

**Who Knows What Chief siaʔ Said?:**

**Interpretations Of Chief siaʔ's Speech and Character**

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## Introduction

### 1.1 Research Object

Chief siaʔl was the leader of both the Suquamish and Duwamish tribes during the 1800s. He is well known today as Sealth or Seattle, the city of Seattle's namesake, but siaʔl is his Lushootseed name. In order to be respectful of the language, I will refer to him as some form siaʔl or Seattle. It is interchangeable. The descendants of these tribes today are generally made up of the Suquamish, Duwamish, and Muckleshoot people.<sup>1</sup> He was the first signatory for both the Duwamish and Suquamish tribes on the Point Elliot Treaty of 1855.<sup>2</sup> This treaty effectively signed over use of the tribe's lands, waters, and resources to settlers of Seattle and the federal government. This was in exchange for hunting and fishing rights, as well as reservation land for the people to live on, and rights to practice religion. The subsequent actions upholding or failing to uphold this treaty are important; however, they are not relevant to this specific research project. What is relevant about this treaty is it was preceded by a speech given by Chief siaʔl in approximately 1854.<sup>3</sup> It was originally given by him in Lushootseed, which is the language of the tribes as far south as Nisqually and as far north as Upper Skagit.<sup>4</sup> It was translated at the time

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<sup>1</sup> Two of these tribes, Suquamish and Muckleshoot are considered Tribal Nations due to their status as Federally Recognized Tribes. However, the Duwamish are currently only recognized by the State as a tribe. The explanation for this is part of much larger tribal politics having to do with rights to land and descendant status. This will be explained further in the section titled, "Challenges to Consider".

<sup>2</sup> You can see siaʔl's signature as X, on the document pictured here:

<https://prologue.blogs.archives.gov/2020/09/28/the-birth-of-an-eternal-document-the-point-elliott-treaty/>

<sup>3</sup> This date is heavily debated, but according to scholar Arnold Krupat and others, it was most likely 1854. "It's my sense that Smith did indeed hear Sealth speak in January 1854 (or, again, possibly in December of that year)" (Krupat, 2011)

[https://go-gale-com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/ps/i.do?p=AONE&u=wash\\_main&id=GALE|A254186581&v=2.1&it=r](https://go-gale-com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/ps/i.do?p=AONE&u=wash_main&id=GALE|A254186581&v=2.1&it=r)

<sup>4</sup> Map of Coast Salish languages: <https://lushootseedblog.wordpress.com/what-is-lushootseed/> Note that Lushootseed contains two dialects, both Southern and Northern. It is assumed that Chief siaʔl would've spoken Southern Lushootseed as that is the territory in which he resided during his life.

into Chinook jargon (a trade language containing about 500 words).<sup>5</sup> Then it was further translated into English. This is a speech that is fairly popular in connection to Chief Seattle, and makes up what little information is remembered or known about him today.

## 1.2 Context

This speech was first officially recorded by Henry A. Smith in the newspaper the *Seattle Sunday Star*, more than 30 years after the speech had been spoken by Chief siaʔɬ and based off the notes taken by Smith. It is supposedly accurate, due to Henry A. Smith's claims that he was present at this speech and was able to translate it into English from Chinook Jargon.<sup>6</sup> This version contained vernacular that is Victorian in nature, an overlay added by Smith that called into question the accuracy of the translation process. Another version of this speech, slightly different than the first, was published in the 1970s for the Southern Baptist Convention for their environmental film titled *Home*. This version contained added language that might be classified as sustainable or eco-conscious as well as changed Seattle's stance on religious statements within the speech. There are other "versions" of this speech as well, one by William Arrowsmith in the 1960s, and another, shorter version of the Ted Perry speech from an Expo in Spokane in 1974. The William Arrowsmith version is in essence a further translation from Henry A. Smith's version that translates some of the Victorian language into easier to read prose. To add further controversy to the speech's authenticity, there are some who believe this speech was not an orally given one, but a letter written to President Franklin Pierce about the treaties. Previous research does not validate this assumption as it is unlikely that such a letter was written.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, there

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<sup>5</sup> For a dictionary of Chinook Jargon, see: [https://www.washington.edu/uwired/outreach/cspn/Website/Classroom%20Materials/Curriculum%20Packets/Treaties%20&%20Reservations/Documents/Chinook\\_Dictionary\\_Abridged.pdf](https://www.washington.edu/uwired/outreach/cspn/Website/Classroom%20Materials/Curriculum%20Packets/Treaties%20&%20Reservations/Documents/Chinook_Dictionary_Abridged.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> See page 194-195 of Arnold Krupat's article in references. Also see page 33-34 of Albert Furtwangler's book in references. Or Jerry Clark's article in references.

<sup>7</sup> See Jerry Clark's article in references.

is much dispute surrounding what may have truly been said by the Chief.<sup>8</sup> One way of studying this speech is through the differing passages found in comparison of the two main versions of the speech. The conclusions made in a lot of the literature have commonly been one of two things. First, the speech's impossibilities are ignored or unknown, and second, the speech's impossibilities are highlighted with rhetorical criticism showcasing the author's own interpretations and new findings.<sup>9</sup>

### 1.3 Significance/Rationale

However, because these two conclusions about the speech come from a specific community of people, either academics or intersectional academics (either minority identifying or from a distinct Native American or Alaska Native tribe) it means there is still an area of interpretation and assessment that is relevant, but uncovered. None of the literature presented has included an interpretation of the speech, and therefore also the character of Chief Seattle, from the perspective of his own tribal communities. The dominant character discussion comes from interpretations in academic articles that speak of who Chief Seattle was based on the speech, i.e. an Ecological Indian stereotype.<sup>10</sup> Due to the lack of relevant and comprehensive research on this speech, I purpose more in depth research on interpretations of siaʔł's character and speech, this

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<sup>8</sup> The article, <https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/1985/spring/chief-seattle.html> "Thus Spoke Chief Seattle: The Story of an Undocumented Speech" by Jerry L. Clark states, "A search of the records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and of the Office of the Secretary of the Interior in the National Archives and the presidential papers of Franklin Pierce in the Library of Congress has not uncovered even a trace of such a letter. It has not been found among the private papers of Pierce in the New Hampshire Historical Society" (1985)

<sup>9</sup> These will be covered within the next section in the Literature review.

<sup>10</sup> This stereotype can be understood as the false idea or narrative that Indigenous people, specifically Native Americans are naturally or inherently more connected to or live in harmony with nature, which in turn informs modern views on Indigenous people or Native Americans and assumes that these modern people should live up to this standard or sustainability and eco conscious practices at all times. Here is a good article that explains this stereotype and problems with the association:

<https://www.pbssocal.org/shows/tending-the-wild/the-problem-with-the-ecological-indian-stereotype> by Dina Gilio-Whitaker.

time as interpreted by his tribal communities, the Duwamish, Suquamish, and Muckleshoot people.<sup>11</sup>

### **Literature Review**

The literature included in this review is of three types. The first pertains to the background information of the speech, including versions of the speech as well as facts that have informed the context surrounding the speech. Some discussion of these versions will include the discussion of interpretations of the speech by various academics, both that recognize impossibilities in the speech and others that do not. The third, pertains to the impossibilities that come up in the discourse surrounding accuracy of various versions, making a second type.

As I have already identified the versions of the speech that are widely known, I will only add a few other subsequent versions to the discussion in order to be thorough.<sup>12</sup> There is a well known children's book titled, "Brother Eagle, Sister Sky" (Jeffers, 1991) that attributes some of the Ted Perry version to Chief Seattle's own words. There are two books that also cover this speech that can be found in the University of Washington's Special Collections, Eli Gifford and Michael Cook's *How Can One Sell The Air? Chief Seattle's vision*, and John Martin Rich's *Chief Seattle's Unanswered Challenge: Spoken on the Wild Forest Threshold of the City That Bears His Name, 1854*. Gifford and Cook's book includes Ted Perry's version of the speech formatted as poetry with illustrations included. Although it is Ted Perry's version of the speech, it is said that they interviewed Suquamish elders about the speech and were able to determine what the elders believed, which was that Henry A. Smith's version was accurate. In my opinion, the

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<sup>11</sup> The Muckleshoot did not end up responding to invitations to participate.

<sup>12</sup> There are many different versions by many different authors. Not all of them contain known authors, such as the version located in the Duwamish longhouse. Some of these subsequent versions are inextricably tied to versions and can not be seen as fully separate.

discrepancies in this book, such as the "confirmation" that elders of the Suquamish tribe believed in the accuracy of Henry A. Smith's version, and the authors' subsequent act of publishing Ted Perry's version as still accurate, makes this source not very trustworthy.<sup>13</sup> John Martin Rich's book is about Chief Seattle's life as well, but formats it through different stories, myths, lore, poems, etc. This source also details Chief Seattle as a part of a "Dying Indian Race," which gets back to the ecological Indian stereotype detailed earlier in the Significance/Rationale section of this Thesis. I believe this book to be similar to Gifford and Cook's, inaccurate in the details surrounding the speech and character of Chief Seattle.

## 2.1 Background Sources

In order to accurately cover the context of the topic (despite my base-level knowledge as a Duwamish and Suquamish tribal member), I looked the most at two sources, one from David Buerge and another from Arnold Krupat. The first by David Buerge is his book titled, "Chief Seattle and the Town That Took His Name: The Change of Worlds for the Native People and Settlers on Puget Sound" (2017). This book is an in-depth compilation of what is known about Chief Seattle and his life. A very short part of the book, covering pages 125-126, talks about the speech as a historical event. It tells us many things about it including what Stevens was doing prior to the speech, what Seattle and his people were doing at this event, etc. This source helped me decide what to include about the context and relevance of the speech. It is important that this information is accurate and I feel David Buerge, having dedicated a lot of his time and life to research about Chief Seattle, is an accurate source to find this information. I appreciate his opinion on this topic, which was that this speech would become one representative of someone's intention to convey what Seattle meant as the beginning of a "change of worlds." Essentially,

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<sup>13</sup> See Appendix three for scanned pages of this book.

what Henry Smith's speech does is encompass the idea of a "change of worlds." He was a leader that had to live and make decisions during the arguably most tumultuous time in his tribe's history. This speech marks that time period.

Arnold Krupat's article, "Chief Seattle's Speech Revisited" (2011), is similar to Buerge's in that it covers the speech and the "facts" known about the speech. However, this one includes discussion of the various versions of the speech and their accuracy. This includes some of the impossibilities that I will cover below. This article was similarly helpful to Buerge's in establishing the facts surrounding the speech. These facts are important for the context and significance of the speech in order to begin the research. With a speech such as this one, with so many differing versions and facts that encircle this speech, I wanted to start with a solid foundation of facts. I feel this source is very thorough in its knowledge about the context of the speech and it was also recommended by my faculty advisor. Overall, I consider this an accurate source.

## **2.2 Interpretation of the Speech**

Getting into how academics have interpreted this speech, I will start with Phillip Deloria. His book, *Playing Indian* 1998, is on cultural appropriation of Indigenous culture in America. Deloria is a Standing Rock Sioux and therefore among the Indigenous academics who have interpreted this speech. Specifically regarding Chief Seattle's speech, we see a short interpretation by Deloria in Chapter 6, pp. 166-167. He writes about environmentalists and their fascination with this speech "by" Chief Seattle. Deloria finds that the speech's versions are not accurate, however environmentalists among others do not care about the validity of the speech. All they care about is that it fits within a useful ideal of Native Americans, somewhat like the ecological Indian stereotype. His own interpretations of this speech are focused on how Chief

Seattle's image is adapted into whatever fits the public's idea of what an Indian should be. This speech, whether authentic or not, touted this idea that "all people were one, bound by a universal web of blood connections and their relations to the earth".<sup>14</sup> So this speech becomes used by the public as their understanding of what "Indianness" looks like. Due to Deloria's membership as a Standing Rock Sioux, this source is important in its coverage of interpretations by Indigenous people. Its importance lies in the relevance for my research project, as the interpretation could align with how members of Chief Seattle's tribal community may feel or react to the speech. However, it is not an interpretation by the specific group most closely related to the Chief.

