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The War of 1812: The End of an Uncommon Alliance

Ryan Barrett

Buffalo State College, BARRRS42@mail.buffalostate.edu

Advisor

Andrew D. Nicholls, Ph.D., Professor of History

First Reader

Andrew D. Nicholls, Ph.D., Professor of History

Second Reader

Misty D. Rodeheaver, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of History

Third Reader

York A. Norman, Associate Professor of History

Department Chair

Andrew D. Nicholls, Ph.D., Professor of History

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State University of New York
College at Buffalo
Department of History

The War of 1812: The End of an Uncommon Alliance

A Thesis in
History

By

Ryan Barrett

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Approved by:

Andrew D. Nicholls, Ph.D.
Chair and Professor of History and Social Studies
Thesis Adviser

Kevin Railey, Ph.D.
Associate Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

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Abstract

The War of 1812: The End of an Uncommon Alliance

The War of 1812 was a struggle between three groups: Americans, British, and Native Americans. The British and the Native Americans were brought together in their necessity to fight the Americans. The alliance began during the French and Indian War while defeating the French. Throughout the rest of the eighteenth century and early nineteenth century the British and Natives would support each other in a mutually beneficial alliance. The end of the War of 1812 would also be the end of the once great alliance.

Introduction

Native Americans have played a major role in the way the North American continent was formed. Living for years as they pleased, their world began to change as Europeans began to move in. They tried to carry on with their traditional way of life, but it was becoming increasingly difficult. They would be forced to adapt and partner with these newcomers to survive. The British-Native American alliance was formed during the eighteenth century and remained strong until the Treaty of Ghent, the treaty that ended the War of 1812. It played a major role in shaping the way North America looks today.

The Native Americans would adapt to the changing world by trading. The lucrative fur trade was a major economic driving force in North America. The French and British would compete for Native American support during the French and Indian War. The Native-British Alliance was a mutually beneficial alliance that would be formed during the mid-eighteenth century, but would not survive the War of 1812. Historical evidence points to the British needing Native support to protect Canada, while the Native Americans needed Britain to furnish weapons and food. The alliance worked well during the French and Indian War and the Revolutionary War, but crumbled with the Treaty of Ghent and the end of the War of 1812.

Chapter one looks back through the European-Indian Alliances that shows how the Native Americans had been treated in North America. The French and Indian War was one of the first major European conflicts that directly impacted the Native Americans. Current historiography focuses much of their effort on the British or American side of the War of 1812. Comparatively a much smaller amount of work has gone into Native American discussion. Author Richard White discusses the intricate system of gift-giving that was established during this early period of Native-European interaction. He contends that this system laid the

groundwork for future relations between Native Americans settlers in North America. Other authors, such as Walter Borneman and William Fowler Jr. give details about the how the specific tribes decided to side with France or Britain. Some sided with France and others with Britain, but it is certain that the relationship with the Native Americans and the British changed following this conflict.¹

The British were now the premier power in North America, but the Native Americans did not want a ruler. The British refusal to treat the Native Americans in the same manner as the French caused problems. Pontiac's Rebellion broke out and the British realized the full strength of the Native Americans. By passing the Proclamation of 1763 the British attempted to pacify the Native Americans, but it represented a push in the buffer state/reservation direction for the Native Americans. They also reinstated the system of gift-giving and the alliance between the two was strengthened again.²

The British were locked in another struggle in the later part of the eighteenth century with the American colonies. The British needed the Native Americans again to help stem the tide of the war. Historian Alan Taylor goes in depth about the British-Native relationship during this time. Although the independence of the United States was recognized, the British left themselves in a position to fight another day. Native American rights were not pushed by the British in the war with France or the United States, they continued their system of gift-giving on American soil. They also retained key forts on American soil in order to hold influence with the local tribes.³

¹ Walter Borneman, *The French and Indian War: Deciding the Fate of North America* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2006).

² Richard White. *Pontiac's War: It's Causes, Course, and Consequence*. (New York: Routledge, 2007).

³ Alan Taylor. *The Divided Ground: Indians, Settlers, and the Northern Borderlands of the American Revolution* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2006).

Without British military support, the Native Americans suffered after the United States gained independence. John Sugden's biography on Tecumseh deals with the Native American plight during this time period and how the young warrior sought to bolster the chances of the Native Americans regaining their land. Sugden describes the journey of Tecumseh and his brother, the Prophet, as they formed the largest Native American alliance ever seen. The Native-British alliance was a necessity in the eyes of Tecumseh because it represented a possible last chance to stave off American encroachment.⁴

The second chapter of the thesis deals with the impact of the Native Americans during the War of 1812. Again, Alan Taylor goes on to describe in detail the many positive contributions that the Native Americans make during conflict. The Native Americans provided large numbers of warriors to protect Canada. They also fought specific engagements on their own against the Americans and most importantly they provided a psychological advantage in the war. Taylor also goes on to describe some of the negative impacts the Native Americans had and how it affected the British-Native alliance. Often times they would not listen to commanding British officers and actually went against what was asked of them. The negative actions fueled anti-British American propaganda and helped the American war effort. Chapter Two also deals with Tecumseh and Isaac Brock. James Laxer looks in depth at their relationship and how similar the two were. The deaths of these two individuals would severely strain the alliance and have consequences during the peace process.⁵

Finally, the third chapter looks at the end of the British-Native alliance. Mark Zuehlke provides in-depth detail about the negotiations that took place at Ghent. The peace talks open with the British delegation pushing for a Native American state, but really only pushing this

⁴ John Sugden. *Tecumseh: A Life* (New York: Henry Holt, 1997).

⁵ James Laxer. *Tecumseh and Brock: The War of 1812* (Toronto: House of Anansi Press Inc., 2012).

agenda to provide a buffer zone between British Canada and the United States. The Native Americans were again left out of the peace treaty and the alliance with Britain is effectively over. The conclusion offers a brief analysis of how the Native Americans were treated after the Treaty of Ghent.⁶

With the British-Native Americans alliance not a necessity anymore, the Native Americans were pushed onto reservations. In Canada and the United States the ability to recover their homelands was now gone. The United States and Britain would continue their push westward to the Pacific Ocean with little regard for the Native Americans in their path. The War of 1812 was the last chance for the Native Americans to establish their lands and stem the tide of westward expansion. They needed help though and world events would force Great Britain to abandon her allies at the negotiating table.

⁶ Mark Zuehlke. *For Honour's Sake: The War of 1812 and the Brokering of an Uneasy Peace* (Toronto: Vintage Canada: 2006).

Chapter 1 – Origins of Cooperation

The loss of identity for the Native Americans began with Europeans coming across the Atlantic Ocean. Spanish conquistadors destroyed the Native American way of life in Central and South America, while the British and the French were the major European powers who disrupted Native American activities in North America. By the early eighteenth century, virtually all of the Native Americans in North America were caught in the web of relationships created by the French, British, and Spanish penetrations of the continent. The wars between the European powers in which battles occurred in North America drew the Native Americans into alliances with the French, the British, or the Spanish, and against other Native Americans who were aligned with opposing European powers. Native Americans fought one another for territory, sometimes carrying on traditional hostilities but often compelled to migrate—and therefore clash – by the encroachment of settlers and the waxing and waning of European imperial projects.⁷ The French and Indian War would be the first major conflict in which the Native Americans were courted by the European powers.

The British colonies were well-entrenched along the eastern seaboard and most of the Native tribes had already been removed or exterminated from areas east of the Appalachian Mountains. The ones that remained persisted in compact enclaves surrounded by colonial towns. They survived partially by assimilating to colonial culture, working for wages and accepting Christianity.⁸ The area west of these mountains was quite different. A vast wilderness only explored and settled by rugged frontier families or traders was still dominated by powerful Native American tribes. The Iroquois in New York, the Delaware in the Ohio Valley, the

⁷ James Laxer, *Tecumseh and Brock: The War of 1812* (Toronto: House of Anansi Press Inc., 2012), 5.

⁸ David McClure and Elijah Parish, *Memoirs of the Rev. Eleazar Wheelock* (New York: Arno Press, 1972), 23.

Shawnee in Kentucky, the Miami in Indiana, the Creek in Georgia, the Ottawa in Upper Canada, and the Potawatomi in Michigan were some of the more formidable tribes in the interior of the continent and it was still their home. The tribes fought against each other before the Europeans arrived, but now had to decide whether to align with the French or British.

The French established trading posts at Fort Saint Joseph in 1691, Fort Ponchartrain along the Detroit River in 1701, and Fort Michilimackinac in 1715. These forts, constructed in the Great Lakes region, established contact with the powerful Ottawa, Potawatomie, Chippewa, and Wyandot nations. As more and more Native Americans relocated to the Ohio Country after 1720 (many were pushed out by the powerful Iroquois Confederacy), the French-Canadians cast their eyes toward the possibility of the lucrative trade that might be fostered there.⁹ Fort Niagara was also constructed and since the Iroquois Confederacy's presence worked to block British occupation, the French supported their claim to the land. While generally agreeable to advantageous trading relations, most Native Americans came to resist European encroachments that had an air of permanency. Passing trappers in canoes were one thing, but log cabins and planted fields were another. The French wanted to dominate the fur trade and the money that came along with it. The problem was English traders often captured large amounts of French fur and sent them east to Albany. The powerful Iroquois confederacy tolerated the British, but regarded them as only a guest. The strength of the confederacy was aimed at resisting European encroachment.

The French did not rely solely on trade to maintain strong relationships with the Native Americans. Gifts became an important part of Native American society. Such offerings were

⁹ David Dixon, *Never Come to Peace Again: Pontiac's Uprising and the Fate of the British Empire in North America* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006), 11-12.

presented to the Natives on a regular basis. The British would learn from their French counterparts about the importance of gift-giving in the years leading up to the War of 1812. Gift-giving was an essential part of Native American culture because it was an indication of a chief's wealth and power. The more a chief received, the more he could give his followers, reflecting the esteem in which he was held.¹⁰ The system was expensive but necessary for consolidating that mutually beneficial relationship historian Richard White has called the "middle ground."¹¹ The "middle ground" theory was both a place and a style of cultural interaction. The location was the region around the Great Lakes, especially the area between Lake Erie and the Ohio River.¹² This middle ground was the exact area Tecumseh would be fighting for during the War of 1812. In its initial stages it was a joint creation of French officials and traders and a host of Great Lakes native peoples who had been driven from their homes by mid-seventeenth-century wars with the Iroquois.¹³ Native Americans tolerated the French based on a fur trade that brought the tribes goods such as blankets, weapons, rum, and food. The British, however, had not mastered the art of giving gifts to the Native Americans and would understand why it was so important immediately following the French and Indian War.

Hostilities between the French and British began to increase as the British gradually expanded westward. The British saw the expansion as both profitable and legal. By Article 15 of the Treaty of Utrecht, signed in 1713, France and Britain had agreed that the powerful Iroquois tribe would be subjects of the British Crown. Since the Iroquois claimed the Ohio

¹⁰ Richard Middleton, *Pontiac's War: It's Causes, Course, and Consequences* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 4.

¹¹ Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 6.

¹² White, *The Middle Ground*, x.

¹³ Daniel K. Richter and James H. Merrell, eds., *Beyond the Covenant Chain: The Iroquois and Their Neighbors in Indian North America, 1600-1800* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1987), 715.

Valley, the British, as their sovereign, took it to be theirs as well.¹⁴ The French rejected this claim and asserted that sovereignty over a mobile people such as the Iroquois could only be extended to persons, not to the lands through which they traveled. The friction present between the European powers in North America was becoming apparent.

During the French and Indian War, the British were able to sway the Native Americans to join their side in two ways. The first way was to offer more gifts than the French. The second way was promising the Native Americans their land would remain theirs. The Treaty of Easton, signed in 1758, specified that the Native American nations would not fight on the side of the French against the British in the current war. In return, Pennsylvania returned large blocks of land which the Iroquois had ceded a few years before. The British colonial governors promised to recognize Iroquois and other tribes' rights to their hunting grounds in the Ohio River valley and they promised to refrain from establishing colonial settlements west of the Allegheny Mountains after the conclusion of the war. This clause of the treaty contributed to the Britain's subsequent Proclamation of 1763, by which it attempted to reserve territory west of the Appalachians for Native Americans and prohibit European-American advancement into the area.¹⁵

English colonists were also numerically superior to their French counterparts. The French Crown operated tight controls on emigration to its overseas colonies in North America. French peasants could only emigrate with the permission of their landlords, while the harsh climate in France's North American colony meant few nobles were interested in organizing such feudal

¹⁴ William Fowler Jr., *Empires at War: The French and Indian War and the Struggle for North America, 1754-1763* (New York: Walker Publishing Company, 2005), 12.

¹⁵ Burton Kummerow, "Treaty of Easton gives sides new hope for peace", *THE TRIBUNE-REVIEW*, 19 Oct. 2008, accessed 16 May 2013.

estates.¹⁶ Most occupants in France's holdings were solitary farmers or fur traders. In either case they did not put pressure on the Native Americans living near them or the land they used. The lack of settlers was a key point made by a French officer in 1753. He told the Native Americans on the upper Ohio, "They [the English] plant all your country and drive you back so that in a little time you will have no land. It is not so with us; though we build trading houses on your land, we do not plant it."¹⁷ The French were trying to work with the Native Americans, not take from them.

It is now easier to see how the Native Americans aligned themselves during the French and Indian War. The French interacted with the Native Americans to gain their trade, their souls, their hand in marriage, or their comradeship in arms, but the British engaged with the Native Americans overwhelmingly with the intention of gaining their lands. They created farms, villages, and cities.¹⁸ Many of the Great Lakes tribes sided with the French because of their history of gift-giving and lack of pressure on the land, but the Iroquois and others aligned with the British because of the lucrative fur trade centered in Albany and promises to give back land previously ceded (Treaty of Easton). The Native Americans played a major role in the French and Indian War, hence the name, but a lengthy military undertaking was not necessary for this conflict because the outcome and how the Native Americans were dealt with was more important.

The British were able to win the French and Indian War. Native Americans did not go to war to preserve an old custom or to protest an economic policy: they strove to prevent their

¹⁶ Middleton, *Pontiac's War*, 5.

¹⁷ Michael A. McConnell, "Charles-Michel Mouet de Landlade: Warrior, Soldier, and Intercultural 'Window' on the Sixty Years War for the Great Lakes." In David Curtis Skaggs and Larry L. Nelson, eds., *The Sixty Years War for the Great Lakes, 1754-1814* (East Lansing, Michigan State University Press, 2001).

¹⁸ Gregory Evans Dowd, *War Under Heaven: Pontiac, the Indian Nations & the British Empire* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 34.

social and political degradation.¹⁹ Native Americans were concerned about the economic situation they found themselves in after the war, but more importantly they did not want to be considered a subjugated people in their own lands. When Indians reluctantly allowed the British to occupy abandoned French posts during the war, they did not have in mind grateful subordination to an empire of trade and troops. They hoped that the British would simply replace the French in the posts, dispense gifts, and accept the service of warriors going out against mutual enemies.²⁰ The British were not the French and with the signing of the Treaty of Paris everything these tribes had known changed.

As important as the Treaty of Paris was to restoring world order, another document emerged from the year 1763 that was arguably to have an even greater impact on the future of the British Empire, particularly in North America. In July 1763, instructions were sent to all colonial governors in North America forbidding settlements west of the Appalachian Mountains.²¹ Under penalty of dismissal, the governors were further restrained from making any grants of such lands. Three months later, these instructions were incorporated into what came to be called the Proclamation of 1763. In the end, the lasting contribution of the Proclamation of 1763 was that it proved that in Great Britain's rush to bring order to its newly won empire, it had left one thorny matter unresolved, namely the Native American question.

The Proclamation of 1763 was calculated to reduce friction with Native Americans in those territories recently won from France. In reality, however, it failed to appease the Native

¹⁹ Dowd, *War Under Heaven*, 76.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 73.

²¹ Walter Borneman, *The French and Indian War: Deciding the Fate of North America* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2006), 280.

Americans and also served to frustrate westward-looking colonists.²² All land from the crest of the Appalachian Mountains on the east, and the Mississippi River on the west—including the Great Lakes and Ohio River valley—was designated a vast Native reserve.²³ British forts would be maintained in this territory and transient traders were allowed, but permanent settlement was prohibited. Any British subjects living west of the Appalachians were to remove themselves from such settlements.

Before news of the proclamation even reached the Ohio River country, a number of Native American nations had taken matters into their own hands to oust the new British landlords. Many Native Americans wondered what had happened to the Treaty of Easton signed five years earlier. Not only were the British fortifying old French posts, they were also building new ones. Most alarming was the permanent community rapidly rising in the shadow of Fort Pitt.²⁴

In the nineteenth century, historian Francis Parkman originally characterized the Native attacks in the summer of 1763 as the “conspiracy of Pontiac.” Pontiac’s Rebellion did not start with Pontiac, as is often assumed. Like Tecumseh, there was a spiritual aspect to the rebellion that often goes unnoticed. Pontiac’s role in the uprising is certain, but what is more certain is that a Delaware prophet, Neolin, had a vision that called on all Natives to reject their dependence on European-Americans. He preached a message of returning to ancestral ways of life. He spoke of eating only traditional foods, training boys with bows and arrows, and of quitting all commerce with white men. Even though he was a Delaware prophet his message was grounded in the

²² Lawrence Henry Gipson, *The British Empire Before the American Revolution, Vol. IX, The Triumphant Empire: New Responsibilities within the Enlarged Empire, 1763-1766* (New York: Knopf, 1956), 51-52.

²³ Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War: The Seven Years’ War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754-1766* (New York: Knopf, 2000), 566-68.

²⁴ Borneman, *The French and Indian War*, 281.

concept of Native American racial unity in resistance to the evils brought by whites.²⁵ He called on an avoidance of trade, a return to ritual warfare and diets, and the gradual abandonment of European-made goods.²⁶

As Gregory Dowd has stated, the Delaware prophet's call for unity against whites, grounded as it was in a vision of divinely sanctioned Indian racial identity, represented a radical departure from "the heritage of Indian diversity and of highly localized, familial, and ethnically oriented government."²⁷ The Native Americans had been fiercely independent people before this desperate call for unity. His message spread rapidly through the disheartened tribes of the Great Lakes region, but only parts of his message were heard. It was the beginning of a pan-Indian alliance based on the common Native American characteristics. Native Americans needed to resist European encroachment because they were Native American and their way of life was being trampled.

Pontiac latched onto this early prophetic message, but realized a number of important factors in the message would be impossible to live by. The Native Americans were at this point completely dependent upon the Europeans for survival. It was not a matter of like or dislike, rather a matter of existence. Natives received not only ammunition and guns from Europeans, but also food, blankets, mirrors, clothes, and iron pots. Most Native Americans now constructed Euro-American style log cabins to live in.²⁸ Trading with the Europeans had become a Native way of life and Pontiac realized completely shutting off this vital lifeline would have devastating effects on the Native population.

²⁵ Alfred Cave, *Prophets of the Great Spirit: Native American Revitalization Movements in Eastern North America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 39.

²⁶ Francis Parkman, *The Conspiracy of Pontiac and the Indian War after the Conquest of Canada* (New York: Dutton, 1908).

²⁷ Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance*, 2.

²⁸ Cave, *Prophets of the Great Spirit*, 40.

The Seneca tribe in the Iroquois Confederacy took Neolin's (a Delaware Prophet) message one step further and plotted the destruction of their British landlords. This was another split within the Iroquois Confederacy because the rest of the tribes remained friendly to the British, but the Senecas found willing allies further west among the other Great Lakes tribes. Even though the Native Americans presented a united front, there was still disunity among them.

