By These Presents: “Purchasing” Toronto

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Produced by Jumblies Theatre & Arts’ Talking Treaties project, for the inaugural 2019 Toronto Biennial of Art.

The following is the script for By These Presents: “Purchasing” Toronto, a site-specific three-channel video installation exploring the so-called Toronto “Purchase” and subsequent land cessions. Presented at the Small Arms Inspection Building in Mississauga from 20 September to 1 December 2019, By These Presents references nearby Etobicoke Creek, the disputed western boundary of the Toronto Purchase of 1787 and the eastern boundary of the 1805 Head of the Lake cession (Treaties 13 and 14, respectively). The creek has never been ceded and is now subject to a water claim by the Mississaugas of the Credit, asserting unextinguished aboriginal title to all waters within their territory.

By These Presents is an episode in the Talking Treaties suite of works, produced by Jumblies Theatre & Arts. Rooted in oral history and community collaboration, Talking Treaties is a multi-year project that artfully shares local Indigenous history and awareness. Launched in 2015, Talking Treaties has many branches and has engaged thousands of participants in generating symbols, poetry, improvised maps, and creative explorations. In 2017 and 2018, the Talking Treaties Spectacle was staged at Historic Fort York; sharing the research through words, song, movement, giant puppets, and outdoor theatre. By These Presents was commissioned by the Toronto Biennial of Art. In 2020 and beyond, Talking Treaties will continue with new workshops, events, productions, and partnerships.
By These Presents:

**Act One: 24 Lace Hats**

**Fort York, at the negotiation table**

**THE ONE WHO KNOWS THE RULES:**

George the Third has decreed by his Royal Proclamation of 1763, confirmed by wampum at the treaty of Niagara the next year, that no private person shall be able to purchase lands from us. If we are inclined to dispose of our lands, they shall be purchased by the Crown, and at some public meeting to be held with us, for that purpose.¹

**Lake, shore**

**CROWN OFFICIAL:**

My children. This is my canoe floating on the other side of the Great Waters. It shall never be exhausted but always full of the necessaries of life as long as the world shall last.

Should it happen any time after this that you find the strength of your life reduced, your Indian tribes must take hold of the vessel and pull. I will open my hand and you will find yourselves supplied with plenty.²

**Fort York, at the negotiation table**

**THE NEGOTIATOR:**

The Supposed Payment for the 1787 Toronto Purchase!

**MISSISSAUGAS:** (counting gifts on the table)

- One bale of flowered flannel!
- 24 brass kettles!
- 120 mirrors!
- 24 lace hats!
- 2000 gun flints!
- 96 gallons of rum!
- and a little money!³

**Debriefing room**

**YOUNG MAN:**

(holds up discovered scroll and reads in shocked tone)

The free sale of rum will destroy them more effectually than fire and sword.⁴

**Fort York, at the negotiation table**

**THE NEGOTIATOR:**

The Mississaugas of the Credit went to your meeting in 1787. A meeting to receive gifts from the crown. And now, you say these gifts were payment? Payment for your so-called Toronto Purchase?

**THE ONE WHO KNOWS THE RULES:**

You were well aware that decisions between nations took time.
Colonial Land-appropriation Found the Laws and Spaces of Our Nation

Etobicoke Creek
THE MEMORY KEEPER:
Those gifts were like paying rent. You don't own the house but you can stay there.

Fort York
THE ONE WHO KNOWS THE RULES:
The government, you said, would call a meeting. We would show up, give presents, talk. We would then tell each other what we want. But then, we would say “we'd think about it” and come back for further meetings over several days.

Lake, shore
CROWN OFFICIAL:
The Indians are so much attached to ancient customs and forms as to be very averse to any deviation from them.

Fort York, at the negotiation table
YOUNG MAN:
You had to go by the Royal Proclamation!

GROWN MAN:
Well, that procedure didn't happen.

CROWN OFFICIAL:
Thank you for your council!

Debriefing room
THE ONE WHO KNOWS THE RULES:
In 1788 your surveyor attempted to survey the lands of the Toronto Purchase. You measured only along the waterfront and left the other boundary lines incomplete.

