

**2017-06-09 CIRCLE OF ALL NATIONS COMMEMORATIVE HERITAGE
RIVER NOTE
LEGACY WORK OF WILLIAM COMMANDA**

1. In 2003, Elmer Savoie approached William Commanda about doing a prayer for the launch of Heritage River Day, an initiative of then former Minister of Canadian Heritage and Parks Canada, and Deputy Prime Minister, Sheila Copps. He agreed, and that became a concert launch at the Museum of Civilization. In 2004, he was presented with the Bill Mason River Conservation Award, joining former Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, and Kirk Wipper, Founder of the Canadian Canoe Museum, in this acknowledgement.

2. As with all his projects, Elder Commanda took on this river work with full passion, now doing in *this* public stream, what he had already been doing on his own anyway - you will recall that at the historical 1987 ABORIGINAL CONSTITUTIONAL ROUND TABLE, he already addressed the federal, provincial and Indigenous leadership, Three Figure Wampum Belt in hand, about the pollution of his lands, air and WATER, everywhere; and he said, *We depend on you to clean this up before the end of time.*” But of course, he was not accustomed to depending on anyone, so he continued marching on ahead. He went to the UNITED NATIONS PRE-RIO EARTH SUMMIT deliberations in Paris to inform the world’s environmental leadership of the looming environmental crisis; and when the report of the ROYAL COMMISSION ON ABORIGINAL PEOPLES was released on VICTORIA ISLAND in 1996, he held up a cup and asked if any of the ministers present would be prepared to drink the water of the Ottawa River – as he and his ancestors had in the past; even the elders around him were a bit taken aback and even uncomfortable since he was not smoothly going along with a “feel good” moment – but for William Commanda, the well being of the Indigenous Peoples and the health of the Ottawa River were inextricably linked; and by extension, this applied to *All His Relatives*; today, in view of mental health and suicide crises everywhere in Indigenous country, and climate change, and now the unprecedented flooding of the Ottawa River Watershed; and our national environmental challenges, and our Canadian preoccupation with mental health, many more of us know now that William Commanda was saying something of incredible importance.

3. In our own *Circle of All Nations* work, while Indigenous Elders’ warnings about environmental priorities and urgencies were a regular part of the agenda, we also hosted special gatherings on water stewardship; in 2002, we featured the work of Dr. Emoto on the Messages of Water; and 2004 Spirit of Water was the special priority (note, in the context of water stewardship and people, that we had a delegation of 30 Japanese at the 2004 workshop, and they participated in a special sweat lodge ceremony in commemoration of the 60 anniversary of the Nagasaki/Hiroshima tragedy; and 2006, we co-hosted (with ICE) the pivotal WATERLIFE Workshop in Ottawa (rough video cut archives); and in 2009, two workshops on Sustainable Relationships at Victoria Island.

4. We learned about Late Senator Len Hopkins lead on an effort to designate the Ottawa River a Heritage River, and William Commanda made the long journey from Kitizan Zibi to the Ouiseau Rock area to attend; thereafter, he became a key player in the work, on both sides of the Ottawa, hosting one workshop on this initiative at an annual *Circle of All Nations* gathering. I describe this at length in the article presented on the anniversary of William Commanda's death, entitled [Circle of All Nation 2016 Commemorative Ottawa Heritage River Note](#). (see www.asinabka.com).

5. William Commanda, some will say, animated the work of many of the local environmentalists and environmental organizations. In 2002, he commenced supporting the work of Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society formally with the Boreal Rendezvous, an initiative undertaken in collaboration with the David Suzuki Foundation; the effort culminated with the creation of a coffee table book of experiences on the water, sandwiched between the prayers of our Elder! *Circle of All Nations* was pleased to support the ongoing work of the organization last fall, with the presentation of our William Commanda, *Learning from a Kindergarten Dropout* book (See post in the chronological listing below). *Circle of All Nations* also provided letters of support for project funding for such groups as Ottawa Riverkeepers and Ecojustice, in view of the evolving Indigenous/settler commitment to environmental stewardship as inspired, in part, by William Commanda and his *Circle of All Nations* work.

6. In 2007, William Commanda challenged damming at the Sacred Chaudiere Falls: his supporters mounted a massive campaign, he met with Domtar leadership (and in fact showed the Frederick Beck animated documentary on the abused and polluted St Lawrence, *The Mighty River*); he explored undamming options (see www.asinabka.com); since his death, we have continued with the effort; we screened the documentary *Damnation*; we raised concerns with the Ministry of Environment, Ontario, and with Energy Ottawa, and others; there is no evidence of public consultation by Energy Ottawa; and it is noted when the City of Ottawa itself called for 150 birthday year initiative ideas, most citizens wanted to see the falls freed; and a separate campaign has secured over 5000 signatures to see the *Falls Freed*. A group of local citizens has been tireless in their campaign to Free the Falls, in support of William Commanda's Legacy Vision for Asinabka Sacred Chaudiere Site.

William Commanda wanted the falls undammed to the extent possible as a symbolic and physical gesture of reconciliations with Mother Earth and the Ottawa River, at the ancient sacred energetic centre of the circular rapids. Today, with its spring of unprecedented flooding, it would seem the River itself in not keen to see itself re-envisioned with coloured lights.

7. William Commanda was passionately concerned about the plight of the American Eel, and added his voice to national efforts to protect this ancient creature, representative of the earliest vertebrate life that evolve in the Ottawa River Watershed; some details follow in the chronology; lengthier reports are available on our www.asinabka.com website.

8. William Commanda launched *PADDLE FOR PEACE* activities to link the two core themes of his work: environmental stewardship and peace building; these were held annually at Victoria Island during the Fall Equinox, till multiple divergent interests at the Sacred Chaudiere Site made this difficult for *Circle of All Nations* to continue in the spirit of true RECONCILIATION. Still we note that globally, others have begun using the *Paddle for Peace* name for their initiatives. Note also that *Circle of All Nations* colleagues organized annual paddle trips from Montreal: Late Algonquin teacher Jacob Wawatie was active in this effort.

9. For many years, William Commanda was the only man at the February Bear Moon Women's water ceremonies at Victoria Island – it seems politics has curtailed that activity too.

10. William Commanda developed a fully inclusive global vision for ASINABKA Sacred Chaudiere Site, with literally thousands of people, Algonquin, Indigenous, from Canada and abroad, over the course of two decades; consistent with his *Circle of All Nations* work launched in 1967 in Eganville, Ontario, it is focused on the theme of RECONCILIATION. He articulated the core vision after consultation with all Algonquin communities in 2003; and the comprehensive vision was endorsed by the City of Ottawa in November 2010, eight months before his death. His vision and plan called for healing of relations with Mother Earth; healing of relations amongst Indigenous Peoples; and healing amongst all others. He, like his ancestors, saw the looming environmental crisis; and the escalating global strife and violence. Very few see reality as this PROPEHCY CARRIER did. It is sad that work of such massive import, generated over the course of a century, and grounded in the wisdom of this land we now all occupy struggles so hard for manifestation. We continue to do what we can to advance his work.

11. FINALLY, consistent with the spirit of the launch of the HERITAGE RIVERS DAY of 2003, and in celebration of the FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY of Grandfather Commanda's creation of his *Circle of All Nations, Culture of Peace*, we have gathered together some of our key references or Grandfather's speaking notes on key HERITAGE RIVER Activities of the past decades. This may present some concrete understanding of his tireless efforts in this area of water stewardship, with many colleagues like you. (Of course, you can be sure, this is not all he did!!)

We know this is a hefty document! Please check our *Circle of All Nations* Facebook page for our work in progress Heritage River Photo Album, for an illustrative accounting of William Commanda's work – you just might find yourself there!!

**CHRONOLOGY OF SOME CIRLE OF ALL NATIONS HERITAGE RIVER/
WATER NOTES since 2007 (older materials remain archived at this time)**

1. JUNE 10, 2007 – NATIONAL HERITAGE RIVER DAY

TODAY, I PRAY ESPECIALLY FOR:

NATIONAL HERITAGE RIVER DAY

**THE MIGHTY KICHI SIPPI – THE OTTAWA RIVER WATERSHED AND MY
ANCESTORS**

THE SACRED CHAUDIERE FALLS

**THE EFFORT TO DESIGNATE THE OTTAWA RIVER A HERITAGE RIVER,
AND THE MEMORY OF MY FRIEND SENATOR LEN HOPKINS**

THE OTTAWA RIVERKEEPERS AND THE SPIRIT OF CANOEING

**THE NATIONAL CAPITAL PEACE COUNCIL AND THE FRIENDS OF THE
OTTAWA RIVERBANK GREENUP**

**THE RIVER HEALING JOURNEY FROM OTTAWA TO MONTREAL, THE
TRAIL OF MY ANCESTORS**

**THE PROTECTION OF THE AMERICAN EEL AND ALL OTHER LIFE
FORMS**

**JAY MORRISON SPREADING THE MESSAGE ABOUT OUR WORK ON HIS
CANOE TRIP TO THE ARCTIC**

**THE VISION FOR THE HISTORIC CENTRE AT ASINABKA AND HERE ON
VICTORIA ISLAND**

**THE MEMORY OF DUDLEY GEORGE AND THE THE IPPERWASH
INQUIRY AND A HOPE FOR BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF ABORIGINAL
ISSUES, AND**

A CIRCLE OF ALL NATIONS AND A CULTURE OF PEACE

**2. William Commanda – Address at the Public Consultation regarding the
Danford Mega-Dump Project – June 13, 2007**

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to share my thoughts about the proposed dump project.

