

Six Nations Legacy Consortium

War of 1812

August 24, 1813 Declarations of War

The Confederacy Council of Chiefs at Buffalo Creek, comprised of leaders from Seneca, Cayuga, Onondaga Nations, with some Oneida and Tuscarora, declared war upon Canada, fifteen months after the war began. After hearing about British invasions into what was then considered Seneca Territory, the following declaration was issued:

We, the Chiefs and Councillors of the Six Nations of Indians residing in the State of New York, do hereby proclaim to all the war-chiefs and warriors of the Six Nations that war is declared on our part against the Provinces of Upper and Lower Canada. Therefore we do hereby command and advise all the war chiefs to call forth immediately their warriors under them and put them in motion to protect their rights and liberties, which our brethren the Americans are now defending.

However, their participation was conditional, as they asked Americans for clothing; to be able to keep lawful plunder; fair treatment for any Haudenosaunee captives from Canada; such prisoners, except the Mohawks, would be turned over to the NY Haudenosaunee; and white prisoners will be given to the Americans. They also required that the warriors get paid, and that liquor be kept away from the warriors. This council pledged the support of Tonawanda, Buffalo Creek, Cattaraugus, Caneadea, Squakie Hill, and Allegany communities. A Grand Council fire was also rekindled at the old capitol at the Onondaga Nation in central New York. The Chiefs told the U.S. officials: “*We see that the tomahawk is lifted up between you and the British. We are uneasy about it . . . Our good prophet [Handsome Lake] of the Seneca tribe, who is now with us in this council, has given us the same advice, and our tribe have entered into a league to follow that advice. We wish to hold fast to it and not take any part in the contest between your people and the British. . . We are willing to do what we can, and if you want our assistance say so, and we will go with your people to battle.*”