



Circle of All Nations

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**2016 June 16 Circle of All Nations Photo Narrative Note to the Prime Minister
Regarding Healing and the Asinabka Sacred Chaudiere Site**

**CIRCLE OF ALL NATIONS June Solstice 2016 Message Regarding the Legacy
Vision for the Sacred Chaudiere Site of late Algonquin Elder, Dr. William
Commanda, OC, with special reference to INDIGENOUS MENTAL WELLNESS.**

Preamble:

Dedicated to the memory of the years of pipe ceremony William Commanda ignited on Victoria Island, Island of Fire at the Sacred Chaudiere Site, on June 21, praying year after year in the hot sun, reaching out to and inflaming literally thousands of people, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, with his passionate belief that we were all capable of making the “great noble change” to create a Circle of All Nations, A Culture of Peace, grounded in Indigenous values, that would honour Mother Earth, respect all her creation, including each other, and act responsibly to create a new legacy for a global society sorely bereft of vision and future, at the unceded, unsundered and unconquered heart of his continent, the sacred site of his direct family ancestors.

June 21 was declared Indian Day in 1945 by Jules Sioui, founder of the North American Indian Nations Government, and William Commanda, its last Supreme Chief, honoured this day of cosmic significance, till his death – on his last visit to Victoria Island, before his death, on June 21, 2011, he spoke only the language of the land.

It is not only the Honour of the Crown that is at stake in the relationship with First Peoples; William Commanda also believed that the self-respect, health and destiny of all who now reside in this land was also at stake. The “others” were not “at home” here, he realized; so he worked till his death at age 98, to make them his “relatives” so that they would honour his “Mother Earth” as he did; he gifted all with his Legacy Vision for a global future of hope for future generations; and *he* gifted *his* land to all.

The first words are Elder William Commanda’s:

[Miskojonia - Red Gold_01.mp3](#)

RE: MENTAL, PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS AMONGST FIRST PEOPLES AND ALL OTHERS

Dear Right Honourable Prime Minister, we note your June 13th 2016 Press Release on Indigenous Mental Health. In view of the challenge of development and the mounting crisis at the Sacred Chaudiere site, and the pressing issue of mental wellness at all levels of Canadian society, I raise the issue of Indigenous approaches to healing here. The overall story is huge, but I focus here on a few prayers and stories of healing – the approaches are different from what is typically found in mental health centres. I have already written to you about William Commanda's Legacy Vision for Asinabka Sacred Chaudiere Site, the contextual issue.

When William Commanda realized that his country was in the grips of a deep racism that was also contributing to its growing mental, physical, and spiritual health challenges, he organized the first *Circle of All Nations* gathering in Eganville, Ontario in 1967, forty nine years ago, a gathering on the land, grounded in Indigenous energy, and supported also by non-Indigenous partners, from both Canada and United States. It was the forerunner of the *Circle of All Nations* gatherings that he hosted at his home in Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg, Maniwaki, Quebec, and on Victoria Island, at the Sacred Chaudiere Site. Indigenous and non-Indigenous people from across the world flocked to his side, especially those awakening to the rising global turmoil of the Earth and her peoples.

I attach a photograph of a young man from Saskatchewan, someone in anguish, who knew he was in such desperate need of healing that he stuffed a handful of tobacco into his mouth as he appealed to the Elder for help. This was in 2007, on Victoria Island; You see him kneeling on the earth and the elder comforting him.



During the winter of 2011 – 12, the country was awakened to the *hunger strike cry* to the Nation, and on Jan 11, 2012, hundreds of people Indigenous and non-Indigenous gathered at the Sacred Chaudiere site, from across the country and beyond, and systemic issues impacting First Peoples and the overtly racist face of Canada was exposed. An Algonquin Elder and environmental activist, Louise Wawatie, died during this stressful period; First Nations politics fell into disarray; people beyond Algonquin gathered in huge number and there was a touching innocence and almost naiveté underlying the response of the Nishyou Walker to the Power and Politics question, what are you walking for – he answered, for love, for peace; it was not a litany of rights – it was a call for hope.