First, by way of introduction, may I say I am William Commanda, ninety three year old Algonquin Elder from Kitigan Zibi, Quebec. My ancestors resided at the Lake of Two Mountains, and the Ottawa River Watershed is the traditional territory of my ancestors from time immemorial. I have a passionate interest in the plight of Mother Earth, and in particular in the stewardship of the Ottawa River Watershed. I currently serve as Honorary Chair of the Ottawa River Heritage Designation Committee, and I have tried, thus far without success, to engage the Province of Quebec in this effort. I also work to promote cross cultural understanding, racial harmony and peace building, through the *Circle of All Nations* – a global eco-community united by values of respect for Mother Earth and Racial Harmony.

In recognition of my efforts, in 2005, I was awarded an Honorary Doctorate Degree by the University of Ottawa. In 2006, I was presented with both the Key to the Capital City by the Mayor of Ottawa, a special honour for someone who resides in Quebec, and a International Peace Day Award by the Mayor of Montreal, which together constitute a recognition and acknowledgement of my commitment to the Ottawa River Watershed.

The following is a list of activities I have personally been engaged with in terms of my environmental work:

Chronology of Key Activities in Support of Mother Earth

- 1945 - Precursor – Hopi/Indigenous Petition to the UN
- 1967 - First Gathering focused on Mother Earth and Peace – at Eganville, Ont
- 1967 - Gathering of Nations in Maniwaki re: Indigenous Wisdom
- 1987 - Presentation of Wampum Belts at Constitutional Talks
- 1991 - Pipe Ceremony at Pre Rio Preparations in France
- 1992 - Message to Earth Summit in Rio – Agenda 21
- 1993 - Cry of the Earth Conference at UN
- 1995 - Spiritual Guide of the Sunbow Five Walk for Mother Earth (across the continent)
- 1996 - Release of the Report of the RCAP – When I raised concerns about the condition of the Ottawa River
- 2004 - Honorary Elder – Boreal Rendezvous
- 2004 - Heritage Rivers Bill Mason Conservation Award
- 2006 – Honorary Chair – Ottawa Heritage River Designation
- 2006 – WaterLife Workshop
- Annual Circle of All Nations Gatherings Promote Environmental Stewardship - 2004 – Focus on Water
- Annual Gathering of Nations Pipe Ceremonies at Victoria Island

Thus you will note that over the past twenty years, my concern over environmental issues have been a major preoccupation. In 1987, when I presented our sacred Wampum Belts

in public at the constitutional debate, Quebec absented herself from the discussion; I pointed out that, with the denigration and exclusion of the values and practices of the Indigenous peoples in the development of this country, the desecration of the soil, waters and air, the depletion of trees, plants and animals, and the subsequent impact on our lives has been profound, and required immediate remedial action. However, the voice of Indigenous peoples remains marginalized in discussions about the environment, and to many of us it is no wonder that we are now in a global crisis around pollution, green house gas emissions, global warming, unprecedented climate change and upheaval. Our lives are being transformed irrevocably, and it will take profound collective commitment, will and cooperation to leave a healthy world to our children.

Indigenous peoples always walked gently on Mother Earth, consistent with the Laws of Nature, always preparing for the seventh generation. Departure from this guiding principle through decades of environmental exploitation and abuse has resulted in long term, sometimes irreversible, damage to the Earth, that future generations will have to bear the burden of.

In my own reserve, a trench dump was established, I believe in the eighties, and even the city of Maniwaki dumped their refuse here; I recall seeing countless refrigerators and stoves, washers and dryers there. Then the hospital called and warned us not to drink our water. Today, and over the past decade, we do not drink the water on my reserve; water is trucked in bottles; a short while ago, we took pride in honouring the 22 lakes in our territory; today, the water is unsafe, there are more people dying of cancer and other diseases, and in my own family, three children are fighting cancer, and my great, great grandson has one kidney. You know that problems with water are no longer limited to reserves.

In November 2006, I organized a special Water Life Workshop to encourage more attention to the continued desecration of the precious essential of life – water. In this past year alone, we have begun to awaken to the hazards posed to the Ottawa River, the sacred river of my peoples, by a range of conditions: green algae, chemical contaminant expelled into the Ottawa River around Pembroke, the sulphuric acid spill outside North Bay, dead fish near Arnprior, bacteria and pollution in the river, and threat of uranium mining on the Mississippi. A few weeks ago, I took photos of fish rotting on the Gatineau River. Even today, there are reports of people in hospital with skin inflammations having immersed in the Ottawa River.

I have also added my voice to the effort to designate the American Eel a *species at risk*. I attach my comments here for your information:

I wish to add my name to the list of people petitioning for the designation of the American Eel as a Species at Risk.

I am a 93 year old Algonquin of the Ottawa River Watershed, and I currently also serve as Honorary Chair on the Ottawa River Heritage Designation Committee. I have been deeply concerned with the devastating transformation

of this watershed and areas beyond throughout the course of my lifetime, and I have been increasingly actively engaged in efforts to promote respect for Mother Earth and all that inhabit her, over the past twenty years. This effort was in part recognized by the Canadian Heritage Rivers System, when, in 2004, I was presented with the Bill Mason Conservation Award.

Over the past ten years, I have also been involved in developing an integrated vision for an international environmentally focussed healing and peace building centre at the sacred meeting place of my ancestors, *Asinabka*, site of the Chaudière Falls in Ottawa, a centre to advance respect for Mother Earth, Indigenous Peoples and all others, and in my mind, these are interrelated matters of grave concern for the world. Last November, I organized a Water Life Workshop, in part to advance this effort, but also to encourage better stewardship of the Ottawa River. This led me to an effort to dissuade Domtar Inc. from expanding the Hydro Electric Plant at the Chaudière Falls. Amongst other concerns, I have been upset by evidence of the destructive impact of turbines on eels in some graphic photographs.

I believe it is of crucial importance that we all reexamine our invasive and destructive relationship with Mother Earth and all her creatures, and many are beginning to hear this cry. Every day, it seems we hear of the desperate state of yet another species, and the current focus on sharks highlights the interrelated ramifications of the destruction of individual species.

At this point I am raising my voice concerning the plight of the American Eel. The eel has been of spiritual, nutritional and material importance to the Indigenous Peoples of the eastern seaboard, and to my ancestors of the Ottawa River Watershed, since time immemorial, has played a role in the Donald Marshall Junior struggle for the recognition of indigenous fishing rights, and I believe eel spirit is intrinsic to the sacred Seven Fire Prophecy Wampum Belt that I have carried for the people for over thirty six years. It is this prophecy that tells us that humanity is now at a cross roads, and that we need to regenerate our relationship with Mother Earth and each other, and it is a message I delivered at the December 2006 Minster's Round Table on *Species at Risk*; a short few months later, we all alert to the issues of global environmental and human crisis.

The voice of Mother Nature is speaking loudly and urgently, and today, I add my voice to those of the many wishing to halt the development of the proposed major engineered landfill, because of the threat it poses to the lakes and rivers in the vicinity of Danford, and to the Ottawa River Watershed. All modern studies alert us to these dangers to the earth and water table.

This is a crucial time in our country's and in global history, when we must urgently explore new an innovative and comprehensive options to address the challenges presented by a modern, post industrialized, urbanized world, and we must be guided by a principle of economics enunciated by friend Ann Pennington – "Net Global Planetary

Benefit". We have to understand and address the interrelatedness of issues.

It seems clear that two new technologies offer new options for waste management – Incineration and Plasma Gasification, and both are possible answers to respond to the new environmental laws and needs. Both incorporate economic incentives/benefits, and minimize negative environmental impact.

I would also like to add that I take a special vision from Quebec to the Capital City for the Sacred Chaudière Site – a vision for spiritual reconciliation with Mother Earth, by undamming the Chaudière Dam and planting trees on Chaudière Island; and for enshrining the heritage and history of the area, in both an international indigenous healing and peace-building centre, and a historic site that will celebrate the meeting of the three cultures of the Aboriginal, French and English and the subsequent development of Canada.

Now I see that heat generated by the Incineration and Plasma Gasification options can replace the hydro dams, and move us towards a more harmonious relationship with Mother Earth, and contribute to a significant portion of this vision. I attach a bilingual note on this vision.

I pray you will be moved to join me and others in this effort to hold constructive dialogue and advance harmonious exchange of ideas, so that we can come together making our best efforts to leave a meaningful legacy to our children and the world.

Thank you for your attention to my message.

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3. **CITIZEN'S INQUIRY INTO THE IPMACTS OF THE URANIUM CYCLE**
Community Coalition Against Mining Uranium
May 9, 2008

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Elder (Dr.) William Commanda was glad to have the opportunity to offer the opening prayer at the Citizen's Inquiry in Ottawa on April 22, 2008.

