritage”’: (a) *monuments: architectural works, works of monumental sculpture and painting, elements or structures of an archaeological nature, inscriptions, cave dwellings and combinations of features, which are of Outstanding Universal Value from the point of view of history, art or science;* (b) *..... sites: works of man or the combined works of nature and of man, and including archaeological sites which are of “Outstanding Universal Value” from the historical, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological points of view.*

Article 2 identifies “natural heritage” as: *natural features consisting of physical and biological formations or groups of such formations, which are of “Outstanding Universal Value” from the aesthetic or scientific point of view; geological and physiographical formations and precisely delineated areas which constitute the habitat of threatened species of animals and plants of “Outstanding Universal Value” from the point of view of science or conservation; natural sites or precisely delineated natural areas of “Outstanding Universal Value” from the point of view of science, conservation or natural beauty.*

Further, Section 18 states that ‘Cultural landscapes are cultural properties and represent the “combined works of nature and of man” designated in Article 1 of the *Convention*, They are illustrative of the evolution of human society and settlement over time, under the influence of the physical constraints and/or opportunities presented by their natural environment and of successive social, economic and cultural forces, both external and internal.’

Also of relevance are the following provisions:

Section 20: “Outstanding Universal Value” means cultural and/or natural significance which is so exceptional as to transcend national boundaries and to be of common importance for present and future generations of all humanity. As such, the permanent protection of this heritage is of the highest importance to the international community as a whole.

Section 23 notes that the *Convention* is not intended to ensure the protection of all properties of great interest, importance or value, but only for a select list of the most outstanding of these from an international viewpoint.

While we (Circle of All Nations) have not attained any surety, only barely beginning to commence the process of developing a nomination strategy, we note that Section 24 states that: Nominations presented to the Committee shall demonstrate the full commitment of the State Party to preserve the heritage concerned, within its means. Such commitment shall take the form of appropriate policy, legal, scientific, technical, administrative and financial measures adopted and proposed to protect the property and its “Outstanding Universal Value”.

With respect to Integrity, the *Convention* states that:

Integrity is a measure of the wholeness and intactness of the natural and/or cultural heritage and its attributes. Examining the conditions of integrity, therefore requires assessing the extent to which the property:

- a) includes all elements necessary to express its “Outstanding Universal Value”;
- b) is of adequate size to ensure the complete representation of features and processes which convey the property’s significance;
- c) *suffers from the adverse effects of development and/or neglect (emphasis added)* – This should be presented in a statement of integrity.

In this regard, Section 28 is pertinent:

For all physical properties nominated under criteria (vii) – (x), biophysical processes and landform features should be relatively intact. However, it is recognized that no area is totally pristine and that all natural areas are in a dynamic state, and to some extent involve contact with people. Human activities, including those of traditional societies and local communities, often occur in natural areas. These activities may be consistent with the “Outstanding Universal Value” of the area where they are ecologically sustainable.

Section 30 adds:

Properties proposed under criterion (vii) should be of “Outstanding Universal Value” and include areas that are essential for maintaining the beauty of the property. For example, a property whose scenic value depends on a waterfall, would meet the conditions of integrity if it includes adjacent catchment and downstream areas that are integrally linked to the maintenance of the aesthetic qualities of the property.

Section 32 notes that properties proposed under criterion (ix) should demonstrate the key aspects of processes that are essential for the long term conservation of the ecosystems and the biological diversity they contain.

Finally, Section 33 states “Properties should contain habitats for maintaining the most diverse fauna and flora characteristic of the bio-geographical province and ecosystems under consideration. For example, ... and island ecosystem should include habitats for maintaining endemic biota; a property containing wide ranging species should be large enough to include the most critical habitats essential to ensure the survival of viable populations of those species; for an area containing a migratory species, seasonal breeding and nesting sites, and migratory routes, wherever they are located, should be adequately protected.”

The *Convention* also makes provision for protection and management matters; as such, it notes in Section 39, “For properties nominated under criteria (vii) – (x), boundaries should reflect the spatial requirements of habitats, species, processes or phenomena that provide the basis for their inscription on the World Heritage List. The boundaries should include sufficient areas immediately adjacent to the area of “Outstanding Universal Value” in order to protect the property’s heritage values from direct effect of human encroachment and impacts of resource use outside of the nominated area.

With respect to encouraging support for the *Convention*, section 41 notes that the objectives are:

- a) to enhance capacity-building and research;
- b) to raise the general public's awareness, understanding and appreciation of the need to preserve cultural and natural heritage;
- c) to enhance the function of World Heritage in the life of the community; and
- d) to increase the participation of local and national populations in the protection and presentation of heritage.

Interested parties and experts grapple to understand the multiple implications of the *Convention* blueprint, and to facilitate the manifestation of the global instruments and this engagement is drawing multiple parties together to consider, for example, the evolving definition of sustainable development, bridge barriers between ideas about biodiversity and physical environment, cultural diversity and heritage conservation.

In this regard it is noted that the concept of sustainable development entrenched further in many domains with the Agenda 21 of the 1992 United Nations Conference on Climate Change; this was inextricably linked with the presence of the Indigenous voice on the global stage – (ignited with Elder William Commanda's pipe ceremonies at the Pre-Rio Conference in France in 1991), in the subsequent 1992 Earth Summit in Rio; in the first United Nations Conference of Indigenous Peoples, the Cry of the Earth Conference of 1993, and the subsequent United Nations International Decade of Indigenous Peoples. Evolving thought drew attention to the critical importance of intangible cultural heritage inherent in meanings of objects and artifacts, art and craft, traditions, ceremonies and rites, the dynamic nature of transmission of such cultural heritage, grounded in integration at multiple levels, and the critical contribution of the Indigenous voice is evident in the importance of the human transmitter of knowledge, the oral traditions, storytelling and the ceremonial.

## ii. The 6<sup>th</sup> Montreal Round Table (2011) on the Impact of Sustainability Strategies on Heritage Conservation Practices

A note on the conference proceedings draws attention to this paradigm shift: "What are the characteristics of the new paradigm? It involves moving from a more static, object-focused perspective to a more dynamic, ecological perspective. It involves moving away from the importance of inventorying, evaluating and designating objects to understanding their context: physical, social, cultural, economic. It involves understanding diversity rather than homogeneity as a healthy aspect of ecological balance. It involves moving away from the win or lose framework of legal controls to the more open-ended process of mediation. It involves moving away from the design / bid / build paradigm to a more integrated view of design-build. It involves less reliance on theory, and on the academically-trained expert, and more recognition of practice, and traditional knowledge, and community-based design and development. It involves moving away from utopian models, and a reliance on zoning, to more organic and incremental models of growth and development. And finally, it involves integrating new and old, treating contemporary design layers as additional richness within the historical layering of existing places.

The voices of the aboriginal community, particularly in Canada, have had a profound effect on this paradigm shift. There have always been challenges from this community of many of the basic assumptions of Eurocentric culture, but only recently have these challenges been heeded to any significant extent. In terms of natural resources, they have challenged the separation between humans and the rest of nature, fundamental to the environmental movement as illustrated in the table above, and insisted that true environmentalism is only possible when our species is treated as an integral part of any ecological model. And on the cultural resource side, they have challenged the separation between past and present, and argued that past artifacts are only given meaning through contemporary practice, and that if cultural heritage is not dynamic then it dies. Most importantly, in the aboriginal perspective, the starting assumption that nature and culture are different is false. And we are not outside either one. We are nature, we are culture. Within this perspective, the field of design and development is necessarily about natural resources and cultural resources by default. And this is being gradually accepted by the dominant culture, and resulting in the emergence of a more holistic and integrated view of how to move forward. In this paradigm, the distinctiveness of the environmental argument and the historic preservation argument becomes blurred. This is the message of sustainability. Sustainability is not utopian, it is organic. It moves beyond LEED and LEED EB (Existing Building) and LEED ND (Neighbourhood Development), and it moves beyond designated buildings and historic districts and mandatory intervention reviews. It is about understanding what exists and intervening in ways that make that reality healthier and more balanced. It is ecological in the sense that humans are part of the ecological equation. Sustainability is not a theoretical proposition, but a practical one, and its success will not be based on expert predictions or abstract models, but on empirical learning and the transfer of traditional knowledge to contemporary contexts. Cultural landscape theory and practice are about this new paradigm. The idea of cultural landscapes emerged in the early 20th Century within the field of cultural geography, but it is only recently that it has begun to play a role in design and development. UNESCO adopted cultural landscapes as a typology to deal with sites where culture and nature were inseparably melded, and it has proven to be a typology with special resonance for indigenous communities around the world. Cultural landscapes are cultural ideas embedded in a place, and they exist as much in the cultural imagination as in the physical world. They are mapped by ritual and marked by artifacts. They are maintained by traditional knowledge but open to contemporary layering.

In this regard, I note that *Circle of All Nations* began to rephrase the UN inspired *Sustainable Development* language under the title of *Sustainable Relationships* with its “eco” workshops at Victoria Island/Sacred Chaudiere Site as early as 2009.

### iii. Indigenous Sites

In 2012, UNESCO produced a special publication on World Heritage (No. 62) (REF) – Here, Kishore Rao, Director of the UNESCO World Heritage Centre notes in his introduction, “as the World Heritage institutions acquired experience in matters of conservation over the decades, it became apparent that the protection of natural sites

could best be implemented by recognizing the existence of the traditional inhabitants of these sites, as they had been discreetly but effectively managed, sometimes over tens of thousands of years, by the very indigenous peoples that had, in recent centuries, all too often been excluded in principle from the management concerns of their own territories. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, adopted in 2007, was conceived to ensure that the provisions of the United Nations Charter and Declaration of Human Rights are duly applied to the peoples thus designated. ... (the World Heritage publication provides “insights into the ways in which the principles of this Declaration are being applied in a World Heritage context”, World Heritage being endorsed as “a building block for peace and sustainable development... (and) a source of identity and dignity for local communities, a wellspring of knowledge and strength to be shared”).

Additional text from the document provide a framework for understanding *World Heritage* and indigeneity.

The concept of *indigeneity* has been gaining attention in recent years in many international and national fora and it holds considerable relevance in the global *World Heritage* forum. Indigeneity has been invoked to promote or celebrate identity or to participate in policies and programmes of direct concern; and to promote an indigenous worldview and values and applying them to social economic, political or environmental issues. These issues are about the well-being and sustainability of indigenous groups, but they may also be about wider community aspirations, including environmental improvement, town planning, museums, businesses, architecture, education and health.

