The War of 1812: A Multiple Perspective Approach for Its Bicentennial

Submitted By: Katy Lapp (Colorado Springs, CO)
Date: August 1, 2011

Description:
The purpose of these lessons is to help students understand there are multiple perspectives relevant to the causes, conduct, and results of the War of 1812. The lessons that follow provide a way for student groups to engage in an in-depth investigation of the parties involved in the war and then as "experts" discuss relevant issues through a simulated interview following the Treaty of Ghent.

Grade Levels:
Middle School and High School (Grades 6-12)

Subjects:
United States History, Canadian History or World History

Duration:
3 to 4 class periods

Goal:
To build on the information provided in students' textbooks by investigating the multiple perspectives relevant to the causes, events, results and future implications of the War of 1812.

Objectives:
Students will:
• research, present and support with rationale various perspectives on one of the roles of the following relevant to the War of 1812: United States, Great Britain, Canadian Colonies or Native Nations.
• develop and write a personal perspective regarding the War of 1812 and its legacy.

NCSS Standards:
• Standard 2 - Time Continuity and Change:
  o demonstrate an understanding that different people and scholars may describe the same event or situation in different ways, but must provide reasons or evidence for their views
  o identify and use processes important to reconstructing and reinterpreting the past such as using a variety of sources, providing, validating and weighing evidence for claims, checking credibility of sources, and searching for causality
  o investigate, interpret, and analyze multiple historical and contemporary viewpoints within and across cultures related to important events, recurring dilemmas, and persistent issues, while employing empathy, skepticism, and critical judgment
• Standard 6 - Power, Authority and Governance:
  o compare and analyze the ways nations and organizations respond to conflicts between forces of unity and forces of diversity
  o explain conditions, actions and motivations that contribute to conflict and cooperation within and among nations
Background Information:

Prior to this lesson, the teacher should introduce the War of 1812, ask students to identify or place the war on a timeline; examine relevant photos, maps, charts in their text or other resources; and ask students to define difficult vocabulary prior to reading the textbook or handouts.

Materials:

- History textbooks
- Student copies of the Chart: War of 1812 (See Pages 4-5)
- Student copies of instructions, directions, rubric (See Page 6) and questions for the Examining Multiple Perspectives Interview (See Pages 7-10).
- Copies of the Multiple Perspective Essay Handouts (See Pages 11-18) or direct Internet access to the following essays found at www.pbs.org/wned/war-of-1812:
  - An American Perspective on the War of 1812, Donald R. Hickey (for Student Expert Group 1)
  - A British Perspective on the War of 1812, Andrew Lambert (for Student Expert Group 2)
  - A Native Nations Perspective on the War of 1812, Don Fixico (for Student Expert Group 3)
  - A Canadian Perspective on the War of 1812, Victor Suthren (for Student Expert Group 4)
- Copies of Questions and Scoring Rubric for Interview Act It Out and Individual Closure Evaluation (closure questions could be written on the board or overhead projector).

Scoring Rubric for Interview and Individual Closure Evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Knowledge of Content</th>
<th>Critical Thinking Skills</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Presents accurate and pertinent information and shows depth of understanding relevant to content in the assigned readings</td>
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List of Related Resources:

- War of 1812 - PBS (Bonus Film: The Canadian Perspective and Legacies of the War): www.pbs.org/wned/war-of-1812
- The War of 1812 Website: www.warof1812.ca/1812events.htm
- Maps and teacher support materials: www.learnalberta.ca/content/sswetw/index.html?launch=true
- War of 1812 Outline and Chart: http://faculty.polytechnic.org/gfeldmeth/chart.1812
- List of multiple sources for War of 1812: www.archaeolink.com/war_of_1812.htm
- Treaty of Ghent Summary: http://timelines.com/1814/12/24/the-treaty-of-ghent
Lesson Procedures:

• Lesson 1: Learning About The War (2-3 days)

A. Research
Divide the class into four "expert" groups. Assign to each group one of the following for research: Great Britain, United States, Canadian Colonies or Native Nations. Provide members of each group with a War of 1812 chart and a list of sources. After student groups divide the questions for research, allow students time to view the film: War of 1812: PBS (available on Internet), and time to conduct library/Internet research.