Background:

Elder Commanda is the ninety four year old Algonquin Elder from Maniwaki, Quebec, and he has a passionate interest in the stewardship of the Ottawa River Watershed, the unceded, unsurrendered and unconquered traditional territory of his peoples on both sides of the mighty river, known to his ancestors as the *Kichissippi*. In 2004, he received the Bill Mason Award for River Conservation, and for several years he has been involved in the effort to designate the Ottawa River a national heritage river. It is well known that it cannot qualify for this nomination on one of the key requirements - a pristine nature - since it has been so badly polluted, contaminated and transformed over the past two centuries; now its special historic and cultural value and recreational potential serve to support the case for this designation. Elder Commanda serves as Honorary Chair of the Nomination Committee, and while the current effort is focussed on the nomination of the river in Ontario, he has also communicated with Quebec, urging its engagement in the file, since the river constitutes the common heritage of all the Algonquins of the watershed, and he of course would like to see the entire river honoured and protected from further degradation.

Key Issue:

The uranium mining issue that has sparked this Citizens' Inquiry has direct implications for the Ottawa River. Elder Commanda has supported the effort to challenge the uranium test drilling in Ardoch/Shabot Lake in a peaceful manner, by conducting ceremonies and promoting dialogue. He arranged for ceremony by Algonquin Fire Keeper Peter Decontie, and information presentations by Mining Watch Canada, Eco Justice Canada and Ms. Lorraine Rekmans co-editor of *This is My Homeland*, and NDP representative, at the first protest gathering on July 8, 2007. He also included this topic on the agenda of *The Awakening* Gathering he hosted in Perth, Ontario in October 2007. As we say in our report on this Gathering, "*Joan Kuyek, the hard working representative of Mining Watch Canada, provided us with factual information about the trigger issue in the area – uranium mining; it seems impossible to imagine the entire town would not want to avail itself of such researched information, as they come to addressing a key controversial issue of our times, one with potential impact on their very own children and grandchildren.*"

Unfortunately, a crisis at the site prevented our Ardoch/Sharbot Lake First Nations and Settler Uranium Protest presenters from joining us, and so we missed out on learning about their dramatic summer of soul searching, struggle and sacrifice, though Larry McDermott, former mayor of Lanark Highlands, and representative of the First Nations of Sharbot Lake provided a brief overview of the protest.”

Elder Commanda also offered the opening prayer at the September 28, 2007 POWER TO CHOOSE OTTAWA information session organized by ActCity at the Odawa Friendship Centre.

As noted in his blog, **this cause touches him personally. Since 1999, people in Elder William Commanda's community, Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg, must use bottled water, because of the uranium in the well water. Other than this great hindrance and cost to lifestyle, the impact on the overall health of the community is not assessed; but he is painfully aware that three young children within his inner family network are fighting cancer, and that one child was born with just one kidney. He notes also that in 2002, his colleagues participated in the Hiroshima Flame Walk from Seattle to New York City, a walk for world peace, mindful that many of their lands were used for the extraction of uranium and plutonium and the dumping of nuclear wastes, with disastrous consequences across the globe, and in violation of their sacred relationship with their lands. He notes also that in 2004, we were reminded of the horror of nuclear weapons when a delegation of thirty Japanese led by the then Vice President of Sony Company participated in a healing sweat lodge ceremony during his *Circle of All Nations* Spiritual Gathering, on the anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima. He himself has conducted prayer and ceremony in Japan and across this continent concerning the aftermath of nuclear warfare and waste.**

He realizes that this is difficult work, and many have made great personal sacrifices to bring the subject to the attention of the public at large, and he will continue to pray, consistent with the beliefs of his ancestors, that, with the growing global acknowledgment and respect for Mother Earth as the both holder of our collective future and the ultimate equalizer, we will all benefit from a deepening understanding of the complexities of this file, and reconcile differences in recognition of the sacred essence of water, and in favour of the protection of future generations of life in this special area and elsewhere.

He commends CAAMU on taking the initiative to launch this effort, was glad to see Algonquin contributions acknowledged so positively, and he looks forward to supporting the on-going work.

Appendices:

1. Backgrounder on William Commanda's environmental work
2. Notes from his blog <http://web.mac.com/circleofallnations> to describe specific

activity on this uranium file, a part of his overall efforts to promote environmental stewardship and protection of the Ottawa River Watershed, and related Sept 2007 note.

3. Two documents presented by the Seventh Generations Fund for Indian Development (whose work he supports) to the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues May 2008 – Agenda Item 3: Special theme: Climate change, bio-cultural diversity and livelihoods: the stewardship role of Indigenous peoples and new challenges: *Collective Statement on the Protection of Water* and the *Water is Sacred Collective Statement*.

Post Script:

On May 9, 2008, Elder Commanda joined Chief Doreen Davis and the Algonquin leadership from the Shabot Obaadjiwan First Nation Community in their interventions on the Uranium Issues, with the Honourable Michael Bryant, MPP, Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, Government House Leader, and reiterated many of the points made in this file. Ironically, this was on the day after the Elder's session at the Nephrology Clinic with his deteriorating kidney condition (note: over the past decade, his community drinks bottled water because of uranium contamination of the water).

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Chronology of Key Activities in support of Mother Earth/Environmental Priorities

1945 – Precursor – Supporter of Hopi Petition on Environment to the UN
1967- First Indigenous Gathering – at Eganville, Ontario
1967 - Gathering of Nations in Maniwaki
1987 - Presentation of Wampum Belts at Constitutional Talks; pollution raised
1991 - Pipe Ceremony at Pre Rio Preparations for Earth Summit in France
1992 - Message to Earth Summit in Rio – Agenda 21
1993 - Cry of the Earth Conference at UN
1995 - Spiritual Guide of the Sunbow Five Walk for Mother Earth across America
1996 – Release of the RCAP Report – at Victoria Island – *Would you drink the water?*

1999 - Presentation – Nuclear Weapons and Spirituality Conference
2002 – Supported Hiroshima Flame Walk
2004 - Honorary Elder – Boreal Rendezvous
2004 - Heritage Rivers Bill Mason Conservation Award
2004 – Circle of All Nations Gathering – Sacred Water; Hiroshima Anniversary Healing
2006 – Honorary Chair – Ottawa Heritage River Designation
2006 – WaterLife Workshop, Ottawa
2007 – The Awakening Gathering
Annual *Circle of All Nations Gatherings* Promote Environmental Stewardship
Annual Gathering of Nations Pipe Ceremonies at Victoria Island
Interventions on the Proposed Megadump at Danford Lake, Further Development at the Sacred Chaudiere Site, American Eel as a Species at Risk, Test Drilling for Uranium

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4. Information Rally to Protest Uranium exploration and mining in Ardoch/Sharbot Lake - Sunday, July 8, 2007 - 3 pm

As you may already be aware, The Ardoch Algonquin First Nation and the Sharbot Obaadjiwan First Nation, together with people from the area, Mining Watch Canada, and other Aboriginal and non Aboriginal peoples, are actively engaged in an effort to prevent drilling for uranium in the Ardoch/Sharbot Lake area, in view of the grave threat to area and water table, including the Ottawa River Watershed, to the traditional wild rice, hunting and trapping areas and lifestyles, to plants and wildlife, and to present and future generations.

Provincial officials are investigating the concerns. It is noted that people in British Columbia and New Brunswick, Labrador and Nova Scotia are rejecting uranium exploration and mining, and concerns are mounting elsewhere.

Elder William Commanda was invited to visit the area over the past few days. He conducted a pipe ceremony on June 29, 2007, to pray for the maintenance of peace at this difficult time.

This cause touches him personally. Since 1999, people in Elder William Commanda's community, Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg, must use bottled water, because of the uranium in the well water. Other than this great hinderance and cost to lifestyle, the impact on the overall health of the community is not assessed; but he is painfully aware that three young children within his inner family network are fighting cancer, and that one child was born with just one kidney. He notes also that in 2002, his colleagues participated in the Hiroshima Flame Walk from Seattle to New York City, a walk for world peace, mindful that many of their lands were used for the extraction of plutonium and uranium and the dumping of nuclear wastes, with disastrous consequences across the globe, and in violation of their sacred relationship with their lands. He notes also that in 2004, we were reminded of the horror of nuclear weapons when thirty Japanese guests participated in a healing sweat lodge ceremony during his *Circle of All Nations* Spiritual Gathering, on the

anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima. He himself has conducted prayer and ceremony in Japan and across this continent concerning the aftermath of nuclear warfare and waste.

On Sunday, July 8, 2007, at 3 pm, the community at Ardoch/Sharbot Lake, will hold an information rally, and they invite you and your communities and colleagues to join them in support and solidarity. (Highway#7 North from Shabot Lake on Road 509, 12 Km North on Road #509, at the site alongside the roadway.)

Grandfather Commanda has to prepare for a medical procedure at the Civic Hospital, and so may not be able to participate this rally in person. He will be there in prayer.