British attitudes in dealing with the Native Americans contributed greatly to the unrest after the French and Indian War. Their attitude was far more arrogant and self-righteous than the more genial camaraderie of the French. The British felt it was their right to occupy Indian territory after the war. The real problem was Sir Jeffrey Amherst's decision to stop the long-established custom of gift-giving.²⁹ His policy of eliminating the presents was taken to the extreme after the French were defeated. At this point, the Native Americans had no other European power to trading partner. They had to deal with the British or face ruin. Against the advice of British Indian agents, Amherst insisted that all Indians trade for their merchandise on the basis of a published schedule of prices.³⁰

It was at this point that Pontiac rose to power at this point with the help of Neolin's message. The Native Americans were able to capture every British outpost west of the Appalachian Mountains except for Fort Niagara, Fort Pitt, and Fort Detroit. Pontiac led a siege of Detroit, but throughout the summer of 1763 the British garrison was able to hold out. Finally, as the fall season approached, many of the warriors that had participated in the siege slipped away for the hunting season and to tend to their families. British general Henry Bouquet

²⁹ Wilbur Jacobs, *Wilderness Politics and Indian Gifts: The Northern Colonial Frontier, 1748-1763* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 33.

³⁰ Wilbur Jacobs, "Was the Pontiac Uprising a Conspiracy?" *Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 59, No. 1 (January 1959), 30-34.

quipped, “We have visibly brought upon us this Indian war by being too saving of a few presents to the savages which properly distributed would certainly have prevented it.”³¹

Though Pontiac and his allies won many battles, the war ultimately ended in a stalemate with the British, who were forced to alter their policies and to establish a relationship with the native peoples of the region similar to the one that had existed with the French. The “middle ground” was restored and peaceful relations returned to the British-Indian alliance. In October 1763, the British government issued the Royal Proclamation, which recognized a vast “Indian Reserve” that stretched from the Appalachians to the Mississippi River and from the Floridas to Canada. The British were already moving toward the policies spelled out in the proclamation, but the armed struggle convinced them that white settlers and Native Americans must be kept apart and that the settlers should not be permitted to encroach on Native lands.³² The problem was the settlers would not be bound to this line and a decade later would be fighting against the British for their own independence.

The Native Americans faced a predicament when hostilities broke out between the young United States and the preeminent world power Great Britain. The Natives were again trapped between two white worlds. Both the British and the colonies recognized the military potential of the thousands of armed warriors living on the frontiers, and from 1775, as they slid into war, both sides competed for Native support.³³ The British made more of an effort to court the Native Americans with increased gift giving and had already fought a war with Native American help.

Both sides in the conflict recognized Native warriors as a force to be reckoned with, and they had an interest in recruiting them to their cause or at least neutralizing them. The Iroquois

³¹ Howard Peckham, *Pontiac and the Indian Uprising* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 101.

³² Laxer, *Tecumseh and Brock*, 8.

³³ John Sugden, *Tecumseh: A Life* (New York: Henry Holt, 1997), 29.

Confederacy, referred to its commercial and strategic relationship with the English as the “Covenant Chain.” A portion of the Shawnees along the Ohio River felt neutrality was the best plan because it would not serve their interests to get involved in a white man’s war.³⁴ Many of the Shawnees, along with other tribes, eventually sided with the British. They could expect to receive arms and provisions from the British. The newly founded United States proved incapable of outfitting the Native Americans with weapons or provisions for their families. This in turn, led more neutral Indian nations to become antagonistic towards the Americans.

The Treaty of Paris did not quash native resistance to the seizure of their land. The war between the British and the Colonies exacerbated the political divisions among the Natives. Both sides in the conflict recognized Native warriors as a force to be reckoned with, and they had an interest in recruiting them to their cause or at least neutralizing them. The British drew the Iroquois leader Joseph Brant to their side. He led the Mohawk tribe against the Patriots in northern New York. The entire Iroquois confederacy joined the British side in 1777, but other Native Americans remained neutral.

The Shawnees were already forced out of the Kentucky territory into Ohio. The Kentucky militia launched raids into Shawnee settlements across the Ohio River. As a boy, Tecumseh was forced to move many times due to this military activity. The Shawnee remained a formidable force throughout the Revolutionary War. According to one estimate, over the course of the conflict, the Native Americans killed 860 men who had been trained as soldiers in Kentucky. The Iroquois waged a similar struggle throughout New York against an influx of white settlers.³⁵

³⁴ Sugden, *Tecumseh: A Life*, 30.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 4-5.

In 1783, the Treaty of Paris ended the Revolutionary War, but not the conflict with the Native Americans. The United States was recognized as an independent nation. By the treaty Britain transferred the sovereignty of most land south of the Great Lakes and east of the Mississippi to the new United States without the feeblest attempt to protect the rights of its yet to be defeated Indian allies who occupied much of the region. The American Congress moved quickly to take advantage of the situation. Before the end of the year it resolved to annex huge territories north of the Ohio and east of the Great Miami River on the grounds of conquest. Once seized, the land could be used to reward military veterans or sold to replenish the treasury of the desperate federal government.

Some tribes, like the Shawnee, found themselves in a familiar situation they had been in before. Just as the Treaty of Fort Stanwix (1768) took their hunting grounds in Kentucky, now the new republic planned to strip them of their remaining territory. Anglo-American occupants in North America had little regard for Native American rights.

Interestingly, even though on American soil, the British did not completely abandon their Native alliance. They held on to possession of strategic forts on American soil for years after the treaty was signed. The British were aware of Indian discontent after the Revolutionary War. They were frightened that Native American discontent would come back to hurt them much like Pontiac's rebellion. They postponed abandoning key posts such as Oswego, Niagara, Detroit, and Michilimackinac, even though they were on the American side of the new international boundary. Encouraged by the failure of the United States to live up to all of its obligations under the Treaty of Paris, Britain retained some of these posts for over a decade, and used them to disperse presents and supplies to the Natives. They also wanted to keep the lucrative fur trade

alive south of the Great Lakes.³⁶ This proved to the tribes that their King had not abandoned them. They were keeping the door open for a future use of the Indian alliance.

Britain was in a difficult situation. Some would say the British gave up during the Revolutionary War, leaving the Americans ill-prepared to fight another day. They knew the Natives were indispensable to the protection of the Crown's weak Canadian colonies, as well as valuable partners in the lucrative fur trade, and it was essential to maintain their vigor and goodwill. Conversely, Britain did not want to be dragged into a war between the Native Americans and the United States, or accused of inciting tribes against their American neighbors. So the British continued to supply the Native Americans with the usual provisions and advised the Natives to insist on their rights peacefully.³⁷

The Treaty of Paris directly impacted large groups of Native Americans. Iroquois leader Joseph Brant convinced the governor of Quebec to grant land for a Mohawk settlement of the Niagara River. In the fall of 1784, the Iroquois divided, with half of the people following Brant to the British side and half of the people remaining in New York.

Even though America had just received independence, the Treaty of Paris did not quell Native resistance to the seizure of their land. Brant returned to New York to provide leadership for Native Americans living in the newly formed United States. He believed that land negotiations between the Americans and individual tribes were illegitimate. The confederacy as a whole had to agree to any sales of land, because the lands of the Native Americans were a common holding, a holding that included the territory on which their settlements were established as well as their hunting grounds. In December 1786, Brant and the Shawnee chief Blue Jacket participated in the formation of an alliance of northwestern tribes – Iroquois, Hurons,

³⁶ Laxer, *Tecumseh and Brock*, 72-73.

³⁷ Sugden, *Tecumseh: A Life*, 42-43.

Delawares, Shawnees, Ottawas, Ojibwas, Potawatomis, Miamis, and the Wabash River tribes – whose delegates assembled in a council at the mouth of the Detroit River. The common goal of this alliance was to hold onto Native American lands as agreed to in the Treaty of Fort Stanwix in 1768. In a message they sent to the U.S. Congress, the members of the confederacy insisted that any cession of lands to the U.S. “should be made in the public manner, and by the united voice of the confederacy; holding all partial treaties as void and of no effect.”³⁸

Then, as later, the representatives of the U.S. government rejected outright the concept that all Native Americans held their land in common. The government’s tactic was to divide people from each other, win over particular leaders, and make land deals with each of them, insisting, on legitimacy of these undertakings. In 1784, U.S. commissioners met with the Iroquois in 1784 at Fort Stanwix, getting them to accept they were a conquered people and giving up their claims to the Ohio country (Brant was not present). A similar tactic was used in 1785 with the Wyandots, Delawares, Ottawas, and Ojibwas.

The Shawnees were called to Fort Finney at the mouth of the Great Miami River and intimidated by the Americans into giving away most of the Ohio country. Joseph Brant was present and stated that “all nations of us of one color were there and agreed as one man not to make peace or war without the consent of the whole, and you likewise know that one or two nations going to our brothers’ council fire cannot do anything without the whole were there present.”³⁹ The Native Americans at Fort Finney rejected the American claim that they had been defeated in battle and had therefore lost any claim to their land. Under pressure from the United States a group of Shawnee chiefs yielded and gave up most of their claim to present-day eastern

³⁸ Colin G. Calloway, *One Vast Winter Count: The Native American West before Lewis and Clark* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), 369-70.

³⁹ Sugden, *Tecumseh: A Life*, 45-46.

and southern Ohio. Instead of bringing peace, it caused more internal division as the Shawnee who were not present prepared for war as Americans continued to move onto their land. The Native Americans were learning that it made no difference if a tribe was at peace or at war with the Americans.

Even with the British retaining these key posts and supplying presents, the Native Americans had to come together to try to stem the tide of American land grabs. There can be no doubt that the ambitious phase of pan-Indianism between 1783 and 1895 was Tecumseh's greatest inspiration. That was the movement that began in the late summer of 1783 with Joseph Brant. The Mohawk Iroquois leader designed a confederacy that was to be more than a military alliance. The confederacy's goal was to block American attempts to pit one tribe against another in order to buy land. The confederacy declared that land negotiations made with individual tribes were invalid; only the confederacy as a whole could ratify the treaty.

America's appetite for new land could only be satisfied through the demolition of the barriers Britain placed in the way of western settlement. The War Hawks, in particular, had their eye focused on expansion. Those from Kentucky, Tennessee, and Ohio were intent on ending what they saw as the Indian menace along the frontier of American settlement. As a result, they detested the alliance between the Native Americans and the British Crown, an alliance of convenience to be sure, but an alliance that still stood in the way of the movement of settlers onto native lands.⁴⁰

Native Americans continued to oppose American expansion onto their lands immediately following the Revolutionary War. Britain had held strategic outposts until the spring of 1795. The year brought peace to North America when Britain and the United States settled their border

⁴⁰ Laxer, *Tecumseh and Brock*, 55.

dispute. Wanting peace, the British agreed to evacuate their border forts within two years. This accelerated the crumbling Indian confederation, already weakened by British passivity in 1794 at the Battle of Fallen Timbers.⁴¹ Individual villages now began to seek their separate peace with the victorious Americans.⁴²

The dissolution of the confederacy culminated in the Treaty of Greenville in August 1795. The Americans dictated terms of the treaty to Ohio area natives. A primary American goal was achieved by dealing with the Shawnees, Miamis, Delawares, and Wyandots as separate Indian nations rather than as a unified confederacy. The treaty forced the Indians to concede the southern two-thirds of Ohio and southeastern Indiana. The Americans also asserted the right to build forts wherever they chose within the remaining Indian country.⁴³

The Treaty manifested the Federalist principles of federal supremacy over settlers; a defined boundary with the Indian country; payment for Indian lands' and a federal preemption for future purchases from a particular nations (rather than a native confederacy). By setting precedents, the Treaty of Greenville was meant to facilitate later, larger Indian land cessions to the United States. American Secretary of War Timothy Pickering told General Anthony Wayne after the Battle of Fallen Timbers and the Treaty of Greenville that "once a peace is established, and we also take possession of the posts now held by the British, we can obtain everything we shall want with a tenth part of the trouble and difficulty which you would now have to

⁴¹ Alan Taylor, *The Divided Ground: Indians, Settlers, and the Northern Borderlands of the American Revolution* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2006), 293.

⁴² Lord Dorchester to Simcoe, July 31, 1795, in Cruikshank, ed., *Correspondence of Simcoe*, III: 184.

⁴³ Reginald Horsman, *Expansion and American Indian Policy, 1783-1812* (East Lansing, Michigan State University Press, 1967), 99-103.

encounter.”⁴⁴ With the confederated Indians defeated and the British in retreat, the Americans took command along their border with Canada.

The Americans now became very rigid with the Native Americans, much like the British immediately following the French and Indian War. An American commander explained the new rules: “Lines are fixed, and so strongly between us [British and Americans], that they cannot be mistaken, and every precaution taken to prevent a misunderstanding.”⁴⁵ Native Americans could not track British deserters on American soil and chiefs could no longer freely cross the border to visit British officials without permission. More alarming than this was the commander’s declaration that the American would cease the British practice of freely feeding Indian visitors visiting American forts. The speech was an assault on three customary Native American rights: rewards for deserters, open communication with both powers, and official hospitality for visiting chiefs.

At this time a new generation of Native American leaders was coming to power. Two Shawnee brothers spearheaded the movement to push the Americans back. Tecumseh and Tenskwatawa, The Prophet, would lead a rebellion similar to Pontiac and Neolin, only much larger in scope.

During the 1780s and 1790s, a young Tecumseh, along with his older brother, gained much military experience and expertise fighting the American settlers throughout the Ohio River Valley. It was here, along the banks of the Ohio, that Tecumseh gained notoriety among his peers. He was considered to be one of the boldest and fairest warriors in the western territories. The Shawnees were impressed by his bravery and skill, and from his success they deduced that

⁴⁴ Richard Knopf, *Anthony Wayne, A Name in Arms: The Wayne-Know-Pickering-McHenry Correspondence* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1960), 407.

⁴⁵ Capt. James Bruff, speech, Sept. 21, 1796, and Bruff to unknown, Sept. 25, 1796, HORC, XV, NYHS.

his guardian spirits, or sacred power, was strong. Also, his practice of distributing booty to others rather than keeping it himself clearly showed he had the generosity and paternalism expected of a chief.⁴⁶ Tecumseh comes to the forefront of Native American fighting during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Although he was not the only Native American chief fighting for his freedom and land, he was a major catalyst when discussing the impact of the Native Americans on the war effort for both the British and American sides leading up to the War of 1812.

Tecumseh, like Pontiac, benefited from a spiritual movement that allowed him to unite various tribes. His brother, The Prophet, rose to power during the years of 1805 and 1806. Before this time, he was not a leader like his brother Tecumseh, rather a drunk who commanded little respect from his people. While Tecumseh preached a message of intertribal unity, the Prophet spearheaded a revivalist cult that revitalized Indian culture and values and condemned debasing influences from the whites.⁴⁷ He quickly rose to power after having a dream about leaving behind all the worldly influences of the whites. His body shook and trembled when he spoke, having a profound impact on his Native American brethren. He denounced alcohol, the abuse of wives and children, war against other Native Americans, and taking more than one wife.⁴⁸ If these rules were followed the Natives would ultimately take back their land and defeat the settlers moving into their land.

This spiritual message allowed Tecumseh to try to unite various tribes, but his efforts to create a large-scale pan-Indian resistance to an Anglo-American power is not original.

Tecumseh was distinguished by the new life he breathed into a strategy that was already tried.

⁴⁶ Sugden, *Tecumseh: A Life*, 63.

⁴⁷ John Sugden, *Tecumseh's Last Stand* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985), 22.

⁴⁸ Sugden, *Tecumseh: A Life*, 117.

Efforts to build alliances and confederacies that crossed ethnic divisions among the Indians had long been a response to situations of exceptional danger, and such efforts had steadily grown in scale. The Indian world was divided by language, standing intergroup hostilities, and differences in outlook. The logistical obstacles to widespread action alone were formidable. It is also true that the typical native political unit was the village, and that even there authority was decentralized and weak.

The geographic distance among the tribes Tecumseh was trying to unite was another problem. Intertribal ventures often fell apart quickly because of competition between varied local priorities, or the jealousies of proud chiefs. There were simmering intertribal rivalries (Ojibwas vs. Dakota Sioux or Potawatomis vs. Osages).⁴⁹ The most difficult problem was the language barrier. The Indians Tecumseh was trying to mold to his purpose were spread in a huge arc across the white frontier, stretching from New York in the northeast, sprawling across the Great Lakes country and the Midwest, and through the southern states to reach its southeastern terminus in Florida. Working within such diversity Tecumseh faced greater difficulties than those of any American or European statesmen, but he would not be deterred.⁵⁰

Like the chiefs before him, Tecumseh wanted to reconcile his differences with the Americans peacefully. When he visited the British at Fort Malden in 1808 he refused to be brought into an alliance, but events unfolded in 1810 that changed his attitude. There was optimism that the grievances he had with the United States could be resolved peacefully. The major event that changed his mind was the Treaty of Fort Wayne.

This treaty was part of Governor William Henry Harrison's strategy to wrest away from Native American tribes almost three million acres of land along the Wabash valley in Indiana.

⁴⁹ William Clark to William Eustis, 20 July and 28 September 1810, U.S. SoW/LR/R 35: 2577, 2633.

⁵⁰ James Witherell to Theophilus Harrington, 19 November 1810, Tecumseh File.

His ultimate goal was statehood for Indiana and white settlement was a step towards that goal. The Treaty of Fort Wayne had recently been enacted, and like the other treaties in the Northwest Territory, it took more land from the Natives. Governor Harrison invited Tecumseh to Vincennes to discuss any grievances he might have. Tecumseh, along with seventy-five warriors took Harrison up on his offer. While meeting, Tecumseh charged Harrison with trying to sow discord among the various tribes.⁵¹

The treaty was invalid because land ownership among Native Americans is communal and no single tribe has the authority to sign over millions of acres to the United States. He stated to Harrison that he had indeed assembled a great multitude of tribes together to resist further land grabs by the United States. Finally, he stated the Native Americans would resist any attempt to settle the lands recently ceded in the Fort Wayne treaty. Tecumseh did not want war, he wanted the United States to return the land, no annuities were necessary for the land. The Natives would live peacefully if more traders were permitted onto their lands for necessary items.⁵²

Harrison could not compromise on the treaty. Communal ownership of land could not be recognized because it would invalidate almost every other treaty signed with any Native American tribe and block further land purchases. Harrison denied treating the Native Americans unjustly and dishonestly. According to reports, at this point in the meeting Tecumseh and his warriors rose angrily. Each side tensely grasped the weapons at their side and waited for the other instigate. Tecumseh, realizing that getting angry did not serve his purpose, apologized diplomatically. Neither side was willing to yield ground and sensed the inevitability of conflict on the horizon. Tecumseh made it clear at his meeting with Harrison that if the United States did

⁵¹ Robert Yagelski, "A Rhetoric of Contact," 71.

⁵² Sugden, *Tecumseh: A Life*, 199-200.

not change its policies on the issue of native land, there would be war. And in the event of war, he warned, he would accept gunpowder from the British.⁵³

Population was another major factor influencing Tecumseh. In 1810 the population of the white settlements in Ohio and the territories of Indiana, Illinois, and Michigan amounted to 270,000. Against this, the Indian population of the area was little more than 70,000.⁵⁴ Tecumseh did not have the numbers, but his travels gave him an inkling of the opposition, and stimulated his determination to bring in as many tribes as possible and to enlist the help of the British.⁵⁵ Years earlier he had discovered an old British wampum belt in possession of the chiefs in the region. It had been given to the King's Indian allies during the French and Indian War, and Tecumseh had retrieved it and kept it safe. He now brought the belt to Fort Malden to renew the old British-Indian alliance.⁵⁶

Tecumseh was first mentioned in British records in 1808 at a council with senior officials of the Indian Department at Amherstburg. The war chief proposed a military pact with the British officials, asserting, "[i]f the king should be in earnest and appear in sufficient force they (warriors) would hold fast by him."⁵⁷ British representatives could only respond by urging restraint until the time was right.

