

Statement by the Western Confederacy

Message to commissioners of the United States from the Western Indian Confederacy, at a general council meeting held in northwestern Ohio after a series of failed negotiations between the Confederacy and the United States, August 13, 1793.

Calloway, Colin G. First Peoples: A Documentary Survey of American Indian History. 4th ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2012, p. 259.

Brothers,

We have received your speech dated the 31st of last month, and it has been interpreted to all the different nations....

...[A]fter reciting the periods at which you say treaties were held at Fort Stanwix, Fort McIntosh, and Miami, all which treaties, according to your own acknowledgement, were for the sole purpose of making peace; you then say, "Brothers, the Commissioners who conducted these treaties in behalf of the United States...supposing them satisfactory to the nations treated with, proceeded to dispose of the lands thereby ceded."

This is telling us plainly what we always understood to be the case, and it agrees with the declarations of those few who attended these treaties, viz. that they went to meet your Commissioners to make peace, but, through fear, were obliged to sign any paper that was laid before them; and it has since appeared, that deeds of cession were signed by them, instead of treaties of peace....

...[Y]our said Commissioner, in the beginning of the year 1789, after having been informed by the general council of the preceding fall, that no bargain or sale of any part of these Indian lands would be considered as valid or binding, unless agreed to by a general council, nevertheless persisted in collecting a few chiefs of two or three nations only, and with them held a treaty for the cession of an immense country, in which they were no more interested than a branch of the general confederacy, and who were in no manner authorized to make any grant or cession whatever....

You say "...the United States would give such a large sum in money or goods as was never given at any one time for any quantity of Indian lands since the white people first set their feet on this island. And because those lands did every year furnish you with skins and furs, with which you bought clothing and other necessaries, the United States will now furnish the constant supplies...."

Brothers,

Money, to us, is of no value, and to most of us unknown; and as no consideration whatever can induce us to sell our lands, on which we get sustenance for our women and children, we hope we may be allowed to point out a mode by which your settlers may be easily removed, and peace thereby obtained....

Brothers,

You have talked to us about concessions. It appears strange that you should expect any from us, who have only been defending our just rights against your invasions. We want peace. Restore to us our country, and we shall be enemies no longer.

Brothers,

You make one concession to us by offering to us your money, and another by having agreed to do us justice, after having long and injuriously withheld it; we mean in the acknowledgement you have now made that the king of England never did, nor ever had a right to give you our country by the treaty of peace. And you want to make this act of common justice a great part of your concession, and seem to expect that because you have at last acknowledged our independence, we should for such a favor surrender to you our country....

Brothers,

We never made any agreement with the king, nor with any other nation, that we would give to either the exclu-

Name: _____

sive right to purchase our lands, and we declare to you that we consider ourselves free to make any bargain or cession of lands whenever and to whomsoever we please. If the white people, as you say, made a treaty that none of them but the king should purchase of us, and he has given that right to the United States, it is an affair which concerns you and him, and not us. We have never parted with such a power....

We desire you to consider, brothers, that our only demand is the peaceable possession of a small part of our once great country. Look back and view the lands from whence we have been driven to this spot. We can retreat no farther....

Brothers,

We shall be persuaded that you mean to do us justice, if you agree that the Ohio shall remain the boundary line between us. If you will not consent thereto, our meeting will be altogether unnecessary. This is the great point, which we hoped would have been explained before you left your homes; as our message last fall was principally directed to obtain that information.

Done in general council at the foot of the Miami Rapids, the 13th day of August, 1793.

[Signatures of representatives from the Wyandots, Seven Nations of Canada, Delawares, Shawanese, Miamis, Ottawas, Chippeways, Senecas of the Glaise, Potawatamies, Connoys, Munsees, Nantikokes, Mohegans, Messasaguas, Creeks, and Cherokees]