



Tecumseh: Fact and Fiction

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Introduction

Any discussion of Tecumseh's role in the War of 1812 must include a contextual backdrop to the Anglo-Native alliance. As the struggle on the western (or Detroit River) theatre ended with an American victory, enough American accounts have been written on it to fill a small library. But these accounts uniformly tell the story from the American point of view and even those historians who sought to include the Anglo-Canadian perspective were frustrated to find that such writings ranged from scarce to nonexistent.

Two pertinent British writings did appear in the 1840's, John Richardson's *War of 1812* and Ferdinand Tupper's *Life of Brock*. Both of these had their shortcomings, albeit in different ways. Richardson, a gifted writer who gained posthumous fame as Canada's first novelist, had been a fifteen year old participant on the Detroit theatre when war broke out. He wrote his account three decades after the events and from a worm's eye point of view, devoid of considerations that we now call the elements and principles of war. He confined his interpretation largely to a personality based approach of good guys like Brock and Tecumseh and bad guys like Henry Procter, the commander who, he felt, did not adequately recognize his services.¹

Tupper also took a personality-based approach in his biography of Brock. As the general's nephew (his full name was Ferdinand Brock Tupper), he deleted those elements of Brock's writings that detracted from his uncle's heroic image. Therefore, his narrative makes no mention of Procter's vital contributions to the Detroit campaign in driving the Americans from British soil and isolating the northwest Army at Detroit prior to Brock's arrival. Nor does he mention anything about Brock's commitment to the Native tribes to

¹ *Richardson's War of 1812* was first published in 1842 with several reprints, the most popular being Alexander Casselman (ed.) *Richardson's War of 1812*, (Toronto: Bryant Press, 1902). For Richardson's alleged non-recognition of his services, see pp. 167-68.

recover their lands. Most importantly, he suppressed Brock's public proclamation (attached to Brock's official reports on the capture of Detroit) in which he declared Michigan "ceded" to Britain.²

Yet, in the absence of meaningful alternatives, it is Tupper and Richardson whom researchers have consulted, rather than draw up the pertinent primary documents. The first historian to challenge their simplistic interpretations was the late Pierre Berton whose two volume work contains, by far, the most complete research on the operations of the Anglo-Native alliance to that time. But as his account covered the war as a whole, he, too, missed the basis for Brock's alliance with the tribesmen and its implications.³

Often called "the greatest Indian", Tecumseh looms large in history, literature, sculpture, pictures, and theatre. His name has been widely appropriated for naval vessels, municipalities, generals and even internal combustion engines. Yet, while Tecumseh's legacy endures, the associated trail of hard evidence is surprising thin.

In 1841, Benjamin Drake published the first biography of Tecumseh, forming the basis for all subsequent accounts. His sources on Tecumseh's early life were a collection of contemporary observations notably the credible first-hand descriptions by Stephen Ruddled, a frontier interpreter who had known Tecumseh personally. But Drake's information as relating to Tecumseh during the War of 1812, at the pinnacle of his career,

² Ferdinand Brock Tupper, *Life and Correspondence of Isaac Brock*, (London: Simpkin and Marshall, 1845). For a full description of Procter's activities prior to Brock's arrival within the broader context of the Anglo-Native alliance, see Sandy Antal, *A Wampum Denied: Procter's War of 1812*. (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1997), pp. 67-89.

Brock attached his proclamation declaring Michigan ceded to his reports to Prevost and Lord Liverpool but Tupper deleted the proclamation. Although Richardson included it, neither he nor Tupper explain the meaning and implications of Brock's cession. Although the cession proclamation is readily available in the National Archives of Canada as well as several printed documentaries, such as William Wood (ed.), *Select British Documents of the Canadian War of 1812 Vol. I*, (Toronto: Champlain Society), pp. 487-89 and *Michigan Pioneer Historical Collections Vol. 25*, (Lansing: Thorpe and Godfrey State Printers *et al*) pp. 333-34, it has attracted no attention, despite its huge implications. The first examination of Brock's seemingly incomprehensible action is contained in *A Wampum Denied* with a focused discussion in Sandy Antal, "Michigan Ceded: Why and Wherefore?" *Michigan Historical Review (Special Issue: The War of 1812)*, Vol. 38, No. 1, pp. 1-26.

