

*A Circle of All Nations  
A Culture of Peace*



**A CIRCLE OF ALL NATIONS  
A CULTURE OF PEACE**

# CIRCLE OF ALL NATIONS

CAN TEACH!

Introduction PPP

*Training*

*Education*

*Advocacy*

*Communications*

*Healing*





THE LEGACY OF ALGONQUIN ELDER  
L'HÉRITAGE DE L'AÎNÉ ALGONQUIN

*Dr. William Commanda, OC*

11.11.1913 - 03.08.2011

*"We must come together  
with one heart, one mind, one love,  
and one determination to create  
A Circle of All Nations  
A Culture of Peace."*

*"Nous devons nous unir avec un seul  
cœur, une seule âme et une volonté  
pour créer un cercle de toutes les  
nations et une culture de paix."*



A CIRCLE OF ALL NATIONS  
A CULTURE OF PEACE

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

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

# William Commanda's Background

- His people were the Mamiwinini- the Nomads
- 84 Algonquin Nations across North America, from east to west
- The *birch bark canoe* is the symbol of this movement through the waters and land



# *Mamiwinini* - Nomad

- This heritage signifies several things to Elder Commanda
- A sacred connection with the land
- A special responsibility as caretaker of Mother Earth

# Sacred Wampum Belts

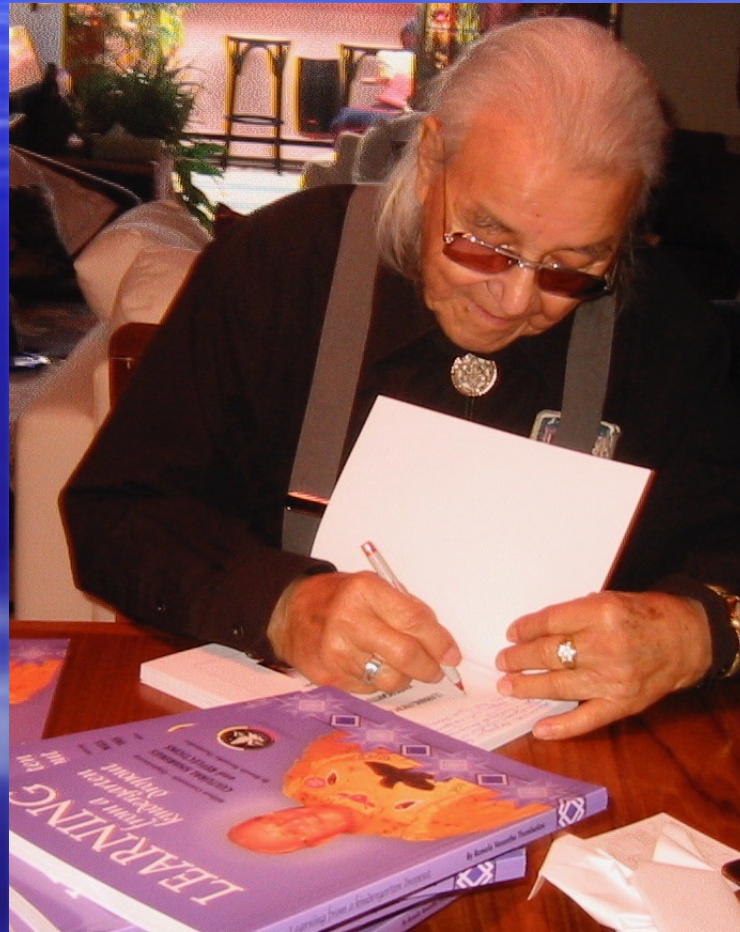
- 1971, became Keeper of the three sacred record keeping Wampum Belts of spiritual and historic importance
- In 1987, began to share the messages of the belts in public discussions on Aboriginal issues



# A Spiritual Awakening

- 1961 – a spiritual awakening following a near terminal illness – cancer
- Moved from self destructive hatred to love and respect
- Began to work to bring peoples of diverse racial backgrounds together

# From A Kindergarten Dropout



# To Hon and Researched PhD





# Priority One – Mother Earth

## Only After

Only after the last tree has been cut down,

Only after the last river has been poisoned,

Only after the last fish has been caught,

Only then will you find that money cannot be eaten.