But he knows he can count on all of you to support the Algonquin Nations and their colleagues in this peaceful effort to advance the three indigenous rs - **Respect, Responsibility and Reverence for Mother Earth**, in the spirit of *A Circle of All Nations, a Culture of Peace*, and in joint stewardship of the Ottawa River Watershed.

Thank you for your support. For more information, please view website www.aafna.ca

5. Uranium, Environmental Stewardship, Wampum Belts and Land Issues (excerpt from blog dated 7 March 2008)

On January 26, Lawyer Michael Swinwood invited Elder William Commanda to a community feast with Ardoch First Nations and Settlers from the area, many of whom were involved in the uranium protest in the Sharbot Lake/Ardoch area. The Elder was asked to make a presentation on the Sacred Three Figure Welcoming/Sharing Wampum Belt that he carries. He talked about how, in the 1700s, before the continent was divided, his ancestors on the east coast, the first to meet with the newcomers, had made an agreement to share the grand natural resources of their homeland and their values in three equal parts with the Europeans (the French and English); the fact that this was a sacred commitment was signified by the symbol of the cross, which represented the Vatican. He talked about how the spirit of the agreement had never been honoured by the newcomers, and he talked about the subsequent impoverishment and oppression of the original peoples, and the pollution and destruction of so much of their land, waters, trees, medicines, and animals. He also asserted that the way to resolving matters was through education and peaceful intervention.

Now many of the new occupants of Canada come from oppression and suffering in their homelands, and Canada is seen as the land of hope and opportunity; rightfully so, but surely not at the continued cost to and marginalization of the First Peoples – and all they valued, developed and nurtured in this land. Already, we begin to see the many irreversible costs of development over the past century. It is in our own best interest to understand the history of the land.

Over the years, Dr. Commanda's tireless efforts to present the stories of the Sacred Wampum

Belts and the true history of his peoples has been awakening the hearts and minds of many people. They resonate with the heart because their simple yet profound messages are undeniable. The group of people at the Maberly community feast included Algonquins who had always lived in communities off-reserve (and suffered racism and exclusion in differing degrees from both Aboriginal and white communities), and Settlers, as they have come to call themselves, the more privileged occupiers of the land. Now they are increasingly unified in the face of the threat of test drilling for uranium on their doorsteps, and many environmental activists are in support of their efforts to express their concerns in a domain historically dominated by the will of corporations and governments. In response to their request, Elder Commanda had joined them in prayer and ceremony on four occasions over the summer, and this matter is described in our first blog.

The update on the file is the harsh coming down of the arm of the law against the representatives of the Ardoch First Nations. In a judgement by Justice Douglas Cunningham on February 15, AAFN negotiator Robert Lovelace was sentenced to six months in jail and fined \$25,000 for his participation in the peaceful protest against uranium exploration on Algonquin traditional territory; Co-chief Paula Sherman was fined \$15,000, and the Ardoch First Nation community \$10,000. Then the parallel travesty of justice with the Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug came to public attention in March 2008. This is really a global debate over legitimate property rights concerns, indigenous concerns, and undeniable environmental concerns, and it is a grave matter that the judiciary has weighted in in this repressive manner, and further narrowly focused the lens of attack on the First Peoples of this country. Yet again, the *Honour of the Crown* is exposed as a hollow concept. Elder Commanda smokes his pipe regularly and sends his prayers to support and strengthen all the people at this very difficult time. He honours the brave contributions of Donna Dillman in drawing attention to this concern. His prayer for the protection of Mother Earth from further abuse and exploitation is ceaseless.

It is difficult and painful work, and we need deep wisdom to help us find the path to a new peaceful and healthy tomorrow for all.

6. Information Rally to Protest Uranium exploration and mining in Ardoch/Shabot Lake - Sunday, July 8, 2007 - 3 pm

As you may already be aware, The Ardoch Algonquin First Nation and the Shabot Obaadjiwan First Nation, together with people from the area, Mining Watch Canada, and other Aboriginal and non Aboriginal peoples, are actively engaged in an effort to prevent drilling for uranium in the Ardoch/Shabot Lake area, in view of the grave threat to area and water table, including the Ottawa River Watershed, to the traditional wild rice, hunting and trapping areas and lifestyles, to plants and wildlife, and to present and future generations.

Provincial officials are investigating the concerns. It is noted that people in British Columbia and New Brunswick, Labrador and Nova Scotia are rejecting uranium exploration and mining, and concerns are mounting elsewhere.

Elder William Commanda was invited to visit the area over the past few days. He conducted a pipe ceremony on June 29, 2007, to pray for the maintenance of peace at this difficult time.

This cause touches him personally. Since 1999, people in Elder William Commanda's community, Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg, must use bottled water, because of the uranium in the well water. Other than this great hindrance and cost to lifestyle, the impact on the overall health of the community is not assessed; but he is painfully aware that three young children within his inner family network are fighting cancer, and that one child was born with just one kidney. He notes also that in 2002, his colleagues participated in the Hiroshima Flame Walk from Seattle to New York City, a walk for world peace, mindful that many of their lands were used for the extraction of plutonium and uranium and the dumping of nuclear wastes, with disastrous consequences across the globe, and in violation of their sacred relationship with their lands. He notes also that in 2004, we were reminded of the horror of nuclear weapons when thirty Japanese guests participated in a healing sweat lodge ceremony during his *Circle of All Nations* Spiritual Gathering, on the anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima. He himself has conducted prayer and ceremony in Japan and across this continent concerning the aftermath of nuclear warfare and waste.

On Sunday, July 8, 2007, at 3 pm, the community at Ardoch/Shabot Lake, will hold an information rally, and they invite you and your communities and colleagues to join them in support and solidarity. (Highway#7 North from Shabot Lake on Road 509, 12 Km North on Road #509, at the site alongside the roadway.)

Grandfather Commanda has to prepare for a medical procedure at the Civic Hospital, and so may not be able to participate this rally in person. He will be there in prayer.

But he knows he can count on all of you to support the Algonquin Nations and their colleagues in this peaceful effort to advance the three indigenous rs - **Respect, Responsibility and Reverence for Mother Earth**, in the spirit of *A Circle of All Nations, a Culture of Peace*, and in joint stewardship of the Ottawa River Watershed.

Thank you for your support. For more information, please view website www.aafna.ca.

7. A Message from Elder William Commanda – 25 September, 2007:

You and your communities and colleagues are invited to join the group in this effort to protest uranium mining in the Ottawa River Watershed. You are also invited to join the group at Victoria Island, around 4 pm September 27 for a welcome and pot luck feast, at the Rally at Parliament Hill, at noon, September 28, and at a POWER TO CHOOSE OTTAWA FORUM on September 28 (4.30 - 9.00) at the Odawa Friendship Centre (12 Stirling Avenue).

Algonquin Leadership are invited to add their signatures to a Proclamation for a Moratorium on Uranium Mining. Others are invited to sign a Petition in support of this Proclamation. Please join us in this effort.

It is noted that already 3,000 people have signed a petition protesting Uranium Mining (CCAMU and The Green Party of Canada) - presented at Parliament Hill September 18, 2007.

Thank you for your support of this effort.

Also included for your information:

Ottawa Riverkeeper supports protesters fighting proposed uranium mining around Sharbot Lake

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

OTTAWA, September 25, 2007 - Ottawa Riverkeeper is throwing its support behind protesters who are opposed to any uranium mining activities in the Sharbot Lake area.

Members of First Nations communities that would be affected by the mining left the Sharbot Lake area on Saturday by canoe and are paddling to Victoria Island in Ottawa.

"We look forward to welcoming the paddlers to Victoria Island on Thursday afternoon," says Meredith Brown, Riverkeeper and Executive Director.

Ottawa Riverkeeper will be signing the petition in support of the Proclamation for a Moratorium on Uranium Mining.

Ms. Brown encourages concerned citizens to join the rally and sign the petition. "Uranium mining will do little for the people in the Ottawa River Watershed except leave them with contaminated water and communities."

Ottawa Riverkeeper will join the protest portage from Victoria Island to Parliament Hill on Friday Sept. 28 beginning at 10 a.m.

Contact Information:

Meredith Brown, Riverkeeper and Executive Director

keeper@ottawariverkeeper.ca

Tel: 613-864-7442

www.ottawariverkeeper.ca

Delphine Hasle

Director of Outreach / Directrice des Relations Externes

Ottawa Riverkeeper / Sentinelle Outaouai

8. **June 7, 2008**

Email to Max Finkelstein; Larry McDermott; cc Chief Kirby Whiteduck; Lucien Wabanonik; Peter Digangi

Hi Max - I am sorry we are not able to join you tomorrow. Here are some remarks for sharing. Hope it is not too long. We shall be thinking about you all in the morning!

Greetings for National Heritage River Day

June 8, 2008

From William Commanda, Algonquin Elder

Dear Friends:

For the first time since its inception, I am not able to join you all in the celebration of National Heritage River Day. I am now ninety-four and a half, and it is not always easy to manage the demands of an aging body and continue to be a nomad! But I am pleased to send you greetings as you launch your canoes from this sacred meeting place of my ancestors, the traditional lands of the Algonquins of the Ottawa River Watershed. My prayer today is connected to my heritage, my health, the health of our waterways, and you younger folk who represent our hope and prayer for environmental stewardship and a healthier tomorrow for all.

