

TREATY

ARMAND GARNET RUFFO



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RUFFO

XXX



A Buckrider Book

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For those ancestors who signed treaty in good faith.

And in memory of Richard Wagamese,
when we dreamed of writing books.

The poet enjoys the incomparable privilege of being able to be at once himself and someone else. – Charles Baudelaire, “Crowds”

Those who authentically commit themselves to the people must re-examine themselves constantly. – Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*

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IMPETUS UNGAINLY

Treaty No. 9

ARTICLES OF A TREATY made and concluded neewteb, evif dna derdnuh enin dna dnasuht eno droL ruO fo raey eht ni niereht denoitnem setad lareves eht ta, between His Most Gracious Majesty the King of Great Britain, srenoissimmoC siH yb dnalerI, dnaand Duncan Campbell Scott, of Ottawa, dna eriuqsE, oiratnO, Samuel Stewart, eriuqsE, oiratnO Ontario, and Daniel George MacMartin, of Perth, Ontario, eriuqsE, eht gnitneserper fo ecnivorp Ontario, dna trap eno eht fo and the Ojibeway, Cree and other Indians, . . . nemdaeh dna sfeihc, rieht yb, debircsed dna denifed retfanierih stimil eht nihtiw territory eht fo stnatibahni.

Whereas, the Indians inhabiting the territory ot tseretni fo srettam niatrec nopu etarebiled ot 1905 fo raey tneserp siht ni yrotirret dias eht ni secalp niatrec ta Canada fo noinimoD eht fo tmemnrevog s'ytsejaM siH gnitneserper noissimmoc a teem ot denevnoc neeb evah denifed retfanierih deliberate upon certain matters tseretni fo to His Most Gracious Majesty, fo eht one part, and the said Indians rehto eht fo.

And, whereas, the said Indians demrofni dna deifiton neeb evah by His Majesty's ecneloveneb dna ytnuob s'ytsejaM siH morf eviecer dna nopu tnuoc ot era yeht secnawolla tahw fo derussa eb dna wonk yam elpoep naidnI siH taht dna, stcejbus rehto s'ytsejaM siH dna meht neewteb goodwill and peace eb yam ereht taht os meht, htiw egnarra dna ytaert a ekam ot dna, tcart dias eht gnitbahni stcejbus naidnI siH fo otereh tnesnoc eht niatbo ot dna, denoitnem retfanierih sa debircsed dna dednuob, yrtnuoc fo tcart a teem mees yam ytsejaM siH ot sa sesoprup rehto hcus gnirebmul, gninim, levart, edart, noitargimmi, tmemelttes rof nepo ot erised siH si ti taht noissimmoc dias yb His Majesty's.

And whereas, the said commissioners a etaitogen ot dedeecorp evah treaty with the Ojibeway, Cree and other Indians, dna rednerrus, esaeler,

edec yberek od snaidnI dias eht, rednuereh denoitnem setad eht ta sdnab
evitcepsereht eht yb dedulcnoc dna, nopu deerga neeb sah emas eht dna,
debircsed dna denifed retfanieret cirtsid eht gnitibahni yield up to the
government of the Dominion of Canada, rof siH Majesty the King and His
na gniniatnoc dnal dias eht 3 .oN ytaerT elgnA tsewhtroN eht yb dedec
yrotirret eht fo yradnuob nretsae eht fo trap a yb tsew eht no dna wal, yb
denifed sa oiratnO fo ecnivorp dias eht fo seiradnuob eht yb htron dna tsae
eht no dednuob dna . . . fo area of ninety thousand square miles, erom ro
ssel.

And His Majesty the King hereby agrees htiw eht dias Indians taht they
shall have the thgir eb emit ot emit morf yam sa snoitaluger hcus ot
tcejbus, debircsed erofotereh sa derednerrus tcart eht tuohguorht gnihsif
dna gnippart, gnitnuh fo snoitacov lausu rieht eusrup ot eht yb edam
government of the yrtnuoc.

His Majesty, raey txen taht seerga osla and annually afterwards for ever, . . .
ereht sselnu, emas eht srallod ruof deifiton ylud eb llahs snaidnI dias eht
hcihw fo setad dna secalp elbatius ta hsac ni snaidnI dias eht ot diap eb ot
esuac lliw eh.

Witnesses:

THOMAS CLOUSTON RAE, C.T.,
Hudsons Bay Co.
ALEX. GEORGE MEINDL, M.D.
JABEZ WILLIAMS, Commis,
H. B. Co.

DUNCAN CAMPBELL SCOTT.
SAMUEL STEWART.
DANIEL GEORGE MACMARTIN
MISSABAY, his x mark
THOMAS his x mark MISSABAY . . .
[What does x mean anyway?]