The Chesapeake affair in 1807 alerted the British to the need to improve their relationships with the Native Americans in case they needed their help in a war.⁵⁸ More presents began to be issued at the British posts, and the Natives were invited to come to Fort Malden to

⁵³ Laxer, *Tecumseh and Brock*, 83.

⁵⁴ Sugden, *Tecumseh: A Life*, 189.

⁵⁵ Harrison to Eustis, 28 August 1810, Esarey, 1: 470.

⁵⁶ Speech of Tecumseh, 15 November 1810, enclosed in Matthew Elliot to William Claus, 16-18 November 1810, Britain/CO 42/351: 40,42.

⁵⁷ Proceedings of Council at Amherstburg, 11 and 13 July 1808, cited in Robert Allen, *His Majesty's Indian Allies*, 114.

⁵⁸ Antal, *A Wampum Denied*, 16.

talks. The policy of winning Indian favor sped up with the issuance of new instructions from Sir James Craig, the governor general of Canada. British Indian agents were to avoid anything that opened Britain to charges that they were inciting the Indians against the United States, but in private meetings they could “insinuate” to the chiefs “that as a matter of course we shall look for the assistance of our brothers.” Craig believed that Britain’s new generosity, in increasing the issue of supplies, including arms and ammunition, and the difficulties the tribes were having with the United States, would eventually push the Indians toward the King, but special efforts should be made to win over influential chiefs.⁵⁹

If the British agents were not openly urging the Natives to take up the hatchet against the Americans in 1812, they certainly courted the favor of the tribes. In July 1811, a Miami chief reported to Governor William Henry Harrison that Matthew Elliot, head of the British Indian Department, was indeed restraining the warriors, but only until the right moment. “My son keep your eyes fixed on me. My tomahawk is now up but do not strike until I give the signal.”⁶⁰

To compound the already uneasy relationship between the British and the Americans, British North America boasted its own version of expansionists among its colonial leaders. For them, the impending struggle was to be not one of defense but of reconquest of the Ohio lands to which the United States was not truly entitled. They hoped to reconstitute that region as a Native state that would be harmonized with British fur trading interests as a defense buffer against the U.S. The leaders of the North West Company, South West Company (British fur trading companies) were at the forefront in demanding the restoration of these lost lands. The elite of the fur-trading community of Montreal stated:

⁵⁹ Gayle Thornbrough, *Letter Book of the Indian Agency at Fort Wayne, 1809-1815* (Indianapolis, 1961), 49.

⁶⁰ Harrison to Secretary of War, 18 July 1810, *Debates and Proceedings in the Congress of the United States 1811-1812* Vol. 2: 1858.

[P]osterity will hardly believe, although history must attest the melancholy and mortifying truth, that in acceding to the Independence of the Thirteen Colonies as States, their territory was not merely allowed to them, but an extent of Country, then a portion of the Province of Quebec, nearly of equal magnitude to the said Thirteen Colonies or States, was ceded, notwithstanding not a foot of the Country so ceded, was at the time occupied by an American in Arms, not could have been had the war continued.⁶¹

During this volatile time the Native Americans were already drawn into a war with the Americans. In 1811, when Tecumseh was off recruiting for the Confederacy, an American army approached Prophetstown. Harrison wanted to strike a major blow to the growing Indian power at Prophetstown (now Tippecanoe), along the banks of the Tippecanoe River in present-day Indiana. Prophetstown, so named after Tecumseh's brother, was a town that included displaced tribes from all over the Northwest. Native Americans that had been pushed off of their land from treaties or white encroachment gathered along the banks of the river in hopes that this inter-tribal confederacy could reverse their fortunes. The town sprang up quickly and Harrison knew that it must be squelched before it became too powerful for his militia or threatening for settlers. Although present-day history texts, such as *The Americans* and *American Pageant* give the American forces a decisive victory, nothing could be further from the truth. Harrison wanted to crush the Native American resistance in the Northwest, but Tecumseh was not even present, so it would prove to be impossible. The Prophet was placed in charge of the town while Tecumseh was recruiting throughout the area. Tecumseh warned his brother to avoid confrontation because they had little gunpowder and needed it to survive the cold season.⁶² His instruction would be disregarded.

The Prophet told the warriors, who were outnumbered two to one, that the bullets of the enemies would turn to sand and the braves themselves would be bulletproof. They were told to

⁶¹ Memorial of Merchants of Upper and Lower Canada to Prevost, 24 October 1812, cited in Donald Creighton, *Empire of the St. Lawrence*, 176.

⁶² Sugden, *Tecumseh: A Life*, 227.

attack the American encampment at night because the whites would be blinded, but the warriors would be able to see in the dark. In early morning hours of November 7, 1811 the Native Americans made an assault on the American encampment.⁶³ The Native Americans gave up Prophetstown and the American army plundered each home and destroyed all of the crops stored for the winter, but a moral victory could be claimed. The Natives had far from disgraced themselves. They fought a numerically superior opponent on their chosen ground and inflicted heavier casualties than they had suffered. They proved to Harrison that they were not a people that would be intimidated and pushed off of their land without a fight.⁶⁴

Tecumseh was not really concerned about the British or Canada. It was the plight of the Indian peoples, and his ambition that drove him forward. The British were tools to be used. Their military strength could be harnessed to the Indian Confederacy. Alone, neither could defeat the Americans in North America, but together they could win. Tecumseh even talked about clearing the Americans from all the lands north of the Ohio River.⁶⁵

Tecumseh was recruiting heavily to push the Americans back off Native lands. Tecumseh was determined to establish a confederacy that could launch a native state with full rights and recognition of the other states on the continent.⁶⁶ As he was about to launch his war against the United States, a larger conflict burst open between the British and the Americans. The dream of a joint pan-Indian and British defense of the northwest was becoming a reality. The War of 1812 had begun and The British-Native alliance was strengthened by the desperation facing both sides during the struggle.

⁶³ Ibid., 232.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 235.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 310.

⁶⁶ Laxer, *Tecumseh and Brock*, 103.

Chapter 2 – Necessary Partners

The Native Americans had been incensed by the Battle of Tippecanoe. They were being dislodged from their land one treaty and battle at a time. British Indian agents, such as Matthew Elliot in the Old Northwest, had been convincing the Native Americans to wait to strike at the United States until a formal declaration of war between the two countries had been declared.⁶⁷ Then the King would supply their needs if they fought on the side of the Crown. In June of 1812 the time was right.

The Native Americans were one of the most important groups to fight during the War of 1812. It can be argued that without the Native Americans, Upper Canada, and eventually Lower Canada, would have fallen to the United States. Without the Native Americans as a fighting force, the War of 1812 would have taken presumably less than a year to conclude. Native Americans were present at most, but not all of the battles during the War of 1812. Still, their action in the western theater of the war, the action along the Niagara Frontier, and the southern portion of the United States made it impossible for the Americans to focus all of their resources in one area. Specific instances will be discussed in which the Native American warriors were the determining factor in the outcome of an engagement. These battles could not have been won by the small forces of British regulars and the unproven Canadian militia left to defend Canada without the integral Native American support.

Five major factors must be taken into consideration when describing the key impact the Native Americans had on the outcome of the war: the manpower they provided during the War of 1812 was considerable; British commanders were emboldened by the sheer size of Native

⁶⁷ Sandy Antal, *A Wampum Denied: Procter's War of 1812* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1997), 17.

American forces willing to fight for the Crown; the Native American warriors brought a psychological “fear” factor to the war that proved decisive in many instances. There are instances of a particular engagement being won by the British side without firing a shot because of the fear the Americans had of Native American warriors. This fear could be traced to the mid-eighteenth century during the French and Indian War.⁶⁸ It was seen again during the Revolutionary War and in instances when American pioneers encroached further onto Native American land. During the war, Native Americans were able to take control of a situation on their own and won without British assistance, again proving their worth. Native American forces were also the driving force behind numerous victories in the Old Northwest, the Niagara Frontier, and the southern theater of the war. British commanders were given credit for the victories, but gave credit to the Native Americans for their contributions.

There were also negative consequences to having Native Americans on the British side. In a few instances the Native Americans were expected, did not show, and their absence resulted in a British/Canadian loss. Native Americans did not fight in the same manner as the Euro-Americans and though tenacious, some of their practices lead to mistrust and conflict with their British allies. The alliance would further be hampered by the deaths of strong leaders on both sides that held the fragile alliance together.⁶⁹ First, the Native Americans furnished thousands of warriors for the field of battle. This is important because at the commencement of hostilities between Britain and the United States, Britain was already locked in a struggle with Napoleon and France. He wanted to conquer Britain and had already succeeded in taking much of Europe. Napoleon was the imminent threat to mainland Britain and the majority of its regular army was serving in Europe in order to contain him. Upper Canada was left with a regular force of

⁶⁸ Borneman, *The French and Indian War*, 83.

⁶⁹ Sugden, *Tecumseh: A Life*, 125.

approximately 1600 soldiers that were spread along backwoods outposts from Montreal to Lake Huron. There were 11,000 men in the militia that were unarmed, untrained, and unreliable. According to General Prevost only four thousand of the men should be armed.⁷⁰ Prevost had the daunting task of defending Canada, but the militia could not be counted on for long periods of time due to the fact that it was mostly an agrarian society. The families depended on the men to plant and harvest crops at specific times of the year. Also, many of the families living in Canada had relatives in the United States or had moved to Canada from America. Utilizing the vast number of Indian allies was not a question of policy but one of absolute necessity.⁷¹ British commanders had two choices when it came to manpower: abandon Upper Canada or embrace the alliance with the Native Americans.⁷²

The number of Native Americans available to the British is disputed. Tecumseh had constructed a loose confederacy of various tribes and various factions of tribes throughout the Northwest. Native American warriors would convene at specific battles when close to their lands and some would travel with Tecumseh when they were summoned by the British. Incidents at Fort Malden, Detroit, and Fort Michilimackinac provide an example of these forces. Some scholars estimate that 15,000 warriors were available to the British at the onset of hostilities. Conservative estimates put the number around 5000-7000.⁷³ Still, this force was much larger than anything Canada could offer and was a force Americans would have to take seriously.

One instance in which the number of Native Americans played a role in the outcome of an engagement was at Detroit. America had concluded that the best way to quickly take over Canada was a three-pronged attack. American forces would cross into Canada through Detroit,

⁷⁰ Prevost to Liverpool, May 18, 1812, DHCNF 1812, Vol. 3: 63.

⁷¹ Strachan, *The John Strachan Letterbook: 1812-1834*, 7.

⁷² Horsman, *The War that Forged a Nation*, 34.

⁷³ Sugden, *Tecumseh: A Life*, 23.

the Niagara Frontier, and up through Lake Champlain. If done concurrently, the British/Canadian forces would not have the resources to hold on.⁷⁴ The American plan was quickly foiled by the British, with major help from the Native Americans on the western front. The two major leaders of the British-Indian alliance, Isaac Brock and Tecumseh, would meet and become the team that thwarted the American plans in Detroit.

Fighting tenacity and style were two additional elements of the Native American braves. Unlike militia, Native American men had been trained in the art of war from an early age. They might not have been trained with muskets right away, but the guerilla tactics brought into play by the Native Americans proved invaluable for the British. Battles at Beaver Dams, Frenchtown, and Prairie du Chien are a small sample of the perseverance shown by the Natives when fighting in battle.

The most important aspect of Native American involvement in the War of 1812 was the psychological component. The war cries and painted faces struck terror in their enemies.⁷⁵ Americans and Canadians alike knew the destructive and sometimes uncontrollable behavior of Native Americans on the field of battle. History books and newspapers are littered with stories of frontier families murdered and scalped, justifiably or not, by Native American warriors. The propensity to give no quarter weighed heavily on the minds of commanding officers and residents in areas close to Native American lands. British officials would use this psychological advantage more than once during the war. One Detroit resident wrote to Congress in February of 1812 stating that “a war with England has no terrors compared with those arising from their

⁷⁴ Horsman, *The War that Forged a Nation*, 46.

⁷⁵ Alan Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812: American Citizens, British Subjects, Irish Rebels, & Indian Allies* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2010), 153.

savage allies.”⁷⁶ The massacres at Fort Dearborn, Frenchtown, and Fort Mims made headlines across America and Canada. These events caused panic and despair among frontier Americans. Settlers fled from their homes and militias fled from the field of battle. American generals had to decide if they wanted to risk entire regiments being butchered by Natives or capitulate peacefully to the commanding British officer. Sometimes it did not matter what they chose. British commanders, such as Isaac Brock, impressed with Native American valor on the field of battle would no longer defend Canada, but push for and achieve an invasion of America.⁷⁷

The first instance in which Native American numbers played a role in the war was at Fort Michilimackinac. Mackinaw Island was of strategic importance during the War of 1812. Originally a British fort during the Revolutionary War it was transferred to American hands fifteen years later. The British coveted the tiny island at the outset of the War of 1812 for a number of reasons. The fort on the island controlled the strategic waterway connecting Lake Huron and Lake Superior. Whoever controlled this waterway would control the lucrative fur trade and the western tribes.

The British commander, Charles Roberts, who was in charge of nearby Fort Joseph (the most westerly post of the British Empire), was given discretion by his superior, Isaac Brock to launch an attack against the American fortress. Roberts, like Brock, believed he could not withstand an American assault on his position and decided that the best defense was a good offense.⁷⁸ With only fifty regular troops under his command, Roberts needed warriors. Native Americans in the area were happy to oblige. Noted fur trader Alexander Mackenzie listened as

⁷⁶ Solomon Sibley to Senator Thomas Worthington, 26 February 1812.

⁷⁷ Antal, *A Wampum Denied*, 46-47.

⁷⁸ Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812*, 152.

Americans told the Indians that they kept this country by “right of conquest.”⁷⁹ Roberts gathered a force of Native Americans consisting of several different tribes. There were 300 Ottawa present and approximately 110 Sioux, Menominee, and Winnebago warriors from Wisconsin.⁸⁰

The British force arrived at Mackinac Island under the cover of darkness and quickly climbed an escarpment undetected, overlooking the American fort commanded by Porter Hanks. The American commander only had 61 men at his disposal when he saw mostly Native warriors peering down on his garrison. Already at a disadvantage strategically and numerically the American commander made his decision. Fearing the destruction of his men by the Native Americans, Porter surrendered the fort without firing a shot. Roberts, believing the right decision was made, allowed the Americans to leave with full honors of war. John Askin, a fur trader accompanying the British force believed that if a shot had been fired, not a single American soldier would have been saved from the fury of the Indians.⁸¹ The British commanded respect from their Native allies, but it was the Native Americans that made up a majority of this fighting force.

One of the first major conflicts during the War of 1812 was won not by the British, but by a British force overwhelmingly comprised of Native Americans from the Old Northwest. The acquisition of this strategic island pushed the allegiance of many of the neutral western tribes to the British.⁸² The number of warriors would swell the British ranks and make the defense of Canada seem possible.

⁷⁹ Mackenzie, *Voyages from Montreal*, pg. xxxvii.

⁸⁰ J. Mackay Hitsman, *The Incredible War of 1812: A Military History* (Toronto: Robin Brass Studio, 1999), 72.

⁸¹ Barry Gough, *Fighting Sail on Lake Huron and Georgian Bay: The War of 1812 and its Aftermath* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2002), 23.

⁸² Capt. W.H., *Select British Documents of the War of 1812*, vol. 3, 549.

As previously stated, the British/Native victory would convince neutral tribes to join the British side. The growing number of Native Americans joining the British war effort would also play a part in the decision of American General William Hull to abandon his invasion of Canada and surrender Detroit without a fight. He knew that the shipping lanes on the Great Lakes were cut off and the Natives were free to attack supply trains on the muddy trails that weaved through the American backcountry.⁸³

At first, General Hull marched unopposed from Detroit across to Canada and occupied the small village of Sandwich. The Canadian militia was away tending to the harvest and there were not enough British regulars to be sent out to meet the force, but Tecumseh had already been active in the defense of Canada. He led his contingency in the general harassment of Hull's force when he crossed into Canada. Amherstburg was a Canadian town a few miles south of Detroit and British Fort Malden was constructed at the north end of the town. Fort Malden is where Tecumseh, along with his friends Roundhead and Main Poc, would gather the Native force of about 350 warriors to prepare for battle.⁸⁴

Hull had it in his power to crush Fort Malden and threaten Canada from the rear due to the massive size of his force. He had the veterans from Tippecanoe (about 1000 men) and a force of 1200 Ohio militia at his disposal. On July 12, 1812, when General Hull crossed into Canada and took the small town of Sandwich, he was met with no resistance and hoisted the American flag for the first time on Canadian soil.⁸⁵ The following day the importance of the Indians was indirectly referenced in a proclamation given to Canadians by Hull. He stated his

⁸³ Mark Zuehlke, *For Honour's Sake: The War of 1812 and the Brokering of an Uneasy Peace* (Toronto: Vintage Canada: 2006), 101.

⁸⁴ Sugden, *Tecumseh: A Life*, 281.

⁸⁵ Sugden, *Tecumseh: A Life*, 284.

intentions to free the Canadians from the oppression of the British and that they should stay home and not fight alongside the Native Americans. He declared:

If the barbarous and Savage policy of Great Britain be pursued, and the savages are let loose to murder our Citizens and butcher our women and children, this will be a war of extermination. The first stroke with the Tomahawk the first with the scalping Knife will be the signal for one indiscriminate scene of desolation, No White man found fighting by the side of an Indian will be taken prisoner. Instant destruction will be his lot.⁸⁶

Hull knew of the destructive power of the Native Americans and was very cautious about marching his force the fifteen miles south to Fort Malden. Tecumseh would prove the valor of the Natives while skirmishing multiple times with the Americans on their way to Fort Malden. Tecumseh had to be the protective force because many of the Canadian militia deserted - their numbers dwindled to less than four hundred at Fort Malden.⁸⁷ Brock was expecting an attack along the Niagara frontier at any time and could not spare any more British troops at the far reaches of the province. Never had the British needed Tecumseh more desperately. Mathew Elliot wrote that “the Indians with us are between three and four hundred, who have resisted every allurements which General Hull laid before them. Tech-kum-thai has kept them faithful. He has shown himself to be a determined character and a great friend to our government.”⁸⁸ The leader necessary to protect the far reaching parts of the British Empire was not even British, he was Native American.

General Hull sent portions of his forces south towards Fort Malden on three separate occasions. About half way to the fort, a stream, the Aux Canard, made crossing difficult. There was only one small bridge and only a few men could cross at a time. The British leader at Fort Malden, Thomas St. George, realized the eagerness of his Indian allies, but did not have the

⁸⁶ Hull’s Proclamation, 13 July 1812, Cruikshank, 58.

⁸⁷ Sugden, *Tecumseh: A Life*, 285.

⁸⁸ Elliot to Claus, 15 July 1812, Cruikshank, 62 (Canada/IA 28: 16396).

forces to support them. After a few days, he realized he would have to support the Indians where he could and loosed Tecumseh upon the oncoming invaders.⁸⁹ Tecumseh realized his geographical advantage and took to harassing and gathering intelligence about the enemy forces.

