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Playing with Privilege: Exposing Differ/End: The Caledonia Project and its Position as Activist

Theatre

“When talking honestly about ourselves is the goal of a spectacle, the spectacle loses its power as such, and we are the only thing left. It feels good to sit in a room with a bunch of people and reconnect with the basic principles of inquiry and self-responsibility.”

–Darren O’Donnell, Social Acupuncture

“We did get lost...we did get sick to our stomachs...and Gil did sweep up some soil, and I felt sick to my stomach; it felt like we were stealing their land.”

–Lisa O’Connell, Head Dramaturge, Differ/End: The Caledonia Project

Introduction: What, Why, & How?

This paper is an inquiry into the efficacy of theatre for social change. It presents a case study of a single play, interrogating the ethical and political implications of the play’s creation and potential effects on its audience. As a theatre student, I am also concerned with the positionality of those involved in activist theatre and how their attempts to research, document, and dramatize a complex political issue pulls them into the meaning of the piece itself. Why is such theatre work important? How might it manage to do good rather than harm? Has it really *done* anything? These are some of the questions that guide the following investigation.

Differ/End: The Caledonia Project is a play written by Gil Garratt, directed by Andy Houston and performed by seventeen undergraduate students at the University of Waterloo. The project began in a third-year dramaturgy class in fall 2007, when Houston asked his students to research everything they could on the land-claim dispute between the Haudenosaunee (Six

Nations) people and developers in Caledonia, which gained national notoriety in early 2006. The class conducted research with the assistance of Lisa O'Connell, a professional dramaturge in Kitchener-Waterloo (K-W). After the course ended, playwright Gil Garratt took their work and condensed it into a two-act play. Although the course was over, seventeen students from the class returned in February 2008, unpaid and not for credit, to rehearse and perform the play. Differ/End was remounted in June 2008 for a four-day run at the Rotunda in Kitchener City Hall, as part of the Tapestries Multicultural Festival.

When I saw the play in February, I was overwhelmed; I had never seen a university theatre production like it. As a drama student who often wonders what is at stake politically in theatre practice, and who has long grown tired of productions that simply maintain the status quo, I am compelled by Differ/End's project. In its attempt to at once document and theatricalize an ongoing community issue, it forges an unusual kind of theatre work, which begins as research in the academy and becomes a provocative communal occasion. Its creators took a leap of faith, conducting research in hopes that they could eventually produce a piece of theatre; but not just any theatre—theatre that actually does justice to those involved in the issue.

Differ/End has an inherent mission: to implicate those who witness it as part of the issue. By educating and implicating, the play intends to effect social change. So how does it do this, and what does it mean? Furthermore, who are the people in the play? Are they students playing themselves, or actors playing students? Are they activists? Their changing positionality, which is discussed throughout the play, constitutes how they function in the creation and construction of the project.

When I saw Differ/End at the University of Waterloo, the much larger Theatre of the Arts down the hall, which seats 500, was housing the K-W Symphony. I remember finding it

interesting that a play created and produced by students at the University of Waterloo, discussing a community-related issue, had been so upstaged by an event that had nothing at all to do with the university's drama students. It was obvious from the space each production occupied that Differ/End did not fit as easily into the performing arts economy as the Symphony did. The location of Differ/End's February production exposes one of its principle problems—efficacy. On one hand, it would be hypocritical to stage a play that presumes to position itself on the front line of an issue in a conventional theatre; if Differ/End's dramaturgy intends to be radical, the space of the performance should bear this out. As Baz Kershaw argues, “in the process of being staged in theatre buildings, in submitting to contemporary theatre as a disciplinary machine, [potentially radical performances] succumb to what they attack” (54). Staging radical performance in a conventionally removed theatre space reinscribes that performance as part of a theatrical tradition it is trying to subvert. On the other hand, such a venue provides many more people an opportunity to see the play. If 500 people could see it nightly, Differ/End could conceivably impact real social change. But of course, this is not how theatre works. How can I imagine that a play about an uncomfortable issue, performed by a bunch of amateurs, would sell out at the Theatre of the Arts? Differ/End addresses these problems by moving out of its academic context and into the public sphere.

In order to better understand its position as a piece of activist theatre, I committed to attending as many rehearsals for Differ/End's June remount as I could, participating in and documenting the process of production, as well as attending each performance. It was not enough for me to sit back and observe, so I actively participated in the rehearsals and productions. If my own research and scholarship were going to benefit from Differ/End, I wanted to give whatever I could back to those involved. I began as an outsider, just as the researchers did when they first

traveled to Caledonia, but in my efforts to participate and reciprocate, I have become intimately connected with the project. The following discussion of Differ/End is based on the rehearsals and performances I attended during its remount at Kitchener City Hall in June 2008, as well as interviews I conducted with the cast and crew. Following a brief description of the play and its political context, I will discuss a number of scenes that provoke wider considerations of cultural criticism, positionality, and the efficacy of theatre for social change.

Research as Performance, Performance as Research

Differ/End: The Caledonia Project had its initial run at the University of Waterloo's Studio 180, a black box theatre whose house seats a maximum of sixty people. When I attended the performance, the house was at capacity and was filled mainly with university students. Entering the theatre, the most notable feature was the seating arrangement; the audience sat in rows set diagonally across the theatre, divided by the performance space. As Augusto Boal has noted, theatre is fundamentally about "seeing [ourselves] seeing" (Rainbow 13), and I was reminded of this notion as I sat down to watch Differ/End. Before the play even started, the audience became participants—we were on display to each other from opposite sides of the stage.

Differ/End is made up of interconnected segments, which together form a composite portrayal of an undergraduate drama class's coming-to-awareness of the dispute in Caledonia. Simply put, Differ/End presents a group of students performing their research. Student-actors present the audience with findings from a semester's worth of detective work. The play is like a live dramaturgical casebook, starting with the problem and presenting evidence in an attempt to form a better understanding, and perhaps even reach some semblance of a solution.

Central to the importance of the piece is its imperative work in building solidarity between Six Nations and non-natives in its community. It avoids polemics by utilizing a documentary and self-reflexive style, especially when discussing the words and actions of extremist protestors on both sides. While strong opinions are sometimes made, the fact that the piece is an ensemble tempers every outlook and enables the play to present a range of different views. Although text-heavy, Differ/End manages to do more than simply relate facts; it is an entertaining, imagistic piece of theatre, engaging its audience by having them participate, which in turn creates a jarring effect between passivity and activity.