Among other Indigenous academics, Joshua L. Reid covers this speech and offers his own interpretations as well in his book, *Bridging Cultural Concepts of Nature: Indigenous People and Protected Spaces of Nature* (2021). It is a book that is about settler colonialism and the various identities that are in contention about Indigenous people and nature. Coverage of Chief Seattle and the author's interpretations begin in Chapter 9, pp. 276-278. The versions addressed by Reid include discussion of both Henry Smith and Ted Perry's speech. Reid's interpretations of this speech and Seattle's character confirms the damage that the speech has had in relation to the characterization of Chief Seattle as an "ecological Indian." This book is therefore similarly important to Deloria's because of its author's Indigenous identity (Reid is Snohomish).

Next, I will discuss Jason Black's paper about the legacy of this speech. Specifically, this, as far as I am aware, white scholar presents his ideas about Ted Perry's version and what it means for the larger history of this speech. As Black puts it, "This essay focuses on Perry's cooptation

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<sup>14</sup> Philip Joseph Deloria. *Playing Indian*. Yale University Press, 1998.  
<https://web-p-ebshost-com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/ehost/ebookviewer/ebook?sid=27307557-6257-4320-b494-27e229cc5204%40redis&vid=0&format=EB>.

of Seattle's speech and what it says about the entanglements of authenticity, rhetorical circulation, and neocolonialism in contexts involving Native-U.S relationships (pp. 637)."

Essentially, Jason Black wants to focus on the work that Ted Perry did to change the speech into a further inauthentic text. He argues that this is most likely inauthentic because, "Seattle's speech has never been verified as accurate (pp. 639)" and "Perry's spurious speech text followed from a long train of earlier co-optations by white interpreters (pp. 639)." This is not uncommon among scholars' interpretations of the speech versions, especially of Ted Perry's version. We see that in the interpretations from Deloria and Reid. What is new, from this paper, is that Black also wants to make clear that Ted Perry's work has to do with "rhetorical circulation." He explains this as a term for the reproduction of spurious material for specific purposes. "Publicly cognizant of the circulation of contrived Native texts, such Western circulators nonetheless tend to rely on these texts to stand in for Native cultures (pp. 636)." So Black goes on to talk about the effect that Ted Perry's version of Seattle's speech becomes more popular than the Henry Smith version, "Perry's manufactured speech became the most famous version of Seattle's words; it became a Boudrillardian 'simulacrum' of the text, allowing 'originals and copies to blur' (pp. 636).") Black argues that this is problematic because it works as neocolonialism." Occurring in a colonial context, the circulation of a text representing a commodified Seattle stands as a percolation of the U.S government's vituperative treatment of American Indians (pp. 638)." This indicates that because these inauthentic speech versions, like Ted Perry's, are circulated in a colonial state like America, these versions do similar work to how the U.S. government has treated its Indigenous people, as not the deciders of their own fate, and present to serve the U.S. standard. Jason Black's paper is a well put-together understanding of the storied history of these speech versions, and how much the authenticity of Seattle's speech and character is affected by it. As Black concludes,

"...Seattle got pulled into Perry's discursive version of 'playing Indian', while the chief's character and rhetoric circulated (pp. 638)." What it does not do, is propose a solution to this issue. Instead Black notes, "There is no optimal way to determine whether Native texts have been corrupted by Westerners (pp. 642)." In fact, he concludes that the very, "pursuit [of authenticity] denies a Native oral tradition that puts stock in individual tribal lifeways (pp. 636)." In this paper, he does not see a way to get back to the authenticity, context, and understanding of this speech. My thesis suggests such a way.

Another important piece of literature to note is that of Veronique Campion-Vincent. Veronique Campion-Vincent's article, "Native Americans as a Source of Wisdom. History and Analysis of a Contemporary Mythology" (2017), makes the claim that the speech is an example of messages that have brought forth a further generalization of Native Americans. This article points out the variety of versions of this speech, as well as additional pieces that have circulated about this speech. It argues that this speech has continued to be misinterpreted on purpose. It talks about how as time passed, it became clearer and clearer to more and more that the speech was a fake. However, that realization did not stop people from using it for their own purposes and recreations. As the author of this article puts it, and other sources above have implied, people after a certain point didn't care whether Chief Seattle had truly said the words, but that someone had, and they sounded nice enough to relate to a character of a "wise ecological Native Chief" like Seattle. This interpretation of the speech as false, but one that recognizes that people had used it for their own purposes, is indicative of what the speech became. It was a speech that was able to be used for anyone's narrative of what nature should be like, about who Chief Seattle was, about how Indigenous people today should act, etc.

Other minority academics also write about this speech in their own way. The authors Ahmed Qabaha and Abdel Karim Daraghmeh are Palestinian. Their article that includes discussion of Chief Seattle is titled, "A Postcolonial Ecocritical Reading of Mahmoud Darwish's "The Red Indian's Penultimate Speech to the White Man" (2023). Despite its recent publication, this article actually misinterprets the speech and its versions as accurate and absent of the impossibilities that Deloria and Reid note in their books. They compare this speech to a poem by another Palestinian, indicated in the title as Mahmoud Darwish. This author's poem is inspired by Chief Seattle's speech, albeit the Ted Perry version. The background information about Chief Seattle as well as the lines that are taken as inspiration for Darwish's poem are misinterpreted. The impossibilities present in the versions of Chief Seattle's speech are left unidentified and this informs the interpretation of who Chief Seattle was. The authors believe that Chief Seattle was a Native that felt closer to nature than others do and that he felt it was his job to remind the colonizers of their place among nature. It is curious to try to reconcile the interpretation these authors had of Chief Seattle's speech and character when the impossibilities are left unidentified, but the poem that results is positive for Palestinians. Now it is time for an overview of these impossibilities to be covered.

### **2.3 Coverage of the Impossibilities**

The impossibilities in the speech are found when analyzing the versions of the speech with rhetorical criticism. Discrepancies between what appears in various versions of the speech and what makes sense contextually are what make up the impossibilities. They are pieces of the versions that do not add up, beginning as early as before the start of Henry Smith's speech transcript where he writes that the Chief was, "slowly pointing heavenward with the index finger." These were written as a part of the publication by Smith in the *Seattle Sunday Star*,

however through research done by scholar Arnold Krupat these words may have been false.<sup>15</sup> I would also call into question the claim that Smith makes about the "Indians" lack of respect for women's roles in civil society. He writes that the "Indians" believed that King George still ruled England and this misconception was the result of a deception by settlers to not bring up that England was ruled by a woman as a means to uphold the respect the "Indians" had for the settlers. I would argue that this idea of gender relations may not have held true for Chief Seattle as a member of the Coast Salish tribes, who were documented to have women that held land and property in their own right.<sup>16</sup> This brings into question not just what Henry Smith wrote about what Chief Seattle said, but the character of Chief Seattle that he represented. Henry Smith begins the speech with, "Yonder sky that has wept tears of compassion on our fathers for centuries untold—". This, as well as other places in this speech, provides language that is indicative of Victorian vocabulary that Chief Seattle would not have spoken in Lushootseed. Although Chief Seattle was aware of Catholicism, had converted, and did know at least some English, he was not likely to use such ornate terminology or tropes. Other Victorian language present includes: "tombs," "flee," "yearn," "nativity," "sequestered vales," "tenderest affection," "dwell," etc. I also question how much of the negative fate and view Chief Seattle held in the Henry Smith version of the speech is accurate. It speaks a lot of the inevitable fate of the Indian, that the whites have defeated the Indians, and the Indians had given up to the powerful whites. As "Indian" himself, how much could Chief Seattle have believed those ideas?

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<sup>15</sup> In Krupat's piece:

[https://go-gale-com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/ps/i.do?p=AONE&u=wash\\_main&id=GALE%7CA254186581&v=2.1&it=r&aty=ip](https://go-gale-com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/ps/i.do?p=AONE&u=wash_main&id=GALE%7CA254186581&v=2.1&it=r&aty=ip), he writes, "that pointing in the sense of 'throwing up a finger'--exactly what Sealth is said to do here--is a 'non-Native behavior.... A Native person indicates with eyes or pursed lips.'" (37) Smith has painted a portrait of Sealth as both a classical orator and a biblical patriarch, hand on the head in blessing, finger pointed to the heavens, one that is easy to imagine in an ornate frame, hung upon a museum wall. This portrait is at the least highly suspect and perhaps historically and culturally impossible".

<sup>16</sup> An article that details some relations of Coast Salish women, <https://openrivers.lib.umn.edu/article/mariners-makers-matriarchs/>

In Ted Perry's version, there is mention of some of the same excerpts present in Henry Smith's "original" version, such as speech about the treaty negotiations and Chief Seattle's reflection on the history of Native-settler relations. Also present are additional sections. They include environmental themes such as, "How can you buy or sell the sky, the warmth of the land? The idea is strange to us. If we do not own the freshness of the air and the sparkle of the water, how can you buy them from us?" These environmentally conscious themes continue throughout the speech. As they were not present in the Smith version and Perry admitted to writing them, and said they were not meant to be attributed to Chief Seattle, most of this speech is considered an impossibility. Some clear specific impossibilities besides the environmentally conscious themes include, "I am a savage and do not understand any other way. I have seen a thousand rotting buffalo on the prairie...". This is quite impossible as Chief Seattle was a man who was raised and lived in the Pacific Northwest, a place absent of buffaloes. In addition, the slaughter of the buffalo that took place on the Great Plains was after this speech was given in 1854.<sup>17</sup> These impossibilities show that we do not truly know what Chief Seattle might have said, and can only really be sure that some of what was attributed to him was not actually said by him.

## **2.4 Statement of Research Question**

I will be seeking to answer in my research: *How do tribal members of Chief siʔal's community interpret his speech and consequently his character?*

## **Methods**

### **3.1 Overview of Methods**

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<sup>17</sup> I decided not to include the William Arrowsmith version in this coverage of impossibilities as its content is the same as the Henry A. Smith version.

In order to answer my research question, I needed to conduct my study through the application of systematic methods. The methodology through which this study was conducted was the use of individual semi-structured interviews. Initial information about participants was obtained through email. The decision to use semi-structured interviews was made after review of other types of qualitative methods like rhetorical criticism. Ultimately, it was decided that rhetorical criticism would only deal with text itself and the basis of my literature review has shown there to be no relevant texts that cover interpretations of Chief Seattle's speech and character by his own tribal communities. Therefore, there would be no literature to analyze and critique. In order to collect the relevant data, i.e. what the tribal members believe about Chief Seattle's character as well as how they interpret the speech, semi structured interviews were conducted. It was determined that there were multiple advantages that this method provides to this study. This included the ability to get live interpretations from tribal members as well as inquire about follow-up questions. It allowed the researcher to clarify and share personal interpretations with participants after the interviews had been conducted. This ensures accurate and ethical interpretations. Another advantage is that interviews allow the ability to understand peoples' range of opinions and generate responses via the participants themselves without bias or assumption through the researchers' creation of survey questions. Interviews allow the recording of the body language and additional non-verbal responses which add to context for data analysis. Within the semi-structured interviews, I used stimulus materials in the form of the different versions of the speeches that are available. This falls under a specific method named, "Think Aloud" protocol research. These materials were presented to participants to review and look over after the first stage of interview questions. This additional method is defined by an inventor of the method as follows: "We asked them to read the articles as normally as possible except that, to

enable us to observe and record what they did, they were to think aloud as they read".<sup>18</sup> The purpose of this method is to understand how participants come to terms with different versions of the speech as well as getting their direct quotes and reactions to the speech versions. This method was deemed the most useful for its advantage in asking participants to voice their thoughts while reading through a text. This is relevant to understanding tribal members' interpretations of Chief Seattle's speech.