B. Small Group Sharing
After research, students return to their expert groups to share information on their focus for the chart. Explain the importance of recording accurate information because each of them will be expected to share with another group.

C. Jigsaw Activity
Ask students in each original "expert" group to count off 1-4 and then jigsaw into new groups. If there are more than 4 in the expert groups, begin the count with one again (in this case there may be more than one student from an original group transferring to the new group). Therefore, in each new group there will be one or more students from each of the four original groups (i.e. composed of all ones from the former expert groups, all twos from another former expert group, etc.).

Explain to the new groups they will share with one another what they learned in their expert groups about their assigned topic: United States, Native Nations, Great Britain or Canadian Colonies. The goal is for all students to accurately complete every category of their charts through this sharing of information. (An alternative strategy may be for each expert group to present the information on its topic to the entire class until all students complete the chart.)

• Lesson 2: The Interview: Examining and Sharing Multiple Perspectives (2 days)

A. Preparation
Students return to their original "expert" groups that were developed for Lesson 1. Each expert group will focus on the American, British, Canadian or Native Nations Perspective on the War of 1812. Each expert group receives a packet that includes the Interview Scenario; Directions and Rubric; Interview Questions; and an Essay. During class or as homework, students will read the assigned essay and use information from it and other resources (chart, Internet, Treaty of Ghent, etc.) to prepare written responses for the You Are There! interview activity. Members of the group will work together to develop the best responses possible for the interview questions. The responses should include rationale as indicated by the rubric.

B. Post-Treaty Interview Simulation: Presenting Multiple Perspectives on the War of 1812
As interviewer, the teacher can ask any member in a group a question. Therefore, all members of a group will need written responses for all the questions and be expected to respond to at least one question. If for some reason a student is unable to attend class, the student can submit an individual written response to the questions and submit it to the teacher for discussion points.

C. Individual Closure Activity/Evaluation
Following the discussion, ask students to individually provide written expository responses to the following questions (Note: This could also be a large class closure discussion):
• Do you think the War of 1812 was a bloody conflict between people who should never have fought or was it a justified conflict to resolve serious issues? Using what you've learned from studying the War of 1812, provide two or more reasons for your answer.
• What do you think are the two most important legacies (long term results) of the War of 1812? Explain why using complete paragraphs for each legacy.

Note: The pages that follow contain War of 1812 Chart; Interview Scenario and Directions; Multiple Perspective Questions; Multiple Perspective Essays, and Treaty of Ghent to assist the teacher in conducting the War of 1812 lessons. The Treaty of Ghent primary document can be obtained on the Internet as indicated on Page 2 under “List of Related Resources”
### War of 1812 - Chart 1
Circle your group's topic for research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas of N. American location</th>
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<th>Important leaders, groups, or political parties and their positions for (or against) the war</th>
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<th>Military leaders and successful battles (select and explain 2 or more)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Focus on maritime battles and those on the east coast of the U.S.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Treaty of Ghent and the end of war… What was gained? What was lost?</th>
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### War of 1812 - Chart 2
Circle your group’s topic for research

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<th>NATIVE NATIONS</th>
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<td></td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Military leaders and successful battles (select and explain 2 or more)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Focus on battles near the US/Canada Border.</strong></td>
</tr>
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<td><strong>Treaty of Ghent and the end of war... What was gained? What was lost?</strong></td>
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Interview: Scenario, Directions and Rubric

Scenario:
You Are There! It is Christmas Eve, 1814 and The Treaty ending the Anglo-American War of 1812 has just been signed in Ghent, Belgium. You are among the teams of delegates and observers representing those who fought in the war. As your team and others leave the negotiations, you are interviewed by a reporter.

Directions:
Your team will be provided with the reporter's questions and you will have a Multiple Perspective Essay and a copy of the Treaty of Ghent to help you prepare for the live interview. Your group may also use the War of 1812 Charts completed earlier, your textbook, and the Internet.

Every member of your group will be asked a question and should be prepared for a potential follow-up question. Your responses should be supported with rationale and evidence from research (see rubric below). If another member of the group wishes to add to a team member's response, he/she will be recognized when providing a thumbs-up gesture.

Scoring Criteria for Points: Your grade for this activity will be determined according to the following rubric:

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Investigating Multiple Perspectives (Group 1)

Interview Questions: United States Delegates

1. What concessions (such as apology, money, land/boundaries) did the United States obtain in the Treaty? Do you think the terms of the treaty were appropriate and fair? Why?