The efficacy of the project is a complex issue, perhaps impossible to measure. But I will argue that the work of Differ/End is to expose, implicate and educate its audience¹ as the issue becomes increasingly close to home. In an interview, one actor notes, “it’s important to reach those people who think they’re distanced from it, throw it in their faces”. As I will continue to discuss, the show ushers its audience into a communal space, but with this inclusion comes responsibility and culpability. While Studio 180 is small, dark, and cloistered away in one of the University’s arts buildings, Kitchener City Hall is impossible to miss—it is an enormous structure located in the middle of downtown Kitchener. The June remount put Differ/End in the centre of official civic space. In this new environment the play became akin to a public forum, accessible to whoever was willing to participate.

Before I begin, I should attempt to make clear that although the performers are University of Waterloo students, and all of them play students in Differ/End, it is not entirely correct to say they play themselves. In the script they are identified by numbers; however, throughout the performance they call each other by their real names. When I first saw the play, I assumed the actors were playing themselves and speaking their own words, but in talking to them later I

learned that this is not completely true. The performers embody characters whose outlooks and attitudes that they do not always share. The liminal space that the performers occupy—between their own identities and their characters’—speaks to the uncomfortable position of the play itself. Differ/End occupies a number of liminal spaces, between art and activism, documentary and fiction, scholarship and practice. I will argue that this is part of what makes it an effective piece of theatre. Designation—student vs. actor—becomes even more complicated when discussing the June remount, where performing had little to do with the university or the actors’ academic lives. When discussing the performance of Differ/End I will use the term students, because students inhabit the world of the play; outside of the play, they are actors/performers.

“The first I heard about Caledonia...”



As the play begins, the cast enters the space, looking rather confused and worried. They seem to wonder, “What is everyone doing here? What are *we* doing here?” They sit on the floor, warily looking around at each other and the audience. One of them tentatively starts the dialogue, remarking, “To be honest, when I first heard about it I thought Caledonia was way up North somewhere ... It was 30 seconds on the evening news ... I remember a guy in a bandana, or maybe a woman, and a Canadian flag, another flag I didn’t recognize, and an OPP cruiser ...

And I thought...it was just some futile gesture” (Garratt 4). A number of the other students give us their first reactions to the land-claim dispute, which manifest a plurality of awareness regarding the issue. While one exclaims, “I couldn’t believe that after Dudley George, the government would allow anything to get that desperate. I actually felt pretty embarrassed” (6), another admits, “My first thought? ‘Oh, another pointless aboriginal protest’ Sorry” (4). I recall the first time I heard the opening line of the play, being pierced by the recollection that I too thought Caledonia was “way up North somewhere”; I imagine a number of audience members were similarly struck. In this way, the audience begins at the same place as the students, recalling our own processes of cognizance.

One of the students is not dressed like the others; while they don casual clothing, he wears a fine black suit and dress shoes. While they give their testimonials, he walks around the performance space sipping a martini. When they have finished, he greets everyone and thanks us for coming, and the cast follows suit. He then asks everyone to stand up (if we are able) and “shake hands with the strangers around [us] and thank them for coming to the show” (6). As we do this, the cast walks around to each audience member and shakes her or his hand, looking each one in the eye and expressing sincere gratitude. The suited student, who we can only assume is our host, explains, “This is a collective experience and we all contribute to it so let’s acknowledge that” (6). To be honest, it feels pretty good; it is new and different to have such intimate interaction with actors and fellow spectators during a performance. In a way, it reminds me of Catholic mass when I was a kid—my favourite part was always “Peace be with you”, when I got to engage with total strangers and shake their hands. As an audience, we are warmly invited to be participants in the piece, as if Differ/End is an exercise in community building.

However, this also works on a subtle level to implicate us. The gesture, seemingly friendly and comforting, is an attempt to prevent passivity on the part of the audience.

As our host continually attempts to begin the “play proper”, students interrupt him with exercises and additional information about their experience, in attempts to better prepare us for what we are about to witness. One conducts a pseudo-meditation with the audience, asking us to “Focus on [our] breathing” and to “let all that tension go ... all that tension from going out to see a play about the Caledonia Crisis and Aboriginal Land Claims” (7). Another reminds us, “you are now culpable”, that our culpability starts here (9). Up until now, the cast has been kind and gentle to the audience, easing us into Differ/End’s controversial subject matter. This speech is jarring; the student is angry, and his classmate’s insistence that he “slow down” only encourages his temper to flare. He will not let us off the hook; we are here, and as long as we are here we will come face-to-face with our own culpability.

If there is a single word that has changed my sense of subjectivity of late, it is culpability. Before Differ/End I had not heard it said in quite some time, but since February it has guided not only my work as a researcher, but almost every aspect of my life. Its definition, “deserving blame or censure” (OED), is harsh, but as a member of white upper-middle class society I believe it necessary to turn my pointed finger back upon myself if I wish to live and work ethically. From Differ/End I have learned that culpability entails more than just feeling guilty and apologizing; for me, it has facilitated an interrogation of the role(s) I play, socially, politically, and personally. Culpability is the reason I have written this paper.

The Differend

A student explains that the title of the play comes from Jean-Francois Lyotard. “The differend” is Lyotard’s concept for contending with “the impossibility of avoiding conflicts (the

impossibility of indifference) and ... the absence of a universal genre of discourse to regulate them (or, if you prefer, the inevitable partiality of the judge)” (xii). Assumptions are made regarding truth and universality by those whose language and linguistic idioms are dominant. Lyotard problematizes these master narratives for their rendering silent those who do not share dominant language/idioms. He states, “A plaintiff is someone who has incurred damages and who disposes of the means to prove it. One becomes a victim if one loses these means. One loses them, for example, if the author of the damages turns out directly to be one’s judge” (13). This notion is particularly pertinent to the subject of Indigenous land-claims, where one must ask, “how can the Aboriginals legitimately take political action against Canada, if the only system they are franchised to work through is just an extension of the Canadian Government itself?” (Garratt 56) How can something be resolved between two groups whose structures and societies are fundamentally different? Lyotard’s differend is explicitly applied to the play through a specific example:

the Europeans wash up on the shores of the Americas ... they’re looking around for somebody in charge, and they see these chiefs ... They assume that there must be parallel hierarchical structure within Native cultures as there are within European cultures. That the men they see, these chiefs, are obviously the ones in charge ... there was an assumption made, based on a distinct cultural experience but that resulted in a miscommunication and ultimately a nightmare. Different people are different. Differ. End (14).

Lyotard asserts that new idioms must be created, “new rules for forming and linking phrases that are able to express the differend” (Lyotard 13). The project of Differ/End is to open up dialogue between and amongst those involved and those outside, in hopes of creating such idioms.

Through audio-video footage and verbal transcription, Differ/End documents stories of Indigenous protestors and Caledonian residents in an effort to see the problem from every angle. Rather than attempting to “solve” the differend, the play interrogates Canadian master narratives and presents alternative histories. But before we go further, it is necessary to put the Caledonia land-claim dispute into context.