### 3.2 Sampling

The sampling for this study began with a purposive snowball sampling. I believe that snowball sampling has worked well. It started with the procurement of at least one informant from each tribe and then generally allowed the informants to form from there.<sup>19</sup> This is a positive way to sample an Indigenous population because of their orientation towards community and oral history. My sample size was 8 participants across 2 tribes. There were 6 participants from the Duwamish tribe and 2 participants from the Suquamish tribe. This is an uneven number, however these are the participants that were interested in this study. The researcher contacted the Duwamish tribal council and they approved a flier to be disseminated in their tribal newsletter. The Suquamish tribe chose to have their Chairman represent the tribe and make the decision on the research proposal. The Chairman then decided who would participate in the study. The low number of participants could have been due to the timeline that the study needed to be completed within. This does not imply that this study was ineffective. The study represented 8 additional tribal members perspectives than had been offered previous to this study. I hoped to cover all demographics of people within the tribe that are of adult age, 18-100. The age range for this

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<sup>18</sup> For the article by Dr. Davida Charney and Danette Paul, see: <http://wvx.sagepub.com>

<sup>19</sup> For the Duwamish, there were a few initial participants that participated from the council and some others reached out due to a flier. After that, the participant pool was established enough to pool participants from that point.

study's participants ranged from late 30s to late 80s. The exclusion of children is done with the assumption that their interpretations will be mostly a reflection of their parental figures and surroundings. As well as the probability that their oral history knowledge will not be solidified at an adolescent age. Another factor in this decision comes about due to ethical considerations of this study.

At the end of the selection process, the informed consent form was sent out to be reviewed by participants. This was done so that the interview time was used effectively. It also gave participants a chance to look through the form before beginning the interview. If the informed consent form was not finished before the interview, then the researcher included it within the interview. The beginning of the interview began with casual introductions and standard welcoming pleasantries. This was done with the effort in mind to create connection with the tribal members as well as to orient my positionality as a researcher and a tribal member myself. The researcher was able to keep in mind that their positionality statement may need to be tweaked in different settings as there are different tribal tensions between these three tribes. The interview process was limited to at least 45 minutes and at maximum 1 hour and 15 minutes. If more time was needed, then the researcher informed the participant that the maximum interview duration had been reached and they were given two options, to reschedule another interview or to take a break and come back to the interview. The interview included video and audio recording, with consent of the participant. The participants were given the option of what location they would prefer the interview to occur in, either their homes or a third party location in their tribe's community center, or via Zoom. This was only relevant when the participant may have some meaningful issue with conducting the interview over Zoom. To compensate participants for their time, the interview concluded with a \$25 "Tango" gift card link sent to participants for use at

their own discretion. Participants were also given a culturally relevant honorarium if the tribal council was willing to fund this. The honorarium was smoked salmon in two flavors, totally 1 pound for each participant. The participants then had the choice of continued involvement with the data analysis process and final results, if they so choose.

### **3.3 Ethical Considerations**

After considering what ethical concerns may occur based on my method, my participants, and my demographic, I determined that the study could be categorized as exempt due to an IRB review. This is because while my study does involve human subjects and a marginalized group, it will be an unpublished study, but most importantly it falls under the category of a low risk study.

In addition to the IRB review, I wanted to make sure that due to my research context, I was providing an extra level of care and consideration of my participants. This included my intentional effort to inform participants of my positionality as a member of specific tribes, to provide a space that they feel comfortable and willing to talk, to provide a space they feel they are being respected and equal, and to consider this research to be open to criticism from the participants. There is a negative history of research in Indigenous communities and the previous harm that has been done in the name of research must be taken into account. I was careful to include a form of what is known as Feminist Communitarian Research Ethics. I was introduced to this in COM 496, an Honors class, in the essay by W. Lawrence Neuman (2014). I chose to bring my proposal to each tribal council in order to get permission to continue with this research in each tribe as well as establish what is known as "good relations." This is the idea that doing things with good intentions is clear to people and will be regarded as such in the course of any type of a relationship. In addition to this, I provided my thesis proposal to each tribal council in

order to receive feedback on the research straight from the tribal community. Likewise, this included the interview schedule.

### **3.4 Data Collection**

The data collection for this study occurred over the course of 3 months in 2024 (March-May). The majority of these interviews took place over the online platform, Zoom. These interviews therefore, were audio and video recorded through the Zoom platform. There was one interview that was recorded in person using three recording devices.<sup>20</sup> The first was a GoPro "Hero 6 Black," the second was a "UPS" voice recorder, and the third was the online Chrome platform "Live Transcribe." The researcher was familiar to 3 of the participants. The majority of the participants were contacted through email based on the researchers attempts to advertise this study as well as meetings with the individual tribal councils. Due to the nature of these interviews being semi-structured, the researcher prepared an interview schedule. The researcher used this interview schedule as a guide in order to keep the interview to the time limits that had been agreed to. The questions served as a way for the researcher to probe deeper into specific topics (such as questions like, "What did you know about Chief Seattle? Did you hear about him growing up"), while also allowing natural follow-up questions to occur ("Oh so if it was only in school, then was your knowledge furthered outside of school? What were the facts learned?"). This was helpful in obtaining new information that would be useful for the study. These questions were chosen with hopes of gaining understanding of the base level of knowledge that participants were going into the "Think Aloud" portion with. This included topics about

#### 1. Cultural affiliation

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<sup>20</sup> This was due to the age of the participant. It was easier for them to do it in person to avoid technology issues as well as predicted miscommunication.

2. Experience with the speech
3. Knowledge of Chief Seattle

The "Think Aloud" portion was chosen in hopes that this method would be most beneficial in obtaining the participants' interpretations of the specific speech versions. The researcher chose to include the two most well-known versions, by Henry Smith and Ted Perry, as well as a tribally relevant version (for the Suquamish this was one published on their website and for the Duwamish it was the version hung in their Tribal Center). The inclusion of tribally relevant versions was done with the intention of engaging with participants in a reflection of what version their own tribe held "true" and whether they agreed or disagreed with the larger tribal body that had made that decision to display that specific speech version.

### **3.5 Data analysis**

Due to the nature of how the data was obtained (through video and audio recording), it then needed to be transcribed. The study used a variety of methods to ensure accurate transcription. The transcriptions were run through the program, "Otter AI" which took the audio recordings and then auto-transcribed them. These auto-transcriptions were then taken off the platform and inserted into a separate document. The researcher then took these transcriptions and matched them with the video recordings for each relevant interview. The transcriptions were also color coded to each individual participant. Quotes were then divided into sections to match them with themes. These included things such as, "agreement," "disagreement," "knowledge of Lushootseed," etc.

## **Findings**

### **4.1 Introduction**

The interview process resulted in many varied conclusions based on the individual's understanding. Participants' own life experiences brought different perspectives on the speeches. They will be detailed prior to the discussion of findings. Eight main revelations were made throughout the interview process. They are identified as: agreement, disagreement, and neutrality in interpretations, the language within the speech, sense of the message of the speech, the participant's own connections to the speeches, their tendency towards a selective perception of the speech, and the cultural influence on participants in relation to the speech. These themes, though separate, encompass how the participants understood and interpreted the speech and character of Chief Seattle. Note that these sections do bleed into each other. Each topic is separated generally, but similar ideas are characterized in different ways because of their interconnection in all aspects of the speech. Also note that the main versions discussed within will be the Henry Smith and Ted Perry versions. The Duwamish and Suquamish versions did not yield enough discussion to be included in the summary of findings. I believe this to be due to both speeches' similarities to the two most circulated versions, by Smith and Perry.

## 4.2 Participants

**Participant #1** has agreed to be identified. His name is Ken Workman, a member of the Duwamish tribe as well as a council member of the Duwamish tribe. Ken worked at Boeing for 30 years until his retirement. He describes himself as being born on the shores of Elliot Bay and continuing his connection to the land his entire life, and he has knowledge of the Lushootseed language. He identifies himself through the Fowler line, as a great<sup>8</sup> grandson of Chief Seattle through the Chief's second wife.

**Participant #2** has agreed to be identified. He is known as John Boddy and is a member of the Duwamish tribe and a councilman of the Duwamish tribe. He also identifies as a direct descendant of Chief Seattle. He describes his tribal cultural connection as recent due to generational trauma that separated his great-grandmother from his tribal line, and therefore also had little knowledge of Lushootseed.

**Participant #3** has agreed to be identified. He is known as Kendall Carrier. He is in his late 30s and lives and works in the local area, on the Eastside. He is a Duwamish tribal member and has been told that he is a descendant of Chief Seattle, but is unsure of the specifics. The cultural connection he has is through his mother, but he grew up with little oral tradition or knowledge of Lushootseed. His knowledge of Chief Seattle is minimal up until his recent exposure to the speech.

**Participant #4** has agreed to be identified. She is known as Monica Robbins. She is a Duwamish tribal member who was raised connected to the tribe due to her mother, as well as identifying with a family line. She is a descendant of Chief Seattle through his daughter Princess Angeline. She did not grow up with a lot of oral tradition or knowledge of Lushootseed. She has recent exposure to the speech given by Chief Seattle.

**Participant #5** has agreed to be identified. She is known as Marilyn Jones. She is a Suquamish tribal elder and has been involved in working with the tribe for the last 30 years. She holds a lot of cultural knowledge as she grew up on the Suquamish reservation, her father was the Chairman of the Suquamish tribe for some time and has been a traditional dancer since the age of seven. She identifies the many people who provided her with experience in oral tradition and knowledge of cultural customs. She is not fluent, though she has an understanding and knowledge of the Lushootseed language.

**Participant #6** has agreed to be identified. She is known as Edith Loyer ``Edie" Nelson. She is a Duwamish tribal elder. She has grown up with some cultural knowledge due to her family's involvement with the tribe. She is a descendant of Chief Seattle and is very knowledgeable of the connection. She does not have experience with oral tradition.

**Participant #7** has agreed to be identified. He is known as Leonard Forsman. He is the Chairman of the Suquamish tribe and has been involved with tribal government for over 35 years. He is a descendant of the Chief through one of Seattle's brothers. He grew up surrounded by cultural knowledge as he was born and raised on the Suquamish reservation. This includes oral tradition, as well as some knowledge of Lushootseed though he is not fluent. He became acquainted with the speech by Chief Seattle in his early adulthood as a part of his work with the Suquamish Museum.