2. During the negotiations here in Trent, Belgium, the newspapers have referred to the war as "peculiar" in regard to the United State's declared reasons for fighting and the numerous battles fought on the northern border. Can you explain why these things might be considered peculiar?

3. The people in the United States were divided about whether or not the U.S. should declare war on Great Britain. Did you support the War Hawks and the Republicans or the Federalists? Why?

4. Why did many in the United States expect an attack on Canada to be successful? Why were they mistaken?

5. Do you think the war, its battles, and all the damage and human suffering might have been avoided if both nation's ships were more efficient in transporting information across the Atlantic? Explain.

6. Do you think there is some hope that the outcome of the war and the Treaty of Ghent may actually support peace, respect and friendship among the three nations in the future? Explain

7. With the war at an end, what do you sense is the attitude of Americans in general in regard to wartime achievements? Has America changed its perception of itself and placed it on a new path for its future? Explain.
Investigating Multiple Perspectives (Group 2)

Interview Questions: British Delegates

1. What concessions (such as apology, money, land and boundaries) did the British obtain in the Treaty? Do you think the terms of the treaty were appropriate and fair? Why?

2. Did the recent American success in the battles of Baltimore and Lake Champlain influence the treaty negotiations?

3. Great Britain could have demanded more in the treaty negotiations if, after Napoleon was defeated, the full force of Britain's navy and army had been sent to fight the United States. Why didn't Britain take this sort of action?

4. We've been told the Treaty of Paris, signed in May 1814 to end the war with France, influenced the British attitude here at the Treaty of Ghent. Can you explain why?

5. Through quotes and songs, the Americans imply success and victorious achievements relevant to the War of 1812 and call it America's Second War for Independence. What is your opinion on how victorious and successful the U.S. was in this war with Great Britain, the greatest naval power in the world and with Canadians on its northern border?

6. Some say the burning of the U.S. capitol in Washington, D.C. outraged the Americans and will influence future Anglo-American relations. Why did the British take such extreme action against her former colonies?

7. Do you anticipate the United States and Britain will ever be on good terms with one another? Is there any indication this war resulted in greater British respect for the Americans? Explain.
Investigating Multiple Perspectives (Group 3)

Interview Questions: Canadian Observers

1. Why are the Canadians only observers at this peace conference? After all their support and sacrifice for the British Empire, shouldn't you have been among the official delegates? What would you have suggested be included in the terms of peace had you been a participant rather than an observer?

2. Many believe the United States actually declared war and fought for reasons other than those formally declared in their war message to Great Britain. What were those reasons and who supported them?

3. Why did Americans living in Upper Canada fight for the British instead of for the Americans?

4. Since the British were fighting the French, did the French in Lower Canada join up with the Americans? Did Nova Scotia with its lucrative trade and close ties with New England support the war effort of the United States? Why?

5. How have the brutal battles such as the one at York (Toronto) where the Americans burned the city, influenced Canadians' thinking about their future safety and relationship with the United States?

6. Some have said the War of 1812 means much more to Canadians. How has the war influenced Canadian's thinking?

7. A recent article indicated that Canada has been a land of refuge and opportunity for people in the United States. Can you explain this statement?
Investigating Multiple Perspectives (Group 4)

Interview Questions: Native Nations Observers

1. Why are the Native Nations mere observers at this peace conference? After all their support and sacrifice for the British Empire, shouldn’t Native Nations have been among the official delegates? What would you have suggested be included in the terms of peace had you been a participant rather than an observer?

2. Why did so many of the native inhabitants of North America decide to side with the British in this war?

3. Explain your thinking about the provisions the Treaty of Ghent provides to protect against U.S. expansion into tribal lands?

4. Although it was not an official reason for the U.S. declaration of war against Great Britain, many people in the United States believed the British provided weapons to the native inhabitants and encouraged them to conduct war against American settlers. Is that true?

5. Why did so many in the Native Nations grieve over the death of Tecumseh?

6. I’ve heard the Battle of the Thames was a turning point in the war for the Native Nations. What changed because of that battle?