Don River (Surveyor carries giant roll of braided border line and unrolls it along the river bank past disapproving Memory Keeper and Beaver)
SURVEYOR:
I desired the interpreter to signify to the Indian chief the spot. Instead of going to the lower end of the Beach, which forms the harbour. The chief brought me to the river called on the plan Nechengquakekong, which is nearer the Old Fort than the place you mention in your instructions.

He insisted they had sold the land no further. To prevent disputes, I had to put it off for some days longer, until a few more chiefs came in and Mr. Lines settled with them, so that the eastern boundary was extended to Ashbridges Bay.

Etobicoke Creek, bridge (Memory Keeper and Beaver block Surveyor from crossing the creek)
SURVEYOR:
I continued my westward survey until I came to the Humber River which the Indians looked upon to be the west boundary of the purchase till Colonel Butler got them prevailed upon to give up to the river Tobicoak [Etobicoke], but no farther nor would they on any account suffer me to cross the river.

I then was obliged to stop rather than run the risk of having any disputes with the Indian Chief, who cautioned me against crossing it openly, as Col. Butler & Mr. Lines were both gone and I was left without anyone to settle any disputes that might arise between me and the Indians.

Fort York, at the negotiation table
THE NEGOTIATOR:
How did this place get to be another England!? Colonizers come in, they point at a river, they draw it on a map, then it becomes theirs!!!

CROWN OFFICIAL:
(produces scroll and slams on table)
Three of your chiefs agreed to our deal. We have proof. The Toronto Purchase. Dodems, right there!!!
(The group reads in cacophony, attempting to decipher and interpret writing on scroll)

YOUNG WOMAN:
Doth hereby acknowledge, and thereof and therefrom and from every part or parcel thereof doth acquit, release, exonerate and forever discharge to His heirs and successors all that tract or parcel of land...

THE ONE WHO KNOWS THE RULES:
...Our Sovereign Lord, the King, His heirs and successors and every one of them, by these presents hath granted, bargained, alienated, released and confirmed, and by these presents doth grant, bargain, sell, alienate, release and confirm unto our Sovereign Lord the King...

YOUNG MAN:
...being together with the woods, ways, paths, waters, watercourses, advantages, emoluments, and hereditaments whatsoever to the said tract or parcel of land situated as the above-mentioned belonging or in anywise appertaining or which to...

GROWN MAN:
...and with the same now are or at any time heretofore have been held, used, occupied, accepted, reputed, taken or known as part, parcel or member thereof or any part thereof, and the issues and profits of all and singular the said premises...

THE NEGOTIATOR:
...and every part and parcel thereof, with the appurtenances and also all the estate, right, title, interest, property. Hereafter peaceably and quietly have, hold, occupy, possess, and enjoy all and singular the said tract or parcel of land...
By These Presents:

CROWN OFFICIAL:
(shouting over then silencing Mississaugas)
And also that His Majesty, His heirs and successors shall and may at all times for ever hereafter peaceably and quietly have, hold, occupy possess, and enjoy all and singular the said tract or parcel of land, hereditaments and premises aforesaid with the appurtenances and every part of parcel thereof without trouble, hindrance or molestation, interruption or disturbance of them.1

THE NEGOTIATOR:
In 1787 the Mississaugas retained their fishing rights in Etobicoke Creek.

THE ONE WHO KNOWS THE RULES:
The rights to our waters were never extinguished. The three chiefs who you say gave you this land would not give you our livelihood.

GROWN MAN:
But soon settlers put in a weir which blocked the fish from spawning.

YOUNG MAN:
Farms and mills fouled the water.8

YOUNG WOMAN:
When we agreed to share the land with you, we had no idea how many of you would arrive. We did not agree to epidemic disease, the alcohol, and the violence that would follow.

YOUNG MAN:
You might have invited us to a gathering

GROWN MAN:
You might have let the wine flow and the rum grow. But when it came to the actual sale of land, it wasn’t a part of what we were doing.

