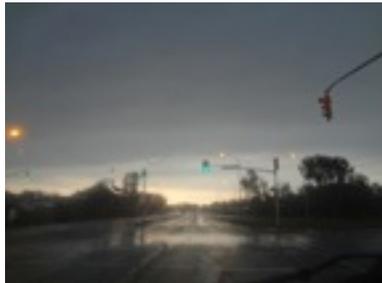




A CIRCLE OF ALL NATIONS A CULTURE OF PEACE

2013 Circle of All Nations Paddle for Peace Report

Preamble: Weather made itself present dramatically and, yes, continuously for the 2013 Equinox Paddle for Peace – in a very wet, wet day.



Many had anticipated this, but when I went out at seven in the morning, there was

light in the sky – so, I thought, wait and see! Now much like Grandfather with his Gatherings, I had dispatched messages to Grandmother Moon, the weaver of the tides and the manager of the waters, to do the best she could for us – and I left it at that: I too, like Larry and others, knew how much our Earth needed Water. Well, she did not let us down – it rained heavily as I drove to Victoria Island – blessings, I thought, and a downpour

of release now, and then, the sunshine the dawn promised after? Well, no, it rained all day! Ever ready to reframe, I realized now, Oh, the *Tears of the Ancestors*.

I remembered this phrase from the opening of the Okima Ochi Healing Lodge for Federally Sentenced Women in Saskatchewan in the early eighties. I had been on the Task Force that had so strongly reflected the pain, voice, strength and creativity of Aboriginal Women - which included the late writer and teacher Patricia Monture; and was the zone where the concept of healing first got introduced into the domain of a western ideology of crime and punishment-; and thus, I got to attend the opening, flying in on an RCMP plane with the former Solicitor General, Herb Gray (who to his great credit, two decades ago, was looking to translate portions of his official speech into Cree, and honour Indigenous languages). Well, the celebration was an outdoors event, and rain presented – *The Tears of the Ancestors*, an elder said, and she were grateful for this presence – quite unlike the regular cursing of the weather we get on our news broadcasts. (Well, if all the Ancestors decided to join us this September 21, they were indeed reminding me of the need for tears – you may have heard of the Federal Correctional Investigator’s dismayed report



on the plight of Aboriginal women in federal corrections these past few weeks.) Of course there are many other Indigenous issues we need tears for – but! This is a report about the United Nations International Day of Peace and the *Circle Paddle for Peace*, and the power and inspiration of Indigenous Peoples as ignited by GWC!!!

Still, I am telling you about the presence of nature at this event – and this actually helps illustrate and elucidate the context of our activity – consistent with the teachings of Grandfather Commanda, we believe the path to peace is through the world of nature, which supports us both individually and collectively, and we believe only she can teach us about deep peace. This energy can then help us animate efforts for global peace. So, we like to support the United Nations International Day of Peace with a symbolic paddle on the *Kichissippi* river of Grandfather’s people, the Algonquins of the Ottawa River Watershed. Weaving together the diverse group of people who constitute Grandfather Commanda’s ever expanding *Circle of All Nations* is not always simple – I believe the rain contributed tremendously to the intimacy and relationship building amongst the hundred odd people who participated in the day’s event; then there was the power of the ancient sacred meeting place - what role did it play in the peace day event? Further, there was the Sacred Fire lit by Elder **Peter Decontie**, on this fourteenth

fall gathering at Victoria Island, the Pipe and Water ceremonies, the drumming, prayers and good will amongst the people. Of course the crowd was as diverse as you could imagine for any GWC event – Algonquins, including Dewaches, Josee Whiteduck, and Claudette Commanda, Bob Poirier, Roy Barnes, Elders Grace Sesma and Ken Cohen from the States, students in from Trent University, Peterborough (hailing from Iqualuit to Afganistan!), folk from Quebec, Ontario, South America, Africa, India, Scotland – even our old friend Pamela Schreiner from BC - and others – Pauline Durgè from Unesco and Biju George from the India Association of Canada; Julie Catalyst and Bob and Ev Abel, with the South March Highland cause - however did he manage to glue us together! – if you really looked at all our places of origin, our linguistic, social and political diversity, our ages, our attitudes, you would shake your head! But then, this message, recently sent to me from a new Canadian immigrant



regarding Grandfather's annual *Circle of All Nations* gathering, would help you understand :

- Hello dear friends, I just realise that All nation gathering is not happening this year. My family enjoyed coming to join you to celebrate the Unity of the humanity. The key words for us to come to this celebration was "All nations". As an immigrant from Lithuania, East Europe, I am still looking for my identity. I left my culture and ancestors back there in Europe. My spirit is looking for a place to feel at home. Where better if not in ALL NATIONS celebration I could do that. It does not matter so much where we come from, but it matters that we can unite through the beat of the drums, singing and dancing together, feel the pulse of Mother Earth. Hope with God's will we can celebrate together next year. Rasa Tamkeviciene, Canadien-Lithuanian".