7. What do you anticipate the future holds for the Native Nations now that the war is over?
Essay: “An American Perspective on the War of 1812” by Donald Hickey

The War of 1812 is probably our most obscure conflict. Although a great deal has been written about the war, the average American is only vaguely aware of why we fought or who the enemy was. Even those who know something about the contest are likely to remember only a few dramatic moments, such as the writing of “The Star-Spangled Banner,” the burning of the nation’s capital, or the Battle of New Orleans.

Why is this war so obscure? One reason is that no great president is associated with the conflict. Although his enemies called it "Mr. Madison's War," James Madison was shy and deferential, hardly measuring up to such war leaders as Abraham Lincoln, Woodrow Wilson, or Franklin Roosevelt. Moreover, the best American generals in this war – Andrew Jackson, Jacob Brown, and Winfield Scott – were unable to turn the tide because each was confined to a one or two theaters in a war that had seven or eight theaters. No one like George Washington, Ulysses Grant, or Dwight Eisenhower emerged to put his stamp on the war and carry the nation to victory.

Another reason for the obscurity of this war is that its causes are complex and little understood today. Most scholars agree that the war was fought over maritime issues, particularly the Orders in Council, which restricted American trade with the European Continent, and impressment, which was the Royal Navy's practice of removing seamen from American merchant vessels. In contemporary parlance, the war was fought for "Free Trade and Sailors' Rights." These issues seem arcane today. Moreover, the only way that the United States to strike at Great Britain was by attacking Canada, and that made it look like a war of territorial aggression. Even today Canadians are likely to see the war in this light, and who can blame them? A war fought to secure maritime rights by invading Canada strikes many people as curious.

The Consequences of the War

If the causes of the war are obscure, so too are the consequences. The United States has won most of its wars, often emerging with significant concessions from the enemy. But the War of 1812 was different. Far from bringing the enemy to terms, the nation was lucky to escape without making extensive concessions itself. The Treaty of Ghent (which ended the conflict) said nothing about the maritime issues that had caused the war and contained nothing to suggest that America had achieved its aims. Instead, it merely provided for returning to the status quo ante bellum – the state that had existed before the war.

The prosecution of the war was marred by considerable bungling and mismanagement. This was partly due to the nature of the republic. The nation was too young and immature – and its government too feeble and inexperienced – to prosecute a major war efficiently. Politics also played a part. Federalists vigorously opposed the conflict, and so too did some Republicans. Even those who supported the war feuded among themselves and never displayed the sort of patriotic enthusiasm that has been so evident in other American wars. The advocates of war appeared to support the conflict more with their heads than their hearts, and more with their hearts than their purses. As a result, efforts to raise men and money lagged far behind need.

Despite the bungling and half-hearted support that characterized this conflict, the War of 1812 was not without its stirring moments and splendid victories. American success at the Thames in the Northwest, the victories at Chippewa and Fort Erie on the Niagara front, the rousing defense of Baltimore in the Chesapeake, and the crushing defeat of the British at New Orleans – all these showed that with proper leadership and training American fighting men could hold their own against the well-drilled and battle-hardened regulars of Great Britain. Similarly, the naval victories on the northern lakes and the high seas and the success of privateers around the globe demonstrated that, given the right odds, the nation’s armed ships matched up well against even the vaunted and seemingly invincible Mistress of the Seas.

The war also produced its share of heroes—people whose reputations were enhanced by military or government service. The war helped catapult four men into the presidency – Andrew Jackson, John Quincy Adams, James Monroe, and William Henry Harrison – and three men into the vice-presidency – Daniel D. Tompkins, John C. Calhoun, and Richard M. Johnson. The war also gave a significant boost to the political or military careers of other men. Indeed, for many young men on the make, the war offered an excellent launching pad for a career.

In some ways, the War of 1812 looked more to the past than to the future. As America’s second and last war against Great Britain, it echoed the ideology and issues of the American Revolution. It was the second and last time that America was the underdog in a war and the second and last time that the nation tried to conquer
Canada. It was also the last time that Indians played a major role in determining the future of the continent. In this sense, the War of 1812 was the last of the North American colonial wars. The war was unusual in generating such vehement political opposition and nearly unique in ending in a stalemate on the battlefield. Although most Americans pretended they had won the war – even calling it a "Second War of Independence" – they could point to few concrete gains – certainly none in the peace treaty – to sustain this claim.