# Priority Two: Respectful, Responsible Relationships

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*The Wolf Project*  
dignifying each other as one race:  
"A Human Race"

# Global Citizen, Global Eco Community





# ***A Circle of All Nations***

- The vision and work of Elder Commanda over the past fifty years
- Not an organization or a network with any formal infrastructure; rather, *A Global Eco-Community*

# Diversity and Unity

- A vision for harmony based on values of forgiveness and love
- Focused on honouring and developing one's individual strengths and gifts
- And contributing to the strengths of the community



# Messages of the Wampum Belts

Seven Fires Prophecy Belt

*choice*

1700s Peace Belt

*sharing*

Jay Treaty Border Crossing

Belt

*borderlessness*

# Welcome From Indigenous in the Centre





# President Mandela: Corona Borealis and Australis Wolf Awards; Racial Harmony



# His Holiness Dalai Lama: Spiritual Leadership, Peace, Meditation





# Donald Marshall Junior : Justice, Indigenous Rights, Wolf, Youth Camp





# *A Circle of All Nations ~ A Culture of Peace*

*Vision And Plan For The Healing Of Mother Earth And The Strengthening  
Of The Circle Of All Nations And Races*



**Elder William Commanda's Vision - Level One**

# A Circle of All Nations ~ A Culture of Peace

Vision And Plan For The Healing Of Mother Earth And The Strengthening  
Of The Circle Of All Nations And Races



Elder William Commanda's Vision - Level Two



## *A Circle of All Nations ~ A Culture of Peace*

The Vision Of North American Algonquin Elder  
William Commanda  
Keeper Of The Seven Fires Prophecy Wampum Belt

These Difficult Times We Live In Were Foreseen By Spiritual Visionaries Across The World. My Ancestors Warned Us About This Time And The Choices We Would Have To Make, In The Seven Fires Prophecy, Which Was Inscribed In Sacred Wampum Shell In The Late 1400s

### **The Prophecy Holds A Vision For A Future Where We:**

- Honour Our Relationship And Responsibility To Mother Earth And All Creation
- Celebrate Our Individual Gifts And Diversity, And Still
- Recognize And Respect Our Place Within A *Circle Of All Nations*

### **The Steps To This Future Are Few:**

- First We Look Within, So We Know Ourselves First And Best. We Recognize, Acknowledge And Forgive Ourselves Our Shortcomings And Any Failure To Achieve Our Best Potential
- We Forgive Others For Any Hardship And Pain They May Have Caused Us And Our Communities. We Trust That This Energy Will Transform Them Spiritually
- We Recognize That Our Thoughts, Words And Actions Affect Ourselves, Mother Earth And All Creation, And We Embrace Peace Mindfully
- We Listen To Our Minds But We Trust Our Hearts Above All

### **It Is Of Crucial Importance That The People Of The World:**

- Respond Immediately To The Plight Of The Many Oppressed By Exploitation, Social Injustice, Racism And
- Animate The Human Capacity For Forgiveness, Compassion, Love And Reconciliation, And
- Create A Global Synergy To Ensure The Improvement Of The Lives Of All

This Path Will Lead Us To Love, Sharing, Respect, Responsibility, Compassion, Healing, Reconciliation, Equality And Justice