³ Pierre Berton, *Flames Across the Border* and *The Invasion of Canada*, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1980 and 1981).

is spotty. Much of it was drawn from detached and unidentified sources of dubious reliability.⁴

Even Drakes' primary sources can be thin. In his introduction, he explains that he made lavish use of the letters of William Henry Harrison, who "possessed opportunities of knowing Tecumseh enjoyed by no other individuals." In point of fact, Harrison had met Tecumseh only twice, for a few hours. As Tecumseh spent most of the war period with his British allies, it is their firsthand accounts that one would expect to be consulted. But since no comprehensive account of Anglo-Native operations had been done prior to *A Wampum Denied*, Tecumseh's record was based largely on the opening and closing campaigns at Detroit and on the Thames retreat. Thus, his activities during the intervening thirteen months remained notably vague, as did the rationale for the Anglo-Native alliance, itself.⁵

As events on the western theatre culminated in a British defeat, Anglo-Canadian scholars did not find it to be an inspiring area of study; nor was the central and continuous figure on the British side, Henry Procter. After all, Procter was found guilty by court martial for his defeat in the culminating engagement and Richardson's unsparing adverse criticisms sealed his historical indictment. So for two centuries, Procter's potentially illuminating observations on Tecumseh's activities have received scant attention. Subsequent biographies, including the recent scholarly ones by American David Edmunds and Briton John Sugden essentially follow the original template established by Benjamin Drake while incorporating the views of Richardson and Tupper to perpetrate the original flawed interpretation that ignores the most vital considerations relating to the Anglo-Native alliance.⁶

It was to fill a conspicuous void that I produced *A Wampum Denied*. Early in the research it became apparent that the tribesmen were a key consideration in all aspects of the war – the causes, the strategic planning, the actual operations, and even the Ghent peace talks. In every major engagement on the western theatre, Native warriors

⁴ Benjamin Drake, *Life of Tecumseh*, (Cincinnati: Applegate and Co., 1841).

⁵ Drake, *op cit*, p. iv.

⁶ David Edmunds, *Tecumseh and the Quest for Native Leadership*, (Glenview, Ill.: Scott Foresman, 1984) and John Sugden, *Tecumseh A Life*, (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1997).

outnumbered their redcoat counterparts, by as much as six to one. Indeed, the early British successes at Detroit, Frenchtown and outside Ft. Meigs produced more American prisoners than the remaining North American theatres combined. These allied successes would simply not have occurred without the participation of the Native tribesmen. Isaac Brock gained his knighthood through them and without their aid, it is highly probable that Upper Canada would have been overrun early in the war. The universally recognized head of the Native confederacy was, of course, Tecumseh.

General

Let us begin with Native considerations as a pretext for the American declaration of war.

Since the American Revolution, the Native-American struggle could be summed up as a recurring pattern. It featured the establishment of boundaries formalized through bi-laterally negotiated treaties. Illegal squatters would then settle onto Native lands in violation of these agreements, drawing Native assaults on the perpetrators. Such incidents were spun as frontier atrocities, leading to a military confrontation ending in favor of the Americans who would then coerce the tribesmen into surrendering more land through new treaties. The process would then be reset to initiate another cycle. The tribesmen became so exasperated by this ongoing pattern that during the northwest Indian War of the 1790's, they stuffed soil into the mouths of dead soldiers, to signify Americans as dishonorable and land hungry.

In 1811, the epicenter of the struggle was Indiana Territory whose governor, William Henry Harrison, was less than judicious in enforcing the treaties. By federal law, he was obliged to honor existing treaties by assisting the tribesmen in ejecting illegal squatters from unceded lands. Instead, he resorted to securing more treaties.

The American perception was, of course, quite different. Despite the best intentions at Washington, Harrison considered it impossible to restrain the flood of settlers swarming over the boundaries. He saw no option but to continue to demand new treaties from local chiefs until he encountered a serious obstacle.

Tecumseh appeared on the scene to articulate the position that as Native lands were held in common, no part of that land could be given away without the consent of all. So, Harrison portrayed Tecumseh and his following as a savage frontier threat to national security and interests. In the fall of 1811, while Tecumseh was absent, he crossed into Native territory to provoke the tribesmen into the battle of Tippecanoe.

