



CIRCLE OF ALL NATIONS 2019 YEAR END REPORT

Here is our overview of the *Circle of All Nations* work over the past year. It has been hectic. Without the visible manifestation such as in the incredible gatherings we used to host on Grandfather William Commanda's land, or the Paddle for Peace events we used to hold on Victoria Island, it is sometimes difficult to explain what we do and to explain what keeps us so driven to be at it. Here is a story to give you a sense of our on-going efforts, and to initiate a prayer for Mother Earth in this the acknowledged Age of the Anthropocene.

PREAMBLE

We shall start with our *Earthworm* Story



Photograph: Romola V Thumbadoo, *Circle of All Nations* – May 2016, Kanata

This is my photo from May 2016 and I posted it on Facebook with an earlier version of this story.

Sometimes it is difficult to explain underground work; in essence, *Circle of All Nations (CAN)* works like *earthworm*: it ingests leaves and soil and transforms this into the blueprint for the good healthy life; and as it burrows through the earth to the subterranean level to reach underground water, passing out its creative manure (as Grandfather would describe it!) in healthy enriched form, it aerates soil and takes life giving oxygen to the dark depths of the soil; it thus counter-balances soil nutrient depletion and pollution. But it also consumes heavy metal contaminants, with some *smart earthworms* having developed capacity to deal with heavy duty damage. So there are four levels to the work, totally aligned with our *Circle of All Nations* Medicine Wheel Logo (*vision*: creating general healthy backdrop for life; *action*: oxygenating the home and animating life; *reflection*: quality control and taking care of debris, and higher level of *knowledge and wisdom*: dealing with more serious poisons <https://www.asinabka.com/Archives/2018%20Logo%20Thesis%20FrameworkInPhoGraphic.pdf>)

Now this is the kind of work we initiated and animated quite deliberately over the past two decades, as you will note in the blogs and reports in our two archival *Circle of All Nations* www.circleofallnations.ca) websites, our www.Asinabka.com site, our periodic Constant Contact E-Newsletters and on social media. (By the way, I consider “animation” a *Circle of All Nations* word; quite unlike Disney World animation, it is far from cartoony but instead is very much concerned with keeping things “*encore vivant*”; it was “given” to me by a late Official Languages colleague, Paul Couture, when he was teaching me about nuances in French, and I am happy to acknowledge him publicly).

Grandfather Commanda’s *Circle of All Nations* gang stir the pot in that kind of *earthworm* way. But they are often working underground, so folk who see surface stuff don’t understand what is really happening and either try to stamp them out or claim their turf or they do both. In almost 2020, you can see the underground *Circle of All Nations* all over our several facebook pages (find us on *Circle of All Nations*, William Commada, William Commanda Legacy Asinabka, Romola’s Nature CAN TEACH and Romola Vasantha Thumbadoo FB pages); you will note that people post leading edge informative posts of critical current and historical environmental, political, Indigenous, social justice and creative importance just about every minute, contributing to new knowledge and thinking at every turn, and as challenging as the issues raised are, 99.9 percent of the folk sharing or commenting are SO RESPECTFUL. Thus we have a remarkable and SAFE and SMART on-line, interactive global eco-peace *earthworm* community contributing to global culture shift towards that *CAN Culture of Peace* that Grandfather Commanda envisioned (PS – To those of you who are new to how social media works, if you SHARE our posts, YOU contribute to growing our community of influence). While our *CAN Earthworm* community emerges from the *GRASS ROOTS* (!), increasingly we know that academics, scientists, academic publishers, and even big wig organizations and sponsored posts dip into our pages; some of them are even beginning to pop their heads up with us occasionally. Now I do confess, I used to grumble to Grandfather about folk “pinching” our ideas all the time; but he would say, “*Well Romola, we have to hope they will come to think like us!*” Well, I sure hope so – we need to worm our way to healing the substrata of all our lives in order to move towards creativity with integrity and self-respect: no major globally transformative gains will happen without that “critical self-reflection”. As you will note in this Deutsche Welle Reader’s Favourite post from 2017, *Earthworms* are extremely vulnerable in these increasingly challenging times: dw.com [Earthworm numbers dwindle, threatening soil health](https://www.dw.com/en/Earthworm-numbers-dwindle,-threatening-soil-health/a-4781173) | [DW](http://www.dw.com) | 30.01.2017



PS. I like it that our *Circle of All Nations Earthworm* is co-creating! JOIN US! Strengthen US!