Political Context: “It’s Grand to Be in Caledonia”

Six Nations protestors began their occupation of the Douglas Creek Estates in Caledonia on February 28th, 2006. As a reporter for the Hamilton Spectator describes, protestors “strung a large banner proclaiming ‘Six Nations Land’ between two lamp posts at the subdivision entrance off Argyle Street” (Legall A07). Since then, they have remained on the site, maintaining a constant presence to ensure that no further development takes place. The partially developed site is part of the Haldimand Tract, a stretch of land totaling nearly one million acres—six nautical miles on either side of the Grand River, from its source to Lake Erie (see CBC News In Depth: Caledonia Historical Timeline). In 1784, the British Crown gave the Haldimand Tract to Six Nations for their loyalty during the American Revolution. Since then, the tract has been reduced, properties have been leased and sold, and Six Nations find themselves in possession of only 45000 of the original acres (Garratt 37). At stake for Six Nations protestors is the right to the land originally given to them in the Haldimand Proclamation. It is critical to note that Six Nations protestors do not occupy developed land—they have no desire to force people out of their homes; only undeveloped or partially developed territory is reclaimed. In the spring and summer of 2006, the situation in Caledonia intensified, and it became the source of national news coverage. Protests and counter protests caused clashes between a number of Six Nations people and Caledonians.

An unfiltered view of the situation in Caledonia is impossible to find. Spectacular images in mainstream media sources, such as those taken at the OPP raid of the occupied site on April 20th, 2006, show protestors wearing bandanas and driving around on ATVs. These images were included in news documents months after the raid took place (see CBC News “Judge tells Ontario to end Caledonia dispute talks”, 8 August 2006). In fact, in the CBC’s timeline of the current dispute (CBC News [In Depth: Caledonia Land Claim Timeline](#)), the only photograph shown is perhaps the most pervasive: that of an Indigenous protestor, wearing a bandana over her or his face and a Mohawk Warriors ballcap, speaking into a walkie-talkie. This image represents the Indigenous protestor as unknown and dangerous, covering up, doing things behind “our” backs. As one of the students in [Differ/End](#) notes, “They were a ‘they’, a ‘them’ an ‘other’ I othered them immediately, as a group. And what do *they* want *us* to do[?] I us’d all of ‘us’” (Garratt 5). [Differ/End](#) provides alternative histories and reports from Caledonia that are inaccessible through mainstream media sources. Media was the subject of many students’ casebooks for their dramaturgy class. The conclusion by many was that they could not garner satisfactory information on the dispute from any major media source.

My own research has left me with the same problem. Notable in many major news articles on the dispute is the privileging of non-native voices and opinions over those of Six Nations people. In nearly every article I came across, both sides were interviewed, but protestors were rarely quoted before non-natives. The lack of Indigenous voices present and given import in mainstream media prompted me to create my own dramaturgical supplement for [Differ/End](#)’s June remount. Because the remount happened too quickly to facilitate any major changes to the script, Andy Houston and I decided to provide the audience with information on current Six Nations reclamation sites in Caledonia and surrounding areas, specifically in Brantford. This

information was displayed along with the students' casebooks in a room above the performance space, where audience members were encouraged to visit during intermission. I created a display that served as a guideline for engaging with media that covered Six Nations protests. Along with articles from the Brantford Expositor, I displayed articles from sources such as [Tekawennake News](#), [The Dominion](#), [People's Voice](#), and [Upping the Anti](#). I displayed signs suggesting that we "Ask [Our] Newspaper Questions", "Talk to Friends and Family About What's Going On" and "Find Alternative News Sources".



I created a brochure titled "What's Happening Now and What Can We Do?" that audience members could take with them. It provides a brief timeline of the Brantford protests as well as a list of web resources; the list consists of Indigenous and alternative media sources such as [Six Nations Reclamation Information](#), [Solidarity and Autonomy: Six Nations and Caledonia Resource Page](#), and [CKRZ: Six Nations Radio](#). Dramaturgically, I felt these brochures continued the play's theme of audience as participant. Along with the conventional program that the audience takes home, I wanted to provide them with a tangible source of education and provocation. It is my hope that those who witnessed [Differ/End](#) and my display are now able to broaden their engagement with media and information relating to the Six Nations cause, and

realize that their education on the subject does not have to begin and end with the evening news or Saturday's paper.

Cultural Criticism, Meaning-Making, & The Politics of Consumption



Differ/End is littered with personal accounts, which work to remind us of its creators' subjectivity. After describing the suburban landscape that makes up a large part of the drive from K-W to Caledonia, a student recalls a sign that she passes on her way: "right in front of the Wendys, strapped to a lamppost just a couple of feet from the right lane, this sign, this enormous, fucking hamburger with THE BACONATOR right above it" (Garratt 21). For the student, the sign comes to mean something more than just a fast-food advertisement. She continues,

it's not about the burger, I mean, I'm a vegetarian. But it's there, and we're driving down to Caledonia, the site of this huge uprising, the site of this spiraling conflict that just seems so unresolvable [*sic*], the site of such incredible racism and hate and oppression, a place where we Canadians, who love to blow the horn of diplomacy into everyone's faces can't even sort it out ... and I can't help but

feel, stupid as it may seem, that the BACONATOR is this horrific metaphor of it all (21).

And suddenly, she becomes the Baconator. Sitting atop another student's shoulders, she holds a flashlight under her chin, yelling "I am the Baconator!" as the rest of the cast rhymes off the jingle from the Wendy's television commercial. At first the scene receives laughs from the audience, but soon we realize that things are turning quite horrific. The cast becomes frightened at their fellow actor, as she towers over them, unrecognizable, and cries, "That's right mother fucker, prepare to be Baconated" (22). When the music stops, she asks, "What's with that? Baconating the shit out of everybody?" and then realizes, "I don't want this viciousness[,] this domination ... I don't want to be a Baconator" (22). By creating and engaging with this metaphor, the student explores what it means to consume such a product, while forcing a connection between corporate consumption and Caledonia.

The Baconator is not the only corporate imagery interrogated for its symbolism by Differ/End. The play also makes provocative use of Canada's "other" maple leaf, the Tim Horton's coffee cup. A student pours disputed soil out of a Tim Hortons cup and onto a table, explaining, "This is probably going to be uncomfortable but we need it for illustration. This extra large Tim Hortons cup is full of soil from this site. In essence this is a cup of disputed soil" (31). The rest of the cast lines up on either side of the table, facing each side of the audience. Another student tells us that "In some of the pictures from the really heated times surrounding the erection of the first barricade, there are people visible, on either side of the barricades, cops included, drinking Tim Hortons. While creating this play, we did it too" (32). The consumption of Tim Hortons products can easily be glossed over as apolitical, but in Differ/End it is directly interrogated. One student explains that the group will pay "a little sacrament to the disturbing

unifying power of the former Canadian hockey legend business, turned massive publicly traded American Corporation, Tim Hortons” (32). The host sings a hymn to Tim Hortons as students cross their cups over their foreheads, then they tilt up the cups as if pouring coffee into their mouths, but instead, soil falls out of their cups and onto the floor. The students hand back their cups, reciting, “Tim Be With You”, “And Also With You” (33)—a disturbing perversion of the moment in Catholic mass brought to my mind earlier in the play. The segment, by correlating Christian ritual with corporate consumption, forces an interrogation of the politics behind both practices. It compels the audience to question our relationship to corporate consumption, to religion, and to the land. As a student, I am keenly aware of how susceptible my sector of the Canadian population is to branding and advertisements; the play interrogates two of the myriad brands we are bombarded with on a daily basis.

