

READING

They Fence Their Neighbors Away

The following is an excerpt from Sioux chief Sitting Bull's speech at the Powder River Council in 1877.

Behold, my brothers, the spring has come; the earth has received the embraces of the sun and we shall soon see the results of that love! Every seed has awakened and so has all animal life. It is through this mysterious power that we too have our being and we therefore yield to our neighbors, even our animal neighbors, the same right as ourselves, to inhabit this land. Yet hear me, my people, we have now to deal with another race—small and feeble when our fathers first met them, but now great and overbearing. Strangely enough they have a mind to till the soil and the love of possessions is a disease with them ... They claim this mother of ours, the earth, for their own, and fence their neighbors away; they deface her with their buildings and their refuse. They threaten to take [the land] away from us. My brothers, shall we submit, or shall we say to them: "First kill me before you take possession of my Fatherland."¹

¹ Text available from the [Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History](https://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-resources/primary-sources/sitting-bull-speech).