**Participant #8** has agreed to be identified. He is known as Duane "Sunny" Summers. He is a member of the Duwamish tribe as well as Quinalt, Quileute, Chinook, and Cowlitz. He works both inside and outside tribal settings. He is also a skipper for Canoe Journey, one of the many cultural ties he has to his family and tribal affiliations. He has a lot of cultural knowledge due to his upbringing and has experienced oral tradition throughout. He has a fair knowledge of Lushootseed but chooses to use it only when he feels it is appropriate. His first interactions with Chief Seattle's speech occurred in tandem with his knowledge of Chief Seattle and the treaty signed by the Chief. This interaction was in Duane's adolescence.

### 4.3 Harmonious Discourse

Cumulative to all the interviews there was generally the highest amount of agreement at approximately 54%.<sup>21</sup> Some highlights of these agreements involved specific parts of the original Henry Smith speech like, "**This is probably true...probably because of pandemic, not war.**" This is in reference to the line in the speech stating, *"There was a time when our people covered the whole land, as waves of a wind-ruffled sea cover its shell paved floor. But that time has since passed away with the greatness of tribes now almost forgotten"*(see Appendix one). This shows that this participant both understands the cultural context of the time that this speech was given, as well as the situation that tribal members were in. The participant is connecting their personal knowledge to a statement in the speech in order to decide to accept it or not. They do in fact seem to accept it. We also see agreement on the same lines here: "**And we're always here, we're always here. Like I said before, in the wind, in, you know, the sun, whatever, we're always here.**" This is in reference to the quote *"And when the last red man shall have perished from the earth and his memory among white men shall have become a myth, these shores shall swarm with the invisible dead of my tribe..."* (see Appendix one). This is taken as agreement because the participant is continuing on this thread from the speech with their own understanding of it. It at least shows a positive relation to the speech. Again, this is based on the participants' cultural knowledge and understanding; that their ancestors are still here in the wind and the sun. We see that this line from the speech, that is italicized above, was one that many people commented on like, "**Makes perfect sense**" and "**Yep, because our spirit will always be there.**" So we can understand that the participants do generally agree with some parts of the speech. This does not always translate to agreement of all versions, or agreement of all parts of the speech. These positive relations to the speech come from specific parts of the speech versions. Therefore, we

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<sup>21</sup> This means that of all the quotes from all participants, 54% of them were interpreted by the researcher to be agreeing with something within the speech.

may assume that the participants do relate to some of this speech and may believe that it would be plausible for Chief Seattle to have said. Their agreement of certain aspects of the speech does seem based in their knowledge and understanding. The fragments with which they agree often seem to relate to cultural understanding.

What was the most surprising finding, was that there was some agreement from participants in relation to the Ted Perry version of the speech, even though there has been much criticism proving this version to be largely written by Ted Perry himself.<sup>22</sup> An example here states, "And that sounds like it's speaking more to the power that the white, the whites had more tools and guns and powerful things to help them than to overpower almost like acknowledging the overpowering, but some things that they were stronger than maybe what the natives had."

This is surprising because this quote, "*This is kind of him, since we know he has little need of our friendship in return. But we will consider your offer. For we know that if we do not sell, the white man may come with guns and take our land*" (see Appendix two), was not present in Henry Smith's version and so we can suppose that this was an addition by Perry himself. However, another agreement with Ted Perry's version may prove to answer this puzzle, "I liked this interpretation of what you [quoted], but using typical, relatable like the train, you know that people back then listening to this would understand." This was in reference to the passage about shooting buffalo from a passing train (see Appendix two). It seems that the participant accepts this version or perhaps accepts the quote more likely, and its mistranslation because it may serve a larger purpose of getting the knowledge about Chief Seattle out in the public. It seems that the participant accepts it because they understand what motives the author, Perry, may have had when changing certain parts of the speech. Though the participant doesn't agree or disagree

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<sup>22</sup> See page 27, in Albert Furtwangler's book.

directly, this may serve to answer why the participants may agree with the version written by Ted Perry.

#### 4.4 Diverging Perspectives

As stated above, there was some disagreement with the speech versions, at around 20% of all interpretations. The disagreement appears more centered on the Ted Perry version in comparison to the Henry Smith version. There was even a participant who refused to engage with the Ted Perry version. The disagreement usually surrounded specific phrases within the speech version.

In Henry Smith's version, the disagreement followed pieces where certain ideas were questioned. These included disagreement with the terms used within the speech, the phrases used, and general rejection of ideas, like, the following comment: "I can't see [Chief Seattle] using the term red man" and "I can see [Chief Seattle] saying a tear but a dirge, that's an old English term." So, what we find with these disagreements is that participants base their rejection of phrases by characterizing the words as something plausible to Chief Seattle or plausible to Henry Smith. We know that this is similar to how academics interpret this speech. Though, additionally some participants are understanding this speech through a lens of cultural knowledge, language knowledge, or their own deduction skills. For example, consider the following: "But I think that you know, this was probably a little romanticized" (in reference to "as waves of a wind-ruffled sea cover its shell paved floor"). These disagreements express participants' interpretations of the speech. They seem to pick up on fallacies within the speech due to their dual-cultural understanding. They make these interpretations interchangeably, with some interpretations being made with knowledge of the public imaginary and some with their

tribal knowledge. We can see this expressed further in quotes within the Ted Perry version of the speech.

In the Ted Perry version, the disagreement was centered on both the language and the false content of the speech. The questions surrounding this speech by Ted Perry followed quotes such as, "I am a savage and do not understand" (see Appendix two) or "I have seen a thousand rotting buffalos" (see Appendix two).

The language disagreement showed up for participants in ways like, "What?! He was never back East, how would he see the rotting buffalos," or "I have trouble with that whole section because he had never seen a train in his lifetime," and "Oh, that's all fabricated, I think." These recognitions seemed to come naturally to participants during the interview. Someone could suppose that this is because all participants understood that the speech versions were more than likely false. However, not all participants characterized the speech in the same way. We see different interpretations across all interviews, ranging from refusing to read the Ted Perry version at all to commenting positively on the pieces most likely to be inserted by Ted Perry. Due to this difference, we can then presume that the above interpretations come to participants naturally, meaning the default interpretations could be due to participants cultural upbringing, or understanding of general public history. In the case of Participant #2, it is known that this participant did not grow up involved in his culture due to generational trauma. This trauma prevented the freedom of identity for the participants' family and therefore the participant themselves ("Because of what happened to [my grandma] my grandpa absolutely hated Natives with a passion and would not allow her to reach out to her family, and she had quite a substantial family"). Therefore, we could suppose that this interpretation may instead come from the participant's commitment to learning their culture ("So that means I have to learn so I can pass it

on to him" and "I've got friends at the Suquamish, I hit them up [contact them] regularly. I've got friends in the Duwamish tribe, I hit them up for knowledge"), as well as their strong tendency towards literature as a knowledge supplement ("I'm a history buff, I love my history," in reference to the knowledge medium the participant leans more into. This "history" discussion surrounded the participants' fascination with older books). Likewise, another quote received the response, "Oh, that's all fabricated, I think," **Participant #8** offered a different natural interpretation/deduction in relation to the written phrase, "*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*" (see Appendix two). The question may be how this participant immediately decides this is "fabricated." It could be due to their previous rejection of the words used in the speech that don't line up with the participant's characterization of Seattle's behavior. We see that in this participant's rejection of another line in this version of the speech: "The fact that the pony was added in there, it makes me think that that that is something that was taken from another leader...Our, our people, traditionally don't really speak in that manner, even today when you talk to elders, they don't really speak like that." Due to this previous rejection of ideas within Ted Perry's speech, this participant might be more wary of this speech and expect more fallacies. It also may be due to the participants' cultural affiliation. We see in the second quote above, this participant has experience, both with the natural speech habits of tribal members from different tribes as well as the Duwamish tribe. In addition to this, this participant speaks of experience with elders and their speech habits not lining up with how the Ted Perry speech is constructed.

#### 4.5 Neutral Stances on Speech

There were still parts of the speech that people remained neutral on (~23%).

Cumulatively, it seems that the neutral or confusing parts for participants centered around doubt

of the author and his translation accuracy or confusion in what the message was supposed to be. The instances of confusion surrounding the author of the speech and their translation begins with Henry Smith's version. Consider, for example, the following statement: "It's kind of hard, like to understand too, like, exactly what he was meaning there...because you don't know if it's translated this way or not? Right. He sounded like a detailed speaker, like, lots of adjectives and descriptive, descriptive words and stuff. So it's hard to say if that's the— is that how Henry Smith? You know, translated it? Did he add anything to it?" We can see this participant has a hard time making a decision of whether this was something spoken by Chief Seattle or Henry Smith. The quote being discussed is, "*Yonder sky that has wept tears of compassion on our fathers for centuries untold, and which, to us, appears changeless and eternal, may change. Today it is fair. Tomorrow it may be overcast with clouds. My words are like the stars that never set.*" This confusion may be due to the participant's lack of understanding of the vernacular used in the speech, or more because it is the first line of the speech. I suspect this confusion to be due to the lack of knowledge surrounding the speech as this participant did not have as much experience with the speech ("I've never like sat down and like, read [the speeches] and studied [the speeches]") compared to other participants who may have even worked on it being published in tribal museums ("I took pictures, his grave site, totem poles different things around the area, and made a large poster, and put the speech in the center of it, and sold it through the [Suquamish] museum"). These are important distinctions in background knowledge to ground interpretations of the speech versions. At the same time, **Participant #5**, was also confused in some parts of the speech due to translation doubts, stating, "It's hard to translate from one language to another." What is interesting is this comment is based off of the same quote as **Participant #4** had commented above. This information coupled together, may indicate it is less about cultural

upbringing and more about the difficulty in deciphering, even as a tribal member, what words could be definitively attributed to Seattle vs to Henry Smith.

Within the neutral or indeterminate speech sections, we see confusion surrounding what the message was supposed to be. One passage that created this confusion was: "*The Great Chief also sends us words of friendship and goodwill*"(see Appendix one). We see answers to this look like, "I am not sure how to interpret this." This answer from the participant surrounds the general set up of the sentence and therefore affects the participant's understanding of what message comes across. Due to a lack of context afforded to the participant, they are left to wonder who the Great Chief could've been as well as what words were sent that mean friendship and goodwill. The use of words such as "goodwill", which are less common in today's public speech, may confuse the participant. They may not interact with these types of speech constructions in everyday life. The confusion in the message may be participants' way of making sense of what they have read, when they are asked to think aloud. "No, I'm not sure what he was referring to when he thought we might also be to blame. Because there was the ongoing, battling by some of the other tribes. There was complacency among the Duwamish. And perhaps that's what he was referring to." This reference of "we might also be to blame," comes from Henry Smith's version here: "*I will not mourn over our untimely decay, nor reproach my pale face brothers with hastening it, for we, too, may have been somewhat to blame*" (see Appendix one).

#### 4.6 Questioning Veracity of Language

A question that the researcher had prior to the research process involved the use of the term "red man" in all speech versions. The conclusions about this term were few and far between, though we can see negative opinions on it stated as, "I'm not sure, I kinda can see part of it, but I'm not sure that he referred to himself as a red man, I don't know, but I think that was

somebody putting that in there." This participant identifies the loaded words such as "red man" as suspect. This participant does not back this up with evidence of the language, just their "natural inclination that the Chief may not have spoken about his people like this. This comment can be confirmed due to the fact that the Lushootseed dictionary indicates the word, "ʔáciłtalbix" as the default word in reference to any native person/group. We can expect that this may be one of the words used by Chief Seattle.<sup>23</sup> However, some found it to be a neutral statement, saying, "The use of the red man also in the yeah, that was in the original too with the Henry Smith version" (referencing Ted Perry's version, "*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*"). This interpretation is interesting to note because this participant is interpreting this statement as acceptable because the same verbiage "red man" was used in what they deem the "original" or the Henry Smith version. This acceptance can be problematic, as we can see that this word may not have been natural to Seattle to use, and therefore, the translation of these speeches can definitely define how people understand and make sense of him. Another participant similarly accepted the "red man" term: "He's right that, you know, the red man did not get the respect that they deserved for the land that they gave." I believe this acceptance comes from these participants' familiarity with the term in the present day.

