



# **A REPORT ON THE VISION FOR THE ASINABKA NATIONAL INDIGENOUS CENTRE**

**A CIRCLE OF ALL NATIONS REPORT**

**PRESENTED BY  
WILLIAM COMMANDA, OC  
Algonquin Elder**

**FEBRUARY 14, 2010**

**Please note that this report primarily reflects the positions and perspectives developed and negotiated by Elder William Commanda, following years of consultation with Algonquins and others, but its release does not imply any official government endorsement of the project at this time.**

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## SECTION 1: MESSAGE

### A. Message from William Commanda, Algonquin Elder, Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg, Hon. Phd., OC

I present a report on the mandate, vision, plans and priorities for the development of the **Asinabka National Indigenous Centre** on Victoria Island, at the Sacred Chaudière Site in the heart of the National Capital Region, as it has developed in consultation with Algonquin, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginals parties during the past thirteen years.

With the exception of one Elders' Gathering, and funds provided by Heritage Canada to the National Capital Commission to articulate the vision in a draft memorandum and advance the development of the architectural plans in 2004, this work has been entirely unfunded.

Ottawa sits on the traditional territory of the Algonquin Peoples, and this confluence of the Ottawa, Rideau and Gatineau Rivers has long served as the sacred meeting grounds of my ancestors. *Asinabka*, the sacred heartland, also a cultural landscape of national historic significance, includes the Chaudière Rapids, Chaudière Island and Victoria Island.

A multi-faceted vision has been developed to revitalize this special gathering place. Its core objective is to advance healing at three fundamental levels:

Healing individual and collective relationships with Mother Earth;  
Healing, strengthening and unifying Indigenous Peoples; and  
Healing relationships with all others.

We propose the establishment of the **Asinabka National Indigenous Centre**. It is envisioned as a site to provide spiritual sanctuary and to advance dialogue on healing and strengthening Indigenous Peoples; to showcase the culture and heritage of First Nations, Inuit and Metis Peoples in a world class setting of interest and relevance to local residents and national and international visitors; and to serve as a think tank for environmental stewardship and peace building.

Its manifestation will constitute a dynamic, dramatic, and inspirational statement to the world and ignite a prayer for *Sustainable Relationships* and hope into the future.

I am grateful to the spirits of my ancestors, and to the many people who have helped inspire, develop and advance this work over the years. I know this effort will move and serve many people in upcoming years.

## **SECTION II:**

### **ASINABKA NATIONAL INDIGENOUS CENTRE**

#### **A. Mandate**

Inspired by the ancient sacred Indigenous Wampum Belts, the mandate for the **Asinabka National Indigenous Centre** 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.

#### **B. Mission**

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*.

#### **C. Goal**

The establishment of a National Indigenous Centre in the National Capital Region, which will ensure the recognition, celebration and visibility of a strong Indigenous presence, culture, values and voice in the fabric of Canadian society; the creation of a culture of inclusion and sustainable relationships; and the animation of a *Circle of All Nations, A Culture of Peace*.

## **SECTION III:**

### **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION**

#### **A. Core Objective**

To reawaken indigenous ideology to advance healing at three fundamental levels:

Healing individual and collective relationships with Mother Earth;  
Healing, strengthening and unifying Indigenous Peoples; and  
Healing relationships with all others.

#### **B. Strategic Plan**

A two-pronged plan is envisioned to achieve this three level objective of healing:

1. Construct a National Centre for Indigenous Peoples to:
  - Support the reclamation, development and sharing of innovative ideas designed to contribute to the healing of Indigenous Peoples and strengthening of communities in such fundamental areas as substance abuse, physical, mental and sexual abuse, suicide and self identity crises;
  - Promote the reclamation, retention and revitalization of language, education, culture, restorative justice practices, sustainable traditions and ways of life;
  - Unite and strengthen Aboriginal peoples in the spirit of the inherent Indigenous birthright of interconnectedness (*We Are All Related*);
  - Promote environmental stewardship and reclaim ways of living in balance with Mother Earth;
  - Celebrate a vibrant, visible Indigenous presence in the National Capital Region.
2. Establish a Peace Building Program for all, dedicated to sharing Indigenous values and ideology with non-Aboriginal peoples, by providing an eco-forum for:
  - Policy development in social justice and biodiversity to improve the lives of all Canadians and build a sustainable legacy for future generations;
  - Advocacy on behalf of Mother Earth;
  - Cross cultural training and experiential programs;
  - Promotion of inter-cultural understanding and racial harmony;
  - Serving as a resource base for national and international peace-building;
  - Sharing and celebrating Aboriginal culture, traditions and ways of knowing;
  - Assuming an active and visible position within the fabric of society and in its continued evolution.

### C. Priorities and Planning Considerations

The key priorities for each component of the overall plan are envisioned as processes, programs or spaces. Together they constitute a living ecosystem from which Indigenous ideology can retrench on the sacred land and take its rightful place in the governance and values of this land. Women and men and young people will be actively involved in developing and animating the vision for the centre with the Elders.

<b>CIRCLE OF NATIONS SPIRITUAL HEALING CENTRE TO UNIFY AND STRENGTHEN INDIGENOUS PEOPLES</b>	<b>PEACE BUILDING CENTRE FOR ALL NATIONS, TO SHARE THE VALUES AND IDEOLOGY OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES</b>
Spiritual/Ceremonial Centre and Elders' Gathering Place	Peace building/environmental stewardship 'Think Tank'
Cultural Revival - Arts, Crafts Studio space; Museum/Gallery	Cultural Sharing/Racial Harmony
Language Resource Centre	Conference Centre
Resource Centre/Campus for Aboriginal University/College Students in the capital city	Think Tank/Meeting Space in natural environment within the city to facilitate deep reflection
Healing Centre/Meeting Centre	Auditorium/Concert Hall
Archives/Library/Historic Research Centre	Accommodations
Medicines/Gardens/Greenhouse	United Nations Meeting Space
Youth/Children Creative Space	Children's/Youth Museum
Traditional Knowledge/Ideology Animation	Restaurant/Gift Store
Research/Planning/Education	Museum/Gallery

## **Critical Planning Considerations**

1. To create a setting to provide spiritual sanctuary; to advance dialogue on healing and strengthening Indigenous Peoples; to serve as a comprehensive resource base and clearing house of innovative Indigenous ideas, programs and initiatives; to serve as a living school of wisdom, art and creativity; to house historical archival materials for the retention, study, promotion and celebration of indigenous history, ideology and knowledge; and to serve as a resource centre for Aboriginal students in the capital city and beyond;
2. To showcase the culture and heritage of First Nations, Inuit and Metis Peoples in a world class setting of interest and relevance to local residents and national and international visitors;
3. To serve as a vibrant gathering place for Indigenous Peoples and others;
4. To create an environment conducive to critical and creative exploration of local, national and global priorities for environmental stewardship and sustainability;
5. To create an environment for Indigenous Peoples to share their knowledge of relationship-building and circle dialogue developed over millennia to advance racial harmony and peace building in a country now called upon to advance and celebrate human diversity;
6. To protect, reclaim and enhance the natural environment to the fullest extent possible, and to repatriate Indigenous species of plants and animals;
7. To develop the site in accordance with its natural, physical, symbolic, cultural, historical, and political importance within the National Capital Region.

#### **D. 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 Peoples, First Nations, Inuit and Metis, on reserves and in urban and rural areas;
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.



## **E. Key Milestones to Date and Planned Activities for 2010**

Of particular note in the chronology of recent development are the following items:

- 1998 Mandate from the Algonquin leadership to explore the feasibility of developing an Indigenous Healing and Peace Building Centre at Victoria Island;
- 2000 – 2003 Community Consultations;
- 2003 Development of the Elders' Comprehensive Vision;
- Annual *Circle of All Nations Workshops* to strengthen the vision;
- 2004 \$50,000 grant from Canadian Heritage for the preparation of a draft Memorandum of Recommendation and Level II Architectural Design Plans for the Indigenous Centre;
- 2006 affirmation of support by the National Capital Commission for the core vision;
- 2009 statement of endorsement to Parliament by Paul Dewar, MP; and
- Increasing community organization activities to support the Indigenous project.

For 2010, several strategies are being launched to advance the project:

- A revitalized communications strategy to build a groundswell of support;
- Ongoing outreach to federal and other political leadership;
- The development of a “friends of” type foundation and a complementary fundraising strategy;
- An Algonquin River Watershed community consultation project developed with support from Ministry of Culture and City of Ottawa;
- University/college/community/church/business/environment group studies, video productions, research papers and outreach;
- Development of strategic educational and partnership initiatives with local Universities;
- Researching and developing governance structures and protocols.

## **F. Summary of Proposed Preliminary Implementation Plans:**

### **Key Initiatives**

1. Revitalized communications strategy for continued promotion of the core vision for the Indigenous Centre to Indigenous Communities, and others, locally, nationally and internationally, through spokespersons, partnerships, presentations and workshops, videos, radio, website, internet, facebook, and twitter outreach campaigns;
2. Mobilizing support within the Federal Government by MPs Paul Dewar and Mauril Belanger, local MPs with key responsibility in the area, and for Aboriginal constituencies; the former has already made a formal statement in this regard and launched a media campaign – see [www.pauldewar.ca](http://www.pauldewar.ca), and email your message of support to [DewarP@parl.gc.ca](mailto:DewarP@parl.gc.ca); Ongoing outreach to government leaders;
3. Creating a Foundation to focus on fund raising for the Indigenous Centre; this will be a two-fold initiative, involving the establishment of a registered charitable “*friends of*” foundation and the development of a complementary fund-raising strategy. Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples will be invited to serve on an Honorary Council for the Foundation;
4. Setting as a first goal for the Foundation, the securing of a minimum of \$10m to commence Phase I – to establish an Indigenous Not for Profit Organization/Operating body to complete development of potential programming; preliminary and conceptual design; detailed capital and operating costing; and articles and by-laws for the Indigenous operating body;
5. Development of a complementary project management body and structure to oversee the construction phase of the initiative, comprised of Indigenous/federal/other representatives;
6. Organization of developmental workshops for the Algonquins of the Ottawa River Watershed to strengthen strategic alliances and establish protocols to serve as the host community for the National Indigenous Centre; and to initiate strategic partnerships with local Urban Aboriginal organizations, National Aboriginal organizations, and other key players to develop governance structures and prepare to operationalize Phase I; and
7. Phase II will entail the construction of the building and the hiring of staff to implement programs and operate the facility.

