



**Aliana Hardy**

**HONORABLE MENTION Grades 6-7**

Grade 7 – Native American Community Academy, Albuquerque NM

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## **Our Beautiful Earth**

When I think of all the beautiful things our planet has to offer, it brings great joy to my heart. I believe, when Kimmerer states, "We are showered everyday with the gifts of the Earth," she's trying to say that every part of nature is a gift to humanity, and that we should take care of this beautiful planet. When you look at the bright blue sky, what do you see? When I look at the sky, I see something that gives us oxygen to breathe, and when I see fluffy clouds I see that they produce water for us to drink but it also provides water for our plants and trees as well.

When I was a young girl, I went on a girls' camping trip with my mom. I had so much fun being surrounded by nature. As we were getting ready for bed, we heard something outside. I was scared because I wasn't sure what it was. As I looked out our cabin window, I couldn't believe my eyes. What I saw was a huge brown bear going through our cooler where all of our food was. I thought the bear was going to break down the door and get me! After seeing the bear, I saw it as a blessing because how many people are able to see a bear in nature up close?

We are surrounded by beauty; however, we abuse and take advantage of its beauty by polluting our sacred water and land. Leopold states "We abuse land." I believe this to be true, we do this through fracking and polluting our sacred water. We have our colonizers to thank for this, they are the ones who started the destruction of Mother Earth. My Native ancestors took care of the land, our sacred water that brings us life. Colonizers tried to destroy my ancestors by putting us in boarding schools, taking away our language, culture and our beliefs, by introducing us to their way of life. One reason my parents sent my siblings and myself to NACA was to reconnect with our culture and to relearn our language and heritage. My father is Jemez, Navajo, and Spanish and my mom is Spanish, Apache and San Alfonso. Like many families their language and heritage were almost lost.

One way that I am giving back to Mother Earth, is that I am part of Tree New Mexico, I am able to plant fruit trees in different communities for free. For about a month I flyered and talked to people about the benefits of planting trees. After they select their tree, we dig a hole and plant it for them. I also do community work for IDHCC. This community work includes working at a Food Hub where I cook and feed the community and work in different community gardens. I believe if we work together as a community, we can improve our beautiful planet.