Doctrine of Discovery

The ants enter the room
bodies glazed in black armour.
They march down the walls
and across the desk.
I can see they are on a mission
held to some master plan
a doctrine of discovery.

When I slap them with my hand
target them with my finger
poke them with my pen
they ignore me
as though everything
were for the taking.
It's getting so I'm beginning
to think I am living a never-
ending nightmare

It's like they are trying
to bore themselves into me
plant themselves
into my brain.
Last night one of them
landed on my head
and I awoke with a start.
When I turned on the light
it scurried under my pillow.

I stomp on them
but they keep coming
day after day after day.
And I'm beginning to think

it is a hopeless war
I've waged. I stomp
and stomp and new recruits
arrive to fill their ranks.
Their determination
is collective mania.

Though I've sealed the doors
and the windows
they keep coming.
And I am beginning to think
they are looking for something
to take in their pincers
and devour, something
supreme like God
like Creation itself
as they carry
the dead away.

The Tap

My mind is a town with main street looking like it's had its teeth punched in. Broken windows and empty lots. And then, it's a bright Saturday morning, and I'm riding my bike down to the beach.

My parents relax on creaky lawn chairs.
I can hear their every move. They are in the shade
of a house made of bone and tarpaper.

My sister is screaming the house is on fire. We run
to the Japanese neighbours. Exiles like us, my mother whispers.
In their tiny kitchen, we drink cocoa where everybody is safe.

My aunt is in a western bar dancing. She throws her cowboy hat
in the air, revealing her bald head. Everyone turns away except me.
Then my sister says she's doesn't want to die, but she dies anyway.

I am ten again. We go for a family picnic, and I get carsick.
The dust from the road in my hair, clothes, mouth. When we arrive
I jump into a lake, and find I can't swim. My father drags me out.

When we return a neighbour is skinning a bear on his back porch,
something he does regularly. The bear is staring at me.
His eyes get bigger and bigger, until they become moons.

I arrive at a friend's door just in time to overhear him say
I don't believe in sin. His parents tell him I'm just a little pagan.
I try to creep away, but the floorboards thunder with every footstep.

At home my dog Chopper is smiling at me with a curled lip, and
I am loving him in a moment so perfect the world opens for me. The
moment is a silver hook cast into a bottomless lake. Floating until it sinks.

It's true. Some memories cannot be turned off with sleep. I jolt awake, go for a glass of water, pull the curtains aside. The light in the yard beside the tree is hard yellow. The dripping tap punctuates the night.

Pink Mints

They're in the kitchen laughing. I'm on the couch half watching the hockey game. Saturday night, and Mervin is making up my mother. He applies some red lipstick and digs into his black case and takes out a small paintbrush. He dips it into a small container and brushes her cheeks. My mother is wearing her sparkly blue dress and black high heels that match her black hair. Mervin's wearing a tight white shirt, yellow socks, pointed shoes and black slacks, the dress-up kind I wear on special occasions.

When I was younger Mervin used to babysit me and other kids from the neighbourhood. He'd take us to the movie theatre where he'd give us brooms we'd push around like a little army. He'd let us keep any money we found, and we'd stick our thin arms between the seats feeling for coins. If we behaved ourselves, at the end of the job he'd stick his arm behind the locked candy counter and slip out a package of mints.

He always grabbed the pink ones. We preferred them anyways. The white ones burned our mouths. We'd stand in a row, and Mervin would drop a mint on our tongues just like Communion. Tonight they're going to The Sportsman's Lounge or maybe to a party. I tell them to have a good time, go back to the hockey game and don't think anything. That will come later from the snickers of the kids at school. Where I'll float above myself and act like I don't know him.

The Shop

The engines buckle and crash as my tiny hands shoot up over my ears. How big the world looks when there are ten engines in a row rumbling in their dragon lair. Tamed by mechanics who shout and wave me away over the deafening. But they are too busy to bother with me.

This place, it is like having the power of diesel in your belly, every limb shaking. Even though there are signs posted everywhere that say this is private property, trespassers will be prosecuted, I come anyway.

In mid-winter, thirty below, this is my route to school. Cautiously I cut through the shop, stopping momentarily at the steaming radiators for warmth. In the summer when the climate sweats, it is reverse in here, the stone walls bleed coolness. Old man Frown lives down the road and when I spot him in his oily overalls I beat it for the heavy doors. I'm afraid of him and run as fast as I can, because sometimes his wife comes to see my mother with her eyes nearly swollen shut. She asks me to go to the drugstore for her.