Wrestling with and deconstructing these symbols is necessary to the activism in Differ/End. In North American society, culture is increasingly encroached upon by corporations who are met with far too little critical resistance, making the culture jamming that occurs in Differ/End vital and timely. In a play about land and ownership, corporate symbols become especially political. Both the Baconator and Tim Hortons mattered to the issue, as part of the landscape. As a young university student and culture jammer tells Naomi Klein in No Logo, “this is my environment ... and these ads are really directed at me. If these images can affect me, then I can affect them back” (Stasko qtd. in Klein 292).



As a result of witnessing the play, these images have become inextricably linked for me to the new meanings that Differ/End has given them. A cup of Tim Hortons coffee is no longer just that. The meaning-making performed in Differ/End reveals the artistry of its creators; their use of corporate imagery creates an aesthetic of subversion. They refuse to conform to the decided meanings of these images, and in doing so create something new. “The Baconator” and “Ode to Tim Hortons” reveal the liminality of Differ/End’s performers, who are at once students, artists, and activists. In these scenes they literally act upon their environment.

Another performer does not have such an easy time making metaphor out of what he sees around him; he does not move as freely between his position as student and as activist-artist. He describes a detour that he took on his way to Caledonia through his hometown of Brantford; he and a few others stop at Kanata Village, a “little Native Historical Centre” (Garratt 24) where he used to go on field trips in public school. As he and the others explore the deserted centre, he comes across a large mask in the bushes at the back of the property. He tells us, “I remember it. It used to be on the big sign where you came in. It’s huge like that, billboard size. We all stand over it. A face, with long dark hair, distorted features. Rotting leaves encrusted all over its

face...grapevines have bound one of the ears to the earth. There are dozens and dozens of insects, wood bugs, crawling in the nostrils” (25). As he looks at it, he becomes convinced that “It’s a symbol of...something” (25). Like any good student of the arts, he has been trained to recognize a symbol. He sees the decaying mask on his way to Caledonia and knows that it is poetic, but he cannot finish the metaphor; the mask remains a symbol without a signifier. The student finishes his monologue, angrily stating, “I want [the mask] to be utterly full of resonance. But it’s just garbage ... I want to cry my face off, or vomit, or just anything momentous. I want something momentous but I just get a forgotten sign in the grapevines” (25). This is a pivotal moment in the play’s documentary process; it forces the narrative to reflect back on itself, interrogating the very act of meaning-making. Is it that no symbol can be made from the mask? Or is it that the subject matter overwhelms such a task? Why is this student unable to make meaning as easily as classmates do with corporate symbols? Perhaps if the student had more time, or if he had a better understanding of rhetoric, he could instill some profound meaning upon the decaying mask, but the pressing issue in Caledonia forces him to move on.

The student finds himself caught in between two positionalities—student and activist-artist. His role as student is to analyze and interpret the image he sees before him, but as an activist he is forced to disrupt his intellectual exercise and continue without the symbol. I find myself relating to the frustration he feels at his inability to make his experience poetic. It is as if, by creating a coherent and meaningful symbol, we might fulfill some greater purpose or even do someone justice. Failure at this makes us wonder what went wrong, what we are missing. If this is not our task as students, then what is?

The monologue speaks to the complex problem of the play itself and the position of its creators as both students and activists. The student’s confusion and disappointment reveal his

position as limited. In order to do justice to the issue, he must negotiate with other parts of his identity. As a student he is unable to make meaning out of the mask, but as an artist and activist he is able to perform a monologue that acknowledges the difficulty of Differ/End's project. At stake is not the meaning of the mask, but the decision to remain or to move on, and what this says about the performer's positionality. Differ/End's creators face problems of not knowing who or what to believe, running out of time, the imminent need to document a vital issue, and the attempt to "tell the truth, without being absolutely sure" (Boal Rainbow 39).

Paul Arthur's discussion of such postmodern political documentary films as Roger and Me and Lightening Over Braddock relates closely to these problems. He argues that the films manifest an "aesthetic of failure" (127); they are made with the subjectivity of their creators in full view, and document both technical and philosophical failures in attempts to find the truth. Rather than concretely depicting the "real story" behind their subject matter, these films possess "the open admission of, indeed a central obsession with, inadequacy emblazoned by formal disjunction and underwritten by dramatic displays of nontotalized knowledge—patriarchal mastery in disarray" (132). In our interview, Andy Houston also speaks of "the problem of failing" in Differ/End; he states, "that strikes me as fundamentally what's at stake here in this negotiation—it's about non-Aboriginals being present with their own failure to do this right, to do the relationship justice, and I want us to be present with that". Rather than an abdication of responsibility, failure works in the play as a mobilizing force. The creators' initial lack of knowledge did not impair them, but compelled them to bear witness, to ask questions and to bring their newfound awareness back to their community. Now, even after months of research, they realize it is impossible to know everything about the Caledonia land-claim dispute—there is

no master narrative. When asked what he felt the goal of Differ/End is, an actor states, “trying to get people to talk about fixing it, because I have no idea how to fix it” (Q&A).

Playing with Privilege: Solidarity & Empathy



The students dramatize their first visit to Caledonia: they are all jammed into a minivan, here replicated by a wooden table, and have entered the occupied site. They find themselves afraid to get out of their vehicle, unsure of what to say and of the reaction they might get. Finally, they all chorus in unison, “Hi. We’re from the University of Waterloo” (Garratt 40). For me, this is one of the most profound and important lines in the play—it represents the tense and fascinating moment when scholars must confront their positionality in the face of their “object of study”. It should be noted that none of the students in Differ/End are Indigenous, or from Caledonia. So what were these privileged students, these outsiders, doing there? Did they have any right to be there? How could any of them claim to be doing more help than harm? Stepping out of their cars and onto the streets was far more difficult and even dangerous than opening a textbook, and their willingness to be present with that reality is critical. However, as sympathetic

as I am to their vulnerability in this moment, I still ask myself whether their entrance onto the scene might actually impact positive change.

