



## **Chief Seattle**

### **Suqwamish and Duwamish (1786-1866)**

Seattle, also known as Sealth, was very young when George Vancouver came to Puget Sound to map the region. Before that time, the Duwamish and Suquamish (his mother and father's respective tribes) had had very little contact with the whites. Seattle's brief experience with Vancouver impressed him greatly, which was perhaps why, in later life, he tried to advocate a peaceful coexistence with the settlers. When he was a young man Seattle inherited his father's position as chief, after first having proved his leadership in warfare against other tribes in the area. Seattle was so impressed by the French Catholic missionaries that in the 1830's he converted to Christianity, taking the baptismal name "Noah". By the 1850's

the settlement had begun to grow and prosper and the name was changed from Alki Point to Seattle. More and more settlers began to move into the area, and in 1855 the governor of Washington Territory called together the tribes to propose a new treaty. This treaty would send the tribes to a reservation and their lands would be controlled by the government. Although Seattle continued to council for peace, the conflict lasted many years. Finally Seattle moved onto a small patch of land on the western side of Puget Sound where he spent the remainder of his life.

**Quotes from Chief Seattle:**

“Every part of all this soil is sacred to my people. Every hillside, every valley, every plain and grove has been hollowed by some sad or happy event in days long vanished. The very dust you now stand on responds more willingly to their footsteps than to yours, because it is rich with the blood of our ancestors and our bare feet are conscious of the sympathetic touch.”

“Even little children who lived here and rejoiced here for a brief season love these sombre solitudes, and at eventide they greet shadowy returning spirits.”

“And when the last red man shall have perished, and the memory of my tribe shall become a myth among the white men, these shores will swarm with the invisible dead of my tribe; and when our children’s children think themselves alone in the field, the store, the shop, upon the highway, or in the pathless woods, they will not be alone.”

“Let him be just and deal kindly with my people, for the dead are not powerless. Dead, did I say? There is no death, only change of worlds.”

“We know that the white man does not understand our ways. One portion of the land is the same to him as the next, for he is a stranger who comes in the night and takes from the land whatever he needs. The earth is not his brother, but his enemy, and when he has conquered it, he moves on. He leaves his fathers' graves, and his children’s birthright is forgotten.”

“The sight of your cities pains the eyes of the red man. But perhaps it is because the red man is a savage and does not understand.”

“The Indian prefers the soft sound of the wind darting over the face of the pond, the smell of the wind itself cleansed by a midday rain, or scented with

pinon pine. The air is precious to the red man, for all things are the same breath - the animals, the trees, the man.”

“Tribe follows tribe, nations follow nations like the tides of the sea. It is the order of nature, and regret is useless.”

“Like a man who has been dying for many days, a man in your city is numb to the stench.”

“To us, the ashes of our ancestors are sacred.”

“A few more hours, a few more winters, and none of the children of the great tribes that once lived on this earth, or roamed in small bands in the woods, will be left to mourn the graves of the people once as powerful and hopeful as yours.”

“The whites, too, shall pass - perhaps sooner than other tribes. Continue to contaminate your own bed, and you might suffocate in your own waste.”

“When the buffalo are all slaughtered, the wild horses all tamed, the secret corners of the forest heavy with the scent of many men, and the view of the ripe hills blotted by talking wires, where is the thicket? Where is the eagle? Gone.”

“And what is it to say farewell to the swift and the hunt, to the end of living and the beginning of survival? We might understand if we knew what is was that white man dreams, what he describes to his children on long winter nights, what visions he burns into their minds, so they will wish for tomorrow. But we are savages. The white man’s dreams are hidden from us.”

“Your religion was written on tablets of stone, ours on our hearts.”

“Day and night cannot dwell together.”

“His brave warriors will be with us, a bristling wall of strength.”

“Today is fair. Tomorrow may be overcast with clouds. My words are like the stars that never change.”

“At night when the streets of your cities and villages are silent and you think them deserted, they will throng with returning hosts that once filled and still love this beautiful land.”

“The white man will never be alone.”

“Youth is impulsive. When our young men grow angry at some real or imaginary wrong, it denotes their hearts are black.”

“We are part of the earth and the earth is part of us.”

“There is no quiet place in the white man’s cities, no place to hear the leaves of spring or the rustle of insects’ wings. Perhaps it is because I am a savage and do not understand, but the clatter only seems to insult the ears.”

“I will not dwell on, nor mourn over, our untimely decay, nor reproach our paleface brothers for hastening it...”

“There was a time when our people covered the land as the waves of a wind-ruffled sea.... that time has long since passed... I will not mourn...”

“My people resemble the scattering trees of a storm swept plain.”