Key elements of indigeneity that apply to *World Heritage* include the ideas of ‘living dualisms’, a holistic approach to understanding the environment and how people find their place in it and the importance of intangibility and associative values.

The document goes on to clarify:

Living dualisms include relationships such as those between humans and their environment, the sacred and the profane the world of the living and the world of the ancestors, and indigenous and non-indigenous groups, the principles guiding these relationships being reciprocity, accountability and respect.

A holistic approach brings together all dimensions of the cosmos – both material and non-material realms.

Intangibility is particularly important because of the emphasis that indigenous people place on things invisible – the stories and histories that help them to interpret landscapes, the roles that people play in those landscapes and the reason for which certain paces are respected in certain ways. These values then help shape what should be done in relation to planning, conservation and management.

In the context of the implementation of the *World Heritage Convention*, the focus on *community* and *cultural landscape* are of particular importance: In the context of the “C”s of the pillars of world heritage: Credibility, Conservation Capacity-building, Communication and Community, in 2007 “the critical importance of involving indigenous traditional and local communities in the implementation of the committee was recognized – the identification, management and successful conservation of heritage must be pursued with **the meaningful involvement of human communities and the reconciliation of conflicting interest**, but it should not be achieved against the interest or through the exclusion of local communities and local values. The document recognizes the need for bridging between the macro and micro and the importance of the involvement of indigenous peoples who have an interest cannot be overestimated (I return to “community” and William Commanda’s interpretation of later).

In the reference to “Cultural Landscape”, which recognizes the relationships or interactions between people and their landscapes or ‘natural’ environments”, it is pointed out that the 1992 *World Heritage Convention* operational guideline amendments provided **better recognition of indigenous values as they relate to landscape** (Of note here: William Commanda conducted pipe ceremonies at the PreRio Earth Conference in France, igniting a recognition of relationship with Earth, a theme further emphasized in the 1992 first United Nations Conference of Indigenous Peoples, entitled, *Cry of the Earth*. William Commanda shared the Sacred Wampum Belt teachings at this international event).

Also of import is the comment that in May 2011, indigenous groups noted that not enough was being done to ensure proper indigenous involvement in World Heritage. The Operational Guidelines provide that nominations be prepared in collaboration with and approval of local communities, but of concern is the fact that it is not clear how state parties go about involving communities.

The document notes that challenges lie ahead when it comes to interpreting and recognizing community and cultural landscapes, noting also that the several layers that make up community are yet to be unfolded, but it also suggests such challenges also provide opportunities for improved outcomes.

These issues are of particular interest and concern with regard to the Sacred Chaudiere Site, the pre-historical and historical dimensions of community, the Algonquin, Indigenous, and *Circle of All Nations* views.

The discussion goes on to pointing out “Within the framework of indigeneity, we can consider the future alongside the past and develop an agenda for heritage centred on indigenous aspirations, indigenous opportunities and indigenous challenges.

That will require us to anticipate the future while we appreciate the past. Fortunately we are not starting from scratch. We have already accepted that



heritage is essentially about acknowledging and honouring the links that communities have established with the surrounding world. Our challenge is to devise strategies, supported by the World Heritage Committee, to ensure that this heritage is protected for the benefit and enjoyment of generations to come.

Distinctions between tangible and intangible qualities of this heritage agenda become blurred when viewed through an indigenous lens. Material and immaterial, tangible and intangible qualities appear to fuse into one. Heritage has a temporal dimension that moves simultaneously in two directions. The past is more highly valued when an object or site can at the same time demonstrate a link to the future. Rather than seeing 'historical authentication' and confining heritage to a distant past, indigenous communities are more inclined to link 'authenticity' to uninterrupted human engagement and intergenerational commitment. Rather than simply measuring authenticity in terms of the passage of time, an additional measure should be recognized in the strength of an on-going relationship established with successive generations. By the same token, value is further added by an on-going relationship with the surrounding natural world. As part of a unique landscape that not only provides material resources but also sustenance, access and distinctiveness, heritage is especially valued when it is in harmony with the environment and part of the ecological backdrop. A case can indeed be made that these four components – site, people, past and future, and the natural environment – are the hallmarks of authenticity and/or Outstanding Universal Value".

Noting that local distinctiveness and unique heritage could well be submerged under the overwhelming weight of world domination, concepts of indigeneity, cultural landscapes and community possess great significance. Thus it is incumbent upon all to work together to find ways to make them effective.

In these contemporary times, many places of sacred significance to Indigenous Peoples are no longer pristine. However, it is erroneous to apply western standards of assessment and assume their power and relevance is extinguished. Indigenous shaman like William Commanda firmly believe their fires still burn and are fanned into co-created power when animated by acknowledgment, respect, prayer, ceremony and ritual. He himself animated that human potential for regenerative healing with the land in the 1995 Sunbow Five Walk for Mother Earth (REF); the recent reclamation of sacred spaces by the Kogi in Columbia attests to the growing recognition of this regenerative potential. William Commanda's work over the past two decades was significant in that his outreach triggered this type of energetic reconnection with land for an incredible number of non-Indigenous Peoples – just this past week (August 2014), three people have attested to this – two of them from Massachusetts, Martin Brown and Patrizia de Libero.)

Finally, it is important to note that the presentation of Indigenous spirit only as existent in remote jungles and in exotic costume and paint can carry its own elements of racism, and patronization. Contemporary indigeneity demands attention.

#### iv. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

##### Article 8

1. Indigenous peoples and individuals have the right not to be subjected to forced assimilation or destruction of their culture.
2. States shall provide effective mechanisms for prevention of and redress for
  - (a) Any action which has the aim or effect of depriving them of their integrity as distinct peoples, or of their cultural values or ethnic identities;
  - (b) Any action which has the aim of dispossessing them of their lands, territories or resources;
  - (c) Any form of forced population transfer which has the aim or effect of violating or undermining any of their rights;
  - (d) Any form of forced assimilation or integration;
  - (e) Any form of propaganda designed to promote or incite racial or ethnic discrimination directed against them.

##### Article 11

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to practice and revitalize their cultural traditions and customs. This includes the right to maintain protect and develop the past, present and future manifestations of their cultures, such as archaeological and historical sites, artifacts, designs, ceremonies, technologies and visual and performing arts and literature.
2. States shall provide redress through effective mechanisms, which may include restitution, developed in conjunction with indigenous peoples, with respect to their cultural, intellectual, religious and spiritual property taken without their free, prior and informed consent or in violation of their laws, traditions and customs.

##### Article 12

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to manifest, practice develop and teach their spiritual and religious traditions, customs and ceremonies; the right to maintain, protect, and have access in privacy to their religious and cultural sites; the right to the use and control of their ceremonial objects; and the right to the repatriation of their human remains.
2. States shall seek to enable the access and/or repatriation of ceremonial objects and human remains in their possession through fair, transparent and effective mechanisms developed in conjunction with indigenous peoples concerned

##### Article 15

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to the dignity and diversity of their cultures, traditions histories and aspirations which shall be appropriately reflected in education and public information.
2. States shall take effective measures, in consultation and cooperation with the indigenous peoples concerned, to combat prejudice and eliminate discrimination



and to promote tolerance, understanding and good relations among indigenous peoples and all other segments of society.

Article 25 \*

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and strengthen their distinctive spiritual relationship with their traditionally owned or other wise occupied and used lands, territories, waters and coastal seas and other resources and to uphold their responsibilities to future generations in this regard.

Article 29

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to the conservation and protection of the environment and the productive capacity of their lands or territories and resources. States shall establish and implement assistance programmes for Indigenous peoples for such conservation and protection, without discrimination.

Article 36

1. Indigenous peoples, in particular those divided by international borders, have the right to maintain and develop contacts, relations and cooperation, including activities for spiritual, cultural, political, economic and social purposes, with their own members as well as other peoples across borders.

States in consultation and cooperation with indigenous peoples, shall take effective measures to facilitate the exercise and ensure the implementation of this right.

**v. Tsilhqot'in**

Several land claim cases have advanced discussions on indigenous title, the most recent being the Supreme Court decision on Tsilhqot'in. Its implications for the Algonquin Peoples of the Ottawa River Watershed are being examined critically and urgently by many players.

**vi. A Sampling of Restored Sacred Sites**

A colleague noted the following, relevant in light of the *Global Instruments* on heritage cited above: *“As a result of this research, I have questions regarding the process of UNESCO. Their list struck me as strangely imbalanced. Why, for example, do small (European) places such as France, Germany, and Spain all have more protected sites than Canada, Mexico, and the US combined? Also, it appears that there are more archaeological sites identified than places of spiritual, cultural, and environmental importance. Does this reflect past, outdated priorities, biases, or....?”* Nonetheless, it is noted that the global trend is moving in the direction of the protection of sacred sites.

Sacred Sites Restored

Manu, Peru, 1987

Manu is in the high Andes of Peru. The area is inhabited by at least four different native

groups: the Machiguenga, the Mascho-Piro, the Yaminahua and the Amahuaca. They practice slash and burn agriculture, a process in which a small patch of land is cleared, burned, and planted for up to 3 years and then left to rest for 5 years. Old fields are easiest to re-use, so the practice is sustainable and does not affect the health of the rest of the forest. Manu is renowned for its plant and animal biodiversity, and the process of cataloguing all species is ongoing. Since its inscription as a World Heritage Site, trade and tourism have added to the economic activities of the five indigenous groups living within the region.

Tongariro, New Zealand, 1993

The mountains in this region have cultural and religious significance for the Maori people. It became the first inscribed World Heritage Site to be recognized as a cultural landscape. The area was home to the Tu Wharetoa people until 1887. At that point, as a means of avoiding it being seized by a land court, Chief Te Heuheu Tukino signed over title and made it a gift to the crown to prevent land-hungry settlers from dividing it amongst themselves.

Uluru-Kata Tjuta, Australia, 1994

The traditional owners of this land are the Anangu Aboriginal People. Uluru and the rock domes west of it have significant spiritual value to the Anangu people who represent one of the oldest human societies in the world. The traditional spiritual philosophies of the Anangu are known as "Tjukurpa," and these teachings interpret the natural world in relation to ancestors, and ancient experience. Early during colonization, an explorer re-named the place "Ayers Rock." Freehold title was restored to the Anangu in 1985. It wasn't until 1993 that its original name was restored to reflect its indigeneity and its importance to the Anangu people. Increased tourism continues to supplement the economy of the Anangu people.