In this context, the students are privileged—provided with the time, support, and resources to conduct research on the dispute. In other contexts, as students and young people, they undoubtedly find themselves in positions where they lack privilege. The fact that their university's Theatre of the Arts was reserved for the Symphony instead of their play is an example of this. University students in Ontario inherently manifest a plurality of privilege, which is constantly compounded by the situations they find themselves in. They necessarily have the means to pay or borrow their way through school, which denotes privilege, but rising tuition, rising interest on student loans, and the expense of additional resources means that whatever money they do make is rarely their own. As well, their sexual, racial, gendered, and differently abled subjectivities critically affect their potential privilege or oppression. The students recognize their tenuous positionality as they awkwardly announce, "We're from the University of Waterloo". Although in the context of this scene their position as students facilitates privilege, at other times this position can be used against them, as we will see when the play draws to a close.

As I attended rehearsals for the June remount of Differ/End, I became increasingly concerned that the play was too distant from its subject matter. When I attended the play during its initial run, Andy Houston mentioned during the Q&A session following the performance that Differ/End would go to Caledonia. I was prompted to take up the play as a research topic in hopes that I would be able to follow it there and document the reaction by Six Nations and Caledonian audience members. When I learned that Differ/End would instead be remounted at Kitchener City Hall, I was disappointed; I thought the play was avoiding its true task².

Fortunately, I came across Tom Keefer's article, "The Politics of Solidarity: Six Nations, Leadership, and the Settler Left". Keefer discusses a prevalent problem in attempts by non-native activists to work in solidarity with the Six Nations protestors in Caledonia. He argues that non-native activists, in attempting to forge solidarity, are preoccupied with "how to relate to the struggle at Six Nations" (1), and see the only possible answer as coming from the leadership of Six Nations themselves. Although Keefer agrees that "any non-native activist interested in doing solidarity activism needs to work in close collaboration with indigenous activists and must be responsive to indigenous experiences and political perspectives" (2), in this particular context, taking leadership has not proven to be a productive or meaningful form of activism. As Keefer explains, the Six Nations Confederacy is very large and extremely complex; to assume it is made up of a homogenized group of people is naïve. Non-native activists become distracted by the fact that this "complex situation is refracted by the diverse channels through which political power is exercised within the community (including clan mothers and traditional chiefs, the band council, men's and women's councils, NGOs, and various levels of formal and informal on-site leadership)" (3). He argues that the largest factor in this situation is the Two Row Wampum agreement between Six Nations and settler populations, which many Six Nations people use as a guiding principle in their relationship with settlers. It holds that "both the Six Nations community and the settler communities are to 'steer their own boats' and not interfere with each other's internal affairs" (5). Keefer would like to see settler activists work in solidarity with Six Nations protestors by adhering to the law of the Two Row Wampum. He contends that misguided white activists have a tendency to "live vicariously through the radical struggle" (6) of oppressed groups, while showing a reluctance to go into their own communities and interrogate structures of racism and oppression. This has had a harmful affect on the Six Nations cause in

Caledonia. While settler activists who sympathize with Indigenous protestors have remained confused and inactive, “media savvy personalities like Gary McHale have organized dozens of rallies and public meetings ... where they have effectively demanded ‘equal rights for whites’ who are seen as oppressed because the Canadian state has not moved in to stop the ‘terroristic’ natives. Dozens of ... neo-Nazis have participated in [these] public events” (6-7). While right-wing protestors have been able to organize rallies and gain attention from the media, leftist activists have hesitated, sitting on the fence and waiting for Six Nations protestors to tell them what to do. Keefer warns of the blurry line that exists between “assuaging white guilt” and “shifting the balance of forces arrayed against Six Nations” (8). Many people in Caledonia do not support racism nor anti-Indigenous protests, and agree with the Six Nations cause, but for the most part these people have not organized; they remain isolated and unsure of how to effectively express their concerns and solidarity. Racism and antagonism grow between the two sides, as right-wing protestors led by Gary McHale—who does not even live in Caledonia—continue to influence the town’s politics. Caledonia suffers from the fact that “there is so little anti-racist, anti-colonial, and anti-capitalist work taking place within non-native communities” (10).

Significantly, the actors in Differ/End do not portray anyone other than university students. Although they relay others’ points of view, these voices are never seamlessly embodied; they are always cited—translated through the actors as students. The play is “a process of approaching, as outsiders to a community, as students, as non-native” (Q&A). Houston felt it important to conduct sympathetic versus empathic research, so that students would avoid the temptation of relating too strongly to those who were interviewed. Sympathetic research is constituted by a relationship that recognizes the myriad differences between the researcher and who or what is being researched. Empathic research involves the researcher

personally identifying with the object of study. As outsiders to the problem, and moreover, as privileged, non-native University students, those conducting research were encouraged to be constantly aware of their own positionalities.

In “The risks of empathy: interrogating multiculturalism’s gaze”, Megan Boler asks, “who and what, I wonder, benefits from the production of empathy?” (255) As an educator, she is wary of what is termed “passive empathy”, which occurs when “identification is easy” and becomes a means of distraction from seeking justice (255). This relates closely to Keefer’s argument about white activists living vicariously through the struggles of the oppressed. Rather than passive identification, Boler seeks a form of empathy that involves culpability. She states, “At stake is not only the ability to empathize with the very distant other, but to recognize oneself as implicated in the social forces that create the climate of obstacles [that] the other must confront” (257). As a privileged space where “the other” is often examined, the university is under the constant threat of breeding a culture of comfort and passive empathy amongst those who work and study there. The students in Differ/End contend with this by first attempting to deny their implication in the land-claim dispute, claiming, “it’s all too late...it’s too late...things can’t be undone, this isn’t our fault, my fault. I didn’t do this, any of this. I wasn’t even born” (Garratt 5). As their research continues, they find that they cannot escape the ignorance that so many in their community use as a defense. Now that they know, indeed even before they knew, they are implicated. One student cites an interview with Six Nations activist Wolf Thomas, who reminded his interviewers that according to Canadian law, “ignorance is no defense” (Thomas qtd. in Garratt 55). The student goes on to say, “Just because you bought [land], and have the papers, just because you didn’t know it was contested, just because you didn’t know what was done to the people of Six Nations, shouldn’t exempt you from the consequences” (55).