It is this lack of success that may best explain why the war is so little remembered. Americans have characteristically judged their wars on the basis of their success. The best-known wars – the Revolution, the Civil War, and World War II – were all clear-cut successes. Although many people remembered the War of 1812 as a success, it was in a very real sense a failure, and perhaps this is why it attracts so little attention today.

The obscurity of this war, however, should not blind us to its significance, for it was an important turning point, a great watershed, in the history of the young republic. It concluded almost a quarter of a century of troubled diplomacy and partisan politics and ushered in the Era of Good Feelings. It marked the end of the Federalist party but the vindication of Federalist policies, many of which were adopted by Republicans during or after the war. The war also broke the power of American Indians and reinforced the powerful undercurrent of Anglophobia that had been spawned by the Revolution a generation before. In addition, it promoted national self-confidence and encouraged the heady expansionism that lay at the heart of American foreign policy for the rest of the century. Finally, the war gave the fledgling republic a host of sayings, symbols, and songs that helped Americans define who they were and where their young republic was headed. Although looking to the past, the war was fraught with consequences for the future, and for this reason it is worth studying today.

Donald R. Hickey is a professor of history at Wayne State College, Wayne, Nebraska. He is the author of Don't Give Up the Ship: Myths of the War of 1812 and The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict.

PBS: www.pbs.org/wned/war-of-1812
Essay: “A British Perspective on the War of 1812” by Andrew Lambert

The War of 1812 has been referred to as a victorious “Second War for Independence,” and used to define Canadian identity, but the British only remember 1812 as the year Napoleon marched to Moscow. This is not surprising. In British eyes, the conflict with America was an annoying sideshow. The Americans had stabbed them in the back while they, the British, were busy fighting a total war against the French Empire, directed by their most inveterate enemy. For a nation fighting Napoleon Bonaparte, James Madison was an annoying irrelevance. Consequently the American war would be fought with whatever money, manpower and naval force that could be spared, no more than seven percent of the total British military effort.

Orders in Council

War with America was a direct consequence of the Napoleonic conflict. Britain relied on a maritime economic blockade to defeat France. When American merchants tried to exploit their neutral status to breach this blockade, the British introduced new laws, the ‘Orders in Council’, to block this trading. In the same spirit, when British warships stopped American merchant ships, they forcibly impressed any British sailors they found into the Royal Navy. While some of these men were Americans, most were British. Some had deserted from the Royal Navy, a hanging offence. Britain was in a total war with France. There would be no place for neutral traders, no amnesty for deserters. Although American statesmen complained in public, in private they admitted that fully half of the sailors on American merchant ships were British subjects.

Some in Britain thought the Orders in Council could be relaxed, and in fact, the Orders were suspended in June of 1812. But no one doubted Britain’s right to impress her sailors, and all blamed the Americans for employing British seamen when the Royal Navy needed them. A decade of American complaints and economic restrictions only served to convince the British that Jefferson and Madison were pro-French, and violently anti-British. Consequently, when America finally declared war, she had very few friends in Britain. Many remembered the War of Independence, some had lost fathers or brothers in the fighting; others were the sons of Loyalists driven from their homes.

Britain’s Response to the American Declaration of War

The British had no interest in fighting this war, and once it began, they had one clear goal: keep the United States from taking any part of Canada. At the outset, they hoped that, by pointing out that the Orders in Council had been revoked, the U.S. would suspend hostilities. Instead, President Madison demanded an end to impressment, well aware that Britain would not make such a concession in wartime. And so Britain went to war, with no troops to spare to reinforce Canada; it would be defended by a handful of British regulars, Native Americans and Canadian militia.

The British imposed the same devastating economic blockade that had crippled France, carefully targeting states like Virginia that had voted for war. By autumn 1814 the American economy had collapsed. British followed up with amphibious forces raiding around Chesapeake Bay, raising regiments of former slaves as they went. In August, 1814 four thousand British troops captured and burnt Washington, D.C.

The War at Sea

While these military successes were welcome, British views of the American war were dominated by what happened on the ocean. In 1812, American super frigates captured smaller, less powerful British opponents in three single ship actions. Despite the marked inequality between the combatants, these actions were profoundly shocking for the heirs of Nelson. To make matters worse American privateers took a heavy toll of British merchant ships. The public blamed the Government for these losses, and the ministers responded by reinforcing the fleet before the 1813 campaign.

