in a fit of savage passion in the one from whose hands she was snatched, the unhappy woman became the victim. Upon the first intelligence of this event I obliged the Indians to deliver the murderess into my hands; and tho' to have punished him by our laws or principles of justice would have been perhaps unprecedented, he certainly should have suffered an ignominious death had I not been convinced by circumstances and observation, beyond the possibility of a doubt, that a pardon, under the form which I prescribed and they accepted, would be more efficacious than an execution to prevent similar mischief.

The above instance excepted, your intelligence respecting cruelties of the Indians is false.  

Mohawks Side with the British (1778)

Introduction

Writing on June 27, 1778, Reverend Dan Claus's excerpted letter explains why the Mohawks chose to remain loyal to the British. Claus also defends Indian warfare as primarily defensive and praises the Mohawk chief, Joseph Brant, for his moderation.

Indeed the Generality of Indians on this Continent saw it their political Interest from the Beginning of this Rebellion to oppose the Rebels as much as in their Power, being sensible of the Americans having always had so great a Propensity of encroaching upon their Lands by foul Means & otherwise, and in particular became more & more troublesome to them in that Respect since the Conquest of Canada, and in short clearly foresaw that should they succeed in their rebellious Plan & became Masters of the Continent they would soon over-run their hunting Territory allotted them by His Majesty in 1766, and expel them. However this Endeavour of theirs was greatly checked by an ill judged Policy in the Rulers of this Country the two first Years, which had it not been the Case the Rebellion in my Opinion must have been check'd in its Bud & Thousands of Lives thereby saved.

Now the Rebels having openly threatened the Indians to extirpate them whenever in their Power & take Possession of their Lands, they are determ'd to carry on the war against them to the last Extremity. And I apprehend if Matters were settled to Morrow on Government side they could not be brought so easily to make Peace with the Rebels after such Threats, being in general of an unforgiving, jealous & savage Temper. Yet notwithstanding this Conduct of the Indians in their own Cause as it were, the Rebels in Conformity to their gen' Character do their utmost to persuade & influence the public agents Government of their being the Inhabitants & Employers of Savage Exploits & Cruelties & which are published in their Papers with the most unjust & false Suggestion, as I myself read in one of them touching our Affair at Fort Stanwix, of which they published that enormous Untruth of Numbers having been murdered in cold Blood, when it can be made to appear with the greatest Truth that we merely acted defensively in preventing an Enemy to attack, dislodge & if in their power cut us to pieces; and not a Rebel was killed after being taken & brought to Camp, but as soon as possible purchased & released from the Indians & sent to this Place.

The Mohawk Chief Joseph Brant that was in London in 1776, has since his Return to his Country and Nation proved & distinguished himself the most Loyal and firmly attached Friend to His Majesty's Cause & Interest; he has requested his Warriors unweariedly to defend their Lands & Liberty against the Rebels, who in a great measure began this Rebellion to be sole Masters of this Continent and only for the Great King their Father's interposing & Protecting them they must have perhaps e'er now been deprived of everything that was dear to them, wherefore they could not sufficiently exert themselves to expose the King's Cause, that was so nearly connected with theirs. He was the most active Chieftain in the late Campaign under me, & by my Directions has all last Winter prepared them, & the other day attached a rebel post called Cherry valley in Tryon County & cut off a party of upwards [of] 300 entirely. I am sure he must occasion some Diversion in favor of Sir Henry Clinton coming up Hudson's River as he keeps the whole Country alarm'd. And altho' he is a thorough Indian born, he allows of no Cruelties in his Exploits; his Proficiency in Christianity is amazing and incomparable, he has acquired the English Language so perfectly that he is the best Interpreter from that into ye Iroquois Language, and has translated [b] great part of the New Testament . . .