Laponian Area, Sweden, 1996

The indigenous people of this area, the Saamis, still herd reindeer as they did 2000 years ago, and Lapponia is a gem of bio-diversity. After the inscription of the Laponian Area as a World Heritage site, disputes arose over who would manage the land, the government or the Saamis. The result of the dispute was the creation of "Laponia Management" as the governing body, a body in which the Saamis form the majority and also choose the chair of the board. A second positive outcome of the dispute was the development of the "Laponia Process," a process in which all negotiations would lead to a consensus rather than a decision by majority vote. These experiences were an important step in the process of decolonization. The organization later received the Swedish WWF prize for nature conservancy.

East Rennel, Solomon Islands, 1998

East Rennel represents the largest raised coral atoll in the world, and in addition, its marine, coastal, and forest bio-diversity make it a place of significant environmental value. The population consists of approximately 800 people of Polynesian origin living in four villages within the area. It was inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage site in

1998. Due to the isolation of East Rennell, significant rural development aid is required to improve the standard of living of the traditional owners and enhance their ability to protect this environmentally sensitive area.

Woomera, South Australia, 2004:

In 1998, the federal government of Australia announced its intention to build a nuclear waste dump near Woomera, a place with significant value to the indigenous people. The Kupa Piti Kungka Tjuta, a council of senior indigenous female leaders from South Australia, led the battle against the federal governments. Many of these women had personally suffered the impacts of the British nuclear bomb tests at Maralinga and Emu in the 1950s. After a 6 year battle in the courts, a Federal Court ruled that the government had acted illegally in stripping Traditional Owners of their native title rights. Accordingly, the Howard government decided to cut its losses, abandon the dump plan, and restore title to the indigenous people.

Richtersveld Cultural and Botanical Landscape, 2007

This region is populated by the Nama people, a semi-nomadic pastoral group of people with a strong oral tradition. The Nama still graze their cattle in the region, living in dwellings they construct from reeds and gathering medicinal plants as they travel. The Nama are legally acknowledged as communal owners. Although their religions, beliefs, and cultural practices were heavily decimated by colonization, and later by the apartheid regime, the Nama have managed to maintain a cultural tradition based on harmonization of people and land. Since its inscription, workshops have been organized to provide cultural sensitivity training and to increase public awareness of the cultural value of the land and its people.

Chief Roi Mata's Domain, Vanuatu, 2008

Chief Roi Mata's Domain is the first site to be inscribed as a World Heritage Site in Vanuatu. The chief's residence and lands have been seen as a place of power, and the people of Efate upheld tabu prohibitions on the area for over 400 years. It is currently administered by both the local community and government bodies, and represents the intersection between oral traditions and archaeology with historic significance for the entire Polynesian region.

Elwha River, Olympic National Park, USA, 2010:

The Lower Elwha Klallam people have lived in the Elwha River region since time immemorial. When the river was dammed, many sacred sites known to the Elwha Klallam were inundated by water. By September, 2010, all involved parties agreed to a removal of the Elwha and Glines Canyon dams. Dam removal began in September 2011 and is scheduled to be completed by September, 2014. One of many positive outcomes of this process is that the salmon population is expected to go from 3000 to over 300,000. The return of the fish will also result in the return of other species, as well as cultural renewal and restoration for the Elwha Klallam. The progress of undamming the river can be followed in the facebook group, "Elwha River Restoration."

Kakadu, Australia, 2011

The Djok Gundjeihmi people live in Koongara in the area of Kakadu National Park in Australia's Northern Territory. In a letter written to UNESCO regarding Kakadu's qualification for inscription as a World Heritage site, Jeffrey Lee, senior traditional owner of the Djok clan stated that he wished, "to ensure that the traditional laws, customs, sites, bush tucker, trees, plants, and water at Koongara stay the same as when they were passed on to me by my father and great-grandfather." The induction of Kakadu as a UNESCO World Heritage site ensures that this will be more possible.

Jaba Taniwashkaka, Columbia, 2013:

The Kogi are an indigenous group of about 20,000 people that inhabits the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta in northern Colombia. On May 5, 2013, lands constituting the ceremonial site of Jaba Tañiwashkaka in the department of La Guajira were formally transferred to the Kogi tribe. The transfer came after the Colombian Ministry of Culture, the Amazon Conservation Team, and the Kogis themselves put together 1.87 billion Colombian pesos (\$1.19 million) to acquire four properties covering 155 hectares (380 acres). The concern was the sacred site would be otherwise flattened for industrial or commercial development.

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## B. JUSTIFICATION

With this backgrounder in mind, we now make the case for the application of these considerations to the Sacred Chaudiere Site.

While this is not yet formally being presented as a Unesco World Heritage Site project, it is clear to many that the Sacred Chaudiere Site itself and the William Commanda Legacy Vision recommend themselves for attention and endorsement as a globally important project from multiple angles.

We make the case for this consideration in the context of its distinct and unique qualities based on the following:

1. Geological history and natural heritage
2. Pre-historical Paleolithic history
3. Unparalleled potential of an accessible Chaudiere Falls
4. Ecological importance, in particular to the threatened American Eel
5. Sacred importance: meeting place from time immemorial, in the Elder's words
6. National/international historical prominence
7. Land issues and Algonquin territorial claims
8. A critical consideration – First Peoples/Canada relations in 2014
9. Peace building and contemporary multiracial/multicultural animation
10. Critical contemporary and international and relevance and importance of Late Algonquin Elder, Dr. William Commanda's (OC) legacy Indigenous vision for the area.

## 1. Geological history and natural heritage

The Ottawa River has been a central meeting place of ancient peoples from time immemorial, as evidenced in archaeological finds. Contemporary geological studies, with new technological tools are beginning to flesh out our understandings of the unique characteristics of the Ottawa River Watershed in the story of the earth's evolution.

We have few threads of understanding to piece together Indigenous knowledge and stories; however distinct evidence of this ancient knowledge exists, and are being threaded through with the revelations of more recent knowledge. The Committee for the Designation of the Ottawa River a National Heritage River commissioned studies of the Ottawa River Watershed; Elder Commanda engaged with this effort from its inception, and he was designated Honorary Chair. This related article by Dr. Allan Donaldson, Carleton University on the Geoheritage of the Ottawa River (the largest tributary to the St. Lawrence) informs us that it is the only Canadian River that crosses four major geological subdivisions of the lithosphere representative of four time units through which 4.5 billion years of Earth's history can be traced: Archean, Proterozoic, Paleozoic, and Cenozoic.

Note that my early research with Elder Commanda in his library revealed that Algonkian refers to an era of geological history between the Archeozoic, the most ancient era from 3,800,000,000 years ago, and the Paleozoic, which emerged 620,000,000 years ago, with the earliest records of the precursors to life: invertebrates, spores and marine algae, embedded in rock (Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 1987):

On April 3, 2007, as we began to give thought to organizing this book, we were led to the word *Algonkian*, in William's Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary (1987); quite unexpectedly, the word jettisoned us into the past – Mother Earth's past, with the word *PROTEROZOIC*. It led us to the word geology, *a science that deals with the history of the earth and its life especially as recorded in rocks*, and the accompanying Geologic Time and Formations Table (page 512), and we learned it (Algonkian) referred to an era of geological history that includes the period between the Archeozoic, the most ancient era, which commenced 3,800,000,000 years ago and the Paleozoic, which emerged 620,000,000 years ago. In that vast undifferentiated period of time are found the earliest records of invertebrates, spores and marine algae, precursors to life.

So *Algonkian* was associated with magnitude of history beyond our realization!

(Excerpt 1 - Book in progress, 2007 - by Romola Thumbadoo and William Commanda).

Dr. Donaldson's paper acknowledges that the Ottawa River was an important pathway for First Nations inhabitants for many years; we are told that they utilized its geological resources for *thousands of years*, (emphasis mine) and were familiar with much of its geological character. This knowledge continued into contemporary times, even despite

the destabilization of knowledge and information flow with colonization, destruction of language and social/cultural practices: e.g. William Commanda's own uncle, Gabriel Commanda, revealed the gold ore that resulted in the mining and creation of the town of Val d'Or.

Next in our research in William Commanda's library, we noted this the following: In *The People of the Ancient Americas* we learned that "hundreds of millions of years ago, long before mankind was on the earth, the Americas were two continental islands. The northern one, covering the area of Quebec, some eastern parts of Canada and the United States, still survives as a geologic area known as the Laurentian Shield. The southern one remains in the very ancient mountains of Eastern Brazil, which are also among the earliest rocks to remain on the surface of the earth. Millions of years later a great convulsion of the earth, probably due to contraction during cooling, caused the enormous crumplings of rock, thus originating the Alps in Europe and the Himalayas in India. (Excerpt 2 – Book in progress – by Romola Thumbadoo and William Commanda).

Dr. Donaldson's paper provides a useful elaboration on this information: "The source of the Ottawa River lies within the Quebec portion of the Superior Structural Province of the Canadian Shield, one of two large blocks of Archean igneous and metamorphic rocks that contain the oldest rocks in North America. More than 2.5 billion years old these rocks consist of:

- (1) Gneiss and large intrusions of granite and other igneous rocks;
- (2) "Green stone belts" that preserve volcanic edifices in which sea-floor eruptions are widely recorded by pillow structures. The greenstone belts also contain thick accumulations of wackes and similar clastic sedimentary rocks. The wackes commonly display graded bedding indicative of downslope resedimentation of unconsolidated sediment in response to earthquake-generated underwater landslides (turbidity currents). In addition, some tracts of Archean sedimentary rocks within the Ottawa Valley display large-scale cross-bedding suggestive of terrestrial deposition, as well as both textural and chemical maturity (well-rounded grains: high concentration of quartz sand) suggestive of multicycle origin; and
- (3) Minor but economically significant deposits of banded iron-formation (chemically precipitated laminated rocks rich in silica and iron oxides, the prime source of iron ore.

Next of particular interest is the Gowganda Strata Formation bordering Lake Temiskaming, part of an episode of continental glaciation (2.2 billion years ago) from before the last Ice Age, its geological history revealed by the Nipissing Diabase igneous rock; this was known to the Algonquins in its topographical presentation on the west shore of Lake Temiskaming as Spirit Rock. Then there is the Grenville formation, comprised of metamorphic and intrusive rock, presented most graphically in Oiseau Rock, acknowledged as a site revered by the Algonquins, and also marked by sacred paintings, at the metamorphosed limestone (marble) rocks around Allumette, Calumet and Rocher Fendu, a place of historical significance acknowledged in the 1613



Champlain encounter with Algonquin chief Tessautot, also sought as reserved sanctuary by William Commanda own great great grandfather, Pakinawatik, in his efforts to safeguard ancestral rights in the Ottawa River Watershed in the mid 1800s. (Dr. Donaldson notes the early development of numerous mines (lead, zinc, iron mica and phosphorous) in the area; note also the Chalk River nuclear plant. It was not without knowledge and reason the First Peoples knew about and sought to protect the area.

