

THE WEB OF LIFE

By Chief Seattle

Nearly 150 years ago, Chief Seattle, a wise and widely respected native Red Indian Chief delivered this compelling message to the government in Washington, which wanted to buy his peoples land. This is perhaps the most eloquent statement ever made on the environment.

How can you buy the sky? Chief Seattle began.

How can you own the rain and the wind?

My mother told me,

Every part of this earth is sacred to our people.

Every pine needle.

Every sandy shore.

Every mist in the dark woods.

Every meadow and humming insect.

All are holy in the memory of our people.

My father said to me,

I know the sap that courses through the trees

As I know the blood that flows in my veins.

We are part of the earth and it is part of us.

The perfumed flowers are our sisters.

The bear, the deer, the great eagle, these are our brothers

The rocky crests, the meadows,

The ponies - all belong to the same family.

The voice of my ancestors said to me,

The shining water that moves in the rivers and streams,

Is not simply water, but the blood of your grandfather's grandfather.
Each ghostly reflection in the clear waters of the lakes tell
Of memories in the life of our people.

The water's murmur is the voice of your great - great grandmother.
The rivers are our brothers. They quench our thirst.
They carry our canoes and feed our children.
You must give to the rivers the kindness you would give to any brother.

The voice of my grandfather said to me
The air is precious. It shares its spirit with all the life it supports.
The wind that gives me my first breath also receives my last sigh.
You must keep the land and air apart and sacred, as a place where one can go to
taste the wind that is sweetened by the meadow flowers.

When the last Red Man and Woman have vanished with their wilderness
And their memory is only the shadow of a cloud moving across the prairie, will the
shore and forest still be there?
Will there be any of the spirit of my people left?
My ancestors said to me. This we know:
The earth does not belong to us. We belong to the earth.

The voice of my grandmother said to me,
Teach your children what you have been taught.
The earth is our mother.
What befalls the earth befalls all the sons and daughters of the earth.

Hear my voice and the voice of my ancestors, Chief Seattle said.
The destiny of your people 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?

When the view of the ripe hills is blotted by talking wires?
Where will the thicket be? Gone!
Where will the eagle be? Gone!
And what will happen when we say goodbye to the swift pony and the Bull?
It will be the end of living and the beginning of survival.

This we all know: All things are connected like the blood that unites us.
We did not weave the web of life.
We are merely a strand in it.
Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves.

We love this earth as a newborn loves its mother's heartbeat.
If we sell you the land, care for it as we have cared for it.
Hold in your mind the memory of the land, as it is when you receive it.

Preserve the land and the air and the rivers for your
children's children and love it as we have loved it

--P
ci--3~,~F