

PROPOSAL FOR A SPECIAL NATIONAL HISTORIC CENTRE AT CHAUDIÈRE FALLS, OTTAWA, CANADA (Dr. William Commanda www.circleofallnations.ca 16/1/07)

SUBJECT

A proposal for development of a special National Historic Centre at the sacred Chaudière Falls, Ottawa, Canada

ISSUE

The vision calls for a fully inclusive City Park, Historic Interpretative Site, Conference Centre and Aboriginal Centre at the Sacred Site of *Asinabka*/Chaudière Falls, Chaudière and Victoria Islands, within the Nation's Capital

BACKGROUND

Since the arrival of Samuel de Champlain in this area in 1613, the area around the Chaudière Falls has been acknowledged as a sacred meeting place of great importance to indigenous peoples, having been used as such for easily five thousand years. Indeed, it is one of the earliest sites of human occupation in this country. Later, it served as a significant meeting place with the earliest settlers, the French and the English. Today the world finds a home on its shores.

This special area holds singular sacred, archaeological and historic value, and has been the site of cultural convergence, political evolution, and internationally influential industrial development and innovation over the past centuries.

The *Ottawa River Heritage Designation History* celebrates this remarkable heritage of the watershed, and the heart of the story lies here in Ottawa/Hull, at the meeting place of three rivers, with the mighty Ottawa, the heritage river of the Algonquins, connecting with the Gatineau from the Province of Quebec and the Rideau from the Province of Ontario.

Elder William Commanda, a trilingual 93 year old Algonquin from Quebec, recently honoured by the University of Ottawa with the presentation of an Honorary Doctorate Degree, and in June 2006, presented with the Key to the City of Ottawa, a remarkable, internationally recognized man with a passionate interest in the environment, this country and all its citizens, and founder of the *Circle of All Nations*, holds a broad vision for the entire area focused on two themes that predominate in his work: Respect for the Mother Earth and Racial Harmony and Peace-building. Today, the environmental crisis and war are our greatest national preoccupations and challenges.

THE ACTIVITY

Dr. Commanda's bold four-fold vision calls for

- 1) Freeing the Chaudière Falls,
- 2) Creating a City Park and Historic Interpretive Centre
- 3) Building a Peace Building Meeting Site, and
- 4) Building an Aboriginal Centre

DETAILS

1. It is a vision of potentially significant international influence for symbolic reconciliation with Nature, both water and land, by **undamming the sacred Chaudière Falls to the extent possible**, and returning it to its former magnificence; planting the Chaudière Island with trees and creating an educational eco-city park in the heart of the country, expressive of both of its history, and its future, offering a **modern day reclaimed green sanctuary** and pow wow grounds to offset concrete urban sprawl; it also calls for developing **a historic interpretative centre** to commemorate the history of settlement – pre and post contact: ceremony, ancient trade routes, exchange of goods, logging, hydro electric power, industrial development, inventions etc.
2. Consistent with the ancient history as **meeting place**, and current need for creative meeting spaces designed to serve as collaborative think tanks for reflective contemplation on global and local issues during this UN Decade for Culture of Peace, for international cross-cultural exchange and training, the remaining portion of the vision calls for a *Tipi Village* pod-style conference hotel on the western portion of Victoria Island, fully accessible within the core area of the capital city.
3. Finally, for almost four decades, the Eastern portion of Victoria Island has been designated the site for an **Aboriginal Centre**; over the past eight years, Elder Commanda has worked to develop a vision for the Centre; Aboriginal Architect Douglas Cardinal, with support from Canadian Heritage, developed the conceptual architectural plans to the Level B; Elder Commanda negotiated a draft Memorandum to Cabinet with a consultant for the National Capital Commission, and at the Circle of All Nations International Gathering of August 2006, the NCC expressed full support for this proposal.
4. The entire site will be a great attraction for Aboriginal peoples, citizens of the cities of Ottawa and Gatineau, the country at large, children, new Canadians and international tourists.
5. Though damaged over the years, the sacred Chaudière site of the Algonquin Peoples remains a beautiful natural and national treasure waiting to be recognized and honoured.
6. Elder Commanda's vision also offers a unique opportunity to *Correct Mistakes of History and Look Towards the Future*.
7. It is recognized that this work spans many federal departments, jurisdictions and responsibility centres. It needs a collective and collaborative national will and leadership to create the momentum for its successful realization.

TIMEFRAME

The timing is propitious for the bestowing a lasting national and indeed international legacy commemorative of the UN Decade for a Culture of Peace, in anticipation of two key dates: 2010, when the world comes to Canada for the Olympics, and 4 June, 2013, the four hundredth year anniversary of the arrival of Champlain in this area (June being also the time Heritage Rivers Day is celebrated). A spring 2007 announcement will ensure the timely actualization of the vision.

ACTION REQUESTED

Widespread endorsement of this fully inclusive proposal through the establishment of a multi disciplinary task force to develop the implementation plan for the Sacred Site.