

Vision for Victoria Island Aboriginal Peace Centre

Good morning it is a pleasure and privilege to worship and speak with you today on a vision that resonates very much with my heart.

And to participate with you in a month of your congregation honouring First Nations, Algonquin, Métis and Inuit contributions to Canada.

Celebrating and setting aside this month for the wider recognition of Aboriginal people's important place within the fabric of Canada and their on going contributions as First People's is very important!

I personally feel very blessed that I have been part of such a process for two Sunday's experiencing worship in this way embracing Anglican and Aboriginal ways and thank Linda for inviting me and Darren Théorêt and Bev Souliere and the many others behind the scenes for such a wonderful experience.

Before I begin I would like to share a little bit of who I am so you will have some context from which I am speaking. I hope a little of what I share will resonate with you today and impact you to take an action.

First I might mention that, as Linda said, my name is Judith Matheson and I work in the vocation of Interfaith Spiritual Direction. As co-founder of the Heart + Soul Light Centre I also partnership with Spiritual Frontiers Canada annual "Spirituality Evenings" where in sacred circle we invite three guests to share who they are and what they do related to two key themes: "Ecology + Environment Healing Mother Earth" and "Celebrating First Nations Indigenous Spirituality." In our effort to make the vision of Grandfather more widely known, for two years First Nations Singer Song writer Bevan Skerrat has helped us with other musicians creating an evening of "Celebrating our Unity in Diversity" with pot luck dinner to help raise funds for our initiatives such as an annual "Family Tree of Life Kids Imagination Camp." This year July 19-23 in Aylmer Qc. with Aboriginal and Non Aboriginal leaders based on The Tree of Life handbook by the Four World Development Project dedicated to countless clans, tribes, and nations of Indigenous people.

As I begin I would like to share with you that last week while worshipping at my own church, First United on Holy Humour, I experienced the shortest sermon I ever heard! The Rev. Tom Sherwood said:

"I have three things to say in this exhortation:

Love the Sacred. Love Justice. And love Creation.

And then he sat down!

Love the Sacred! Love Justice! Love Creation!

This speaks to me of Grandfather Elder William Commanda's life, and vision for Victoria Island.

And yes my comments will be a bit longer! Ha!

For the vision of Grandfather for me speaks to the essence of his life in overcoming pain and oppression because of his Indian Identity being taken from him as a child.

To overcome addictions and life threatening cancer, Grandfather's ability to forgive gave him the freedom to become a very tireless spiritual leader for his people. Forgiveness is a Spiritual gift! And his example models to us all the power of moving beyond sorry to a legacy of change and hope!

His light and life gives others hope of overcoming pain and becoming the compassion and selfless service our world needs.

His vision for a "Culture of Peace and A Circle of All Nations" speaks to many people from all over the world who support his vision for the building of an "Aboriginal Peace Centre" in the heart of Canada on Sacred Algonquin Land at the Chaudiere Falls and Victoria Island.

This vision with resilience and patience for over forty years of service to this cause helps us to see in Grandfather's fortitude the truth of these two questions.

- Did you know that every time you express forgiveness to yourself or another, your capacity to love and heal strengthens?
- Did you know that every time you emit love, that love raises your consciousness and the consciousness of Mother Earth?

This Planet and all of its inhabitants are in great need to hear the wisdom and voices of the Indigenous Aboriginal Elders.

I see the vision for an "Aboriginal Peace Centre" in Hull QC in the shadow of our Parliament Buildings in Ottawa as a catalyst towards bringing All Nations and Cultures together as One!

There is a First Nations saying:

"Each culture is like a flower. And one day the world would be like a Heavenly flower. All cultures creating the garden of the future!"

Our children must be insured that they and future generations have that future!

Such visions as Grandfather's for Victoria Island and for a "Culture of Peace and A Circle of All Nations" help us to come out of our numbness! To reclaim our power to make a difference for our being here and to have hope to take an action, to speak up! By getting involved and learning to work together we can accomplish anything!

In these times it is said that ordinary grassroots people are being supported by "The Sacred Tree of Life."

"The book The Sacred Tree is dedicated to the countless clans, tribes, and nations of Indigenous people throughout Mother Earth whose sacred visions, dreams, prayers, songs, wisdom, experience, and kind guidance form the foundations and living reality of the Sacred Tree."

There is an evolving impulse driving the Cosmos, a powerful relative force, the authentic self that is our own deep need and yearning for spiritual transformation and growth that Spiritual Leader Andrew Cohen refers to in the DVD that is part of the "Awakening the Dreamer Creating the New Dream world wide Symposium."

"The Family Tree of Life Kids Imagination Camp" like the "Awakening the Dreamer Symposium" that we are bringing to this congregation on Saturday, September 11 are examples of this truth:

"That we must educate and nurture ourselves and our children to the sacredness of our own Indigenous roots, our own lives and our relationship with each other, and our own connection to our one home the Planet Mother Earth."