PLUS

JOIN US! For our informal December Solstice Get Together

December 22 – 5 pm

506 Stratas Court, Kanata K2L 2K7 – 613-599-8385

Highlights of 2019

This is a synopsis of key activities. The text will be complemented with a photo album on our *Circle of All Nations* facebook page. Detailed discussions of some key 2019 events are included in other posts already available in the Documents section of our www.asinabka.com website.

1. Commemorations

In February 2019, we commemorated the passing of two Circle of All Nations colleagues: 1. The Hon. Paul Dewar, NDP Member of Parliament, Ottawa: A long time advocate for the William Commanda vision for the Asinabka Sacred Chaudiere Site, Paul Dewar participated in many CAN events on Victoria Island, and in his farewell message, again affirmed the relevance of this Grandfather Commanda legacy project; see our Tribute to his here - [2019 CAN Tribute to Paul Dewar Tribute RED final.pages.pdf](#); and 2. Rev. Betsy Stang, of the Wittenberg Center, a long time friend of Elder Commanda, associated with his participation in the United Nations *Cry of the Earth* Conference of 1993, in presentations at the Wittenberg Centre in the nineties, in the Annul Prayer Vigil in Washington DC, as well as with other Indigenous activities and events: a very special lady, we joined her when she began her journey to fight cancer fourteen years ago in Woodstock New York (there isn't anyone I can recall who asked for a prayer from Grandfather William Commanda that was not helped in their healing journeys; that's why I call him the DC Elder – Direct Connect! Here is our tribute to Betsy Stang: [2019 CAN Betsy Stang Tribute RD.pdf](#)

In the Spring, we also lost two critically important people in the Commanda Family: first, William Commanda's niece Daisy Mary Commanda Jacko, a strong and independent advocate for Algonquin and Indigenous, much like her mother Judith's brother, William; and his youngest sister and only remaining sibling, Marie Commanda. Both were early feminists who as Indigenous women, faced particularly tough challenges, and work is underway to document their stories; I visited them regularly over the years, and they contributed tremendously to my understanding of the family and community history, to social evolution in Canada from the thirties, and in Daisy Jacko's case, to my great respect for her life as a working woman in both Canada and the United States, and for her passionate Indigenous activism to the end.

2. A Year of Road Trips and International Travel; and Miscellaneous Activities

December 2018 ended in Omaha Nebraska and was followed by an unexpected trip to South Africa in January 2019 – thus began a year in constant motion.

In March, 2019, *Circle of All Nations* made its March Equinox outreach via Fete Culturelle Lac Tiberiade, at an event organized by Dan Bernard (Algonquin who had served as Fire Keeper at the community effort to protect South March Highlands in Kanata in 2010). [Lac Tiberiade March 2019 Event.pages.pdf](#). This was the first of a series of multiple documented road trips over the Ottawa River Watershed, the commencement of a next phase of research into the William Commanda legacy.

This was followed by several art/research trips accompanied by Carolyn Martelock, a serious hobby historian and archivist – to Belleville, Arnprior and the Madawaska, Mont Tremblay and the Riviere Rouge, Petit Nations region, Eganville, Bancroft, Shawville, Hudson, from the spring to late fall.

In May 2019, I attended the Annual Webinar of the Global Social Service Workforce Alliance in Washington DC; check out the informative website for a vast library of resources for social work professionals: (<http://www.socialserviceworkforce.org/about-us>)

Dawn Ferguson, Founder of *Children Singing Peace Around the World* and I met staff at the Native American Museum to promote the work of the *Circle of All Nations*. Dawn drummed at a gathering 20 years ago, and Grandfather Commanda did the first translation of her song, and his Algonquin version is available on her website – www.childreningpeace.com ; Dawn has planted 30 peace song seeds amongst children across the world, in their local languages, the last completed in 2019 (another example of *earthworm and Squirrel* seed planter* work): *CAN folk know we associate Squirrel/Ojigway with Grandfather.

In June/July 2019, I travelled to Durban, South Africa to make a presentation on CAN Indigenous Approaches to Child and Youth Care Work at the 44th Biennial and 4th CYC-NET World Conference hosted by the National Association of Child and Youth Care Workers: www.naccw.org.za Contact circleofallnations@sympatico.ca for a courtesy copy of the presentation; the file is large. It is part of our ongoing effort to centre child and youth care in our CAN priorities; our September event was dedicated to this work and a separate report is available.