We Shall Then Light The Eighth Fire Together And Become

*A Circle of All Nations ~ A Culture of Peace*

**?**

**“An  
Inconvenient  
Truth”**

**“Corporations”**

**“Fahrenheit 9-11”**

**Indigenous Wisdom  
Mother Earth and  
All Her Relations**

**Environmental  
Exploitation  
and Destruction**

**Corporate  
Domination**

**War  
and  
Extermination**





**The Fourth  
Dimension  
Earth/Spirit  
Connect**

**Respect,  
Responsibility  
and Reverence  
for Mother Earth**

**Generosity  
and  
Sharing**

**Racial Harmony  
and  
Peace Building**

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The Frog Principle

**F**oundation

**R**esults

**O**pportunities

**G**oals



# *A Circle of All Nations ~ A Culture of Peace*

## **Foundation**

Conquest

War

Expropriation

Racism

Hatred

Near Genocide

Exploitation

Corruption

Religious Oppression

Loss Of Language, Culture  
And Traditions

**Colonization**  
**Globalization**



## Results

Clear Cutting

Poverty

Pollution

Suicide

Family Violence

Global Warming

Addictions

Sexual Abuse

Alienation And Isolation

Extinction Of Species

**Negative  
Aftermath**

## **Opportunities**

Decade Of Indigenous Peoples

Anti Racism

Peace Vigils And Summits

Focus On Rights And Equality

Truth And Reconciliation

Peace Building

Indigenous Justice

**Change**

**Goals**

Compassion

Peace

Justice

Hope

Forgiveness

community

Respect

Diversity And Unity

Reconciliation

Healing

Love

Responsibility

**Vision**



# A Circle of All Nations ~ A Culture of Peace

Foundation	Results	Opportunities	Goal
Compassion		Peace	War
Conquest	Justice		Expropriation
Decade Of Indigenous Peoples			Clear Cutting
	Poverty	Racism	Hatred Hope
	Forgiveness		Pollution
	Suicide		Near Genocid
Anti Racism		Exploitation	community
	Family Violence	Respect	
Diversity And Unity			Corruption
Religious Oppression		Peace Vigils And Summits	
		Global Warming	
	Focus On Rights And Equality		Reconciliation
	Addictions		Truth And Reconciliatio
Loss Of Language, Culture And Traditions			Sexual Abuse
		Peace Building	Healing
	Alienation And Isolation		Love
Responsibility		Indigenous Justice	
	Extinction Of Species		
Colonization Globalization	Negative Aftermath	Change	Vision

# A Circle of All Nations ~ A Culture of Peace

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		Peace Building	Healing
Alienation And Isolation		Love	
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		Extinction Of Species	
Colonization Globalization	Negative Aftermath	Change	Vision



# AN EXPLORATION OF FORGIVENESS

FIRST THERE IS A TRANSGRESSION OR OFFENCE

TRANSGRESSION *leads to*

HURT, PAIN *to*

ANGER AND FEAR (first level of 'hot' emotions) *and to*

RUMINATION (Scab Image) *to*

UNFORGIVENESS (second level of 'cold' emotions)

RESENTMENT

BITTERNESS

RESIDUAL ANGER

RESIDUAL FEAR

HATRED

HOSTILITY

THE EMOTIONAL STATE is NEGATIVE and STRESSFUL

THEREFORE - WE WANT TO GET RID OF OR REDUCE  
STRESS

ONE WAY IS THROUGH ALCOHOL OR DRUGS

THIS DEADENS THE NEGATIVE EMOTIONAL STATE  
BUT THE STRESS RETURNS

WE NEED TO TRANSFORM EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENT TO  
TRANSGRESSION IN A HEALTHY WAY

WE NEED TO MOVE FROM A NEGATIVE TO A POSITIVE  
EMOTIONAL STATE, AND

FROM NEGATIVE UNFORGIVENESS TO POSITIVE  
FORGIVENESS



FORGIVENESS INCLUDES POSITIVE EMOTIONS LIKE  
EMPATHY  
SYMPATHY  
COMPASSION  
LOVE

WE UNDERSTAND FORGIVENESS BY FIRST EXAMINING  
AREAS WHERE WE NEED FORGIVENESS

FIRST WE MUST UNDERSTAND WHETHER WE ARE  
DEALING WITH DENIAL OR GUILT

WHEN WE UNDERSTAND FULLY AND ACKNOWLEDGE OUR  
RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE ACTIONS THAT REQUIRE  
PARDON, THEN WE LEARN TO FORGIVE OURSELVES

WE DO NOT HAVE TO JUDGE OURSELVES - THAT IS  
PRESUMPTIOUS; ('THE POWER TO FORGIVE')

WHEN WE SHARE OUR STORIES OF HUMANESS, WE FIND  
HEALING

WHEN WE UNDERSTAND THE NATURE OF FORGIVENESS,  
WE CAN LEARN TO FORGIVE THOSE WHO TRANSGRESS  
AGAINST US

AT THE FIRST LEVEL, WE FREE OURSELVES FROM THE  
NEGATIVE EMOTIONS OF 'UNFORGIVENESS'

WE ALSO DEVELOP A SENSE OF PERSONAL POWER OVER  
OUR DESTINIES

THUS WE MOVE OUT A STATE OF VICTIMHOOD OR  
FEELING VICTIMIZED TO A STATE OF SELF  
EMPOWERMENT

AT THE SECOND LEVEL, WE LEARN TO FORGIVE OTHERS

IN THIS PROCESS, WE TRANSFORM THE ENERGY IN OUR  
RELATIONSHIPS WITH THEM

WE TRUST THAT THIS ENERGY WILL TRANSFORM THEM  
SPIRITUALLY

THUS FORGIVENESS IS THE WAY TO TRANSMUTE  
POISON AND PAIN

IT CAN REPLACE NEGATIVE EMOTIONS WITH POSITIVE  
ONES

FORGIVENESS IS PERSONAL; THE BENEFITS ARE  
PERSONAL

FORGIVENESS - IS NOT TO 'FORGET', BUT  
'FOR GETTING "TO FEEL BETTER"