## **Other Related Items**

### **Specific strategic organizational responsibilities for the Algonquins of the Ottawa River Watershed as territorial hosts of the national centre include:**

- The vision and the land will be held in trust in perpetuity by all Algonquin Elders, as custodians of the land, and a unified Algonquin peoples will serve as the host nation, welcoming all First Peoples, First Nations, Inuit and Metis to develop and animate the National Indigenous Centre; and from this central circle, embrace all others in the spirit of inclusion, sharing and exchange;
- A Registry of all Algonquin Elders of 55 years and over to hold the vision, site and building in trust, to be updated annually in perpetuity;
- A Council of Algonquin Elders, supported by Algonquin resource peoples, to oversee the initiative - each community selects two elders, with interest in language, cultural revival, Indigenous history and rights, healing and peace-building, to sit on the Council to support the development of the vision, to serve as the link to other Elders and the communities, and to offer direction to a core team of Algonquin representatives to guide the development of the Indigenous Not for Profit Organization/Operating Body.

### **Preliminary plans for the Indigenous Not for Profit Organization/Operating Body**

Preliminary plans call for a structure with 15 voices as follows to achieve a broad based, unified and strengthened Indigenous presence, identified under Elder Commanda's guidance:

- 6 Algonquin representatives (2 from each of the three Algonquin groups);
- 2 Algonquin representatives from community organizations/associations and urban organizations/associations/associations and urban organizations from Ontario and Quebec;
- 7 Aboriginal representatives from Inuit, Metis, East Coast, Huron, Iroquois, Prairies and West coast communities; plus
- 3 Non-voting federal representatives, to ensure on-going partnership and liaison.

Consideration may also be given to the inclusion of a representative from each of Ontario, Quebec, Ottawa and Hull for liaison and support.

This group will be supported by an Honorary Council of Wisdom Holders.

In Phase I, the Not for Profit Organization/Operating Body would invite leaders from across the country with expertise in the different areas to develop the project through working circles; they would also hire first the interim team to develop the project; and then, in Phase II, hire the ongoing operational team.

## **SECTION IV: BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

### **A. Draft Memorandum of Recommendation, 2004**

#### **National Aboriginal Centre – Draft Memorandum prepared for The National Capital Commission, funded by the Department of Heritage Canada, April 2004**

##### **The Site**

By formal arrangement, the federal government as represented by the National Capital Commission (the “NCC”) and Elder representatives of the 10 Algonquin First Nations of the Ottawa Valley will, with the support of the First Nations, enter into an agreement which states the following;

- that the site and grounds required for the Centre are located within the traditional area of the Algonquin First Nations.
- that the site has formed an integral element of their spiritual and cultural values and traditions.
- that the parties agree that the site will be dedicated to the representation of these values and for use as a National Aboriginal Centre for the purposes outlined below. The Centre shall serve all Aboriginal people and shall be open to the public.

This agreement will be in the form of a Trust arrangement under which the parties agree that the land will be used for the purposes indicated and agreed upon and this Trust agreement can only be modified with the agreement of the NCC and Elder representatives of the (10 then) Algonquin First Nations. Legal title will rest with the Trust organization established for this purpose consisting of Elders named by the Algonquin people for so long as the site is used for its intended purpose.

##### **Vision for the Centre**

The vision for the Centre encompasses the following underlying purposes.

Firstly, it will, within its core vision, support the healing of Indigenous Peoples, the healing of relationships with others, and the healing of relationships with Mother Earth. It will do so by strengthening indigenous identity, supporting the revitalization of language, education and cultural expression, providing strategic leadership on social issues which would strengthen indigenous communities, and building the interconnectedness of indigenous peoples with each other, with other parties and with Mother Earth.

Secondly, the Centre will provide a national stage for celebration of elements central to Aboriginal history and culture including spiritual and ceremonial, arts and crafts, education, medicine, traditional knowledge and will include archival, library and research functions. The Centre will actively engage children, youth and elders in developmental

activities of the Centre, and will have as an objective the building of pride and knowledge, and communication of Aboriginal life.

Finally, the Centre will share with Canadians and people around the world the values and ideology of Indigenous Peoples. Activities included under this purpose would include cultural sharing, inter-racial activities, peace-building, international relations, museum, gallery, convention, meeting and activity centres.

Broadly, this Centre would contribute to the education, communication and understanding of Aboriginal culture, and its location in the Capital would give it the unique opportunity to be experienced by visitors from across Canada and around the world. It would add a unique dimension to the expression of Canada's cultural richness and diversity and a corresponding statement of recognition and reconciliation for the Aboriginal people of Canada.

The proposed name for the Centre is Anicinabe Wigwam – The Good Peoples' House.

### **Operating Body**

The project will be implemented under Aboriginal leadership, and for this purpose a not-for-profit body with charitable status would be incorporated.

The purposes and articles of the body shall establish that it will be operated within the vision agreed upon under the Trust.

The structure of the organization will include the following elements;

- a Board of Directors consisting of equal numbers of Algonquin Elders representing the Trust, and Aboriginal voices from across Canada aligned with the vision for the Centre.
- an operating structure with responsibilities for the day-to-day and ongoing operations of programs, facilities and grounds.
- such “working circles” as may be required from time to time to provide advice on specialized areas of the Centre's programs.
- an executive body representative of the above elements and including up to 3 non-voting federal members.

The organization shall, in addition to its long term responsibilities, direct through a project management group, the immediate preparation of:

- detailed initial programming of the Centre through national “working circles”.
- conceptual design of the Centre (including selection of the architect) to the level of a Class C estimate respecting an upper cost of \$85.6M including consultations, design, project management and complete construction of the building, activity areas, services, grounds, environmental cleanup, Carbide Mill rehabilitation, etc. In finalizing cost, a clear distinction will be made between costs of the Centre and

costs associated with environmental remediation and restoration of the Carbide Mill.

- recommended operating body including Charter, Articles of Incorporation and By-laws, initial organizational structure and annual operating budget respecting an annual budget of \$8M plus revenues.
- Recommended federal-Algonquin partnership for life cycle recapitalization of land, building and service infrastructure, estimated annual cost of \$2M.

It is recommended that, in its structures, the operating organization make provision for up to three federal representatives in an ex-officio status to help ensure continuity of the ongoing partnership required for the project.

### **Financing and Project Management – General Framework**

A project management group shall oversee design and construction of the project within the purposes and costs approved by the Federal Government. This Committee shall approve programming, select the project architect, approve design guidelines, final design and estimates and contract documents, and will authorize any changes to design, programming and costs during the construction period, as authorized by the Federal Government.

The Federal Government would bear the full capital costs for the project, ongoing operational costs as established at the time of project approval and ongoing renewal of major infrastructure.

This does not preclude the opportunities for contribution by the private sector in either the initial construction or in long-term program support above the operational budget. Such support would be actively sought.

Federal Approvals: This paper anticipates two steps. Step 1 is an approval in principle by Cabinet of an initial purpose, preliminary design concept, preliminary programs, anticipated management structure, and anticipated costs. Cabinet will name a federal lead agency. The approval in principle will be accompanied by release of sufficient funds to bring the project to final vision, design, programs and costs. A report back to Cabinet would be then taken as Step 2, to achieve final approvals. Treasury Board release of funds would follow and approval given by Cabinet would constitute the agreement between the parties. Any exceptions would require the approval of the appropriate Cabinet Committee.

Project Management Group: A project management group would be established, from the initiation of Step 1 through to finished product. The project management group will consist of and be chaired by the planned Operating body of Algonquin and Aboriginal representatives. There will be up to three federal representatives on the project management group, probably DIAND, Canadian Heritage and NCC during the “build” phase. This paper anticipates that the NCC would be named lead agency for the federal government and in this respect would carry out the following tasks: ensure coordination of federal representatives, manage cash flows and payments to the Aboriginal Operating

Body, facilitate local and federal approvals including the NCC design approval process, ensure compliance of all parties within the approved Cabinet framework, and report annually to Treasury Board on progress.

The project manage group will provide overall direction to the architect, be present at and approve awarding of tenders and contract documents, approve change orders and manage cash flows. Communications plans will be approved by the project management group.

Architect: The architect will be under contract to the Aboriginal Operating Body and will report to the project management group for project implementation. This will include bi-weekly reports and meetings. The architect will be responsible for preparation of design, contract documents and tenders, and will direct preparation of independent estimates by agreed-upon qualified quantity estimators. All construction contracts will be tendered.

General Contractor: The general contractor, as well as sub-contractors, shall be directed by the architect and perform within the contracts approved by the contract management group.

#### **13.04.04**

A notional budget was also prepared.

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## **B. Presentation to National Capital Commission Board of Directors, 2008**

*Asinabka*

National Aboriginal Centre

The vision for the

Sacred Chaudière Site

[www.asinabka.com](http://www.asinabka.com)

<http://web.mac.com/circleofallnations>

[www.circleofallnations.ca](http://www.circleofallnations.ca)

William Commanda's Presentation to National Capital Commission Board of Directors,  
National Capital Region, Ottawa

April 3, 2008

- Billions of years ago, the most ancient rocks on the earth emerged in this area
- 5,000 years ago, and likely earlier, this was a place of meeting and cultural exchange for Indigenous Peoples across North America, evidenced in copper and turquoise artifacts
- 400 years ago, Samuel de Champlain witnessed the ancestors of the Algonquin Nation conducting tobacco ceremonies here, identifying the area as a special sacred site
- In the 1800s, Philomen Wright moved into the area, and over the next two centuries, it became a Pandora's Box for industrial development: logging, pulp and paper, hydro dams, invention, etc.; i.e. progress and peril
- The capital city was established, bridging the worlds of Upper and Lower Canada, Quebec and Ontario, and the French and the English
- The Indigenous presence diminished, the area lost its pristine character, and today it is a heavily contaminated industrial wasteland
- Over time, people from all over the world gravitated towards this heartland, and their presence is felt in its cultural and heritage buildings, activities and commemorations
- Many believe Aboriginal Peoples must also take their place in what remains a sacred site within the unsundered, unceded and unconquered Algonquin territory that the capital city sits upon; and they must reignite their ceremonies and traditions respectful of *Mother Earth and All Our Relations*
- 40 years ago, Aboriginal Peoples from across the country resumed gathering and holding spiritual ceremonies in the area
- As the country becomes aware of their history and present day struggles, few will deny that Aboriginal Peoples are the least privileged and most oppressed in the lands of their ancestors, where all the world is now finding opportunity and hope