In 2013 I attended a Wampum Project presentation under the rubric of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), in Gatineau – I came to realize the impact of Grandfather Commanda’s annual *Circle of All Nations* Gatherings: four young French women from Quebec, who had participated in and witnessed the peace-building and healing generated on his land, developed this Wampum Project to facilitate better understanding of First Peoples amongst the mainstream population. A special couple talked about their histories of removal from family, culture and language, and of pain and sexual abuse in residential school; and also of the challenges this placed on their marriage and relationships with children and grandchildren and extended family and community. They also talked about returning to land and language and ceremony for healing; and it was at the TRC presentation that I learned that this journey had been undertaken over the course of many years within the safety and sanctuary of William Commanda’s gatherings; they actually reclaimed ceremonial practice by taking fledgling steps into the unknown on his land. It was a deeply moving presentation – I had not realized I would be seeing people I already knew; it was even more devastating when I learned that their son had committed suicide immediately prior to the presentation, and I realized that they were raw with the reactivated grief of the residential school legacy, yet were strong enough to continue with the presentation.



During the past year, from April 2015 to April 2016, Sue Martin, herself a victim of abuse by age 3, and on the streets by 9, grieving the loss of a three year old daughter by age nineteen, the mother of another daughter murdered at age 24: Sue Martin turned to the land for healing, land on Victoria Island, land reawakened to ceremony and public consciousness by William Commanda over two decades of intense work – a tiny sliver of land on the eastern shore line, fenced off from the Ottawa River, not easy to access, especially under snow, ice and mud, and obscured from view. (See Facebook Post Two, below). Countless people, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, and many in desperate need of healing, visited Sue Martin over the course of her healing vigil. Initially, she just slept out on the land in her sleeping bag for four nights. Then her vision to do her prayer vigil for healing emerged. Despite harassment, pressure and many unpredictable events, she demonstrated a remarkable capacity for ensuring safety, security, healing and education, for herself and countless others. I myself worked at multiple levels within the criminal justice system, including in Aboriginal Justice, and public security has been a critical priority for me, so I was alert to concerns. I wrote to the CEO of the NCC about this at one point: I had hoped my note would lead to a better understanding of what an URBAN LAB might really be all about (See Note One, Pasted Below). At the conclusion of this year's vigil, Ms. Martin participated in the May Ontario Association of Child and Youth Care Workers Conference in Thunder Bay, ironically at the time of the Inquiry into the Deaths of Seven Indigenous Youth. She received a standing ovation for her presentation, and I attach a note on the conference and Indigenous ideas for healing for your additional information with the email that accompanies this note (Attachment One). It is ironic to note the reports on the crisis in child care across the nation explode since that workshop.

Mr. Prime Minister, you assumed leadership of this country during the year of Sue Martin's vigil, and informed your ministers that you deemed the relationship of your government with First Peoples their most important responsibility. You/we have been presented with an escalation of crises – demands for inquiry of Murdered and Missing Women/Loved Ones, skin disease, suicide, murder, release of the Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, environmental challenges, etc. Many of us believe you and your government are working hard to address these issues.

In view of your June 13 statement regarding **Immediate Support for Indigenous Mental Wellness**, I raise once more the issue of William Commanda's Legacy Vision for a Healing and Peace Building Centre at the Sacred Chaudiere Site.

When William Commanda first met your officials at the National Capital Commission (NCC) (2004), and they claimed ownership of the islands, he asked them to show him ownership papers; when he met with their lawyers a week later, they were unable to do so. He and other elders from a wide range of places and nations "awakened" Victoria Island with work and ceremony, and gradually thousands of people engaged in animating the dream. Former Prime Minister Jean Chretien was supportive of this initiative.

Unfortunately, the NCC and RCMP introduced an energy of division amongst the Indigenous People. William Commanda objected to the commercial enterprise that NCC

negotiated to manage Indigenous presence at the island: the place of sweat lodges, medicine wheel and view and access to the river was taken away from the people. They then began to do sweat lodge ceremonies in the obscured corner of Victoria Island, where Sue Martin later set up her *Home Fires Burning* camp.

(Do you know that of all the public sites that the NCC manages in the National Capital Region, this one, acknowledged as a place of particular significance to Indigenous Peoples, has no public toilet, despite repeated requests over the years? Is this a statement of systemic or overt racism? Is it to deliberately discourage Indigenous presence here?)

Shortly after Sue Martin's vigil was over, Audrey Redman commenced a prayer ceremony at the obscured corner of Victoria Island. As the video clips reveal pasted below ([See Facebook Post Three, below](#)), she was unceremoniously put to the ground and removed by the NCC and RCMP. An Indigenous woman from the west, Ms. Redman has lived in the capital city over the past several years, and has shared her story of grief, anger, frustration and alienation in the land of her ancestors – not unlike the angst that the TRC exposed. The murder and loss of her sister in Canada's infamous Picton horror story is undoubtedly a continual anguish.