RECONCILIATION IS A SEPARATE PROCESS

IT IS ABOUT BUILDING A BRIDGE WHERE TRUST HAS  
BEEN BROKEN

FOR THE INDIGENOUS VISION OF CONNECTEDNESS,  
THE RESTORATION OF HARMONY IS RELATIONSHIPS IS  
ESSENTIAL

THIS LEADS TO PEACE - UNDERSTOOD IN THIS WAY, WE  
REALIZE THERE IS NO WAY TO PEACE - PEACE IS THE  
WAY (Gandhi)

# CIRCLE OF COURAGE

(Reclaiming Youth at Risk - Brendtro, Brokenleg, Van Bockern)

## SELF ESTEEM

### FOUR COMPONENTS OF SELF ESTEEM

**SIGNIFICANCE** acceptance, attention, affection vs  
*rejection, ignored, not belonging*

**COMPETENCE** mastering one's environment, capability vs  
*inaadequacy, stifled emotions*

**POWER** ability to control one's behaviour and gain respect of  
others vs  
*Being helpless and without influence*

**VIRTUE** worthiness, judged by values of one's culture and  
significant others vs  
*life not spiritually fulfilling or meaningful*

### INDIGENOUS IDEOLOGY

**SIGNIFICANCE** belonging (community)

**COMPETENCY** mastery (personal strengths)

**POWER** independence (uniqueness)

**VIRTUE** generosity (community)

**CIRCLE OF COURAGE** - the fearless warrior

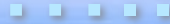
**BELONGING, MASTERY, INDEPENDENCE, GENEROSITY**



# Historical Overview of European Patterns of Child Rearing

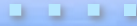
## ■ Prior to 400 AD

- Children were deemed inherently wicked and without souls and therefore they had to be controlled
- They were “small adults”
- Initially, adults were not punished for child murder or abuse
- Illegitimate children were killed routinely, girls frequently, abnormal children always



- 400 – 1300 AD

- View of children as evil persisted
- Parents maintained physical distance
  - Wet nurses
  - Sold to Slavery
  - Monasteries, convents, foster homes
  - Workhouses



## ■ 1300 – 1700

- Views began to change
- Dangerous forces in children could be molded by adults
- Use of restraints was views as a kindness
- With the advent of the printing press and increased literacy, distinctions were made between childhood and adulthood





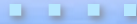
- 1700 – 1800

- More supportive attitudes
- **Tabula Rasa/Clean Slate:**
- It was the responsibility of adults to influence children



- 1800 – 1900

- Reduction in child labour
- Industrial Revolution –
  - different type of work force
- Education for children



- 1900s

- New attitude towards children
- Child welfare
- Philosophy of Caring

- 2000s

- Preschool
- Universal Day Care
- Nannies (Note: Institutional care)



# Considering “*Reclaiming Youth at Risk*”

- The *twentieth century* was envisioned as the century of the child by Swedish sociologist Karen Key, and there was faith in the progress of science and rebirth of human values to ensure that the *education of children would become the highest function*.
- Unfortunately, the labeling, isolating, marginalizing and criminalization of youth appears to be the growing trend.

- Today, bullying, violence, at risk, attention deficit disorder, autism, mentally disturbed, fetal alcohol syndrome, youth crime, delinquency, deviance are more often the notions that come to mind when we think about children and youth. The ones who don't come to the direct attention of justice or correctional forces are alienated, angry, depressed, suicidal, or on prescribed or unprescribed drugs. Others are idolant.
- If children are the future, this is indeed the century of tremendous vulnerability.



- *Reclaiming Youth at Risk* presents ideas to counter balance the alienation of youth, drawing to a large extent on ideas of Indigenous roots – it points out that the *education and empowerment of children* used to be the central purpose and highest function of traditional North American societies; youth were critical to the family's purpose and survival.



- **Indigenous child raising practices** were a powerful challenge to Western education and youth development, but were **suppressed** and eradicated by presumed “superiority” of Western approaches.
- The enforced and **abusive** colonial and religious **practices** – in particular the residential schools experience and legacy – **struck a near genocidal death blow in the social structure of families and communities**

- Yet in this decomposition lie also the seeds for eco revival – but given the vastly transformed and still speedily changing spiritual/socio/economic/political fields, the vitality of the seeds is dependent on the nurturing –
- In my opinion, regrounding in the Indigenous playing field is critical to enhance the potential for resurgence.

