

Chief seattle oration analysis

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Seattle Chiefs Ovation The arrival of the European colonists in New England in the 17th century pushed the Native Americans to the west and eventually sparking their demise. Intensive logging impacted their environment, epidemic diseases from Europe claimed lives of thousands of Native Americans, and the Euro-Americans simply took over regions and the land of the native community. The Native Americans were outraged by their inferiority and on the colonist's treatment of the environment.

The Chief Seattle's 1854 Oration is a speech in response to a proposed treaty in which the Indians were persuaded to give up thousands of acres to the US government for a sum of 150, 000 dollars. The Chief Seattle's Oration is considered to be the most profound environmental statements in history. The Chief Seattle was the leader of the Dkhw'Duw'Absh, and a prominent figure in the Indian-American relationship of the time. At this time, numerous Native American's were being scattered out of their tribes by the American's and it was believed that they would be extinct.

In the speech, The Chief Seattle attempts to convince the American conquerors that they should treat them fairly despite their inferiority to the American people. Through figurative language and his respect for nature, the Chief appeals to the Governor of their decision to take over Washington making of their time. Prior to the colonisation of North America by the Europeans, the Native Americans lived peacefully and they saw their environmental as communal. Their low-impact technologies saw them live in harmony and respecting the environment.

Their religion revolved around the belief that animals, plants, rocks, mountains, rivers, and stars had souls. Upon arrival, the European colonists

immediately began take natural resources for European trading and usage. Large forests were cut down for firewood, trading, and agriculture; animals were killed for skin, the girdling of the trees prevented the leaves from growing and eventually killing it. For every person added to the population, one or two hectares of land was cultivated.

This trend continued on until the beginning of the 20th century, and to this day, 1/3 of America's forests have been cut down causing devastating environmental disruptions. The land which was once peaceful and quiet, home to the Native Americans who respected and loved it had changed horribly. Throughout America's history, the capitalist Americans viewed the natural resources as a possibility for economic growth. The formation of a free market meant that government legislation and fiscal policies were inadequate to prevent environmental demolitions.

From the Colonisation up to the 20th century, the United States government failed to apply sustainable growth. This reflects on how our world economy is working. Governments fail to advocate environmental issues in order to boost the economy. The Chief Seattle underlines the value of the environment. He chief treats nature as a living thing. " Yonder sky that has wept tears of compassion upon my people for centuries untold, and which to us appears changeless and eternal, may change. Today is fair. Tomorrow it may be overcast with clouds. This use of personification in this line relates to how the rain is coming from the sky, but with the incursion of the Americans, nature's natural course is twisted, thus a cloud will overcast the compassionate tears of the sky. The Chief is sympathetic towards his people; he states that " my people are few. They resemble the scattering tress of a

storm-swept plain. ” The Chief underlines the value of the trees, and whilst most of the mass logging occurred during America’s colonisation, the biodiversity was badly affected during this time period.

This relates to how the Native American race is slowly coming to an end and it resembles the logging of the trees cut down by the American’s. Hence, the Chief emphasises that his men are part of nature therefore they are dying with it. Furthermore, the chief argues that the Euro-Americans never appreciated nature. “ Our dead never forget this beautiful world that gave them being. They still love its verdant valley’s, its murmuring rivers, and its magnificent mountains. ” The Chief highlights that his race valued nature, and the love of nature goes on after their deaths.

The tone of the speech suddenly becomes more aggressive in the 9th paragraph. He argues that “ your time of decay may be distant, but it will surely come, for even the White Man whose God walked and talked with him as a friend to friend, cannot be exempt from the common destiny. ” The chief states that there will come a time, when their civilisation will come to an end and God will be unable to help them. This can be related to the damage we are doing now with climate change.

Global warming is now considered a threat to our world, with growing average temperatures; the climate is changing and can cause devastating natural disasters. Global Warming has been scientifically proven to be all caused by human’s destroying the world’s biodiversity and harming the earth’s atmosphere. Logging contributes to global warming, by deregulating the oxygen in the atmosphere. Therefore at this time, the logging of trees destroyed the biodiversity, and the Chief contended that whilst the Euro-

Americans cut down trees, it will backfire on them and destroy their civilisation.

In the last paragraph, the Chief quotes that “ these shores will swarm with the invisible dead of my tribe, and when your children’s children think themselves alone in the field, the store, the shop, the highway, or in the silence of the pathless woods, they will not be alone. In all the earth there is no place dedicated to solitude. ” The Chief describes that the legacy of his tribe will live on. This describes how the Natives have so much respect for their land, and they will value it forever, and live on with for eternity.

Moreover, The Euro-Americans and the Native American had contrasting views on the environments. The Natives had a belief that the environment is sacred and should be preserved, whereas the Euro-Americans preferred to economically benefit from nature. During this era, the industrialisation of America was booming, and the timber industry was at its peak. Nothing was known of the consequences for destroying the environment, however the Native Americans had their tradition to respect the environment and preserve it forever however this belief was uncommon to the European settlers.