Immediately after the removal of Ms. Redman, this tiny obscured sliver of land has had ceremonial presence scoured out of it, sweat lodge Grandfather rocks displaced, and it is now fenced off (photos included).

I have visited the place regularly over the years, in the context of my support of the work of William Commanda. I have taken photographs of debris and condoms, and diseased creatures, all over Victoria Island. I have seen Indigenous People clean up the Obscured Sliver of Land and take their children there, hold talking circles, drum, pray, share food, and celebrate marriage, in the one spot with shade, with prayer rocks, a few trees and the sound, if not access to the river – and somehow Indigenous visitors from across the country have found their way there (See Facebook Post One, below).

Most of the local Indigenous folk in town live in apartments. Everybody knows what a great divide exists between “Canadians” and ordinary native people. So it should come as no surprise that they don't frequent Andrew Hayden Park and the likes – where its no problem for other “Indians” like me to light fires and have barbeques, and soccer games and make music. But I have seen little Alex grow increasingly secure and surefooted on this patch of land over the past few years. This became his “Safe Park”.

Mr. Prime Minister, I am deeply upset that Indigenous Peoples are prohibited from using this spot made sacred by many years of ceremony. It is *cruel*. That this happens at this time in the country's history, and through the agency mandated to celebrate full Canadian presence in the in the National Capital Region, the Ministry responsible for Canadian *Heritage*, is surely *wrong*. Citizens in Ottawa will recall that a mere decade ago, people barely knew they were on Algonquin territory; NCC scarcely acknowledged their presence. Many know that it was William Commanda's outreach that stimulated the NCC Sound and Light show that for the first time acknowledged Canada's larger history a few years ago – to his credit, this was the work of the sector of the present NCC CEO. Surely

if Audrey Redman's ceremony did indeed present security concerns, matters could have been negotiated in a less hostile and repressive manner. **There was no discussion, no negotiations, just harsh eviction of hurt people seeking *mental wellness* from wounds of colonialism, in, in fact, their Indigenous *church and mass*.**

Now I have written you and other ministers about challenges of development interests at this critically important sacred, cultural, heritage, historical place of significance to all Canadians, let alone First Peoples, and in particular, the Algonquins. Several of us are presently engaged in a legal challenge of the City of Ottawa's decision to rezone public lands to permit privatization on the Sacred Chaudiere Island; we have objected strenuously to the new damming project at the Sacred Waterfalls.

I now 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. In my legal challenge, I note that the NCC itself has had to acknowledge conflict of interest with respect to consultation with Algonquins on the Sacred Site file in writing (documentation available); I informed the NCC CEO that this information was going to be part of my appeal; this conflict of interest admission pertains specifically, to the common-law partner of the NCC worker being a member of the development company Windmill/Zibi/Dream Aboriginal advisory committee; this is a publicly known fact. With all due respect to the Elder from Kitigan Zibi, who NCC engaged with in removing Audrey Redman from the Island, and in fencing it off, (and whom I personally respect for his years of conducting Fire Ceremony for William Commanda, at Victoria Island and elsewhere), I contend that this is also a deeply contentious matter, since his family members are partners with the Windmill/Zibi/Dream developers, another publicly known fact. **It is wrong and unconscionable to put Elders and Indigenous Peoples in this kind of tenuous "police-dog" position** – this is also totally inconsistent with restorative Indigenous practices, and even more so in the wake of the TRC. It only further fragments relationships already rendered fragile through historical practices of colonization.

Substantial Indigenous presence is being eliminated from the Sacred Chaudiere Site, and this is in direct conflict with the government's espoused desire to address Mental Health challenges. Likewise, the community of diversity that WC drew together in the lengthy process of reconciliation has been annihilated by a few voices who are presumed to speak for all Algonquins, Indigenous Peoples and many Canadians at large who love and revere the Sacred Chaudiere Site. Countless Indigenous Peoples now reside in urban centres, including Ottawa. Indigenous Peoples heal on the land; Aboriginal organizations in the capital city are all located on concrete. The report on the Child Care Workshop conference mentioned before attests to the healing of two people on this land. As mentioned already, Indigenous peoples in the capital city have no land base for prayer. In fact, it has become increasingly ironic over recent years that the only legitimate presence on Victoria Island are tour buses full of foreigners.