Lake, shore
BRITANNIA:
(lounging on the beach, makes a delighted gesture of “oh, go on! it wasn’t that bad…”)

Act Two : To Have And To Hold

Debriefing room (GROWN MAN and YOUNG MAN read from discovered scroll in shocked tone):
GROWN MAN:
His Majesty’s Executive Council was exceedingly alarmed at reading of the purchase made at Toronto.

YOUNG MAN:
Which if more generally known, would have shook the tranquility of many respectable persons who’d risked their whole property within its limits...
Colonial Land-appropriation

GROWN MAN: For if that transaction is invalid, the king’s right to any of the lands between the rivers Etobicoke and Don, including a great many cultivated farms, as well as the seat of government will have become very doubtful.

YOUNG MAN: Our tenure will be at the mercy of the Mississaugas. If they are appraised of the circumstances, they might give trouble, with a view of taking their own advantage from it.9

THE ONE WHO KNOWS THE RULES: A plan has been found in the surveyor general’s office, to which is attached a blank deed, with the names or devices of three chiefs... on separate pieces of paper, annexed thereto. Witnessed by a surveyor, since dead. The chiefs on their side, dead and gone. But not being filled up, is of no validity... No fraud had been committed, or seemed to have been intended. It is, however, an omission which set aside the whole transaction, and throws us entirely on the good faith of the Indians. For just so much land as they are willing to allow.10

Lake, shore

CROWN OFFICIAL: (whispers to Britannia) It is best to not press the matter or to show any anxiety about it.11 By and by, we will find a way to confirm the boundaries... without their notice, perhaps when we acquire the lands to the west.

Fort York, at the negotiation table

YOUNG WOMAN: Our old burial sites are being looted! We ask that you enact some laws to stop this grave robbery!

NEGOTIATOR: The Mississauga chief Wabakinine was killed defending his sister from one of your soldiers, on our lands off the harbour!

YOUNG WOMAN: You promised to bring to justice anyone who commits a crime against us!

CROWN OFFICIAL: We acknowledge your concerns. We are sorry for your losses.

Lake, shore

CROWN OFFICIAL: (explaining to Britannia) After our soldier killed the Mississauga chief, large numbers of Mississaugas journeyed to York and Niagara, demanding satisfaction.

Founds the Laws and Spaces of Our Nation

We gave them presents—rum—but they refused further surveys of their land.12 The news of Wabakinine’s death spread far and wide, and we feared the Mississaugas and their allies, the Western Nations, would rise up, surround the town of York, and cut us off.13

CROWN OFFICIAL: (to Britannia) We will postpone settling the boundaries of the Toronto Purchase until circumstances are more favourable. Grant the lands on the eastern banks of the Etobicoke Creek to the Queen’s Rangers.14 We are not yet certain that this is the legal boundary of the Purchase, but we will act as if it is.

Establish military settlements on all of the routes into town, so that the Mississaugas or their allied nations cannot possibly breach the Garrison.15 Upgrade the Garrison to a Fort. Henceforth, no Indians are to come into York unless they receive explicit invitation!16

Keep negotiations fixed on their own concerns. Give them presents separately and in a grand fashion. Put large tracts of settled country between them and their allies.17

Fort York, at the negotiation table

YOUNG WOMAN: (reads scroll) Commencing on the east bank of the south outlet of the River Etobicoke; following the several windings and turning of the said river to a maple tree blazed on four sides at a distance of three miles and three-quarters.18

Lake, shore

CROWN OFFICIAL: (to Britannia) Well, I didn’t remember. We asked Sir John Johnson, who negotiated the purchase at Toronto, what did you get from the Indians, and he remembered a 10 x 10 mile square, with a little bit along the Humber river, and another square at Lake Simcoe. But he’s the only one who remembers it that way.

What do the Indians remember?

Fort York, at the negotiation table

YOUNG WOMAN: All the chiefs who sold the land you speak of are dead and gone.

