

July 2011 - Letter from Romola...

Thanks for the many messages and prayers concerning Grandfather's health.

The past two months have been a really difficult experience - and GWC is now catching up to his age. I think we can thank the health care system for that. You have heard of the Romanov Report - just wait till you see the Romola Report!

In this regard, I include an excerpt from our note to the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages (needless to say, this is not all I learned over the past weeks):

Thank you for your concern for Elder Commanda's health. The past weeks of worsening kidney disease, dialysis and hospitalization have indeed been a very difficult and painful experience, and, ironically, the predominant feature in the end has been language. Yes, the Algonquin language. Elder Commanda reverted to almost exclusive use of his mother tongue during this pivotal period. At times when he seemed furthest away from us and closest to the other side, the language took on an unfamiliar rhythm, sound and intensity - it was like the ancient voice of the land was resounding. At times when the pain was the greatest (and he was given no pain killers), he prayed and shouted constantly and fervently in his everyday Algonquin, for hours at a stretch, dry tongued and hoarse - it took folk a long while to realize the acuteness of his pain; he prayed in his language to cope with the pain - language was the pain killer.

And what did he say? - it was overwhelming the numbers of times he said Megwetch, Megwetch - Thank you, Thank you. I thought, My God, in his position, I would have

been saying, Please, Please. He was saying, Thank you, Thank you. What a glimpse into the character of the man and the demands of his language and philosophy.

This insight took me well beyond simple matters like, how can Native people access adequate medical attention, if they cannot be understood - and of course we all know access to health care was a fundamental commitment of the Royal Proclamation and the earliest treaties.

This was about the entrenchment of the spirit and ideology of the language on the land and its peoples - all its peoples - within the psyche of this country. Elder Commanda made this quite clear when we "bust him out" of hospital, and took him to join his friends at the June 21 Summer Solstice National Aboriginal Day Pipe Ceremony at Victoria Island, site of the much anticipated Indigenous Centre, en route to his home in Kitigan Zibi - he sat in his car and held court for 90 minutes, as the familiar faces greeted him, one after the other - and this time, he spoke Algonquin to them all. He was in fact saying, if we truly want to communicate with and understand him and his messages (and many do!), we have to embrace the first language of the land and of its First Peoples. This was a shift from his own personal Trilingual Policy and his traditional style of translating himself from Algonquin to English and French to ensure that he communicates with all.

It was also a statement about the fallacy of building nationhood in this country without the expression, vibrance, resonance and guiding precepts of the first language of the land, which, as Elder Commanda has reminded us countless times, was taken by the 84 nations of Algonquian descent throughout Turtle Island from Time

Immemorial.

It has been a humbling realization for me, who, as much as I have supported his work these past thirteen years, has not learned his language, and even now, as we cope with his illness at home, I see the inadequacy of my service to him as he pointedly expresses his needs in Algonquin - only when he decides to take pity on me does the cheeky man translate! - but there are moments when he is too sick for that.

Anyway, we are most grateful to all the folk from within and without the system who helped Grandfather through this challenge. In this regard, I must especially acknowledge the ceaseless advice, support and supplies from Susan Hagar and the special support from Edmond Decontie.

Now, as he did with his cancer in 1961, Grandfather is counting on his unique blend of good medicine to help him into the future - yes, endless work, Indian Medicine, traditional food, homeopathic cures, prayers, ceremonies, drum songs, dance, and love and support from good friends around the world, many, we are discovering being folk who do not even know him personally (e.g. check out - Earth Heal Blog: <http://earthheal.blogspot.com/>).

YES, THE 2011 CIRCLE OF ALL NATIONS GATHERING!

CLICK HERE FOR MORE DETAILS

Grandfather invites you to his Annual Spiritual Gathering - August 5, 6 and 7 - at his home in Kitigan Zibi, Maniwaki, Quebec - J9E 3B1.

This year our focus is on PRECIOUS LAND AND SPECIAL POWER PLACES; DEVELOPING THE CAN UMBRELLA (CAN U??!!) ; and there will also be a focussed workshop to develop a volunteer CAN Task Force for the VISION FOR THE INDIGENOUS CENTRE ON VICTORIA ISLAND AT THE SACRED CHAUDIÈRE SITE.

Now you see our notice and invitation are going out late - our preparations are also starting late; we hope you will help animate the Gathering by volunteering your skills, labour and support to make it effortless for all our regular helpers, especially on the Thursday - you will then be able to understand first hand how Grandfather magics a first rate international gathering of leading edge ideas and creativity; unique community peace-building, intercultural understanding and racial harmony; and transformative personal development, under the shelter and wisdom of the Indigenous Umbrella!

He gets us to share our unique individual gifts to create the bio-diverse eco experience - and as we engage, so we evolve! At the gathering each year, we have a few streakers - who skim through the experience; a few strollers who look and see; a few passengers, who come for the ride; but the ANIMATORS are the ones who really know what the magic is about! Thousands across the world have been inspired already! Come be a part of GWC's CAN! - As somebody said, Yes, you CAN!

A SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT!! - this year, l'Universite du Québec is presenting Elder William Commanda with his latest honour - le titre de docteur honoris causa (D.h.c.)!!!

Again, thanks for your interest, respect, friendship, love and support over the

years.

Best wishes for the summer.

And, please do your bit to help with the manifestation of Grandfather

Commanda's Vision for the Indigenous Centre in the heart of the country!