The Chaudiere Site has been acknowledged as sacred land since time immemorial for many critically important reasons (I attach a note on this site, attesting to its potential significance as a world heritage site, with my accompanying email, as Attachment Two);

I have already alerted your office/government to much material on the actual Commanda Asinabka proposal for a Healing and Peace Building Centre. Over the years, Elder Commanda stressed that the vision required multi-level government engagement and coordination – it was his way of advancing “Indigenous spirit and intention” in the good governance of his country – in view of the crises of health, environment and war facing the global community, many in the larger world realize that understanding Indigenous ideology is important for all – you yourself said so in Paris. His was a vision of prophecy, and we are living in times of prophecy.

We are also surely past the time of tokenism. Windmill/Zibi/Dream development is being challenged by many parties, and the William Commanda Legacy Vision, originally affirmed by the federal government in 2006, and the City of Ottawa in 2010, for the entire Chaudiere Site, is still the aspiration of countless people, in this unsundered, unceded and unconquered Algonquin territory. Many of us have been identifying it as a 2017 Canada Birthday project since 2004 – it is wrong that NCC earmarks over half a million dollars to refurbish the old Legion building, for Canada’s birthday, and present it as an Indigenous project. It does not have the sanction of many Indigenous Peoples; and it is duplicitous expenditure of public funds to 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– ironically, at this precise moment, people are petitioning the White House regarding the Bhopal Union Carbide disaster, in view of the continued suffering of the people in India in this the world’s worst industrial disaster; it is ironic that Thomas Willson of our Carbide Mill is the creator of the calcium carbon that figures in the gas explosion in the pesticide factory; further his other project was the dream of the hydroelectric project at Churchill Falls – today, people begin to see the impact of pesticides, and dams (witness Hoover, Eels, Whales et al), and we question the *settler colonial* mentality still imposing its will at the most sacred of sites in this continent (the journey of ancient peoples from at least 6 thousand years ago attests to its history as meeting place of peoples).

Mr. Prime Minister, I am writing again to you, because I have yet to receive a response from the Ministers of Canadian Heritage, or Indigenous Affairs, to whom your office referred my previous correspondence; neither have I heard from the many other Ministers I have written to (e.g. Environment, Justice, Public Security) about these complex and interrelated issues of our times. Having worked as a bureaucrat across the country for over twenty years, including on Indigenous justice issues, I know this work is not easy, and that there are many challenges; I have some appreciation of what a pressure both politicians and bureaucracies are under at every turn. I also believe things are at a pressure point in the local and global community; and in the capital city, we are in critical need of safeguarding one sanctuary for the public good into an uncertain future. Surely, a cursory look at condo development across the city will confirm that developers already have a firm hold of most of the prime land in this unceded Algonquin territory. We are not unaware of the challenges and pressures developer can pose for all, and we already see their impact on the environmental groups in the City. We are in desperate need of leadership, courage and diplomacy to understand and honour the healing promise of the land, at this one tiny spot in a vast country.

Furthermore, we are concerned about violations of fundamental human rights flowing from Section 35 of the Canadian Constitution and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Canadian and Ontario Human Rights Codes, which acknowledges the rights not only of Indigenous Peoples but all Canadians to sacred sites, such as this one to which William Commanda himself invited and welcomed all in contemporary times, consistent with the Three Figures Prophecy Belt.

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

Our 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.

We are deeply grateful for of your personal review of this critical file. We need an opportunity to discuss the challenges and opportunities of this potential world heritage site and “temple” with your officials and others – there is surely room for all in the William Commanda’s Legacy Vision for the site of his *direct familial* ancestors, and prosperity and healing of a deep nature.

William Commanda’s daughter Evelyn Commanda Dewache and niece Daisy Commanda Jacko join me in bringing to your **urgent** attention our deep concern with this file.

Sincerely,

Romola V. Thumbadoo
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613-599-8385

NOTE ONE – NOTE TO NCC

2015 November 28 – CAN Letter to NCC CEO Mark Kristmanson

Greetings again,

Thank you for writing. I am glad the situation was resolved quickly yesterday.

I am taking the liberty to write to you about how and why I have gotten involved in the overall challenge that this healing ceremony at Victoria Island is embedded in.