On July 16, July 19 and July 25 Tecumseh and his raiding parties were able to repulse American advances towards Fort Malden. Most of the time the numerical threat of the Natives was enough to force back the American contingent, but on July 25 the Americans suffered their first battle fatalities. Tecumseh led a party that crossed over the Aux Canard and ambushed a party of 120 Ohio volunteers. The skirmishes proved the power of the Native forces and gave Tecumseh and his alliance confidence. Hull believed the Indians were now surrounding him on all sides and were merciless in the heat of battle. Now on Canadian soil, Hull was hesitant to attack and constantly worried about his supply lines being cut off by the Native Americans.⁹⁰ The number of Native Americans was now determining the action of the American forces.

The halt of the American army convinced more neutral tribes to join Tecumseh's loose Native American confederacy. The powerful Wyandot tribe defected to the British side and brought hundreds more warriors.⁹¹ They were also camped south of Detroit, allowing Tecumseh to cut off Hull's line of communication with the rest of America. Tecumseh took the opportunity and crossed over to American soil. It was at Brownstown, a town south of Detroit, that one of Tecumseh's daring raids would take place. He ambushed a force of Americans four times larger than his own while they were trying to take supplies to Detroit. Besides defeating a numerically superior force, the Native Americans captured General Hull's mail. Native American warriors

⁸⁹ St. George to Brock, 15 July 1812, Cruikshank, 61.

⁹⁰ Hull to Eustis, 9 July 1812, Cruikshank, 50.

⁹¹ Sugden, *Tecumseh: A Life*, 287.

were now joining Tecumseh's alliance en masse; his ranks had swollen to six hundred men.⁹²

News that the American invasion at Niagara had stalled and British General Isaac Brock was on his way to Fort Malden sent Hull reeling.⁹³ The invasion of Canada had ended, for the time being.

Brock and Tecumseh met for the first time on the night August 15th. It was late and the meeting was short, but both men had quickly developed a mutual respect for one another. Brock admired the courage shown by his counterpart and Tecumseh faced a man that had the same daring spirit. Brock hatched a bold plan, against the wishes of his superior officer (Prevost), to attack Detroit.⁹⁴

This bold plan was hatched towards the end of 1811 when British officers in Canada knew a conflict was coming. Brock brooded long and hard about the military strategy to be pursued in the likely event of war with the United States. His strategy differed from that of the other British military commanders in the Canadas, because he understood that an effective alliance with native peoples would hold the key to the defense of Upper Canada's western reaches. This idea would be central to his triumphs in the last months of his life and it would be put into action at Detroit.

The plan was bold because Brock knew the size of the force Hull had at Detroit from the captured mail, but he also knew of Hull's fear of the Native American warriors. He immediately sent a letter to Hull imploring him to surrender Fort Detroit. Brock stated that "the numerous body of Indians who have attached themselves to my troops will be beyond control the moment

⁹² Elliot to Claus, 10 August 1812, Canada/IA 28: 16397.

⁹³ Antal, *A Wampum Denied*, 82-83.

⁹⁴ Prevost to Brock, 9 July 1812, Hitsman, *The Incredible War of 1812*, 56.

the contest commences.”⁹⁵ In reality the British had attached themselves to the body of Indians for the battle. Brock gambled on Detroit with the presence of the Native Americans.

Hull refused the offer, so Brock marched across the Detroit River and prepared for the assault. The Native Americans employed another tactical maneuver. Tecumseh, after all the warriors had made it across the river, infiltrated the town of Detroit and marched his warriors through the woods so they could be seen by the defenders. After the warriors formed lines he would send some of the braves back through the woods to make it appear as though there were at least two to three thousand warriors. He made sure that from Detroit, the men could see his ranks swelling with braves.⁹⁶ This seems to have been the decisive action in the “battle.” William Hull surrendered the Detroit before any fighting took place. Hull later testified at his court-martial hearing that he was influenced to surrender by the news that the Indians were breaching the outskirts of the town.⁹⁷ It is possible that he wanted to spare the town and his family from a massacre. Detroit is another early example of the numeric advantage the Native Americans would afford the British in military conflict. The number of Native Americans had contributed greatly in saving Upper Canada from invasion through Detroit and proved their value to the British Empire.

It is necessary to explore the relationship between Tecumseh and Brock in greater detail. What made the two such natural allies was their approach to combat. Both were inclined to fight offensive battles, to strike quickly, and to cede as little ground as possible to the enemy. Realizing that when the Americans mobilized to their full capacity they would outnumber the native warriors, British regulars, and Canadian militia, they counted on a war of movement. The

⁹⁵ Brock to Hull, 15 August 1812, Cruikshank 144.

⁹⁶ Wood, *Select British Documents of the Canadian War of 1812*, 554.

⁹⁷ Sugden, *Tecumseh: A Life*, 303.

British-Indian alliance would use swift attacks which would disrupt the enemy, endanger his lines of supply and communication, and prevent him from assembling his superior numbers on a field of battle where he could achieve strategic victory. Brock's regular army, with the cannons, was an ideal match for Tecumseh's warriors, who were much more comfortable using their guerilla tactics. They relied on an excellent knowledge of the terrain and ability to strike quickly at chosen points.⁹⁸

In General Brock, Tecumseh had at last found a man worthy of his trust, and during the few days they had together the Shawnee made sure the English officer learned why the Indians were fighting. Brock knew the folly of promising more than he could deliver, but he was under a deep obligation to the Indians; he sympathized with their predicament; and more than anything else, he had further need of their services. He had to keep Tecumseh's hopes alive. He pledged that this time the Indians would not be deserted.⁹⁹

Brock was still threatened by invasion at Niagara and only spent a day or so at Fort Malden before returning east, but on August 29 he addressed a letter to the new British Prime Minister, Lord Liverpool.

Among the Indians whom I met at Amherstburg, and who had arrived from distant parts of the country, I found some extraordinary characters. He who attracted most of my attention was a Shawnee chief, Tecumset, brother to the Prophet, who for the last two years has carried on, contrary to our remonstrances, an active warfare against the United States. A more sagacious or more gallant warrior does not, I believe, exist. He was the admiration of every one who conversed with him. From a life of dissipation he has not only become, in every respect, abstemious, but has likewise prevailed on all his nation and many of the other tribes to follow his example. They appear determined to continue the contest until they obtain the Ohio for a boundary. The United States government is accused, and I believe justly, of having corrupted a few dissolute characters whom they pretended to consider as chiefs, and with whom they contracted engagements and concluded treaties, which they have attempted to impose on the whole Indian race.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Laxer, *Tecumseh and Brock*, 161.

⁹⁹ Brock to Prevost, 18 September, W. Wood, *Select British Documents*, 1: 592.

¹⁰⁰ Brock to Liverpool, 29 August 1812, Britain/CO 42/352: 105.

The Indians were of utmost importance to Canadian security, and Brock suggested Liverpool could ensure their loyalty by including them “in any future negotiations for peace.” To Sir George Prevost, governor-general of Canada, he was more pointed still. The Indians would not fight for Britain unless their interests, or war aims, became part of peace negotiations; a treaty, he said, should admit their claims “to an extensive tract of country, fraudulently usurped from them.”¹⁰¹

It is not known for sure what exactly was said between Tecumseh and Brock. We know that on September 17 Brock instructed General Procter to have British-Indian agent Thomas McKee raise the matter with the Indians, in a casual fashion, and learned what the tribes would want in a peace, both in the event of British success and of British failure in the war.¹⁰² There can be little doubt that Brock assured Tecumseh that Indian land claims would be supported, but equally that he had not entered into the detail of the subject.¹⁰³

Brock would be killed at the Battle of Queenston Heights two months after the meeting with Tecumseh and great victory at Detroit. Tecumseh would not get to fight alongside the man that gave him so much respect again. Britain had lost one of its ablest commanders and the Native Americans had lost one of their most ardent supporters. Henry Procter would now take over British operations and work with Tecumseh, but it would not be the same.

Native Americans also contributed to the war effort by leading their own expeditions against the Americans without British help. These expeditions proved Native Americans were capable of defeating the Americans on their own and were a valuable military asset to the

¹⁰¹ Brock to Prevost, 28 September 1812, Wood, 1: 596.

¹⁰² Matilda Edgar, *General Brock* (London: Oxford University Press, 1926), 279.

¹⁰³ Procter to Roger Sheaffe, 28 November 1812, Henry Procter Papers.

British. The Battle of Beaver Dams and the victory by the Creeks at Fort Mims were two important examples of Native Americans winning decisive victories on their own.

The Native Americans proved their worth to the British throughout the war effort, but it was a force consisting mainly of Native Americans that managed to win a decisive victory at the Battle of Beaver Dams. This decisive action would come on the Niagara Frontier. The Americans had taken possession of Fort George on the Canadian side of the Niagara River. Although the American troops still outnumbered the British by two to one, the hunters had become the hunted.¹⁰⁴

Dreading the forest full of Indians and the roads clogged with mud, the Americans waited for their side to gain control of Lake Ontario before moving. Desperate for provisions, but not wanting to give up Fort George, the American General Henry Dearborn sent out scouting parties to plunder the farms and mills within a dozen miles of the fort. These foraging parties increasingly fell into ambushes set by the British and their Indian allies.¹⁰⁵ An American officer recalled that each probe found “the limits of safe marching more and more contracted.”¹⁰⁶ The guerilla tactics frustrated Dearborn and he sent Lieutenant Colonel John G. Boerstler with a force of 575 infantry and cavalry to crush these skirmishers and probe the British lines for weakness.¹⁰⁷

The important facet of the battle was its participants. Lieutenant James Fitzgibbon was the commander of 50 British Rangers at a small post on the Niagara Frontier. There were approximately 400 Native warriors that carried out the attack on Boerstler’s force.

¹⁰⁴ Taylor, *Civil War of 1812*, 224.

¹⁰⁵ Taylor, *Civil War of 1812*, 224.

¹⁰⁶ [Anonymous], “The First Campaign of an A.D.C.,” 257-67.

¹⁰⁷ Borneman, *1812: A War that Forged a Nation*, 110.

The American commander saw Native Americans as he marched his forces into the woods on June 24, 1813, but did not retreat back to Fort George. The Native American force, comprised of 300 Caughnawaga and 100 Mohawks under the command of John Norton, attacked in a densely wooded area right outside Beaver Dams (Thorold, Ontario). The position was perfect for the guerilla style of the Natives, but disastrous for the Americans, as they could not see the targets they were firing at. After two hours of taking heavy fire and Boerstler himself being wounded, the Americans were ready to surrender. The main reason for surrendering was the fear of being massacred by the Natives.¹⁰⁸

According to Fitzgibbon, the surrender was made possible because of the strength shown by the Native force against the Americans.¹⁰⁹ Fitzgibbon later stated “not a shot was fired on our side by any but the Indians. They beat the American detachment into a state of terror, and the only share I claim is taking advantage of a favorable moment to off the protection from the tomahawk and the scalping knife.”¹¹⁰ Fitzgibbon intimidated Boerstler into surrendering with a note about the strength of the Native Americans surrounding his unit. He stated that the Americans must surrender to avoid a general massacre by the Indians. Finally, after another small British detachment arrived Boerstler yielded his entire force.¹¹¹ Chief John Norton stated that, “The Caughnawaga got the victory, the Mohawks got the plunder and Fitzgibbon got the credit.”¹¹²

The Battle at Fort Mims was another instance in which Native American forces routed an American counterpart on their own. The southern theater of the War of 1812 is often

¹⁰⁸ Taylor, *Civil War of 1812*, 226.

¹⁰⁹ Jason Ridler, “Battle of Beaver Dams,” accessed July 23, 2012, (<http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/articles/Battle-of-beaver-dams>)

¹¹⁰ Stanley, *The Indians in the War of 1812*, 182.

¹¹¹ Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812*, 210.

¹¹² George Stanley, *The Indians in the War of 1812*, 183.

overlooked, but cannot be neglected. While the war in the north proved to be a back and forth struggle a new development in the southern United States would leave the US vulnerable to attack on two geographical fronts. The young nation would now have to divert precious resources to the south during an increasingly unpopular war.¹¹³

The Creek Nation was divided among the Upper and Lower Creeks. The Lower Creek Nation had adopted some European customs and agrarian lifestyles. This angered the Upper Creeks who strongly resented the encroachments American settlers had made with a road cut through their territory. The Creek Indians saw a civil war erupt among the tribe that spilled into the greater conflict of the War of 1812 against the Americans. The warriors of the Upper Creek most closely aligned with Tecumseh's dream of an Indian confederation were called Red Sticks, probably named for the color of their Creek war clubs.¹¹⁴

Many Americans believed that the British and the Spanish were inciting the Indians in the South by handing out weapons.¹¹⁵ Tempers flared when Americans learned that a group of Native Americans were returning to their villages from Pensacola loaded with ammunition and guns from the Spanish. The Americans engaged the Creeks and a small skirmish ensued. This encounter came to be called the Battle of Burnt Corn and proved to be the opening round of the Creek War, a war that was as much Creek versus Creek as it was American versus Creek, Spanish, and British.¹¹⁶ Although an indecisive battle, it gave the Native Americans confidence. The Red Sticks determined to drive the white settlers out of their territory and starting with an attack on Fort Mims.

¹¹³ Frank Owsley, *Struggle for the Gulf Borderlands: The Creek War and the Battle of New Orleans 1812-1815* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1981), 9.

¹¹⁴ Borneman, *1812: The War that Forged a Nation*, 143-44.

¹¹⁵ Owsley, *Struggle for the Gulf Borderlands*, 11.

¹¹⁶ Mahon, *War of 1812*, 231-32.

After the Battle of Burnt Corn many settlers sought refuge at Fort Mims. The fear of the Natives spread and the entire Mississippi Territorial Militia was called out for greater protection.¹¹⁷ The Fort was one of the strongest and largest in the area, and no one seriously believed the Indians would attack such a strong position.¹¹⁸ At the time of the attack there were 120 militia stationed at the fort. All together there were probably around 275 whites and a number of slaves, all able to offer some resistance.¹¹⁹ Resistance would prove to be futile in this encounter.

The Upper Creeks were led by William Weatherford, a man born to a Scottish father and Creek mother. The night before the attack, Weatherford led a small group of Natives on a reconnaissance mission to the fort. It was determined the Natives would rush through the fort's open gate and then take control of the portholes on the sides of the fort. The portholes would offer the warriors protection if the element of surprise failed. The next day the Indians executed their offensive. After nearly three hours of fighting nearly all of the 300 occupants of Fort Mims were dead.

News of the massacre spread quickly across the frontier. No fort in the south of this size and strength had ever been captured by the Indians. Many of the settlers believed that the Indians had magical powers.¹²⁰ At about the same time, the Red Sticks made a number of smaller, but successful attacks against other forts and settlements that resulted in American casualties. The attacks were repulsed, but they did add considerably to the general state of alarm

¹¹⁷ Doster, "Fort Mims," 269-70.

¹¹⁸ Owsley, *Struggle for the Gulf Borderlands*, 34.

¹¹⁹ F.L. Claiborne to Editors, *Mississippi Republican*, 25 March 1814.

¹²⁰ Owsley, *Struggle for the Gulf Borderland*, 39.

and increased the credibility of the rumors of widespread attack and destruction.¹²¹ The Native Americans in the southeast had become an immediate threat to the young nation on their own.

Another example of the Native Americans acting with nominal British assistance was at Prairie du Chien and Rock Island Rapids in the far western theater. The upper Mississippi was of vital importance to the British fur trade. The British already controlled strategic Michilimackinac, but wanted to keep control of the Mississippi waterway. Prairie du Chien was an outback fur trading post located at the confluence of the Wisconsin and Mississippi River. The waterway was significant because it connected the mighty Mississippi with the Great Lakes. It was also invaluable to British Indian agents engendering the military alliance of the Natives.¹²²

The problem was an American force under William Clark took the area on June 2, 1814 and renamed it Fort Shelby. A British commander at Michilimackinac noted that if the enemy was not ousted from the post, “there was an end to our connection with the Indians.... Tribe after tribe would be gained over or subdued, & thus would be destroyed the barrier which protects the great trading establishments of the North West & Hudson Bay Companies.”¹²³

The British, under the command of William McKay, set out to retake the area because native peoples to Prairie du Chien held the British alliance in high regard. McKay had a force numbering approximately 600 men, with half being warriors from the Menominee and Chippewa tribes.¹²⁴ Upon arriving at Fort Shelby, the British and Native Allies surrounded the fort. American Lieutenant Perkins, after taking continuous cannon fire for two days weighed his options. He was running low on ammunition, medical supplies, water, had an inferior force, and was cut off from the river (his escape route). He surrendered and appealed to the mercy of the

¹²¹ Ibid., 40.

¹²² Gough, *Fighting Sail on Lake Huron*, 72.

¹²³ Dictionary of Canadian Biography 7, 556.

¹²⁴ Gough, *Fighting Sail on Lake Huron*, 77.

British officers. In any combat with Indians in this region, brutality could become apparent.

Fear of the Native Americans was again a major factor in the American surrender.

When McKay accepted the truce he warned the Americans not to come out of the fort until the following morning. As he told Perkins, he could not guarantee the safe passage of the Americans in the face of possible Indian reprisal.¹²⁵ The Indians allowed for safe passage and the Americans were granted parole and allowed to return to St. Louis. During the siege of Fort Shelby the Americans cut a gunboat loose to drift downriver because it was taking heavy fire. McKay sent a party of Indians, with four kegs of powder, downstream to destroy the structure. The Battle of Rock River Rapids would occur two days after the surrender of Fort Shelby.

On July 21 the Indians discovered six American barges anchored for the night with the intent of relieving Perkins at Fort Shelby. The Indians fell upon the anchored barges with a fury that can only be imagined. At Rock River Rapids the Indians were complete with their stroke.¹²⁶ McKay learned of the fighting and got the details of the native martial technique:

To give an idea how desperate the Indians were, the women even jumped on board with their Hoes, some breaking heads, others breaking casks, some trying to cut holes in her bottom and sink her, and others setting fires to the decks—as one of the barges was making from shore the Ioway that came from McKinac with me, jumped on her deck and with his hatchet cut a hole, and fired his gun among the Americans in the boat—they plunged into the river and made his escape ashore.¹²⁷

This evidence from July 1814 proves that the Native Americans were still fighting and desperately trying to preserve their way of life. The western tribes cannot be trivialized in the War of 1812 and because they allowed the British to maintain a presence along the Mississippi River. McKay reported to his superiors that Rock Island rapids “...is perhaps one of the most

¹²⁵ Louise Kellogg, *The British Regime in Wisconsin and the Northwest* (New York: Da Capo, 1971), 319-20.

¹²⁶ Gough, *Fighting Sail on Lake Huron*, 78.

¹²⁷ McKay to McDouall, 27 July 1814. in Wood, vol. 3, pt. 1, 264.

brilliant actions fought by Indians only, since the commencement of the war.”¹²⁸ British commanders still viewed the Native American fighting force as necessary in the War of 1812.

The most important military contribution the Native Americans provided the British during the War of 1812 was the psychological “fear” factor they created in the minds of their adversaries. The fear created was an advantage in numbers too. You may rely on it that without the Indians we never could keep this country and that with them [on the British side] the Americans never will take the upper posts, . . .for in the woods, where the Americans must pass, one Indian is equal to three white men.¹²⁹

In many instances, Native Americans were involved in a specific conflict during the war and an American commander would readily surrender rather than risk his entire force being killed by Native Americans. There are cases in which Native Americans attacked American forces and left few survivors. The Native mode of warfare, including scalping and killing wounded soldiers terrified the American public. It also forced many American leaders to surrender rather than fight.