The enlarged fleet imposed an effective convoy system, cutting the supply of prizes and capturing a steady stream of privateers. The next three frigate battles reversed the pattern of 1812. On June 1, 1813 HMS Shannon captured the USS Chesapeake off Boston in only eleven minutes, perhaps the most brilliant single ship action ever fought, making Captain Philip Broke the British hero of the war. On February 28th, 1814 HMS Phoebe took the USS Essex at Valparaiso, Chile in a similarly one-sided action. Finally, on January 14th 1815 the American flagship, the big 44 gun frigate USS President commanded by Stephen Decatur, was hunted down...
and defeated off Sandy Hook by HMS Endymion. The American flagship became HMS President, a name that still graces the list of Her Majesty’s Fleet. The war at sea had turned against America, the U.S. Navy had been defeated, privateers curbed, ports closed and trade at a standstill.

The End of the Napoleonic Conflict

The decisive event of the war was the abdication of Napoleon in April, 1814. This gave the British the option of increasing their military effort to secure a decisive victory. But the Duke of Wellington’s army remained in Europe, sending a few regiments to facilitate the capture of Washington. The British focus on Europe remained absolute from 1803 to 1815: securing a peaceful, stable and durable settlement on the continent was far more important than the Canadian frontier.

Even when the British agreed to negotiate with the U.S., the discussions at Ghent remained entirely subordinate to the main diplomatic gathering at Vienna. Eventually the British offered a status quo ante bellum peace, without concession by either side: the Treaty of Ghent ignored the Orders in Council, the belligerent rights and impressment. By accepting these terms the Americans acknowledged the complete failure of the war to achieve any of their strategic or political aims. Once the treaty had been signed, on Christmas Eve 1814, the British returned the focus to Europe.

The wisdom of their decision soon became obvious: Napoleon returned to power in 1815, only to meet his Waterloo at the hands of Wellington. Had the U.S. stayed in the war, the army that defeated Napoleon might have been sent to America. Anglo-American relations remained difficult for the next fifty years, but when crises erupted over frontiers and maritime rights, British statesmen subtly reminded the Americans who had won the War of 1812, and how they had won it. In case any doubt remains the results were written in stone all along the American coast. Between 1815 and 1890, American defence expenditure was dominated by the construction of coastal fortifications on the Atlantic seaboard.

Andrew Lambert is Laughton Professor of Naval History at King’s College University of London and the author of War at Sea in the Age of Sail. He is an expert on British trade and naval history. PBS: www.pbs.org/wned/war-of-1812
When the American declaration of war fell upon the disparate colonies of British North America, it produced reactions as different as the character of each colony. But the people of the Canadian colonies were united in the belief that this was an unwanted war, governed more by the distant preoccupations of London or Washington than the needs and wishes of the King’s subjects in North America.

**The Perspective in Lower and Upper Canada**

In Lower Canada, what is now the Province of Quebec, the French-speaking majority had little love for the British colonial overlords, who had governed them since the conquest of New France, fifty years earlier. As with the American War of Independence, they viewed this new war as another fratricidal struggle between Anglo-Saxons, in which the people of Quebec had little interest. The British government, however, had guaranteed their freedom of language and religion, and it was not clear that the Americans would do the same if they were to control Canada. Picking the lesser of two evils, French Canadians served willingly in regular British regiments and militia formations, and fought well in the successful repulse of American forces.

In Upper Canada, which would later form the basis of the Province of Ontario, the British administration was far less sure the population would fight in defense of the colony. There was a hardy, well-settled core of American Loyalists who had trekked north to Canada after the Revolution. They nurtured a bitter enmity toward their former countrymen who had dispossessed them of all they had and driven them out. But they were lost in the ranks of other American settlers who had come north seeking land after the Revolution, and who now outnumbered the Loyalists. The small and overworked British administration, and its inadequate garrison of regular troops, governed an essentially American colony of uncertain loyalty.