There was a further complication to this mess. For years Harrison had accused the British of fomenting unrest among the tribesmen. After the battle of Tippecanoe, he found firearms of British manufacture among the dead warriors and immediately pointed to British collusion. He warned Washington of a nefarious frontier conspiracy in which the British were actively inciting and arming the tribesmen on American soil and identified Tecumseh as the engine of Native militancy and Amherstburg, the nest of frontier intrigue. His assessments formed one of President Madison's pretexts for war.⁷

Harrison's view was in line with other western leaders; William Hull, Isaac Shelby, Richard Johnson, Duncan McArthur, Lewis Cass, and Henry Clay, who were unanimous in their understanding of the aim in the impending hostilities. They rarely, if ever, touted the slogan "Free Trade and Sailor's Rights." For them, the aim was the occupation and possibly cession of Upper Canada as a means to divide the Anglo-Native connection, once and for all. This view was articulated in an official congressional statement: "Whatever may have been the disposition of the British government, the conduct of its subordinate agents had tended to excite the hostility of the Indian tribes...Her [Britain's] invisible arm was in the defeats of General Harmar and General St. Clair." For western war hawks, the battle of Tippecanoe of 1811 was only the first shot fired in the war to come.⁸

So the vanguard invasion of Upper Canada was on the Detroit River. As early as 1805, its commander, William Hull, had urged the annexation of the Canadian side to "forever put down Indian apprehensions". Not surprisingly, his 1812 invasion featured a public proclamation that bestowed "the blessings of liberty" on the civilian populace.

⁷ Tecumseh's speech to Harrison, 20 Aug. 1810, Esarey, p. 466.

⁸ Alexander J. Dallas, *An Exposition on the Causes and Character of the War Between the United States and Great Britain*, (Concord, NH: 1815), p. 58.

Hull's invasion along with all other attempts ended disastrously, except one. It was the same area identified by Hull, (the Canadian side of the Detroit River) that was successfully occupied in 1813 and remained so until mid-1815. As the beginning of that occupation coincided with the death of Tecumseh and the destruction of his confederacy, American westerners considered their war aim achieved.⁹

The British relationship with the tribesmen was as convoluted as the American one but it also had its own peculiar logic. Contrary to Harrison's assessment of the warriors being lavishly armed from Canadian arsenals, the British government did not actually issue the warriors weapons. The British Indian Department did bestow annual presents on the tribesmen which included lead and powder for hunting and even that was drastically reduced after the battle of Tippecanoe. Since the Royal Proclamation of 1759, this tradition of giving presents had been maintained to retain their friendship so as to preclude a recurrence of the Pontiac insurrection. The British held the position that while the Natives did reside within American boundaries, the land, itself, belonged to the tribes.¹⁰

Weapons were another matter. These were provided to the warriors through trade with the Northwest Company and its surrogate, the Southwest (or Mackinac) Company. Despite the dubious optics of peddling armament across American boundaries, the British held that this, too, was legitimate, justifying the legality of such commerce under the terms of Jay's Treaty of 1794. Article III specified:

“It is agreed that it shall at all times be free to His Majesty's subjects, and to the citizens of the United States, and also to the Indians dwelling on either side of the said boundary line, freely to pass by land and inland navigation, into the respective territories and countries of the two parties...to navigate all the lakes,

⁹ Hull's proclamation is found in Hull to Eustis, 14 July, 1812, *Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections*, Vol. 15, pp. 413-14. Hull's proclamation clearly signified annexation, rather than mere military occupation and when British delegates pointed this out at Ghent, their American counterparts repudiated Hull's action as unsanctioned by Washington.

¹⁰ For a full examination of the role of the British Indian Department within the broader context of Anglo-Native relations, see Robert. S. Allen, *His Majesty's Indian Allies: British Indian Policy in the Defence of Canada, 1774-1815*, (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1993). The reduction in British allocations of powder and ball is reported in Superintendent William Claus to Brock, 16 June, 1812. Library and Archives Canada, C676: 144.

rivers and waters thereof, and freely to carry on trade and commerce with each other.”¹¹

In a word, Jay’s Treaty allowed for a free trade system between Americans, Britons and Natives. One of the ironies of this war was that notwithstanding the war aim of “Free Trade and Sailor’s Rights”, the Treaty of Ghent actually shut down a pre-existing free trade arrangement along the northern American border; nor was it restored until recent times through the North American Free Trade Agreement.