- In the past year alone, we have witnessed the national *End First Nations Poverty* campaign, and seen the *Truth and Reconciliation* Project initiated to address the devastating aftermath of the Residential School abuses
- Young Canadians of conscience are exposing painful injustices and historic legacies in documentaries like *Unrepentant* (K. Annett) and *Les Peoples Invisibles* (R. Desjardins)
- Since 1998, Elder William Commanda has consulted with the NCC, world renowned Indigenous Architect Douglas Cardinal, Algonquin communities in Ontario and Quebec, and Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Peoples to develop a comprehensive vision for the sacred site, and support is extensive
- Who is Elder William Commanda? And why is the heritage he represents important to us?
  - He is the 94 year old Elder of this territory
  - He is Keeper of Sacred Wampum Belts of historic importance
  - He has shared the message of the 1700s Three Figure Sharing Belt with the Queen's representative
  - He is the Founder of the *Circle of All Nations*, and much honoured for promoting Indigenous wisdom, environmental stewardship, and racial harmony and peace-building internationally
  - In 2005, the University of Ottawa presented him with an Honorary Doctorate Degree
  - In 2006 he received the Key to the City of Ottawa, significant for someone from Quebec
  - He is widely travelled, internationally known as a canoe builder and craftsman, an influential Elder, a statesman emeritus: a wise, holy man beloved to many across the world
- Over the past decade, Elder Commanda has developed and promoted the Indigenous vision for *Asinabka* tirelessly, entirely at his own expense
- It is a fully inclusive vision to revitalize and honour the true jewel in the heart of the Nation's crown, consistent with dreams of many others over the years
- It celebrates the ancient and recent history of the area, promotes peace, environmental stewardship, and Indigenous heritage

- The vision for *Asinabka* offers a unique, positive way to heal the pains of the past and shine a torch into the future
- It is a vision for healing relationships amongst and with Aboriginal Peoples, and with *Mother Earth*
- It is a vision for reclaiming, honouring and profiling the unique culture, heritage and values of Aboriginal Peoples, recognizing their crucial importance to Canada's future
- The National Capital Commission (NCC) as protector of our national heritage can play a positive leadership role to create the manifestation of a relationship of hope and reconciliation with Aboriginal Peoples
- This will benefit the entire nation, as Aboriginal Peoples remain the glue to bind a fragile democracy and culture together
- Such a gesture will also only strengthen and enhance Canada's reputation internationally
- In the 1970s, then NCC Chairman Jean Pigott acknowledged Victoria Island as the site for a National Aboriginal Centre
- In the 1990s, Indigenous Architect Douglas Cardinal developed conceptual plans for the centre for the NCC
- In 2004, further to the Elder's direct request, Canadian Heritage advanced funds to develop the proposal and architectural plans for the Aboriginal Centre on Victoria Island
- **In August 2006, at the annual *Circle of All Nations* International Gathering, 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

—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

—(The sentiments expressed are consistent with the Three Figure Sharing Wampum Belt, with Aboriginal Peoples assuming their rightful position and share within the capital - *our note*)

- This national centre will celebrate all Aboriginal Peoples: First Nations, Inuit and Metis from across the country, and its eco-tourism value is great

- It will serve as the think tank to reclaim, revitalize and protect Indigenous languages, culture and heritage, contribute to healing the scars of the past, and transforming the future

- It will showcase and celebrate the values, artistic and cultural heritage, music, pow wow dance, spirit and food of Aboriginal Peoples

- A revitalized and strong Aboriginal Peoples will share their culture and heritage with others in the spirit of peace-building

- The ancient values of *Respect for Mother Earth and All Our Relations* will be reinstated, and serve and support all Canadians

- This legacy of forgiveness and reconciliation will strengthen the nation's self-respect and honour and heal differences

**We will celebrate together a**  
***A Circle of All Nations***  
***A Culture of Peace***  
**Canada's Gift to the World**

- On 4 June 1613, Aboriginal Peoples prayed as Samuel de Champlain passed the Sacred Site

- **Today, we urge the NCC Board to**

- Review its 2006 commitment to the materialization of the National Aboriginal Centre**

- Make an announcement on June 21, 2008, National Aboriginal Day, to commence with implementation plans for a grand opening of the centre on the 2013 four hundred year anniversary of the birthing of the country**

## SECTION V: LARGER VISION FOR THE SACRED CHAUDIERE SITE

### A. An Open Letter from William Commanda, Algonquin Elder, Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg, Hon. Phd., OC February 14, 2010

#### Context

1. The Focus on Nature  
Respecting the Sacred in the Land
2. Inter-Cultural Understanding and Racial Harmony
3. Indigenous Peoples

#### A Historical Perspective

#### Wild Space in the Nation's Capital

#### Conclusion

#### **Greetings:**

This year, as we enter the second decade of the twenty first century, I look to my ninety seventh birthday, beckoning from the future, November 11, 2010. I have lived a long life, not without considerable pain and privilege, and in the end I see the two matters that informed the prayers of my ancestors enter into all our lives, individually and collectively, and at no time more compellingly than during these times that we live in.

It is clear to me that the greatest challenges we face here in Canada, and indeed globally, come first from Mother Nature, and next from the strife between peoples of different races, languages, cultures, religions, ideologies, heritage and history. When one takes the long view, all other issues pale in comparison; these each come with ramifications that oblige us all, throughout the world, to return to the centre, to mend the breaking hoop of life.

For me and many others, that centre lies physically, spiritually, symbolically, and energetically at the heart of this country, *Akikpautik*, the sacred Chaudière Rapids. A sacred site for Indigenous Peoples of the Americas for over five thousand years, it was the site of first encounter between my Indigenous ancestors and Champlain at what was to become the doorway to the grand natural resources of Turtle Island; it was the site where my ancestor Machecewa encountered the first settler in this area, Philomen Wright; on both occasions, my ancestors lit their pipes in prayer for peace, the essence of which is captured in the word, *Ginawaydaganuc – We Are All Connected*. Over the two centuries that ensued, we were gradually removed from our ancestral grounds on the Ottawa River Watershed, and our sacred site became a desecrated wasteland. Over the past forty years, we have returned there for strength and sanctuary, and have lit many pipes to reignite our connection with the *Source*.

This brings me to the story of my peoples and of all peoples who now call this land of my ancestors, home.

You will understand that I write with a fervent passion for this land of my ancestors and its peoples, for its history and its evolution. For forty years, now, I carry three Sacred Wampum Belts, our ancient record keeping artifacts, for the people. Around the first millennium, the *Seven Fires Prophecy Wampum Belt* warned us of the changes that would be coming to our homeland, and we anticipated the arrival of new people with mixed feelings. With our *Three Figure Welcoming and Sharing Wampum Belt*, my ancestors committed us to embracing the newcomers and sharing our values and grand natural resources with them; to this day, they still come from lives of greater deprivation, and our land holds them all. Our ancestors' trepidation was not without justification, and for many years we were made invisible in our homeland. We struggle now to reclaim our rightful place. Further, today, we *all* face the challenges of the two crucial issues that were integrated in our ancient prayer, *Ginawaydaganuc*: respect for Mother Earth and peace and harmony; many realize now that these entities are in dire trouble, and now threaten all our lives as well as future generations. Today I read George Monbiot writing about *Consumer Hell* – “solidarity is shattered by possessive individualism. Consumerism has changed all of us. Our challenge is now to fight a system we have internalised.” We are witnessing the collapse of unbridled commodification and consumerism, and it is crushing us all.

I attach three charts at the end of this letter to illustrate my understanding of the strife of our times.

Now, I write to share my thoughts and prayers about these things.

## Context

### **1. The Focus on Nature**

As you might know, the way of life for my peoples was intimately related to the laws of nature; today, almost everyone realizes that Nature does not sustain life in the way she used to; almost everyone realizes that she has been exploited to the limit, and that a cycle of natural repercussions is upon us. But, not everyone realizes this: very recently, no sooner than the words *America has never left its destiny to the winds of nature* were uttered, as Hurricane Katrina lashed the southern portion of the North American continent, then Hurricane Rita gathered her strength, with devastating consequences, and since then, the assaults of the forces of nature have only compounded.

Indigenous Peoples have been warning the world about the devastating transformation of the environment since the establishment of the United Nations, but this message has not been well understood. This stems from some fundamental differences in perspectives: Indigenous Peoples are off the land and rooted in its voice in sacred ways that those who detached from their ancestral lands cannot comprehend. Thus some will talk about Mother Earth and others about the Environment. It is only now that scientists

acknowledge that the greatest damage to this Earth has occurred in the past hundred years, as a direct consequence of human abuse. Much of this abusive exploitation of natural resources and growth of unsustainable lifestyle practices has been inflicted on colonized lands, with little comprehension of the impacts on various life forms and the environment. But some of us have been feeling Earth's pain and failing health and the suffering of her many creatures for some time.

Indigenous Peoples call her Mother Earth, and with this expression we offer a paradigm shift in perspective to the world; we realize we are intimately related to her, this living Gaia, and we realize that she is not merely a resource to be exploited unceasingly. Even as we breathe, the air in our lungs remind us of how intimately connected to us she is – we are nothing without that air to animate us.

But today, the air, the waters, and Earth herself are polluted and this once life-sustaining and life-producing entity is now making us sick. No, she does not sustain life as she used to. We experience this in the cancers in our bodies, in the devastating impact of our modern farming practices, and in the dearth and loneliness in our souls. Mother Earth's body is not strong and pure any more, and neither are we; our deep global fears are evident in our preoccupation with health care – and now, faces of note from the world of national politics and sports and media - like Margaret Trudeau, Daniel Alfredsson and Valerie Pringle are associated with the looming mental health crisis. Pharmaceutical *industries* are gathering strength to address our human spiritual and emotional angst.

The contamination crisis, as Storm Cunningham expresses it in his book, *The Restoration Economy*, has resulted from the huge stress our ecosystems are under and he states emphatically that they are unable to cleanse themselves, and thus he advocates restorative development. This is what Indigenous Peoples have been warning about for at least seventy years; I have taken that message around the world personally over the past many decades.

Mother Earth is telling us that we need to transform our exploitative relationship with her dramatically if we are to safeguard a future for our children.

We do see a new consciousness emerging, in our increasingly urbanized and compartmentalized lives, and words like sustainable development and green practices now inform our thinking. But something much more dynamic is required to transform our relationship with Earth, individually, communally and globally.

### **Respecting the Sacred in the Land**

As I have said before, inherent in the prayer of the Indigenous Nations of Turtle Island is the deep knowledge that we are all connected – my people in the east say *Ginawaydaganuc*. The prayer is a celebration of the profound knowledge that we are connected with the each other, as well as with the chief elements – Mother Earth, Water, Air and Fire – the animate and inanimate, the plants and animals and the larger universe, connected *energetically*.