Mohawks Seek Assistance in Canada (1786)

Introduction

Joseph Brant rose as a Mohawk leader due to his connections with British officials such as Sir William Johnson. A devout Anglican, Brant translated the prayer book into the Mohawk language. In his letter to the American secretary of state, Lord Sydney, written on January 4, 1786, Brant reminds the British of Indian sacrifices during the rebellion. He pledges loyalty to the king and asks the government to assist his people in Canada.

My Lord,

The claims of the Mohawks for their losses having been delivered by Sir John Johnson, His Majesty's Superintendent General for Indian affairs, to General Haldimand, and by him laid before your Lordship, who cannot but be well informed that their sufferings, losses, and being driven from that country which their forefathers long enjoyed, and left them the miserable possessions of, is in consequence of their faithful attachment to the King, and the zeal
they manifested in supporting the cause of His country against the rebellious subjects in America.

From the promises made by the Governor and Commander-in-chief of Can-
ada, that their losses should be made good, and that soon, when I left them,
I was desired to put His Majesty's ministers in mind of their long and sincere
friendship for the English nation, in whose cause their ancestors and they have
so often fought and so freely bled,—of their late happy settlements, before the
rebellion, and their present situation,—and to request their claims might be
attended to, and that orders may be given for what they are to receive to be
paid as soon as possible, in order to enable them to go on with the settlement
they are now making in some measure stock their farms, and get such articles
and materials as all settlements in new countries require, and which it is out of
their power to do before they are paid for their losses.

Do my mentioning these matters, since my arrival in England, I am in-
fomed orders are given that this shall be done; which will give great relief and
satisfaction to those faithful Indians, who will have spirit to go on, and their
hearts be filled with gratitude for the King, their father's great kindness, which
I pray leave, in their behalf, to acknowledge, and to thank your Lordship for
your friendship.*

JOSEPH BRANT, Captain, or
Thayendanega.

Indians as Beasts of Prey (1783)

Introduction

The two excerpted letters, written on May 10, 1783, and September 7, 1783,
illuminate General George Washington's desire to advance frontier settle-
ment without instigating another "Indian War." Throughout, Washington
remains clear about rewarding the efforts of American "warriors" through
granting them Indian land. Washington's comparison of Indians with
wolves, both beasts of prey, highlights the continuing Indian resistance to
American expansion.

To Chevalier de Chamblys, Newburgh, May 10, 1783

At present, both Armies remain in the Situation you left them, except that
all Acts of hostility have ceased in this quarter and things have put on a more
tranquil appearance than heretofore... We look forward with anxious expectation for the Definitive treaty to re-
move the doubts and difficulties which prevail at present, and our Country of
our Newly acquired friends in New York, and other places within these states of
whose Company we are heartily tired. Sir Guy, with whom I have had a meet-
ing at Dobbs ferry for the purpose of ascertaining the Epoch of this event, ad-
give me no definitive answer; but general assurances, that he has taken every
preparatory step for it, one of which was that a few days before, he had shipped
off for Nova Scotia upwards of 6000 Refugees or Loyalists, who apprehending
they would not be received as Citizens of these United States he thought it his
duty to remove previous to the evacuation of the City by the King's Troops.

... The Indians have recommenced hostilities on the Frontiers of Pennsyl-
vanias and Virginia; killing and scalping whole families, who had just returned
to the habitations from which they had fled, in expectation of enjoying them
again in Peace; these people will be troublesome Neighbours to us unless they
can be removed to a much greater distance and this is only to be done by pur-
chase, or Conquest; which of the two will be adopted by Congress I know not.
the first, I believe would be cheapest, and most consistent perhaps with justice.
the latter most efficacious.

To Marquis de Lafayette, Head Quarters, Newburgh, May 10, 1783

... The Indians on the Frontiers of Virginia and Pennsylvania have lately
committed Acts of hostility, murdering and Scalping many of the innocent
Settlers, who were returning to their former habitations in hopes of possessing
them in Peace. It is much to be doubted whether these wretches will ever suffer
our Frontiers to enjoy tranquillity till they are either exterminated, or removed
to a much greater distance from us than they now are.