

The people who plant the lands that we have occupied for thousands of years display no love for the life of this place. Each year they plant the same crops on the same land and they must then spray those crops with poisons to kill the insects which naturally infest their fields because they do not rotate crops or allow the land to rest. Their pesticides kill the birdlife, and the runoff poisons the surface waters.

They must spray also the other plant life with herbicides, and each year the runoff from the fields carries these poisons into the watersheds of our country and into the waters of the world.

Brothers and Sisters: Our ancient homeland is spotted today with an array of chemical dumps. Along the Niagara River dioxin, a particularly deadly substance, threatens the remaining life there and in the waters which flow from there. Forestry departments spray the surviving forests with powerful insecticides to encourage tourism by people seeking a few days or weeks away from the cities where the air hangs heavy with sulphur and carbon oxides. The insecticides kill the black flies, but also destroy much of the food chain for the bird, fish and animal life which also inhabit those regions.

Brothers and Sisters: We point out to you the Spiritual Path of Righteousness and Reason. We bring to your thoughts and minds that right-minded human beings seek to promote above all else the life of all things. We direct to your minds that peace is not merely the absence of war, but the constant effort to maintain harmonious existence between peoples, from individual to individual and between humans and the other beings of this planet. We point out to you that a Spiritual Consciousness is the Path to Survival of Humankind. We who walk about on Mother Earth occupy this place for only a short time. It is our duty as human beings to preserve the life that is here for the benefit of the generations yet unborn.

Brothers and Sisters: The Haudenosaunee are determined to take whatever actions we can to halt the destruction of Mother Earth. In our territories, we continue to carry out our function as spiritual caretakers of the land. In this role as caretakers, we cannot, and will not, stand idly by while the future of the coming generations is being systematically destroyed. We recognize that the fight is a long one, and that we cannot hope to win it alone. To win, to secure the future, we must join hands with like minded people and create a strength through unity. We commemorate two hundred years of injustice and the destruction of the world with these words.

R

From BLACKROBE: ISAAC JOGUES (1604-1646)

WOLF 1

The trampled forest
reverberates
the crunch
of heavy
footsteps

*Kwa-ah, kwa-ah!**

WOLF 2

Snakes

Like the wind of a river
it weaves south from the snow
country leveling the woods,
swallowing all the rabbits
in the brush, trampling
the young berries. Its
silver skin defies the moon.

Tight ribbon of cold flesh
ever slithering north, a great
sturgeon in its jaw, its belly
obese with the hind-quarters
of a spring fawn. The golden stripes,
brilliant, flaunt the sun.

WOLF 3

Feet
in the forest
under eagles

separates
birch and elm

kwa-ah

reflections
break the
sunlight

kwa-ah

BIRDS

birds weren't caged
when I was a kid
growing with mountains

an old man might keep a crow
on his shoulder-blade
but it could fly
into alders when its mate cawed

we tucked under current bushes
or slid into the cool of the hay barn
when chicken-hawks shadowed the yard

mallards and pheasants
fed us in late October
but my dad left a few
to hatch spring

kids threw rocks
at sparrows and starlings,
we hunted hummingbirds
but those home-made sling-shots
never aimed right
and did you every try
to catch a hummingbird
in your open hands,
or bury a robin
in a kitchen match box

POEMS BY Maurice Kenny

*Mohawk: A sad wail.