

Thesis Proposal Oral Defence

The Analytical Framework
For My Thesis Proposal

Key Ideas

- My Thesis Proposal Question
- My Central Argument
- Why the Topic is Important
- The Theory Behind My Approach
- A Circle of All Nations Discourse
- Logics of Inquiry
- My Methodology
- A Foucauldian Discourse Analysis
- Time Line for Completing the Thesis

My Thesis Proposal Question

- Can an analysis of the work, thoughts and influence of William Commanda on environment, relationships and related matters contribute, through a case study, to a greater contemporary integration of this *Anicinabe* approach to knowledge generation in academic discourse on these issues?

Who is William Commanda

- William Commanda is the late Indigenous Elder of Algonquin descent, founder of the Circle of All Nations, recipient of two honorary doctorate degrees and Officer of the Order of Canada
- In 2014, University of Ottawa named a Pavillion after him

My Central Argument

- Environment, Mother Earth, was central to William Commanda's overall view of life
- His *Anicinabe* approach to environment has been influential at a global level in some microcosmic fashion since the 1990 UN Pre-Rio Earth Summit deliberations

- His *Anicinabe* approach to environment is inclusive of a singular spiritual dimension, integrated with empirical knowledge
 - (i.e. observational and experiential knowledge
 - ‘communally-analysed and confirmed’ knowledge
 - passed down over countless generations, and inclusive of
 - adaptation to changing environmental conditions

- He expressed his influential views in the contextual framework of the
 - Law of Nature, energy, motion, connection, “trickster” and evolution
 - Mother Earth as the penultimate provider, and
 - The cosmic world, key elements of fire, earth, water and air, and natural world, including stones, plants and animals as the chief instructors

... My Central Argument

- A better understanding of this Indigenous approach can lead to some level of
 - Formal integration in western academic disciplines; and
 - Co-creation of new knowledge critical for these times of massive climate change, environmental and human relational crises

Why the Topic is Important

- These are times of unprecedented global interconnection on environmental and cultural issues with profound impact across space and time
- Foundational ideas of western approaches to knowledge generation have been questioned and challenged over the past centuries, and particularly so since the seventies, in the post-modern and post-structural eras: in feminist, environmental ethics, post-colonial and post-imperial, Indigenous and critical geographical thought and critique

- With respect to environment, my research has led me to conclude that there are significant limitations to popular contemporary approaches to the environment – e.g. with environmental ethics , deep ecology, feminist geography
- Acceleration in climate change, and environmental crises of global impact attest to the need for invigorated efforts and interconnection to generate new approaches

- Since 1987, William Commanda positioned his approach to the environment in many contemporary national debates – e.g. uranium, water contamination, eels, damming, animating discussions with diverse players
- He also pointed to linkage with political and social justice issues
- Can a better understanding of his approach lead to greater integration of Indigenous approaches in western traditions?

The Theory Behind My Approach

- My thesis question must be theorized within a framework to draw out the critical elements to
 - Permit scrutiny that is theoretically grounded and viable in the western academy
 - Permit scrutiny that is empirically grounded and respects Indigenous parameters

My thesis question is both:

- Abstract (whether and how his *discourse* impacts approaches to environment and related issues) that is, it is theoretical and conceptual, dissociated from any specific entity, the specific entity having to be abstracted from concrete existence;
- Action oriented, and concrete (regarding the continued relevance and animation and emergence of the *discourse*)

A Circle of All Nations Discourse

- Over the past fifteen years, William Commanada's *Circle of All Nations* work has been developed within the conceptual framework of a version of the Medicine Wheel
- Flowing from East to South to West to North, ideas flow from vision to action to refinement to balance in an ever emergent spiral

WISDOM

HARMONY
BALANCE



Logics of Inquiry

- I position four *Logics of Inquiry* on a Medicine Wheel Conceptual Framework to illustrate my theoretical approach:
 - Performance Mapping: to explore the ideological framework and *Anicinabe* conceptual underpinnings of his thoughts/ideas;
 - Historical/Dialectical: to ground his story and its inseparability from contemporary history
 - Phenomenological: to substantiate an interpretative approach to analysis
 - Cybercartographic: to examine polyphonous and multi-dimensional reporting, reflective and emergent elements



