



The Brant Monument in Brantford, Ontario honours the Mohawk Chief Joseph Brant, who fought alongside British troops during both the Seven Years' War and the American Revolution.
(NAC/PA 60047)

TRADITION GROWS

It is difficult to pinpoint reasons for the Native response. Many Native veterans volunteered for the same reasons other Canadians did, i.e. because their friends and relatives did, for patriotism, for the chance of adventure or simply to earn a guaranteed wage.

Some volunteered for reasons that were unique to their band or reserve. One member of the Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte Band attributes his reserve's high enlistment ratio to its ties to Great Britain: "We came over with the United Empire Loyalists from the United States. Our treaties are with the Crown, so, when the Crown calls, you go."¹⁸

One Native historian suggests that the Great War offered Indian men who lived on reserves an opportunity to assume a more active role.¹⁹ According to his theory, reserve life had made the role of Indian men less important, a change to which many had difficulty adjusting. He also says, for some, the war presented a chance to escape boredom on the reserve.

Tradition was also a factor in the response. Natives in Canada had a well-established history of fighting on the side of Great Britain, dating back to the activities of the Mohawk Chief Joseph Brant during the 18th Century. Brant was just a teenager when he fought with the British in the Seven Years' War. As well, in 1775, he and 1,500 other members of the Six Nations Iroquois (or Long House) Confederacy fought alongside Great Britain's Hoyal Regiment during the American Revolution.²⁰

Indian cooperation in British military activity continued over the years. Joseph Brant's youngest son, John, followed in his father's footsteps. As captain of the Northern Confederate Indians, he fought against the Americans in the War of 1812.

Several Mohawks from present-day Quebec journeyed south to join the Ontario Iroquois during this war. The Americans felt their presence most in the second year of the war during the Battle at Beaver Dams, when 180 Mohawks from Kahnawake, Ramenatake and Akwesasne, along with 200 members of the Six Nations of the Grand River, thwarted an American military expedition on its way to Fort George. During the two-hour battle, 15 Indians were killed and 25 were wounded. -