

Madame Lorraine Morissette
Responsable du Comité de toponymie
Ville de Val d'Or
Quebec

November 11, 2015

Greetings Madame Morissette,

Naming the new bridge in Val d'Or after Gabriel Commanda

I am writing to support the efforts of Daniel Gagné to see the new bridge in your city named after its 'founder and first citizen', the late World War One Veteran, environmentalist, and renowned 'builder of bridges' amongst the diverse peoples who populated Val d'Or in the early years after he was so successful in his prospecting for gold in his ancestral territory in Quebec.

I am writing here on behalf of the Circle of All Nations, the Legacy peace building work of his own nephew, the late Algonquin Chief and Elder, Dr. William Commanda, OC. He was honoured to join celebrations in your city when the Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre named its Kindergarten after him; and later in 2010, when the City honoured him. In 2006, we celebrated his conservation efforts in the 1930s during our Waterlife Workshop. I am attaching our power point presentation on his story. I see that we were talking about naming the bridge after him back in 2006.

Remembrance Day is quickly approaching and I note that November 11 is the birth date of William Commanda. He was born in 1913, on the eve of the First World War. Gabriel Commanda served in Belgium during the war, and he actually carried the famous Grey Owl fearlessly through the lines when he shot himself in the foot. He served courageously, and stories, including the romance written about his life by Jean Ferguson, reveal that he inspired many people with his teaching about the Great Spirit, nature and peace building. We think it is wonderful that his spirit continues to inspire the annual March 21 Walk for Racial Harmony in your city – we all realize how much we need this today. He returned from the war to face tragedy – his wife and two children, including a son who would have been the same age as his nephew William, had died of the Spanish Flu.

He himself was a victim of the systemic racism in his country – he lost his Indian status when he enlisted to serve Canada in the war effort; and he could not register a claim in his name for the gold mine he had discovered because he was Indian. In his old age, he lived alone, blind and penniless, till his nephew took him home to die on the reserve in Kitigan Zibi.

Dr. Commanda too experienced much oppression, but today he is honoured and respected for his tireless efforts to promote harmony and peace. We believe he was following the footsteps of his uncle Gabriel Commanda.

We discussed the proposal to name the new bridge in Val d’Or after Gabriel Commanda at our September 20 Circle of All Nations International Day of Peace event – and participants signed a petition in support of this proposal. I am including a photograph of the signatures for your information. I have also discussed this with his two great nieces, Daisy Commanda Jacko and Lillian Dowling, and both are very supportive of the proposal. I am taking the liberty to attach a mini biography of William Commanda also, for your records – you will see the Commanda’s were a family of leaders over many generations. It will be a wonderful gesture of reconciliation to see this ancestor acknowledged and honoured by Val d’Or.

We strongly support the naming of the new bridge the Pont Gabriel-Commanda. We would be happy to provide additional information as required.

Sincerely,

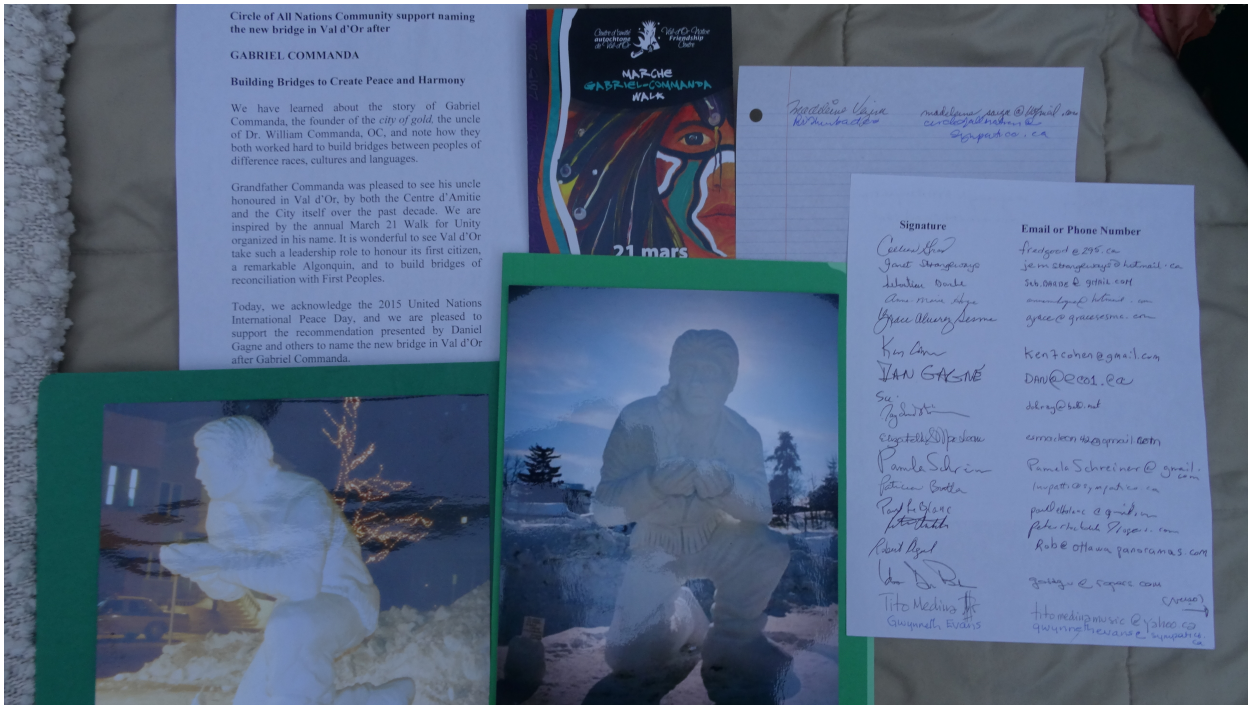
Romola V. Thumbadoo

Coordinator, Circle of All Nations

Legacy Work of Dr. William Commanda, OC

www.circleofallnations.ca

www.asinabka.com



CIRCLE OF ALL NATIONS ENDORSE THIS SUPPORT FOR THE NAMING OF THE NEW BRIDGE IN VAL D'OR AFTER ALGONQUIN PROSPECTOR AND "FOUNDER" OF THE CITY, WORLD WAR ONE VETERAN, GABRIEL COMMANDA – UNCLE OF THE LATE DR. WILAM COMMANDA, OC, FOUNDER OF THE CIRCLE OF ALL NATIONS

Signed at the Annual Circle of All Nations International Day of Peace celebrations in Ottawa, Ontario, September 20, 2015

Photos of Art Sculpture of Gabriel Commanda by Daniel Gagné

Romola V. Thumbadoo

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