This is to live the message of Grandfather on his web- site "A Circle of All Nations" at <http://web.mac.com/circleofallnations>

"The time would come when the voice of the Indigenous people's would be heard and rise again after five hundred years of oppression to light a path to an eternal fire of peace, love, brother/sisterhood, amongst all Nations."

At this bilingual children's camp in Aylmer July 19-13 four Aboriginal adult leaders are helping the children to make their own Peace Drums and to experience the "Seven Grandfather Teachings."

Love Bravery Respect Honesty Humility Wisdom Truth

This is an example of why we so much need the project of Victoria Island for as Elijah Harper said to me at "The Sacred Assembly" in Hull in 1995----"Judith not until the First Nations people heal enough to reclaim and share their culture can the people and Nation of Canada heal."

I believe such healing is occurring. This past Tuesday on Parliament Hill in a circle, approximately twelve MP's met with First Nations and concerned grassroots citizens from Kingston/Ottawa/Gatineau regarding the closing of prison farms in Kingston where it is estimated that 20% of the population are Aboriginal prisoners.

They shared in mutual respect listening to each other and others asked to speak.

A gift had been created of a Wampum Belt with symbols on it representing Justice, Honour, Respect, and Humility. These virtues were spoken to pointing out that when interacting and talking from these we give each other Wisdom and Strength.

Such a movement by all of us to share and discuss in this way can't help but make a difference in our growing ability to create mutual understanding and solutions for these times. On such issues as that, to this day we are all living on original Algonquin land and especially in the area where the project for this Aboriginal Centre is envisioned we must be aware that to the Algonquin People this land and Mother Earth is considered very Sacred. That what we do to the Earth we are actually doing to ourselves!

Since 1971 when Grandfather William Commanda became Keeper of the three sacred record keeping Wampum Belts of spiritual and historical importance to the Algonquin People's and since 1987 when he has been sharing the message of these belts in public discussion on Aboriginals, he has received numerous awards such as the Order of Canada, and the keys to the City of Ottawa for his dedicated work of educating and sharing his Dream, Vision and Values.

But rather than honours, this ninety-six year old young Spiritual Leader needs to have his dream of an Aboriginal Centre made real by the positive political will of grassroots people and our elected representatives. The architecture designed by Douglas Cardinal has been ready for years and calls for a fully inclusive City Park, Historic Interpretative Centre, Conference Centre and Aboriginal Centre at the Sacred Site of Asinabka/Chaudiere Falls.

These plans had been approved by the National Capital Commission in 2006 but with the change of government things have been held up for the past four years. We must get informed and speak up to motivate action to get this project moving for Traditional Aboriginal Knowledge is critical to conservation and our own survival as species!

Grandfather Elder William Commanda has overcome many challenges to become a leading light for his people and for many people like us throughout the world. In February at our annual "Celebration of Unity in Diversity Evening" his vision and dream were honoured with the lighting of eight candles to signify the coming of a new age where the passion of each person's heart to make a difference will be lit.

In April the "Awakening the Dreamer Symposium" at First United church also supported making Grandfather's Vision for Victoria to be made more well known and today I have here, for you to sign, the petition by MP Paul Dewar recently brought forward once again

in the House of Commons on June 11, 2010 for the second time, to begin the construction of the National Aboriginal Centre and prepare for its opening in June 2013. Please sign it before leaving if you cannot join us downstairs for lunch where we will also have petitions, free copies of the magazine "Action to Care" and an information table available.

Please also take these magazines home and share with your friends and neighbours and call your local MP and the Prime Minister at PM@Pm.gc.ca 613-992-4211 to indicate your support for this vision.

Copies of this petition can also be obtained on Paul Dewar's website and Circle of All Nations. Thank you for joining this growing wave of people for Awakening the Dreamer Creating the New Dream here at St. Michael's And All Angels and also supporting the Vision for Victoria Island Aboriginal Peace Centre.

These are times of great change, challenges and hope. I believe we are all called towards one goal being and becoming Catalysts towards bringing all Nations and Cultures together as "One! We are all leaders, for leadership is about spiritual service to a cause much greater than ourselves!

I see great possibilities as Canada matures as a Nation and we her people become the "I" and the "you" becoming the "We" and the "One" all of us in our own simple ways leaving a legacy of Peace for future generations!

My prayer for us today as we leave is this:

"Thank you Creator God for the light and love in all humanity's hearts that inspire our imaginations to see that we are able to co-create in our National Capital Region an "Aboriginal Peace Centre." With grassroots support growing we see The National Capital Commission and other governments working together with the Algonquin leaders and other grassroots citizens welcoming people from all over North America and the world. Listening to the voices of our Indigenous Aboriginal Elders from many lands this Aboriginal Peace Centre is helping Canada to take her rightful place as a world leader and as a model of uniting Nations. Healed in the Spirit of Forgiveness so that we are able to work together to achieve this project Canada has now received the Freedom to be a Nation of great Hope and a Catalyst Country for bringing Peace and healing to our mutual home Planet Mother Earth.

And so it is!

Amen!

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