

# Aboriginal Contributions to the War of 1812

## Western Operation



During the War of 1812, many battles took place in the Western Great Lakes region. There, British and American forces fought to win strategic lands and to control important transportation routes.

In the opening battles of the war, First Nations warriors and Métis fighters were largely responsible for British victories. In July 1812, more than 300 Odawa, Ojibwa and Dakota warriors, along with British troops and Métis fighters from the Voyageurs Corps, captured the American post at Michilimackinac. Britain held this post for the remainder of the war, which allowed First Nations warriors, such as the Dakota, to harass and attack American troops as far west as Fort Dearborn (Chicago).

In August 1812, General Brock and Shawnee War Chief Tecumseh, with 700 regular troops and militiamen and 700 First Nations warriors, captured Fort Detroit and more than 2,500 American troops. First Nations warriors had a reputation as ferocious fighters, which played a large role in the victories over American commanders. Such victories rallied even greater numbers of First Nations warriors to side with the British.

Despite these early victories, by 1813, pressure by the Americans caused the British to retreat towards Niagara. The final battle at Moraviantown (Battle of the Thames), in October 1813, was a bitter struggle. Under the leadership of Tecumseh, 500 First Nation warriors, including Chief Oshawana (John Naudee) from Walpole Island, put up a long and bitter resistance before being defeated by the vastly superior American forces. The unity of Western First Nations was dealt a tremendous blow when Tecumseh was killed while attempting to protect retreating British troops.

2) Image: Shawnee War Chief Tecumseh

Sault Ste. Marie

Fort Mackinac



5) Battle of Queenston Heights

Fort Dearborn (Chicago)

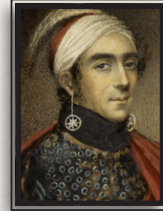


6) Voyageur Corps

### Legend

- Present-day city locations
- ★ Battle locations

## Niagara Operation



With numerous forts and strongholds on both sides of the Niagara River, this region was the most contested area of the War of 1812. Nearly a dozen different battles were fought on both American and British territories, from Niagara to York (present day Toronto).

Between 1812 and 1814, First Nations warriors from the Great Lakes region and the St. Lawrence Valley fought side-by-side with British troops and Canadian militiamen to push back the American invaders. During these battles, First Nations leaders such as John Brant and John Norton commanded troops, while First Nations warriors took part in raids against American forces and acted as scouts and guides across the region.

In the early battles of 1812, Britain's military alliances with First Nations allowed its forces to record several important victories over a much larger American army. In October, Six Nations and Delaware warriors helped hold off invading American troops, despite the death of General Brock at the Battle of Queenston Heights. The toll was often high for the First Nations who fought during the war. Many warriors paid with their lives.

In 1813, well-prepared American troops were able to capture Fort George, while another force of 1,700 Americans sailed on to York, capturing this strategic town despite the presence of 800 British troops, militiamen and First Nations warriors. In June 1813, an American force of 500 men was sent to capture a British raiding unit made up of 50 British soldiers and 400 First Nation warriors. However, in the ensuing battle at Beaver Dams, First Nations warriors under the command of Six Nations War Chief John Norton – mostly from Six Nations, Kahnawake, Akwesasne and Kanesatake – captured the American troops in a daring ambush. Along with other British victories in 1813, this battle allowed Britain to regain control over much of Niagara.

As the War of 1812 entered its final and bloodiest year, First Nations warriors saw action throughout the region during the Battles of Fort Chippawa and Lundy's Lane in July 1814 and during the extended siege of Fort Erie in the fall of 1814.

3) Image: Major John Norton, Teyonihokarawen, Mohawk Chief



7) Chief Oshawana (John Naudee)



8) Death of Tecumseh

## St. Lawrence Operation



As battles raged in the Great Lakes region, American troops pushed northwards to capture Montreal so they could prevent British reinforcements from reaching Niagara. After a series of naval battles on Lake Champlain, two separate American units moved towards Montreal in the fall of 1813.

In late October, Mohawk, Huron and Abenaki warriors and the French-Canadian Voltigeurs, all under the command of Charles-Michel d'Irumberry de Salaberry, repelled the first invading army of 3,000 American soldiers at Châteauguay. The second unit of American troops was marching down the St. Lawrence at the same time, but was repeatedly harassed and delayed by a group of Mohawk and Algonquin warriors and Voltigeurs. On November 11, 1813, British troops met up with the second American unit at Crysler's Farm. After a bloody battle, the combined forces of British troops, First Nations warriors and militiamen forced the Americans to retreat and abandon their invasion of Montreal.

4) Image: John Brant, Ahyonwaigis, Chief of the Six Nations



1) Six Nations veterans

Montréal

Châteauguay

Crysler's Farm

York

Fort Detroit

Thames (Moraviantown)

Fort George  
Stoney Creek  
Beaver Dams  
Lundy's Lane  
Fort Erie  
Fort Niagara  
Queenston Heights  
Chippawa



9) Brock meeting Tecumseh

## Major Battles

### 1812

- June 18 – Declaration of War
- July 17 – Fort Mackinac
- August 15 – Fort Dearborn (Chicago)
- August 16 – Fort Detroit
- September 3-6 – Western Raids
- October 13 – Queenston Heights

### 1813

- January 22 – Frenchtown
- April 27 – York (Toronto)
- April 28 – May 9 – Fort Meigs
- May 25-27 – Fort George (Niagara)
- June 6 – Stoney Creek
- June 24 – Beaver Dams
- August 2 – Fort Stephenson (Ohio)
- October 5 – Thames (Moraviantown)
- October 26 – Châteauguay
- November 11 – Crysler's Farm
- December 19 – Fort Niagara

### 1814

- March 4 – Longwoods
- July 3 – Fort Erie
- July 5 – Chippawa
- July 17-20 – Prairie du Chien
- July 25 – Lundy's Lane
- August 4-5 – Michilimackinac
- August 15 – Fort Erie
- November 5 – Niagara Peninsula
- December 24 – Treaty of Ghent



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