In organizing his militant movement, Tecumseh realized that without external aid, his cause stood no chance against superior American numbers and technology. So, in 1808 and again in 1811, immediately after Tippecanoe, he met with the British Indian Department to propose a military pact. On both occasions, he was put off since Britain had no interest in another American war, being preoccupied with the Napoleonic struggle. As military commander and acting lieutenant governor of Upper Canada, Isaac Brock characterized the Native Leadership as “infatuated fanatics” and made it to be clearly understood that if the tribesmen provoked a war with the U.S., they could expect no aid from Britain.¹²

But, privately, Brock pondered the notion of an Anglo-Native alliance in his contingency planning. In early 1812, he prepared a classified document entitled “Plans for the Defense of Canada.” In it, he proposed to augment his manpower deficiency with Native warriors and use them to create a major diversion in the west. As the Native families would become entirely dependent on the British commissary for provisioning and clothing while the warriors were on the war path, Brock identified the need for significant logistical resources for the west. His other preconditions included significantly strengthening the military and marine facilities at Amherstburg. Brock placed Colonel Henry Procter, on standby, ready to proceed with 1000 regulars to capture Detroit, on the outbreak of war so as to sway the tribesmen *en masse* to the British side. But Governor

¹¹ Article III to Jay’s Treaty, 19 Nov. 1794, cited in William Mac Donald (ed.), *Select Documents Illustrative of the United States, 1776-1861*, (New York: MacMillan Co., 1898). p. 114

¹² Brock to Prevost, 3 Dec. 1811 cited in Tupper, *op cit*, p. 97 also in *Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections*, Vol. 25, p. 288-89.

Prevost considered Brock's plan a case of strategic over-reach. He was decidedly opposed, depicting Brock's plan to London as "vain".¹³

So, note that from the beginning, the defined resources requisite to carry out Brock's plan were not in place or even earmarked; nor would they be. The overriding factor that would define the outcome of the war in the west would be logistics. Simply put, the outcome was attributable to the Americans' committing resources that the British did not come close to matching.

Nonetheless, when war actually broke out, Brock implemented his scheme. As planned, he sent Procter to take command in the west. But instead of a regiment, Procter took with him only ten men. This reinforcement did little to offset Hull's numerical superiority since his army outnumbered the red coats at Amherstburg by ten to one. Indeed, Hull had more men under arms than Brock had regulars in the entire colony! Even when allowing for the qualitative differential between American militia and British regulars, Hull's advantage was huge.¹⁴

It was the tribesmen who altered these odds. On the outbreak of war, Tecumseh, still intent on securing British aid, immediately sided with the British, albeit with fewer than 300 followers, the remnant of his confederacy. The mass of tribesmen remained decidedly neutral. On assuming command at Amherstburg, Procter sought to enlist the Michigan Wyandot. As the Wyandot were the holders of the great calumet, the kindlers of the northwest council fire and keepers of the regional wampum archives, their support was crucial. With Tecumseh's help, Procter succeeded, and wrote: "We are much indebted to Tecumseh for our Indian arm. He convinced the Indians that our cause was theirs and his influence by example determined and fixed every tribe." Procter would forever remember Tecumseh's vital role at this critical time and even though allied

¹³ Plans for the Defence of Canada, n.d. Feb. 1812, Wood, Vol. I, 288-89; Brock to Prevost, 2 Dec. 1811, Tupper, *op cit*, p. 126 and Prevost to Lord Liverpool, 18 May, 1812 cited in E.A. Cruickshank (ed.) *Documentary History of the Campaign upon the Niagara Frontier, Vol. III*, (Welland, ON: Lundy's Lane Historical Society, 1896-1908), p. 63.

¹⁴ Procter to Brock, 26 Jul. 1812, Wood, *op cit*, Vol. I, p. 415.

relations would become strained, his subsequent writings never reflected on Tecumseh in a negative light.¹⁵

With the Native contingent doubled, Procter undertook offensive operations, successfully interdicting the enemy supply line to Ohio at the engagements of Brownstown and Maguaga. By the time Brock arrived, Procter, with Tecumseh's essential aid, had not only forced Hull's evacuation from British soil but had isolated the Northwest Army at Ft. Detroit with artillery batteries poised for its bombardment.¹⁶

With the dire military situation completely reversed from just a few days prior, Brock proposed a direct assault on Detroit. Tecumseh, speaking on behalf of some 600 assembled warriors, readily supported this measure but it was barely undertaken when Hull hoisted the white flag. Brock's threat of Native misconduct was enough to induce the surrender of the entire Northwest Army.