A famous incident took place in May, 1813. A British naval officer out on Lake Ontario watched a boat full of American troops rowing out from shore under a white flag. The officer stated they came to “surrender and claim our protection as prisoners of war against the savages on the shore.” The officer was astonished because he noted that the Americans were “armed to the teeth” with weapons. The American officer stated “that the woods were full of Indians, that he had had a fight with that morning; and rather than fall into their hands and be massacred, he surrendered to us.” Minutes later a second boat of Americans followed to complete the surrender of 115 well-armed Americans, who had suffered only light casualties skirmishing with thirty-six

¹²⁸ Ibid., 265.

¹²⁹ Askin to Powell, Jan. 25, 1813, in DHCNF, 5:50.

warriors.¹³⁰ This is one of many examples of American soldiers panicking when facing a group of Native Americans.

To explain the surrendering of Americans that day, the British officer cited an American culture that was paralyzed by horror stories featuring Indians. “The dread of encounter with Indian foes was a striking feature among many of the Americans. . . . To the effect of nursery tales and fireside legends, aided by ‘thrilling narratives’ issuing from a mercenary press, the Americans are most indebted for this weakness.”¹³¹ A New Yorker confirmed that no child was “allowed to grow up in that region, without imbibing . . . hatred and horror of the Indians. Tales of Indian cruelties were in the mouths of all mothers and nurses.”¹³² Americans were taught from birth to fear and hate Native Americans.

The British valued Native warriors because they scared American regulars and terrified American militia. A British agent said, “The Americans are constantly in Alarm either by an Indian War or at least the shadow of Bands of Indians. They imagine their heads in danger of being scalped.”¹³³ The fighting style was different and Americans feared Native American scalping. An American official confirmed this fear by stating, “A war with England has no terrors compared with those arising from their savage allies.”¹³⁴ Most of this fear came from the prowess of Native Americans in guerilla combat. The use of sudden raids and ambushes tricked American forces into thinking there were more Natives present at an engagement than there really were. (This can be seen, for example, at Detroit. General Brock played on Hull’s fear of

¹³⁰ Malcolmson, ed., *Sailors of 1812*, 29-31.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 32.

¹³² Henry Wright, *Human Life, Illustrated in my Individual Experience as a Child, a Youth, and a Man* (Boston: B. Marsh, 1849), 44.

¹³³ John Askin, Jr. to John Askin, Sept. 8, 1807, *John Askin Papers*, 2:572.

¹³⁴ Solomon Sibley to Thomas Worthington, Feb. 26, 1812, quoted in Antal, *A Wampum Denied*, 25.

the native warriors.) The silence in the woods followed by sudden shrieks scared even the most hardened military veterans.

In addition to the fighting style of the Natives, their customs of war also terrified the Americans. By scalping the dead, warriors took trophies of victory and dishonored the enemy. Even though Americans scalped too, the Native Americans were vilified for doing it. Sometimes warriors would mutilate corpses to make a terrifying impression on those who would discover them. One example occurred in Indiana in 1812. An American soldier found a frontier family “cut up with a tomahawk and a knife. The man had his breast opened, his entrails torn out and strewed about the ground.” These displays often spooked entire settlements into flight. These panics were more common than heroic acts of home defense so often celebrated in patriotic histories of the settler frontier.¹³⁵ The settler retreat was exactly what the Natives wanted and their mode of warfare was working.

Americans would lump all native peoples together as brutal savages. Dread and hatred were alternating emotional currents affecting the same people depending on the circumstances. When given superior numbers over vulnerable natives, Americans would butcher natives of all ages and both genders, which they would call just revenge.¹³⁶ Fear trumped hatred when Americans ventured into a densely forested country possessed by Indians who had British help. In forest combat, American troops confronted their own nightmares, something far more terrible than real Indians. An American soldier’s greatest fear lurked in his own vivid imagination.¹³⁷ Native Americans psychologically weakened America.

¹³⁵ Carl Benn, *The Iroquois in the War of 1812* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 78.

¹³⁶ Richard White, *The Middle Ground*, 383.

¹³⁷ Peter Silver, *Our Savage Neighbors: How Indian War Transformed Early America* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2009), 64.

The British were caught in a difficult situation. Although natives and American soldiers both scalped the dead, killed prisoners, and plundered civilians, the difference was Americans had access to printing presses to spread their stories. Propaganda was a powerful tool the Americans utilized during the war. This propaganda embarrassed British officers, who considered themselves civilized.¹³⁸

As American defeats mounted, so did American frustration. The *Baltimore Whig* suggested, “Hang four or five Indians for every American massacred, and if it does not bring them to their senses it will at least go some way towards their extermination.”¹³⁹ A double standard is seen here. Although the Americans were fighting the British and the Native Americans, there is not a headline to be found calling for the extermination of the British. The natives are being supplied by the British with weapons, ammunition, and food, but Americans are focused on wiping out the Native Americans. The *Aurora* concluded, “The hand of vengeance must be raised against them, and a war of extermination waged until they shall disappear from the borders of our extensive country.”¹⁴⁰ This negative attitude foreshadows what little respect would be given to Native Americans when the War of 1812 concluded.

American propaganda labeled the natives as bloodthirsty savages, but also denounced the British for manipulating bloodthirsty savages. American congressman Henry Clay talked about the innocence of the Canadians in this manner:

Canada innocent? Canada unoffending? Is it not in Canada that the tomahawk of the savage had been moulded into its death-like form? Has it not been from Canadian magazines, Malden and others, that those supplies have been issued? Supplies which have enabled the savage hordes to butcher the garrison of Chicago and to commit other horrid murders?¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ Taylor, *Civil War of 1812*, 208.

¹³⁹ *Baltimore Whig*, May 27, 1813.

¹⁴⁰ [Philadelphia] *Aurora*, March 24, 1813.

¹⁴¹ George Prentice, *Henry Clay* (Hartford: Samuel Hammer, Jr., 1831), 98-99.

Even American President James Madison lost his temper when discussing the British alliance with the Native Americans. In 1813 he assured Congress that the British were “eager to glut their savage thirst with the blood of the vanquished, and to finish the work of torture and death on the maimed and defenceless captives.”¹⁴² Americans praised their own refusal to use Native Americans while accusing the British of buying scalps for six dollars each.¹⁴³ Ironically, some Native tribes were aligned with American at this time and the same tactics denounced by Americans were used against the British.

The propaganda war against the natives also opened up the door to American military recruiting, putting the British at an even greater disadvantage. The battle at Frenchtown and subsequent events became a rallying cry for the Americans throughout the rest of the war. After winning an engagement near Frenchtown (settlement south of Detroit) British General Henry Procter did not have enough supplies to take the wounded American soldiers with him back to Detroit. During the evening, many of these soldiers were killed by Native Americans. “Remember the River Raisin” was a call to arms and a call to remember American fallen soldiers at Frenchtown.¹⁴⁴

In their defense, the British asserted that the natives had every right to defend their own lands in their own way against American aggression. The British also insisted that they did everything in within their power to moderate the Indian mode of war. The British stated the

¹⁴² President Madison’s Address, 4 March 1813, *Annual Register or A View of the History, Politics and Literature for the Year 1813*, 395.

¹⁴³ Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812*, 207.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 213-14.

Crown only paid for captives, which encouraged the warriors to spare lives.¹⁴⁵ The American propaganda war machine embarrassed the British-Native alliance.¹⁴⁶

In the field of battle, British commanders coveted the ability of natives to harass the flanks of American armies and to turn their retreats into bloody routs or sudden surrenders.¹⁴⁷ There was a double standard in the military action of the war too. Native Americans would be looked down upon by some British commanders and actually forced military action upon British commanders when they knew it was not the right decision. According to some British commanders, Native Americans were unruly, uncontrollable, and could not be trusted in the heat of battle.¹⁴⁸

As previously stated, Henry Procter was left in command of the British forces in the west. He was short on men and supplies, but his appeal for more of both went unanswered. He lacked supplies not only for his men, but also for the natives. Always ambivalent about natives, Procter respected and feared Tecumseh.¹⁴⁹ Though he distrusted their loyalty, he failed to recognize that the confederacy did not have the same war aims as the British; his lack of troops required him to rely on them as allies.¹⁵⁰

Native Americans were becoming more of a burden to the British as the war continued.¹⁵¹ They would often leave a battle to return home or would not listen to British commanding officers. The number of Natives also dependent on British gifts of food and clothing was also becoming unsustainable.¹⁵² The British/Canadian forces were having a difficult time even

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 208.

¹⁴⁶ Antal, *A Wampum Denied*, 200.

¹⁴⁷ Antal, *A Wampum Denied*, 177.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 195.

¹⁴⁹ Zuehlke, *For Honour's Sake*, 197.

¹⁵⁰ Pierre Burton, *The Invasion of Canada: 1812-1813* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1980), 282-83.

¹⁵¹ Calloway, *Crown and Calumet*, 196-214.

¹⁵² Procter to Prevost, July 11, 1813, in *Select British Documents*, 2: 254.

getting supplies to the outer reaches of Upper Canada, let alone supplying multiple tribes with enough food to survive.

After the defeat at Detroit, William Henry Harrison was ordered to recapture the lost territory. His plan was to construct a string of forts along the Sandusky River through Ohio. In this way, he could protect his supply lines through inhospitable areas. Procter, although short on supplies, knew he must stop him before the Americans became entrenched in the heart of Indian country. A string of forts would serve to demoralize the natives and strain the British/ Native alliance.¹⁵³ The first problem Procter faced with the natives was a lack of response. On April 3, 1813, Procter sent word to Tecumseh, asking him to join the attack, but six days later he still did not have a reply.¹⁵⁴ On April 16, Tecumseh and his brother arrived with about a dozen warriors. He asked Procter to wait an additional five days for the arrival of four hundred braves. Procter needed the manpower and was forced to wait, but the almost month-long delay allowed Harrison to strengthen the newly constructed Fort Meigs. The episode shows an example of a growing lack of communication between the allies or it might indicate how meager overall resources were for both the British and Tecumseh's Confederacy.

An example of the Natives abandoning British forces also took place at the first siege of Fort Meigs. Attracting more natives to the British cause was both advantageous and disadvantageous for the British. Many western tribes arrived at Detroit a few weeks after the great victory. They were western tribes who had not been directly affected by American encroachment yet and had never seen an American. British Indian agents had given them some supplies due to an extended drought in their region. Now they followed the agents back to

¹⁵³ Antal, *A Wampum Denied*, 221.

¹⁵⁴ Procter to Sheaffe, 3 April 1813, NAC, C 678: 167.

Detroit ready to fight, but expecting further provisions for their families.¹⁵⁵ The Native coalition now consisted of more than three thousand warriors, outnumbering the British regulars six to one. The British could never prevail on the frontier without Indian support, but their support came at a price. Procter had to be the aggressor in order to keep the Native Americans involved. Only through offensive action could they regain the lands stolen by the Americans through war and deceit.¹⁵⁶ Procter was forced to use the new arrivals immediately or risk losing them. Due to the shortage of supplies, Procter wanted to attack a supply depot on the Upper Sandusky River, but the warriors had other ideas.

Procter wrote, "I had the mortification to find instead of the Indian force being a disposable one, or under my direction, our movements should be subject to the caprices and prejudices of the Indian body, to the degree in which my regular force was disproportionate to their numbers."¹⁵⁷ Native Americans were forcing the British to fight in places where they did not see an advantage and in circumstances when there was a disagreement in leadership. The Native warriors were always going to follow the leadership of Tecumseh. Again, once Brock died, the British/Native alliance existed but did not prosper.

Procter agreed to attack Fort Meigs. The allies marched towards the American fortifications and scored a tactical victory outside of the fort by destroying a column of American reinforcements trying to get inside the fort. The victory did not end up with the capturing of the fort though. After capturing over 400 American soldiers, Native Americans began tomahawking the helpless men. British officers were helpless amongst their native allies. At this point, a

¹⁵⁵ Procter to Lt. Gen. J.C. Sherbrooke, 15 June 1813, NAC, C 679: 104.

¹⁵⁶ Zuehlke, *For Honour's Sake*, 198.

¹⁵⁷ Procter to Prevost, 13 July 1813, NAC, C 679: 220.

British soldier was killed when he tried to intervene and stop the killing of prisoners.¹⁵⁸

Tecumseh arrived and threatened to kill any warrior who continued to murder prisoners. After the capture of this large number of troops, many warriors departed, heading home to deliver captured goods. Procter could not continue the siege without the main body of his force and was forced to retreat to Amherstberg before the Americans could pick up on his weakness.¹⁵⁹ On top of this, his superior (Prevost) had not wanted him making incursions into American territory anyways.

During the summer of 1813, the British were also in a tenuous position along the Niagara frontier. The Americans held Fort George on the Canadian side of the Niagara River, but each side was waiting to move further until control over Lake Ontario was established. The British relied on their Indian allies to keep the Americans pinned within Fort George and to keep British soldiers and Upper Canadian settlers from deserting.¹⁶⁰ The reliance proved double-edged, for the warriors demanded that the British keep a substantial army on the Niagara Peninsula, a dangerously exposed position should the Americans gain naval control of the lake.¹⁶¹ British officer Edward Baynes explained that a withdrawal “would have lost us all our wavering friends and would have proved destructive to our Indian alliance.”¹⁶² British officers making decisions to keep the Native Alliance together was not necessarily the best military tactic for the war. This is where conflicting war aims prevented the alliance from operating smoothly. The British were stretched to the limits at home dealing with Napoleon and were now being forced to use their scant resources to protect an alliance they needed in order to defend Canada.

¹⁵⁸ Chambers Diary, 5 May 1813, MPHC 15: 291.

¹⁵⁹ Antal, *A Wampum Denied*, 230-31.

¹⁶⁰ William Claus, Journal, in C. Johnston, ed., *Valley of the Six Nations*, 217.

¹⁶¹ George Prevost to William Bathurst, Sept. 15, 1813, DHCNF, 7:131.

¹⁶² Edward Baynes to Henry Procter, Sept. 18, 1813, in Esaret, ed., *Messages and Letters*, 2:582-83.

Even with the destruction of another American military force, Procter did not achieve his goal of dislodging the Americans from Ohio. It had been at best a long shot and it had a visible effect on the local tribes. Many came forward to the Americans, including local chiefs of the Delaware, Seneca, and Shawnee, to offer surrender. Furthermore, Procter's failure to destroy the fort became a new source of friction among the allies, as Natives insisted on fulfillment of Brock's promise that their lands would be recovered.¹⁶³ The other side of the equation was massive American reprisals against all Natives in the Ohio region – even against tribes like the Miami which had been loyal to the United States.¹⁶⁴

Lacking regulars he had to rely on Indian warriors, who meant to call the shots in their alliance with the British. A British officer lamented:

As we are now completely in the savages' power, we are obliged in a great measure to act as they think proper.... Many dread the war whoop may sound in our ears, if we act contrary to their ideas, which are as wild as themselves. We have spread a net which may catch us.¹⁶⁵

The British were now worried about the Americans launching an attack and their Native allies turning on them if they did not agree to follow Native orders.

The Indians also increased their harassment of the settlers in occupied Michigan. A Detroit resident noted that when the Natives returned from the victory at Frenchtown they were “elated with their success and exhibited scalps, prisoners, and clothing. They danced from door to door, and we were obliged to be silent spectators and give them refreshments of Victuals and drink lest we should share the same fate.”¹⁶⁶ The psychological terror that had been an

¹⁶³ Antal, *A Wampum Denied*, 232.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 234.

¹⁶⁵ Letter of a British Dragoon, quoted in Antal, *A Wampum Denied*, 307-308.

¹⁶⁶ Lewis Bond, *Journal*, 40.

advantage for the British was gradually becoming a problem as the war progressed. The British feared for their own safety and could not protect captives or people in conquered territory.

Procter was forced to attempt another attack on Fort Meigs while his supply lines were dangerously thin. He reflected on the large gathering of natives: “The encampment of this large body of warriors with their women and children presented an imposing spectacle. They were perhaps a more numerous assemblage of the Indian nations than had ever united in arms in a common cause.”¹⁶⁷ Again the siege on Fort Meigs failed, but rather than return to Amherstberg, Procter decided to attack Fort Stephenson along the Sandusky River. Again, the native alliance was the reason. The British Indian Department leaders openly declared that without some kind of victory, the Natives would desert the expedition.¹⁶⁸

Again, Procter was left with fewer natives than he expected. He wrote, “We could not muster hundreds of Indians than I might reasonable have expected thousands.”¹⁶⁹ Tecumseh did not accompany Procter to Fort Stephenson, rather he returned with a large body of Native Americans to Amherstburg to protect native families from an American invasion.¹⁷⁰ Procter proceeded with his forces and was promptly routed by the Americans at Fort Stephenson. In his report Procter attributes the loss to his allies:

The troops maintained the greatest bravery ... but the Indians who had proposed the assault, and had it not been assented to, would have ever stigmatized the British character, scarcely came under fire, before they ran off out of reach. A more than adequate sacrifice having been made to Indian opinion, I drew off the brave assailants who had been carried away by a high sense of honour to urge too strongly the attack ... You will perceive that my Indian force is seldom disposable, never to be relied on in the hour of need, and is only found to be useful in proportion as we are independent of it.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁷ Procter and Procter, *Lucubrations*, 348-49.

¹⁶⁸ Procter to Prevost, 9 August 1813, NAC, C679: 371.

¹⁶⁹ Procter to Prevost, 9 August 1813, *Select British Documents 2*: 45.

¹⁷⁰ Antal, *A Wampum Denied*, 256.

¹⁷¹ Procter to Prevost, 9 August 1813, *Select British Documents 2*: 46.

The alliance between the British and the Native Americans was slowly fragmenting. Many of the neutral tribes in the Ohio region declared support for the Americans in hopes of being provisioned.¹⁷² Even Tecumseh proposed to abandon the alliance, complaining that the British reinforcements had not arrived and the braves were being used to merely “start the game.”¹⁷³

Tecumseh remained loyal to the British, but the consequences of an inadequately supported Native alliance became apparent. The confederacy had contributed substantially to past British successes. Ironically though, as the number of braves increased, their military effectiveness diminished. The Americans had effectively neutralized the benefits of guerilla warfare. They forced concentrated engagements against fortifications in which the warriors’ individual form of fighting was disadvantaged. The lack of success deprived the warriors of their motivating influences –plunder, scalps, revenge, and personal glory. As a result, there were many defections.

Also, Native confidence in their allies was shaken by their failure to reduce fortifications. Tecumseh remained with the British out of necessity, but he typified Native attitudes in measuring the depth of British commitment in direct proportion to the visible British presence at Amherstburg. The chief considered the ongoing shortages of provisions as proof of British duplicity. Driven from their homes and their hunting grounds, these natives were entirely dependent on the British for everything.

To the British officers, the Native allies had become a burden (they numbered over ten thousand people).¹⁷⁴ The British commissariat was unable to keep up with native provisioning. In military terms, some British officers considered the braves undisciplined, insubordinate,

¹⁷² Harrison to Armstrong, 1 August 1813, *MLWHH* 2: 506.

¹⁷³ James Campbell, *Outlines of the Political History of Michigan* (Schober & Company, 1876), 362.