Spirit embraces and unifies us all.

Inherent in the prayer is a deep respect for both Mother Earth, the penultimate provider and nurturer, and all her children. The prayer is a constant reminder to honor this connectedness, and walk gently in the places of differences, for those are the places of co-creation.

But across the globe, our relationship with Mother Earth and each other has been disrupted, and storms and blood despoil our world. When the new peoples arrived in this continent, they were too often motivated by greed, the realities of the day were war and genocide, and the ramifications were environmental exploitation and destruction; my ancestors were nearly all destroyed. The land carries a deep pain.

We are now all feeling the impact of the environmental crisis that has resulted from the reckless exploitation of land, water and air, in escalating climate change; lands and peoples across the world are embroiled in desperate wars; and health is a primary concern across the world, no matter how privileged we might seem to be, for life itself is under attack.

Today, the Law of Nature is revealing herself as the great equalizer on all planes, with ominous implications for us all and for future generations.

Again, may I say our ancestors always knew that all things were connected, and our ancient prophecies told them that one day, all the world would one day come to us to learn this. As I mentioned earlier, I have been the Carrier of the ancient sacred *Seven Fires Prophecy Wampum Belt* for 40 years. This prophecy, known to many peoples across the world, told of the important choices we would have to make at the time of the *Seventh Fire*, choices regarding our relationship with Mother Earth and each other, and that time is upon us. We have to choose wisely to ensure a meaningful heritage for all humanity and life forms. We have to choose urgently.

A global shift in our value base is essential. We need to move from greed and corporate domination to generosity and sharing; from fear and war to racial harmony and peace building; and from relentless environmental exploitation to the three indigenous Rs – reverence, respect and responsibility for Mother Earth.

We need to inspire people across the world to embrace these values urgently. This is the great challenge of our times – this is what the Seven Fires Prophecy warned about. It is the task for which we have to strengthen ourselves collectively. The transformation comes from within first; then, recognizing that we are all connected, we reach out to transform our brothers and sisters and leaders. We strive to humanize institutions.

I hold a vision for an Indigenous Centre where we can all come together to animate this future.

When we come together with one heart, one love, one mind and one determination, we will be creating the pathway to a *Circle of All Nations, a Culture of Peace*.



Before I share my thoughts on this further, may I turn to the other matter that preoccupies my attention: Racial Harmony.

## **2. Inter-Cultural Understanding and Racial Harmony**

The other great struggle, which is of as great significance to us here, in what many consider the most blessed of all countries, as it is to those living daily lives of strife and blood shed, lies in the relationship between diverse peoples.

You have heard that the deepest belief of Indigenous Peoples is that *We Are All Connected*. This conviction was celebrated in the sacred 1700s *Three Figure Welcoming Wampum Belt*, when my ancestors welcomed the newcomers, the French and English, to this continent, in the spirit of sharing – the sharing of the grand natural resources and the sharing of our values, with the land being held in trust for Creator and the unborn children. My ancestors drew *their* hands together in friendship, because they knew this was something these people needed to learn. This was before my country and my people were divided. Since then, sacred resources have been commodified, exploited, depleted and contaminated. The balance of life has been disrupted, and the centre cannot hold things together: again, I say, we have seen this in the unprecedented floods, fires, temperature fluctuation, environmental deterioration, climate change, greed, financial crisis and human strife. Over the centuries, Indigenous Peoples have been denied our rightful place and we have lost much of our heritage. I believe the country and world at large is poorer for this, because not too many people understand the deep principles of inter-connection. Three hundred years later, these are still the fundamental issues we grapple with: generating congenial relations between diverse peoples, sharing resources, and animating a culture of values that can support all.

The world, with all its diversity in language, religion and culture, swarms to Canada, seen like no other as the land of hope and promise. Our visionaries anticipated this long ago, in both the Seven Fires Prophecy, and in the vision of Black Elk:

I was seeing in a sacred manner the shapes of all things in the spirit, and the shape of all things as they must live together like one being. And I saw that the sacred hoop of my people was one of many hoops that made one circle, wide as daylight and as starlight, and in the centre grew one mighty flowering tree to shelter all the children of one mother and one father. And I say that it was holy.

Today, we are all seeking this *Circle of All Nations*, this holy *Culture of Peace*.

## **3. Indigenous Peoples**

In my mind, it is the Indigenous Peoples who hold the seeds for a vision of inclusion and collective sharing, respect and responsibility, and in our very existence we serve as the glue to bond a fragile federation together. We must work together collectively for a strengthened future.

As the country becomes aware of our history and present day struggles, few thinking people will deny that Aboriginal Peoples are the least privileged and most oppressed in the lands of our ancestors, where our natural resources are the primary source of the nation's livelihood, and where all the world is now finding opportunity and hope.

Indigenous Peoples are

- The poorest, and struggle with homelessness or impoverished living conditions both on and off the reserves;
- Have more single mother families, with accompanying impoverished living conditions;
- Suffer significant health crises, and struggle with debilitating substance abuse, and fetal alcohol legacies;
- Suffer high rates of sexual, physical and mental abuse;
- Experience the highest suicide rates;
- Experience the highest school dropout rates;
- Disproportionately represented in the criminal justice system, and especially so Indigenous women;
- Struggle with un- and under-employment, on and off the reserves; and, worst of all;
- Are largely invisible in a country now occupied by and supporting the world, while witnessing the abuse and depletion of the natural resources in ancestral homelands; and
- Lack meaningful and equal opportunities to influence positive development in their homelands.

In the past few years, we have witnessed the national *End First Nations Poverty* campaign, and seen the *Truth and Reconciliation* Project initiated to address the devastating aftermath of the Residential School abuses. Young Canadians of conscience are exposing painful injustices and historic legacies in documentaries. Surely it cannot be right that Indigenous Peoples are poorer than the poorest refugees, as research this past year has revealed.

At the May 29 2008 First Nations National Day of Action on poverty issues, I shared these thoughts:

I carry the Sacred *Three Figure Sharing Wampum Belt* from 1700s, before my country was divided without our consent, and at that time, my ancestors agreed to share their grand natural resources and values with the newcomers, then the French and English, in three equal parts, in the spirit of welcome and sharing, joining their hands in friendship. Our ancient prophecies had told them to expect the new people, but they did not anticipate that our numbers would be so decimated, and that the new people would arrive in such large numbers. Today, First Peoples stand between the Federal and Provincial/Territorial Governments, the new partners, as the glue to hold a fragile democracy together, and between all other interests and the land, and our rightful place is at the centre of the federal tax/resource sharing table, because, after all, it is still our resources that are being shared.

I believe some of our values form the underlying social safety net in this country – for example, generosity, social welfare and universal health care principles. *All* newcomers will acknowledge that they left oppression and worse conditions in their homelands and had no similar community welfare values to guide development, such as those that they found in the New World. But many of our other values were discarded – reverence, respect, responsibility for *Mother Earth and All Our Relations*, and now we are all facing equality, racial, cultural, environmental and health challenges of an unprecedented nature.

Our social, spiritual and cultural heritage was attacked, and today my people are the most disadvantaged in the land of our ancestors – and the fundamental principle of the *Three Figure Wampum Belt* – equal sharing – has been disregarded. We do not even receive an *equitable* share of our own resources – resources we developed, nurtured and protected over at least several thousands of years.

There are fundamental injustices within the country's makeup that impact the First Peoples alone, and I pray that they will be resolved as we journey the road to peace and well-being for all.

I am not an economist, but it seems to me that there are some fair principles, consistent with government practices, that must be explored to ensure First Peoples receive our fair share of our grand natural resources. This will also safeguard us from violating our fundamental sacred principle – that we belong to Mother Earth, and we cannot sell our Mother; it is not right that we are obliged to accept the language and parameters of governments that do not understand our deeper preoccupations with *Mother Earth*, in negotiating a rightful place for our children.

We have within our current fiscal structures principles and mechanisms to address these wrongs:

- Distribution of resources per person as per the federal formula – for education, health, justice and social programs;
- Equalization principles, depending on the circumstances of the communities/reserves, as with provinces;
- Government service transfers, as per Nunavut, for Aboriginal organizations;
- Floating scale for royalties for local/provincial/territorial resources;
- Remedial funds for historic injustices, such as the Residential School legacy, as per the Japanese or Chinese settlements.

When you combine per person funds, funds for equalization, governance, royalties and remediation, you move to a fair range for settlement of indigenous grievances, with underlying principles that also serve to remove from the minds of Canadians at large the erroneous notion that we are welfare recipients. If Aboriginal Peoples constitute one tenth of the population, and the federal budget is gestimated roughly at 500 billion dollars, then the variation between a one third (equal) and a one tenth (equitable) share runs between 167 billion to 50 billion dollars, and the room for fair redistribution is broad and transparent.

When one realizes that the current federal Budget in Brief states that since 2006, \$21 billion in incremental tax relief—or 1.4 per cent of Canada's economy—is being provided to Canadians and Canadian businesses this year, and our natural resources continue to sustain economies, this must surely give all Canadians and corporations of conscience cause for serious reflection. (Note: Written in May 2008)

With such principles guiding resource distribution, we will have the opportunity to recover our heritage and values on our own terms and ensure they impact the evolution and development of this country, and benefit all. We will have the opportunity to redevelop our sacred relationship with the land and its resources, and I know our prayer for the land will strengthen Mother Earth.

In my *Circle of All Nations* network, I see increasing numbers of non-Aboriginal peoples from across the globe searching for the sustaining wisdom of the Indigenous Peoples – and now many

realize the current paradigm for *economic* development is not the only way forward. Achieving justice for the First Peoples will ensure that we live with dignity, and Canadians with self-respect. Then, with the foundations of our relationships healed and strengthened, we will together create a vibrant and viable *Circle of All Nations and Culture of Peace*, and leave a fitting legacy for all our children.

The country is beginning to awaken to its discriminatory and shameful history towards First Peoples.

I, and many others, many non-Aboriginal, have seen for a long time that this nation will not find true peace until the relationship with the First Peoples of this land is healed: how can it be otherwise? A concrete manifestation of such a reconciliation needs to be made visible to the country at large, the original settlers who need to revisit and restore their relationships with the First Peoples, and the newer immigrants who are oblivious of our history and have very limited knowledge and awareness of our current realities. At the same time, it must contribute to strengthening Aboriginal Peoples individually and collectively.

On June 11, 2008, the country's leadership came together to make a public statement of apology to Indigenous Peoples, and media pundits noted it was a high water mark in the Prime Minister's year.

