

After the war broke out, a second delegation of Onondaga and Seneca met with the “pro-British” faction from Grand River at Queenston. This time General Brock had more influence on the proceedings and John Norton advocated in the Crown’s favor. Only a few Onondaga and Seneca delegates were allowed to cross the Niagara River to Queenston, and then given only a few minutes to present their case.

Seneca speaker Arosa (Silver Heels), holding a wampum belt, spoke of the miseries and destruction brought on by war. He reminded the Grand River delegates that it would be tragic if old friends found themselves fighting each other.

*Brothers, the people of the great King are our old friends, and the Americans are our neighbours ... We have determined not to interfere, for how could we spill the blood of the English or of our Brethren? We entreat you therefore to imitate our determination ...*

*Listen to the words of our Mothers, they are particularly addressed to the War Chiefs, they entreat them to be united with the village chiefs, and to have a tender regard for the happiness of their women and children and not to allow their minds to be too much elated or misled by sentiments of vanity or pride.*

The Grand River chiefs would not agree to neutrality. In response Arosa pleaded:

*Let the Warrior’s rage only be felt in combat, by his armed opponents; Let the unoffending Cultivator of the Ground, and his helpless family, never be alarmed by your onset, nor injured by your depredation.*

*(The Journal of Major John Norton 1816, Carl F. Klinck and James J. Talman, editors, The Champlain Society, 1970, pp. 289-292)*

The United States Congress declared war on Britain on June 18, 1812. It was not until August 24, 1813 that the Six Nations Council at Buffalo Creek would declare war on Britain. The principal chiefs who led the Seneca warriors were Farmers-Brother, Red Jacket, Little Billy, Pollard, Black-Snake, John, Silver-Heels, Captain Half-Town, Major Henry O’Bail, and Captain Cold.

When the July 12, 1812 invasion of Canada began in Detroit, U.S. Brigadier General William Hull, Governor of the Territory of Michigan, and Commander of the Northwestern Army of the United States, sent notice to Grand River that their settlements and families would not be disturbed if their warriors would remain at home.

General Brock became enraged by the lack of support from Grand River and threatened to remove them to the west. Brock sent Joseph Willcocks to Grand River to try to win back their support. Willcocks had been a member of the Legislative Assembly of Upper Canada representing Haldimand County, but had also become a political foe of Brock. He resisted Brock’s attempts to prepare for war, yet found himself fighting alongside the Six Nations