

Tansi Keh -te-ha-yak	Hello Elders
Tansi nimisak	Hello, my older sister
Tansi nistisak	Hello, my older brothers
Tansi nisimisak	Hello, my younger siblings
Tansi ka ke thaw ni wah ko ma ka nak	Hello, all my relatives

Nes nas ko maw Kitchi Manitow	Thank you, Creator
Ke tom ka wan ska yan;	For giving me the privilege of
	waking another day;
ke tom ta pa kit ta tam mo yan;	To breathe once again;
ke tom taw a pa ta man aski e kwas chi nipi;	To see once again the
	earth and water;
ke tom taw a pa mi ta kaw.	To see you once again.

Throughout my speech I will pay tribute to the teachings of our people and the leaders and authors who demonstrated such wisdom in a time of great oppression. Two of these today are George Manuel in "The Fourth World" (1974) and Wahbung Our Tomorrows by the Indian Tribes of Manitoba (October, 1971). I have made a commitment to bring forward messages/advice from leaders/mentors/scholars who have contributed their wisdom to advance our self-determination – to bring them forward to the Senate floor. I believe that's where they were always meant to go.

Over the past two days numerous people have told me that they see me, a Senator, as a symbol of hope. I want you to close your eyes and go deep within yourself, and picture the reality I've witnessed over the past 2 days and for those of you whom I've known longer what I've witnessed for years. You represent hope because you speak it and you walk it. You're here today. You fight, you're fearless, your intentions are positive, you're humble, you're intelligent, focused, witty, and know when to break out into tears or laughter - all good medicine. You are role models for me and I will carry this weekend to Senate with me – to let me know I am not alone. Neither are you. Sometimes people need to be told: You are powerful, you're making change, and we love you. Thank you.

I use a lot of different forms of teachings that come from so many places – from people, from books, from puzzles, from dreams. Since there are

so many powerful women involved in this movement I want to share a dream I had when I was a girl of 8 at residential school. I entered residential school at the age of 4 and left at 16. My mom had passed on from thyroid cancer on Dec. 18, 1957 and I was sent to residential school 3 weeks later.

In this dream I'm sitting at the bottom and in the middle of a boat, which is the safest place) and my mom was standing at one end with both arms upraised one holding a paddle. I remember my face in the dream and even today I can't tell you the expression I had in my face: it was a mixture of wonder, amazement, trying to figure out why she was doing that, but there was knowledge that it was for something good because mama wouldn't do anything to harm me. I looked around at the landscape and the sky had fallen and was touching the water so that there was no horizon. My mother was keeping the sky from falling onto us and we could breathe. There was no fear in the dream. 57 years later when my daughter had thyroid cancer we went to the hospital in Saskatoon to register her on the day of surgery. I said to her, "My girl there's 3 seats over there let's sit there." We walked over and sat down and I felt something above me and looked up and there was a painted mural and it said: "When the sky falls, hold up your hands." I said, "My girl, look, granny's here." I didn't know there was such a saying. I looked up the meaning over the years and I got the best interpretation from a painting, by Melva Widdlecombe, I saw 2 years ago: "It speaks about the legacy of women supporting each other. It invokes the idea of kindred spirits where two means strength. The lake meeting the sky echoes the depth of women's ability to "shore" one another up, not just in times of adversity but in times of plenty. Two is an army in good times and bad." When I commissioned an artist to do a painting in 2017 he drew two children in the boat. I realized that as women, and Creators of life, each generation of women will do what is humanly possible to protect children and others who need them. This is what I have witnessed at this conference.

We'll make a good team – all of us in this room. Now let us see what we can do for our children. Sitting Bull.