Indigenous Peoples, despite all the pain we carry, are also resourceful, creative thinkers, who offer tremendous opportunities to the world for desperately needed paradigm shifts in mainstream individual and collective ideologies. Our voices need to be heard and respected now, before it is too late. We are a gentle, humble people, with a deep capacity for compassion and forgiveness, and it is we who ignite a fire for reconciliation. Some have said we carry the wisdom of the *Older Brother*.

### **A Historical Perspective**

From time immemorial, *Asinabka*, the *Place of Glare Rocks* at the sacred Chaudière Rapids, has served as a special spiritual meeting place, a special place of council fire, for the Indigenous Peoples of North America. For countless seasons, the *Mamiwinini*, my ancestors, gathered at special meeting places across the continent – meeting places that were on waterways that served as their highways, and islands that served as their half-way houses, marked by thundering rapids. The four elements marked these as places of power, places of passion. The Chaudière Rapids were especially significant – they reflected the shape of a pipe, in this place of *glare rock*, and the rising vapours were an expression of the prayers of the people rising to the Great Mystery on the wings of the wind. The Mamiwinini consecrated the place with prayer and this was noted in one of the earliest paintings of the *Asinabka* area: it is painting of three native men in different outfits, perched on an outcrop of rocks, smoking the sacred pipe, and offering tobacco to the whirling rapids below them.

This area was an important destination for the Algonquin Peoples, because it was the site of “their chief Hunting Grounds, Sugaries and Fisheries”, and this was noted in 1824 in

the records of the evolving country (Appendix R to the 23 volume of the Journal of the House of Assembly of the Province of Lower Canada).

The painting of 1613 is complemented from the earliest annals of documented history of the area in the journey of Samuel de Champlain on *la riviere des Algoumequins*. Champlain, geographer, explorer and colonizer, founder of Quebec and indeed a fore-father of Canada, was the first person to publish maps of the Mighty River and its topographical features:

“The water falls ... with such impetuosity on a rock that with the passage of time it has hollowed out a wide deep basin” wrote Samuel de Champlain in describing the Chaudière Falls which he saw for the first time when journeying up the Ottawa River in 1613, “...The water whirls about to such an extent, and in the middle boils so vigorously, that the Indians call it Asticou\*, that is to say, a kettle. This waterfall makes such a noise in this basin that one can hear it from more than two leagues away.” P.7 Kennedy (\*Note – The Algonquin word is actually *Akikpautik* for the *pail* rapids.)

Champlain spoke disparagingly of the natives praying at the tempestuous river, but soon enough, he himself was in difficulties for his canoe had spun broadside in a whirlpool and

*“had I not luckily fallen between two rocks, the canoe would have dragged me in since I could not quickly enough loosen the rope that was twisted around my hand, which hurt me very much, and nearly cut it off. I cried out to God and began to pull my canoe toward me...As for our Frenchmen, they did not fare any better, and several times were nearly lost. ...Having escaped, I gave praise to God, beseeching Him to preserve us.”*

Thomas C. Keefer, a civil engineer noted in 1854, “*There is scarcely a portage or cleared point, jutting out into the river where you do not meet with wooden crosses, on which are rudely carved the initials of some unfortunate victim of the restless waters...*”, he said. “*In a prosperous year, a thousand men are afloat on loose timber, or in frail canoes, and as many as eighty lives have been lost in a single spring.*”

The vignette of Champlain’s first famous *foreigner’s* encounter with the Mighty River reveals the attitude with which the sacred watch of my ancestors was dismissed as trivial and superstitious; we and our land have experienced great pain with the imposition of other Gods upon us. In 1800, my ancestor, Chief Machecewa met the first settler in what was to become the capital city. I quote my comments of February 23, 2009 regarding the Navigable Waters act at this point, since they are relevant to our unceasing concerns:

I am a ninety five year old Algonquin from the Ottawa River Watershed, and my passion and commitment over many decades has been to draw attention to the ceaseless plundering and destruction of the grand natural resources of my ancestral lands, the deepening environmental crisis across the globe, and its impact on our lives and health; to promote environmental stewardship; and to warn of the crucial need for Indigenous wisdom in reclaiming a balanced relationship within the world we all live in.

Just today, I was asked to lend my voice in support of the campaign to protect our waters from impending changes to the Navigable Waters Act, and the request came from non-Aboriginal community environmentalists.

I have not had much time to review this file; however, consistent with federal and provincial legislation, I believe the **onus lies on the federal government to ensure full and proper consultation with Aboriginal peoples in developing public policy and legislation; and in this matter, which has serious implications in the Boreal Forest, in our traditional territories and to our lifestyles, rights and heritage, the responsibility is even greater.**

Having said that, I must also say that some, like me, have deep reservations about laws, and regulations and amendments, often seeing these as tools that have given others unjustified rights over our lands and resources. When my ancestors first met Philomen Wright at the Sacred Chaudière Site on the Ottawa River in 1800, and asked by what right he cut down the trees and took the land, the stranger drew a paper from his pocket and read *“The Indians have consented to relinquish all claim to the land, in compensation for which they receive annual grants from the Government, which shall be withheld if they molest settlers.”* This paper, my ancestors saw as a big *“loup garou”*, an indescribable monster supposed to have supernatural powers, and in my own lifetime, I have experienced the deep fear this reference brings to native peoples. Ironically, on his deathbed, Philomon Wright himself said, *“When I look back over the past achievements of my life they are of no profit when viewed in the light of eternity. The sun that has lighted our way is going down in a cloud – a dark, dark cloud!”* Indeed an ominous statement, and we are all now beginning to fear its implications. (ref. The White Chief of the Ottawa by Bertha Wright Carr-Harris.)

It is not without reason that we have been fearful about the powers wielded over our lands, and since the nineteen forties, we have raised our voices in protest against the many abuses to Mother Earth, and raised the alarm against unbridled and unregulated exploitation of the natural world. In the 1600s the land transformation began with none of the resource management strategies my ancestors had developed and employed over centuries: *with the fur trade, logging, dams, hydro, and nuclear energy, the resources of my peoples of the Ottawa River Watershed gave birth to Canada, and they are now dangerously polluted and depleted.* I have said elsewhere that *“I believe Mother Earth is a living creature. She has a body and spirit and veins. The rivers are her veins. If they are blocked and contaminated everywhere, cancers and poisons build up; eventually they kill. Dams, motorized vehicles, foreign animals, fertilizers, pesticides and raw sewage attack the lifeblood of Mother Earth. She has to fight back. It is Nature’s Law.”* And what happens to her, happens to us because we are inextricably connected. I reiterated this message to the University of Ottawa’s Faculty of Law in 2007.

Now we live in a world regulated by legislation. We must make this legislation work for our communal good, and this can only happen if it is consistent with Nature’s Law. Just last night on the CBC news I heard talk about Canada’s great natural resources in the context of the world economy; in this time of global economic crisis, we have to be scrupulously careful about protecting and safeguarding our resources, and ensuring their sustainability. This priority is not what generally drives economic interests, and that influence has played a significant role in the development of legislation historically. Ingrained in Indigenous philosophy is the concept of protecting our resources for the Seventh Generation, and we did that consciously and conscientiously in the past. Many of the threads of that knowledge have been eroded since contact, but I believe it is of crucial importance to all that Aboriginal Peoples regain their positions as custodians of the land, and I believe it is in everybody’s best interest, the public’s and governments’, to facilitate and support this transition. We are the threads to hold the integrity of this land intact.

Many have heard me repeat the “Only After” Indigenous prophecy repeatedly over the years:

- Only after the last tree is cut,

- Only after the last river is poisoned,
- Only after the last fish has been caught,
- **Only then** you will know that  
Your money cannot be eaten!

*We are living in times of prophecy. The then is now!*

- Logging is in decline
- Since my WaterLife Workshop in 2006, the terrible condition of the Ottawa River has repeatedly come to public attention
- The ancient *American Eel*, which was once so plentiful in the Ottawa River Watershed, has been placed on the Endangered Species List in Ontario
- *And* now we are all caught up in the worse global financial crisis ever.

It is of crucial and urgent importance that we reassess our priorities collectively, and today, we depend on governments to understand and evaluate many priorities to ensure balanced, sustainable lives for all, including all that constitutes our natural world.

Less dramatic, but even more ominous, the quality of the Ottawa River with the beaches that need to be closed each summer because of the fecal content, the constant sewage overflows, constitute a powerful message about where the desecration of our waterways leaves us.

It was in 1806, two hundred years ago, that timber was first exported from the Ottawa region, ushering in an era of devastating exploitation and pollution.

To this day, in unsundered, unceded and unconquered Algonquin Territory, a company like Domtar can hold in perpetuity the lease for such a significant sacred site as the Chaudière for \$100 a year, and create a contaminated wasteland that affects us all, right here in the capital city. These injustices and abuses are impacting our collective soul, psyche and self-respect.

In 1936, sixty three years ago, an apparently lone but immortalized voice rose in the person of Grey Owl, to warn us of the tremendous costs of the wanton abuse of nature (invisible in this appeal was the fervent energy of Algonquin woman and conservationist and eventually Officer of the Order of Canada, Anahereo, and my own uncle Gabriel Commanda and Chief Ignace Papatie):

I am not a hero or a prophet.  
Like most of us, I've done what I've had to get by.  
The one thing that gives me the courage to stand before you today is that what I have to say is crucial to our survival.

We are not the lords of the Earth, we're its children.  
We lie in the lap of creation, in the strong arms of a spirit greater than our own.

You know I am going to say protect our beavers;  
You know I am going to say stop cutting down the forests;  
You know I am going to say the money you make is not worth the price you pay.

Here's some more:

If we can say that there are some things that are not for sale, that there are some things that belong to all of us and to future generations, other people will hear us and say it too.

And some day there will be enough of us and we will believe that it can be done, that we can change the world.

So why don't we start in our own country, in Canada, here?

In 2010, this message is only more profound and urgent.

In view of the global climate change crisis, the health care crises, the endangered species crises, and the financial fiasco, you can scarcely imagine what it is like to be voiceless in the face of such continued folly, that has now spread to envelop us all in a death cloud. Many are too deeply enmeshed to be able to see clearly; the same platitudes prevail to obscure reality.

As Einstein said, problems cannot be solved by the consciousness that created them.

Indeed, *"It was prophesized that the time would come when the voice of Indigenous peoples would rise again after five hundred years of silence and oppression, to light a path to an eternal fire of peace, love, brotherhood and sisterhood amongst all nations."*

Forty years ago, I hosted the first *Circle of All Nations* Gathering, and over the decades, increasing numbers of non-Aboriginal peoples have come to learn from and with Indigenous peoples, and it is their deep passion for my work that has inspired the development of the vision for *Asinabka*. We all wish to see this energy protected and nurtured at the **Asinabka National Indigenous Centre** at the sacred Chaudière site.

