



ISAIAS – “They gave me this name” – William Commanda, July 30, 2011.
©Romola V. Thumbadoo, *Circle of All Nations*

On August 3, 2020, the 9th anniversary since the passing of Elder William Commanda, I heard for the third time a name that sounded vaguely familiar on the radio, and finally I paid attention – radio announcers were warning of the arrival of Tropical Storm Isaias. As I listened to the unusual name, I was transported back in time to a few days before Grandfather died – why? because I had heard that name before. I went racing back to my old journals.

On July 30, 2011, (5.44 is the precise time of my journal entry), I had noted that Grandfather had awakened in the early morning and was praying; when he finished, he told me “They gave me a name – Asayas, something like that”; he went back to sleep; when he awakened later, he repeated this message. We researched the name and it appeared Hebrew. On August 15, 2011, I consulted with a friend about it Jasmine: “Does the word Asayas - or something like that ring any bells for you?” In a December 6 2011 conversation we again touched on that name Asayas. We both could only come up with the fact that it appeared to be a surname common in the Philippines, Indian, and Israel, here being a boy’s name meaning “created by God” in Hebrew. In a vague way, I thought, if there is reincarnation, perhaps a child called Asayas will be born in the future, and maybe in that trouble place in the Middle East.

On August 3rd, 2020, I realized that ISAIAS was actually the proper spelling of the name that “they” had given William Commanda. As I researched *Isaias* anew, I noted it was associated with a prophet, prophecy and salvation. I was not sure what to do with this wake-up message on August 3, 2020. Since then, environmental and racial tensions only continue to skyrocket. I have just decided to share this reflection with you today at our Equinox event.

As you know William Commanda was Carrier of the Seven Fires Prophecy, and many believe/d him to be the Carrier of the Prophecy at the time of the unfolding of its seventh message – the time for critical choice making about the ongoing destruction of Mother Earth and all her creation, including human; for easily fifty years, these had been the core elements of his public outreach campaign (respect for Mother Earth and peace amongst people), locally (nonstop till his death), nationally (e.g. at the 1987 Aboriginal Constitutional Conference) and globally (e.g. at the Pre-Rio Earth Conference deliberations in France in 1991). Just about everybody who knew him knows just how passionately and hard he worked to deliver the Wampum messages of his ancestors, and in particular the warnings of the Seven Fires Prophecy.

On September 21, 2019, the day of our last Circle of All Nations Fall Equinox event, and our last physical gathering, the 8th Fire tornado touched down on both sides of his ancestral river, the

Kichissippi, the Ottawa, (originally their highway, but since historical colonial times to the present, the mechanism to divide his Algonquin peoples).

The world has shifted irrevocably since then.

Many folk will recall that on his last June 21, 2011 visit to Victoria Island, William Commanda spoke only Algonquin, and as if only to the land. By this time in his life, he despaired that people had really understood his warnings and his message of hope in his Asinabka Vision for the Sacred Chaudiere Site. He said to me that it would only be when Nature herself intervened that change would come.

There are too many important global events to recall here, including ones where the Indigenous voice has been rising in urgency (Hawaii, Standing Rock, Wet'suwetn, Australia, South America, Chaco Canyon and at Chaudiere, in 2014, event the ancient ones could be heard as archaeological artifacts 8000 years old affirmed the critical importance of the area as gathering place of the Paleolithic Peoples). In 2017, there was the unprecedented flooding of the Ottawa River, then the shutting down of the Chaudiere Bridge, the unbearably painful Ottawa winter of 2019, the 2019 flooding along the river including at Oka, and then the 2019 fall equinox tornadoes (accompanied by dramatic political shifts, especially in the hydro regime). Since then, Indigenous Peoples have been extricated from Victoria Island and no fires such as William Commanda ignited from the eighties burn there anymore – there is no Indigenous honouring of the ancient sacred site anymore; there are no “Paddle of Peace” events.

Over the past year, there has been dramatic escalation in climate change, extreme weather, the extinction march of countless species from the bottom of the oceans to the top of the chain of life, and at this moment, fires burn in the west and cloud skies in the east, and in the middle, birds fall dead by the thousands. The global Coronavirus pandemic that marks human as part of this trajectory of shift; in this age of global communications, the crisis escalates at unfathomable levels, and leadership is ill equipped to cope, despite many valiant efforts – the world now anticipating a Covid second wave.

Indigenous folk might say that Mother Earth is now deeply engaged in a process of cleansing, such as William Commanda talked about so passionately to us with his last breath.

Isaias is the critically important marker of our times, times of prophecy indeed. We have such limited capacity to think through these complexities even as the world thinks together - we surely need some other orientation into knowledge and wisdom beyond what dominant articulation presents us with.

I remember with even greater clarity how William Commanda always identified himself as child of Mother Earth. We all are, and we are part of her evolution. Dramatic culture shift is critical. *Ginawaydaganuc*.

Romola@circleofallnations.ca; www.circleofallnations.ca