In July, 2019, I went to pay my respect to Abuela Margarita in Val David, Quebec, where she was conducting her annual vision quest ceremony; this tireless Mexican elder noted Grandfather Commanda's inspiration for this work, and is contributing to the healing and development of countless folk in Canada, primarily in Quebec with two visits each year, and then elsewhere in the world: *earthwork and Squirrel seed planter work!*

In May 2019 I attended the premier of the movie *Corporate Prey*, by Bob Abell, and later accompanied him and Evelyn Abell and Ron Big Bear Goddard to a second *Fete Culturelle Event at Lac Tiberiade*, organized by Dan Bernard. I also met with Abuela Margarita's colleagues, elders from Spain there. I attended the Guatemalen Marimba concert hosted by Tito and Sandra Medina. I attended pipe ceremonies with Elder Dominique Rankin; and met Elder Madonna Ballentyne from Saskatchewan. I attended the September Canoeing for Friendship trip launch; this paddle was organized by Free the Falls, included Dot Bonnefant and Max Finkelstein, and folk paddled from the Quebec to Ontario waters of the Ottawa River Watershed. I mention these CAN engagements to point to the range of activities CAN colleagues undertake.

We hosted the annual *Circle of All Nations Annual Peace/Justice Fall Equinox gathering* [2019_CAN_Sept_Event_Report.pdf](#); this included a very special reconnection with William Commanda colleagues from 52 years ago (his first international gathering) and from Denmark from almost 40 years ago (canoe building for the Roskilde Museum, Jan Skamby and Queen Margarethe – this, courtesy of a new *Circle of All Nations* friend, Winnie Stubkjær Laursen. A formal report on this history will be available soon.

In October, accompanied by William Commanda's niece Lillian Dowling and her husband, I travelled to Maniwaki, Montagne Diable, and Val d'Or, attended a launch of a commemoration of Murdered and Missing Women organized by the Centre d'Amite, and the release of Justice Viens Report; and reconnected with artist Daniel Gagne, strong advocate for late Uncle Gabriel Commanda. In part, this journey was to acquaint Lillian with aspects of the family's history from the source of the Ottawa River.

We became acquainted with Amanda McDonald and Jamie Maurice Nichols, from Hudson, and participated in Amanda's Facebook live discussion sessions to promote *Circle of All Nations* and William Commanda.

3. Academia

Historically, the *Circle of All Nations* work of Elder Commanda has been informal and unstructured but animated by non-stop work, outreach and travel locally, nationally and internationally; during the past twenty years, it continued as a grassroots activity marked by international gatherings on his land, with his global eco peace community gradually further linked in concert with the dramatic shifts in the digital world, by website, blogs and social media facilitating informal communications. With the formal research initiated in 2012, I have now engaged in exploring and documenting his teachings in western academic streams. I am locating this research in the domain of Cybercartography as articulated and developed by Dr. D. R. Fraser Taylor, in part in the creation of a Cybercartographic digital atlas, informed and strengthened by NVIVO computer based qualitative analysis technology, in ongoing social media animation in

several facebook pages, and in a series of articles on Cybercartography to explore his cybernetic approach to knowledge generation. We have completed two chapters on this theme: these are included in an Elsevier publication, *Further Developments in the Theory and Practice of Cybercartography: International Dimensions and Language Mapping*, Taylor, D. R. F., Anonby, E. and Murasugi, K. Eds. *Chapter 15 Storytelling with Cybercartography: The William Commanda Story* (2019); and a Routledge publication, *Digital Mapping and Indigenous America*, Hess, J. Ed. *Chapter 9. William Commanda's Integration of Ancient Oral Wampum Storytelling in Contemporary Digital Technology, Remapping Indigenous Presence across North America* (In Press 2020). In June 2019, I commenced a Social Science and Humanities Research Council Postdoctoral Fellowship to continue my research on William Commanda, and to leave some clear record of his thinking in the academy; grounded in Geography and History, it will examine his travels and work on the land.

4. Join US! – December 22 Winter Solstice Get Together

An informal get together to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Grandfather William's first Gathering of Reconciliation with Indigenous Tribes across North America (we are preparing a report on this too); and to acknowledge also 30 years since the release of the report of the Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women. Finally, we wish to revitalize the story of the Mi'qMaq Elder from Donald Marshall Junior's community – Alex Denney; he told me about the ancient NEW YEAR FORGIVENNESS FEAST: the chief would host a feast and acknowledge any hurts committed deliberately or inadvertently, other members of the community would do the same, and having healed the energies between them, they would all be strengthened to commence the new season with good will. Grandfather Commanda also hosted many special Pipe Ceremonies at his Lodge in December – magical moments.

JOIN US!

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Best wishes for the Holiday Season!