A specific line originating in the Henry Smith version of the speech states, "*A tear, a tamanamus, a dirge, and they are gone from our longing eyes forever*" (see Appendix one). This word, "tamanamus" has confused both the researcher and the researcher's advisor. Many participants did not comment or understand this part of the speech. One statement says, "I can see him saying a tear but a dirge, that's an old English term." However, there was one

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<sup>23</sup> For reference of the dictionary and the word definition see:  
<https://lushootseeddictionary.appspot.com/#!LutEngCellBrowser>

participant's comment that follows a prediction made by the researcher in early rhetorical criticism of the speech, as well as a man named Albert Furtwangler's interpretation of this mysterious word. Furtwangler states that they believe that Smith used this term as a way to show that he had not deceived people (writing from his own words and not Seattle's). "If Smith meant to note this word—tamanawus—as an authenticating detail in the speech surely he would've called attention to it." The interview with Participant #7/Leonard Forsman involves him immediately recognizing this word as, "tamanawus."<sup>24</sup> The interviewee and researcher continued to break down this quote further, by bringing in the other words in the sentence such as "dirge" and "tear." They surmised that "dirge" meaning "lament for the dead" and "tear" may have related to someone crying. Therefore, the participant predicts that the word, "tamanamus" is actually "tamanawus" and means to involve spirit power. However, they recognize it as Lushootseed, not Chinook Jargon as Furtwangler states. This is accepted by a Lushootseed expert Tami Hohn who states, "That word I was told by an elder that it is most likely a Chinook jargon word and that people used it all over the Northwest area. It is a commonly used word. I like to use it as a general term for power. We do have a word for power in Lushootseed, sqəlalʔitut sqəlalitut which is a general word for us. But I think both terms are fine to use. I have seen it written in different ways, tomanowus, tomanamus, and others but use any of them, it's just how different people said it."

Many participants mentioned their interpretations of certain aspects of each speech version as containing "flowery" or "romanticized" language. They also connected this language to be more appropriate to that oral form, and added to each speech version by its author. We can see this in many interviews like, "It is flowery but also could be true." This participant knows

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<sup>24</sup> Albert Furtwangler's version of Henry Smith's version of the speech recognizes it as spelled "tamanawus" as well. Though this copy used in the speech version was misspelled as "tamanamus", as other versions misspell it like Grant. See page 33 of Furtwangler's book in references.

that there is a level of eloquence added to the speech, but cannot decide if that means it is false or just translated from Seattle's oration. Ultimately, there does seem to be some correlation between a participant's knowledge of Lushootseed and their recognition of fallacies within each speech version. The participants who do have some knowledge of the language seem to recognize when some pieces of language are not plausible to be a direct quote from Chief Seattle. For example, Participant #1 again questions the truth of the speech versions in general because of language used, "Alls you have to do is understand... our language, it's a [polysynthetic] language.<sup>25</sup> Alls you have to do is know a root. And then you have to know the construction of your affix, suffixes, tense, past, present, gender, once you understand all of that, you realize that the native language here was very much like the sounds of nature, and therefore all of the adjectives that are described in the Dr. Smith's speech...but, you know, that's coming from Europe." This questioning comes from their knowledge that Lushootseed is constructed differently than the way a sentence in the Henry Smith version of the speech is.

#### 4.7 Fluidity of Translation By Participants

Most participants seem to agree that they believe in the "gist" or the message of the speech versions rather than the direct quotes of the speech. This is seen in quotes like, "...in this, the gist seems accurate, vernacular doesn't," referring specifically to pieces in the Ted Perry version of the speech, one that we know was not written by Chief Seattle. That is an interesting finding to note. Most participants still saw Ted Perry's version as having some truth within it, even if most of the words were most likely not Chief Seattle's. This idea that the message of the speech is similar, the vocabulary is what changes, does apply to how participants felt about the Henry Smith version as well, like stated here: "I'm not used to seeing that, you know, the sentence structure is a little weird, but, but yeah, I think you've more or less saying kind of explaining his

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<sup>25</sup> For understanding of the word see, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/polysynthesis>

decision." The researcher believes that this conclusion that the main content of the speech is believable, even if the language is not, then allows participants to connect to and accept the speech for what is there on the page. This is most likely because of a lack of other avenues of evidence of what was said at the oral speech event itself.

#### 4.8 Resistive Feelings Towards the Speech

There were several participants who indicated sadness towards this speech. We see this in quotes like, "Yeah, just that just says what it actually it's the line before it. That was sad to me before the first time... That, that that was that seemed sad that. I mean, that was true. But that was sad that he felt that way." This is coming from Ted Perry's version stating, "*No, we are separate races. Our children do not play together and our old men tell different stories. God favors you, and we are orphans*"(see Appendix two).

There were also several participants who indicated anger or negative feelings towards one or more speech versions. One participant, as stated in the "Disagreement Surrounding the Speech" section, refused according to their right to participate in the Think Aloud method with the Ted Perry version, stating, "Yeah it's not something that I care to talk about." This refusal to even listen to the speech goes to show how the participant interprets not just the Ted Perry version, but the Henry Smith version as well. This participant has strong feelings about how Ted Perry's version manipulates the "original" version by Dr. Smith. It may be due to what Jason Black identifies as "problematic [about the speech] as the entire timbre of Seattle's ideas were removed discursively, just as his territory was taken materially." This entire manipulation is defined by him as serving a means of "neocolonialism." I believe this is a similar feeling to what drove Participant #5 to refuse to read Ted Perry's version.

#### 4.9 Confirmation Bias of Participants

Participants interpreted the speech in a way that allowed the selective perception of their understanding of the speech, often in a way that ignored fallacies present. This term, selective perception is defined as people selecting information that they connect with to fit with their understanding to explain away other contradictory information. This is seen in Participant #4's interview where she states, *And that sounds like it's speaking more to the power that the white, the whites had more tools and guns and powerful things to help them than to overpower almost like acknowledging the overpowering, but some things that they were stronger than maybe what the natives had,* in reference to the line, *"For we know that if we do not sell, the white man may come with guns and take our land."* It is interesting because it is in fact the Ted Perry version, something that she is aware is false (it had been discussed in the interview that Ted Perry had reworked this speech as well as the line that she was looking at had been color coded yellow to indicate it had been added in). So we see her rejection of possible fallacies in exchange for her confirmation of the speech due to her direct relation to it. We also see similar selective perception from Participant #3, where he states, *"Yeah, that's a little surprising that he would word it in such a way, you know, from, from what we kind of learned in history is that the general narrative is that, you know, white men came, they took the land that wasn't rightfully theirs. And he's almost saying that, that they don't have rights to the land any more"* (see Appendix one, referencing the quote *"The great and I presume also good White Chief sends us word that he wants to buy our lands, but is willing to allow us enough to live on comfortably. This indeed appears generous for the red man no longer has rights that he need respect"*). It is curious that this Participant does seem to want to confirm that this line goes against what he would expect the Chief to say. He indicates that it would've been common to hear that the settlers

came in and took Native land, but that the narrative is "flipped" by Seattle. This puzzle isn't fixed by the participant. He accepts that he might've been wrong, instead of supposing that this could be a mistranslation or a change in language by Henry Smith. I believe this is because this participant did not feel he understood the speech well due to lack of experience with it ("[A tribal event is] the first time I had read the whole thing and learned about it").

#### 4.10 Cultural Contextualization of Participants

The interpretations by participants seemed to be influenced by whether the participants were more or less engaged with their culture in some way. Engagement may be experience with oral tradition, experience with Lushootseed, "Indian Country" knowledge of American Indian history, etc. This cultural connection seemed to have an effect on how the participants interpreted specific parts of the speech. We see this in examples like where Participant #5 states, "Like I say, he was a seer [meaning the Chief went through a traditional Vision Quest and received seeing power]. And he would say things in the changes, so I'm not sure how you know in translation. You know, it could be fairly close to what he really meant" (see Appendix one, referencing the line, "*There was a time when our people covered the whole land, as the waves of a wind ruffled sea cover, it shall paved floor, but that time has long since passed away with the greatness of tribes now almost forgotten. I will not mourn over untimely decay, no reproach my pale face brothers with hastening it for way too may have been somewhat to blame*"). In this instance, we see that Participant #5 is using their own cultural knowledge as evidence to understand the truth behind the speech; the participant is corroborating the speech using their own knowledge.

### Conclusion

#### 5.1 Reflections & Takeaways

I believe that ultimately, we cannot judge participants for their positive or negative interpretations of any version of the speech. They come to terms with it just as others have. The Duwamish and Suquamish tribes holding versions of this speech in their spaces despite the fallacies present may represent the resilience in holding the figure of Chief Seattle with respect despite the colonial struggles that have gotten in the way of the exact quotes of the speech. Like most participants stated, the message is what matters, and that message is powerful and they relate to that. Indeed, there were some new interpretations of the speech, considering no Duwamish or Suquamish tribal member has been identified and quoted in previous scholarship for any interpretation of this speech. Some of the interpretations by participants did line up with previous academics' general interpretations, like the recognition of fallacies within the speech. What is new is the distinct observations participants made about clarifying language within the speech. It should be noted that generally no two people felt exactly the same about the speech, though there are themes, these are all individual interpretations and should be taken as such and not generalized further. This study did not aim to generalize but to add new interpretations by tribal members so that they would be present in the scholarly record.

## **5.2 Limitations of the research**

This research was at the mercy of many limitations. They include:

1. Lack of practice in research methods, including Think Aloud protocol.
2. Short timeline for the completion of the research project.
3. Not covering the full breadth of all speech versions due to time constraints during interviews.
4. Small sample size.
5. Lack of Muckleshoot tribal member participation.

6. Not including a base level question about the participant's connection to the land.

What these limitations mean are that the research could be improved by including things such as a more practiced method of Think Aloud. The research could be improved if the method were tested to understand the most beneficial way to conduct this method on non-academics. Initially the researcher had planned for data collection surveys to take place over the phone prior to the selection of participants. These surveys could've involved the cross-checking of specific criteria necessary for inclusion in the study. These include participants that are aware of the speech, have existing information or opinion about Chief Seattle, and are willing to meet to discuss their opinions on the speech and character of Chief Seattle. This would've been done to try to prevent participants from changing their original opinion about the speech after hearing about it being connected to the study. Changing opinions could be classified as the history effect, which is defined as, "events that happen in the environment that change the conditions of a study, affecting its outcome. Such a history event can happen before the start of an experiment, or between the pre-test and post-test".<sup>26</sup> Pre-interview surveys did not end up as part of my research because of my research timeline. More time for the research project may have yielded more interpretation as well as possibly a fuller thesis, or a follow-up research project into the speech. In not covering all aspects of all speech versions, some interpretations certainly could have been missed. I was not able to sample as many participants as I originally projected to. Originally my sample size was predicted to be 30 participants total, to account for 7 participants per tribal group as well as 3 extra participants to be mindful of possible dropout rates as well as informal, test interviews. More Suquamish member participation would result in an even more in-depth

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<sup>26</sup> For reference on the definition of the history effect, see: <https://dissertation.laerd.com/internal-validity.php#:~:text=History%20effects%20refer%20to%20events,%2Dtest%20and%20post%2Dtest.>

research process. This means getting Muckleshoot participation as well as other local tribal participation, not exclusive to Chief Seattle's descendant tribes. The research could also be improved by covering the subject of participants' current connection to and understanding of the land. This would provide a fuller perspective to draw from when looking at specific quotes about land within all speech versions.