First may I offer some contextual information about myself, for you to better understand why I am writing. I was born in South Africa, came to school in Canada in 1970, and then worked in the criminal justice system for over 20 years; in my career days, I was trained in the Western Career Assignment Program. I became involved in “Aboriginal” justice in the nineties, (these followed the the stream of Aboriginal (in)justice inquiries across the country); I developed the Prairie Region Plan for Aboriginal offenders (when liaison officers, cross cultural training and healing lodges/Native Institutions were first introduced into the prison system); was on the Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women (which created the Healing Lodge in Saskatchewan, and the other facilities for women and alerted me to “Murdered and Missing Women” issues); then after the OKA crisis, I worked in Urban Aboriginal Policing; and in the mid nineties, was National Coordinator for the Department of Justice’s Aboriginal Justice Learning Network (AJLN).

I met Elder William Commanda in the context of my AJLN work, and when I found the hopes, commitment and aspirations of countless Indigenous Peoples, including Donald Marshall Junior, thwarted by government/bureaucratic processes, I took early retirement to support the *Circle of All Nations* work of William Commanda pro bono. I worked with him for fourteen years, and I am now involved in doctoral studies to leave an academic record of his thinking and work. I offer this background information to indicate that I have been seriously committed to doing my part to ensure Indigenous Peoples occupy their rightful place on this land over several decades, having both learned of the historical abuses, and having worked directly with people in the “system”; I am aware and disheartened that Aboriginal justice realities are worse than when I was engaged in the restorative justice initiatives of hope of the nineties. I found my work with William Commanda contributed to greater change amongst people at multiple levels - his honorary doctorate degrees, appointment as Officer of the Order of Canada, and Lifetime Aboriginal Achievement Award attest to his reach into separate sectors. He was deeply concerned about environmental, indigenous, and peace and racial harmony issues at local and global levels, and I, and countless others, are committed to continuing his work in our individual ways – hence, in fact, the “self-combustive” sprouting of attention to the Chaudiere file.

With Canada’s growing awareness of the “mental health” crisis impacting us (note public schools, hockey players, public servants, prisons, armed forces, police, paramedics, autism, and even our highest profile families), we are now beginning to become aware of

the challenges and implications of post traumatic stress disorder, multi-generational, genetically encoded disorder, trauma associated with violence, and the associated stresses on families and communities. Over the years of gatherings at William Commanda's home, I have seen thousands of non-native people drawn to Indigenous healing ceremonies on the land; many approaches were actually developed on his ground by people in trauma: residential school survivors; a young American autistic friend of William's created a documentary on Indigenous approaches to "Inner Healing" and his mainstream psychiatrist's commentary attests to the strength and innovative quality of the Indigenous voice; this is the type of thing I witnessed evolving and then saw crushed by bureaucracy in the Aboriginal restorative justice initiatives of the nineties.

When I first came to work in Ottawa, I recall being sent to a high level multi-department meeting to address the growing tensions at the land dispute on the armed forces base at Ipperwash; history shows how costly, inadequate and racist the response of government and police was. The Murdered and Missing Women file is even more overtly volatile – here the *violence has been inflicted* (and every day we learn more about just how pervasively – witness Val d'Or), and *the attention drawn to it by Indigenous victims has been peaceful, creative, humble and ceremonial*.

I have only been peripherally involved in Sue Martin's healing ceremony at Victoria Island, partly in view of the complex Algonquin dynamics operant here; but I see that what was originally a personal, spirit-driven need for Indigenous land-based prayer and ceremony by one woman is now also a situation impacted by the escalating Asinabka Sacred Chaudiere Site crisis, amongst many other matters. I learned about just how much multi-generational violence pain and grief is being addressed yesterday, and this is not just Sue Martin's – it is evident in the stories of the countless vulnerable and "establishment" folk who gravitate there. Something extremely precious and vulnerable is germinating here.

When I was called yesterday, it was obvious that the complex spectrum of issues I raise was coming face to face with bureaucracy and rules. It is obvious (and hopeful) that no "crushing" interventions have been undertaken on the site to date, and that the larger new government approach sets a new context for addressing the underlying systemic issues. Multiple parties can play a role to enhance potential for real healing and success with any Inquiry that emerges; and I believe transformative action can be generated in small steps.