### **Wild Space in the Nation's Capital**

We present a vision for a wild and inclusive space in the heart of the capital city, proclaiming, on a microcosmic level, a symbolic reconciliation with Nature and humankind. The vision for this area animates the ancient attitude of reverence, respect and responsibility for nature again.

Ottawa sits on the traditional territory of the Algonquin Peoples, and this confluence of the Ottawa, Rideau and Gatineau Rivers has long served as the meeting grounds of my ancestors. *Asinabka*, the sacred heartland, a cultural landscape of national historic significance, includes the Chaudière Rapids, Chaudière Island and Victoria Island.

A multi-faceted vision has been developed for this area to narrow the lens to focus on the two fundamental issues of our times: Mother Earth and Racial Harmony. Its core objective is to advance healing at three fundamental levels:

Healing individual and collective relationships with Mother Earth;  
Healing, strengthening and unifying Indigenous Peoples; and  
Healing relationships with all others



Its manifestation would constitute a dynamic, dramatic, and inspirational statement to the world.

Yes, for several decades now, Victoria Island has been identified as the site for a national Indigenous centre. Over recent years, a vision for healing, reconciliation and celebration has evolved, and internationally renowned Indigenous Architect Douglas J. Cardinal has developed conceptual designs for the place to house the vision.

After years of partnership building, it appeared that the vision stood on the threshold for implementation in 2004, but that stalled with federal leadership challenges and the subsequent Sponsorship Scandal. In August 2006, the National Capital Commission itself chose to make a statement of commitment for the project at the international *Circle of All Nations* gathering, but this momentum too stalled with the federal review and structural changes to that organization.

I have continued to work on this initiative, and consistent with suggestions of new administration that, one, we need a *champion* for the project, have secured the support of local MPs Paul Dewar and Mauril Belanger to raise the file in the federal government; two, that we *need a groundswell of support*, are mounting a communications campaign; others, from the business community, are focusing on assisting with financial support matters and developing a fundraising foundation; a variety of community organizations are mobilizing support for the Indigenous centre amongst their constituencies; and students are bringing the vision forward in their formal studies and research in universities and colleges. I believe the project has captured the imagination, hearts and heads of many, and it stands ready for advancing.

While our focus right now is the establishment of the Asinabka National Indigenous Centre, in its larger form, the vision is a bold one for the future, comprising:

Freed Chaudière Rapids  
Reforested Chaudière Island  
An Indigenous Centre on Victoria Island  
A Peace-Building Conference Complex

The larger vision includes the development of a conference centre, a modern *Tipi Hotel* complex, to animate the ancient meeting grounds of the Algonquin peoples in the contemporary context, to serve as a sustainable site to host Aboriginal conferences, concerts, powwow and cross cultural training and peace building efforts.

The voice of the magnificent circular Chaudière Rapids has been silenced over the past two hundred years, yet she speaks loudly of the polluting of the waters of the countless rivers whose natural cleansing processes have been stifled by dams. It is time for us to be bold and innovative in our search for other viable sources of power, perhaps wind and solar; and it is time to restore the Chaudière Rapids to her wild freedom, in a symbolic statement of reconciliation with the waters of Mother Earth, a message that can reverberate to the world from this Nation's Capital.

Though much of the once beautiful Chaudière Island is now clad in concrete, after decades of industrialization and transformation, the vision for the area restores it to a fraction of its former state, now as an urban eco-park, reforested with the red and white pines that used to dominate the landscape of the Ottawa River Valley, promoting biodiversity, readily accessible to people from Ottawa and Gatineau, Ontario and Quebec, serving as a symbolic statement of reconciliation and unification; it would also present to the globe a vision for the greening of space in our ever increasingly urbanized world – offsetting urban concrete and heat with the regenerative energy of nature. Its refurbished warehouses can become artists’ studios and contribute to the transformation of the energy in the heart of the country, and serve as a counter balance to the political and bureaucratic preoccupations of the *capital* city, and inspire a ‘right brain-left brain’ rebalancing.

The heart of the people must return to the *Source*.

### **Conclusion**

The Ottawa River was once the dividing line between Upper and Lower Canada, between the people of French and English ancestry. After Confederation, this site was chosen to symbolize the union of all Canadians. Many more now occupy the centre. But the original people who used the river as a venue of convergence for thousands of years are still absent, and our history as the founding peoples of the culture evolving in this heartland is obscured.

Thus evoking the true spirit of Canada remains a work in progress.

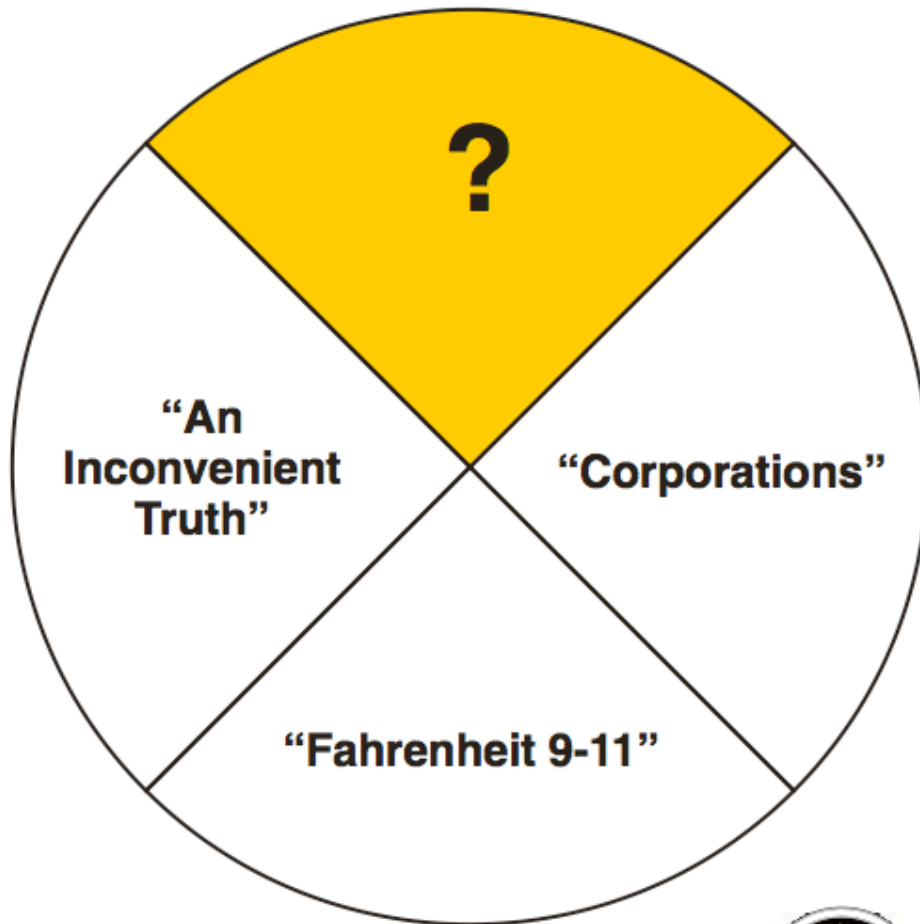
We need a big vision to carry us into the future, a vision for a strong, healthy world of peace and inclusion, a place accessible to all, holding in microcosmic fashion the seeds of reconciliation with Mother Earth, the waters, and the diversity of peoples who now call Canada home. Indeed, this vision can also support Canada’s effort to take a place of influence and leadership in the world. And finally, it will also be a statement of returning to the centre, to the *Source*, to reconciliation with the First Peoples and the ancient values of this land.

2013 is a time foreseen by Indigenous prophecies as the time of tremendous transformation on Earth. 2013 marks the 400<sup>th</sup> year anniversary of the arrival of the newcomers at the Chaudière Rapids, and it presents as the significant moment to return the area to some fraction of its former grandeur, with the promise of an increasingly strengthened relationship with Mother Earth to guide us into the new times. 2013 will also mark 200 years since the last battle dividing Turtle Island was fought in this traditional territory of my ancestors, and it calls for the lighting of a fire of peace and healing. November 11, 2013, Remembrance Day, will also be the time of my hundredth birthday. The messages of our three Sacred Wampum Belts weave together to mark portentous times.

The charts that follow reflect some of these ideas.

I have every faith that many will help carry this prayer for *Sustainable Relationships* for all into the future, and safeguard a healthy, meaningful legacy for our children's children.

# Dominant Ideologies



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A CIRCLE OF ALL NATIONS  
A CULTURE OF PEACE

# The Crucial Paradigm Shift

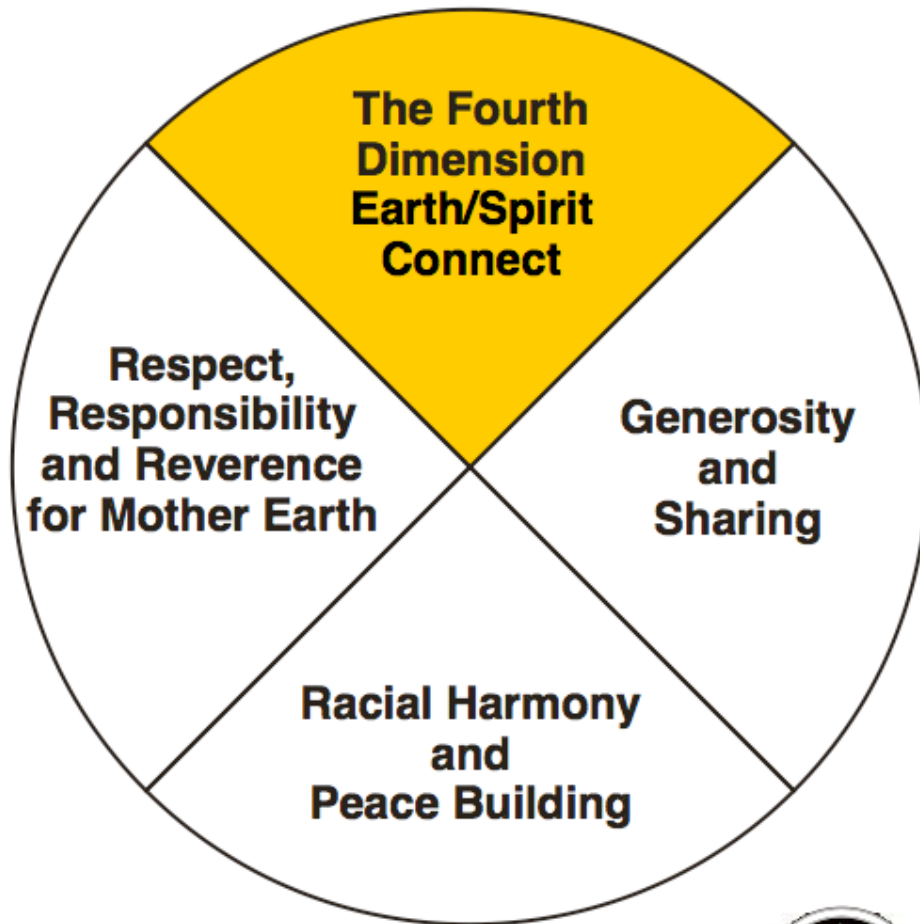


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# The Light of The Eighth Fire



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## **B. A Mini-Biography of Dr. William Commanada, OC, Algonquin Elder, Founder, A Circle of All Nations**

Ninety six year old Algonquin Elder William Commanda from Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg, Maniwaki, Quebec was born on November 11, 1913 under the bright light of the Morning Star, so his mother named him *Ojigkwanong*; thus the larger universe figured in his personal story from the very beginning. Today, he is seen by many as the symbol of light emerging from the darkness of the first World War, illuminating a path to a new world with his vision for a *Circle of All Nations, A Culture of Peace*.

