

Earth is our Mother

words attributed to Chief Seattle (1786-1866), a chief of the Suquamish tribe of the Pacific Northwest.

The President in Washington sends word that he wishes to buy our land.
How can you buy or sell the sky or the land?
If we do not own the freshness of the air and the sparkle of the water,
How can you buy them?

Every part of earth is sacred to my people. every shining pine needle, every sandy shore, every mist in the dark woods, every meadow, every humming insect; All are holy in the memory of my people.

All belong to the same family.
We know that sap courses through the trees as we know that blood courses through our veins.
We are part of the earth and it is part of us.
The perfumed flowers are our sisters. The bear, the deer, the soaring eagle, these are my brothers.
All belong to the same family.

The shining water that moves in the stream and the rivers is not just water,
but the blood of our ancestors.
If we sell you our land, you must remember that it is sacred.
Each ghostly reflection in the clear water of the lakes tells of all memories in the life of my people.
The water's murmur is the voice of my father's father.
The rivers are my brothers.
They quench our thirst, they carry our canoes and feed our children.
So you must give to the rivers the kindness you would give any brother.

If we sell you our land, remember that the air is precious to us.
The wind that gave our grandfather his first breath also received his last sigh.
The wind also gives our children the spirit of life.
So if we sell our land, you must keep it a place apart and sacred,
as a place where man can go to taste the wind that is sweetened by the meadow flowers.
Will you teach your children what we have taught our children, that the earth is our mother?
What befalls the earth befalls all the sons of the earth.

This we know: the earth does not belong to man, man belongs to the earth.
All things are connected like the blood that unites us all.
man did not weave the web of life; he is merely a strand in the web.
Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself.

Your destiny is a mystery to us.
What will happen when the buffalo are all slaughtered, the wild horses tamed?
What will happen when the secret corners of the forest are heavy with the scent of many men
and the view from the ripe hills is blotted out by the talking wires?
Where will the thicket be? Gone!
Where will the eagle be? Gone!
The end of living! The beginning of survival.

The land is gone, the sky is gone, the beasts are gone, the birds are gone,
the lakes are gone, the streams are gone, the sea is gone.
The buffalo, the antelope, the grizzly bear, mountain goat. Gone.

Land of our birth, true mother earth, gone.
Someday the moon may not appear. Gone.
Someday the sun may disappear. Gone.
Then darkness came over the earth, and it was gone.

Whatever happens to the beasts, soon happens to man.
When the last Red Man has vanished with his wilderness.

Earth is our mother. We love this land as a new-born loves his mother's heartbeat.
Care for it as we cared for it.
Hold in your heart the memory of the land as it was when you received it.
Preserve the land for all children and love it as God loves us all.
We are part of the land. You, too, are part of the land.
We are brothers after all.
Deal kindly with my people for the dead are not powerless.
These shores will swarm with the ghosts of my tribe.
Dead did I say? The ghosts of our ancestors walk the earth.
There is no death, a change in worlds. No death.