During the nineties, William Commanda himself cooked, brought wood, and even left his wood splitter at Victoria Island, to support homeless and wounded people. The healing work developing there was crushed by NCC bureaucracy and police, and "civilized" operations like Aboriginal Experiences sponsored. William Commanda reconstituted his efforts in pipe ceremonies, sustainable relationships workshops and paddle for peace interventions at Victoria Island. Upon his death, these then were immediately crushed by the new Algonquin leadership, which did not really comprehend the depth and significance of his multi-racial work grounded in Indigenous idiom. Yet seeds of regeneration are bubbling up again in this ancient meeting place.

It is a humble campsite, at the obscure lower strip of land on Victoria Island – it is not a Trailhead or Mountain Coop experience that is happening here (it is more than ironic that I receive Wally Schaber’s message about his coffee table Dumoine River book on the same day as I am called to Victoria Island); and it is a daily challenge to keep sacred, cooking and warming fires going. Quite literally, the people need fire to generate the deep healing they are searching for in the cold and hostile homeland Canada has become for Indigenous Peoples over the past centuries. Today, locally, nationally and globally, we stand at a new cross road, and we need leadership to help spark change in all, in these critical times of transition.

With Paris, and the world’s refugee crisis, we see governments needing to respond on the fly to emerging crises – but they have some resources; Sue Martin’s journey started with a simpler personal goal, perhaps, but she now has to manage multiple things: countless visits from Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples on their own trauma-healing journeys and journeys of reconciliation, the new challenges of the day, and growing expectations; and she also has to respond on the fly and at any hour of the day or night to police, maintenance crew, media, while feeding and serving visitors, insulating her wigwam, and chopping wood and maintaining the fires primarily by herself.

Given the fact that the healing ceremony at Victoria Island has continued uninterrupted for seven months now, given that federal leadership, media and public at large are aware of it, and given that the larger federal plan is to address the Murdered and Missing Woman Inquiry issue, **a gesture to leave the cut wood or seasoned wood from other NCC managed trees, would be a quiet statement of understanding**, and would ease the 24 hour fire feeding challenge being managed by one great grandmother and a shifting handful of helpers, through the looming winter. Perhaps three or four cords of wood were cut and removed yesterday. Note that separately, in my research regarding the development challenges at Chaudiere Site, I trace William Commanda’s direct ancestors from Commanda Lake (Lac Papineau) asserting right and responsibility as they challenged Philomen Wright for cutting down their sugar bushes at the Chaudieres around 1802; hence I consider this place, and the trees, his personal and communal inheritance. Perhaps the wood can be seen as his gift for reconciliation; Sue Martin sees the fallen tree as a gift from nature. Do you know that even when people offer her firewood, she has to coordinate schedules, arrange for volunteers to drive to out of town locations, and in suitable vehicles, to cut and load the wood, then deliver and pile the logs – even the gifts come with challenges.

Please indulge me for a minute on another matter. During all my years with William Commanda, I and others have requested and challenged but never followed up properly on the issue of toilets at this public site maintained by the NCC. I have taken photos of the **facilities** at several parks and trails, including my own Quarry Trail in Kanata, where we now have been upgraded to new heated facilities. Is it a systemic racism issue that there are still no facilities/or even portapotties at this identified “Indigenous” site? Can this not be addressed as a priority? I had intended to send my photos to the Prime Minister, but I shall spare him; instead, I shall forward to you the two letters I have written to him regarding Paris and William Commanda’s legacy vision for an eco-peace

think tank at the Sacred Chaudiere Site.

Perhaps you will pop in at the pot luck feast Sue Martin is hosting at her new, multi-blanket insulated wigwam at 3 on Sunday – apparently the PM has visited the site during the past year, and is expected some time again; and who knows who will show up there on Sunday. From what I heard yesterday there has been an intriguing slate of visitors to date, and people find themselves learning and growing in profound ways. A most innovative Urban Lab lies under our noses!

FACEBOOK POST ONE- OBSCURED SLIVER OF LAND IN 2014



[Romola Vasantha Thumbadoo](#)
June 8, 2014 ·

A special moment at Victoria Island - Neecha, Liz, Audrey and I were discussing Grandfather Commanda's Vision for the Sacred Chaudiere Site - and several ironies presented - the western portion of the island was busy with a Hydro Ottawa activity - and I had to be permitted to drive on to the eastern half of the island - respectfully, I note, by a visible security guard - but I could not help shrinking inside, wondering how that might feel for the Indigenous Peoples at the entry of their sacred space of countless centuries (you can imagine I am especially sensitive to this issue!). I also could not help remembering that it was Grandfather's inclusive vision for the site that proposed an educational site of the historical development on the islands when he received the Key to the City in 2006 - and he wanted a different understanding of the power of the Chaudiere Falls experienced by all. Then, unexpectedly we were joined by four students from the First Nations University of Regina - here on a national students workshop - but feeling their education needed to be deepened by the land - so the land drew them to Asinabka and Victoria Island - and they managed to find us in the sweat lodge sanctuary; and we shared Douglas Cardinal's conceptual plans for the site - they affirmed the healing power and comfort of his university in Sask. Others found that tiny secluded spot - a family who came to picnic - though informed that this was a sacred