Another significant feature of the Ottawa River Watershed, in particular between Pembroke, the western reaches of the ancient Champlain Sea of 9 to 12 thousands years ago, is the presence of Stromatolites: the oldest know record of life on earth. Dr Donaldson notes that these are biosedimentary structures rather than fossils; they reveal the presence of cyanobacteria, which, likely through life generating process like photosynthesis, transformed Earth's initially reducing (oxygen-poor) atmosphere to its present oxygen-rich state. These are exposed around the Ottawa River close to the capital city.

In a similar vein, a *Circle of All Nations* colleagues presented William Commanda with "oxygen rocks" several years ago. The geological name for these rocks formations is "clay concretions"; they are found in ancient glacial lakes; two of those glacial remnant lakes existed here in the Pontiac area of Ottawa River Watershed. Proof of ancient life is stored within the mycelia, in the bacteria that formed the earliest building blocks of life. Some call these "faerie rocks" – it is noted that on the north shore of the Ottawa, close to the capital city, we have the *Lac de Fees* – some people associate the area with the "*Little People*" – sacred energetic entities, connection with whom was indicative of accessing "other ways of knowing in the context of the law of nature".

Between 10,000 – 7,000 years ago, after the melting of the last ice sheet, the Atlantic Ocean entered the depressed Ottawa River and created the Champlain Sea, home to five species of whale. A growing body of information on the Paleolithic People of the American North East indicates that they were a culture of navigators and marine hunters, and evidence of chert, including Ramah chert, within the watershed is indicative of their presence in this area. "Before the Lake was Champlain" is a documentary that provides new insight into the lives and culture of these much ignored ancient peoples, who actually lived in this very area, and who constitute a critical chapter in the story of humanity (note preamble).

Clay is also a significant topographical feature of the area: Leda clay is composed of particles of bedrock ground by glaciers and deposited on the ancient sea floor; this sediment was transformed by freshwater after the retreat of the Champlain Sea, and can liquefy if disturbed by river erosion, earthquakes, excavation, construction, pore-water pressure increase through rain or snowmelt – and areas in the Ottawa River Valley are vulnerable to catastrophic landslides. William Commanda regularly pointed out the road changes triggered by the shifting clay composition; the restorative and healing components of the clay were also noted in his lake further up north in the watershed.



Then there is the 1 kilometre-diameter structure, Brent Crater, formed by meteorite impact – and I have heard elders in Kitigan Zibi talk about this remarkable feature on the land.

The other item of note is the fact that ten thousand years ago, there was a much larger flow of water, and the large glacial lakes of Ontario and the Prairie provinces and the upper Great Lakes all drained into the Ottawa River, and there remain many underwater caves and twisting passages – the Ottawa River disappeared into two of these underwater channels at the area of the Chaudieres, symbolic of the connection with the womb of Mother Earth, a referent of great relevance to many indigenous peoples. Elder Commanda had the opportunity to walk within the Bonnechere Caves – and quite spontaneously, he felt called up to drum in this dark watery basin – it was a powerful reminder that First Peoples knew about both the features and geological transformation of their ancestral waterway, as well as of their sacred and energetic relevance. This is consistent with the contemporary explorations of Sheldrakian morphology.

Today, public broadcasts such as those offered by CBC on the Canadian Shield and the geological and tectonic history of the American North East indicate that modern day scientific knowledge is confirming many things about living and growing stone that the First Peoples always affirmed; knowledge that rock was not inanimate was held in myths and legends and oral and empirical knowledge of ancient origins, and this knowledge persists even in reference to rocks as Grandfathers. The name for the Ottawa River Valley area of glare rock, *Asinabka*, reveals knowledge of the ancient sea of 450 million years ago in the acknowledgement of the bedrock, much like the Ojibway legends of the Great Falls beneath Lake Huron are now being confirmed by modern day sonar testing. This unique and special area and the ancient rock of the Chaudiere Island warrants urgent protection in terms of its geological heritage. Its emebddness in a special landscape strengthens this claim.

## **2. Pre-historical Paleolithic history**

Please see Preamble

### 3. Unparalleled potential of an accessible Chaudiere Falls

The Chaudiere Falls are once again affirmed as an ancient meeting place of great spiritual and ecological importance, including with respect to the threatened American Eel.

Prayer for water, joy in water, valuing and respecting water – this was a central focus throughout William Commanda's long life. He was born to this water-based heritage. His ancestors were the nomads – the *Mamiwinini* – who travelled the water highways of North America in their iconic birch bark canoes. He believed they were descendants of the ancient Maritime hunters of the North Atlantic Seaboard, who, over ten thousand years ago, arrived here after the Wisconsin Ice Age, and left evidence of their presence on the retreating shorelines of the ancient Champlain Sea, right here in Asinabka, the place of bare rock, the place of glare rock. The capital city of Canada now stands at the confluence of the primary river of the territory of the Algonquins: the Mighty Kichissippi, the Ottawa, flowing west to east, joined by its major tributaries, the Gatineau from the north and the Rideau from the south, showing in the geography how, despite historical division, Quebec and Ontario are connected.

Nature's own Medicine Wheel is etched on this special sacred part of the Mother Earth, centered and spun by the circular rapids, the *Akikpautik*, the Chaudieres. This place held deep spiritual significance to the ancient peoples, and the earliest newcomers to the continent witnessed the homage paid to the boiling waters. The *Akikpautik* symbolized the bowl of the sacred pipe, with its constant spray taking the prayers of the people to the cosmic creator in perpetuity. The underground rock formations, the karsts, and the underground rivers sang messages from the womb of Mother Earth at this sacred place, and the thundering water drum of the Chaudière Rapids called the people to the source.

William Commanda told people repeatedly that water was a critical natural element that we could not survive without for long. He described the living Gaia, his Mother Earth – the rivers were her veins, he said; he described the Earth's natural cycles – snow thaws and spring rains flushed out the debris accumulated in the waters in Nature's natural cleansing processes – he bemoaned the dams stifling the movement of the mighty rivers of North America at every turn – and especially so at the Sacred Chaudière Rapids. He noted the eight thousand barrages impeding the movement of water and contributing to the decimation of the ancient Eels, fish precious to his ancestors, throughout the St. Lawrence River Watershed. Now when we hear how the Hoover Dam is no longer able to sustain the Las Vegas community into the foreseeable future and how artificial floods have to be created on the Colorado River to replicate the seasonal cleansing inherent to the intelligence of Nature's Law, or about the impacts of invasive species, some begin to understand the enormity of William Commanda's wisdom and the wisdom of Indigenous Elders more deeply.

The Chaudière Falls, 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 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, until his canoe caught on the rocks, and he broke a leg, and then had to pray to his god for help; fortunately for him, nature was there, and a tree saved his life. But Queen Victoria did realize this was the power place, when she selected the *Asinabka, Place of Glare Rock*, for the capital city.

When Philomen Wright arrived in this area in 1801/2, William Commanda's direct ancestors from the Quebec/Commandant Lac area were alarmed – their sugar bushes were being cut down and they challenged this (as documented by P. Wright's daughter, based on his papers). Wright produced a paper, an agreement signed by their ancestors, he said, giving him the right to do this (Royal Proclamation of 1763). 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, health 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, and not just Indigenous ones, to honour and celebrate nature; he envisioned a sanctuary for individuals and communities, for bridging multiple cultural divides, for repatriating Indigenous plants and biodiversity, and for protecting water life and the American Eel, *Manoshkadosh*.

Following his 2006 Waterlife Workshop focused primarily on the polluted and desecrated condition of the Ottawa River, the heritage river of his ancestors, William Commanda challenged Domtar's plans to expand hydro development at the Chaudiere Falls – today, many others continue with the commitment to see the Sacred Chaudiere Falls freed, apprising federal, provincial and municipal authorities of their responsibilities to the Canadian public at large to protect such a singular site of historical and public importance from privatization and gentrification; further, they point to the tremendous significance and eco-tourist potential of a capital city graced by a spectacular falls once deemed second only to the Niagara Falls.

Other than global thinking these days about the destructive environmental impact of so many dams around the world, (including the Hoover, which is killing the once mighty Colorado that created the Grand Canyons and can no longer reach the sea), there are also stories amazing recovery as described herein:

[As World's Largest Dam Removal is Completed, Fish Already Returning  
www.newsweek.com](http://www.newsweek.com)  
[The ecosystem's nascent but rapid recovery has shocked scientists.](#)

... and others with warnings: See [Large hydro dams aren't "green" - they actually drive climate change](#) (Despite the rhetoric about "green" hydro dams, the science suggests these projects actually help DRIVE climate, which should change our thinking about them.commonsensecanadian.ca)

*Many will continue to pray for and insist on the restoration of the Sacred Chaudiere Falls.*

### **3. Ecological importance, in particular to the threatened American Eel, *Manoshkadosh***

William Commanda added his voice to the call to place the Eel on the endangered species list: “Today, the plight of the Eel must awaken us to the crucial need to transform our relationship with Mother Earth and All Our Relations, and to awaken us to the pivotal role of Indigenous Peoples in this process. I believe that Eel spirit is intrinsic to the Sacred Seven Fire Prophecy Wampum Belt. This unique and mysterious ancient creature was of tremendous significance to the original peoples of the eastern coast of North America, and in the stories of my ancestors, it was plentiful beyond imagination; the Eel was of great spiritual, nutritional and material importance to the people from time immemorial. Intimately connected with peoples of the land, the Eel played a pivotal role in the R. v Marshall landmark legal victory in the recognition of Indigenous rights. ...

The plight of the American Eel is finally obliging us to reexamine our relationship with the natural world, and to take concrete steps to entrench survival and coexistence for all life forms, and governments are now implementing legislation to address these crucial concerns. We have to be especially diligent with species on endangered or threatened lists. I mention the American Eel here, but may I also mention that I am deeply concerned about the Lake Sturgeon, a prehistoric fish so plentiful in the stories of my parents, and the salmon; and I do not hear the frogs at my lake much any more. We need governments to listen and learn from the voices in communities, and to take an active leadership role to educate the public, developers and industry on these critical issues of our times.”