THE ONE WHO KNOWS THE RULES: I now speak for all of the chiefs of the Mississaugas.
By These Presents:

**YOUNG WOMAN:**
We cannot absolutely tell what our old people did before us, except by what we see on the plan now produced…

**THE ONE WHO KNOWS THE RULES:**
...and what we remember ourselves and have been told.19

**YOUNG MAN:**
You waited until we were starving to bring us to the table!

**GROWN MAN:**
You told us the settlers wanted land to till, not to hunt game and fish!

**THE ONE WHO KNOWS THE RULES:**
We want to know, do the settlers have the power to prevent us from hunting on our lands?20

**YOUNG WOMAN:**
We were promised that the farmers would help us.

**Etobicoke Creek**
MEMORY KEEPER:
Colonel Butler told our old chiefs, “We do not want the water; we want the land.”21

**Fort York, at the negotiation table**
**YOUNG MAN:**
Now your people are putting nets across the river. They’re taking everything that comes up!

**Etobicoke Creek**
MEMORY KEEPER:
The new map was 14 x 28 miles. So it changed a lot.

**Fort York, at the negotiation table**
**THE ONE WHO KNOWS THE RULES:**
...in a straight line from the mouth of the said river; thence north twenty-two degrees west twenty-four miles and one-quarter; then north sixty-eight degrees east fourteen miles.

**Lake, shore**
**CROWN OFFICIAL:**
What is your understanding of the western boundary?

**Fort York, at the negotiation table**
**THE ONE WHO KNOWS THE RULES:**
You made up the boundary, from Ashbridges Bay to Etobicoke Creek, and all the way to Newmarket.

**CROWN OFFICIAL:**
I gave you money for that!

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Colonial Land-appropriation

NEGOITIATOR:
You promised us 10 shillings, but did we even receive it?

CROWN OFFICIAL:
Whatever—you signed it!

Fort York, at the negotiation table
(All read portions of treaty text aloud, in cacophony)
GROWN MAN:
...being the place of beginning, containing two hundred and fifty thousand, eight hundred and eight acres, together with all the woods and waters thereon, lying and being...

YOUNG MAN:
...and all the advantages, emoluments and hereditaments whatsoever to the said tract or parcel of land belonging or in anyways appertaining and the issue and profits of all and singular the said premises and every part and parcel thereof with the appurtenances...

CROWN OFFICIAL:
...and also all the estate, right, title, interest, property, claim and demand whatsoever of them the said Principal Chiefs, Warriors, and people of the Mississauga Nation for themselves and for and in the name of their whole Nation in and to all and singular the said premises and every part and parcel thereof with the appurtenances...

THE ONE WHO KNOWS THE RULES:
(All read portions of treaty text aloud, in cacophony)
Save and except the fishery in the said River Etobicoke, which they, the said Chiefs, Warriors and people, expressly reserve for the sole use of themselves and the Mississauga Nation.

(Cacophony continues):

CROWN OFFICIAL:
To have and to hold all and singular the said tract or parcel of land, hereditaments and premises in and by these presents released and confirmed...

YOUNG MAN:
...unto Our Sovereign Lord the King, His heirs and successors forever, and to and for no other use, intent or purpose whatsoever...

YOUNG WOMAN:
...and also that His Majesty, His heirs and successors as aforesaid shall and may at all times for ever hereafter peaceably and quietly have, hold, occupy, possess...

THE ONE WHO KNOWS THE RULES:
...and enjoy all and singular the said tract or parcel of land with the appurtenances and every part and parcel thereof without trouble, hindrance, molestation, interruption or disturbance of them, the said Principal Chiefs, Warriors and people of the Mississauga...

NEGOITIATOR:
...or any of them, their heirs or successors or any other person or persons lawfully claiming or to claim by, from or under them or any of them.

(Crown Official speaks over then silences the others):

CROWN OFFICIAL:
Having first heard this openly read and rehearsed in your own language and fully approved by your nation,22 your people signed that agreement. Confirmed!

Lake, shore
MEMORY KEEPER:
You had a house, your neighbour moves into your house. Pretty soon he kicks you out. It's still your house and you will always believe it's your house, right?