He is a respected spokesman and spiritual leader at many conferences, participates in United Nations peace and spiritual vigils, and his work is acknowledged nationally and internationally. Fully trilingual, he shares his words and prayers in Algonquin, and translates them into English and French. Central to Elder Commanda's teachings are the concepts of equality, balance, respect and responsibility for Mother Earth, for all life forms and for people of all racial and cultural backgrounds, and he works ceaselessly, alone and entirely without an organization, staff, structure, formal or financial support to animate the *Circle of All Nations*.

A most senior representative of the Algonquins of the Ottawa River Watershed, he is the great, great grandson of the legendary *Pakinawatik*, the Algonquin chief who in the mid eighteen hundreds, led his people from their lands at Oka on the Lake of Two Mountains to their traditional hunting and trapping grounds at the confluence of the Desert and Gatineau. He is the carrier of three sacred **Wampum Belts of historic and spiritual importance**: the ancient Seven Fires Prophecy Belt about choice; the 1700s Welcoming Belt about sharing the grand natural resources and values of the original peoples with the newcomers; and the Jay Treaty Border Crossing Belt which recognized Turtle Island as a coherent entity. His ancestors inscribed their legends, prophecies and agreements in these carefully crafted items over many centuries. He is seen by many as the carrier of the Seven Fires Prophecy at the time of the unfolding of its final message, and the messages of all these ancient artifacts are as deeply relevant today, as they were in the past.

He was acclaimed chief of the Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg for over nineteen years, though he himself never participated in the elections. He also worked as a guide, trapper and woodsman for much of his life. He is a **birch bark canoe maker and craftsman** of international renown, and there is a special display dedicated to his work at the Canadian Canoe Museum of Peterborough. He built a canoe for Queen Margrethe of Denmark, and he helped Pierre Trudeau repair his famous birch bark canoe. At the age of 90, he shared his canoe making skills and philosophy in Valerie Pouyanne's documentary, *Good Enough for Two*.

He has promoted **environmental stewardship** and respect for Mother Earth passionately for many decades. He conducted pipe ceremonies for the Pre-Rio Earth Summit Conference hosted by President Mitterand of France in 1991, and his prayers lie behind *Agenda 21*. He participated in the United Nations first Indigenous *Cry of the Earth* conference. He served as spiritual guide to the 1995 seven and a half month *Sunbow Five Walk* from the Atlantic Coast to the Pacific, to raise awareness of the growing

environmental crisis; received the Bill Mason River Conservation Award in 2004; hosted workshops on water stewardship in 2004 and 2006, and 2009; is honorary chair of the Ottawa Heritage River Designation Committee; and offers interventions on current environmental issues such as the identification of the American Eel as a Species at Risk, the building of a mega dump on Danford Lake and the Navigable Waters Act.

He is the recipient of numerous awards and acknowledgements of his works and talent: the Wolf Project and Harmony Awards for his **efforts to foster racial harmony and peace building** through the creation of a *Circle of All Nations* (one very well received example of this commitment is the annual international gathering he hosts at his home during the first weekend of August – the 2001 Gathering is presented in the *Circle of All Nations* documentary); a Justice Award from the University of Ottawa and a Peace Award from Friends for Peace. He promotes restorative justice, forgiveness and his outreach to prisoners is captured in Lucie Ouimet’s National Film Board Documentary, *Encounter with an Algonquin Seer*.

Recently, his efforts were acknowledged in Ottawa with two special recognitions: in 2005, with an **Honorary Doctorate Degree** from the University of Ottawa, shortly after his book, *Learning from a Kindergarten Dropout*, was published; and in 2006, with the **Key to the City of Ottawa**, a singular honour for an Aboriginal person from a reserve in Quebec. This was presented on Victoria Island, where the tireless ninety five year old continues working on his vision for a National Indigenous Centre, for the restoration and development of **the Sacred Chaudière Site** as a special national historic centre, and as a think tank for environmental stewardship and peace building of national and global relevance. Two other books, *Learning from a Kindergarten Dropout Book Two*, and *Passionate Waters–Butterfly Kisses* include further reflections on his work and ideology.

In December 2008, he was appointed **Officer of the Order of Canada**, for *his leadership as an elder who has promoted intercultural understanding and has raised awareness of the traditions and legacies of Canada’s Aboriginal people*. Elder Commanda says he is deeply honoured to witness this recognition of the relevance of Indigenous Wisdom to this country at this time.

In November 2009, the National Aboriginal Achievement Awards Foundation announced his selection as 2010 Lifetime Achievement Award recipient. In January, 2010 Willis College announced the Dr. William Commanda Scholarship!

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[www.circleofallnations.ca](http://www.circleofallnations.ca) (General Information)

[www.asinabka.com](http://www.asinabka.com) (Indigenous Centre Information)

<http://web.mac.com/circleofallnations> (Elder Commanda’s Recent Activities)

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## C. The Vision for the National Historic Site at the Sacred Chaudiere Site

**A proposal for development of a special National Historic Centre at the sacred Chaudière Falls, Ottawa, Canada** [www.circleofallnations.ca](http://www.circleofallnations.ca); [www.asinabka.com](http://www.asinabka.com); <http://web.mac.com/circleofallnations>

### ISSUE:

The vision calls for a fully inclusive City Park, Historic Interpretative Site, Conference Centre and Aboriginal Centre at the Sacred Site of *Asinabka*/Chaudière Falls, Chaudière and Victoria Islands, within the Nation's Capital.

### BACKGROUND:

Since the arrival of Samuel de Champlain in this area in 1613, the area around the Chaudière Falls has been acknowledged as a sacred meeting place of great importance to Indigenous peoples, having been used as such for easily five thousand years. Indeed, it is one of the earliest sites of human occupation in this country. Later, it served as a significant meeting place with the earliest settlers, the French and the English. Today the world finds a home on its shores. This special area holds singular sacred, archaeological and historic value, and has been the site of cultural convergence, political evolution, and internationally influential industrial development and innovation over the past centuries.

The *Ottawa River Heritage Designation History* celebrates this remarkable heritage of the watershed, and the heart of the story lies here in Ottawa/Hull, at the meeting place of three rivers, with the mighty Ottawa, the heritage river of the Algonquins, connecting with the Gatineau from the Province of Quebec and the Rideau from the Province of Ontario. Elder William Commanda, a trilingual 93 (now 96) year old Algonquin from Quebec, recently honoured by the University of Ottawa with the presentation of an Honorary Doctorate Degree, and in June 2006, presented with the Key to the City of Ottawa, a remarkable, internationally recognized man with a passionate interest in the environment, this country and all its citizens, and founder of the *Circle of All Nations*, holds a broad vision for the entire area focused on two themes that predominate in his work: Respect for the Mother Earth and Racial Harmony and Peace-building. Today, the environmental crisis and war are our greatest national preoccupations and challenges.

### THE ACTIVITY:

Dr. Commanda's bold four-fold vision calls for

- 1) Freeing the Chaudière Falls,
- 2) Creating a City Park & Historic Interpretive Centre
- 3) Building a Peace Building Meeting Site, and
- 4) Building an Aboriginal Centre

### DETAILS:

1. It is a vision of potentially significant international influence for symbolic reconciliation with Nature, both water and land, by **undamming the sacred Chaudière**

**Falls to the extent possible, and returning it to its former magnificence; planting the Chaudière Island with trees and creating an educational eco-city park in the heart of the country, expressive of both of its history, and its future, offering a modern day reclaimed green sanctuary and pow wow grounds to offset concrete urban sprawl; it calls for developing a historic interpretative centre to commemorate the history of settlement pre and post contact: ceremony, ancient trade routes, exchange of goods, logging, hydro electric power, industrial development, inventions etc.**

2. Consistent with the ancient history as **meeting place, and current need for creative meeting spaces designed to serve as collaborative think tanks for reflective contemplation on global and local issues during this UN Decade for Culture of Peace, for international cross-cultural exchange and training, the remaining portion of the vision calls for a *Tipi Village pod-style conference hotel on the western portion of Victoria Island, fully accessible within the core area of the capital city.***

3. Finally, for almost four decades, the Eastern portion of Victoria Island has been designated the site for an **Aboriginal Centre; over the past eight years, Elder Commanda has worked to develop a vision for the Centre; Aboriginal Architect Douglas Cardinal, with support from Canadian Heritage, developed the conceptual architectural plans to the Level B; Elder Commanda negotiated a draft Memorandum to Cabinet with a consultant for the National Capital Commission, and at the Circle of All Nations International Gathering of August 2006, the NCC expressed full support for this proposal.**

4. The entire site will be a great attraction for Aboriginal peoples, citizens of the cities of Ottawa and Gatineau, the country at large, children, new Canadians and international tourists.

5. Though damaged over the years, the sacred Chaudière site of the Algonquin Peoples remains a beautiful natural and national treasure waiting to be recognized and honoured.

6. Elder Commanda's vision also offers a unique opportunity to *Correct Mistakes of History and Look Towards the Future.*

7. It is recognized that this work spans many federal departments, jurisdictions and responsibility centres. It needs a collective and collaborative national will and leadership to create the momentum for its successful realization.