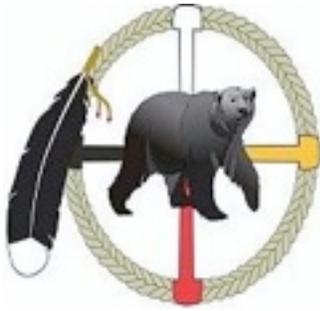
So, the Circle of All Nations "Paddle for Peace" was honoured to launch the seventh annual Ottawa Peace Festival, coordinated by **Bill Bhaneja and Peter Stockdale**, a two week event animating peace in Ottawa. After the ceremonial moments, which, delayed by the rain and other matters, left our paddlers unacknowledged at 11 am (fortunately they are peaceful folk, and were ready to forgive us!), people stood in the rain to hear a range of speakers talk about the importance of the day for them. It was very special indeed to have Grandfather's daughter **Evelyn** and his son-in-law **Tommy Dewache** join us – at Asinabka/Victoria

Island, and Evelyn's impassioned speech about her family history, her father's work, and her appreciation of the support of his



friends was heart warming; Chief **Gilbert Whiteduck** offered an official welcome to Algonquin Territory and affirmed support for the GWC vision for the Indigenous Centre at Victoria Island; **Larry McDermott** brought greetings from Chief Doreen Davis from Shabot Obaadjiwan and talked about environmental challenges and human rights commission work - as you may know, Grandfather Commanda ignited the prayer for relationship with Mother Earth at the Pre-Rio Earth Summit in France in 1991 and Larry McDermott and Claudette Commanda were there with him; Larry and Evelyn were in Rio for that first global conference on the Earth.





SHABOT

OBAADJIWAN FIRST NATION

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Circle of All Nations
C/O Romola Trebilcock

September 20, 2013

Dear Romola,

First let me send you my most sincere regrets that I cannot attend the Paddle for Peace tomorrow. We recognize the global importance of this legacy of our dearly departed Elder William Commanda.

We honour his vision of peace. His vision was fully inclusive of all of humanity and included a peace with all of Kigi Manitou's creation. He reminded us through the sacred wampum belts that as Algonquin people we must take a lead role in animating respectful relationships with all the life upon Mother Earth.

Let me express my heartfelt thanks to you Romola and all the volunteers at Circle of All Nations who take this day to remind all who share this land of our responsibility to walk our life's journey in peace.

Our Shabot Obaadjiwan First Nation Ambassador, Larry McDermott will once again officially represent us at this important event.

Sincerely,

Chief Doreen Davis



Bill Bhaneja then offered the official welcome to the two weeks Ottawa Peace Festival event. Our final formal greeting came from **Natalie Zuniga** from the City of Ottawa – in addition to the Mayor Jim Watson's Peace Day Proclamation, Natalie reflected on Grandfather Commanda's meeting with her team years ago (was it 2008?) which contributed directly to the City's realization and recognition of the Algonquin people on



whose land the capital city sits, (by the way, GWC planted a Tree for Peace at City Hall in 2004!) and led to many systemic changes in the city's policy and program work, and to the recent historical meeting of Mayor Watson with Chiefs Gilbert Whiteduck and Kirby Whiteduck, from the two Algonquin First Nations communities of Kitigan Zibi and Pikwakanagan: well yes, now Ottawa acknowledges *Quebec and Ontario Algonquin* as the glue in the national capital, much as was foreshadowed when Elder Commanda was presented with the Key to the City of Ottawa by then Mayor Bob Chiarelli in 2005!