(Seven live eels were found at Victoria Island exactly a year after William Commanda’s death – August 3, 2012, and now Eel authority, Dr. J. Casselman reports that there are young eels in the Mississippi River upstream from the Chaudière’s – they join the effort to free the Chaudière. His prayer is powerful!)

#### 4. Sacred importance: sacred meeting place from time immemorial

With the retreat of the Champlain Sea, from 12,000 years ago, there is evidence of the Paleo Indians/ancient maritime navigators, visiting emerging islands and bedrock of the South March Highlands and Gatineau Hills. When the integrity of the landscape is examined, then one notes several critically important things about this area; it lies within vicinity of Ouiseau Rocks pictographs; the vicinity of red ochre mine, Calumet and Allumette (Pipe and Fire/Matchstick Islands pipes and other archaeological items provide evidence of Indigenous presence and ceremony; archeological finds of turquoise from Mexico, copper from Lake Superior and ramah chert from the Labrador are indicative of the nomadic reach of the ancient travellers of 5 to 6 thousand years ago; archaeological finds indicate that it is a site of fisheries/meeting place; it is place for ceremonial acknowledgement and tobacco ceremony;

- canoe routes followed river highways; portage routes indicate land passage: here, in Ottawa at Dow's Falls, the over-land route runs along present-day Preston Street to the Lebreton Flats and the Sacred Chaudière Falls, confirming how important this meeting place was; across, there is the Lac des Fees, the French name indicative of the Indigenous reference to the Little People, and sacred associations; French missionary Sagard noted the fires of ceremonial sweat lodges dotting the landscape; in 1600s, Samuel de Champlain provides description of the Indigenous ceremonial rituals that inspired future artists; in 1803 Algonquins of Lac Commandant area (William Commanda's people) object to Philomen Wright's cutting of their sugar bushes, and conduct conciliatory ceremony at the Chaudière site; in the 1800s, newcomers flood the Ottawa River areas; the 1830s rape and impalement/murder of an Algonquin girl by workers at Parliament Hill signals the reasons for the growing absence of Algonquin visibility at the Sacred Site; but Indigenous presence at the site was not extinguished, despite industrial development and contamination at Victoria and Chaudière Islands, and island reconfiguration, bridge building, establishment of logging and pulp and paper mills, hydro dams, newcomer presence, and diseases like cholera. In the seventies, the people gathered there again, creating an Indian Embassy and encampments of resistance to federal programs and policies; the nineties saw the active return of Indigenous Peoples and ceremonies to Victoria Island; many Elders, including late Algonquin Elder Frank Decontie, Late Grandmothers Lillian Pitawanakwat, Irene Lindsay, Jeorgina Laroque and others led sweat lodges and other healing ceremonies here; William Commanda himself cooked and fed the homeless and lost, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous; he also hosted annual Solstice and Equinox Pipe Ceremonies here from the late nineties till his death in 2011; in collaboration with Elders Without Borders, he hosted the 13 Moons Gathering of Indigenous Elders from around the world here; in collaboration with Plenty Canada, he organized Sustainable Relationship workshops, transforming language in environmental discussion. With the prayer that accompanied the release of the report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, he drew attention to the polluted Ottawa River; (he asked the leadership there whether they would be prepared to drink the water – for him, the salvation of the Indigenous Peoples and the salvation of the waters was one and

the same; almost 20 years later, the same issue is evident with the battles around fracking and pipelines and First Peoples lands; if the waters become unfit to drink, as anticipated as a dire concern in the Seven Fires Prophecy, then what lies ahead? It is already projected that the wars of the future will be Water Wars.) In 2006, he was presented with the Key to the City at this site, and this affirms public acknowledgement of the significance of the place to Indigenous Peoples. The winter of 2011/12 saw a return of Indigenous Peoples from across North America and even South America to the Sacred Chaudière Site, with the hunger strike of Chief Theresa Spence, the Idle No More movement, the winter of First Peoples unrest, activism and prayer, and the stream of walkers from across the country returning to the Source, as did their nomadic ancestors for countless centuries. The fire burning steadily at the Sacred Site over the past five decades. It is not out.



**5. Sacred importance: meeting place from time immemorial, in the Elder's words: William Commanda's words on heritage, spirituality, responsibilities and rights**

I preface this segment with text in William Commanda's own words, and expressed in materials published in the eighties and nineties. You will note the voice of perfect awareness of Indigenous right and historical wrongs, of deep spiritual wisdom, strength and diplomacy, and of vision for environmental stewardship and peace-building. He also spent the last two decades of his life in unceasing, entirely unfunded work, to animate his passionate imperative in the hearts and minds of countless others, of all backgrounds. In view of our present day global crises on both scores, and our national one with respect to Indigenous issues, you will see that he was a microcosmic seed planter of ideas and action on these many issues. That is why his voice continues to resonate so persistently at this time through diverse people.

Please note the following transcripts.

***A Circle of All Nations Note – William Commanda Transcript One (from McFadden and Sioui)***

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**TWO Transcripts of William Commanda interviews in 1991 and 1994 respectively, offered to facilitate a better understanding of his perspectives and positions, his views on his heritage, spirituality, responsibilities and rights, as well as of the *Circle of All Nations* work.**

**Excerpt from the book *Profiles in Wisdom: Native Elders Speak about the Earth* by Steven McFadden, 1991 Bear and Co. Chapter Two – Seven Prophets, Seven Fires: Grandfather William Commanda**

Selected excerpts quoting Grandfather William Commanda:

..... That's why when Indian people gather we always say, 'Let us put our minds together and have one mind'. We know that. The Creator created us equal; he created us one man and one woman, and there we all derive.

“Later, after the Vikings, when the other Europeans got here, we were already millions of inhabitants in this country. But they seem to want to refuse to believe today that we were the first occupants, and that we have the claim of first occupancy. They all say, well, they came four hundred or five hundred years ago, with the 1492 arrival of Christopher Columbus. He didn't arrive to find us. He was trying to get to India but he got lost. We found him. And then he called us Indians, but we are not. When we see a real Indian from India, we know that it's you that are Indian, not me. I am a North American.

“If my mother stands in the United States, I am still a North American. It makes no difference which side of the line. We did not draw the line. It was drawn by greedy people who came here and saw the riches that we have, and they divided my country into two parts. It almost became three countries once, because there were Confederates in the South and they had banks and printed their own money and had their own government and were fighting against the Union. But they lost the war. And the same thing happened with the French that arrived here. They had to sign away the land in 1763; they made a treaty in France surrendering the land. But how could they surrender a place they did not own? We were here. Today, they just say the all the legal papers they have made up supercede the aboriginal rights we have, and they want to completely eliminate us. They are talking to us now about granting us self-government, which is very mis-represented. I'm seventy-seven years old and I never went to school, but my Creator shows me true vision of what's going to be, what they are planning. I've had vision since the age of twelve. So I don't believe the government. I know their minds; I could read them. I read their hearts.”

*Just who were was the Civilised One?*

## ***A Circle of All Nations Note – William Commanda Transcript One (from McFadden and Sioui)***

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Grandfather Commanda commented, “Algonquin means ‘First people’, but that is a name that has been given to us. We are the Mamiwinini, which means ‘nomad’, which we are. That’s our name. We had that name because we were not settled. We were wanderers, nomads; we hunted and fished and moved about. That’s why we claim people from all over, not just those who are now on the reserve. But now, the minute you set foot outside the reserve, they say you are not one of the people. And that you cannot fish, or hunt, or trap. They say you pay, or you don’t pass. But we won’t pay. We don’t think its right.

“We are over fifteen hundred people in this part of the territory now, and we have people in settlement to the North, some of which are not called Indian reserves – but they have always been our people there. Today the government says they do not recognize these are Indian lands; they say they are Crown lands. Who made them Crown lands? We always battle with the words. They have obtained everything in squatter’s rights. What’s a squatter? What about the poor man? Is he a squatter man? Does he have a right to rob the banks? Does he have a right to kill for money, or for food? Is that the way a government should rule? Is the might right? When you ask yourself these questions, then you beginning to understand the meaning of the word ‘right’. You talk about right, then you can talk about left.

(NOTE – Even before his death over two decades later, William Commanda was still considering this concept of power, might and right – this is extracted from handwritten text on a scrap envelop that I just found in his room: (Does) might have a right to over power a right - *Romola Thumbadoo – July 2014*).

“We love our neighbors, and we opened our hands and arms when they came because we knew they were in peril and misery where they came from. They were probably overruled and overtaxed and over-everything they did not like. They were seeking freedom, and we gave it to them. But after they got over here, What did they do? Turn around and stab us in the back with the knife. Then we began to think. They were supposed, they thought, to civilize us. They came to evangelize. But today, see, all the waters are foul. You see the trees are dying. And you see the animals are sick – you see the fishes with cancers, and they are not edible in a lot of places because they would make you sick if you ate them. And so you begin to ask yourself, ‘Just who was the civilized one? Was it us or them?’ And it leaves me only one conclusion.

“”When I got to speak in schools, I say, in spite of all the things that happened, I never hate these people. That’s a word that should not be used. Love is a factor, because love overcomes. And so I never say, not even one time, ‘Go back to the country where you came from’. In spite of all that has happened we try to get along together. But that’s

## ***A Circle of All Nations Note – William Commanda Transcript One (from McFadden and Sioui)***

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not what they are doing. They are still trying to walk over our backs and to get the last drop of blood that we have in our bodies. And they are still not satisfied. Why did one people, because of a different colour of skin, have this urge or obsession to try and overrule because somebody else's skin is different? Why does this happen? What kind of blood do they have in their veins? What kind of heart do they have? Is it a red one like mine, or is it black? And you begin to wonder – it must be black because they wouldn't have all these polluting practices, and be doing all these things they are doing. You talk to them and they just walk away and laugh at you.

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“Our tradition teaches of a time when these things will change. They will change. Definitely. But before that change, whenever it takes place and we are awakened, we just let the people do what they are doing. They don't seem to listen to nobody. They have forgotten their Creator. It's the money that rules today, even though God in their book tells them you cannot serve two masters. Either you serve God or you serve the money. So who are they serving?

“I ask myself often, and it makes me cry, ‘What's going to happen to the grandchildren?’ They are just starting to grow. But two-thirds of these people, who are so-called Indians, we are told that two-thirds of these also will go. In what way we don't know. Maybe diseases, or massacres, we don't know. But it has happened in the past.