As some of you know, I have been drinking bottled water on my reserve for the past decade, because of the uranium in our well water, and my failing kidneys are for me a symbol of the parallels between our health and the health of our waterways and land. I have been expressing my concern about the environment steadily over the past twenty years. In 1996, at the release of the Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, here at this very spot, I asked the political leaders whether they would be prepared to drink these waters; twelve years later things are much worse. Many of you were with me at our 2006 WaterLife Workshop, when Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples joined together in a unique sharing of ceremony and ideas for the protection of this special river. I commend the recent activities and leadership of Ottawa Riverkeeper to promote awareness and stewardship of the Ottawa River. You are one answer to our prayers.

For several years, I have supported the effort to designate the Ottawa River, the Mighty Kichissippi, a heritage river, and I remember my friend, the late Senator Len Hopkin's commitment to this task. As he came to understand the historic relationship of my peoples to this river, he worked to ensure that this history was documented and acknowledged. Today, we are a lot closer to seeing this designation materialize. But this is of course a mixed blessing for Algonquins – we hail from both Ontario and Quebec, and the Ottawa is the heritage river of all our peoples and we would like to see the whole river honoured soon. I know I can count on you to support this effort, since you understand this special river better than most.

My best wishes for an enjoyable day on the river. May I also invite you all to join us

here, perhaps again in your canoes, at 10 on June 21 for our annual *Circle of All Nations* Pipe Ceremony, in support of the vision for Victoria Island, where I pray that Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Peoples will continue to work together for the protection of this river.

William Commanda
Algonquin Elder
www.circleofallnations.ca

9. February 11, 2009 1.34 pm

Email to To Gilbert Whiteduck; Kirby Whiteduck

Hi there:

We have talked to each of you individually regarding the June 14 - 17 conference.

June 14 is Heritage River Day and WC has been engaged since its inception - of late it has taken the form of a prayer at VI.

Ottawa Riverkeepers plans a canoe trip from VI - in the evening the Conf commences; another group plans a River Clean up/green up activity. Likely, WC will do a prayer/Sacred Fire/ with Peter Decontie and maybe Dominic Rankin.

Other colleagues have been collecting artifacts that date back to 10 centuries ago in Prince Edward County - and might be interested in showcasing, to show the ancient Indigenous history of the area.

Brian Grimsey from Parks Canada called regarding the Conf. - he was to send some information but we have not recd. this yet.

Key points -

1. He was looking for a co presenter with Kirby re: History of OR - and said he had already discussed this with you, Kirby. We mentioned this to Gilbert, and he would be happy to join you in a joint presentation - we think that would be great - so the river resumes its identity as a connector, and not the provincial divider.

2. They want to do one of their side trip activities to be a visit to VI and are interested in a presentation on the Vision for VI.

3. I mentioned the Women's Drum group - who have been doing annual Water Ceremonies on VI - for the river, water and the VI vision (Josie Whiteduck a collaborator with this effort too)- but I am not sure they were interested.

4. I also mentioned the work on the American Eel - that Larry McDermott is spear heading with Ont Nat Resources - and under WC's guidance, is also engaging Algonquins on the Quebec side amongst others - but I am not sure that they were interested in this as an agenda item either.

I am attaching for your info a mini presentation we did on Water and ORW some time ago.

I know that during the AFN Poverty Rally on VI, my sister from SA thought Kirby's remarks were the most effective for raising awareness about Indig/Algon/land issues - and maybe this HRConf presents an opportunity to acquaint a national audience with some of these thoughts.

For your consideration.

Thanks!

Take good care,
Romola
Coordinator
Circle of All Nations
506 Stratas Court
Kanata, On K2L 3K7
613-599-8385
819-449-2668

<http://web.mac.com/circleofallnations>

10. 95th Birthday Update - Jan 2009

2 June, 2009 5.29 pm

Email message to Donald. Gibson@pc.gc.ca; Brian.Grimsey@pc.gc.ca

Hi Don,

Further to our conversation this morning, we have been in communications with Elder Commanda, Chief Kirby Whiteduck, Bill Sluiman and others, and confirm that Circle of All Nations and colleagues will host a workshop on Elder William Commanda's vision for the Sacred Chaudière Site and the Indigenous Centre at Victoria Island. It will take the form of a talking circle with key partners engaged in advancing this initiative.

We shall work on further details later this week and apprise you accordingly.

If you are having folk preregister for the field trips, it will be helpful to know how many folk are likely to attend.

Thank you for your interest in Elder Commanda's work.

Take good care,
Romola
Coordinator
Circle of All Nations
506 Stratas Court
Kanata, On K2L 3K7
613-599-8385
819-449-2668

11 3 June 2009

Hi Gilbert - Hope all is well.

There are some developments on this file and the VI file that we would like to fill you in on - If WC is up of the drive, we will be heading to KZ tomorrow - so maybe Friday??

In the meanwhile, we know you and Kirby W. are on the agenda for the 15th at noon - now, there is a field trip to VI planned for the afternoon - 3 - 5 pm - and at this late date, we are involved in coordinating something - see doing a talking circle on the VI vision and the plan for the Indigenous Centre - with GWC, KW, hopefully you, perhaps Douglas Cardinal - so writing to say we hope you will be able to participate. Kirby expects to be able to be there.

WC is ok but still recovering from the past month - it has taken a bit of a toll - will have to have his heart monitored on the 10th - it is a bit slow and erratic. But he still keeps busy!

Thanks! Romola

.....

12 July 6, 2009 at 8.51 pm
To Donald.Gibson@pc.gc.ca, Keri.Spink@pc.gc.ca, Brian.Grimsey@pc.gc.ca; cc Alan.latourelle@pc.gc.ca, Gilbert Witeduck; Kirby Whiteduck; Bill Sliuman; Max Finkelstein; Ottawa Riverkeeper; Larry Graham; Bcc Larry McDermott; Paul Dewar

Dear friends,

This is a note to say that Grandfather William Commanda was glad to participate in some of the activities of the 6th Heritage River Conference. We would also like to thank you

for the beautiful prints.

We were glad to have the opportunity to share with some of your participants the vision for the Indigenous Centre at Victoria Island, and were glad *he* was well enough to be there with us. He would very much like to know what participants thought about the experience - Perhaps Cam McNair (I hope I have his name right) will have some feedback about that for us.

It was a special experience for Elder Commanda to be there at Victoria Island with the Sacred Fire Keeper Elder Peter Decontie and Chief Gilbert Whiteduck from his community in Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg, Quebec, and Chief Kirby Whiteduck from Pikwakanagan First Nations in Ontario, and Monique Renaud, who has coordinated winter water ceremonies at Victoria Island over the past six years; and, at the age of ninety five, share his passion for this special meeting place with visitors from across the country, including some First Nations peoples. Intriguingly enough, on March 21, the date of Elder Commanda's first *Sustainable Relationships* workshop, *Le Droit* featured an article entitled *Une rivière à la recherche d'une famille*; during the Heritage River commemorations, we were glad to see the Algonquins from both sides of the Kichissippi meet at the sacred site of the ancestral fires with others who are also passionate about river stewardship.

We would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge Bill Sluiman's support and coordination throughout the field trip.

Although he was not able to be there at the Ottawa Riverkeepers canoe trip, Elder Commanda's spirit was very much there with his friends, as it has been over the years since the inception of Heritage River Day. A former recipient of the Bill Mason Award for River Conservation, he was especially pleased to witness Max Finkelstein being honoured at the Conference Banquet. He was glad to have been a part of the effort to designate the Ottawa River a heritage river, and while he has known the time for that is not yet, he sees that that journey has indeed commenced.

We are attaching his remarks offered at the Banquet for your records.

May we also take the opportunity to invite you to the annual *Circle of All Nations* Gathering at his home in Maniwaki, Quebec, scheduled for July 31, August 1 and 2. He hosted the first gathering there in 1969! Please check his website for more information.

Thank you for including Elder Commanda in your program. His is not an easy role, bridging his Indigenous heritage and responsibilities and his broader humanist outreach; he hopes that the Sacred Chaudière Site will become that place of convergence for all within the heart of the country very soon, with Indigenous Peoples occupying their rightful place in the centre, and he asks for your support of this work. He sends his very best wishes to each of you, and will continue to pray for your efforts on behalf of the watersheds of North America.

Sincerely,

Romola
Coordinator
Circle of All Nations
506 Stratas Court
Kanata, On K2L 3K7
613-599-8385
819-449-2668

<http://web.mac.com/circleofallnations>

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13. Updated March 9, 2009

**Greetings from Grandfather (Dr.) William Commanda, OC
Algonquin Elder, Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg
Founder, Circle of All Nations
6th Canadian River Heritage Conference
Great Rivers Rendezvous Event
Canadian Museum of Civilization
June 16th 2009**

I am pleased to offer you greetings at this 6th Canadian River Heritage Conference on the banks of the mighty river that gave birth to the Canada we now know, the river my ancestors knew as the Mighty *Kichissippi*, the focus of many trails from across Turtle Island, and the convergence point for waters from the four directions at the Sacred *Akikpautik*, the pipe bowl waterfalls, now known - but scarcely seen and revered - as the Chaudière Falls.

