

"The President in Washington sends word that he wishes to buy our land. But how can you buy or sell the sky, the land? The idea is strange to us. If we do not own the freshness of the air or the sparkle of the water, then how can you buy them? Every part of this 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 and experience of my people.

We know the sap that courses through the trees as we know the blood that courses through our veins. We are a 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 water in the meadow, the body heat of the pony, and us people - we all belong to the same family." (Attributed to Chief Seattle)

Two and a quarter centuries have passed and our orientation toward God's sacred land has only become more sinful. Taking into account all of the productive land, it takes to support our consumptive habits, we exploit an average of 12 hectares per person, while at the same time, those living in abject poverty in Bangladesh survive off of six tenths of a hectare.

"The shining water that moves from the streams and 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 lakes tells of memories in the life of my people. The water's murmur is the voice of my father's father. The rivers are our 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 to any brother."

Less than 3 % of Canadian rivers and lakes lie in lands protected by our governments. And the underground aquifers, upon which our modern economy is founded, is a more frightening story. Sixty percent of all aquifers in the world over are now contaminated. Note that it takes an estimated one thousand four hundred years for an aquifer to fully replenish itself.

"If we sell you our land remember that the air is precious to us, that the air shares its spirit with all of the life it supports. The wind that gave our grandfather and grandmothers their first breath also receives his last sigh. The wind also gives our children the spirit of life. So if we sell you our land, you must keep it apart and sacred as a place where men can go and taste the wind that is sweetened by the meadow flowers."

Despite gains in air pollution laws, today urban youth in North America have only 70% of the lung capacity of their grandparents generation. Chicago's population travels over 50 billion vehicle miles each year – mostly on old single occupant vehicles: this is our main cause of air pollution. Communities that are heavily influenced by freeways, and thus by automobiles and air pollution, have more asthma related deaths than the rest of the province (Dupage, Kane, McHenry and Will).

"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 us; we belong to the Earth. All things are connected like the blood that unites us all. We did not weave the web of life, we are merely a strand of it. Whatever we do to the Earth, we do to ourselves.

"One thing we know: our God is also your God. The Earth is precious to God, and to harm the Earth is to heap contempt on its creator."

Not only do we continue to heap contempt upon our the earth, the Mother of all life - despite all knowledge of science and all of our religiosity and hope for the coming reign of God, we continue to heap millions of pounds of Carbon Dioxide and other global warming gases into the air.

Temperatures and ocean levels have already risen, while our fellow aquatic life forms experience rapid extinction. At this rate, more than 80 million people from South and South East Asians will be forced from their land as the sea level rises. Yet we continue to bank developing larger parking lots, not on improving mass rapid transit.

"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 men and 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 is it to say good-bye to the swift pony and the hunt? The end of living and the beginning of survival! "When the last red man has vanished and his memory is but the shadow of a cloud moving across the prairie, will these shores and forests still be here? Will there be any of the spirit of my people left?"

We never knew the Spirit was connected to other life forms.

We as spiritual people stand aside as companies continue to exploit the earth for its resources. Conservation and alternative energy sources, already technologically available, are not on their radar screen, nor are they on ours.

"We love this Earth as a newborn loves its mother's heartbeat. So if we sell you our land, love it as we have loved it. Care for it as we have cared for it. Hold in your memory the land as it is when you receive it. Preserve the land for all children and love it as God loves us all. As we are part of the land, you too are a part of the land. As the Earth is precious to us, so is it precious to you.

"One thing we know: there is only one God. No man, be he red man or white man, can be apart. We are brothers after all."

Each of us have favorite places of memory. And I want you for a moment to focus on those memories. Close your eyes and see the place just as it was. Take a moment and let those visual memories surround you.

Now I want you to not only visualize that place I want you to let the sounds come as well. The waves crashing or lapping on the rocks. The sand singing as the waves recede to the sea. The wind sighing through the trees. The birds singing or the sound of their wings as they fly by. The buzzing hum of the hummingbird. The powerful swoosh, swoosh, swoosh of the geese in flight above. The crickets singing or the peepers in lullaby. How are the sounds affected by different times of day

Now gather those sounds together and carry them with you. They are powerful messages about life. May they nurture you in the days to come, and may they always remind you that the earth is the Lords and the fullness thereof and that all creation is called to gather together to give praise to God.

(Statistics: Alan Jenkins)