“One time back in 1987, at a meeting out West, an Ojibway man was telling a funny story about what had happened to the people, and we all began to laugh. There was a white man standing behind us. We did not know who he was, and he said, ‘How can you do that? How can you people laugh the way you are doing, after all we did to you people?’ He said, ‘I wouldn't be able to laugh like that.’ And I said, ‘Well, we forgive you people. We forgive you. We don't forget what you did, but the Creator wanted us to forgive, and that's exactly what we do.’

“People are funny. They're funny, then again they are pitiful. A lot of people blame the denominations – blame the Catholics, the Anglicans, the Jesuits, and all these people. These people were also used by governments. They were pushed to do things, and they did them in order to receive things from the government. But since they were not natives, when they saw all the riches there were here, they went along with the government. Today it would probably be different.

“You and me, we need each other. That's why I told you in the beginning, we never say, ‘Go back where you came from.’ Never ‘go’, but the people who are doing the bad things, what kind of heart do they have? Why are they doing these things? Let's not talk about the past, but the future. Because the past you can't change. They are still doing it today.”

## ***A Circle of All Nations Note – William Commanda Transcript One (from McFadden and Sioui)***

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### *Relevant messages of the Wampum Belts*

“The one from 1600s speaks of the French and English who have played a dominant role in the modern history of Canada. It also speaks about an agreement made between the two”, Grandfather Commanda says, “with the nation of Indians standing in between. There’s a cross on the belt, which means the Vatican: it represent the Vatican. That cross also represents the priests who blessed the agreement, which said that as long as the Sun will shine, as long as the grass will grow, as long as the rivers will run, these two people promise that their word will never change. The rivers are still running. The Sun is still shining. The grass is growing. Where are the white man’s words? False. They have been false people, who you cannot fully trust. And they know, too, even if they won’t say”.

*With respect to the Seven Fire Belt, this is what he had to say:*

“The Seven Fires are times in the life of the people. What the belts say will happen is a purification. And that day, whenever that takes place, two thirds of the aboriginal people will have faded away, or disappeared, or have been destroyed. That’s what we are told. Notice, we are only a handful now. And after that the rightful occupant, who was here first, will take over. But by whose command? There’s one Creator. And at that time, all will believe.

“I believe the rightful inhabitants are the Red Nations; that it’s not going to be the White Nation. But there will be room for people of all colours: the reds, the yellows, the blacks, and the whites. Because, as I said there are a lot of good white people.

“For a long time we did not show the belts. At a meeting we had in 1987 – the Constitution meeting in Ottawa – I brought the belts to the meeting and we exposed them to the TV for all the world to see, for the first time. We never had allowed anybody to take pictures of these before. But we opened them then. And we try to get along. We’ve been having meeting amongst the Aboriginal people, like this meeting in the Yukon where I was the other day. That’s all we talk about there. We try to get together and explain it to the government. But they only want to talk about the land claims. Always it’s the money. You know, it’s wrong. And they were even mad when we told them otherwise about things that are really important. They want the millions and millions.”

With respect to the Seven Fires Prophecy, Grandfather Commanda was always especially concerned about the warning from centuries ago regarding the possible poisoning of the waters, when the fish become unfit to drink – “It’s all spirit, and it’s all connected,” Grandfather Commanda comments. “If you pollute the water, you are going to see that the things in the water are dead, because the waters have killed it. No more

## ***A Circle of All Nations Note – William Commanda Transcript One (from McFadden and Sioui)***

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life. And look at all the trees. Every time it rains it's supposed to be pure water, not acid rain. The pure water that we used to have a long time ago was good for the trees; it would hang on them in drops."

As of 1990 there were over fourteen hundred dead lakes in Canada, and many of the forests had been visibly weakened by acid rain. (Of course, we don't talk about this any longer).

He also noted the "people who were the first to have contact with the light-skinned race would suffer the most" – he was not unmindful that that was his people – the Algonquin chief Tessaouat who met Champlain in 1604.

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"Grandfather Commanda has many stories to share, all of them marked by the wisdom of the North. "Let me tell you something that happened even before the coming of the light-skinned race. They were having a ceremony one evening, and one of the Grandfathers came over. He had this vision. He said some day, very soon, his vision would become real, and that the four colours would come; people who were not here then would come. He said, "We are known as Red People, the Red Race, but there will be other colours. Just look over there, ' he said, "and you will see a white birch standing over there. And over there, there's a yellow poplar. And then if you look out there, toward the South, you'll see a black cherry tree standing out there. Those trees represent the people who will come. They are not here yet, but they will come. And there will be a person coming with a long rope and cross. What he represents is just like the Sun when it comes up brilliant in the East. But after he has been here a few years, then he will start to form a thundercloud in his mind, in his head, and then he's going to forget what the Creator told him and fall away". And you know it happened. All this came to pass.

"We have to have one mind for the Four Directions. Until we reach that one mind, we cannot be filled with understanding. We pray a lot of times and make ceremony with tobacco. Now, you know, you can get a big crowd around the fire, of say some two hundred people, and some of the people may have a different mind. If that's so, then the prayers, most of the time, are not answered because you have twenty-five different minds. The creator will not answer until you have just one mind, just like if you have one person.

" And there are Four Corners of the Earth that we talk about, and the Four Colours of people, and the Four Winds. You see the winds – they are spirits – and they are probably the most dangerous thing there is in the world. It could destroy all the cities and kingdoms, everything, within an hour, if the Creator permits it. Nothing could stop it. Atom bombs and jet planes and all threats. They are nothing compared to the Creator.

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***A Circle of All Nations Note – William Commanda Transcript One (from McFadden and Sioui)***

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And also waters. There's a lot of power in nature, as we know from the Seven Fires. Fire is visible, but the wind is not. The wind is connected with the North.

“The North is the wisdom direction, the direction of clear mind. Remember that. It's white because it's bright. That's where the snow always exists, twelve months a year. The snow never disappears from the north side of the mountains. It's always on top. The snow is up there year round.”

In his life, Grandfather Commanda has been gifted with twelve separate visions. One of them came on August 4, 1988, at 9 a.m. “I saw the Peace Tower in Ottawa, which is the capital of Canada, and the tower was standing just fifty feet from me, with the Canadian flag with the red maple leaf. And the wind was blowing it south, because of the way it was placed. And I was lying deep in a trance, sitting toward the East in the morning. Then I began to see it going down – the tower was going down; everything, including the flag was all going down, disappearing into the ground. So that was really something. Then in October of 1988 there was an election between incumbent President Brian Mulroney and John Turner. While they were debating, Mulroney was accused of selling out to the United States with one stroke of the pen when he signed the Free Trade Accord. And it's so. With that one stroke of the pen he sold us out. We are going to become the fifty-first state of the United States.

“Why? Why this vision? Four months before the debate, I saw the tower and flag disappear. And so I trust my vision that was given to me by my creator. I believe it will happen. It might not happen in my time, but it's going to happen. I know. Canada has been sold out and its going to become part of the United States.”

***The Great Law of the Wampum: The Path of the Anishnabek by Regent G. Sioui, Wendake, March 1994***

**Excerpts from a Paper submitted to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples**

**“I collected the oral traditions from William Commanda, a Native personality with the double status of Wampum Keeper and Supreme Chief of the Government of the Indian Nation of North America (an organization founded by Jules Sioui in the period 1930 – 1950).**

**“Reading and interpretation of Wampum Belts and Strings by William Commanda Odjigwano born 11 November 1913, Maniwaki, Lac Bitobi, Canoe artist, Guardian of the traditions, keeper of the pipe and the wampum”**

1. Wampum belt one  
The Seven Fires

Does each of you hear? This is the belt of the seven nations and I also say of the Seven Fires. The fire was lighted from the east, from the eastern part of our country, and as you see in this part the belt was broken in the 1800s. And we know that two nations have vanished from North America. You will no longer find the Beothuk in Newfoundland. They have died out. New York had the Mohicans, but they have gone. The belt told our elders this long ago: these two nations would vanish. Nevertheless, their fires live on because their spirits are alive. The peoples may have gone but their spirits are with us.

And this (wampum) was lighted from the east and came toward the west in this way. (He shows the direction on the wampum with the eagle feather.) Now, a few years ago the fire was again lighted in the west and it came toward the east, in this direction. We think at present it is here, at this boiling point. People gather and unite as if they have become one. At one time we fought our brothers: to the south the Mohawks and all those who were with the English because we had allied ourselves with the French from the beginning. We, however, did not go to war against anyone because we were nomads. We used to occupy all of eastern Quebec. We lived in Oka for 300 years and my great-grandfather brought this belt in 1822 to the place where we live now. He died in 1874 and his son-in-law took over the duties because he had no sons. He (my great-grandfather) was also was a traditional chief. His father was a chief and that is how things were done at that time. After his son-in-law took charge of the belts he accepted the elective system and took the belts to Barriere Post (Abitibi). They stayed there. That was in 1892 and they stayed there until 1927.



## ***A Circle of All Nations Note – William Commanda Transcript One (McFadden and Sioui)***

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In 1927 the situation was difficult and the belts had to cross the border to the USA. They were borrowed there and were kept there from 1927 until they came to me in 1969, back to their origin.

*{Serve Bouchard, in Memoires d'un simple missionnaire: le pere Joseph-Ettien Guinard, omi (p- 213) relates the reappearance of the wampums in 1944-45 at Obedjiwan. Their guardians supported the league of the Government of the Indian Nation of North America found by Jules Sioui at that time. "(TRANS) All squatting on their heels, they listened to a stranger seated on a chair who held in his hand an old band of beads and explained their value and meaning at great length. At his feet was a chest with bands, belts, headdresses, pipes, eagle feathers, papers and badges." William Commanda is today the last Supreme Chief of the Government of the Indian Nation of North America.}*

(With the eagle feather, Chief Commanda draws the central figure of this wampum: the double diamond which closes like an eclipse to make a single one.) As you see here, at the time of the realization of this and the comprehension of unity in a single spirit a single heart, together ... as you see here, these two diamonds will meet and become one. And from what we can see, it is sad to realize that when this reunion takes place, two-thirds of our people will have been destroyed. This means the first peoples of this continent. Only a third will survive. They do not know how. No one knows why and we do not know which ones. It could be by an earthquake, it could be by disease, something that cannot be cured or anything at all. And that is what we call the day of Purification. After that everything will become pure again, water, trees, plants, medicines, everything.