### **5.3 Future Implications**

This research may very well open other research in the same area or about similar speeches given by Native icons. It may provide the participants with an increased desire to learn about their ancestors and this city's important and well-quoted speech. My hopes as the researcher are that this research may reach both the participants and people who may be slightly familiar with the speech and grow the knowledge of this interesting history surrounding the speech given in 1854 by a man named Chief Seattle.

I would recommend that someone may try to retranslate this speech back into Lushootseed, taking from the Lushootseed dictionary available as well as consulting language experts and the breadth of recordings available in Lushootseed. A linguist may also be contacted for consultation. The difficulty is that the Lushootseed language has no first language speakers and is therefore considered a "dead" or "sleeping" language. There is always a possibility of language loss including words within this speech to be left unidentified.

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**Appendix One**<sup>27</sup>

H. A. Smith, "Scraps From a Diary—Chief Seattle—A Gentleman by Instinct—His Native Eloquence,"  
The Seattle Sunday Star (October 29, 1887): 10.

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Old Chief Seattle was the largest Indian I ever saw, and by far the noblest looking. He stood six feet full in his moccasins, was broad shouldered, deep chested, and finely proportioned. His eyes were large, intelligent, expressive, and friendly when in repose, and faithfully mirrored the varying moods of the great soul that looked through them. He was usually solemn, silent and dignified, but on great occasions moved among assembled multitudes like a Titan among, Lilliputians, and his lightest word was law. When rising to speak in council or to render advice, all eyes were turned upon him, and deep-toned, sonorous and eloquent sentences rolled from his lips like the ceaseless thunders of cataracts flowing from exhaustless fountains, and His Magnificent Bearing was as noble as that of the most cultivated military chieftain in command of the forces of a continent. Neither his eloquence, his dignity or his grace were acquired. They were as native to his manhood as leaves and blossoms are to a flowering almond. His influence was marvelous. He might have been an emperor but all his instincts were democratic, and he ruled his loyal subjects with kindness and paternal benignity. He was always flattered by marked attention from white men, and never so much as when seated at their tables, and on such occasions he manifested more than anywhere else the genuine instincts of a gentleman.

When Governor Stevens first arrived in Seattle and told the natives he had been appointed commissioner of Indian Affairs for Washington Territory, they gave him a demonstrative reception in front of Dr. Maynard's office, near the water front on Main street. The Bay swarmed with canoes and the shore was lined with a living mass of swaying, writhing, dusky humanity, until Old Chief Seattle's trumpet-toned voice rolled over the immense multitude, like the startling reveille of a bass drum, when silence became as instantaneous and perfect as that which follows a clap of thunder from a clear sky. The governor was then introduced to the native multitude by Dr. Maynard, and at once commenced, in a conversational, plain, and straight-forward style, an explanation of his mission among them, which is too well understood to require recapitulation.

When he sat down, Chief Seattle arose with all the dignity of a senator, who carries the responsibilities of a great nation on his shoulders. Placing one hand on the governor's head, and slowly pointing heavenward with the index finger of the other, he commenced his memorable address in solemn and impressive tones:

Yonder sky that has wept tears of compassion on our fathers for centuries untold, and which, to us, appears changeless and eternal, may change. Today it is fair. Tomorrow it may be overcast with clouds. My words are like the stars that never set. What Seattle says, the great chief, Washington, (The Indians in early times thought that Washington was still alive. They knew the name to be that of a president, and when they heard of the president at Washington they mistook the name of the city for the name of the reigning chief. They thought, also, that King George was still England's monarch, because the Hudson Bay traders called themselves "King George men." This innocent deception the company was shrewd enough not to explain away for the Indians had more respect for them than they would have had,

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<sup>27</sup> From Leah Ceccarelli's work shown here:

<https://www.washington.edu/uwired/outreach/cspn/Website/Classroom%20Materials/Reading%20the%20Region/Texts%20by%20and%20about%20Natives/Texts/7.html>

had they known England was ruled by a woman. Some of us have learned better.) can rely upon, with as much certainty as our pale-face brothers can rely upon the return of the seasons.

The son of the white chief says his father sends us greetings of friendship and good will. This is kind, for we know he has little need of our friendship in return, because his people are many. They are like the grass that covers vast prairies, while my people are few, and they resemble the scattering trees of a storm-swept plain.

The great, and, I presume also good, white chief sends us word that he wants to buy our lands but is willing to allow us enough to live on comfortably. This indeed appears generous, for the red man no longer has rights that he need respect, and the offer may be wise, also, for we are no longer in need of a great country.

There was a time when our people covered the whole land, as the waves of a wind-ruffled sea cover its shell-paved floor. But that time has long since passed away with the greatness of tribes now almost forgotten. I will not mourn over our untimely decay, nor reproach my pale face brothers with hastening it, for we, too, may have been somewhat to blame.

When our young men grow angry at some real or imaginary wrong, and disfigure their faces with black paint, their hearts, also, are disfigured and turn black, and then their cruelty is relentless and knows no bounds, and our old men are not able to restrain them.

But let us hope that the hostilities between the red-man and his pale-face brothers may never return. We would have everything to lose and nothing to gain. True it is; that revenge, with our young braves, is considered gain, even at the cost of their own lives, but old men who stay at home in times of war, and old women, who have sons to lose, know better. Our great father at Washington, for I presume he is now our father as well as yours, since George has moved his boundaries to the north; our great and good father, I say, sends us word by his son, who, no doubt is a great chief among his people, that if we do as he desires, he will protect us. His brave armies will be to us a bristling wall of strength, and his great ships of war will fill our harbors so that our ancient enemies far to the northward, the Simsians and Hydas, will no longer frighten our women and old men. Then he will be our father and we will be his children.

But can this ever be? Your God loves your people and hates mine; he folds his strong arms lovingly around the white man and leads him as a father leads his infant son, but he has forsaken his red children; he makes your people wax strong every day, and soon they will fill the land; while my people are ebbing away like a fast-receding tide, that will never flow again. The white man's God cannot love his red children or he would protect them. They seem to be orphans and can look nowhere for help. How then can we become brothers? How can your father become our father and bring us prosperity and awaken in us dreams of returning greatness?

Your God seems to us to be partial. He came to the white man. We never saw Him; never even heard His voice; He gave the white man laws but had no word for His red children whose teeming millions filled this vast continent as the stars fill the firmament. No, we are two distinct races and must ever remain so. There is little in common between us. The ashes of our ancestors are sacred and their final resting place is hallowed ground, while you wander away from the tombs of your fathers seemingly without regret. Your religion was written on tables of stone by the iron finger of an angry God, lest you might forget it. The red-man could never remember nor comprehend it.

Our religion is the traditions of our ancestors, the dreams of our old men, given them by the great Spirit, and the visions of our sachems, and is written in the hearts of our people.

Your dead cease to love you and the homes of their nativity as soon as they pass the portals of the tomb. They wander far off beyond the stars, are soon forgotten, and never return. Our dead never forget the beautiful world that gave them being. They still love its winding rivers, its great mountains and its sequestered vales, and they ever yearn in tenderest affection over the lonely hearted living and often return to visit and comfort them.

Day and night cannot dwell together. The red man has ever fled the approach of the white man, as the changing mists on the mountainside flee before the blazing morning sun.

However, your proposition seems a just one, and I think that my folks will accept it and will retire to the reservation you offer them, and we will dwell apart and in peace, for the words of the great white chief seem to be the voice of nature speaking to my people out of the thick darkness that is fast gathering around them in a dense fog floating inward from a midnight sea. It matters but little where we pass the remnant of our days.

They are not many. The Indian's night promises to be dark. No bright star hovers about the horizon. Sad-voiced winds moan in the distance. Some grim Nemesis of our race is on the red man's trail, and wherever he goes he will still hear the sure approaching footsteps of the fell destroyer and prepare to meet his doom, as does the wounded doe that hears the approaching footsteps of the hunter. A few more moons, a few more winters, and not one of all the mighty hosts that once filled this broad land or that now roam in fragmentary bands through these vast solitudes will remain to weep over the tombs of a people once as powerful and hopeful as your own.

But why should we repine? Why should I murmur at the fate of my people? Tribes are made up of individuals, and are no better than they. Men come and go like the waves of the sea. A tear, a tamanamus, a dirge, and they are gone from our longing eyes forever. Even the white man, whose God walked and talked with him, as friend to friend, is not exempt from the common destiny. We may be brothers after all. We shall see. We will ponder your proposition, and when we have decided we will tell you. But should we accept it, I here and now make this the first condition: That we will not be denied the privilege, without molestation, of visiting at will the graves of our ancestors and friends. Every part of this country is sacred to my people. Every hill-side, every valley, every plain and grove has been hallowed by some fond memory or some sad experience of my tribe.

Even the rocks that seem to lie dumb as they swelter in the sun along the silent seashore in solemn grandeur thrill with memories of past events connected with the fate of my people, and the very dust under your feet responds more lovingly to our footsteps than to yours, because it is the ashes of our ancestors, and our bare feet are conscious of the sympathetic touch, for the soil is rich with the life of our kindred.

The sable braves, and fond mothers, and glad-hearted maidens, and the little children who lived and rejoiced here, and whose very names are now forgotten, still love these solitudes, and their deep fastnesses at eventide grow shadowy with the presence of dusky spirits. And when the last red man shall have perished from the earth and his memory among white men shall have become a myth, these shores shall swarm with the invisible dead of my tribe, and when your children's children shall think themselves alone in the field, the store, the shop, upon the highway or in the silence of the woods they will not be alone. In all the earth there is no place dedicated to solitude. At night, when the streets of your cities and villages shall be silent, and you think them deserted, they will throng with the returning hosts that once filled and still love this beautiful land. The White Man will never be alone. Let him be just and deal kindly with my people, for the dead are not altogether powerless.

Other speakers followed, but I took no notes. Governor Stevens' reply was brief. He merely promised to meet them in general council on some future occasion to discuss the proposed treaty. Chief Seattle's promise to adhere to the treaty, should one be ratified, was observed to the letter, for he was ever the unswerving and faithful friend of the white man. The above is but a fragment of his speech, and lacks all the charm lent by the grace and earnestness of the sable old orator, and the occasion.

Appendix Two<sup>28</sup>

Ted Perry, film script for Home (prod. by the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission, 1972), reprinted in Rudolf Kaiser, "Chief Seattle's Speech(es): American Origins and European Reception," in *Recovering the Word: Essays on Native American Literature*, ed. Brian Swann and Arnold Krupat (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 525-30.

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The Great Chief in Washington sends word that he wishes to buy our land. The Great Chief also sends us words of friendship and goodwill. This is kind of him, since we know he has little need of our friendship in return. But we will consider your offer. For we know that if we do not sell, the white man may come with guns and take our land.

How can you buy or sell the sky, the warmth of the land? The idea is strange to us.

If we do not own the freshness of the air and the sparkle of the water, how can you buy them from us[?] We will decide in our time.

What Chief Seattle says, the Great Chief in Washington can count on as truly as our white brothers can count on the return of the seasons. My words are like the stars. They do not set.