I, like you, have been deeply concerned about the plight of the watersheds of this land, over many decades. In 1987, during the Constitutional Debates, when the voice of Indigenous Peoples was first really heard in this country, and I raised concerns about the pollution of our waters, lands and air to the country's leaders, saying,

“We depend on you to remedy this before the end of time”. But we continued to advocate for Mother Earth, and in 1990, I took my prayers to the Pre Rio Earth Summit preparations in France. I believe the prayers of the Indigenous Peoples lie behind Agenda 21.

In 1996, with the release of the *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*, I asked our federal and political leaders if they would be prepared to drink the waters of the Ottawa River, asserting my conviction that the safety of our waters is inextricably linked with the survival of Aboriginal Peoples.

In 2004, at my Annual *Circle of All Nations* Gathering, we had innovative and inspirational presentations on water restoration, and in November 2006, we ignited a special prayer for the Ottawa River at our *WaterLife* Workshop.

In December 2006, at the Minister’s Round Table on the Species at Risk Act, hosted by Environment Canada, I offered a prayer for an awakening to the plight of Mother Earth.

In scarcely a week, Canada moved from international criticism on its stance on the environment to a national awareness of the global environmental crisis.

I do not mention these things to dramatize my efforts; I mention them because I believe Indigenous Peoples maintain a sacred tie with the land of our ancestors, and Mother Earth’s healing is inextricably connected with our survival, our health, our unique knowledge and our prayers.

As our Elders die, as we loose our connections with our lands and life blood and ancient sacred sites, as our languages and ways of knowing are obliterated, so we lose the ability to connect with Mother Earth, and her struggles impact us all – and this is evident not only in our environmental crises but in our national and international social, mental and physical health turmoil.

Since we reclaimed our connection with the Ottawa River in November 2006, she has revealed the depth of her struggles with pollution and contaminants with fearful regularity – and now Chalk River, at the location of the sacred Oiseau Rock Site, consumes global attention. The ancient fish revered by my ancestors, the American Eel, has raised its cry to our attention.

It is time for a deep shift in our relationship with this special river.

I have been engaged in a prayer for the Heritage River Strategy since its inception in 2003, and I was honoured by the presentation of the Bill Mason River Conservation Award at the 2004 Rivers Conference; I joined with many of you in the Boreal Rendezvous experience; I have supported the effort to designate the Ottawa a heritage river, while at the same time pointing out that the river spans my ancestral home lands in both Ontario and Quebec, and urging federal and

provincial leadership to facilitate the engagement of Quebec in the effort to honour and protect this magnificent river, one of the grandest in North America, and the heritage river of my ancestors; I was even prepared to accept, like you, that a half a loaf was better than no bread, and a partial designation might begin a process of honouring and protecting this river, but the Ottawa River has determined otherwise, and so now some are disappointed that she is not being designated a Heritage River at this conference.

We have more work to do, and I pray that Algonquins will be a more vital part of this effort. All of us and our children and grandchildren will benefit from such an engagement, and it will be a strong symbolic message of *Ginawadaganuc*, we are all connected, emerging from the heart of the country.

I have worked long to see the establishment of an Indigenous Centre at Victoria Island on the Ottawa River, where the voice of Aboriginal Peoples will join with others in healing our relationship with Mother Earth and inspire the revitalization of *Sustainable Relationships* everywhere. I hope you will all help me with this task.

Best wishes for an inspiring conference.

William Commanda

circleofallnations@sympatico.ca

www.circleofallnations.ca (General Information)

www.asinabka.com (Indigenous Centre Information)

<http://web.mac.com/circleofallnations> (Elder Commanda's Recent Activities)

Mailing Address

506 Stratas Court, Kanata, Ontario, K2L3K7 613-599-8385

Home Address

231 Pitobig Mikan, Maniwaki, Quebec J9E 3B1 819-449-2668

14. RE UPDATE Invitation extended by The Wolf Project for Their Excellencies to participated in a Paddle for Peace canoe Trip with William Commanda from the Canadian Museum of Civilization ‘

To Max Finkelstein; Jay Morrison; James Raffan – plus 20;

Hi,

Though we have been in touch with the office of the GG, we have not yet received

confirmation regarding participation; and you may have heard that there will be a new GG taking office on October 1, and so September 21 falls at a very busy time for them and this may impact the decision making.

I am writing to see if you are all still interested in participating in a Paddle for Peace canoe trip to commemorate the UN Day of Peace - so we can decide whether to go ahead and make plans for the event. We see it as an opportunity to ignite a prayer for peace and the environment/water, and showcase our individual projects (displays etc), canoe making demo, have a concert, food, relationship building and socialization and nurturing the seeds for peace.

And, by they way, we have mentioned this activity to many other folk who are interested too.

We would be grateful to hear from you by July 30. Many Thanks!

PS Check out the invitation to Grandfather's Annual Circle of All Nations Gathering - August 6, 7 and 8 - and our Photo News update on <http://web.mac.com/circleofallnations>

All the best for the summer!

Take good care,

Romola

Coordinator / Coordonnatrice
Circle of All Nations / Cercle de toutes les nations
506 Stratas Court
Kanata, ON K2L 3K7
613-599-8385
819-449-2668

<http://web.mac.com/circleofallnations>

Updated July, 2010

An Officer and a Gentleman - What a Lifetime Achiever!

Begin forwarded message:

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15 From: Romola <circleofallnations@sympatico.ca>
Date: March 23, 2010 12:20:58 AM EDT (CA)
To: Max Finkelstein <dowfink@rogers.com>, Jay Morrison
<jaymorrison@rogers.com>, james.raffan@canoemuseum.net, Larry McDermott
<larryplentycanada@gmail.com>, Centre Ethno Culturel 8ATAPI
<centreethnoculturel@hotmail.com>, Bill Allen <heritage1@magma.ca>, George Fenn

<gafenn@rogers.com>, Rebecca Mason and/or Reid McLachlan <redcanoe@istar.ca>, Phil Weir <philweir@rogers.com>, Marcel Labelle <mahi_gan@hotmail.com>, Stephen Augustine <Stephen.Augustine@civilisations.ca>, Larry Graham <larrygraham@vianet.ca>, lkitchikeesic@yahoo.com

Cc: Beatrice <beatrice19@rogers.com>, PETER STOCKDALE <peterstockdale@rogers.com>

Subject: Invitation extended by The Wolf Project for Their Excellencies to participate in a Paddle for Peace canoe trip with William Commanda from the Canadian Museum of Civilization to Victoria Island this summer

Hi!

I connected with most of you regarding a canoe event this summer, and you will see in the attachment such an activity is proposed.

You will note that we have taken the liberty to state that we would be inviting you to paddle with us in a **Paddle for Peace** event to be held this summer, possibly on September 21, in celebration of the United Nations International Day of Peace, or depending on the availability and schedule of their Excellencies, some time over the next few months. We would paddle from the Museum of Civilization to Victoria Island for a picnic and concert; organizations would have the opportunity to showcase their work and passions.

Please let me know if you are interested in animating this activity, and we will keep you informed of discussions, developments and dates.

PS - William Commanda heads to Regina to receive his Lifetime Achievement Award at the National Aboriginal Achievement Awards on March 26!

He sends his best wishes.

Take good care,

Romola

Coordinator / Coordonnatrice
Circle of All Nations / Cercle de toutes les nations
506 Stratas Court
Kanata, ON K2L 3K7
613-599-8385
819-449-2668

<http://web.mac.com/circleofallnations>

Updated Nov. 2009 / Mise à jour nov. 2009

An Officer and a Gentleman - What a Lifetime Achiever!

16 WATER – A CIRCLE OF ALL NATIONS REFLECTION ON WILLIAM COMMANDA AND THE SPIRIT OF WATER, FOR MARCH 22, 2014

Water Spirit blessed us in abundance on March 22, in a dramatic snow fall, after days of sunshine - it reminded me of one legend Grandfather shared - Spirit of the South had headed in too early one year, and Spirit of the North was caused to shiver and shed his fleas! Note how Indigenous Peoples valued the cold winters, when all germs were eliminated in anticipation of the new season of growth.

Prayer for water, joy in water, valuing and respecting water – this was a central feature throughout Grandfather William Commanda’s long life. He was born to this water-based heritage. His ancestors were the nomads – the *Mamiwinini* – who travelled the water highways of North America in their iconic birch bark canoes.

He believed they were descendants of the ancient Maritime hunters of the North Atlantic Seaboard, who, over ten thousand years ago, arrived here after the Wisconsin Ice Age, and left evidence of their presence on the retreating shorelines of the ancient Champlain Sea, right here in Asinabka, the place of bare rock, the place of glare rock. The capital city of Canada now stands at the confluence of the primary river of the territory of the Algonquins: the Mighty Kichissippi, the Ottawa, flowing west to east, joined by its major tributaries, the Gatineau from the north and the Rideau from the south, showing in the geography how, despite historical division, Quebec and Ontario are connected.

