

Six Nations Legacy Consortium

War of 1812

Weapons of War

William “Tiger” Dunlop, writing of his 1812 war experiences, described the use of tomahawks during the siege of Fort Erie in 1814: *When their opponents were from fifteen to twenty yards in advance of them, they [warriors] threw their tomahawks with unerring aim and great force, burying the head of the hatchet up to the eye in the body of their opponents.*

Haudenosaunee warriors had been using flintlock muskets and rifles and steel hatchets and tomahawks for nearly two centuries before the War of 1812. The British supplied most of the weapons employed in this war, as they had done in the past.

If the king wanted Haudenosaunee warriors to come to his defense, he was expected to arm and supply them and take care of them while they were on the war path. During the War of 1812, they also expected to be compensated for their time and to make up for losses suffered by their families in their absence.

At the same time, some warriors preferred their older bow and arrows and hand-made war clubs. In this mural we see the central figure wielding a spear. At first this may appear to be out of place for that era. In reality, the British supplied such lances, but with metal points.

One summary lists these weapons being supplied by the British:

12,504 Muskets	10,123 Chiefs' guns
1538 Rifles	2,636 Pistols
Tomahawks	Axes
Spears or Indian lances	Swords
Knives	Gunpowder
Lead to make shot	Gun Flints

One British inventory of material sent to Upper Canada for the Natives in 1814 included 100 pipe tomahawks, 400 half axes, 150 spears, and 100 hangers (short, slightly curved swords).