Every part of this earth is sacred to my people. Every shining pine needle, every sandy shore, every mist in the dark woods, every clearing, and humming insect is holy in the memory and experience of my people. The sap which courses through the trees carries the memories of the red man.

The white man's dead forget the country of their birth when they go to walk among the stars. Our dead never forget this beautiful earth, for it is the mother of the red man.

We are part of the earth and it is part of us. The perfumed flowers are our sisters[;] the deer, the horse, the great eagle, these are our brothers. The rocky crests, the juices in the meadows, the body heat of the pony, and man—all belong to the same family.

So, when the Great Chief in Washington sends word that he wishes to buy our land, he asks much of us. The Great Chief sends word he will reserve us a place so that

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we can live comfortable to ourselves. He will be our father and we will be his children.

But can that ever be? God loves your people, but has abandoned his red children. He sends machines to help the white man with his work, and builds great villages for him. He makes your people stronger every day. Soon you will flood the land like the rivers which crash down the canyons after a sudden rain. But my people are an ebbing tide, we will never return.

No, we are separate races. Our children do not play together and our old men tell different stories. God favors you, and we are orphans.

So we will consider your offer to buy our land. But it will not be easy. For this land is sacred to us. We take our pleasure in these woods. I do not know. Our ways are different from your ways.

This shining water that moves in the streams and rivers is not just water but the blood of our ancestors. If we sell you land, you must remember that it is sacred, and that each ghostly reflection in the clear water of the lakes tells of events and memories in the life of my people. The water's murmur is the voice of my father's father.

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<sup>28</sup> From Leah Ceccarelli's work:

<https://www.washington.edu/uwired/outreach/cspn/Website/Classroom%20Materials/Reading%20the%20Region/Texts%20by%20and%20about%20Natives/Texts/8.html>

The rivers are our brothers, they quench our thirst. The rivers carry our canoes, and feed our children. If we sell you our land, you must remember, and teach your children, that the rivers are our brothers, and yours, and you must henceforth give rivers the kindness you would give any brother.

The red man has always retreated before the advancing white man, as the mist of the mountain runs before the morning sun. But the ashes of our fathers are sacred. The graves are holy ground, and so these hills, these trees, this portion of the earth is consecrated to us. We know that the white man does not understand our ways. One portion of 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 behind, and he does not care. He kidnaps the earth from his children. He does not care. His fathers' graves and his children's birthright are forgotten. He treats his mother, the earth, and his brother, the sky, as things to be bought, plundered, sold like sheep or bright beads. His appetite will devour the earth and leave behind only a desert.

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I do not know. Our ways are different from your ways. 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.

There is no quiet place in the white man's cities. No place to hear the unfurling of leaves in spring or the rustle of insect's wings. But perhaps it is because I am a savage and do not understand. The clatter only seems to insult the ears. And what is there to life if a man cannot hear the lonely cry of the whipporwill or the arguments of the frogs around a pond at night? I am a red man and do not understand. The Indian prefers the soft sound of the wind darting over the face of a pond, and 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 share the same breath—the beast, the tree, the man, they all share the same breath. The white man does not seem to notice the air he breathes. Like a man dying for many days, he is numb to the stench. But if we sell our land, you must remember that the air is precious to us, that the air shares its spirit with all the life it supports. The wind that gave our grandfather his first breath also receives his last sigh. And the wind must also give our children the spirit of life. And if we sell you our land, you must keep it apart and sacred, as a place where even the white man can go to taste the wind that is sweetened by the meadow's flowers.

So we will consider your offer to buy our land. If we decide to accept, I will make one condition: The white man must treat the beasts of this land as his brothers.

I am a savage and I do not understand any other way. I have seen a thousand rotting buffalos on the prairie, left by the white man who shot them from a passing train. I am a savage and I do not understand how the smoking iron horse can be more important than the buffalo that we kill only to stay alive.

What is man without the beasts? If all the beasts were gone, men would die from a great loneliness of spirit. For whatever happens to the beasts, soon happens to man. All things are connected.

Whatever befalls the earth, befalls the sons of the earth.

You must teach you children that the ground beneath their feet is the ashes of our grandfathers. So that they will respect the land, tell your children that the earth is rich with the lives of our kin. Teach your children what we have taught our children, that

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the earth is our mother. Whatever befalls the earth, befalls the sons of the earth. If men spit upon the ground, they spit upon themselves.

This we know. The earth does not belong to man; man belongs to the earth. This we know. All things are connected like the blood which unites one family. All things are connected.

Whatever befalls the earth befalls the sons of the earth. Man did not weave the web of life; he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself.

No, day and night cannot live together.

Our dead go to live in the earth's sweet rivers, they return with the silent footsteps of spring, and it is their spirit, running in the wind, that ripples the surface of the ponds.

We will consider why the white man wishes to buy the land. What is it that the white man wishes to buy, my people ask me. The idea is strange to us. How can you buy or sell the sky, the warmth of the land? [sic] —the swiftness of the antelope? How can we sell these things to you and how can you buy them? Is the earth yours to do with as you will, merely because the red man signs a piece of paper and gives it to the white man? If we do not own the freshness of the air and the sparkle of the water, how can you buy them from us[?]

Can you buy back the buffalo, once the last one has been killed? But we will consider your offer, for we know that if we do not sell, the white man may come with guns and take our land. But we are primitive, and in his passing moment of strength the white man thinks that he is a god who already owns the earth. How can a man own his mother?

But we will consider your offer to buy our land. Day and night cannot live together. We will consider your offer to go to the reservation you have for my people. We will live apart, and in peace. It matters little where we spend the rest of our days. Our children have seen their fathers humbled in defeat. Our warriors have felt shame, and after defeat they turn their days in idleness and contaminate their bodies with sweet foods and strong drink. It matters little where we pass the rest of our days. They are not many. A few more hours, a few more winters, and none of the children of the great tribes that once lived on this earth or that roam now in small bands in the woods will be left to mourn the graves of a people once as powerful and hopeful as yours.

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But why should I mourn the passing of my people? Tribes are made of men, nothing more. Men come and go, like the waves of the sea.

Even the white man, whose God walks and talks with him as friend to friend, cannot be exempt from the common destiny. We may be brothers after all; we shall see. One thing we know, which the white man may one day discover—our God is the same God.

You may think now that you own Him as you wish to own our land; but you cannot. He is the God of man, and His compassion is equal for the red man and the white. This earth is precious to Him, and to harm the earth is to heap contempt on its Creator. The whites too shall pass; perhaps sooner than all other tribes. Continue to contaminate your bed, and you will one night suffocate in your own waste.

But in your perishing you will shine brightly, fired by the strength of the God who brought you to this land and for some special purpose gave you dominion over this land and over the red man. That destiny is a mystery to us, for we do not understand when the buffalo are all slaughtered, the wild horses are 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? Gone. Where is the eagle? Gone. And what is it to say goodbye to the swift pony and the hunt? The end of living and the beginning of survival.

God gave you dominion over the beasts, the woods, and the red man, and for some special purpose, but that destiny is a mystery to the red man. We might understand if we knew what it was that the white man

dreams—what hopes he describes to his children on long winter nights—what visions he burns onto their minds so that they will wish for tomorrow. But we are savages. The white man's dreams are hidden from us. And because they are hidden, we will go our own way. For above all else, we cherish the right of each man to live as he wishes, however different from his brothers. There is little in common between us.

So we will consider your offer to buy our land. If we agree, it will be to secure the reservation you have promised. There, perhaps, we may live out our brief days as we wish.

When the last red man has vanished from this earth, and his memory is only the shade of a cloud moving across the prairie, these

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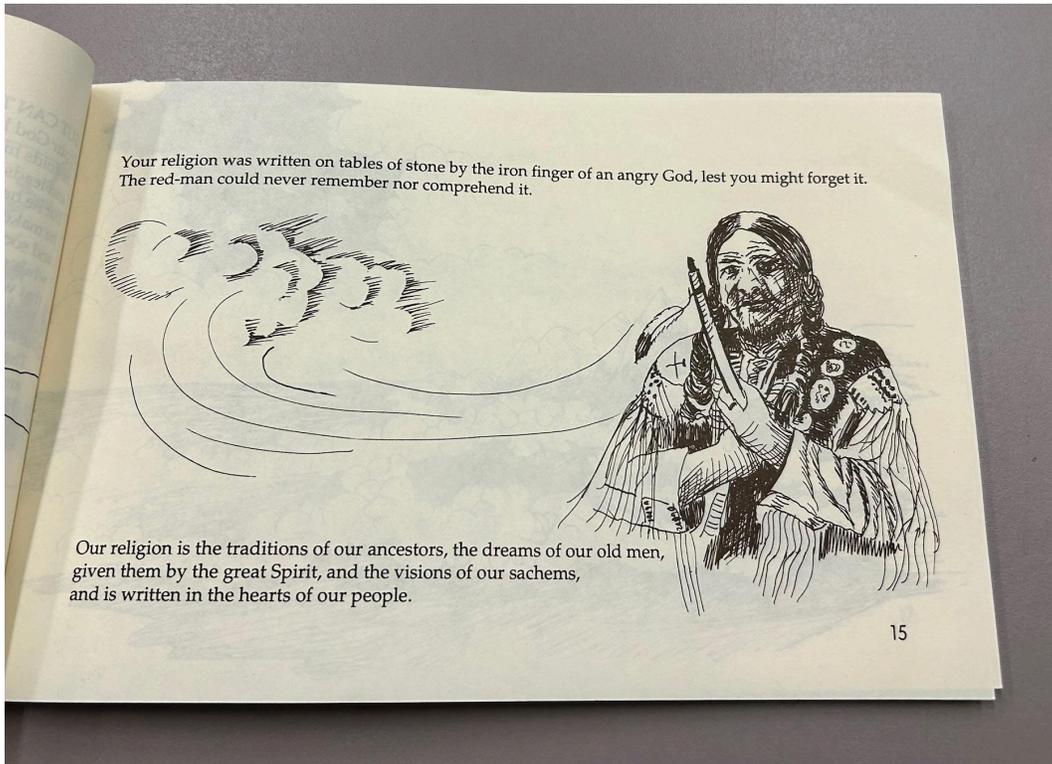
shores and forests will still hold the spirits of my people. For they love this earth as the newborn loves its mother's heartbeat.

If we sell you our land, love it as we've loved it. Care for it as we've cared for it. Hold in your mind the memory of the land as it is when you take it. And with all your strength, with all your mind, with all your heart, preserve it for your children, and love it . . . as God loves us all.

One thing we know. Our God is the same God. This earth is precious to Him. Even the white man cannot be exempt from the common destiny. We may be brothers after all. We shall see.