Boler calls for a form of empathy that does not necessitate identification with the oppressed, because such empathy permits an “abdication of responsibility” (260). If Differ/End is equally as concerned with the thoughts and questions of a group of drama undergraduates as it is with those in Caledonia, this is because the piece does not abdicate; its work is to locate and confront ignorance in its own community. Boler suggests students stand back and bear witness rather than inserting themselves into a situation as the oppressed; this action “emphasizes a collective educational responsibility” (262). Boler’s ideas are borne out by Differ/End’s student researchers. In an interview with me, an actor describes casually speaking to a young woman who was eating dinner with her children at a restaurant on the Six Nations reserve. After a long day of attempting to record formal interviews, he decided that rather than announce himself, he would simply bear witness silently and give the person room to say what she wanted, without recording anything. He remarks, “I thought that was interesting, y’know, so we don’t say anything, [and] someone opens themselves up completely. We say we’re from the University of Waterloo and we’re doing a project on this, then the tension comes” (Actor 1). In this context, the actor exerts control over his positionality; he is able to conceal his identity as a student-researcher. His conversation did not make it into the script, but nevertheless the actor plays with his privilege, acting as witness rather than as student-researcher.

Game Playing & Social Acupuncture



One of the most memorable scenes in Differ/End is a game that relies on audience participation. “Musical Land Claim” includes six audience members, each of whom is given a large nametag bearing one of the six nations in the Haudenosaunee confederacy. The host tells participants that this game is much like musical chairs, “but instead of being out, you just have to stay in the game and sit on the remaining chairs anyway, all of you, together” (Garratt 25). As the chairs are taken away, participants must find creative ways to pile onto the remaining “land,” until they are left with no chairs. The game is always one of the most comical and engaging parts of the show; during the June performances at City Hall, audience members were always very eager to participate, even though they had no idea what they were in for until they were standing in the middle of the performance space. “Musical Land Claim” is important to Differ/End in a number of ways; it drives home, in an unavoidable way, the loss of land that Indigenous peoples have faced in Canada—as fun and communal as the game is, there remains an undercurrent of serious interrogation. As well, the game elicits contact between strangers in the audience. Much like the greeting at the beginning of the show, audience members are taken out of their comfort zones and put into contact with each other in a safe space.

I would also argue that the game emphasizes Differ/End's irreproducibility—the participants' creative ways of dealing with their reduced space changed with every performance. There was no way of guessing what participants would do on a given night; some would grab chairs from the audience, or sit on the ground, or try to forcibly keep chairs from being removed. These spontaneous tactics aided in the individuality of each performance. Although I do not think Differ/End is in imminent danger of commodification, “Musical Land Claim” seems to be a statement of opposition to the type of theatre work that aims at strict reproduction, which can be replicated at different times and places with a purity of form and content. There is a generosity in the dramaturgy that Differ/End practices; in this instance the play allows its audience to affect its production through active participation in the performance space. This keeps the audience interested and gives participants the space to perform, blurring the line between actor and spectator, and turning the latter into what Augusto Boal calls a “Spect-actor” (Games xxx).

“Music Land Claim” is based on the dramaturgical practice of Darren O'Donnell, a theatre practitioner in Toronto who uses children's games, amongst other techniques, to promote new modes of civic engagement. When I asked Andy Houston which texts he used in his dramaturgy class, he directed me to O'Donnell's Social Acupuncture. The concept of “social acupuncture” comes from O'Donnell's experience with traditional Chinese medicine. He writes:

the social body, like the physical body, is a complex and nuanced system with many excesses here and deficiencies there. For example, the amount of resources plugged into the media spectacle, with its endless parade of entertainments, is an excess dialectically related to a deficient and apathetic, politically alienated public (47).

O'Donnell explains that traditional Chinese medicine sees the body as a unified system in an ongoing process, where everything is related and affected. This principle is true not only of the physical body, but of the social body as well. He warns, "Like real acupuncture, social acupuncture can be uncomfortable, but this is a good thing. The dispersal of holding patterns, of energetic excesses and deficiencies, will usually generate discomfort, the social equivalent of confusion, a necessary part of any learning process" (50). O'Donnell's book is not a conventional dramaturgy text. Its first section is titled "Life in the Shit Factory", and indeed O'Donnell is crass, sardonic and often quite pessimistic. However, when I read Social Acupuncture and reflected on Differ/End, the connections were obvious. The play accepts the impossibility of its own task, and contends with the question of "how to create thoughtful, rigorous work while allowing for the unknown, the unexpected and the awkward—how to find meaning in qualities other than virtuosity and razzle-dazzle" (21).

Rather than remain in the classroom, students were asked to go out and engage face-to-face with their "objects of study". Students drew inspiration from O'Donnell's theatrical endeavors, one of which involves taking a group of strangers onto the streets and having them stop pedestrians to ask questions about their lives, in a polite and non-threatening manner. The students in Houston's class were empowered by the knowledge that they could conduct research this way. One actor tells me that she has always engaged with strangers in random and irreverent ways, regardless of social implications. However, she did not know that these interactions might be a viable method of dramaturgical research. Now, she and many of her fellow castmates do not feel intimidated by what she calls taking a "bold approach" to dramaturgy (Actor 2). Student-researchers staged (and often recorded) spontaneous interviews with members of their own communities, with people from Six Nations, with non-native homeowners in Caledonia, and

spent a significant amount of time on the contested site interviewing protestors. These conversations gave voice to those who do not necessarily get quoted on the news or in print. It also gave students the chance to engage with people who came from recognizably different walks of life. Of course, some of what students witnessed and heard was shocking, but it was undeniably real, and integral to their project.

These dramaturgical interactions prompt critical ethical questions. As O'Donnell states, "any old conversation is not enough to introduce democracy; we have to interrogate who is conversing, who isn't and what we are talking about" (33). The spontaneous interactions between students and interview subjects put the project in a complex ethical regime. Although the project was stamped and approved by the University of Waterloo's Ethics Board, there was no way of accounting for potential results of such unplanned interactions. Students are aware of the privilege that came with the conversations and interactions they had, and keep themselves in check during the play through discussion and reflection. Importantly, the show's creators allow their audience to interview them at the Q&A sessions following each performance; in this way, they became the audience's "object of study". Differ/End's goal is to provoke conversations that acknowledge positionality and alternative points of view, and these conversations go beyond the space of performance. Now that the actors have engaged so intensely with the situation in Caledonia, they feel more able to speak about it with those around them. During one of the Q&A when the actors are asked how the project has affected them, one states, "I've been talking about the issue more. I bring it up at work, I bring it up at school, I talk to strangers about it".

Although I do not agree with everything O'Donnell does, I would argue that the importance of his work lies in its bringing together of people from different social spheres. In a social climate where the importance of live theatre is becoming increasingly difficult to defend,

O'Donnell has reconceptualized what theatre can mean, and what makes it effective; he stands up for intimacy and its effect on civic engagement. Although both his work and Differ/End are inevitably evanescent, a certain “communitas” (Turner 45) is gained from shared social space, which occurs as a result of these performances. They are democratic, generous, and fun. They instigate conversations that continue once the show has ended. After Differ/End is over, warm pie is offered to the audience and we all stand around eating and chatting about what we have witnessed. I would go so far as to borrow Jill Dolan’s term “utopian performative” in describing Differ/End, especially regarding a scene such as “Musical Land Claim”. It is impossible to gauge the social impact of such a performative tactic, but the game is indeed one of those “small but profound moments in which performance calls the attention of the audience in a way that lifts everyone slightly above the present, into a ... feeling of what the world might be like if every moment of our lives were as emotionally voluminous, generous, aesthetically striking, and intersubjectively intense” (Dolan 5).