Nature’s own Medicine Wheel is etched on this special sacred part of the Mother Earth, centered and spun by the circular rapids, the *Akikpautik*, the Chaudieres. This place held deep spiritual significance to the ancient peoples, and the earliest newcomers to the continent witnessed the homage paid to the boiling waters. The *Akikpautik* symbolized the bowl of the sacred pipe, with its constant spray taking the prayers of the people to the cosmic creator in perpetuity. The underground rock formations, the karsts, and the underground rivers sang messages from the womb of Mother Earth at this sacred place, and the thundering water drum of the Chaudiere Rapids called the people to the source.

Born on the confluence of the Desert and Gatineau rivers to his water based heritage, William’s mother helped her little toddler fashion tiny birch bark canoes to sail on the mud streams and gullies that the spring rains would pound into his yard – he spent countless hours playing with his canoes, every lesson about the movement of water,

impacted by wind, rocks, plants, sun, weather, implanted in his psyche, remembered with as much vividness at ninety as when a toddler.

As a child, his mother's brother, Uncle Andre, taught him how to make proper birch bark canoes and throughout his life, this ancient craft gave him his independence and strength – but that is a separate story.

His passionate concern for Water was roused when he would challenge tourists who dumped gasoline and debris into the pristine lakes and rivers of his ancestors in the days of the old fishing and gaming clubs. Later, in the forties, the interventions of the Hopi tribes at the fledging United Nations meetings alerted him to water issues at a continental level – there in their arid homeland, these Indigenous Peoples, who knew the critical importance of the underground water table to their survival, were already raising alarm bells about water. How prescient were they – today, it is believed by many that the wars of the 21st Century will about water.

In 1987, William Commanda brought his concerns to the national public attention at the time of the Constitutional Debates organized by Prime Minister Mulroney. It was also the first time he presented the Sacred Wampum Belts publicly – these are the ancient mnemonic record keeping and prophetic artifacts created from quahog shell by the peoples over many centuries. As he raised the Three Figure Welcoming and Sharing Wampum Belt from 1700, instead of the anticipated exhortation on Aboriginal Rights to the political leadership, he instead talked about the pollution of the waters, earth and air, and stated “we depend on you to remedy this before the end of time!” (William Commanda's archival tapes).

But he did not – depend on the Prime Minister or the Premiers, that is. In 1990, he did three days of pipe ceremonies at the Pre-Rio Earth Summit conference hosted by President Mitterand in France – here when scientists and environmentalists were seeking to manage the resources of Mother Earth more judiciously in the face of devastating global environment challenges, Indigenous Peoples, under William Commanda's spiritual guidance, were igniting a fire for relationship with Mother Earth. In 1993, he took his Wampum Belts and messages about the looming environmental crises to the first United Nations Conference of Indigenous Peoples, one they called the *Cry of the Earth*.

In the nineties, after a decade of damning justice inquiries in every province and territory across the country, and after the OKA crisis, Canada initiated the Royal Commission on

Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) – and after its exhaustive work, it released its reports on Victoria Island in 1996. William Commanda was there – and his intervention was singular – he asked the government whether they would be prepared to drink the waters of the Ottawa River. People were startled – but few, not even the Indigenous peoples, understood the enormity of his statement – for him, the survival and strengthening of the First Peoples and the transformation of their relationship with Canada was grounded in a transformation of the relationship with Water.

He told people repeatedly that Water was a critical natural element that we could not survive without for long. He described the living Gaia, his Mother Earth – the rivers were her veins, he said; he described the Earth’s natural cycles – snow thaws and spring rains flushed out the debris accumulated in the waters in Nature’s natural cleansing processes – he bemoaned the dams stifling the movement of the mighty rivers of North America at every turn – and especially so at the Sacred Chaudiere Rapids. He noted the eight thousand barrages impeding the movement of water and contributing to the decimation of the ancient Eels, fish precious to his ancestors, throughout the St. Lawrence River Watershed. Now when we hear how the Hoover Dam is no longer able to sustain the Las Vegas community onto the foreseeable future and how artificial floods have to be created on the Colorado River to replicate the seasonal cleansing inherent to the intelligence of Nature’s Law, or about the impacts of invasive species, some begin to understand the enormity of William Commanda’s wisdom, and the wisdom of Indigenous Elders more deeply.

Ever the leader and teacher, he began rekindling people’s relationships with water at multiple levels. At the 2002 Circle of All Nations Gathering at Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg, we had a workshop on Dr. Emoto’s innovative studies of water crystals - showing they changed patterns in concert with energies impacting them – Indigenous Peoples remembered their ancestral knowledge of this phenomena in their prayer and offering to the spirit of Water (and other forces in nature). The 2004 Gathering was dedicated to Water - there were with multiple presentations, including the creation of a living stream learning project – and some of the work was animated by a delegation of 30 Japanese environmentalists and healers. In 2006, our Elder hosted the Waterlife Gathering in Ottawa – it fired up energies for water stewardship on the Ottawa, and quite literally – to today, participants remember the smudging and pipe ceremony of the Algonquin Elders at the Travel Lodge which set off the fire alarms – they did not stop praying as the firemen swarmed around; and the Full and New Moon ceremonies he initiated, and the Equinox

and Solstice events at Victoria Island have gradually awakened the Indigenous Peoples and citizens at large to the cosmic forces impacting water. The Waterlife Gathering drew attention to sewage spills, and the subsequent fining of the City of Ottawa led to the formal creation of Ottawa Riverkeeper organization. Interventions at the National Capital Commission led to joint water management planning by the cities of Gatineau and Ottawa – yes, William Commanda was awakening people to the River in its ancient form as zone of confluence, so different from its historical enlistment as border and separator.

William Commanda impacted on other water related matters in the region and beyond. He challenged Domtar's plans to expand hydro development at the Sacred Chaudiere Falls – he wanted the dam freed from its bondage as a symbol of the Industrial Age. He engaged in the challenge of uranium mining in the Ardoch/Sharbot Lake area in Ontario; he made presentation to the commission enquiring into the creation of a mega dump at Danford Lake in Quebec, and influenced their decision to stop the project; he added his voice to the call to place the Eel on the endangered species list, (seven eels were found at Victoria Island exactly a year after William Commanda's death); he prayed to protect the migration route of the Loons through Moira Lake area in Ontario; he prayed at Source Gabriel, the source of the drinking water of Val d'Or and area, the city opened by his Uncle Gabriel Commanda - and he served as Honorary Chair in the effort to designate the Ottawa River a Heritage River. He prayed for the waters at Sept Isles at the mouth of the Mighty St. Lawrence, and also, marking the territory of his ancestors to the home of the Quahog Shellfish of the Wampum Belts in the Cape Cod waters, he conducted Pipe Ceremony on a boat at Boston Harbour, (transforming forever the Moby Dick images of the American psyche in my mind!)

On my first visit through his community with him in 1997, William Commanda took me to Cedar Lake – at a certain spot, there was a spring, and a tin cup hung on a crook of a stick – here you could drink the pure waters emerging from the breast of Mother Earth – this was very significant to him. When we visited the spot again a few years ago, there was a sign warning us against drinking the waters. So much has changed over such a short time. Because of contaminants now found in the rivers and lakes of his homeland, he himself had to contend with bottled water in his home – who knows its implications in the kidney disease that took his life, or with the great grandson born with one kidney. Yes, things are changing fast, and not yet for the better.

When I was struggling hard to understand megadumps, William Commanda instead insisted on going out to buy me a kayak – he sent me to the water, to understand what it

was really all about – and as I paddle, I find the journey on the waters offers me endless lessons. William knew what a teacher water is. His people knew intimately how water worked, how it moved, how it shifted with the seasons, how it sustained life. Science tells us life was birthed in the waters – we must reclaim a respectful relationship with this critical force.

Yes, water inspired William Commanda throughout his long life, and developed a vision at a most sacred water place to guide us on our journey. The vision was to create a space for people to gather and reconnect with nature at the heart of his ancestral homeland, within the National Capital Region; to free the Chaudiere Dam as a statement of symbolic reconciliation with nature; to replant Chaudiere Island with Indigenous trees and create a *Central Park* and nature sanctuary for the public at large; to acknowledge the historical development in the area; and to entrench the Indigenous peoples in their ancient meeting grounds, and in the hearts and psyche of the people of this country and beyond. He believed that the capital city held a tremendous responsibility in this regard, and had a critical leadership role to play, of global importance. He was grateful to know of their endorsement of his vision in 2010, before he died.

Over the past two decades, William Commanda showed us that embracing him, just as he embraced all in his Motherland, was not a fearful thing. He became endeared to Ottawa, and he accepted a Key to the City in 2006 – in return, he offered her a legacy vision, a vision he knew would include and benefit all; in that vision we see both the reflections of his ancestors and the future of our children.

Many of us were ignited by the vision and work of William Commanda. Hence, we continue to keep vigil at the Sacred Chaudiere Site, fanning the embers of William Commanda’s eternal prayer at the waters edge.

