



CIRCLE OF ALL NATIONS

Special Tribute to Adrian Esposito Nomeika and Kristina Nomeika

October 2010



William Commanda Meets Adrian Esposito Nomeika and Kristina Nomeika in 2010

In 2010, Adrian Esposito Nomeika and his mother Kristina made the journey to Kanata Ontario from New York State to meet Elder William Commanda. A young man with Asperger syndrome (a mild autism spectrum disorder), he came to to seek the Indigenous Elder's advice to deal with the challenges of "being different". He loved Native American movies and documentaries and wondered whether linkages with Indigenous Elders and film making might help him deal with his frustrations in the regular school system.

Grandfather Commanda was very impressed by the young man (who thereafter sent many Indigenous documentaries to add to his library). Adrian and Kristina gifted the Elder with a Medicine Wheel motif Pendleton blanket, and Adrian departed to develop his talents as an independent documentary and movie maker! A year later, August 2011, Grandfather departed with the blanket.

DIFFABILITY *Adrian uses a new word that we like to discuss our differing gifts and capabilities :Diffability. The topic of disability representation is close to his heart, since he is himself a part of the autism community. His life experience brings a unique perspective to his films that resonates with many people facing similar challenges. With his cyber presence, we believe that he has drawn much contemporary attention to autism.*



Circle of All Nations
Global Eco Peace
Community Founded
by Mishomis William
Commanda



**Asinabka Sacred
Chaudiere Site**
Legacy Vision for
Ancient and Historical
Gathering Place



William Commanda
Carrier Sacred
Wampum Heritage,
Honorary and
Researched PhD,
Officer of the Order of
Canada

From childhood, his mother had encouraged him to watch many *reel* movies in his youth, and, inspired by his love of film, Adrian began to take classes at The Animation Workshop at Animatus Studio in Rochester when he was 12 years old: "This study opened a door for him. He found a way to express himself using the vocabulary and the medium of film," wrote journalist Jim Memmott in an article for the Rochester Democrat & Chronicle (Oct 18, 2008). In 2008, Adrian received his certificate in Radio & Television Broadcasting from Monroe #1 BOCES EMCC. He continues to study filmmaking with Animatus Studio.

In August 2011, we hosted a very special farewell *Circle of All Nations* gathering, which commenced with Grandfather's wake and funeral and continued with his full three day gathering program, which included evening documentaries at our outdoor theatre behind his house. We were pleased to premier Adrian's documentary, *We Can Shine - From Institutions to Independence*, which traced a 50 year US history of the institutionalization of people with physical challenges and the brave fight for freedom: *it brings us back to the treatment of the developmentally disabled in institutions, most notably, Willowbrook State School in Staten Island. The agonizing story is told by survivors who managed to succeed in life in spite of their past abuses in institutions.*

Adrian's work has gained national and international recognition, and both he and his films have won many awards. *Inner Healing - Journey with Native Trees of Knowledge* was named Best Documentary at the Los Angeles Red Nation Film Festival and the very popular film *Bury My Heart with Tonawanda* won the Red Nation Courage Award. On July 29, 2015, Adrian's facebook post read "I have just been notified that I have been awarded the Self-Advocate of the Year award by NYSARC. I was nominated by the ARC of Monroe where I belong to the Self Advocacy Alliance. I will receive the award at their annual banquet this October. Just to let everyone know, the ARC of Monroe decided to nominate me on their own so this came as a pleasant surprise!": He had won the prestigious 2015 NYSARC Self-Advocate of the Year Award and was honoured to be the recipient of the ARC National Executives 2016 NCE Lifetime Achievement Award in filmmaking. In 2016, he was named "Filmmaker of the Year" at the Buffalo Dreams Fantastic Film Festival and his film *Diffability Hollywood* won as Best Documentary Feature at the same festival.

Inner Healing - Journey with Native Trees of Knowledge

During the 2011 *Circle of All Nations* Gathering, Adrian was also working on his documentary. *Inner Healing-Journey with Native Trees of Knowledge* is about Adrian's his own search for understanding, healing and acceptance of the challenges he faces. With the information given to him by different healers and his own therapist, he discovers things that help him through his struggles. One section focuses on the wisdom of Grandfather Commanda. We were intrigued to realize we know several of the Elders interviewed: Mike Bastine, Ted Silverhand, Ken Cohen, and Wallace "Mad Bear" Anderson, to name a few (the latter was at Grandfather Commanda's 1969 Gathering!) It was most interesting to note the mainstream psychiatrist's reflections on the healing strategies of the Indigenous Elders. This excerpt from a 2018 letter affirms the importance of Adrian's documentary to the human healing journey: *Dear Adrian, I just had the joy of watching your film about your journey for healing. Thank you for the excellent job you did with the film. I am an energy medicine practitioner/teacher that also had much experience with special ed and I have been in practice for ten years. I have worked with many clients that have had many different issues. The Indians are right, it is about finding balance. ... I thank you from the bottom of my heart for this film that you made and I hope you continue to do more. Jeanne. FIND IT ON AMAZON!*

CIRCLE OF ALL NATIONS NOTES THE TREMENDOUS ATTENTION TO AUTISM OVER THE PAST DECADE'

* In 2015, we presented a special video and power point workshop on Adrian's Inner Healing Documentary at the *Circle of All Nations* Equinox/Peace event in Ottawa Canada.

* In 2019, *Circle of All Nations* referenced the documentary at the 22nd Biennial Conference of the National Association of Child and Youth Care workers and 4th CYC-Net World Conference.

* Learn more about his work at <https://espocinema.wordpress.com/>

* Find him on Facebook - Adrian Esposito Nokeima

* Adrian is available as a speaker. Please contact him for more information: espocinema@rochester.rr.com



We are super proud of our young *Circle of All Nations* Colleague, as is his special mother!