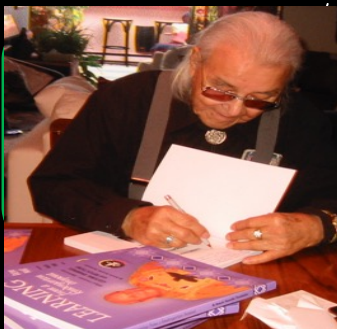
Cyber-
cartography



Phenomeno-
logical

Logics of
Inquiry

Performance
Mapping



Historical
Dialectical



My Methodology

- My overall framework is *Post Structural*, questioning and deconstructing foundational structures as social, mediated and constituted in discourse; and exploring the plurality of meaning
- The principal lens is *Foucauldian Discourse Analysis* and its examination of knowledge, power, truth and truth effects
- I propose a discourse analysis of William Commanda's approach to extract a better understanding of its workings
- **My hypothesis is that forms of discourse can be created and made relevant beyond those determined by power and knowledge embedded in institutional structures of position, authority, hierarchy, and capital**

Further,

- Such discourse can also incorporate elements that contravene the discursive elements in conventional discourses
- These alternative discursive elements can present a coherence and integrity that is experienced as a particular discourse at a distance from the very discursive structures within which they are generated
- A preliminary overview of the Commanda discourse reveals that it is creative, dynamic, unstructured, unpredictable and emergent – but it appears to hold an internal logic and is recognizable as an entity unto itself

**A CIRCLE OF ALL NATIONS
A CULTURE OF PEACE**
 FOUNDED BY
WILLIAM COMMANDA
 a global eco community
 unified by values of

- RESPECT
- RESPONSIBILITY
- FORGIVENESS
- COMPASSION

focussed on advancing

- INDIGENOUS WISDOM
- RESPECT FOR MOTHER EARTH
- RACIAL HARMONY
- SOCIAL JUSTICE

Recipient of A Wolf + Harmony Awards
 Can you see his work in action?

**ASINABKA
SACRED CHAUDIERE
SITE**

- Indigenous Centre
- Peace Building
- Eco City Park
- HISTORIC PARK

Reconciliation



THE LEGACY OF ALGONQUIN ELDER
 L'HERITAGE DE LAINE 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
 coeur, 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 www.asinabka.com

**An Iteration of
the
Commanda
Discourse**

SPIRIT of the NORTH
 WISDOM OF THE OLDER SIBLING

WILLIAM COMMANDA RECIPIENT OF '98 WOLF PROJECT CORONA BOREALIS

**FROM the HEART of POLAR BEAR
A MESSAGE**

**TROPHY they
THINK ARE CREATED!**

ALL TROPHIES ARE CREATED
 SAVE THE BEST FOR YOUR
 TARIU OTHERS 2

OTHER
 TROPHY
 ANIMAL
 SPIRITS

HAVE CARE TO WALK
 A POLAR BEAR'S
 ANTA CORONA

SOULS
 FROM THE
 AMERICAN
 EAT

SNOW SHOES
 IN THE OLD DAYS
 WILLIAM WALKED 50
 MILES A DAY ON HIS
 SNOW SHOES. AND
 ALL THE COMMUNITY
 WAS HEALTHY + FIT

TODAY WE HAVE THE OLYMPICS +
 ELITE SPORTS + ELITE SPORTS
 EVERYBODY WORRIES ABOUT HEALTH

**WATER FALLS
of the
SPIRIT OF WATER**

- ONE OF THE FOUR SACRED ELEMENTS
- CONTAMINATED, POLLUTED + DEPLETED EVERYWHERE

Dr. Commanda works on water of former Indigenous lands in an area that is impacted by prayer

WILLIAM COMMANDA SAYS
 "I believe Mother Earth is a living creature. She has body + spirit + veins. The rivers are her veins. If they are blocked everywhere, cancers, poisons build up; eventually they kill. Dams, motor vehicles, foreign animals, fertilizers, pesticides, raw sewage are attacks on the blood of Mother Earth. She is fighting back. AS NATURE'S LAW"

PARKS of the BOREAL FOREST

- 70% OF NATIONAL PARKS WERE CREATED AT THE INSISTENCE OF ABORIGINAL PEOPLES
- THE BOREAL RENDEZVOUS IS EMBEDDED IN THE PRAYERS OF OUR ELDER