Organized in the sequence of the *Circle of All Nations* organic version of the Medicine Wheel (as compared to a hierarchical agenda) we moved in a circular fashion from the official greetings/tone setting to the people/racial harmony/peace-building elements, with a most special greeting from Indigenous Architect **Douglas Cardinal**, who has spent decades developing and strengthening conceptual designs for the Asinabka Indigenous Healing and Peace Building Centre at Victoria Island, consistent with the vision of Grandfather Commanda; his expression of continued commitment to the dream was followed by an announcement of support from new supporters – a group of senior citizens represented by **Colleen Henderson**, who spent a year studying

Aboriginal issues and then presented a report to the federal government which highlights support for the **Vision for the Indigenous Centre!** Indeed, more evidence that Grandfather's vision is still truly compelling to a truly diverse group of players.

Then, we had a moment to acknowledge our paddlers – loyal *Circle of All Nations* friend since his participation in our 2006 Waterlife Workshop, **Phil Weir**, joined us with his seventy year old cousin from Toronto, newly exposed to Aboriginal peoples – Phil has spent much energy helping us advance the vision for Asinabka. Our outdoors education paddler has just published his first book about his canoe journey, *Paddling the Mountain* (congrats Phil!) – it was a special moment when Elder Peter Decontie smudged his canoe (and Max's) and his new book! And, so yes, we were pleased to have the ever retiring canoeist, writer and environmentalist **Max Finkelstein** say a few words about the Capital to Capital Canoe trip he had organized with others passionate about river/environmental stewardship the year before – wherein the Grandfather Commanda's inspiration for the motif of *Rivers are the Veins of Mother Earth* connection was honoured – Evelyn and Tommy Dewache had participated in the launch of this canoe journey from Ottawa to Washington – and it was special to see Tommy connect with Max this one year later! (Tommy is a mapper and



knows his land – and he was most interested in the route of the canoeists – reminding us that all of the east coast of North America was the traditional territory of his ancestors.) You will be interested to know that Max, our old canoe friend Kirk Wipper (founder of the Canadian Canoe Museum of Peterborough), former Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau and our own Grandfather Commanda have something in common – they are all recipients of the *Bill Mason River Conservation Award*!

Then our circle agenda finished with the readings of peace proclamations from cities in Quebec – by **Nicole, Theresa and Daniel**, and Bill Bhaneja’s invitation to other Ottawa Peace Fest Events.

Other Thoughts

I see it is dangerous to engage in this celebration of key *Circle of All Nations* friends by agenda – there were so many equally valuable partners, old and new, there with us this special day: Our ever, ever loyal *Circle of All Nations* friends, the **Medina family**, though preoccupied with the Carleton University Pow Wow, also came and set up the sound system, and also tents, pro bono – Sandra and Tikal did all the work in the rain! but Tito came to join us and remind us of global issues and issues in Guatemala, and to sing so powerfully – we are ever grateful to

this wonderful family, who, amongst immigrants in Ottawa, are the notable ones who have, over the decade, made consistent outreach to *CAN* and Indigenous Peoples in Ottawa; **Dan Gagne** was involved at Victoria Island more than fifteen years ago – and he put in Grandfather’s electric *stairway to !!* in Kanata, and massaged his aching bones in his last months – and he continues to look for ways to advance the Asinabka vision; **Luc Ann Salem** created a Canada Goose Canoe, to remind us about the water plants the iconic symbol of our country feeds on – if all is polluted down under, what nourishes them? **Liz McLean**, who GWC knew from her birth, and her nephew, **John III**, were there with maple syrup and mountain ash and cedar – Liz’s older brother, John I and our GWC sealed a blood brotherhood relationship over seven decades ago – GWC was obviously into this peace-building thing for a long, long time! Drummer **Jesse Matthews**, who initiated the minute of silence at the International Drum Fest on the anniversary of GWC’s death, guitarist **Balam**, new helpers and supporters, **Marion Mulvena** and **Jonah Mitchell**, and, yes, **Rachelle Prudhomme**, who provided me with a key to her toilet for emergencies (yes, Victoria Island is one NCC managed site that does not have a toilet or porta-potty, despite many formal requests and interventions – but since this is a peace note, we shall not discuss this further); **Madelaine**



