



Sacred site walkers don't want old embassy

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - OTTAWA - unceded Algonquin Territory- (June 20, 2017) – **Algonquin elders say Canada is still using bait-and-switch tactics to alienate First Nations from their lands.**

“If they think that offering to turn the old U.S. Embassy into some kind of glorified friendship centre will make us forget about protecting the sacred Chaudière Falls site, they are sorely mistaken,” says Albert Dumont.

The Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg elder – who will be participating in the June 23rd second annual walk – ‘*Faith is Peace 2017 walk*’ referred to reports that the federal government is prepared to offer the vacant three-storey former embassy on Wellington Street as a multi-purpose Indigenous centre.

“We don’t want bricks and mortar; that’s what we’re fighting against,” says Dumont, referring to an Indigenous peoples-led campaign against plans to build a billion-dollar high-rise development on Chaudière and Albert Islands in the centre of the Ottawa River. He says the proposal by Windmill Development to build 300 condominiums and 300,000 square feet of commercial space betrays municipal commitments to the late Algonquin Elder William Commanda and his vision for the creation of Asinabka National Indigenous Centre on the islands near the Chaudière Falls, a sacred site for Indigenous peoples for centuries.

Algonquin elder Jane Chartrand says sacred lands are not for sale.

Canada proclaims this week to celebrate National Aboriginal Day, to respect the First Peoples of Turtle Island. And Prime Minister Justin Trudeau says that his relationship with Indigenous peoples is the most important one for his government. Is this his idea of Reconciliation – the desecration of sacred sites to pad the pockets of developers? This just continues Canada’s tradition of getting our lands away from us by promising one thing and doing another. The very ground beneath the Parliament buildings was stolen from Algonquin peoples.

“The city of Ottawa and National Capital Commission should be as concerned about the preservation of our beautiful lands and waters as they are in building more office towers. This environment has sustained us for thousands of years.”

Albert Dumont noted that the flood levels reached by the Ottawa River in May could have been disastrous for any residential development.

“The waters would have reached the second floor of this condo building. The Chaudière Falls were never meant to be harnessed.”

Walkers will gather at Victoria Island beginning at 10 am on Friday, June 23rd and proceed east to Parliament Hill for speeches and ceremonies.

www.ItIsSacred.ca To book interview with Elders or for more info: 613-864-1907



BACKGROUNDER

Support for Elder William Commanda's vision for Asinabka

On National Aboriginal Day in 2006 Ottawa's then mayor, Robert Chiarelli – now a member of the Ontario Legislature – presented Elder William Commanda with the key to the city in a ceremony on Victoria Island, which lies adjacent to Chaudière and Albert Islands between Ottawa and Hull.

“We respect the vision of Elder Commanda that this place will become a beacon for all those values that speak to protecting Mother Earth, and the philosophies and values of all First Nations peoples.”

That vision – Asinabka National Indigenous Centre on Chaudière and Albert Islands – was presented to the National Capital Commission board of directors on April 3, 2008, three years before Elder Commanda died at the age of 97.

The proposal -- which included plans for an Indigenous Centre, free falls and a sacred forest-referenced public remarks made in August, 2006 by NCC chairman Marcel Beaudry at the annual Circle of All Nations International Gathering.

In his remarks, Beaudry acknowledged that the islands were a sacred Aboriginal site, that the commission wanted to recognize Aboriginal peoples by building a centre of national stature, that Aboriginal peoples should decide what activities took place on the site, and that the federal government would make an initial investment of \$100 million and commit \$11 million annually for programs and services.

Beaudry died in 2012, and that year the Stephen Harper government abandoned plans to protect the sacred site and encouraged private ownership. The National Capital Commission – a federally-appointed agency – subsequently approved the massive billion-dollar Windmill Development project.

Supported by the Assembly of First Nations, nine of ten federally-recognized Algonquin communities in the Ottawa Valley demand the project be halted.

[AFN resolution #49 - to protect sacred site link here](#)

www.ltIsSacred.ca To book interview with Elders or for more info: 613-864-1907