WE ARE LIVING IN TIMES of PROPHECY

ONLY AFTER THEN IS NOW

THE LAST TREE IS CUT LOGGING IN DECLINE

RIVER IS POISONED OTAWA RIVER PANIC

LAST FISH CAUGHT ANCIEN TEELENDANGER THEN YOU WALK AND

MONEY CAN'T BE BENE GLOBAL CRISIS

WILLIAM COMMANDA IS THE TIRELESS VOICE FOR THE EARTH BLED SUDAN FIVE WALK FOR THE EARTH (LIFE) BLOOD TO FIGHT A FIGHT AN INDIGENOUS CAMPAIGN

HISTORY - ANCIENT HISTORY

well beyond 4000 years

- BILLIONS OF YEARS AGO, THE MOST ANCIENT ROCKS EMERGED HERE
- + 5000 YEARS AGO => MEETING PLACE OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES OF N.A.
- 400 YEARS AGO, WILLIAM'S ANCESTORS PRAYED HERE AS CHAMPLAIN WATCHED

IN THE 1500s, there were plus 100,000,000 peoples in America

DECIMATED BY ORIGINAL GERMAN WARFARE + NEAR GENOCIDE

IN THE 1800s THE LAND TRANSFORMATION BEGAN =>

- FUR TRADE
- LOGGING
- DAMS
- HYDRO
- NUCLEAR ENERGY

ie. RESOURCES OF WILLIAM'S ANCESTORS GAVE BIRTH TO CANADA

**CANOE
Spirit of MAMTOU**

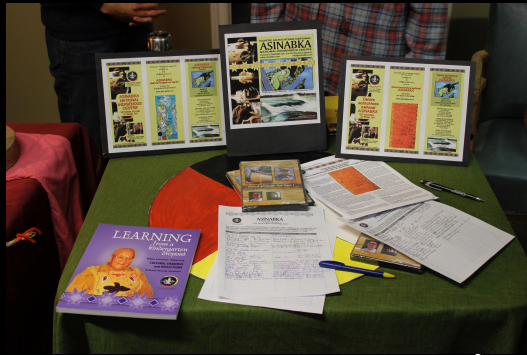
Where was Manitou before he created the Earth?
 In his Canoe, which was floating in the skies
 The Indigenous Canoe - the penthimate symbolic wonder of Canada

- Integrating the physical + metaphysical
- Integrating Spirit, Art, Craft + Inequality with the practical + sustainable

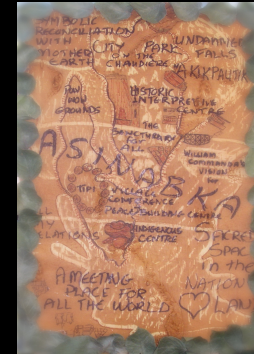
The Metaphor for Navigating the Journey of one's Life

A Foucauldian Discourse Analysis

- This lens will be employed to scrutinize and analyze William Commananda's approach to the environment
- The primary methods/tools to permit focused analysis are
 - Geo-Narrative
 - Narrative
 - Critical reflexivity
 - Cyber-cartographical mapping
 - These will be complemented by NVIVO data analysis



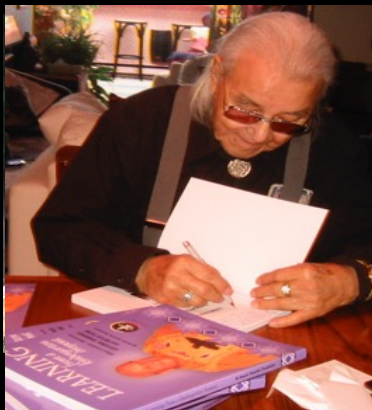
Cyber-
cartographical
mapping



Critical
Reflexivity

Primary
Methods

GeoNarrative



Narrative



Contribution to Knowledge Generation

- Despite the rhetoric, very little is understood about Indigenous relationship with environment, its integration with all other thinking, and its relevance for contemporary times and global issues
- Many historical and cross cultural barriers impede understanding and sharing

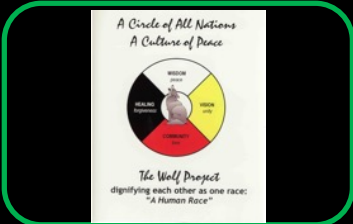
- William Commanda is acknowledged for his voice of peace building and reconciliation, grounded in his Indigenous rootedness on the land, yet connected with diverse others
- These others animate his environmental stewardship and peace building efforts
- His seed planting efforts in a range of areas appear to have sprouted into multiple activities
- Is this so, what did he do and how did he do this?