¹⁷⁴ Antal, *A Wampum Denied*, 262.

unreliable, and useless in storming fortifications.¹⁷⁵ The British scheme of converting the western nations into “an impenetrable barrier” only brought them to the doorstep where the allied dissensions were magnified by inadequate provisioning.¹⁷⁶

More than anything else that affected the British-Indian alliance was the death of Tecumseh. In October 1813, at the Battle of the Thames, Tecumseh was killed. His death was enormously significant. When they killed Tecumseh the Americans knocked a major foe out of the war. Although the British missed Brock, who had died a year earlier, their state and military structure allowed for an orderly succession of command. The Native American forces did not have a predetermined military structure akin to Britain’s that would allow for a smooth transition of power from Tecumseh to his successor. With its towering leader gone, the confederacy disintegrated.¹⁷⁷

Tecumseh was not the only leader to envision a union of native peoples living on their own land. Others came before, and still others tried after him. But in his time, he was peerless – a man of enormous energy whose political gifts and willingness to work with others, whether they were native or white, made him singular in his determination to change the history of the continent. When Tecumseh fell, the War of 1812 had reached its midpoint, but the combat in the northwest theater had effectively come to an end. The whole of Tecumseh’s life was devoted to the struggle to hold on to native land in the Ohio country, in the Indiana territory, and indeed along the western edge of the American settlement to the Gulf of Mexico. With his death on the

¹⁷⁵ Procter to Prevost, 12 August 1813, NAC, C 679: 371.

¹⁷⁶ Calloway, *Crown and Calumet*, 215-232.

¹⁷⁷ John Lattimore, *1812: War with America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 188-89.

battlefield on the Thames River in Upper Canada, the native peoples were left devoid of another leader capable of the same things as Tecumseh.¹⁷⁸

The deaths of Tecumseh and Brock left the Native American dream in doubt and the alliance on shaky ground. Who would hold the fragile alliance together? Would the Native Americans be remembered in the peace talks at the end of the conflict or would they be completely ignored such as at the end of the French and Indian War or the Revolutionary War. Events across the world would again affect Native Americans.

¹⁷⁸ James Laxer, *Tecumseh and Brock* (Toronto: House of Anansi Press, Inc., 2012), 208-9.

Chapter Three - Peace

With events unfolding in North American and in Europe, negotiations for peace opened in early 1814. As previously discussed, the military impact of Native Americans waned as the war continued; however, this does not mean the British delegation would not push for their rights at the negotiating table. Both sides were tired of fighting. The United States was running low on money and the northeastern states were already meeting to discuss secession. Great Britain had been mired in a continental struggle with Napoleon for a decade.¹⁷⁹ The British government as well the British people were anxious to unload the heavy tax burden the wars commanded. The fate of the Britain's Native allies in North America would be decided a continent away, in Europe.

In order to understand the peace process at Ghent the individuals involved in this peace process must be introduced. On the British side, Lord Liverpool held an important role. He became Prime Minister of Britain right before hostilities with the United States broke out. His priority at the time was on Napoleon and Europe, but as events changed in Europe his focus would shift to the United States. Lord Castlereagh, also a significant player in the peace process, was the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. His job was to secure relationships with other countries and promote British interests abroad. Lastly, there was Lord Bathurst, the Secretary for War and Colonies. He would be responsible for the army and the British colonies. Though the British sent other delegates to negotiations at Ghent, the decisions on their side were ultimately made by these three powerful men.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁹ Zuehlke, *For Honour's Sake*, 1-2.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 3-4.

The British delegation actually attending the peace negotiations was made up of three British officials. The stated causes of the war regarded maritime issues, so a member of the House of Lords and a senior officer of the Royal Navy was selected, Vice-Admiral James Gambier. William Adams, an expert in maritime and naval law, would be responsible for drafting the treaty's clauses. To lead the negotiations, War and Colonial Office Undersecretary Henry Goulburn was chosen. He could be relied on to advance the British position with clarity and precision.¹⁸¹ He would also prove to an ardent supporter of the Native Americans and represented their interests at the negotiating table. Unfortunately, though, events out of his control would lead to the marginalization of the Natives.

Goulburn was also expected to maintain strict lines of communication between Bathurst and Castlereagh. Britain (Goulburn) could initially afford to take a hard stance on the Indian issues because news from the western frontier was favorable. Even though the Americans had established forts along the upper Mississippi in 1813, many had been abandoned by the summer of 1814. Prairie du Chien was back under British control with help from the Native Americans. As the man in the government most familiar with the political and military complexities of the war in North America, Goulburn was determined to keep the Native alliance strong, so he continued to press for Native rights.¹⁸²

The two sides could not have been more different. The American delegation was made up of five men. President James Madison named John Quincy Adams, James Bayard, Henry Clay, Jonathan Russell, and Albert Gallatin as the American envoys. Each of these members

¹⁸¹ Zuehlke, *For Honour's Sake*, 277.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 315.

possessed important traits, but it would be Henry Clay, a westerner who had pushed for the annexation of Canada, who would turn the question of a Native homeland upside down.¹⁸³

The course of the war in North America had changed considerably since the onset of hostilities. By the middle of 1813 the British and her Native allies were being pushed back into Upper Canada. One of the ablest British officers, Isaac Brock, had already been killed, and the Native Confederacy lost its indispensable man in October. The loss of Tecumseh was a blow to a loose association of tribes that was barely hanging on. The Americans, however, were full of confidence. General William Henry Harrison had recovered Detroit in the West and in the southern theater Andrew Jackson had the Creek tribe on the run. As Tecumseh was fighting his last battle, across the world in Europe events were unfolding that would have a significant impact on the peace negotiations, including a Native state.¹⁸⁴

Napoleon was defeated at Leipzig in October 1813 and the French Empire was collapsing. Consequently, he fled to France with an army led by Tsar Alexander I pursuing. The Duke of Wellington pushed the French out of Spain back across the Pyrenees. By April of 1814, Napoleon abdicated and accepted his exile. After more than ten years of war, Europe was now at peace. This would enable the British to free up their military accessories for use in North America.¹⁸⁵

Even though Liverpool wanted to alleviate some of the pressure a decade of war had had on the Treasury, his cabinet was determined to give Prevost sufficient means to not only defend, but go back on the offensive. “It is the wish of His Majesty’s Government to press the war with

¹⁸³ Zuelhlke, *For Honour’s Sake*, 303, 347.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 6-7.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 263.

all possible vigour up to the moment when peace shall be finally concluded,”¹⁸⁶ Bathurst wrote. In early May, London’s *Morning Chronicle* stated: “the Americans must soon face the ‘elite of the army.’”¹⁸⁷

In short, the British were determined to punish the Americans with battle-tested troops. Within a week of Napoleon’s surrender, Wellington had orders to ready 13,000 troops for redeployment to Canada.¹⁸⁸ The increase of regular troops would alleviate the strain of relying on the Native Americans and militia. It also signaled the willingness of Great Britain to now keep pressing for complete victory over the United States. A British commander stated, “I have it much at heart to give them a complete drubbing before peace is made, when I trust their northern limits will be circumscribed and the command of the Mississippi wrested from them.”¹⁸⁹ American negotiator Albert Gallatin wrote from Europe that “the numerous English forces in France, Italy, Holland, and Portugal are ready for immediate service, and for which there is no further employment in Europe; ... it is a very formidable army which we are not prepared to meet with any regular, well-organized force.”¹⁹⁰ The Americans were worried about the size and strength of the force the British were preparing to send to America. This show of strength would have had an effect on the negotiations; a total victory would allow the British to impose their terms of peace on the Americans, and the Native state would be the first goal of the British.

¹⁸⁶ Brian Jenkins, *Henry Goulburn, 1784-1856: A Political Biography* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1996), 81.

¹⁸⁷ Bradford Perkins, *Castlereagh and Adams: England and the United States, 1812-1823* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1964), 36.

¹⁸⁸ Zuehlke, *For Honour’s Sake*, 63.

¹⁸⁹ A.T. Mahan, *Sea Power in its Relation to the War of 1812*, vol. 2 (Boston: Little, Brown, 1905), 330-31.

¹⁹⁰ Henry Adams, ed., *The Writings of Albert Gallatin* (New York: Antiquarian Press, 1960), 602-3.

While Castlereagh wanted an end to the war in North America and hoped the negotiations at Ghent would bear fruit, he also believed the tide ran against the Americans. So while the British government crawled slowly through the early summer to the peace talks, it simultaneously sped up the flow of troops and ships across the Atlantic.¹⁹¹ In a secret dispatch sent from Bathurst to Prevost dated June 2, 1814 Bathurst stated that Prevost would be resupplied with regular troops and his goal would be to protect British Canada and secure British possessions in Canada. He stated Detroit and the Michigan Territory should be occupied. Success on this front would restore Detroit and the Michigan Territory to the Indians, rendering the British frontier materially improved.¹⁹² The intention was clear to Prevost: he wished to seize the momentum from the Americans and occupy territory that the British government would retain, either for the Indians or as part of an expanded British North America.¹⁹³ The goal of Bathurst and the British government was to secure the British frontier, an issue that would play a major role in the Treaty of Ghent a few months later. Although the Natives would receive the Michigan Territory it was only to protect British Canada.¹⁹⁴ The British would push the native state to the forefront only to help keep their imperialistic lands in Canada secure, but not concerning themselves with actual native desires.

The British negotiating team finally arrived in Ghent in August 1814. Castlereagh had given the British team instruction as to how to proceed with the negotiations. There were four overarching themes under which all possible issues at hand could be categorized. First, maritime rights, of which the most important in His Majesty's eyes was the right to "enforce in war the allegiance and service of his subjects; secondly, the protection which the Indians, as allies, are

¹⁹¹ Zuehlke, *For Honour's Sake*, 276.

¹⁹² Mahan, *Sea Power*, 332.

¹⁹³ Zuehlke, *For Honour's Sake*, 277.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 278.

entitled to claim at our hands;...”¹⁹⁵ Castlereagh instructed his commissioner to assert an array of non-negotiable stipulations, at the same time, drawing out American feelings on certain issues without committing the British to anything.¹⁹⁶

Castlereagh gave his delegation specific instructions to make the Indian boundary issue a *sine qua non*, or absolute. He stated that Britain and the United States must “place their mutual relationships with each other, as well as with several Indian nations, upon a footing of less jealousy and irritation.” He believed this could be accomplished by “a mutual guarantee of the Indian possessions, as they shall be established upon the peace, against encroachment on the part of either state.” If both governments regarded “Indian Territory as a useful barrier between both states they would have a common interest to render these people...peaceful neighbors.”¹⁹⁷

Castlereagh’s instructions demonstrate his desire for the Native buffer state. In his view, both countries should guarantee native sovereignty in this area and it would be advantageous for both. He concluded that America would be able to end the costly and bloody Indian wars while its insatiable desire for expansion would be checked to the satisfaction of the Indians and Great Britain. Besides, since the United States already controlled vast parts of North America, this need for continued expansion perplexed Castlereagh. He thought it would be more logical for the Americans to accept limits and avoid further Indian wars.¹⁹⁸ He was mistaken in his belief that the Americans would accept this.

America’s seizure of most of the Floridas and multiple invasions of Canada led Castlereagh to seek revision of the frontier boundaries between the U.S. and British North

¹⁹⁵ Charles William Vane, ed., *Correspondence, Despatches and Other Papers of Viscount Castlereagh, Second Marquess of Londonderry* (London: John Murray, 1853), 68.

¹⁹⁶ Zuehlke, *For Honour’s Sake*, 298.

¹⁹⁷ Vane, *Correspondence, Despatches and other Paper of Viscount Castlereagh*, 69-72.

¹⁹⁸ Zuehlke, *For Honour’s Sake*, 298.

America, but he did not state how those boundaries were to be drawn. He only said that the Treaty of 1783, which set the present boundaries had been “very hastily and improvidently framed in this respect.”¹⁹⁹ The wording was left vague by Castlereagh to see how the Americans would react to redefining boundaries on territory they already occupied.

On August 8, 1814 Goulburn delivered the British demands to the American delegation. As instructed, he pushed for Native rights as a *sine qua non*. Goulburn stated that the Indian boundary must be “definitively marked out, as a permanent barrier between the dominions of Great Britain and the United States.”²⁰⁰ He also stated Britain wanted to revise the boundary line between American and British North America. Responding to questions from the Americans Goulburn quickly assured them that Britain “did not contemplate an acquisition of territory.”²⁰¹

Castlereagh did not provide any instructions, so the British did not define the proposed Indian boundary or Canadian border revision. Actually, Goulburn was more familiar with the geography of North America and its current boundaries than his superior, so he pressed the issue more forcefully than his instructions suggested.²⁰² He was determined that any treaty stifle further imperialistic designs America might have.²⁰³ This is an important point because he wanted to check American expansion and the native buffer zone would be the key to doing it. Goulburn did not express his desire to check American expansion, but was using his negotiating wit to secure the advantage for Britain.

The Americans were not prepared for the Native provision in the peace treaty. They returned to their hotel in order to construct some type of response to the British demands.

¹⁹⁹ Vane, *Correspondence, Despatches and other Paper of Viscount Castlereagh*, 70-73.

²⁰⁰ Perkins, *Castlereagh and Adams*, 71.

²⁰¹ Charles Francis Adams, ed., *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams*, vol. 3 (Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1969), 6.

²⁰² Perkins, *Castlereagh and Adams*, 72.

²⁰³ Zuehlke, *For Honour's Sake*, 302.

Privately, Gallatin wrote to his son that the British demanded that the “Indian tribes should have the whole of the North-Western Territory. This comprises the States of Michigan, Wisconsin, and Illinois—four fifths of Indiana and a third of Ohio. That an Indian sovereignty should be constituted under the guarantee of Great Britain: this is to protect Canada... But all this means the dismemberment of the United States.”²⁰⁴ Simply put, the British had followed through with their intention to put forth the Native American interests that had been promised and the United States did not know how to respond.

Communication in the early nineteenth century was already slow, but with the American delegation across the Atlantic it would take weeks to hear back on the Native question. When the two sides met to discuss the Natives, John Quincy Adams stated that instructions could not have been expected on the Indian question because this was “never contemplated by them as being in dispute. No European power had ever considered the Indian Nations as Great Britain appeared to now consider them.”²⁰⁵ Adams wanted the British delegation to modify their stance on the Natives so that they could at least discuss the other points in the peace treaty.

Goulburn would respond by stating that both powers had made treaties with the Indians and some of these nations were British allies, so it was not beyond contemplation that “Britain would stipulate for them in any treaty with the US.”²⁰⁶ He went on to say that it would be difficult to construct any type of peace agreement without some assurance that the Americans could at least agree to a provisional article even without specific instructions.²⁰⁷ In truth, the British are pushing vehemently to get a peace treaty with the Native Americans included, but not

²⁰⁴ Count Gallatin, ed., *The Diary of James Gallatin: Secretary to Albert Gallatin—A Great Peacemaker, 1813-1827* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1920), 27-28.

²⁰⁵ “Letters from Henry Goulburn to Earl Bathurst: August 9th to December 30th, 1814,” Lord Bathurst Papers, Reel H-2091, Vol. A 8, MG 24, Library and Archives Canada, 190-95.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 190.

²⁰⁷ Zuehlke, *For Honour’s Sake*, 304.

with Native interests in mind. Goulburn would continue on and state that his government's view was clearly "to procure to her Allies a peace as permanent as that procured for themselves and to establish the Indian Nations as a sort of barrier between the two states to prevent their future collision."²⁰⁸ The British were pushing the Native question forward with the protection of their territory, Canada, in mind.

The Americans argued that a barrier would be achieved if Britain and the United States entered into a peace treaty and then the U.S. independently negotiated peace agreements with the Indians. They believed commissions for negotiations with the Indians had already been appointed and those agreements would "fix limits to their territories." The British commissioners understood that the United States had historically broken one treaty after another with the Indians, but they refrained from any sharp rebuke. The British wanted to negotiate a peace treaty and did not want a squabble between delegations. The tension was present though and Goulburn calmly stated that Britain wanted to assure "the permanence of peace made with the Indians."²⁰⁹

The American commissioners were increasingly irritated. American commissioner James Bayard asked if the negotiating point with the Indians was intended to prevent the British from losing their own lands. The British responded that "the restraint need not be on the Indian right of alienation but on the right of the U.S. or Great Britain to acquire those lands by purchase or cession." The Natives could still sell to a third party. Henry Clay snapped that he had "extreme difficulty" believing that any article on the Native subject would be accepted by the

²⁰⁸ "Letters from Henry Goulburn to Earl Bathurst: August 9th to December 30th, 1814," Lord Bathurst Papers, Reel H-2091, Vol. A 8, MG 24, Library and Archives Canada, 193.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 192.

American government.²¹⁰ Both delegations had begun to snipe at each other over the Indian question. With negotiations deadlocked, both sides agreed to take a few days to review what had been discussed.

While the two commissions were not meeting, Goulburn wrote Bathurst that, “there was little hope of their concluding anything [with regard to the Indian boundary] without the receipt of instructions from America.” He asked Bathurst if it was worthwhile to continue to discuss other points of peace without a response on the Indian question.²¹¹ Though the Americans did not know it, Britain had the upper hand in the negotiations at this point. The British delegation knew that its powerful fleet had been sent to invade America and destroy Washington, D.C. They could push the Indian question harder knowing that with a large force set to invade the America the American delegation would want a peace agreement. The location at Ghent gave the British quicker communication with their government and it also allowed the Americans to read the European newspapers. They understood what would happen to America with regular troops now being sent to Canada. John Quincy Adams was extremely anxious without a peace agreement. He believed that America would soon face a blow that would “lay us prostrate at the mercy of our foe. God forbid!”²¹²

The Americans sent a draft of the negotiations back to the United States, illustrating the fact that the British commission had not come to Ghent to negotiate in good faith. The Americans believed that the British had come with intent to use the dispute over Indian boundaries as pretense for breaking off discussions. Whether or not the British were using the

²¹⁰ “Letters from Henry Goulburn to Earl Bathurst: August 9th to December 30th, 1814,” Lord Bathurst Papers, Reel H-2091, Vol. A 8, MG 24, Library and Archives Canada, 195.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 191.

²¹² Worthington Ford, *The Treaty of Ghent, and After* (Madison, Wisconsin: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1915), 83.

Native American territory as a means to break off negotiations cannot be known for sure, but the British delegation did make the Indian issue extremely important at the start of negotiations.

On August 19, British instructions on how to continue the peace talks arrived with Viscount Castlereagh. He was passing through Ghent on his way to Vienna, where a congress was to convene in September that would redraw the map of Europe. This was an important meeting that required his full attention. He needed to guide his country through a peace process that had taken more than a decade to achieve.

Castlereagh was not staying in Ghent long, but had some instruction for his delegation. Castlereagh stated "...they could have had no reason to suppose that the British Government would for a moment listen to a separate peace, to the exclusion of the Indians, who have acted with them as allies during the war."²¹³ He also reiterated that the inclusion of the Indians in the peace remained a *sine qua non* and suggested the Treaty of Greenville imposed by William Henry Harrison, wherein the Indians had surrendered the Ohio Valley to America, could serve as the basis for negotiations. The boundaries once agreed were not open to acquisition through purchase by either side.²¹⁴ These instructions were welcomed by Goulburn, but he became perplexed at the wording Castlereagh used. He insisted on the prohibition of either power gaining Indian territory so that it denied acquisition only by purchase. When the negotiations first started, Goulburn had explained that this prohibition would mean that neither party could acquire territory inside the Indian boundary by purchase "or otherwise."²¹⁵

With this, a small crack was beginning to appear in the British defense of the Native cause. Castlereagh stated that he objected to Goulburn's inserting the additional word. It was

²¹³ Vane, *Correspondence, Despatches and other Paper of Viscount Castlereagh*, 84.

²¹⁴ Zuehlke, *For Honour's Sake*, 310.

²¹⁵ "Letters from Henry Goulburn to Earl Bathurst," 196.

not Britain's intent "to preclude the Americans from conquering the Indians who might be at war with them and acquiring territory by conquest as a restriction of this nature would expose them to invasion from the Indians from which there would be no redress."²¹⁶ Castlereagh worried that the Indians who were displaced from the United States during American expansion would overrun Canada. He was not concerned about Native American desires, only pressing forward what was best for British interests. He was momentarily passing through Ghent on his way to a historic meeting of leaders in Vienna. His mind was on pressing issues in Europe at the time. If the point was brought up again, he instructed Goulburn to "disclaim such a view."²¹⁷

This was a setback for the Native Americans and it infuriated Goulburn. He wrote immediately to his superior Lord Bathurst. He stated his dismay at the Americans not being able to purchase Indian territory, but rather conquer it.