I worked, as a dentist, in my home community of Brochet, for many years. On one of those trips I had gone out on the land with my family and as we were travelling on Reindeer Lake

I asked my nephew why he didn't get lost in the water system that had thousands of islands. He said: "My dad taught me to **"always look back"** to landmark so you see the islands from both sides because when you head back the land and waterway won't look the same. There are various interpretations for this saying: always look back; one was about the immediate situation of navigating a water system but on a higher level: to look back at our history to see where we have come from so we don't get lost. When my daughter wanted a tattoo she asked me for a teaching and I took what my nephew, Rod Jr. had said and translated it as this:

"Ka we tha we katch wa ne kis ke se e te ka ke o pe tas keen."

Never ever forget where you came from and how you were raised: from the Creator and raised by the land, the water, the teachings, environment, seasons, ecology, astronomy, community, family and kinship, values, tradition and all our relations. Our people had a PhD in life and understood the web of life. Their world had the solutions they needed as do we.

In Cree the word ka ke o pe tas keen is a word similar to world/earth but has a more deeper and complex meaning that takes into account what influenced and shaped us in our ways of knowing, life course and destiny. We carry our own unique world within each of us everywhere we go – each of us in this room. When I was sworn in at Senate in December 2017 I said to our people: The Mary Jane that walked into the Senate Chamber was not the individual Mary Jane but the collective Mary Jane who had been shaped by the Creator, the land, history of family and kinship, community, Elders, teachings, friends and all the people I met on my Earth journey. Some are in this room today. My thoughts, my actions, my words, my values, my intent were the culmination of this knowledge that wasn't derived from a textbook. The Voice I carry with me into the Chamber and here today in this sacred space is one I hope carries with it the respect, kindness, and direction that will help guide my words and actions. I don't want my negative energy or negative spirit to guide my actions as I don't want it to revisit my children. We know the saying "what goes around comes around."

In the book entitled "*The Fourth World*" by George Manuel and Michael Posluns (1974), George Manuel states:

A cornerstone of the mythical structure that has stood in the way of the Indian reality has been a belief that an Indian way of life meant something barbaric and savage, frozen in time and incapable of meeting the test of changing social conditions brought about by new technology. This myth was created by confusing the particular forms in use at one time with the values and beliefs they helped to realize. A man who is wedded to the soil is not necessarily married to a wooden plough. A man of letters is not committed to a fountain pen or a microphone.

It is true that there have been any number of surface changes that have increased understanding. Our children now often go to provincial schools rather than church schools, and we are now allowed into most hotels and protected against the more blatant forms of discrimination.

While these changes may be important for their own sake, few if any of them reach below the surface and touch on the fundamental ways in which two cultures so different in their roots, meet and touch each other. Only with that meeting and touching can the gap be closed. Only the closing of the gap – not a domination of one over the other but a real meeting – can result in a real change.

Sometimes we need to have difficult conversations within ourselves and among ourselves. Sometimes we create our own obstructions to progress. One is a racial based division - white versus Indigenous. Some people feel that white people should have little to no say in a conversation about decolonization, about advocacy for Indigenous rights. I have witnessed for many years of my life. My husband is from an English/Scottish background so my children are bi-racial. This argument has been directed at us many times but I didn't give this attempt at marginalization any power. We cannot displace children because of their racial mixture. We cannot walk a road of reconciliation by ourselves, as Indigenous Peoples. We will always be living with others in this multi-cultural country we all call home. Our lives are too bound up with others for either of us to go entirely our separate ways. We will need the support of many Canadians to start making the changes we need to change our world. We will need the support of many global leaders to start making changes we need to change the world of resource extraction.

I want to introduce you to James Campbell, the Director of Parliamentary Affairs I work with in Senate and Anna Millest, the Executive Assistant at our Senate Office. Canadians need to know who works for them, to see how committed, how passionate, how intelligent and articulate they are. James and Anna will each be doing a presentation this morning.