Performance and Excess: The Haldimand History Game



The final scene in Differ/End involves very different game, conducted by the show's host, and featuring one of the young women in the cast as the sole contestant. The host informs his contestant that she will be tested on facts about the Caledonia land-claim dispute, and for every question she answers wrong, she will "lose something" (Garratt 74). The host assures her, however, that she should not get any of the questions wrong, because she has been "studying this stuff for five months" (74). Although she answers the first two questions correctly, she soon begins to falter. With each question she answers incorrectly—and indeed she answers all of the ensuing questions incorrectly—the host's two male assistants demand an article of her clothing. When the game is through, she is left wearing only her undergarments, traumatized and humiliated in front of the audience. In a fickle attempt to make up for what he has done, the host offers her a Canadian flag to wrap herself in. The game is about authority, power, and corruption; it is about knowledge and positionality, and how both can be used to dominate and exploit others.

Privilege is not a solid state; it is constituted by context. Students in Differ/End had formerly occupied a privileged position as researchers investigating the land-claim dispute in Caledonia, but the student forced to participate in "The Haldimand History Game" is rendered powerless by the very knowledge that had formerly empowered her. What does this say about privilege and positionality? What does this have to do with Caledonia? The game interrogates the risk of not knowing. Up until this point, the students have used knowledge to educate and empower; it is here flipped upside down, privileging some while abusing others. The contestant's position as a student does not change, but the situation changes her relationship to knowledge. And what about the position of the host? By variously embodying a student and a ringmaster, he has more power than his fellow students do. Although the play had seemed democratic up until

now, the host is suddenly revealed as exceptionally powerful. “The Haldimand History Game” exposes the risk of Differ/End—the risk inherent to playing with privilege. The game is about more than a loss of privilege, it is about a loss of rights. The contestant is forced to take part in a game with rules she has not made; she has become a victim of knowledge, as it is used to oppress and disenfranchise. In a Lyotardian sense, the game’s author is also its judge; he is the one who possesses knowledge—both of the game’s form and its content.

At the first performance of the June run, during this climactic final scene, City Hall security guards loudly chatted and made a great deal of noise. When asked to quiet down, they began speaking and moving even louder to show their authority over us. Of course, this occurrence caused the actors and audience stress, but it also provided a level of irony impossible to achieve anywhere else. The noisemaking of the security guards manifested their own inflated sense of power; it was an ironic coincidence that their utilization of this power to dominate another group occurred at the moment power was deconstructed in the play. Both the game and the security guards’ interruption seemed senseless, absurd—but both exposed people in positions of authority playing with their privilege to oppress others. This layering of “play” power and real power would not have been possible in a normal theatre space, conventionally considered “sacred” in our culture.

Baz Kershaw’s argument in The Radical in Performance: Between Brecht and Baudrillard is that theatre’s efficacy in relation to social justice has become possible only when performance happens outside of a traditional theatre space. This is because “its excesses are more directly shaped by the cultural pathologies that threaten radicalism in theatre” (16). Kershaw’s argument prompts an interrogation of why performance should take place in the theatre. Is it so that we can protect it from a potentially disruptive public? Is it because we need

the refuge of a separate, sacred place? Some would argue that the technological and audio-visual capabilities of current theatres aid in the spectacle of performance. However, these are all residual symptoms of what Kershaw calls the “theatre estate” (32), and performances beyond it “re-vision the creative process itself” (23). The aggressive security guards in City Hall certainly prompted me to question the risk of taking theatre out of traditional performance spaces, especially theatre with a complex and controversial subject matter. However, I believe the play’s exposure in a public place is essential to its subject. Differ/End is about space—space to live, space to control, space to speak and act. The conflict between the performers and security guards at City Hall was also bound up in space. Who was encroaching on whose space? Who has ownership of City Hall? The security guards’ increasingly disruptive behaviour was an obvious response to our request that they quiet down (in fact, I was the one who asked them), and they had the power to effectively ruin the final scene. This disturbed and angered the audience, but positionality prevented anyone from approaching the security guards after the show. They were the ones wearing the uniforms, standing together—they were the ones who had been *trained* to exert power.

The situation is compounded by fact that the final scene is an exceptionally uncomfortable one. During a Q&A session at a later performance, we discussed the issue of whether or not the audience should stand up for the performer who is forced to remove her clothing. Although many in the audience felt they wanted to, none of them did. I call such a performative occasion excessive because, while watching the scene through the disruption of the security guards, the audience was paralyzed—they were experiencing an excess of power from both within and outside of the play. Even if none of the audience members felt this paralysis and discomfort as strongly as I did, I still believe it was an important occasion. The audience had

been ushered in as “spect-actors” at other points in the play—but at this crucial moment the fourth wall was still firmly in place. “The Haldimand History Game” challenged audience members to be present with their own discomfort; it raised questions regarding the imaginary divide between performers and spectators, and it disrupted conventional theatre practice. If a play intends to “[attack] the injustices produced by ... exploitation in modern democracies” but remains in a theatre, how can those involved make any legitimate claim against “succumbing to what they attack” (Kershaw 54)? It was essential to Differ/End’s political position that it be held outside of a conventional theatre space. The performance of Differ/End radicalized the space of City Hall; as one audience member noted, “[the space] makes contact with the ideas that are spoken of ... the building tells me a lot more about this community” (Q&A). The performative excess that occurred when Differ/End moved to Kitchener City Hall prompts questions of what such a structure actually represents, who is allowed to speak in it, and in what ways; such an occasion exposes the place of performance and those involved in it as critically bound up in the creation of its meaning.

Conclusion: Exposing the Process

An audience member at a public rehearsal for the June remount noted that the transition between the documentary and self-reflexive segments was “jarring”—she explained that she was used to theatre being an imaginary space, and that the play kept throwing her back and forth between imagination and reality; this disturbed her (Q&A). Houston discussed with her the purpose of such a style, and the play’s effort to present the journey that the class took from ignorance to (at least partial) enlightenment. Still, it was hard for her to stomach, and I would argue that her concern is integral to the piece. Differ/End’s scholastic framework includes interrogating a current community issue, finding the facts, and conducting dramaturgy by using

O'Donnell's principles of social acupuncture. But as Houston asserts in our interview, "I never do a theory course, or I never do a scholastic course, without making it applied to a performance in some way. I don't ever believe in separating those things in theatre research ever".