It was this reality, as well as the weakness of the British defenses -- the militia of Kentucky alone could outmatch the total armed force available for the defense of “the Canadas”-- that led Thomas Jefferson to suggest that the conquest of Canada would be a “mere matter of marching.” The American settlers in Canada wanted to protect their homes and farms, more particularly so after the first American troops incursions demonstrated that an American origin would be no protection against burning and pillaging. But these transplanted Americans would not commit to a fight unless the British administration demonstrated it would defend the Canadas. When the British did show they meant to fight, the largely American “Canadian” militia turned out in defense of their new communities against the armies of their former countrymen.

The sufferings of Canadian civilians at the hands of American troops, and the legacy of burnt and looted communities along the frontier gave the people of Upper Canada a strong sense, not so much of who they were, but certainly who they were not. And it had been American bayonets and torches that had brought that realization. Nonetheless, when the passions of the war faded, Upper Canadians soon returned to a more natural relationship with the American communities across the border, and re-knit ties of kinship, trade and friendship that the war had, in most eyes, needlessly sundered.

**The Canadian Maritime Perspective**

In the colonies of Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick, opposition to the war was immediate. In this, they shared the feelings of the New Englanders, to whom they were intimately tied by marriage, trade, friendship and natural inclination. During the war, citizens on both sides sought to minimize the war’s impact.

For Nova Scotians, there was an economic benefit, the principal British naval and military base at Halifax bustled with activity during the war, injecting energy into the colonial economy. Privateer vessels from all three colonies preyed successfully on American shipping during the war, establishing some lasting fortunes, including that of Samuel Cunard. Nonetheless, the war’s end brought a sigh of relief, and a quick return to friendly relations and business as usual between New England and the Maritime Provinces.

**First Nations of Canada**

For the North American Indian First Nation warriors, their courageous and desperate struggle against the Americans ultimately failed. The Shawnee war chief Tecumseh died in battle near Moraviantown, and the disparate tribes that had fought with the British lost not only their leader, but also their political position in the
resolution of the war. The refusal of the British government to press redress of First Nations grievances with the Americans, who were in no mood to discuss it, ended all hopes of First Nation security. Having been instrumental in the successful defense of Canada, the warriors and their families lost their dream of an Indian homeland, and continued their decline into marginalization and poverty. Theirs is the most tragic story of all in the War of 1812.

The end of the war brought a return to normalcy in terms of trade, and the renewing of ties of friendship and family. The end also brought out, in often poignant terms, the tragedy that such a conflict could have arisen between peoples so closely bound. But some things were different. Great Britain, preoccupied with its European and world concerns after the defeat of Napoleon, had learned a new respect for the United States. For its part, there would be no more talk of a “mere matter of marching” to conquer Canada in Washington’s corridors; the tough and dogged defense that had blunted American invasion efforts ensured that. And for the British North American colonies, the blurred lines that had marked the border with the United States had now become clear. The war ensured that there would be a different society to the north, following its own lights, and having fought for its existence -- as had its neighbour thirty years earlier. Out of that would grow mutual respect and an enduring friendship.

The War of 1812 was an important conflict with broad and lasting consequences, particularly for the native inhabitants of North America. During the pivotal years before the war, the United States wanted to expand its territories, a desire that fueled the invasion of native homelands throughout the interior of the continent. Tribal nations of the lower Great Lakes, including the Shawnee, Potawatomi, Ojibwa, and others saw their lands at risk. The same was true for the Muscogee Creek, Seminole, Chocotaw, Cherokee and Chickasaw in the south.

The Native leaders who emerged in response to this expansion shared a single concern, that of protecting tribal lands. There were Indians who sided with the Americans -- Red Jacket and Farmer's Brother led a Seneca faction to help the Americans at the Battles of Fort George and Chippewa. But most Indian nations sided with the British against the U.S, believing that a British victory might mean an end to expansion. In all, more than two dozen native nations participated in the war. In addition to the Lower Great Lakes Indians, led by Tecumseh, and Southern Indians, the Mohawks fought under Chief John Norton to hold onto their lands in southern Quebec and eastern Ontario.

The Indian Confederation under Tecumseh

The Shawnee war chief, Tecumseh, and his brother the Prophet, also known as Tenskatawa, played crucial roles in leading the Indians in the war. By 1811, Tecumseh had built a confederation of more than two dozen Indian nations, all of whom hoped to stop the American settler encroachment on their lands. One might ask why would they be concerned? The answer is clear. Tecumseh and his followers had observed eastern coast and upper Great Lakes Indians being removed from their lands by settler expansion, and they had seen a domino effect as one removed nation encroached on another's land. The residential order of more than one hundred eastern Indian nations had been permanently disrupted. Furthermore, both the French and Indian War, called the Seven Year's War in Canada (1756 to 1763) and the American Revolution (1775 to 1783) cost many native nations' lives and land. The Indians in Tecumseh's confederation had every reason to be concerned about the future.