In the last 2 days I listed what I heard contributed to ongoing adverse impacts of resource extraction. These included:

- power of various and collective industry –
- Corporations owning the government and have same rights as a human being
- Industry-government alliance versus FN-government alliance
- Lack of collective voice at all levels and from different institutions
- Silence of adverse impacts
- Consent issue (self-determination)
- Unilateral decision making (self-determination)
- Unilateral development (self-determination)
- These 3 issues impacting self-determination are consequences of the adverse impacts of resource extraction but because they are not dealt with they themselves then become adverse impacts. We saw evidence of that in the young girl who presented this morning and said they didn't understand what was happening.
- Turning blind eye to violence against Indigenous women, girls, and men
- Passiveness – can't just sit back
- Power of capitalism and consumerism
- Web of life destruction: separating children from culture of water (fracture of culture and spirituality)

- Treat us like beggars – we’re not beggars (shame)
- Not looking for hand-outs (shame)
- Sign confidential agreements – can’t ask questions and community members ostracized
- Splits community/families in half through methods used by industry
- Where are our children going to get water?
- Employment at 90% but no change: economic development without human and community development as a foundation.
- Raises hope: Hopeful that this is time when things will work out.
- We live in the toilet bowl of the North.
- Addiction to fossil fuel – endless consumption of energy.
- Windigo economy
- Preferential contracts under resource sharing
- Greed of industry: why so cheap to produce and so expensive to pay for it especially if it is on our land.
- Privatization
- For youth: development is going too fast and can’t keep up
- Not educated on process of development and that needs to change – leaders are not here
- Youth not consulted – stepping stones are missing.
- Leaders not educated – “Everything has a price”
- Hydro power dams seen as clean energy
- Scientific knowledge questionable
- Private investors

And I heard many solutions as well:

- Can’t just sit back
- Work we need to do together – what is that? In research, inform public policy, look for allies;
- Use parliamentary system to raise your voices – elect and vote for people; Run for office;
- Southern parliamentarians /laws/legislation determining our lives in northern Manitoba – how do you change that? How do we give Voice?
- Southern politicians have no idea of what they’re doing – what are the unintended or intended consequences of legislation or policy. When we realize the consequence how do you change it?
- It is possible to stop pipeline projects
- Don’t let them create narrative.
- Future needs all of us to work together towards change. How do we make change?
- Canada needs structural adjustment in energy
- In the ugliness that surrounds us let’s do something uplifting
- Don’t want predatory energy system
- Do Declaration – to keep doing work
- Identify who is extractive – 75% of mining by Canadians

- Activism in difficult socio-political and economic context is a David-Goliath challenge: how do we help
- How do we mobilize?
- How do we mount opposition at all levels?
- Dam is already built – how do we oppose? Demand liberation of rivers
- Our fight is not to fight new dams it is to dismantle
- Movement became informed – data presented to support your struggle
- Moratorium on further projects
- BCR – due to violation of peace kicked out Shell by using Indigenous law (Alaska).

I also heard wise words and some are also solutions:

- Our song is your song - solidarity
- Development is such a dirty word
- They studied safety of animals (mice, rodents) but not people
- Our highways are rivers and lakes. When highway in city breaks – fixed immediately but rivers purposefully contaminated.
- We need money to survive but only to certain point.
- We are all water protectors as spirits.
- Prophecy: choice of 2 paths: Which do we embark on? My comment: Because this weekend we have reached a fork in the road
- Pray and do your best.
- We are all on the same boat.
- Look at what relatives teach us: plants like squash whose seeds lay dormant for years- teaches us about resilience and hope
- Don't treat plant as a commodity.
- Step out of line if we want to survive
- Be prayerful – we are spirit
- Restore peace without violence
- Indigenous Peoples across the world are brothers and sisters
- Land can heal again
- I'm afraid to no longer feel
- Fear brings up different choices – increase of risk
- How do we mount opposition – at all levels
- Do we become capitalistic?
- Fish have water memory
- With slow violence nobody cares
- It's about others but need insight into yourself – spiritual growth

I heard language that needs to change:

- Development is such a dirty word
- Frozen draft
- Consultation

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I have been in Senate now for almost two years. I wonder if re-modernizing the Senate will work for us or if shallow tinkering of a colonial system will fail us. I do know that I have my reservations about the system when you look at how fast Bills C91, the language bill, and C92, the Child Welfare Bill, were rushed through. C92 didn't even hit the order paper and James said he has never seen that happen. When I gave my speech against letting these bills go through as I felt they required more dialogue and change I told the Senators that we deserved better.