#### **TIME FRAME:**

The timing is propitious for the bestowing a lasting national and indeed international legacy commemorative of the UN Decade for a Culture of Peace, in anticipation of two key dates: 2010, when the world comes to Canada for the Olympics, and 4 June, 2013, the four hundredth year anniversary of the arrival of Champlain in this area (June being also the time Heritage Rivers Day is celebrated). A spring 2007 announcement will ensure the timely actualization of the vision.

#### **ACTION REQUESTED:**

Widespread endorsement of this fully inclusive proposal through the establishment of a multi disciplinary task force to develop the implementation plan for the Sacred Site. Send your message of support to **pm@pm.gc.ca** and **circleofallnations@sympatico.ca**  
**www.circleofallnations.com**

**Le projet d'aménagement d'un Centre historique national au site sacré des chutes de la Chaudière à Ottawa** [www.circleofallnations.ca](http://www.circleofallnations.ca); [www.asinabka.com](http://www.asinabka.com); <http://web.mac.com/circleofallnations>

### **VISION:**

Cette vision se compose de l'aménagement d'un site complet qui comprendrait un parc municipal, un site d'interprétation historique, un centre de conférences ainsi qu'un centre autochtone sur les lieux sacrés d'*Asinabka* (les chutes de la Chaudière et les îles Chaudière et Victoria), en plein cœur de la capitale nationale.

### **HISTORIQUE:**

Depuis l'arrivée de Samuel de Champlain dans cette région en 1613, les lieux qui entourent les chutes de la Chaudière ont été reconnus comme étant des lieux sacrés de rencontre pour les peuples autochtones, lieux qui sont d'une grande importance pour eux puisque cet usage date d'au moins cinq mille ans. En effet, il s'agit de l'un des plus anciens sites occupés par des humains au pays. Plus tard, cet endroit a également servi de lieu de rencontre avec les premiers pionniers, les Français et les Anglais. Aujourd'hui, le monde entier pourrait y trouver un lieu de rencontre, un chez soi. Cet endroit spécial est imbu d'une valeur singulière, puisqu'il s'agit d'une valeur qui est à la fois sacrée, archéologique et historique; c'est un lieu de convergences, où l'évolution politique et l'innovation et le développement industriels se sont fait sentir à l'échelle internationale au cours des derniers siècles. L'histoire de la désignation patrimoniale de la rivière des Outaouais célèbre le patrimoine remarquable de ce bassin important et le cœur de cette histoire se retrouve ici, à Ottawa/Hull, où trois rivières se rencontrent : la majestueuse *Kitchissippi* (rivière des Outaouais/Ottawa river), rivière patrimoniale des Algonquins, dans laquelle se jettent la rivière Gatineau du côté québécois et la rivière Rideau du côté ontarien. L'aîné William Commanda, un Algonquin trilingue de 93 ans vivant au Québec, à qui l'Université d'Ottawa a récemment rendu hommage en lui présentant un Doctorat honoraire, et à qui la ville d'Ottawa a remis, à l'été 2006, la Clef de la ville d'Ottawa, est un homme remarquable, connu à l'échelle internationale et qui possède une passion pour l'environnement, pour ce pays-ci et pour tous ses citoyens. Ayant fondé le Cercle de toutes les nations (*Circle of All Nations*), il cultive une vision d'ensemble pour la région dont l'emphase repose sur deux principes qui guident toujours son travail : le respect de notre Mère la Terre et la culture de la paix, de l'harmonie inter-raciale. Aujourd'hui, la crise environnementale et la guerre sont nos préoccupations et nos défis les plus importants.

### **ACTIVITÉS:**

La vision courageuse du Dr. Commanda comporte quatre éléments principaux :

- 1) La libération des chutes de la Chaudière
- 2) La création d'un parc municipal et d'un centre d'interprétation historique
- 3) La construction d'un centre de conférences voué à la Paix
- 4) La construction d'un centre autochtone

## DÉTAILS:

1. Le **démantèlement de la dame des chutes sacrées de la Chaudière, dans la mesure du possible**, et la restauration de l'ancienne majesté de ces chutes, ont le potentiel d'avoir une influence internationale comme symbole de réconciliation avec la nature, à la fois avec l'eau et avec la Terre. En plantant des arbres et en créant un parc écologique éducatif sur l'île Chaudière, en plein cœur du pays, l'histoire et le futur trouveraient leur place, côte à côte, dans ce **retour contemporain d'un sanctuaire de verdure** et d'un terrain de *pow wow*, adoucissant aussi les étendues de béton du centre-ville. Un **centre d'interprétation historique** y commémorerait l'histoire de la région avant et après le contact avec les Européens : les cérémonies, les anciennes routes d'échange, la coupe du bois, le développement hydroélectrique et industriel, les inventions, etc., toutes choses qui font la richesse de cette région.

2. Afin de respecter l'ancienneté de cet endroit comme **lieu de rencontre** et pour répondre aux besoins contemporains en lieux propices pour réfléchir et collaborer à la recherche de solutions aux questions locales et mondiales de l'heure en cette Décennie internationale pour une culture de la paix de l'ONU, la vision propose un centre de conférences prenant la forme d'un hôtel modulaire basé sur le modèle d'un village de tipis dans la partie ouest de l'île Victoria, favorisant des séances de formation et des échanges inter-culturels internationaux, tout à fait accessibles, en plein cœur de la capitale.

3. Enfin, depuis presque quatre décennies, la partie est de l'île Victoria est désignée comme site pour un **centre autochtone**; au cours des huit dernières années, l'aîné Commanda a travaillé à mettre au point une vision pour ce centre : l'architecte autochtone Douglas Cardinal, avec l'appui de Patrimoine canadien, a élaboré des plans architecturaux de niveau B; l'aîné Commanda a négocié la présentation d'un projet de loi au Cabinet avec un conseiller de la Commission de la capitale nationale (CCN), et au mois d'août 2006, lors de la rencontre internationale du Cercle de toutes les nations, la CCN a exprimé son plein appui pour ce projet.

4. Le site entier sera d'un grand attrait pour les peuples autochtones, pour les citoyens de Gatineau et d'Ottawa, pour tous les citoyens canadiens, les enfants, les nouveaux citoyens et les visiteurs de partout dans le monde.

5. Bien qu'endommagé au cours des ans, le site de la Chaudière, site sacré des peuples Algonquins, demeure un trésor national naturel d'une grande beauté, qui n'attend que d'être reconnu et mis en valeur.

6. La vision de l'aîné Commanda offre aussi l'unique possibilité de *corriger des erreurs de l'histoire et de présenter une vision d'avenir*.

7. Nous reconnaissons qu'un projet d'une telle envergure relève de l'autorité de nombreux ministères fédéraux ainsi que de divers paliers et organismes : c'est pourquoi une volonté collective et un esprit de collaboration et de leadership nationaux sont requis pour mettre en œuvre un tel projet et en assurer le succès.

## RÉALISATION:

L'heure est propice à la création d'un héritage national et même international qui aura longue vie, à la fois pour souligner la Décennie internationale pour une culture de la paix de l'ONU et pour marquer deux dates importantes : l'an 2010, lorsque le monde entier viendra au Canada pour les Olympiques et le 4 juin 2013, le 400<sup>e</sup> anniversaire de l'arrivée de Champlain dans cette région (le mois de juin étant aussi le mois de célébration de la

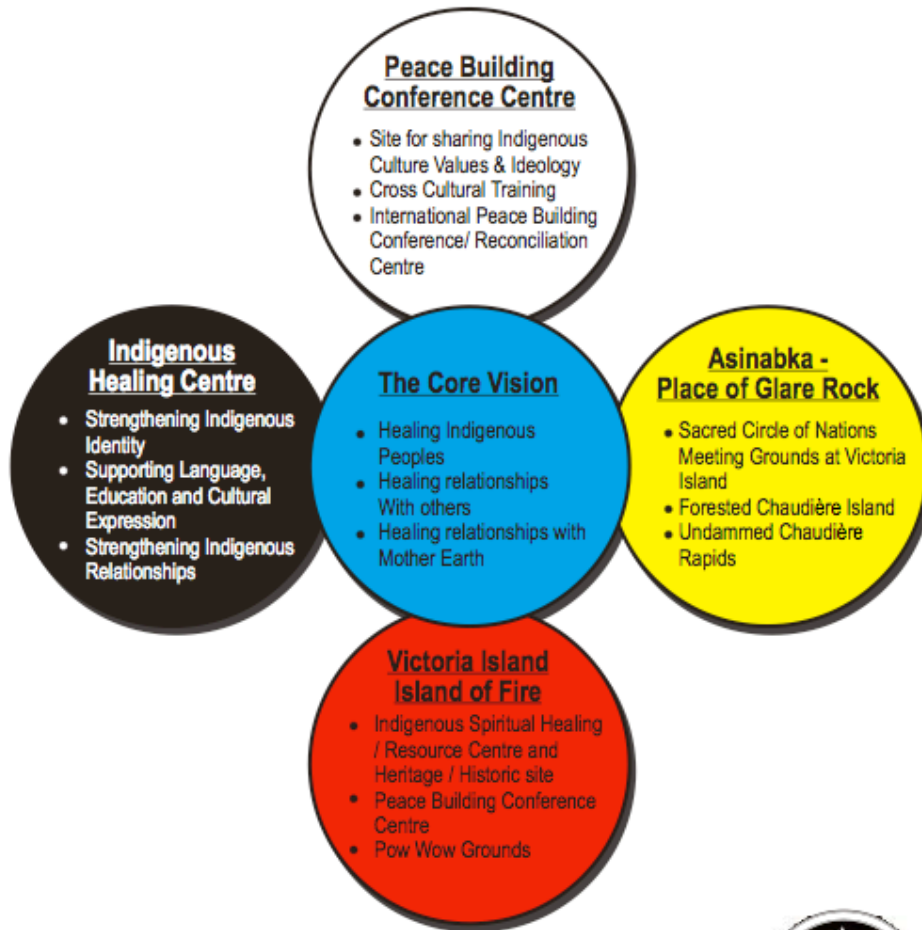
journée des rivières patrimoniales, *Heritage Rivers Day*). Une annonce diffusée au printemps 2007 veillera à la réalisation propice de la vision.

**ACTION DEMANDÉE:**

- un appui répandu de cette proposition globale et la création d'un comité de travail multidisciplinaire qui sera chargé d'élaborer un plan de réalisation pour ce site sacré. Envoyez votre message d'appui à [pm@pm.gc.ca](mailto:pm@pm.gc.ca) et [circleofallnations@sympatico.ca](mailto:circleofallnations@sympatico.ca).

D. Circle Vision Graphic

## William Commanda's Vision for *Asinabka* - The Chaudière/Victoria Island Site



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