Venzina, who has supported GWC events for years, including in the cook shack in KZA; and **Roland Charbonneau**, former mayor of St. Columban, canoeist, environmentalist and participant in CAN gatherings; **Natalie Armitage**, who reminded us once that there are sometimes Caucasian parents who have Indigenous children – her children fall in the line of GWC’s father-in-law! and there was **Joan Fulthrop Jubb** – she was part of the historic Clayquot Sound *save the trees* environmental effort that Bruce Braun did his geography thesis on – and a Raging Granny! – a senior citizen whose passionate efforts GWC was impressed with years ago - well, the people there presented us with a range of energies to ignite peace-building and environmental stewardship well beyond difference; **Koozma Tarasoff**, photographer was with us again - he is busy writing his festival feature photo report on the overall peace event that he will soon circulate; we had **Serena d’Agostina** taking photographs for us – she had visited GWC years ago and had talked about her interested in endangered languages – years later when she participated in his August Gathering, she was startled to find GWC remembered her as the language lady – our friend did not miss a beat and did not forget people – *Ginawaydaganuc* was indeed he lifespring.

So, did I forget you? I am sorry – getting old! But *he* would not have - so here is the

invitation for you to add your words to this report – it will be greatly appreciated by me and others! We are expecting one from the students from Peterborough! And please excuse me, I am in too many of the photos - but apparently that’s what happens sometimes when you are not in charge of the camera - and, sadly, my editing skills are not good!

So, please send your words to this report and make peace come live!! : circleofallnations@sympatico.ca

A Post Script - This year, I had the opportunity to attend a few of the other Peace Fest activities –it was great to see Douglas Cardinal honoured at the *Friends for Peace* event – GWC received the first Peace award from this group and, as Ian Prattis reminded us, in the rain!; the *National Capital Peace Council’s* celebration of the work of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King (not only did GWC receive this group’s Ambassador for Peace and MLK Dreamkeeper award, but GWC actually did a Pipe Ceremony for healing at the motel where Dr. King died – furthermore, did you know that MLK reps and reps from the Rosa Parks Foundation were at our Millennium Peace Gathering at Nepean Point!); the *Gandhi Celebration and Lecture at Carleton University* (organized by Noel Salmond, another long time supporter of the GWC Asinabka vision); and finally, at the conference of the *NCPC* where Douglas



Cardinal again affirmed his commitment to advancing the vision for Asinabka – now, indeed, he has a vested interest in this project – he has only been dreaming it since his discussions with Jean Pigott in the 1970s, when the NCC acknowledged it as a site of supreme Indigenous relevance. Our most inspirational and unique Indigenous Architect turns 80 next year - so we had better get him working immediately!

As I noted in our invitation, Grandfather Commanda initiated a prayer for peace formally in the Capital City in 2000, the UN Decade for a Culture of Peace, and his constant efforts to animate peace were vibrant this year in ongoing efforts at the United Nations, New York, and in our Capital City! It is heartening that this is acknowledged in Ottawa Peace Festival co-chair Bill Bhaneja's note - *The Algonquin leader Grandfather William Commanda's vision of a culture of peace and care for Mother Earth reigned during the Festival.*



So, likely now you know who the spirit behind the Peace Tower is - The NCC itself says so in its Sound and Light Show - and GWC continues to offer the welcome of peace, friendship and sharing in the heart of the land of his ancestors!!

PS - I am posting the invitation to the event so you have a full understanding of the context of this activity! Cheers!

INVITATION TO THE 2013 Paddle for Peace Celebration at Victoria Island

Join us for the Fourteenth Grandfather William Commanda Annual Peace Event in Ottawa on Saturday, September 21, 2013 to Acknowledge Autumn Equinox
Celebrate the 7th Annual Ottawa's Peace Festival
Honour the United Nations International Day of Peace
Animate the quintessential Canadian Spirit of Canoe
Support the NCR Canada Global March for Peace and Unity
Build bridges, promote peace and partnerships, and celebrate Sustainable Relationships!
Supporters of Grandfather Commanda, The Circle of All Nations, The Wolf Project and Plenty Canada invite you to the annual Paddle for Peace event to ignite a flame for the Canoe as the synergetic symbol for Peace
Join Grandfather William Commanda's friends and celebrate his legacy, and the spirit of Canoe, with notable canoeists, peace and environmental activists who will share their perspectives on how canoes, water and nature combine to animate deep peace.
Then participate in a pot luck community picnic, art and birch bark canoe demonstrations, drumming, music and information sharing!