Many Canadians tell First Nations, Metis and Inuit to “**forget the past** and get on with life.” They say “we went through the same type of system – that we were also abused in school and at home and we’ve learned to move on.” But remember that our live stories, as First Nations, have a depth and **complexity of oppression** that was forced on us and goes beyond any other group in Canada. As First Nations, Metis and Inuit Peoples we were forced to live and continue “to live through many interrelated upheavals - all continuously changing our ways of life, our ways of looking at things, our ways of knowing, changing everything out of recognition and changing it fast.” The ever-changing relationships between governments and Indigenous Peoples and between industries and First Nations make it difficult to challenge the status quo. And what is the status quo? It is the continuing dependency of the Indigenous population and it persists in the face of “concerted efforts” to address it. In her paper “Separate but Unequal: The Political Economy of Aboriginal Dependency Frances Widdowson states: “Despite the serious nature and pervasiveness of aboriginal dependency, the subject has not been an area studied extensively in Canadian political economy. Instead, most of the analysis of aboriginal marginalization and deprivation has occurred outside the discipline, where the expropriation of aboriginal lands by European settlers and the destruction of native traditions by the Canadian state are advanced as the dominant explanations. The focus is on the racist attitudes of Non-Aboriginals, rather than examining how the historical requirements of capitalism have influenced the current circumstances of aboriginal peoples.” She goes further to ask: “Why did aboriginal peoples become marginalized after the fur trade, while the rest of the country developed? Since labor shortages existed in Canada during the 19th century, why weren't the natives proletarianized and integrated into the emerging economy, instead of being sidelined by workers from Europe?”

The impression is created that poverty will disappear with better opportunities, thus ignoring structural problems and the fundamental changes required to a system that oppresses. The question is “what will bring about meaningful improvements?”

There is no human failure greater than to launch a profoundly important endeavor and then leave it half done. This is what Canada has done with its colonial system. It shook First Nations loose from their old foundations. But it seems indifferent whether or not we reach safe harbor in the end, whether we are given a surer route to equality, to material well-being, to the achievement of technology, science and capital. Canada purposefully excluded First Nations from being involved as part of society and can hardly ignore the forces they unleashed upon First Nations. Can Canadians really be content to see people hungry, to see people, especially infants die prematurely, to see people continue with food insecurity and ill- health when she has the means to help them? Is this Canada's concept of equality? If it is, what does it say?

Groups like Wa Ni Ska Tan have been advocating and bringing to light the atrocities created and administered by various industries in Canada. They have been doing the job that the government like the Office of the Auditor General was meant to do. People who have been marginalized, oppressed, abused, dispossessed aren't born, they're made by different levels of authority including the provincial and federal governments. Part of the problem has been that the government feels they can and may ignore the pleas from First Nations, Metis and Inuit Peoples when there seems to be little to no oversight body. Secrecy continues to contribute to the lack of accountability of Canada to the human rights abuses of original peoples. Secrecy allows people to turn a blind eye. We need a mechanism that will bring to light the contribution of industries and the provincial and federal leaders to the dire situation Mother Earth is in.

In closing I would like to quote Richard Wagamese from his book Embers (p.114)

Me: What's the greatest teaching in life?

Old Woman: You have to make your own moccasins.

Me: You're kidding, right?

Old Woman: No. You make them from the hide of your experience, all the places you have walked. You sew them with the thread of the teachings, the lessons embedded in all the hard miles. You stitch them carefully with the needle of your intention – to walk a spiritual path – and when you're finished, you realize the Creator lives in the stitches. That's what helps you walk more gracefully.



I got busy learning how to sew.