



## **Circle of All Nations**

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### **2016 June 23 Circle of All Nations Cover Note (Email) to PM (submitted together with 2016 June Note to PM re Mental Health and Asinabka).**

1. The attached note to you, Honourable Prime Minister, was prepared on June 16, 2016. It draws attention to the topic of Indigenous Mental Health and William Commanda's Vision for an inclusive *healing* and peace-building centre at the Sacred Chaudiere Site. Key items are elaborated on in the accompanying note; this takes the form of a photo narrative inclusive of some Facebook posts, since it is so difficult to reduce the critical Indigenous issues raised here to a bureaucratic briefing note. But we know you are well attuned to the new e-communications style.

### **The request is for the creation of a multi-disciplinary task force to deliberate on the potential of the Commanda Legacy Vision for the Asinabka Sacred Chaudiere Site.**

2. First, we commend you on raising the national profile of National Aboriginal Day on June 21, 2016. It was very heartening from multiple perspectives. But we are not unmindful of the reality that the June 21 Pipe Ceremony that William Commanda animated and consecrated on Victoria Island for two decades was managed by Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada at the Museum of History and the Sacred Chaudiere Site rendered bereft of ceremony; that you were robed in the jacket created by his wife Mary Commanda, when the late Elder raised the issue of Justice for Indigenous Peoples with your late father; that William Commanda himself met you when he came to advise your father on repairing his birch bark canoe – I post our William Commanda Legacy – Asinabka Facebook commentary for June 21 National Aboriginal Day as addendum for your information. Many people around the globe pray Dr. William Commanda, OC, the Indigenous *Dalai Lama* to many, will remain “*encore vivant*” and not be rendered *invisible*.

### **3. Re: Your June 13<sup>th</sup> Press Release focused on Indigenous Mental Health.**

Over the past two decades, William Commanda developed and articulated a vision for healing at the Asinabka Sacred Chaudiere Site, with healing on the land being the central feature, since he recognized that mental (and related physical) health was emerging as a looming crisis, not only for First Peoples, but for all Canadians. He also re-animated healing on the land, both at his home in Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg, and on Victoria Island. The work he initiated is discussed in the attached note in the case of (1), two victims of the residential school history, and their reclaiming of Indigenous healing strategies at William Commanda's gatherings, and their subsequent articulation of the healing story as part of the Truth and Reconciliation work, in a project developed by *Circle of All Nations*

colleagues; and (2), the healing journey of the mother of a murdered woman on Victoria Island, between April 2015 and 2016, and her engagement in advancing child care work.

In May, 2016, Audrey Redman, herself a grieving Indigenous woman, whose sister was a victim of the Picton horror, was forcibly prevented from doing a healing ceremony on Victoria Island, by RCMP and NCC. I attach photos to illustrate the disturbing nature of the intervention.

I discuss the deliberate elimination of ceremony and Indigenous presence at Victoria Island, including from the one sliver of obscured land where Indigenous peoples have been gathering for prayer and companionship over the past years, some under the specific direction of Late Elder William Commanda. Further, I note that Indigenous apartment dwellers have no place of shade, sanctuary and safety to gather in still largely racist and isolationist Ottawa. I contend that it is cruel and wrong to prevent people from using the sacred island and its one shady spot; a particularly hot summer is upon us.

4. You will be aware that the City of Ottawa's decision to rezone Chaudiere and Albert Island from open space and public designation for privatization and condo development remains under legal challenge by supporters of William Commanda's vision for the Sacred Chaudiere Site. I raise the serious question of the influence of developers in the elimination of the presence of people/Indigenous Peoples aligned with William Commanda's vision from the Sacred Chaudiere Site. Here, first, I am obliged to point to the engagement of certain Algonquins to sanction the recent NCC/RCMP action: NCC itself has had to acknowledge Conflict of Interest issues with respect to its Aboriginal Officer, whose partner is a part of the Windmill/Zibi/Dream group's Aboriginal advisory group (this item is included in our appeal documents); it is also a publicly known fact that the family of the Elder engaged to seal off the island are partners with the Windmill/Zibi/Dream group. It is surely wrong to use Indigenous Peoples for "policing" in such sensitive matters. Issues of nepotism and obstructionism, and the absence of Indigenous practices of circle discussion and consensus building are of serious concern. For people like me who have worked in Aboriginal justice over many decades, Oka and Ipperwash are not far from the mind.

5. Another issue is also of deep concern: many have suggested the Commanda vision of the Sacred Chaudiere Site as a 2017 Canada Birthday project since 2004. We contend that it is wrong that NCC earmarks over half a million dollars to refurbish the old Legion colonial building on Victoria Island, for Canada's birthday celebration, and presents it as an Indigenous project. It does not have the sanction of many Indigenous Peoples; and it is a duplicitous expenditure of public funds that reaffirm *settler colonial* practices. I note that just a few years ago, NCC expended \$2 million to protect the white elephant of the Carbide Mill on Victoria Island, while people still await a public toilet such as is available at all other NCC sites. It is quite apparent that mainstream media refuses to profile the challenge story fairly or objectively: merely 50 odd people appeared to engage in the City of Ottawa's (partner with NCC and Developers in the Chaudiere Challenge) launch of a monument to select Algonquin nations this past month; more than 600 walked

from Victoria Island to Parliament Hill for the Commanda vision; the former was covered by the Citizen, but not the latter.