- An analysis of his work as proposed can contribute to a deeper understanding of the discourse he created and the critical role others play in the germination and manifestation of his projects
- This will generate respect for the Indigenous knowledge generation process and its place for bridging and co-creating in an increasingly inter-connected world

- William Commanda stressed the relationship theme at the 1990 United Nations Pre Rio Earth Summit
- Twenty five years later, three things predominate environmental issues
 - the voice and place of the Indigenous and
 - western domination in a “world on fire”
 - global connections

- I believe that a better understanding of William Commanda's unique bridge-building discourse can contribute to
 - greater integration of approaches in view of the ever accelerating environmental challenges facing a growing human population
 - in a world of climate change, disease, violence and environmental crises increasingly recognized as being created by humans

Others were not quite "At Home"

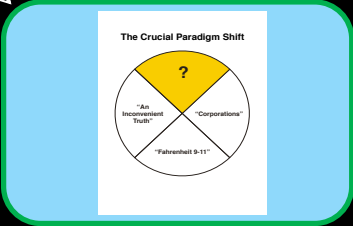
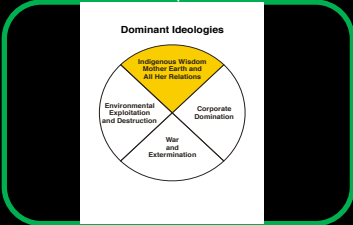
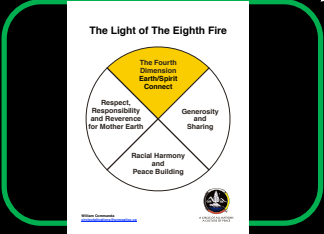


So he had to make them "relatives" so they could love his Mother Earth and all her children

William Commanda always knew he was the First Person of this Land - "I am North America"



Interrelated Goals – Racial Harmony and Peace Building and Respect for Mother Earth



Problems anticipated and addressing them

- There are three particular challenges with this work:
- i. I propose to find a place for the knowledge of an Indigenous “kindergarten dropout” in the graduate level of the western academy; this requires me:
 - - to understand western academic thinking and academic approaches to knowledge creation;
 - to deepen my understanding of William Commanada’s indigenous approach to knowledge; and
 - to articulate his approach to environment and related matters such that it is comprehensible and can spark new thinking within the academy

- ii. I myself am new to the academy and the study of geography and cartography, and I am not Indigenous; I therefore have to
 - remain focused on the academic prerequisites to executing this work effectively
 - remain focused on my commitment to William Commanda to generate a space for the serious engagement with his way of thinking, and
 - not create misunderstanding that my exposé of his *Anicinabe* thinking implies any expertise with respect to other expressions of Indigenous knowledge

- iii. William Commanda created a particular discourse in conjunction with a diversity of players
 - the research requires meticulous analysis of this informal but complex phenomena, in its past expressions, and in any emergent forms
 - players are dispersed across space and occupy a range of positions in the social/cultural framework
 - The relevance of actants, chance and *trickster* in the discourse requires critical attention

- The work occupies uncharted global space and time
- The challenge is to tell a coherent story given the interplay of the vast range of actors and actants in this particular *Commanda* zone of time and space, and
- Articulate its relevance to academic thinking

Time Line for Completing the Thesis

- I propose to complete my thesis by the summer of 2017.
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- The workplan breakdown for the next 8 school terms (two years, eight months) is as follows:
 - January to December, 2015: organizing and transcribing archival material; developing a cybercartographical atlas; learning Nvivo
 - January to August 2016 – atlas work; analysis of data
 - September to April 2017 – thesis writing; atlas work
 - April to September 2017 – thesis defense preparation

An avid student, William Commanda initiated this academic pursuit several years ago; the Kindergarten Dropout's work continues