It's important to ask not only about the native leaders methods for dealing with the situation, but also to ask about their decisions, their influences and their vision for future relations with the United States and Britain. Tecumseh is a good case in point, since it was his decision, as a leader, to try to build a strong system of many alliances with other native nations. At the time, each native nation consisted of a few to several communities, each speaking a different language. Tecumseh realized that he had to depend on interpreters to translate his conversations and speeches to each Indian nation that he came into contact with. He also knew that he would have to raise a massive but focused army, drawing from these diverse Indian nations, a daunting task. Imagine trying to get all of Europe, with its different cultures and languages, to fight as a single army. Finally, Tecumseh's decision to forge an alliance with the British shows him to be a leader wise in the ways of statecraft. The daily challenges of managing an Indian confederation and an alliance with the British would be daunting for any individual.

Tecumseh's and the other Indians' decision-making process went well beyond politics. He and his fellow leaders knew that the British and American linear minds moved from claiming the land, to colonization and exploitation of natural resources. They knew their own process was one of native logic and inclusiveness -- involving the flora and fauna and native communal values and relationships. Thus, the Indians were acting on a different system than either the U.S. or the British. Choosing the British as an ally was difficult at best, but the future of native North American hung in the balance.

Tecumseh preached his confederation and alliance point-of-view to various tribes, arguing that, in the big picture, an Indian confederation held the hope of stopping U.S. westward expansion. He gained respect in almost every case, and many followers, although the Choctaws stood firmly for neutrality. Pushmataha, the noted Choctaw leader, opposed Tecumseh's grand alliance.

Tippecanoe and the Aftermath

In 1811, when Tecumseh was in the South, a group of natives led by Tenskwatawa, attacked U.S. army forces in the Battle of Tippecanoe. The battle was a draw, but the U.S. General William Henry Harrison declared
victory and then had his troops sack and burn Prophetstown, Tecumseh’s home base in the Indiana territory. Following the Tippecanoe defeat, Tecumseh realized even more how important it was for a British alliance.

During the war, the Indian nations fought more than forty battles and skirmishes against the U.S. In southern Canada, pro-British and pro-U.S. Iroquois found themselves fighting each other, but in most engagements, the native forces fought alongside the British. They were key to the British success at both Detroit and Queenston; at the Battle of Beaver dams native warriors, with no help from their British counterparts, defeated the Americans, taking 500 prisoners of war. Although the Creek War of 1813-1814 is not normally viewed as a part of the War of 1812, Creek resistance to the U.S. Army in the south led to a series of battles that eventually crushed Indian military power in that region.

The Loss of a Leader

Perhaps the most significant battle took place in 1813 in Canada. Tecumseh and his warriors, deserted by the British forces, faced a pursuing army of Americans led by William Henry Harrison at the Battle of the Thames. As this confrontation became certain, Tecumseh promised his warriors that there would be no retreat. This battle, he felt, must be won in order to stop American westward expansion in all areas. But Tecumseh was mortally wounded, and his death and defeat marked the end of the native campaign to drive back white settlers. On a larger scale, the American victory cleared the way for the U.S. claim to the native interior of North America with more treaty negotiations following, resulting in numerous removals of most of the eastern woodland Indian communities to the west.

After the War of 1812, the U.S. negotiated over two hundred Indian treaties that involved the ceding of Indian lands and 99 of these agreements resulted in the creation of reservations west of the Mississippi River. Other native resistance movements sprang up, including the Black Hawk War of 1832 and the Second Seminole War (1835 to 1842), but neither affected so many different Indian nations as did the War of 1812.

Both the war and the treaty that ended it proved to be devastating to all of the eastern Indian nations. The Ghent agreement halted U.S. expansion into Iroquois land in Canada, and some native communities of the Great Lakes managed to remain in their original home areas, but their small numbers posed no threat to the existence or the expansion of the United States.

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PBS:  www.pbs.org/wned/war-of-1812