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**Appendix Three**



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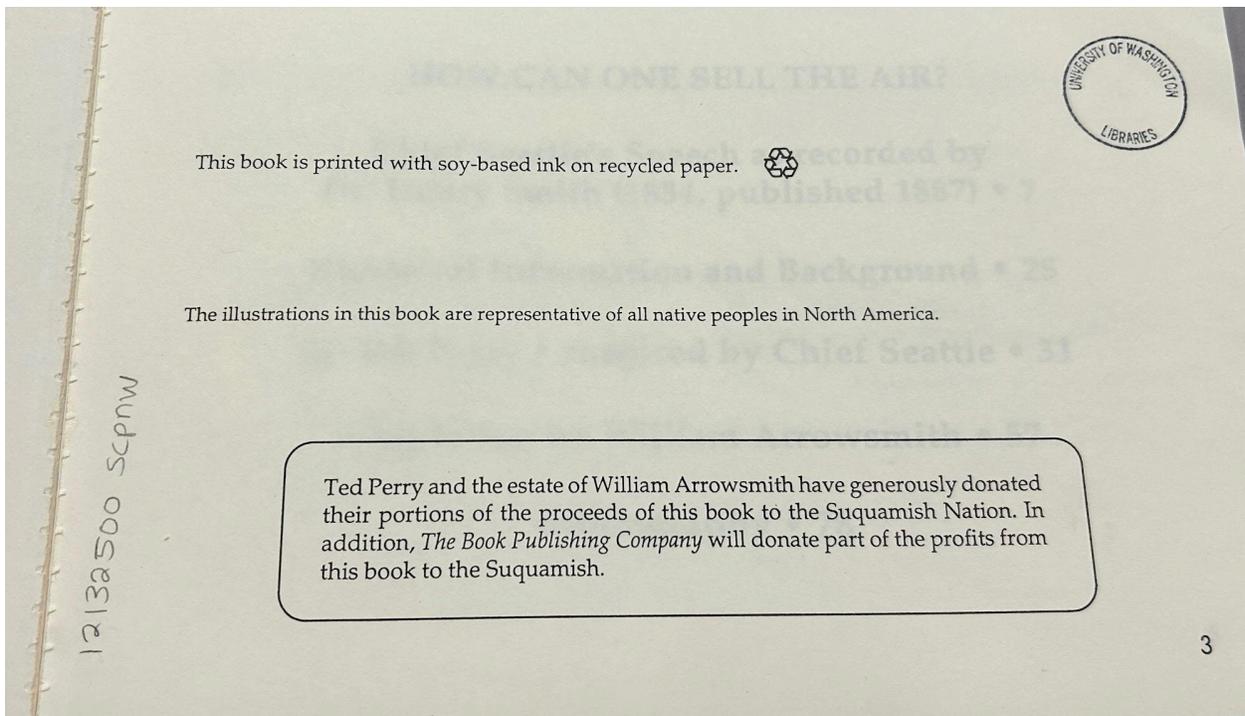
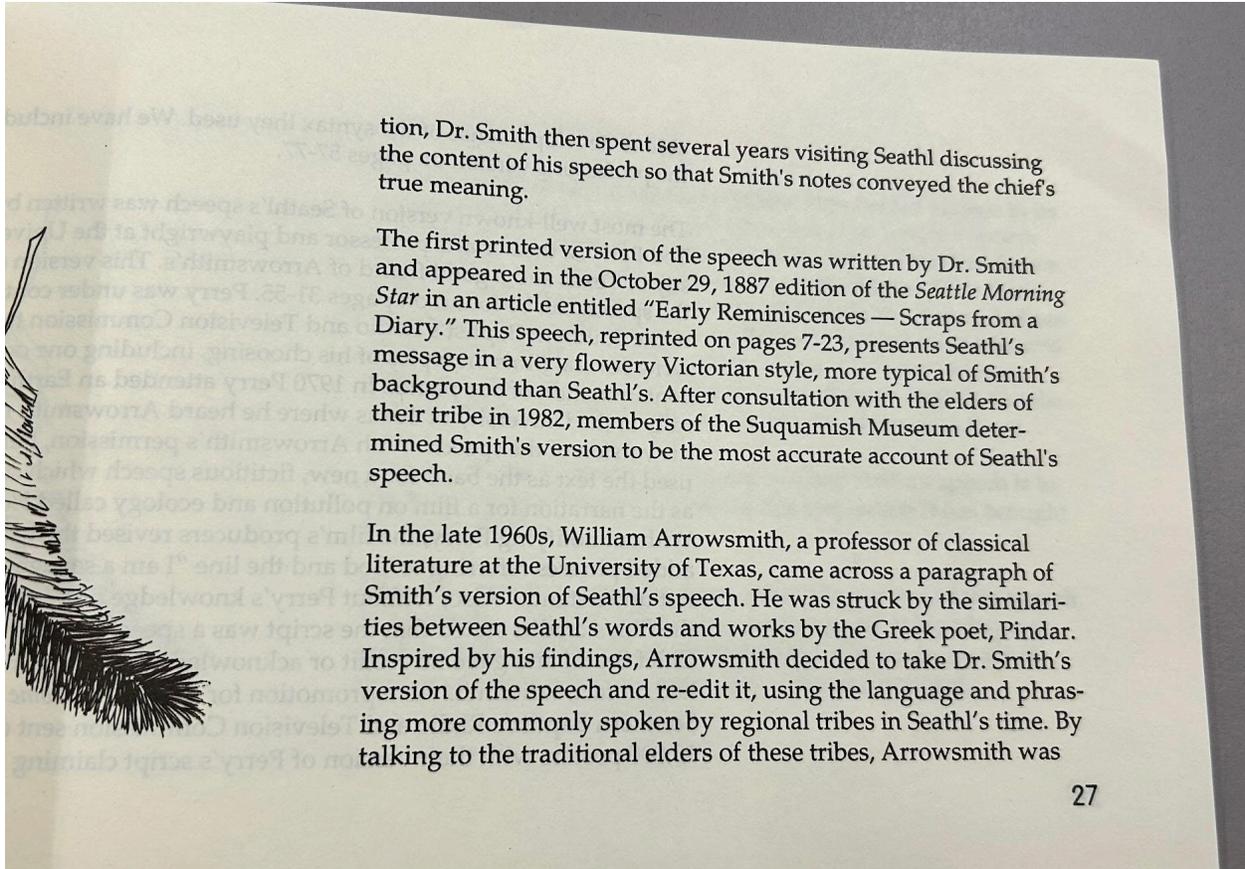
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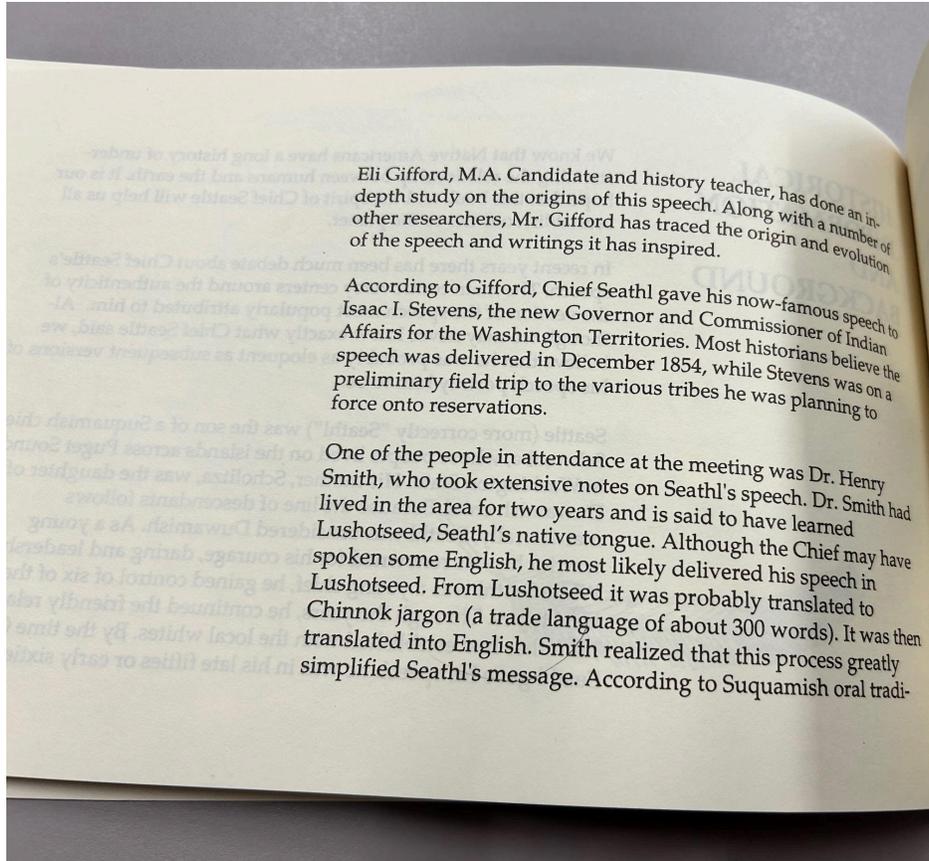
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Eli Gifford, M.A. Candidate and history teacher, has done an in-depth study on the origins of this speech. Along with a number of other researchers, Mr. Gifford has traced the origin and evolution of the speech and writings it has inspired.

According to Gifford, Chief Seathl gave his now-famous speech to Isaac I. Stevens, the new Governor and Commissioner of Indian Affairs for the Washington Territories. Most historians believe the speech was delivered in December 1854, while Stevens was on a preliminary field trip to the various tribes he was planning to force onto reservations.

One of the people in attendance at the meeting was Dr. Henry Smith, who took extensive notes on Seathl's speech. Dr. Smith had lived in the area for two years and is said to have learned Lushotseed, Seathl's native tongue. Although the Chief may have spoken some English, he most likely delivered his speech in Lushotseed. From Lushotseed it was probably translated to Chinook jargon (a trade language of about 300 words). It was then translated into English. Smith realized that this process greatly simplified Seathl's message. According to Suquamish oral tradi-

## how can one sell the air?

### Chief Seattle's Vision

We know that Native Americans have a long history of understanding the relationship between humans and the earth. Chief Seattle's eloquent plea to respect "the Sacred Web of Life" has become an inspiration to many.

But what did Chief Seattle really say? Our research led us to the version the Suquamish elders from Seattle's tribe include in their oral tradition, published in this new edition along with two popular twentieth century adaptations. A section of historical background explains the evolution of the speech and clears up the recent controversy surrounding its authenticity.

It is our hope that this book will accurately present the vision of Chief Seattle and his desire for all people to live in harmony with each other and the earth.

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### Appendix Four

#### **Letter of Informed Consent<sup>29</sup>**

*Please fill out the blanks accordingly and circle one answer for each of the sections in bolded writing, either to agree or disagree (this will not affect your status as a participant)*

I understand that the purpose of this research study is to understand the interpretations of Chief Seattle's speech and character by members of the Duwamish and Suquamish tribes.

I understand that this research is being carried out as a part of the University of Washington's Communication Honors Thesis award requirements.

I understand that this research was agreed to by my tribal council/government and that there was an opportunity for their feedback on this project.

I understand that this interview will be (video and audio) recorded for the sole purpose of the researcher's ability to document and analyze it for each participant. I understand that I can obtain a copy of my interview transcript and recording if I so choose.

\*Do you agree or disagree with keeping a copy of this interview's transcript and recording?

#### **Agree or Disagree**

I understand that my compensation will be provided in the form of a single \$25 online "Tango" gift card link that I can use however I deem fit.

I (print name here) \_\_\_\_\_ agree to be interviewed and take part in this study on Chief Seattle's speech and character and my individual interpretations of both as a member of either the Duwamish or Suquamish tribes. I understand that my participation is voluntary and I am free to withdraw from the study at any time.

I **agree or disagree** to be identified in the research results

I **agree or disagree** to continue to be contacted after the interview in order to have ongoing access to the research's data analysis as well as the research results for approval and/or personal benefit.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

---

<sup>29</sup> This form as well as this thesis paper was generally modeled after the dissertation by Marie Conroy: <https://arrow.tudublin.ie/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1049&context=aaschssldis>

Dated: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Information (email and phone number): \_\_\_\_\_

\*This information will not be shared with anyone but the researcher for the purposes of research during the study. This applies to all personal information shared in this consent form including your personal address.