Differ/End is an embodiment of praxis, and bears out the complexities of negotiating between scholarship and activism. Because its creators chose to move beyond the space of the classroom and even the theatre, they have given their audiences access to alternative ways of knowing and witnessing; this suspends the play between "a critique of what is and a display of what is possible" (Martin 23). For these reasons, Differ/End will always be about process—always incomplete and ephemeral. From the beginning it has been about trying to bring two seemingly distant forces together: intellect and art, theory and practice, text and the body, protest and peace. Houston worried from the outset that the production would become "too earnest", so the rehearsal process started out with dancing and game playing. Indeed, it started by trying to connect a visceral physical score with an information-heavy text, and both of these aspects of the performance were fraught with the problem of trying to "make a play that speaks authoritatively without being exhaustive" (Q&A).

Differ/End is a text-heavy piece, and often relays long and detailed reports by the students. The challenge for the piece was to create a physical score that did not upstage the text, but rather underlined the themes that make up the heart of the conflict—mapping, protest, opposing forces, land, authority, and negotiation. A student in the class came up with what she calls The Human Map. Rather than mapping geography, The Human Map traces bodies, hands, feet, and uses them as landmarks to represent a community. Throughout the performance, maps are made in chalk on the floor, creating images where there were none before, and putting everyone in the cast to work on the creation of the space. These chalked images and maps are

different in each performance. Differ/End's maps are imperfect, unfixed and fleeting. At one point, each of the students individually relay different parts of an interview with a Six Nations activist while the rest of the cast listens and works, drawing on the floor and laying down to have their bodies traced by others. I would argue that these moments embody an idea of praxis that is centrally rooted in the project of Differ/End. The students are never inactive—they are always at work, speaking and educating through dialogue, or communicating visually and physically through the creation of images.



There was a desire on the part of Houston and the cast to manifest their own process of approaching, and the overwhelming feelings that followed researching the issue. When I ask him about the numerous stories of researchers getting lost on their way back from Caledonia to K-W, Houston cites the overwhelming emotions that hit them driving home, making it difficult to concentrate:

when you've taken in all that...it's kind of shocking because there's a huge feeling of "I can't believe that this has happened to you" and ... there's this kind

of shame about that, and then there's a kind of embarrassment around the fact that you didn't know that, no one's ever told you that.

This affective experience is relived in the performance space each night, as audience and cast assemble to confront their varying familiarity with the land-claim dispute. The piece itself is a manifestation of overwhelming affect; at any one moment there is a flood of textual information, along with images and words projected onto the screens at the front of the performance space, and students creating images with their bodies, or drawing maps in chalk. Differ/End exposes its own process of creation by overwhelming its audience. As a witness, I was at first agitated by this performative tactic, but I eventually realized that it was important to simply take in what I could; I would not retain everything, but how could I expect to in only ninety minutes? This is what makes coming back to the performance again and again so exciting; something new will always be gained by watching.

Differ/End's performers are vital to its meaning and efficacy. They are constantly negotiating between their identities as students, actors, and activists. As students, they witness and document the issue; as actors, they dramatize and aestheticize it; and as activists, they pull their creation out of the theatre and into the public sphere, imploring their audience to participate. Such negotiations permit a dissembling the master narratives Lyotard warns against, because positionality has its limits—the performers find themselves alternately enfranchised and disenfranchised depending on context. As Differ/End's physical score manifests, these negotiations are taxing work, demanding constant attention and reflection.

The land-claim dispute in Caledonia remains unresolved; this means Differ/End's work is not finished. There is a responsibility on the part of both the creators and participants of the piece to continue interrogating themselves and those around them. Both my paper and the piece itself

run the risk of failure and injustice, primarily because our positions give us the privilege to walk away if we so choose; those fighting for their land do not have such privilege. Through continued education and action, we must keep ourselves in check and remember our own culpability. Although Differ/End is about much more than Caledonia, it remains critically rooted to the situation there. The student-actor-activists, who are fundamental to Differ/End's meaning, must push forward with their work while continuing to reflect on their positionalities. If Differ/End is to carry on, it must do so in solidarity with those directly affected by the issue.

As I attempt to do justice to Differ/End, to document it in a way that relays its incredible originality and importance as a theatre piece, I find myself overwhelmed. I am running out of time, I have not interviewed enough of the people involved, and I still have many more questions. I worry that the play is not perfect, that though it tries to work in solidarity with Six Nations, it does not do enough. I still worry the play will not make it to Six Nations or to Caledonia. I worry that my own writing does not effectively capture the essence of the play and that it is all too enormous to try and explain succinctly. But I continue to write because I need to document the occasion of Differ/End, however failingly. The last thing I want to do is nail Differ/End down, because its momentum is what makes it compelling; before I turn around, everything will have changed again. As the situation in Caledonia and along the Haldimand Tract shifts, so will the play, and so will those who participate in it. In every conversation I have with Lisa O'Connell about dramaturgy and Differ/End, she reiterates that it is about process, and will remain unfinished for a long time to come. In a pervasively product-driven society, this is perhaps Differ/End's most important political manifestation. Randy Martin captures what so compels me about this piece when he writes, "When political theatre takes these myriad associations as its materials, when it makes legible its dependencies, its limitations, its

fabulations, and excesses, it finds itself an ensemble amidst so many others bearing heavily on still more to come” (31).

¹ Although Differ/End does not explicitly intend a certain audience, the decision to keep it in K-W has been a conscious one; the play's principle aim is to educate members of its own community on an issue that is becoming increasingly close to home—as Six Nations protests have increased in Brantford. Members of the Six Nations and Caledonian communities did attend the February performances; however, as I learned from the audience surveys I conducted, people at the June remount were largely non-native K-W residents.

² However, Houston and Gil Garratt are currently in talks with members of Six Nations to bring the play to the Reserve in the fall. Houston tells me, “It could be a benefit to the Haudenosaunee in the sense that we’re showing them that there are people outside of their community who acknowledge that the history has not been told ... and that we owe them an apology, and then we owe them a plan” (Houston “Interview” 6/18/08).

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Photography Credits

1. Differ/End's cast greets the audience—by Robyn Letson (10 June 2008)
2. Information on Brantford and alternative media—by Robyn Letson (12 June 2008)
3. “The Baconator”—by Andy Houston (June 2008)
4. Coffee cup with soil from Douglas Creek Estates, atop one version of The Human Map—
by Robyn Letson (10 June 2008)
5. “Hi. We’re from the University of Waterloo”—by Robyn Letson (7 June 2008)
6. The audience participates in “Musical Land Claim”—by Robyn Letson (10 June 2008)
7. “The Haldimand History Game”—by Robyn Letson (12 June 2008)
8. Drawing “The Human Map”—by Robyn Letson (10 June 2008)