

Chiropractic in the American Public Health Association

MODERN PROBLEMS SOLVED THROUGH ANCIENT SOLUTIONS

As we enter the new millennium, author Laurie Garrett's seminal work, *Betrayal of Trust* (Hyperion, 2000) is timely and terrifying in its documentation of the collapse of global public health. Two points set out in the introduction of this treatise are basic to any description of public health: 1) The definition of public health continues to be very broad, with diverse opinions on what constitutes the mission of public health; 2) For most of the world's population in 2001, the public health essentials mapped out before World War I are still not a reality.

Ms. Garrett notes that people do not view public health as a system that functions for the good of all communities, rather, it is perceived as care for the impoverished.

"The idea that the health of every nation depends on the health of all others is not an empty piety, but an epidemiological fact," Ms. Garrett states.

While the challenges of public health have never been greater, "the basic factors essential to a population's health are ancient and nontechnological," she adds.

In a famous speech to the U.S. government during treaty negotiations in the 1850s, Chief Seattle, a leader of the Duwamish, Suquamish and other Puget Sound tribes, reflected a knowledge that is fundamental to the concept of public health:

"Every part of the earth is sacred to my people," Chief Seattle reportedly said. "Every shining pine needle, every sandy shore, every mist in the dark woods, every meadow, every humming insect. All are holy in the memory of my people. We know the sap that courses through the trees as we know the blood that courses through our veins. We are part of the earth, and it is part of us. The perfumed flowers are our sisters. The bear, the deer, the great eagle - these are our brothers. The rocky crests, the juices in the meadow, the body health of the pony and man all belong to the same family."

The mission of APHA is as clear and relevant today as it has been in the past: to improve the public's health and to achieve equity in health status for all. It promotes the scientific and professional foundation of public health practices and policy, advocates the conditions for a healthy global society, emphasizes prevention and enhances the ability of members to promote and protect environmental and community health.

Chief Seattle's words still echo as our conscience for a healthy world:

"Will you teach your children what we have taught our children, that the earth is our mother?" he asked. "What befalls the earth befalls all sons of the earth. This we know: The earth does not belong to man, man belongs to the earth. All things are connected like the blood that unites us all. Man does not weave the web of life; he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself."

Michael Bird,MSW,MPH
President, American Public Health Association

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