ceremonial place, they believed they were well with their rights to use the space - we could not find the best way to react - they did not leave with grace; we affirmed GWC's generosity of spirit and sharing approach, especially with the children present; but we were not all at ease, and rightly so - there was the energy of right to occupy space by the new inhabitants of Canada - but I also could not help wondering how folk might feel about strangers picnicing in their temples and cathedrals. We have so much to learn - but despite GWC's efforts to awaken and transform Ottawa, the Capital City still has a long way to go to demonstrate leadership to transform the attitudes of Canadians towards First Peoples. Pray the Sacred Chaudiere Site accelerates our wake up. Some shift from entrenchment in colonialism and endless appropriation is surely urgently needed.

[Romola Vasantha Thumbadoo](#) shared a memory.

[June 8 at 9:00am](#) ·

SO - FACEBOOK REMEMBERS THIS MEMORY - I took this photo in the Sacred Space at Victoria Island - these were students from other parts of Canada - they were gathered for an environmental conference, I think, and found their way to the Sacred Chaudiere Site, and then to the spot where folk had been doing sweat lodge ceremonies for years, and where [Sue Martin](#) held her healing vigil - [HOME FIRES Burning](#) this past year. Two years ago, [Niisha Kwe](#) and Audrey had clean up all the dead weed and litter to create a bit of a shaded sanctuary where kids like Peanut - who are mostly confined to apartments in a rather "Hostile to Indigenous Peoples" Capital City - could run around and here the water and see rabbits and ducks and chipmunks, and experience a tiny bit of wild and peace and safety. I recall even this little spot dedicated to Indigenous healing a prayer for so many years was invaded by a noisy and invasive "Caucasian" family convinced of their rights to picnic precisely on that spot - a non-native myself, I was so ashamed of us Settler Colonialists - Note Grandfather [William Commanda](#) in the space! with his Learning from a Kindergarten Dropout Book and the conceptual design for his [William Commanda Legacy - Asinabka](#)

FACEBOOK POST TWO – SUE MARTIN

[Woman holding sacred ceremony on Victoria Island vows not to leave](#)

An Ottawa-area woman says the National Capital Commission will have to have her arrested if it wants her to leave the camp site where she's been holding a sacred...

cbc.ca

FACEBOOK POST THREE – ARREST AND EJECTION OF AUDREY REDMA

[William Commanda Legacy - Asinabka](#) shared [Peter Stockdale's](#) album: [Detention of Audrey Redman on Victoria Island, Ottawa.](#)

[May 17 at 10:03pm](#) ·



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[+10](#)

[Peter Stockdale](#) added 14 new photos to the album: [Detention of Audrey Redman on Victoria Island, Ottawa](#) — with [Arif Jinha](#) and [2 others](#) at [Victoria Island](#).
[May 15 at 10:04pm](#) · [Picasa Uploader](#)

Would this happen in a church? Would the RCMP enter, detain and remove a religious person while in ceremony in a church like this? It happened on sacred Akikodjiwan/Chaudiere in Ottawa last Thursday. Is this reconciliation?

Did the new government's ministers authorize this breach of religious freedom and the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People? Did Indigenous Affairs Minister Carolyn Bennett and Heritage Minister Melanie Jolie (responsible for the NCC) approve it or just the NCC's Harper appointee CEO Mark Kristmanson?

RCMP detained Lakota Cree Firekeeper and Broadcaster Audrey Redman for trespass and mischief and removed her and Arif Jinha from ceremony on Victoria Island on 12 May, 2016. This is under the authority of Algonquin Firekeeper Peter Deontie. NCC Aboriginal Liaison Officer Rene Tenasco presided over the action. Trees were planted in the ceremonial area to prevent what an NCC conservation officer described as 'squatters'.



Obscured Sliver of Land Blocked Off May 23, 2016 (Compare with 2014 photo above)