There are seven complete nations on the whole continent speaking 250 dialects. My nations can understand perhaps over fifty dialects of the Algonquian family: Cree, Ojibway, Chippewa, Wabanaki, Micmac and Malecite. All the eastern area down to Boston and all James Bay is Algonquin. All these languages differ only as dialects. We understand one another, and many words are similar. However, the way they are said, the various forms of pronunciation and the accent are very different. That is why we use these belts to talk to the people. It is our duty to make this understood.

### 2. Wampum belt two

#### THE THREE FIGURES (1763)

This is a highly debatable belt. As you see, on my side, here, we have four winds and four directions. On the other side you see the four colours of the peoples of the world and there are four seasons. The first figure is the Creator. The Creator made man, he made woman. An the instructions were given as to how to take great care of each thing: trees, waters, medicines ... Not to take these things for granted, not to use anything just for pleasure. We owe respect to all we use.

## ***A Circle of All Nations Note – William Commanda Transcript One (from McFadden and Sioui)***

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Then the white came here. The French arrived and brought with them a book called a Bible. Their Bible tells us that the Son ... of the Creator ... was crucified and their teaching also tells of the Holy Spirit ... We assimilated those things in our inner life out of respect for them. If we have to criticize foreign domination or something of the sort it is because many of many times say that the reason we became like that is because we are like this. This is why we are unlucky or that is why we have lost everything. However, it is really the government. Those foreigners who came with their Bible were also used by government to do what they did to our people. The government built schools and gave orders so that our language would be destroyed. We were injured, they did all they could to make us lose our language. Because language is what gives power and we have to work hard to learn in again. You would be able to speak it fluently as we do. We teach now to young children among us in schools. We began four years ago and already they speak to us and bear witness to our language.

And it is good, impressive and very encouraging to see this happen. It is something we must bring back with our four grandfathers because they are the ones who gave us all this power. When I prayed this morning I thought to thank the grandfather for the four corners of this continent to thank they so that they will help us as our elders taught us and all the things we know. Probably we know very little but we pass on what we do know and the way we have been shown. We do not want to pass it on only to Aborigines. We must teach it to people of other colours too, so that they will understand us, because formerly they thought we were worshipping evil spirits when we used the things we have such as this pipe, for example. That was not true however, and it still not true.

They have made many books and many things and they write what they please. They even wrote our names and placed Xs, stating that this “his mark”, the mark of one of our past chiefs. Then they waited until our grandparents died to show us this book, telling us that they had renounced their rights at the time. In their book of cessions of land we see many of this things and they tell the children, “In this way you gave us your mother.” They follow this procedure in the courts of law and the courts believe it, what the white man writes. They would not want, they do not want to believe this, this belt.

### **3. Wampum belt three**

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#### **JAY’S TREATY**

This is a very young belt. It was completed in 1793. It took three years to make this belt.

When the US independence movement began in 1776, it took all that time until 1793 before they began to negotiate to divide our country into two. And we call this the Jay’s Treaty belt. In their book, there was no Indian present. They did it all themselves. That is

**A Circle of All Nations Note – William Commanda Transcript One (from McFadden and Sioui)**

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why you see the white beads here, they are not wampum. They are glass beads from the Hudson's Bay Company.

Our grandparents placed this (the glass beads) just because that border was not always there. And it will go away bit by bit, piece by piece. It will change every year. The first phase you will see is this: just one country.

As you see, I had this belt in 1969 (Mr. Commanda shows a place in the wampum restored with unpolished beads). There is only one original one in the corner and I placed the rest here. That is why you see they do not shine. I had the wampum beads from a museum. Someone brought them to me and I arranged them (this row of wampum). Since then we have had courts of law and many things have happened. Today we have problems with tobacco and with other things. The Indians have always known that tobacco did not come from Europe. Tobacco was already on this continent. They took it from us and they use it without being entitled but they make millions and millions of dollars from it. It is their industry to sell cigarettes. Now they try to charge us and put us in prison for doing it.

As you see from this (figures in the wampum), these are Indian places on both sides of the border. We were supposed to cross and cross back to make visits. You could live with other Indians in the USA for years if you wished and return to live in your locality without any trouble, without any difficulty. When they drew the line in their book, not one Indian was present. But the Indian made the belt because they knew what was going on. That is why we put this white band. We said, "Fine, I can do it, it will not be there forever." Our ancestors spoke directly to the Creator and they had this vision and they knew what they were doing. That is why these belts are really important.

And as it happens, the other day a man who came from Yukon sat with the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Canada. They began to talk and this man who know me told him. And the Chief Justice said that the belts should be brought into court as evidence whenever a problem arises. Because it is not taken into account in the books of the white man. We are all men, humans, and we also have books. These belts are not just things which were written and which no longer exist. No, they are there to stay and they will stay. Because we believe, because our ancestors told us all this and we really believe all they left us.

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***A Circle of All Nations Note – William Commanda Transcript One (from McFadden and Sioui)***

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All these beads were made from this: a shellfish.

You see the colours, white on the side? Her it is brown because I have burned tobacco in it while saying a prayer sometimes. Taking tobacco, setting it alight and adding sage, that is why it is coloured.

That is almost all I can tell you about the belts, but the most important is this one (Wampum two). In the very near future it will be used in the courts (of law) to prove what I said a moment ago, that we are still kings of this continent. Because that is what the Creator says. I have never heard that the Creator lies to anyone.

The truth is there. It is not like the book which was written with our names in it. Then, after waiting until our grandparents were dead, they came and told us, “They ceded all this and now it is ours.” We all belong to one human people, whether you are white, black, red, brown or yellow. There is no difference because it was already included in this belt: four families of people in the world and we have four winds, four directions and four seasons. And this was there. We respect it because we know that our grandparents of this part of the globe are there in spirit. And we still ask, when we pray, for help. My prayer always says, “Father, please, return to us what you gave to our grandparents before us, before it is too late.” Because if the trend continues as it is, all the destruction and pollution of the waters, perhaps in ten more years we will not know if we can eat, if we can drink water. The gardens will be so polluted that nothing will be edible any more. That is why prayers are very important. Every morning that is the prayer I pray. Even when I am alone in my room I pray this prayer, asking the Creator, “Return to us what you gave us before so that we will again be Guardians of all this creation with the purpose of saving it.” Because we do not want to see the last tree cut down and we do not want to speak of the last unpolluted spring and so forth. That is all! Megwetch.

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## 6. National/international historical prominence

The Sacred Chaudiere Site lies at the heart of the Nation's capital, between Ontario and Quebec, encompasses islands historically the preserves for First Peoples, with a spectacular circular waterfalls second to none – the only capital city to boast such a natural splendor

Archaeological and historical documentation establishes that it was a sacred meeting place from time immemorial; records of Etienne Brule and Samuel de Champlain (1613) and various missionaries affirm this

William Commanda's direct Algonquin ancestors from the north eastern side of the Ottawa River asserted "claim" to the islands at the Chaudieres at the time of the first settler, Philomen Wright (1802)

Though dislocated from this site by settler occupation, warfare, disease, rape and population decimation, the attachment to the area remained unextinguished for the First Peoples

In the 1960s they began to return to the area to assert rights, resume ceremony, build relationships and sanctify the land; their efforts were and remain constantly challenged

In 1970s National Capital Commission Chair Jean Pigot identified Victoria Island as the site for a National Indigenous Centre.

In the late 90s William Commanda developed a comprehensive vision for the area

In August 2006, at the annual Circle of All Nations International Gathering, National Capital Commission (NCC) Chairman Marcel Beaudry affirmed that:

- NCC had been working a long time, perhaps 15 years, but intensely over the last 7, for Aboriginals to be recognized once and for all in the National Capital Region
- In Ontario, English culture predominates, and in Quebec, French, but NCC felt the Aboriginals did not have a place, and noted its role to facilitate this
- NCC wanted to recognize Aboriginals by building a centre of national stature
- NCC noted the area is sacred to Aboriginals
- Aboriginals themselves should decide what should take place there: healing, spirituality, education etc<sup>19</sup>
- The Federal Government would invest \$100 million dollars on the building (our note: includes remedial environmental work), and \$11 million a year on programs

and services

–Two Foundations would be established to implement the project: one to oversee construction and maintenance with 50% Federal and 50% Aboriginal control; the other under Aboriginal management for programs and services

–NCC noted that Aboriginals were here much earlier than the French and English, and moving forward on this project would finally see all three founding nations represented in the capital city

–NCC also acknowledged Elder Commanda’s respected status across the country amongst Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples; and Douglas Cardinal’s unique architectural vision, and long term commitment to the project

In November 2010 the City of Ottawa endorsed the project.

Documentation on the project has been presented to the United Nations at multiple levels.

Indigenous Peoples and multiple supporters continue to press for manifestation of the vision, with strong assertion of support for an Indigenous centre and public space.

It is seen as penultimate project to celebrate Canada’s upcoming 150<sup>th</sup> birthday on the local, national and international stage.