Act Three: Heirs and Successors

Debriefing room
THE ONE WHO KNOWS THE RULES:
Treaty 13, the so-called Toronto Purchase of 1787, was confirmed in 1805. The boundaries were made official. The western limit was Adoopekong—Etobicoke Creek.

Fort York, at the negotiation table
THE ONE WHO KNOWS THE RULES:
Now that you have settled this boundary, you demand the release of the next swath of land. You want all the land west of Etobicoke Creek to be in British hands.

CROWN OFFICIAL:
So what's your answer? We need it today.

YOUNG WOMAN:
It is hard for us to give away any more land.

GROWN MAN:
The young men and women having found fault with so much having been sold before.

YOUNG WOMAN:
It's true we are poor,

GROWN MAN:
and the women say we will be worse if we part with any more.23 delineating
By These Presents:

Lake, shore
CROWN OFFICIAL: (to Britannia)
We will protect our possessions and make sure we never again face a threat of Indian war in these parts. We will purchase all the remaining waterfront so that communication between our forts can never be disrupted—by Americans on the lake or by Indians... and we will purchase it at our price.

Be advised that Wabakinine, before his death, asked Joseph Brant, the Mohawk chief, to help the Mississaugas get a better price for land in any new transactions. We must break up this combination.

Fort York, at the negotiation table
NEGOTIATOR:
I do not think it reasonable that land be taken away from the Mississaugas at a shilling an acre, only to be given away to individuals to make money off it. The Mississaugas propose three shillings, four pence an acre, which is still generous.24

CROWN OFFICIAL:
You may rest assured, the King would never accept a single acre from them, unless they were willing to give it and were satisfied by the price paid for it.25

YOUNG WOMAN:
We were beginning to understand the price of land in your system, and that we had to provide for future generations who would face many changes.

THE ONE WHO KNOWS THE RULES:
You wanted the colonies to pay for their own infrastructure. Your plan was to pressure us to sell our lands for almost nothing and then sell the land to settlers at much higher prices and reap the profit. You put an Indian agent in place at York to help you rip us off!

Debriefing room
THE ONE WHO KNOWS THE RULES:
(reads discovered scroll in shocked tone)
The primary duty of the Indian agent is fomenting the jealousy between the Mississaugas and the Six Nations. And preventing, as far as possible, any junction or good understanding taking place between them. The best and safest line of policy to be pursued in the department is to keep the Indians separate and unconnected with one another. As by this means they will be in proportion more dependant on the King’s government.26
Colonial Land-appropriation

Lake, shore
CROWN OFFICIAL:
(to Britannia)
We have received reliable intelligence that we no longer need to fear the Mississaugas’ alli-
ance with the western nations—who now want
peace—or even with the Six Nations.

Fort York
YOUNG MAN:
We do not know why we no longer receive our
gifts as before, with the Six Nations,

GROWN MAN:
but since we were attached to the Indian Agent
at York, we have got very little in the way of
presents.27

THE ONE WHO KNOWS THE RULES:
It seems you are determined to reduce the
expenses of the Indian department.

Lake, shore
CROWN OFFICIAL:
Only good behaviour will ensure delivery of
their presents, which they now depend on.

Debriefing Room
THE ONE WHO KNOWS THE RULES:
The British successfully undermined the influ-
ence of Haudenosaunee negotiator Joseph
Brant with the Mississaugas and neutralized
his demand for market prices. By 1805, the
Mississaugas were negotiating on their own.
Brant would die two years later. Our peoples
remained suspicious of each other.

Fort York, at the negotiation table
YOUNG WOMAN:
I hope you will open your ears and attend
to what we have to say. When you first came
up to purchase the lands at Toronto, Sir John
Johnson told us the King wanted some land
for his people to settle on, and they would be
of great use to us. We gave them lands without
hesitation, since we were told we would never
live in poverty, and made no bargain for the
land, but left it to you.

YOUNG MAN:
Father, we have not found this to be so. When
we camp on the shore, they drive us off and
shoot our dogs, and never give us any assis-
tance, as was promised to our old chiefs.

GROWN MAN:
We want to know why we were served in this
manner.