6. But it pains us to repeatedly address issues such as these, when all our focus should be on peace building and healing for future generations, as directed by Grandfather Commanda. So, in another vein altogether, Honourable Prime Minister, we also note the potential of Chaudiere as a world heritage site, and attach a note illustrating its singular stature as a one of a kind geological, cultural, heritage, Indigenous, sacred and historical centre, and another note that demonstrates how this aligns with global markers for such places: our new research indicates that it is in direct alignment with other temple sites of global importance: Ankara Wat, Ghiza Pyramid and Mayan Sun Pyramid. It requires federal government leadership to advance the Sacred Chaudiere Site for consideration as a UNESCO World Heritage Site – such an effort may help shift the contentious nature of the challenge at Sacred Chaudiere Site – and raise the mark for the “Great Noble Change” William Commanda called for, and unify people to a larger cause, should federal leadership raise the flag.

7. Thus, the accompanying note provides a more comprehensive backgrounder and articulation of our huge need for you, Honourable Prime Minister, to elevate this place and vision beyond the zone of contention that is growing increasingly hostile, shameful and shameless, and safeguard this inclusive sacred healing vision of local, national and global importance and protect it within the heart of the country. Many believe that is more than the Honour of the Crown that is at stake in these times of unprecedented global environmental and human challenges, predicted by Indigenous prophecy.

8. Mr. Prime Minister, PLEASE help us with this file – this place of healing was once a meeting place of great stature – please do not let us squeeze all the life and spirit out of it, and permit it to be cemented over with concrete.

**Again, we request is for the creation of a multi-disciplinary task force to deliberate on the potential of the Commanda Legacy Vision for the Asinabka Sacred Chaudiere Site.**

With deep respect for your consistent and inspirational leadership on the Indigenous file.

Addendum re June 21 Facebook Post

[William Commanda Legacy - Asinabka](#) added [16 new photos](#) —

[June 21 at 1:12pm](#) ·

SEVERAL OTHER THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT NATIONAL ABORIGINAL DAY HISTORY - In 1945, Indigenous Activist Jules Sioui declared that June 21 was INDIAN DAY (linked with Anicinabe Cosmic and calendrical knowledge)- he served two terms in prison, and was broken by a 77 day hunger strike, for animating the fight for Indigenous Rights, and he sparked the North American Indian Nations Government - William Commanda became its Supreme Chief in the early 50s and continued to affirm its inclusive and independent values, when others aligned with the government controlled Native Brotherhood, later Assembly of First Nations; When Governor General Romeo Leblanc declared National Aboriginal Day in 1996, his daughter Everlyn Dewache gathered people into a great circle at Rideau Hall to do the opening prayer - here she is with the current leadership and representatives of the Crown

- thought we did not know the Commandas then, Donald Marshall Junior and I, with others from the Aboriginal Justice Learning Network were there at the GGs; Romeo Leblanc was following the blueprint of Jules Sioui's seed. GWC's wife Mary Commanda made the Famous Buckskin Jacket - GWC fashioned the moose bone buttons; When it was presented at the Millennium launch of the Canadian Canoe Museum, the spirit of the Commanda canoes were there = and GWC met Sasha Trudeau there - flash back to when that Buckskin Jacket was presented to PM Pierre Trudeau, and the former PM and GWC shared a plate of beans - and thoughts, consistent with the Spirit of the Three Figure Welcoming and Sharing Wampum Belt; in the Next picture, you see GWC taking that message to the GGs - the Queen, as it were; William Commanda served as Honorary Elder for CPAWS/D Suzuki Foundation BOREAL RENDEZVOUS - and John Ralston Saul was Patron - and they launched a canoe from Victoria Island to the Museum of Civilization; William Commanda launched the Paddle for Peace at Victoria Island, to show the deep connection between peace and environment. He held pipe ceremonies at Victoria Island year after year, facing the Eastern Sun for hours - this shelter provided no protection from the Sun, as thousands could attest; pipe carriers sat on the gravel and prayed for the Commanda Vision for the Sacred Chaudiere Site on JUNE 21. He drummed his message of PEACE AND LOVE into our spirits, and left us with a really difficult challenge - to continue his work in that holy way, and not wither, despair nor rage at appropriations and misrepresentations - But look, his buddies know he is always making tracks ahead, so it will be easier for us to energize his Circle of All Nations, his Culture of Peace - SO THOSE ARE MY SEVERAL THINGS TO CONTEMPLATE FOR NATIONAL ABORIGINAL DAY HISTORY - I do commend our PM for his affirmation of the energies and prayers of the Ancient Ones.

P.S. I have not yet heard from the Ministers of Canadian Heritage and Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada yet, on my previous correspondence that your office referred to them, so I am copying them on this correspondence.