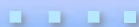
# The Child's Life Purpose in the Indigenous Community

- Indigenous and pagan peoples believe that each individual is born with a **purpose**. It is a unique purpose that is at the same time profoundly connected with community
- Some communities are so interested in the purpose of the child that they consult with the stars or Mother Earth and the plant and animal worlds regarding its future. **Names are chosen consistent with this mission**

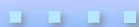




- The developed **child contributes to the strength of the community**. Indigenous values underline the “connectedness” with all creation
- For many, **ritual provides a sense of connection within community and with a greater dimension**



- Initiation rites are a series of planned challenges presented to individuals so that they may **grow into their potential**
- Tribal life is full of public ritual initiations marking the various stages of a person's life
- Successful completion of the rites increases the individual's responsibilities within the community



- The fundamental **focus on community responsibility as compared to individual rights melds** everything together
- It is ironic that the **children of Indigenous Peoples** who, historically, were so especially welcomed into the world and whose upbringing was so carefully nurtured, now **suffer the worst abuse**, neglect and pain



# MEDICINE WHEEL

- We take the cyclical and spiralling **Medicine Wheel approach** in organizing all our activities and see this **emergent model** as relevant to animation of the Circle of Courage approach
- Some concepts in **brain friendly learning** are consistent with our efforts

# Brain Friendly Learning

- In a world of confusion, the **brain** is the processing organ to make patterns out of elements and identify objectives, develop programs of action, energize and respond; in a sense this is the **right brain** engaging with information. The **cognitive brain** is stimulated by motion.

# PERFORMANCE MAPPING

- This is consistent with the webbed *Map thinking* of indigenous peoples:
- The *Map is the guide*, blueprint
- The *Map structures and inputs values*
- But it is a *Law of Nature structure* – as per a River with banks and flow and emergence, responsive to multiple stimulants – wind, sand, rock, sun, cold, cosmic movement etc



This approach to learning is grounded in

- - **Experiential** learning
- - **Nature** based learning
- - **Social** settings
- - **Co-operative/collaborative** learning
- - **Narrative/storing telling, oral and verbal** learning
- - **Autonomy**
- But it is not about autonomy without structure, without relationship to the whole

- It incorporates **discipline and responsibility**
- i.e. **inner discipline**; self-discipline, linked to a sense of values, informed by reflexivity
- It develops **personal power** vs position/socio/economic/political/external power
- It develops **personal power vs obedience to an outer discipline**
- The personal power is linked with autonomy
- It incorporates equality, inclusive of respect, justice, dignity

- **Children model behavior** (of adults, animal/nature teachers); make **choices** without coercion; this requires observation, listening, apprehension, attention, consideration, analysis, comprehension, reflexivity and choosing
- It is **organic**, creative, flexible, immanent, responsive vs teaching by rule/rote/obedience/chastisement/punishment
- It is not without structure, organization and coherence – but consistent with the **Intelligence of Nature, the Laws of Nature.**



- Dominant culture approaches to learning are left/logic brain oriented, didactic, rule oriented, institutionalized
- This is increasingly a part of our post-industrial global reality and dominant ways of learning and thinking; it is reinforced by capitalism, globalization, religious and political control regimes
- It reflects the patterns of the *old* evolutionary brain with fight or flight rules
- Hence, our growing crisis with youth at risk, with reduced capacity for resilience.

# Circle of Courage

- Belonging – It takes a village (inter-connection; inter-relationship; inter-dependence, not just inclusion)
- Mastery – Competence, responsibility, work as a way of life vs an economic pursuit; cornerstone of the community
-

- Independence – autonomy; blending autonomy and belonging in an inter-dependence critical for survival – harmonizing apparently conflicting needs.
- Generosity – altruism – social consciousness
- This is the **Courage of the Resilient Warrior**



# GINAWAYDAGANUC! UBUNTU





# Differabilities - Resilient Autistic Youth





# CIRCLE OF ALL NATIONS





# Legacy Work of William Commanda

- [www.circleofallnations.ca](http://www.circleofallnations.ca) – 2 archival sites
- [www.asinabka.com](http://www.asinabka.com) – Asinabka/Chaudiere
- [circleofallnations@sympatico.ca](mailto:circleofallnations@sympatico.ca)
- Circle of All Nations Digital Atlas in the making!
- © Romola V. Thumbadoo