YOUNG MAN:
The farmers threaten to shoot us, in the same
manner, when we go on their land,

Founds the Laws and Spaces of Our Nation

GROWN MAN:
although we were promised to encamp and fish
as we pleased.

YOUNG WOMAN:
Now you want another piece of land. We cannot
say no, but we wish to keep the northern half of
the Mississauga Tract for ourselves,

Fort York
THE ONE WHO KNOWS THE RULES:
and from the tract along the waterfront will
reserve one mile on either side of our lands on
the Credit... and half a mile on either side of
Twelve Mile and Sixteen Mile Creek... and two
or three chains wide along the whole length of
the beach, so that we may not be subject to be
driven off, but two miles northward of the road
and all south of it...

Fort York, at the negotiation table
YOUNG WOMAN:
Father, this is what we will do and ask no price,
but leave it to the generosity of our Father.

CROWN OFFICIAL:
If these are the limitations and reservations, I
will give you no further trouble, for I am certain
the Governor will not accept the Lands on these
terms.28

THE ONE WHO KNOWS THE RULES:
We will retire and confer.

(There the Beaver is left at the table, the presents are
scattered around the table and yard.)

YOUNG WOMAN:
Father, we have reconsidered the subject of
the Land we spoke about yesterday. We have
agreed to give you all you ask, to do as our
Father pleases with except the River Credit. We
now rely on you Father to protect us when we
want to encamp along the Lake and not suffer
us be driven off, as we are now from the lands
we formerly sold to our father.29

Debriefing room
THE ONE WHO KNOWS THE RULES:
The cession of the waterfront lands west
of Etobicoke Creek was signed at the same
meeting as the confirmation of Treaty 13, the
so-called Toronto Purchase. With Treaty 14, the
British acquired more than 80,000 acres: the
waterfront to Burlington Bay, and north six
miles to modern-day Eglinton Avenue.

But we still retained what we most needed for
our sustenance: The sole right to the fisher-
ies in the 12 mile Creek, the 16 mile Creek, and
Etobicoke River, together with the flats or the
low grounds on said Creeks and river which we

delineating
By These Presents:

have heretofore cultivated and where we have camps and also the sole right to the fishery on the Credit River with one mile on either side of said river.30

Fort York, at the negotiation table

NEGOTIATOR:
The final price, paid in goods, was 1,000 pounds. You bought the land off of them for 2.5 percent of its market value! The price was so low even the treaty negotiator petitioned that they be given more!

The situation of those poor people I hope you will sir so far consider them as to recommend a further sum then that stipulated in the provisional agreement.31

THE ONE WHO KNOWS THE RULES:
The ground on which you and your children stand covers the bones of our fathers for many generations.

YOUNG WOMAN:
We sold a great deal of our land to our great Father.

NEGOTIATOR:
For very little.32

GROWN MAN:
Our young men now desire to become farmers.

YOUNG MAN:
The chase being almost destroyed by settlements,

GROWN MAN:
the woods being emptied of their wild animals and the fish having forsaken our river.

YOUNG MAN:
The settlers are fast eating away the forest.

GROWN MAN:
We therefore ask our Father that each of our men may have or possess as much land as one farmer holds.

THE ONE WHO KNOWS THE RULES:
Our people are afraid to clear much ground. They are told their lands can be taken away from them at any time.33

YOUNG WOMAN:
Father, having heard some bad birds crying, that we did not own any lands on the Credit. We wish to know, what’s up from our great Father, King? We wish to know...
Colonial Land-appropriation Founds the Laws and Spaces of Our Nation

Fort York

THE NEGOTIATOR:

How much land do we really possess?

ALL:

Colonial Land-appropriation Founds the Laws and Spaces of Our Nation
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d delineating

Lake, shore

BRITANNIA and CROWN OFFICIAL frolicking along the beach. BRITANNIA spins romantically, CROWN OFFICIAL keeps looking back, checking to see if the Mississaugas are coming.
By These Presents: “Purchasing” Toronto

Only good behavior

We wish to know what's up

The waters and the flats remain unsurrendered

How much land do we really possess

capitalism