EARLY MORNING ACTIVITIES

9.00 – 11.00

Opening Prayers and Ceremony

Pot Luck Breakfast

Discussions on Land, Water, Eel and Peace Themes

PADDLE FOR PEACE 2013 EVENT

11.00 Canoes and Walkers arrive at Victoria Island

Opening Prayer, Drumming, Prayer for Water

Prayer for Grandfather William Commanda

Welcoming Remarks and Official Greetings

Remarks from Special Guests

12.00 Pot Luck Community Picnic

1.00 Drumming, Music, Informal Gathering and Sharing

Birch bark canoe making demonstrations and discussions

Information sharing tables – themes: Asinabka Indigenous Centre, water, land, creativity, river, art, peace and nature and Grandfather's Circle of All Nations

books, dvds and legacy

3.00 Closing

Backgrounder: Paddle for Peace Celebration at Asinabka:Victoria Island

This project is inspired by the work of Grandfather William Commanda, the late Algonquin Elder of the Ottawa River Watershed. Consistent with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, sharing local perspectives cross-culturally on the path to reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples and all others is a key step to building a stronger centre of peace in the City of Ottawa and the National Capital Region. Inspired by Grandfather Commanda's outreach and leadership in the capital city since 2000, the UN Year for a Culture of Peace, the Circle of All Nations is honoured to host this special event.

For countless years, the canoe has been the central symbol to express the magic of the journey of life and discovery across the vast continent of North America. It is the zone where diverse cultures and peoples met and interconnected with the intimate face of Nature. It conveys thoughts about balance, cooperation, harmony and fun, consistent with the joy, flow and challenges of nature. The canoe has captured the imagination of the country so profoundly that it was selected as the winner in the CBC contest to uncover the Canadian Seven Wonders in 2008. This ancient watercraft of the Indigenous Peoples continues to inspire modern sport enthusiasts, nature lovers, artists and social activists to challenge themselves to build bridges and friendship, and over the past twenty years native communities and police have developed cross cultural trips to promote camaraderie, peace, racial harmony and relationship building, under such captivating titles as Fast Waters, Fast Friends, Flotilla for Friendship, and Pulling Together, linking Elders and youth, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Peoples, professionals and community voices.

Grandfather Commanda's passions included birch bark canoe building, peace building and environmental stewardship. He dedicated the last forty years of his life to creating a Circle of All Nations, Culture of Peace. A canoe builder of international renown, over seventy-five of his canoes carried his energy around the world, including to Queen Margrethe of Denmark, from whose land the first newcomers arrived on Turtle Island. Entirely unsupported by any organization, he reached the hearts of diverse communities, nationally and internationally, with his love, wisdom and prayer for peace, and his lifetime of efforts was acknowledged by his Master Canoe Builder and Bill Mason River Conservation recognition, receipt of the Key to the City of Ottawa, appointment as Officer of the Order of Canada, Lifetime Achievement with the 2010

National Aboriginal Achievement Awards, receipt of the Wolf, Harmony, Bernard Assiniwi and Martin Luther King Dream Keeper Awards and two Honorary Doctorate Degrees.

In 2000, Grandfather Commanda organized the Millennium Circle of All Nations Peace Gathering at Nepean Point, to acknowledge the United Nations Decade for a Culture of Peace, and later that year participated in the UN Peace Conference in New York; in 2005, Cercle de Paix and the Mayor of Montreal presented him with the pacifist of the year award in celebration of the first September 21 United Nations International Day of Peace, and over the recent years, he inspired and supported citizens of Ottawa in peace day celebrations. Associated Peace Day activities include the Global Walk for Peace, National Capital Region, Canada; Peace Walks in Montreal and Victoriaville, Quebec also honour Grandfather's legacy!

In May 2000, the former Governor General, The Right Honourable Adrienne Clarkson, participated in a special circle discussion on peace-building at the Millennium Circle of All Nations Peace Gathering; in 2004, Elder Commanda and then Excellency, John Ralston Saul participated in the Boreal Rendezvous canoe launch from Victoria Island. Friends of Elder Commanda see the proposed Paddle for Peace event as a further step towards the reconciliation of Aboriginal Peoples and Canadians; the advancement of the vision for Indigenous peace-building at Asinabka, on Victoria Island, on the Ottawa River; the promotion of Sustainable Relationships with all; and the celebration of A Circle of All Nation, A Culture of Peace: Join us to celebrate the Spirit of the Canoe and Peace Building, and launch the CANOE as the quintessentially Canadian symbol for PEACE at the spot so precious to Grandfather –

The SOURCE!

GINAWAYDAGANUC: WE ARE ALL RELATED!