## 7. Land issues and Algonquin territorial claims

Several key thoughts come to mind:

- As per William Commanda's consultation with all Algonquin communities on both sides of the Ottawa River, (March, 2003), *all* affirm interests in the Sacred Chaudière Site
- The establishment of the reserves at Maniwaki, Golden Lake and Temiscaming in the 1850s, before there was a Canada, Quebec and Ontario attests to the presence and rights of the Algonquins from both sides of the Ottawa River
- During Elder Commanda's first meeting with the National Capital Commission (2003), he asked for papers to attest to the NCC's right to Victoria Island and vicinity – no documents were produced during a subsequent meeting with NCC lawyers.
- In 2007, Domtar representative F. Jette revealed that his company leased the Chaudière Island property in perpetuity for approximately \$100 a year, renewable every twenty years, a leasing arrangement developed in 1856, after the Algonquin peoples had been driven from the area
- In 2008 and in 2014, *Circle of All Nations* (with William Commanda first and Douglas Cardinal subsequently) wrote to Domtar to propose a non-contentious return of the Sacred Chaudière Site for the creation of the Asinabka legacy vision of William Commanda, a gesture of reconciliation and karmic rebalancing, in view of the centuries of advantage to developers, and of site desecration, a gesture that would be beneficial to both First Peoples and all others now occupying their ancestral lands. This has not manifested
- **The land issues are contentious and as yet unresolved.** A brief exposé of the issues extracted from the Master's Thesis of Eric L. Smith (2011) reveals that the site is a *jurisdictional quagmire*: "In terms of land ownership and uses, Chaudière Island is a mix of federal (crown) land, managed by the Department of Public Works and Government Services Canada (PWGSC), and private land and industrial infrastructure, owned and managed by Domtar Corporation. Domtar has been the owner of the hydroelectric facility on Chaudière Island since acquiring the E.B Eddy properties from George Weston Co. in 1998. Through the administration of PWGSC, the Crown owns the hydraulic lots along the perimeter of Chaudière island and leases them to Domtar. The entire island is restricted to industrial use and public access is prohibited. Three principal parties share responsibilities for managing the dam, maintaining and setting water levels: Hydro-Ottawa, Hydro Quebec and Domtar Inc. The principals operate and maintain the dam under the corporate entity known as Chaudière Power Inc. The City of Ottawa owns Hydro-Ottawa Holdings Inc. while a subsidiary of Hydro-Ottawa: Energy Ottawa owns and operates two of the hydroelectric generating plants below the falls on the

Ontario side. Politically, the interprovincial Ontario-Quebec border runs along the river north of Chaudière Island, situating the island within the city of Ottawa but at the western edge of the island, the interprovincial border dips to the south with the result that the Chaudière Ring Dam lies entirely within the city of Gatineau... For the National Capital Commission (NCC), the entire island and the waters of the Ottawa river fall within the category of partnership land, in which there is an ongoing federal role and involvement. The NCC considers Domtar properties to form part of the 'National interest land mass'- a "category of lands that are key to building the Capital over long term" (G. Dionne, personal communication, 2011) However the NCC and Domtar have no lease arrangements. The ring dam is excluded from NCC jurisdiction. The island, waters and the dam also exist within the Census Metropolitan Area of Ottawa Gatineau, the only of its kind in Canada to fall within two provinces." (Access full thesis exploring colonial relations at [www.asinabka.com](http://www.asinabka.com) 2011 Eric Smith Thesis on ASINABKA *An urban epicentre of decolonization in Canada: the Indigenous-Settler alliance to make a place for peace at Asinabka.*)

- The public at large is under the impression that Domtar has sold its rights to the Chaudière property to Windmill Development Group. Someone wrote, *I'm not a real estate agent, but it seems to me that holding a lease isn't having title to the land and therefore the ability to sell it.* In response to the question, is Windmill now the *leaseholder*, like Domtar, and earlier Weyerhaeuser rather than the *owner* of the lands, we have learned that City of Ottawa officials "understand that Windmill is not yet the outright owner of the Domtar lands at this time. The lands are under their control via an Agreement but they are not yet the full owner/leaseholder at this time" (Inner Urban (Wards 12, 13, 14, 15, 17). Further, according to the Land Registry, most of the island appears not to be owned by Domtar, but leased. It seems that only parcel 213, which is largely under water, is owned (Letters Patent of 1986) and that all other parcels are leased. (213 was originally owned by Eddy and in 2012, through Domtar, transferred to Chaudière Hydro). It is therefore still predominantly Crown land.... No treaties were ever signed with the Algonquins and it remains unceded, unsurrendered and unconquered Algonquin territory.
- While the Algonquins of Ontario have been engaged in land claim discussions, these remain contentious and unconcluded; still, the Algonquins of Ontario have nonetheless also asserted that any development at the Sacred Chaudière Site must be consistent with the vision of Grandfather William Commanda; and Algonquins from Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg, Quebec, William Commanda's home base, are a regular presence at Victoria Island. Further, as noted earlier, as per William Commanda's personal consultation with all Algonquin communities, *all* affirmed interests in the Sacred Chaudière Site and support for the multi-pronged vision ((March, 2003). Finally, the overwhelming support for the unifying work of the Algonquin Chief and Elder was reaffirmed by the fully inclusive Algonquin presence at his funeral on August 6, 2011)



- Grandfather Commanda's vision sees the Algonquins from both sides of the Ottawa River serving as hosts, but it also sees an equitable role and place for all First Nations, Inuit and Metis Peoples, from across the country at the Sacred Chaudière Site. This practice was always the historical reality at sacred sites (witness Pipestone, Minnesota), and is particularly so in this capital city. Hence First Peoples from across the country have a critical vested interest in the place.

## 8. A critical consideration – First Peoples/Canada relations in 2014

- Crisis, tensions and pressures are mounting in First Nations/Federal relations and they are fracturing fragile First Nations institutional structures
- Indian Residential Schools atrocities and Truth and Reconciliation Commission work has presented public witnessing of historical wrongs, abuses and injustices at the hands of government and church and has revealed the continued devastating impacts on multi-generations
- Despite a decade of justice inquiries in the eighties, and new policing, corrections, and justice initiatives over the past twenty-five years, in 2012, the Correctional Investigator released reports severely critical of the criminal justice system and its treatment of Aboriginal Peoples
- Environmental clashes are on the rise and gaining increasing visibility; whereas in the past, many struggles were hidden in remote First Nations communities, today the public at large is growing aware of the national and global implications of the devastating environmental degradation of the past hundred years. When he first brought out the Wampum Belts at the Constitutional Debates in 1987, Elder Commanda drew attention to precisely this issue. Now the public at large is beginning to learn from the Indigenous voices.
- UN Reports and the Special Rapporteur on the Rights Indigenous Peoples regularly takes Canada to task on the global stage on a range of issues of concern to First Peoples: Missing and Murdered Women, Education, Justice, Human Rights, First Nations Children, Poverty, Land Issues etc.
- In a colonized country such as this, many citizens are now realizing that our self-respect and healthy living is inextricably tied together with the well being of the First Peoples and the need for deep reconciliation is urgent.

## 9. Peace building and contemporary multiracial/multicultural animation

Inspired by the ancient sacred Indigenous Wampum Belts, the mandate for the Asinabka Site is multi-fold:

- To inspire respectful and responsible choice for sustainable relationships guided by values of sharing, balance and harmonious co-existence, at these times of global crisis anticipated by the ancient *Seven Fires Prophecy Wampum Belt*;
- To renew and celebrate the Indigenous spirit of welcome and sharing as inscribed in the *Three Figure Wampum Belt* from the 1700s;
- To celebrate freedom and interconnection consistent with the spiritual laws of nature and the great circle of life; and
- To honour First Peoples whose values and heritage have contributed substantially and positively to the evolution of Canada since its inception, and who still serve as the glue to hold a diverse society together.
- The vision for the site was developed with the passionate input and contribution of his larger *Circle of All Nations* global eco-community over fifteen years (see [www.circleoffallnations.ca](http://www.circleoffallnations.ca) for extensive background information) and they are also deeply entrenched in his plan for the Sacred Site; this includes Settler allies, organizations, and other international friends and partners
- Consistent with his interpretation of the 1700s Welcoming and Sharing Three Figure Wampum Belt, Grandfather Commanda also projected this as a place for acknowledgement and review of historical and industrial development at the site (it is noted that Energy Ottawa has commenced embarking on such community-based information events over the past two years)
- Mindful also of commitment to Mother Earth, he envisioned a relationship with land in the form of the restoration of a contaminated brownfield to a “Central Eco-Park Medicine Garden” on Chaudière Island, at a Chaudière Falls freed to the fullest extent possible, thereby also “freeing” the endangered American Eel. This revitalized space is to serve as an urban sanctuary for all, drawing the French (Quebec) and English (Ontario) Canada and all the citizens of the National Capital Region together with the First Peoples of the continent under the healing umbrella of nature, and consistent with 1700s Welcoming and Sharing Three Figure Wampum Belt
- It is a vision of profound sharing and interconnection, and is the manifestation of his prayer, *GINAWAYDAGANUC*

## 10. Critical contemporary and international and relevance and importance of Late Algonquin Elder, Dr. William Commanda's (OC) legacy Indigenous vision for the area.

For Grandfather William Commanda, the Legacy Vision is predicated on two critical issues of ever escalating global, national and local importance:

- Respect and reverence for Mother Earth, the penultimate mother
- Peace building, racial harmony and social justice and inclusion

These are integrated as one in the ancient prayer always on his lips:

### *Ginawaydaganuc*

*We are all connected; we are all interrelated*

*With each other, Mother Earth and all her Children and with our Cosmic World*

*We have to find the path to unity*

*Our Separations and Divisions are Costing More than we can Sustain*

*More than Mother Earth can Endure without Reaction*

(And more than the insurance companies will cover in the face of escalating climate change and environmental depletion)

We are in a deep need for a new vision to shine the light into an ever more challenging global future.

With his century of self-driven effort, William Commanda charted a path for global alliances, partnerships, creativity and co-creation grounded in the ancient laws for co-existence and in the intelligence of nature. He animated this in his *Circle of All Nations* work, and numerous acknowledgements and honours indicate the span of his influence. His vision continues to inspire an incredibly diverse community, from grass roots to politicians, spiritual leaders to academics.

Thus, the Mission is to vitalize and celebrate a strong, unified Indigenous presence in the sacred heart of the country, inspiring a passion for environmental stewardship and peace-building, consistent with the deep understanding of the central ancestral prayer of the land: *Ginawaydaganuc, We Are All Connected*, thereby ensuring a sustainable future for the *Seven Generations*.

### **Expected Key Results**

1. Sharing and strengthening strategies for healing and social development programs;
2. Creation of an environment conducive to healing of relationships amongst First Nations, Inuit and Metis Peoples, both on reserves and in urban and rural areas; and with the Settler community;
3. Creation of space for art studios and creative activities;
4. Creation of space for the showcasing of art and culture of First Nations, Inuit and Metis;

5. Increased visibility of Indigenous Peoples in the National Capital Region and country;
6. Establishment of archives, and creation of an environment and resource base to support researchers and students in universities and colleges in the national capital region and beyond;
7. Incremental improvements in the socio/economic/health conditions of Indigenous Peoples, consistent with the ideals of the *Three Figure Wampum Belt* and principles of sharing and confederacy, in fair recognition of birth rights to land and resources;
8. Comprehensive articulation of Indigenous thoughts on global, environmental and social justice issues;
9. Greater understanding of Indigenous ideology and its tremendous importance to the key issues of the times – health, environmental stewardship and peace-building;
10. Understanding and affirmation of Indigenous history and rights amongst Canadians at large; and commitment to support their occupation of their rightful position as First Peoples of this land;
11. Celebration of Indigenous culture and heritage as *The Sacred Jewel in the Nation's Crown*;
12. Maturation and self-respect in the Canadian psyche.

The wholistic vision respects the integrity of the central site and provides space of inclusion for all inhabitants of this special country.