The Americans will I am sure be ready to assign a boundary if they are told that they may conquer though they may not purchase the territory within....Causes of War will always be found for they almost always exist and the only difference in the situation of Canada will be that its frontier will be laid open by a conquering American Army under General Harrison instead of by Treaties for Sale as heretofore....I do not quite see the justice of Lord Castlereagh's distinction....In other instances in which Barriers of a similar kind have been created (in the low countries for instance) it was never conceived that either country could destroy that Barrier by conquest whatever injuries she might sustain from the inhabitants within it and surely if the Indian Territory is made a barrier it ought to have a similar exemption. America has modes of punishing the Indians more effective than the occupation of their Territory: indeed the occupation of a territory is no punishment: for an Indian nation has always heretofore been in the habit of indemnifying itself for the encroachment of this nature by invading a neighbouring nation more remote from the original encroacher—The arrangement too will operate unfairly against us —If an American Indian nation injures us we cannot attack them because they are within the limits of the United States and remonstrance is out only mode of obtaining redress.²¹⁸

Goulburn felt all of this would provide the Americans with a reason to eliminate the Indians and come up against the Canadian frontier. His anger is felt in the letter to Bathurst, but it is not

²¹⁶ "Letters from Henry Goulburn to Earl Bathurst," 199.

²¹⁷ Ibid., 198.

²¹⁸ Ibid., 199.

necessarily attributable to the Native Americans losing their land. It appears that Goulburn is more upset by the fact that the barrier state could be conquered, thus the United States would be brought right up against Canada. He believed Native Americans would be forced to attack Canada when the U.S. threw them off their land. He did not appear to be upset with the lack of land for the Native Americans, rather that the lands could have been conquered, placing the British possession of Canada directly in the path of the Americans and Native Americans. This same point of contention would come up again in a private conversation between Goulburn and John Quincy Adams.

Goulburn reluctantly followed the directions of his superior and the meeting with the American delegation lasted less than an hour. It turned into a shouting match, with the Americans wondering what would happen to the approximately 100,000 people living behind the Treaty of Greenville's line. Goulburn did not even mention Castlereagh's point that the Americans could gain by conquest what they would be prohibited from purchasing. The Americans did not press for details, apparently thinking they were to be denied any avenue to acquire territory.²¹⁹ Although given specific instructions, Goulburn discreetly kept the Native American interests at the forefront.

Britain (Goulburn) could afford to take a hard stance on the Indian issues because news from the western frontier was favorable. Even though the Americans had established forts along the upper Mississippi in 1813, many had been abandoned by the summer of 1814. Prairie du Chien was back under British control with help from the Native Americans. British control over Lake Huron, ensured the strong allegiance of the still potent western Indian allies. As the man in the government most familiar with the political and military complexities of the war in North

²¹⁹ Perkins, *Castlereagh and Adams*, 78.

America, Goulburn was determined not to undermine this alliance, so he did not raise Castlereagh's point.²²⁰

Goulburn assured Castlereagh that the Americans "were disposed both to treat and sign on these arrangements." He believed if the British stood firm, with what had taken place, and with British veterans getting ready to invade America, the American delegation would acquiesce. Castlereagh was preoccupied with Vienna and anxious. He worried that the war drifted toward a purely territorial conflict for parts of North America that Britain had little need for. Adding more trackless wilderness to the empire hardly warranted the inherent costs. There was also the nagging fear that they engaged in a war unlikely to be lost but equally impossible to win.²²¹

Writing to Prime Minister Liverpool, he pondered compromises that might lead the American commissioners to enter into a provisional agreement that included an Indian peace and left Indian boundaries for a later discussion.²²² He did not want to break the negotiations off over the Indian issue and give the Americans the propaganda advantage back home. The Indians were of course not his concern, but policy imperatives at home (cost) and abroad (Vienna) were marginalizing them.

The North American battlefield indisputably influenced the faltering negotiations at Ghent. Part of the problem with the Native American issue was that communication was very slow across the Atlantic. The British delegation was receiving orders within a couple of days. The American delegation was negotiating on instructions they had received from their government months ago. They requested a written document with the British points to send back to America to be further reviewed. The British complied and, despite Castlereagh's instruction

²²⁰ Zuehlke, *For Honour's Sake*, 314.

²²¹ Zuehlke, *For Honour's Sake*, 315.

²²² Duke of Wellington, ed., *Supplementary Dispatches, Correspondence, and Memoranda of Field Marshal Arthur Duke of Wellington, K.G.*, vol. 9 (London: John Murray, 1862), 192-93.

against prohibiting the right to acquire territory through conquest, Goulburn inserted the requirement that neither Britain nor the United States would “acquire by purchase, or otherwise, any territory.”²²³ Castlereagh thought the tone of the letter too confrontational, but approved the document, perhaps not reading it carefully. After approving it, he and his caravan of people and goods continued their journey to Vienna. He was not focused on the document, but getting himself and his luggage to Vienna. Goulburn told the American delegation that they should agree to terms now, or face tougher terms later.

Castlereagh was much less optimistic than Goulburn at this point. He worried that the war drifted toward a purely territorial conflict for parts of North America that Britain little needed. Adding more trackless wilderness to the empire hardly warranted the massive costs. There was also the nagging fear that they were engaged in a war unlikely to be lost but equally impossible to win.²²⁴ Castlereagh did not know why Britain was even fighting anymore.

The American negotiators understood the British tactics. American Albert Gallatin believed the British might win everything they wanted from the barrel of a gun. He predicted a major offensive to gain control of the Great Lakes, a widened Indian war that must be met vigorously by America to expel the adjacent tribes or force them to sue for peace and thus eliminate the sine qua non pretext. He also knew about the large force of British regulars that was to sail for North America. He stated “It is highly probable that our struggle will be longer and more arduous than I had anticipated.”²²⁵ If the negotiations had ended at this point, the British very well could have secured the territory they had desired for the Native Americans, but this was not the end and British positions were shifting on the matter.

²²³ *State Papers, on the Negotiations and Peace with America, 1814* (London: Sherwood, Neely and Jones, 1815), 35-36.

²²⁴ Zuehlke, *For Honour's Sake*, 315.

²²⁵ Henry Adams, ed., *The Writings of Albert Gallatin*, (New York: Antiquarian Press, 1960), 637-39.

A few days later, the Americans responded to the British. The Americans believed the war was rooted in maritime issues, so the demand that the America surrender “one-third of the territorial dominions of the United States to perhaps 20,000 Indians” was both unforeseeable and certain to be rejected.²²⁶ The terms imposed by Britain:

would inflict the most vital injury on the United States, by dismembering their territory, by arresting their natural growth and increase of population, by leaving their northern and western frontier equally exposed to British invasion, and to Indian aggression; they are, above all, DISHONORABLE to the United States, in demanding from them to abandon territory and a portion of their citizens, to admit a foreign interference in their domestic concerns, and to cease to exercise their natural rights on their own shores, and in their own waters.²²⁷

The demands made by Britain were “new and unexpected pretensions” that raised “an insuperable obstacle to pacification.”²²⁸ This was a firm American response. They would not give back land to the Native Americans and have their country divided up. The natural growth of the United States would continue and the Native American buffer state was something that would not stop this growth.

The British negotiators had no instruction as to which course of action to take if the Americans did not enter into a provisional agreement, so they forwarded the information to London. The firmness of the response startled the British cabinet. Castlereagh wrote to Prime Minister Liverpool that the proposition regarding the Indian boundaries had been stated too “peremptorily.” In more muddled language than in previous written instructions, he again argued against Britain being drawn into a territorial war over the Indian question. He was leaving Paris within the hour so lacked the time to generate any kind of meaningful response, but

²²⁶ *State Papers, on the Negotiations and Peace with America*, 39.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, 41-43.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, 44-45.

left it up to Liverpool, Bathurst, and staff to decide the ultimate response.²²⁹ It is clear at this point that Castlereagh was too preoccupied with Vienna to worry about the conflict in North America. At this point, he had washed his hands of the situation by leaving up to others in the government to construct a response.

Liverpool wanted a more conciliatory tone adopted while offering no significant change in course of action because there was no military justification for compromise. He thought the commissioners had “certainly taken a very erroneous view of our policy.” He was also weary of the negotiations breaking off on the Native American point because the war would “have become quite popular in America.” He wanted blame for breaking off of peace talks to fall on the American delegation. He wrote Castlereagh that “If our commander does his duty, I am persuaded we shall have acquired by our arms every point on the Canadian frontier which we ought to insist on keeping.”²³⁰ Liverpool still believed the Indian buffer state could be achieved through force by the British, but did not want to rupture negotiations over the Indian question and risk galvanizing the Americans at home.

While negotiations were at a halt, John Quincy Adams and Henry Goulburn had an insightful conversation into the Native American component of negotiations. Goulburn angrily shouted at Adams that conquering Canada had been the war’s only objective. This was why the Great Lakes must be secured and a barrier nation created for the Indians—to preclude America’s embarking on another war of conquest. Again, the fate of Canada and not the Native Americans was the main concern. John Quincy Adams suggested both sides grant amnesty to those Indians living inside their existing boundaries that had fought for the other nation. Goulburn pressed that

²²⁹ “Letters from Henry Goulburn to Earl Bathurst,” 203-4.

²³⁰ Wellington, *Supplementary Dispatches*, 214.

they must be considered independent nations because America had entered into treaties with them in the past.²³¹ This reflected acceptance that these people enjoyed nationhood.

John Quincy Adams stated that where the Indians formed settlements and grew crops, this civilized behavior resulted in respect of their property by the United States. He then stated that most Indians were “wandering hunters” so set against settlement that was impossible for such people to have possessions. Their only rights to the land was to use it as hunting-grounds, and when those lands where they hunted became necessary or convenient for the purpose of settlement the U.S. would acquire it by treaty. The proposal that the Indians have a nation with inviolable borders was bound to fail. “It was like opposing a feather to a torrent,” Adams stated.²³² The United States population numbered eight million; its boundaries must expand as the population grew.

Goulburn shouted back that it was inevitable that the United States must conquer Canada, too. Adams specified that this was not the intent of America and Great Britain must secure Canada’s borders with her great military superiority. Goulburn rejected this and stated Canada could never have security. He also declared that there were many civilized Indians, and the American policy of pushing them back from their lands only drove these people into the British provinces where they encroached on the boundaries of Indians already dwelling there.²³³ For the first time Goulburn shared his private beliefs that without a Native American homeland the tribes would become a problem in Canada. Many tribes would be pushed onto the lands of other tribes and the British would be forced to deal with an encroaching United States while at the same time

²³¹ Adams, *John Quincy Adams*, 24.

²³² *Ibid.*, 26.

²³³ *Ibid.*, 27.

mediating Native American disputes. Adams claimed to have never had heard this argument before and the two men left angrily.²³⁴

Both negotiating teams expected talks to break off at this point. The test of wills was plain to see. Each side was trying to get the other to break off negotiations in order to bolster support in their respective country to continue the war. The Native homeland was pushed hard by Britain to get the Americans to break off talks, but the Americans resisted on this point. The Native Americans were important to the British as a bargaining chip. On September 4, the British presented their response to the Americans. Goulburn concluded that the Americans had:

no real intention of making Peace but had acceded to the proposal of negotiating with the sole view of deriving from the negotiations some means of reconciling the People of America to the continuance of the War—The Indian Boundary appears to them calculated to answer this object, and their desire of negotiating is therefore at an end.²³⁵

In the British response they stated that the United States would have taken Canada if the British had not been able to reinforce their armies. A decade of American expansionism in the Spanish Florida and Louisiana colonies was detailed. They closed by stating that they had offered a reasonable proposal that America remove itself militarily from the Great Lakes and accede to an Indian nation whose boundaries provided a protective buffer between British and American territory had been rejected. They then offered a defense of the proposition that America should return all territory beyond the Treaty of Greenville boundaries. In closing the British delegation wanted to know whether the Americans “will take upon themselves the responsibility of breaking off the negotiations altogether.”²³⁶ The British again pushed the Indian buffer state idea with the protection of Canada as their main objective. They stated that

²³⁴ Adams, *John Quincy Adams*, 30.

²³⁵ “Letters from Henry Goulburn to Earl Bathurst,” 208.

²³⁶ *State Papers, on the Negotiations and Peace with America, 1814*, 50-53.

Canada was saved by British reinforcements, which not entirely accurate, marginalizes the assistance Native Americans provided throughout the first half of the war.

The Americans took five days to craft a stinging response. On September 9, their response refuted the need for an Indian boundary and decried any limit on American expansion as “arresting the natural growth of their population and strength” while dooming the Indians to “perpetual barbarism.” The Americans maintained again that they held no hostile intentions towards the Indians and wanted peaceful coexistence. They voiced their displeasure on the British “deployment of savages, whose known rule of warfare is the indiscriminate torture and butchery of women, children, and prisoners, is itself a departure from the principles of humanity observed between all civilized and Christian Nations, even in war.” The actions led to “unjustifiable aggravation of the calamities and horrors of war.” Without offering specific incidents, they accused British officers of watching over massacres and despoiling of the dead by Indian warriors. The American delegation had again rejected the idea of an independent Indian nation, but they closed their response by saying that they remained ready as always to continue the negotiations.²³⁷

Although not explicitly said, it was clear that the American delegation was referencing events that took place at Frenchtown during the winter of 1813. They used the event to reject the idea of an independent Indian nation. The British commissioners thought the American response would rupture the negotiations, but they waited for a response from London as to what to say. It was plain they considered matters at an end.²³⁸ Goulburn and Clay spoke that evening at dinner about the Native American issue. He explained to Goulburn that even if the United States

²³⁷ *State Papers, on the Negotiations and Peace with America, 1814*, 54-57.

²³⁸ “1814 July-Dec, To Lord Gambier, Henry Goulburn, and William Adams from British Foreign Office,” Foreign Office fonds B-2003, vol. 102, Library and Archives Canada, n.p.

acceded to the Indian boundary proposition and the eastern states and Great Britain tried to enforce such an agreement, they would not be able to “restrain that part of the American population which is to the Westward of the Alleghany, from encroaching upon the Indian Territory and gradually expelling the aboriginal inhabitants.” Goulburn listened and wrote Bathurst that under “these circumstances I do not deem it possible to conclude a good peace now—as I cannot consider that a good peace . . . leaves the Indians to a dependence on the liberal policy of the United States.”²³⁹ Goulburn appeared to still have the Native Americans in mind, but the Americans were not retreating and his superiors were quickly softening on the issue.

While Goulburn wrote to his superior, the strength of the Native American position was weakening. Liverpool and Castlereagh, independently of each (Castlereagh was travelling through Europe), succumbed to second thoughts. Castlereagh was moving from one European seat of power to another on a long path that would eventually end in Vienna and found the American war ever less important. The puzzle of reconstructing the stability of continental European empires was a demanding challenge, one that required his full attention. The unnecessary and costly war across the Atlantic continued to intrude on his valuable time and energy. He thought that perhaps the commissioners had taken too hard a stance and when the record of discussions was disclosed, the opposition in the House of Commons in London would hold the government accountable for failing to negotiate a treaty.²⁴⁰ Castlereagh was worried that he would be held responsible for not negotiating a peace with America over the issue of the Native Americans.²⁴¹ Although they had been a major ally to the British, he was not willing to

²³⁹ “Letters from Henry Goulburn to Earl Bathurst,” 23.

²⁴⁰ Zuehlke, *For Honour's Sake*, 337.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 338.

sacrifice his reputation for people thousands of miles away that would never have an impact on his life. He was also extremely consumed by the more important matter of putting Europe back together and thought the British position should be softened to conciliate the Americans.

Liverpool reached the same conclusion. He wrote Bathurst that the commissioners “evidently do not feel the inconveniences of the war. I feel it strongly, but I feel it is nothing now compared with what it may be a twelve-month hence, and I am particularly anxious therefore, that we should avoid anything which may increase our difficulties concluding it.”²⁴² The “anything which may increase our difficulties” being the Native Americans. The cause championed by the British delegation, especially Goulburn, was now being pushed aside. A chink in the British armor was now exposed.

Goulburn received the softening stance with dismay. He detected a weakening resolve to decide the issue on the battlefield and was disappointed with the arrangements being made for the attack on New Orleans. The original plan called for 15,000 Peninsular veterans to sail from France on this mission. Britain realized the city’s strategic importance at the mouth of the Mississippi River, but there had never been enough soldiers to undertake this operation until victory over France was achieved. Liverpool’s cabinet cancelled the operation as strains between Russia and Britain over dominance in Europe warranted maintaining a sizable army on the continent. Only 2,600 veterans were sent and they joined 3,400 men under General Robert Ross. The instructions were given, but Ross had already been dead a week from fighting at Baltimore.²⁴³

²⁴² Francis Bickley, ed., *Report on the Manuscripts of Earl Bathurst* (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1923), 288-89.

²⁴³ “Letters from Henry Goulburn to Earl Bathurst: August 9th to December 30th, 1814,” Lord Bathurst Papers, Reel h-2091, vol. Q 8, MG 24, Library and Archives Canada, 209-10.

Bathurst believed the British in North America to be successful everywhere. Slow early nineteenth century communication prevented him from knowing the truth. He wanted Britain to seize the mouth of the Mississippi and another chunk of land in the southern United States, such as New Orleans or Georgia, to be used as a bargaining chip in negotiations.²⁴⁴ It was thought that friendly Indians waited to greet the British with open arms.

Goulburn did not think the force was nearly large enough, but he was in Ghent. His absence from Downing Street denied him influence over the war's trajectory. He was also not happy with the efforts of Governor Sir George Prevost in Canada. That he could not gain supremacy on the Great lakes was incomprehensible, his "indisposition to attempt anything" almost treasonable. Goulburn believed the Native Americans were being pushed off the negotiating table because British men in positions of power were not competent, namely Prevost. A sense of futility weighed on Goulburn, as he witnessed the cabinet soften its stance at the negotiating table, especially on the Native American component. Looking at the new instructions from London he sensed the Indians might be completely abandoned.²⁴⁵

Gone was the insistence on a distinct Indian nation with guaranteed boundaries based on the Treaty of Greenville. Instead the Indians should be included in the treaty and "restored to all the rights, privileges, and territories which they enjoyed in the year 1811 previous to the commencement of the war." Boundaries were open to discussion and a reciprocal agreement proposed that neither side purchase lands lying within these "lines of demarcation." No longer did the word otherwise appear; nor did the phrase *sine qua non*. Also, the boundaries could be revised on agreement. The Great Lakes and other territorial issues between the United States and

²⁴⁴ Reginald Horsman, *The War of 1812* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969), 225-29.

²⁴⁵ Zuehlke, *For Honour's Sake*, 339.

Canada could be set aside in order to focus on the Indian question.²⁴⁶ Reduction in the importance of the Native Americans was becoming a bitter reality to the man who had fiercely fought for their rights through the summer of 1814. Everything the British pushed forward on the Native question they were now backpedaling on.