Ginawadaganuc! Megwetch!

Romola www.circleofallnations.ca

17 **From:** Romola <circleofallnations@sympatico.ca>
Subject: **Petition to List the American Eel as Endangered under the Special at Risk Act, and Implement a National Recovery Plan immediately.**
Date: March 17, 2016 at 6:30:43 PM EDT
To: xglf-saralep@dfo-mpo.gc.ca

Content-Type: multipart/alternative; boundary="Apple-Mail=_AB8BA3B5-9469-41DB-8670-AB363AF18F16"

Message-Id: <613701AC-EEE9-4EC4-9B82-8E1A36DAB98C@sympatico.ca>

Mime-Version: 1.0 (Mac OS X Mail 7.3 \ (1878.6\))

X-Priority: 1

X-Smtp-Server: smtphm.sympatico.ca:circleofallnations@sympatico.ca

References: <C48E4505-4631-41C1-A5D4-0DE5006CDB6A@sympatico.ca>

X-Universally-Unique-Identifier: 919A0EDB-31AE-4861-8065-AC8D43B69D76

March 17, 2016

Attention: xglf-saralep@dfo-mpo.gc.ca

Fisheries and Oceans Canada Gulf Region, Species at Risk Programs

343 Universite Ave., Moncton, NB. E1C 9B6

Greetings,

Re: American Eel Consultation, 2016

I am writing to urge the federal government to proceed without delay in listing the American Eel as Endangered under the Special at Risk Act, and to in implementing a National Recovery Plan immediately.

1. I attach a bilingual note on the American Eel Manashkadosh, prepared as educational material by the Circle of All Nations, founded by late Algonquin Elder Dr. William Commanda, OC. I paste a copy of his original intervention to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, from March 31, 2007; it is also included in the pdf file below.
2. I note that seven eels were found at the Sacred Chaudiere Site, Victoria Island, exactly one year after his death. This is a place Dr. Commanda envisioned as an eco-think tank/research institute, part of an Asinabka National Indigenous Centre (www.asinabka.com), to encourage deliberation on environmental matters such as this one.
3. I note also that the Late Donald Marshall Junior joined Elder Commanda to advance the vision for the Asinabka National Indigenous Centre, and that the “nomad” fish featured in his legal challenges regarding Indigenous rights and resources. Both these important contemporary Indigenous leaders also petitioned for the removal of the hydro dam at the Sacred Chaudiere Site - in part to protect the American Eel. In this regard it is noted that students at Algonquin College in Pembroke retrieved eels mangled in turbines in that portion of the Ottawa River this past year.
4. I also attach a link a video clip where Elder Commanda talks about the plight of the Eel in his own words - the words about the Eel commence at 2.37. This was obviously a very special fish of tremendous importance to his ancestors.

[grandfather william commanda](#)
talks about Victoria Island Ottawa Canada
[youtube.com](#)

5. EMAILED MESSAGE RE CONSULTATION on American Eel March 31, 2007
William Commanda Intervention in Consultations on the American Eel as a Species at Risk Department of Fisheries and Oceans Sent March 31, 2007
Copied to Bill Allen, Archaeologist, Alan Latourelle, Parks Canada, Meredith Brown, River Keepers, and Larry Graham, Ottawa Heritage River Designation (noted, RVT Feb 7, 2014)

Dear Pooi-Leng Wong:

I wish to add my name to the list of people petitioning for the designation of the American Eel as a Species at Risk.

I am a 93 year old Algonquin of the Ottawa River Watershed, and I currently also serve as Honorary Chair on the Ottawa River Heritage Designation Committee. I have been deeply concerned with the devastating transformation of this watershed and areas beyond throughout the course of my lifetime, and I have been increasingly actively engaged in efforts to promote respect for Mother Earth and

all that inhabit her, over the past twenty years. This effort was in part recognized by the Canadian Heritage Rivers System, when, in 2004, I was presented with the Bill Mason Conservation Award.

Over the past ten years, I have also been involved in developing an integrated vision for an international environmentally focussed healing and peace building centre at the sacred meeting place of my

ancestors, Asinabka, site of the Chaudière Falls in Ottawa, a centre to advance respect for Mother Earth, Indigenous Peoples and all others, and in my mind, these are interrelated matters of grave

concern for the world. Last November, I organized a Water Life Workshop, in part to advance this effort, but also to encourage better stewardship of the the Ottawa River. This led me to an effort

to dissuade Domtar Inc. from expanding the Hydro Electric Plant at the Chaudière Falls. Amongst other concerns, I have been upset by evidence of the destructive impact of turbines on eels in some graphic photographs.

I believe it is is crucial importance that we all reexamine our invasive and destructive relationship with Mother Earth and all her creatures, and many are beginning to hear this cry. Every day, it

seems we hear of the desperate state of yet another species, and the current focus on sharks highlights the interrelated ramifications of the destruction of individual species.

At this point I am raising my voice concerning the plight of the American Eel. The eel has been of spiritual, nutritional and material importance to the Indigenous Peoples of the eastern seaboard, and to my ancestors of the Ottawa River Watershed, since time immemorial, has played a role in the Donald Marshall Junior struggle for the recognition of indigenous fishing rights, and I believe eel spirit is intrinsic to the sacred Seven Fire Prophecy Wampum Belt that I have carried for the people for over thirty six years. It is this prophecy that tells us that humanity is now at across roads, and that we need to regenerate our relationship with Mother Earth and each other, and it is a message I delivered at the December 2006 Minster's Round Table on Species at Risk; a short few months later, we all alert to the issues of global environmental and human crisis. I am taking the liberty of attaching a paper prepared by Archaeologist Bill Allen, who is currently undertaking studies in support of my effort to advance a vision for the Chaudière site, for a more specific review of critical concerns on this matter.

I look forward to being apprised of development on this file.

Sincerely,
William Commanda
Algonquin Elder
www.circleofallnations.ca

On behalf of the Circle of All Nations and Dr. Commanda's Legacy work, I urge the federal government to proceed without delay in listing the American Eel as Endangered under the Species at Risk Act, and to in implementing a National Recovery Plan immediately.

Sincerely,
Romola V. Thumbadoo

Coordinator, Circle of All Nations
Legacy Work of Indigenous Elder
Dr. William Commanda, OC

www.circleofallnations.ca
www.asinabka.com

18 2016 November Correspondence regarding CPAWS Fundraiser

Hi Romola, I was pleased to see you walking in last night. I apologise for not chatting more, we were quite a bit behind schedule setting up and I seem to have been caught up in every little decision.

It is a great idea to make a gift of Grandfather's work. I know the McGuffins will appreciate it. Joanie called me this morning from the road home and particularly mentioned Annie's remarks as being a highlight for her. I do not know what we have left at the office but I will be seeing John today or very

soon. I have the impression that there were bids above retail price for Grandfather's book. I will be in touch to let you know what we are doing. thank you so much Jay

From: Romola Vasantha Thumbadoo <romolavasantha@gmail.com>

Date: November 3, 2016 at 3:30 AM

Hi Jay,

Just a quick note to say thank you for inviting me to the CPAWS event yesterday - It was a great evening and I was glad to have come. So strange, but I was doing some filing the day we talked, and I laid my hands on an agenda for a 2002 CPAWS meeting that Grandfather Commanda blessed - in preparation for the Boreal Rendezvous - I shall scan it and share it with you some time. He then served as Honorary Elder for the actual initiative. His prayers sandwich the text and photos in the book James Raffan compiled after that 2004 summer project. I think it was an Ann or Amy from the Wakefield area, a former South African, who coordinated the initiative. I am not sure if that was an initiative of the national organization.

The McGuffins shared a wonderful experience last night and that was a super video - I got a copy of Painted Land. I am sorry I did not get to meet them; I am writing to suggest you give them a copy of our book or dvd. I would also like it best, actually, if you gave the copies of the books and dvds to special guests or staff, in memory of Grandfather Commanda - he took a great interest in the work of CPAWS over the years. I recall SNAP doing a presentation on the Dumoine at the Circle of All Nations Waterlilfe Workshop in 2006; and I remember your outreach to the Kitigan Zibi community at that time.

Anyway, congratulations of a great event yesterday, and all the best with the on-going work.

Best,

Romola

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19. We are not unmindful of the massive and unprecedented flooding of the Ottawa River this spring. It will be the subject of a separate note. But you can find some of our photos and comments on our Facebook Page William Commanda Legacy – Asinabka.

BUT WE NOTE THAT THE SACRED SITE IS RENENDERED BEREFT OF PRAYER AND CEREMONY SUCH AS GRANDFATHER COMMANDA ANIMATED IN THE HEARTS AND MINDS OF SO MANY INDIGENOUS AND NON INDIGENOUS PEOPLES. BUT WE ARE STIIL GUIDED BY HIS PRAYER THAT WE COME TOGETHER WITH ONE HEART AND ONE MIND, ONE LOVE AND ONE DETERMINATION, TO CREATE A CIRCLE OF ALL NATIONS, A CULTURE OF PEACE. MEGWETCH. GINAWAYDAGANUC!