

My name is Lekeyten from Kwantlen First Nation. The speech you are about to hear belongs to Chief Seattle.

How can you buy the sky? 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 are all holy. And the memory of our people. My father said to me, "I know the sap that coarse 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 moves in the streams and rivers is not simply water, but the blood of your grandfathers. Grandfather." Each ghostly reflection in the clear waters of the lakes tells us memories in the life of our people. The water murmurs the voice of your 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 spirits with all the life it supports. The wind that gave me my first breath also received my last sigh."

You must keep the land and the air apart and sacred. As a place one can go to taste the wind that is sweetened with the meadow flower. When the last red man and women have vanished with their wilderness, and their memory is only a shadow of a cloud moving across the prairie, will the shores and the forest still be here? Will there be any spirit of my people left? My ancestor 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, all the sons and daughters of the earth? What befalls the earth befalls all the sons and daughters of the earth." Hear my voice and the voice of the ancestors. The destiny of your people is a mystery to us. What will happen to the buffalo when they are all slaughtered? The wild horses tamed? What will happen when the secret corners of the forests are heavy with the scent of many men? When the view of the ripe hills is spotted by talking wires? Where will a thicket be? Gone? Where will the eagle be? Gone? And what will happen when we say good bye to the swift pony and the hunt? It will be the end of the living and the beginning of the survival. This we 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. What ever we do to the web we do to ourselves. We love this earth as a newborn loves his mother's heartbeat. If we sell you our 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 of your children's children. And love it as we have loved it.

**Note:** The text of this speech is used with permission from Susan Jeffers and is to be used solely for the purpose of the Aboriginal Curriculum Integration Project.