The Americans received the British note on September 20 and quickly recognized the shift it represented, but it did not lift their spirits. John Quincy Adams stated that “we so fondly cling to the vain hope of peace that every new proof of its impossibility operates upon us as a disappointment.”²⁴⁷ The Americans knew that Washington would never agree to include any articles regarding the Indians. Albert Gallatin concluded it would be “a bad point for us to break off negotiations upon; that the difficulty of war might compel us to admit the principle at least, for now the British had so committed themselves with regard to the Indians that it was impossible for them to further retreat.”²⁴⁸ Even though the British softened their stance considerably, they still wanted an agreement dealing with the Native Americans. The American delegation would not sign a treaty if it included the Native Americans. Both sides were still using negotiating tactics at this point, but the British were consistently lessening their Native American demands.

With each British note it seemed to take the Americans longer to respond because their delegation was larger and more voices had to be heard. While crafting a response to the British, English newspapers arrived containing accounts of the American defeat at Lundy’s Lane along the Niagara frontier. Adams lamented in his diary that this was likely the first of “a long and

²⁴⁶ *State Papers, on the Negotiation and Peace with America*, 58-60.

²⁴⁷ Adams, *John Quincy Adams*, 36-37.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 38.

heavy series before us.”²⁴⁹ Even though concerned with the events unfolding in North America, the America delegation rigidly held their ground on the Native American proposal.

The America response circled back to many of the previous arguments they had made, though they were stated in different words. They pounded the point that America would always treat the Indians fairly but that the nation must be free, “in proportion as their growing population may require, to reclaim from a state of nature, and to bring into cultivation” territory as needed. In doing so:

they will not violate any dictate or justice of humanity; for they will not only give to a few thousand savages, scattered over that territory, an ample equivalent for any right they may surrender, but will always leave them the possessions of lands more than they can cultivate, and more than adequate to their subsistence, comfort, and enjoyment by cultivation.²⁵⁰

They ended their response by stating that “peace would long since have been concluded, had not an insuperable bar against it been raised by the new and unprecedented demands of the British government.”²⁵¹ The unprecedented demands were the Native American homeland and the boundaries that they could never concede. It was again left to the British to break off negotiations. The Americans wanted the British to abandon the Native interests totally and accept peace or stick with the Natives and not have peace. They awaited the British response.

While awaiting the British response news reached Ghent of the burning of Washington, D.C. The Americans were shaken by the news, but the British were uncertain how to best exploit it. Bathurst, who like Goulburn preferred a tough stance, instructed the British to put the Indian nation proposal back on the table with the old statement of willingness to accept a provisional agreement subject to U.S. government approval. They could not give the tough

²⁴⁹ Count Gallatin, ed., *The Diary of James Gallatin: Secretary to Albert Gallatin—A Great Peacemaker, 1813-1827* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1920), 31.

²⁵⁰ Count Gallatin, ed., *The Diary of James Gallatin*, 32.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 33.

response until hearing from London though. Unfortunately, Bathurst's position was unsupported by Liverpool or Castlereagh.

The Prime Minister considered the destruction of Washington "very satisfactory," but assured Castlereagh and the Duke of Wellington that it made "no difference in our anxious desire to put an end to the war if it can be done consistently with our honour." Liverpool believed that terms being offered to the Americans were so conciliatory that he would face a backlash at home:

But I feel too strongly the inconvenience of a continuance of the war not to make me desirous of concluding it at the expense of some popularity; and it is a satisfaction to reflect that our military success will at least divest the peace of anything which could affect our national character.²⁵²

Liverpool was happy with the British military success, but was willing to accept the peace they had already offered and not put the Native American state back on the negotiating table.

On October 5, Bathurst appended a note to the reply that instructed the commissioners to feel free to alter it if doing so would render it more palatable to the Americans. The proposed Indian article was not to be touched though, as its substance was too important. If the American refused to accept this then they should return home.

The British response contained much legal precedence to justify the British claims to a right to negotiate on behalf of the Indians. No longer, however, was there anything about creating an Indian nation. It stated that the United States considered all Indians living within lands claimed by it as American subjects and when these people sided with the British in the current war they were exposed to retribution "as rebels, or disaffected persons." The Americans

²⁵² Duke of Wellington, ed., *Supplementary Dispatches, Correspondence, and Memoranda of Field Marshall Arthur Duke of Wellington, K.G.*, vol. 9 (London: John Murray, 1862), 290.

could then force them off their land at will. This was something the British, even though they wanted peace, could have never accepted.²⁵³

The British proposed that, upon entering into a treaty, both countries be bound to end all hostilities with Indian tribes they were at war with and “restore to such tribes or nations, respectively, all the possessions, rights, and privileges, which they may have enjoyed or been entitled to in 1811, previous to such hostilities; provided always, that such tribes or nations shall agree to desist from all hostilities” upon being notified of the agreement. This was “their ultimatum.” The British “anxiously” awaited a reply because “their continuance in this place will depend” on the American response.²⁵⁴ The British were now dropping much of their original insistence on Native American land and boundaries. They were hoping that by eliminating so much about the Native Americans that the American delegation would have had no choice but to accept and end the fighting. Native American rights were being sacrificed further at the negotiating table because the British wanted a swift end to the war and thought they could get it because they burned the American capital.

The Americans received the British correspondence on October 8 and realized it signified a substantial retreat on earlier demands relative to the Indians. Rejecting the new British proposal would be political suicide. When the record of negotiations was made public, the government would face the outrage of New England and probably other parts of the nation for turning its back on peace by rejecting a moderate proposal. The five commissioners would have had to take the full blame for mishandling the negotiations.²⁵⁵ The Americans agreed to accept the article about the Native Americans, but needed to see the entirety of the British treaty before

²⁵³ *State Papers, on the Negotiation and Peace with America, 1814*, 68-70.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 71-74.

²⁵⁵ Zuehlke, *For Honour's Sake*, 346.

things could progress further. Meanwhile, back in America, the American government authorized its delegation to drop all previous demands if the “status quo ante bellum” could be restored. They were empowered to follow their own judgment in agreeing to treaty articles, subject, of course, to ratification by the government.²⁵⁶

British commissioners forwarded the desire of the Americans to see the outline of a treaty to their superiors in London. Liverpool was not in a good mood as news of British defeats at Baltimore and the complete failure of the invasion through Lake Champlain angered him. Goulburn worryingly wrote Bathurst that “we owed the acceptance of our article respecting the Indians to the capture of Washington and if we had either burnt Baltimore or held Plattsburgh I believe we should have had peace on the terms which you have sent to us in a month at the latest. As things appear to be going on in America the result of our negotiation may be very different.”²⁵⁷ As the course of events turned against the British in North America, Goulburn was not sure they could even keep the Indian article in the negotiations because they were losing bargaining power quickly.

The British delivered their reply to the Americans. The Indian article stayed the same, but the northwest boundary ran from Lake of the Woods (present-day Minnesota) to the Mississippi, and the others could be negotiated. This effectively eliminated any chance of the Native Americans gaining any territory. They would now be in the same situation they were in before the war except America would have control over all of the Northwest Territory. As soon as the British signed the treaty, there would be no more support for the Indians and the Americans would be free to do whatever they wanted to with people inside of “their territory.”²⁵⁸

²⁵⁶ Irving Brant, *James Madison: Commander in Chief, 1812-1836* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1961), 333.

²⁵⁷ “Letters from Henry Goulburn to Earl Bathurst,” 227.

²⁵⁸ Zuehlke, *For Honour's Sake*, 351.

Liverpool was compelled to sign a treaty as soon as possible due to a couple of other factors at the time as well. George Prevost was not getting the military results the British had wanted in North America, but there was no one to replace him. The Duke of Wellington was the obvious choice, but he had so much influence that he got to choose where he would serve. Liverpool wrote to Castlereagh, "I feel most anxious that he should accept the command in America. There is no other person we can send there really equal to the situation...The Duke of Wellington would restore confidence to the army, place the military operations on a proper footing, and give us the best chance of peace with America if it can be made upon terms at all honourable."²⁵⁹ The Prime Minister was looking for someone to lead the war effort in Canada that would allow the British to have all of their demands met, including the Native American state.

The Duke of Wellington sent his reply on November 9, but it was not what Liverpool wanted to hear: "I have already told you and Lord Bathurst that I feel no objection to going to America, though I do not promise much success there. I believe there are troops enough there for the defence of Canada forever." He even thought limited offensive action might be possible. He also stated that the American army was incapable of beating British veterans, "if common precautions and care were taken." He did not mention Native American help in the defense of Canada but rather claimed British veterans could handle the job.

The problem was not command incompetence but lack of "naval superiority on the Lakes. Till that superiority is acquired, it is impossible . . . to keep the enemy out of the whole frontier, much less to make conquest from the enemy." Wellington told Liverpool: "You have no right from the state of war to demand any concession of territory from America." Having

²⁵⁹ Duke of Wellington, ed., *Supplementary Dispatches, Correspondence, and Memoranda of Field Marshal Arthur Duke of Wellington, K.G.*, vol. 9 (London: John Murray, 1862), 404-5.

failed to carry the war effectively onto American soil, the cabinet could not “on any principle of equality in negotiation, claim a cession of territory excepting in exchange for other advantages which you have in your power.”²⁶⁰ Liverpool had already made the Native American homeland demand and now realized he did not have any right to put this in a treaty. Liverpool knew he had overstepped his limit and was now pushing the American delegation without anything to push with. The Native American issue was thus restructured and this is why Liverpool called for a return to the ways things were before the war.

Even though Goulburn was outlining his plan to defeat the Americans at the bargaining table, the mood in London favored peace at any price. Wellington’s harsh assessment had badly rattled Liverpool and dark clouds began to form on the European horizon. From Vienna, Castlereagh warned that the war with America weakened Britain’s position in negotiations. The war was a liability from which little could be won. Equally worrisome, pro-Bonaparte movements in France were gaining support. If there was an uprising against the imposed monarchy, Europe might again be plunged into war. Having Wellington and a large share of the British army overseas would be disastrous. The political opposition at home was also growing from the publication of the Ghent negotiation papers up to the end of August. The papers exposed a British government making war for little purpose other than territorial acquisition. Finances were even more of a concern. With the European war at an end, continuing the property tax courted political ruin, but it was necessary to fund the war in America.²⁶¹

Liverpool explained to Castlereagh, “We determined, if all other points can be satisfactorily settled, not to continue the war for the purpose of obtaining or securing any acquisition of territory.” He was saying that Britain could not continue to fight a war where our

²⁶⁰ Wellington, *Supplementary Dispatches*, 404-5.

²⁶¹ Zuehlke, *For Honour’s Sake*, 357-58.

main goal in the peace negotiations is to acquire territory from America, and most of this territory would be for the Native Americans. There were too many other important matters to take care of at home (taxes, negotiations in Vienna, pro-Bonaparte movements), the Native American homeland, although noble, would have to be shelved.

Bathurst had to tell the negotiators in Ghent. On November 21 and 22 he wrote a series of letters:

You know that I was never much inclined to give away to the Americans. I am still less inclined to do so after the statement of our demands with which the negotiation opened and which has in every point of view proved most unfortunate. Believing however in the necessity of the measure you may rely upon our doing the utmost to bring the negotiation to a speedy issue...²⁶²

Goulburn responded to the letters and his bitterness at the virtual abandonment of the Indians was evident:

I had till I came here no idea of the fixed determination which prevails in the breast of every American to extirpate the Indians and appropriate their Territory; but I am now sure that there is nothing which the people of America would so reluctantly abandon as what they are pleased to call their natural right to do so.²⁶³

Everything on the Native question that Goulburn had been negotiating for so hard was destroyed in a matter of days, but as a public servant he continued on and finished the negotiations.

On November 27 the British sent their stipulations to the Americans. John Quincy Adams stated “they have definitely abandoned the Indian boundary.”²⁶⁴ With the Native Americans now abandoned by the British at the negotiating table the Americans took some time to work out other issues in the treaty. Finally on December 24 the Treaty of Ghent was signed. Article Nine would contain the Indian dialogue. The Native American tribes had not been consulted during the negotiations and were eventually marginalized by the British in order to

²⁶² “Letters from Henry Goulburn to Earl Bathurst,” 236-37

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, 238-39.

²⁶⁴ Adams, *John Quincy Adams*, 77.

conclude a war they no longer had use for. The most ardent supporter of the Native Americans, Henry Goulburn, left Ghent not believing the peace negotiated was good for Britain, Canada, or the Indians to whom he tried to remain loyal only in the end to sacrifice them in accordance with Liverpool's instructions.²⁶⁵ With the status quo antebellum restored the Native Americans would have to face an encroaching America that was unlikely to be forgiving after the way events unfolded during the war.

²⁶⁵ Zuehlke, *For Honour's Sake*, 378.

Conclusion

The conclusion of the peace talks at Ghent meant the end of the Indian-British alliance in North America. Britons and Indians came to realize that the days were over when their combined might had controlled the Great Lakes and held the keys to the continent. As Britain looked elsewhere for power and prosperity, the United States gradually translated its nominal hegemony into reality and the Indians developed alternative strategies of survival through migration or cultural adaptation.²⁶⁶

All too soon, the British forgot that the Indians had helped to save Canada from the American invasions in 1812 and 1813. Chapter two discussed how the Native Americans helped the British. By intimidating American troops, the warriors had done more to foil the invaders than had the Canadian militia. Chapter two also discussed the problems the Native Americans posed for the British. Difficult allies, they had irritated British commanders by coming and going as they chose and by consuming great quantities of presents and provisions. British officers felt uneasy about their own complicity in the native mode of war. Embarrassed by American propaganda, the British officers sought to distance themselves from allies increasingly disdained as savages.²⁶⁷

The Indian confederacy, hopelessly fragmented by the war and Tecumseh's death was doomed. Within three years all the continent south of the 49th parallel and east of the Mississippi River (except what remained of Spanish Florida), had been granted statehood or territorial status. Growing numbers of settlers, gold prospectors, buffalo hunters, fortune seekers, and freebooters of all kinds had pushed outward to the Missouri River and beyond by the end of the decade. The

²⁶⁶ Colin Calloway, "The End of an Era: British-Indian Relations in the Great Lakes Region after the War of 1812." *Michigan Historical Review* 12 (fall 1986): 1.

²⁶⁷ Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812*, 435-36.

Indian nations in their path fled westward as refugees, moved to assigned reservations, or faced slaughter by the army. This pattern would continue until America declared the west won. Only a remnant of the peoples from whom a continent was taken survived.²⁶⁸

As was noted in Chapter 3, Britain did not win any land back for its allies. The British commanders in the Great Lakes country tried to reconcile the Indians to peace terms that fell far short of what they had been promised. The natives would not recover the country north and west of the Ohio River, now would the British retain the key fort at Michilimackinac. Instead, the Indians had to settle for a vague promise that they would be restored to their possessions of 1811, and they had to trust in their bitter enemies, the Americans, to keep that promise. Given British presents and hollow promises, angry chiefs rebuked the British officers as liars and deceivers.

The Lakota chief Little Crow insisted:

After we have fought for you, endured many hardships, lost some of our people and awakened the vengeance of our powerful neighbors, you make peace for yourselves, leaving us to obtain such terms as we can. You no longer need our service; you offer us these goods to pay us for having deserted us. But no, we will not take them; we will hold them and yourselves in equal contempt.²⁶⁹

Many of the Native Americans were too impoverished by war to join Little Crow in rejecting the presents of consolation.

The British army officers resented having to break their own pledges made throughout the war. At Michilimackinac, Lieutenant Colonel Robert McDouall wondered how the world's most powerful empire could grant such generous terms to the crass and defeated republic:

It is to me an Enigma that I cannot solve that our Country, the first in Wealth, in power, in arms, the mistress of the World, swaying the destinies of Europe that she has delivered, . . . that a

²⁶⁸ Zuehlke, *For Honour's Sake*, 383.

²⁶⁹ Robert S. Allen, *His Majesty's Indian Allies: British Indian Policy in the Defence of Canada, 1774-1815* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1992), 175-176.

country exalted to the utmost pinnacle of human greatness should make concession after concession and with a cautious and measured policy truckle to a nation . . . of no character.²⁷⁰

During the spring of 1815 McDouall delayed returning Michilimackinac to the Americans in the hope that his home government would reconsider the peace treaty. The delay aggravated Americans, for the fortified island was the strategic pivot of Indian trade and relations within the continent. Without that fort, the Americans could not persuade Indians that further resistance was futile.

To resist trade restrictions, the Native Americans sought help from the British. British officers empathized with the Native Americans, but could do nothing about the situation. Canada's new governor-general, Sir Gordon Drummond, expressed a painful sense of dilemma: "Many of our faithful allies will apply for succor in their distress. If it is refused them, we force them into the power of their bitterest enemies. If it is granted them, we inevitably bring on another rupture between ourselves and the United States."²⁷¹ Drummond had to obey his restraining orders from London, which he enforced on his subordinates in the Indian country. The British chose to abandon their alliance.

Although the Americans lost the northern war to conquer Canada, they won the western war to subdue the Indian resistance. In 1813, at the Battle of the Thames, they had killed Tecumseh, their most formidable Indian adversary and the chief proponent of native unity and resistance. In 1814, Andrew Jackson had used superior numbers to beat the Creeks in Alabama. He then forced them to sign away over 20 million acres of land—over half of their domain.

²⁷⁰ Robert McDouall to Frederick P. Robinson, Oct. 4, 1815, in MPHS, MHC, 16: 77-80.

²⁷¹ Drummond to Lord Bathurst, Aug. 27, 1815, in MPHS, MHC, 25: 632-33.

Although the Treaty of Ghent committed the Americans to restore Indians to their prewar lands, they recovered nothing.²⁷²

The mutually beneficial alliance, which began during the French and Indian War, had come to nothing after the fighting was over in the War of 1812. The British bowed to American pressure. The British were no longer permitted to trade with Indians living inside the new American borders. When a British diplomat complained, John Quincy Adams responded, “A bitter experience of thirty years had proved that all the Indian Wars in which we had been involved, had been kindled by the pestilential breath of British agents and Traders.”²⁷³

Native Americans were being displaced, but did display some resistance. The Cherokee Tribe, which had adopted American farming techniques and Christianity, were still forced out of their homes. Andrew Jackson would force them to move on the “Trail of Tears.” The Black Hawk war took place in Illinois, but was over within a year. Other tribes, such as the Seminoles, would resist, but there was never the same Native American unity amongst all of the tribes on the continent like in the days of Tecumseh. Even in Canada Native Americans were being pushed to the reservation system. In Upper Canada Native Americans faced increasing pressure to give up their lands. The population of Upper Canada doubled from 75,000 in 1815 to 150,000 by 1824, overwhelming the 8,000 Native Americans.²⁷⁴ Between 1815 and 1824 over 7.3 million acres was ceded to Canada. By the mid-1820s, most of the colony’s natives were restricted to reserves that resembled the American reservations.²⁷⁵

Further proof that the alliance had ended was the destruction of the warrior culture that had previously been defended in Upper Canada. Natives were pressured to accept Christianity

²⁷² Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812*, 436.

²⁷³ John Quincy Adams quoted in Calloway, “End of an Era,” 8.

²⁷⁴ Allen, *His Majesty’s Indian Allies*, 177.

²⁷⁵ Surtees, “Land Cessions,” 113.

and to practice the European mode of agriculture. Prior to the war, no British lieutenant governor would have endorsed the American policy that sought to restrict, dispossess, and transform the Indians. But after the war Upper Canada's Indian policy converged with the American model. That convergence made it easier for the British to forsake their alliance with the Indians within the American border.²⁷⁶

The War of 1812 was the last chance for the Native Americans save their way of life, but it would not happen. The British-Indian alliance that had been so strong since the French and Indian War was now over. The Native Americans would never recover their ancestral lands and would never have the same way of life again. They would be reluctantly pushed onto reservations in both the United States and Canada.

²⁷⁶ Allen, *His Majesty's Indian Allies*, 178-184.

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