 Remarks [10:30 AM]

Vaoh-tama
Welcome to a Native Place

From the National Museum of the American Indian—on the National Mall in Washington, D.C.—we, the indigenous nations, extend a warm greeting and a CALL TO CONSCIOUSNESS to all the peoples of the World.

*Neh-ahtovo! Nah-tose-tohtoxeme tsehe-skese ho’e.*
Listen to me, I am going to talk about our Mother the Earth.

My name is Henrietta Mann. I am a Cheyenne grandmother. I am humbled and honored to impart this message from our elders.

The profound teachings and prophecies of our beloved ancestors predict this time. We are taught to love and protect the beauty and holiness of our Mother the Earth. We are also taught to honor the great power of Grandfather Sun. Together, the Sun and Mother Earth make life.

Their is a delicate relationship. As dutiful children we must never disturb their elemental ability to nurture us and all the plant and animal nations that give us our food, medicines, clothing, and shelter. We must honor the life-giving power of the Sun and Earth.

The natural systems that regulate our climates—the winds, ocean currents, and air and water temperatures—are changing.

Our elders instruct us to always walk upon Mother Earth with respect, gentleness, and with thankful hearts. We must never deviate from the fundamental precept of stewardship, or we will be capable of causing great harm.

Judging from today’s concerns, human beings have acted irresponsibly.

Scientists have confirmed increases in global average air and ocean temperatures, and widespread melting of polar ice. Artic temperatures have increased at almost twice the average global rate in the past century. The Cheyenne Prophet Sweet Medicine told us that the Earth would burn. **MOTHER EARTH HAS A FEVER.**

Mountain glaciers and snow cover are declining worldwide. Sea levels are rising, and peoples from many island nations and coastal regions are at risk. In Alaska, the Inupiat village of Shishmaref is disappearing into the sea.

We agree with the broad consensus of our most respected international climate scientists that global warming is upon us; and it is destabilizing the natural rhythms of Mother Earth. We also
agree with the broad scientific consensus that human activity, including deforestation and
greenhouse gas emissions, is a primary cause.

For these reasons—from the grounds of the National Museum of the American Indian in
Washington, D.C. —we call upon all the peoples of the world to awaken and respond to our
collective human responsibility to the seventh generation. Ours is a CALL TO
CONSCIOUSNESS. Each of us is part of the sacred circle of life.

_Ho’e netaome heskenon’e, nah ta-vestahamon’e._
Earth is our Mother and we must care for her.

I introduce you to a woman of the people, who has brought many new lives to Earth—midwife
_Katsi Cook._

§ § §

**Remarks [12:15 PM]**

I would like to offer an example of Dr. Wildcat’s statement that knowledge and wisdom are
inherent in indigenous traditions.

Let us explore the sacred concept that all life is related, and that we live in one universal ocean
of relations characterized by interdependence.

We know that everything in life is made up of four elements or sacred substances: water, earth,
air or wind, and fire.

In indigenous thought water is life. We were conceived in water and for nine months, we were
nurtured, blessed, protected, and cherished by the womb waters of our mothers. It is said that
when babies are born, they are 90% water. Adults are approximately 80% water. The water
content of elders decreases to around 65%.

Since human beings are primarily water, we are all related regardless of cultural heritage. That
also makes us related to the rain, lakes, rivers, and seas. Those very seas circulate within each
of us.

Next, there is earth. Our various traditions speak of how we as human beings were created from
soil, dirt, dust, clay, or “red earth salt.” Again, as a result of having been made from earth, that
makes us kin as the children of Earth, who are also related to the rocks and mountains that
make up our sacred landscape.

Then, there is air. We are enveloped by air, invisible to the human eye, which is associated with
breathing and breathing with life. Air also is necessary for speech, thus, indigenous peoples
have great respect for language. Two sacred breaths mark the beginning and the ending of
one’s earthly journey. You are air, so am I, and we are related to the atmosphere that surrounds
Earth.

Finally, there is fire. Fire is hidden within each of us, and it burns at a normal 98.6 degrees
Fahrenheit. We are human solar power. Fire can be seen in the light of your eyes, the same
light of the sun to whom we are related, just as we are one to another.
You are water. You are earth. You are air. You are fire. So am I. We are related. Expanding ever outward, upward, and downward, we live in a huge kinship system that lovingly embraces everything from the tiniest microbe to the most distant star. Made from the very dust of stars, you are my star relatives. Thus, as kin folk, we must stand in sacred relationship to everything in our environment.

Briefly stated, traditional knowledge and wisdom is profound in its simplicity.