Perceptions of Tecumseh

At this point, let us examine the principle players' perceptions of Tecumseh. Harrison was the first to put Tecumseh into the public limelight. After his final meeting with him in 1810, he wrote:

The implicit obedience and respect which the followers of Tecumseh pay him, is really astonishing, and more than any other circumstance bespeaks him as one of those uncommon geniuses who spring up occasionally to produce revolutions and overthrow the established order of things. If it were not for the vicinity of the United States, Tecumseh would perhaps be the founder of an empire that would rival in glory Mexico or Peru".¹⁷

Now, surely Harrison knew that the Aztecs and Incas were sophisticated societies, advanced in government, writing, art, mathematics, architecture, astronomy and

¹⁵ Procter to Sheaffe, 20 Nov. 1812, US National Archives Microfilm 588, roll 7, no. 22, "Miscellaneous Intercepted Correspondence", p. 19-21.

For more on the Wyandots as the "elder tribe" among the Northwest nations, see Harrison to Armstrong, 22 March, 1814, Esarey, *op cit*, Vol. I, p. 636 and Peter Dooyentate Clarke, *Origin and Traditional History of the Wyandotts*, (Toronto: Hunter, Rose, 1870),

¹⁶ Brock to Prevost, 17 Aug. 1812. Wood *op cit*, p. 467.

¹⁷ Harrison to Eustis, 7 Aug. 1811. Esarey *op cit*, p. 549.

agriculture. The Northwest tribes, on the other hand, were a hunter-gatherer culture, barely out of the Stone Age. His suggestion of Tecumseh as heir apparent to an advanced Native civilization was certainly inflated. Harrison was ambitious and it was in his interest to magnify Tecumseh into a dire threat to national security so as to position himself as the solution. Indeed, he would be propelled to the presidency largely on the basis of his destruction of Tecumseh's confederacy, first at Tippecanoe and then on the Thames, where the war chief was killed.

It was during the Detroit campaign that Brock met Tecumseh for the first time; his previous letters had not even mentioned the war chief by name. But with war declared, Brock depicted Tecumseh in glowing terms as the head of the Northwest tribesmen, now an essential resource. He wrote to Lord Liverpool, (double hated as prime minister and minister for war and the colonies):

He who attracted most my attention was a Shawnee chief, Tecumset [sic], brother to the Prophet... A more sagacious or noble warrior does not, I believe, exist...He was the admiration of everyone who met him...They appear determined to continue the contest until they obtain the Ohio for a boundary...No effort of mine shall be wanting to keep them attached to our cause. If the condition of this people should be considered in any future negotiation for peace, it would attach them to us forever."¹⁸

The British had an abysmal record in keeping their promises to stand by Native territorial rights. To win over the wavering interior tribesmen, Brock had to demonstrate to them that, this time, the British would not abandon Native interests as in the past. By Tecumseh's documented speech and Procter's independent affirmation, Brock promised the Native chiefs that their lost lands in the Northwest would be recovered. Thus, immediately after the capture of Detroit, he publicly ceded Michigan Territory to Britain by proclamation. But despite its importance, the cession of Michigan has not been

¹⁸ Brock to Liverpool, 29 Aug. 1812. Wood *op cit*, p. 508.

addressed in any account of the war; nor does it receive even passing mention in any of the biographies of Brock or Tecumseh.¹⁹

Like Harrison, Brock was ambitious, his stated objective being a knighthood which he achieved through the capture of Detroit. As the cession of Michigan was not a British war aim, he had to explain his motives and actions to London. In highlighting the essential services of the tribesmen, he paid particular attention to Tecumseh as their talented head and a worthy ally and sought diplomatic recognition for their territorial demands. In response, an elated home government not only formalized the alliance but added that Native interests would be “neither forgotten nor compromised” at the peace talks. It was this commitment that resulted in the opening British demand at Ghent that featured a *sine qua non* (meaning mandatory and unconditional demand), that the international boundary be redrawn westward through the middle of Ohio. Eurocentric accounts consistently miss the connection between Brock’s commitment to the tribesmen at the outset of the war, his cession of Michigan and the principal stumbling block to a negotiated peace at its conclusion.²⁰

¹⁹ Tecumseh and Procter’s statements concerning Brock’s commitment are found in Tecumseh’s council speech, Sept. 15, 1813, cited in *Richardson’s War* 205 and Procter to Sheaffe, 28 Nov. 1812, U.S. National Archives, Miscellaneous Intercepted Correspondence, *op cit*, pp. 22-26.

After the cession, Brock appointed Procter civil (not military) governor of Michigan. Procter went on to reorganize the territorial government along British lines, demand oaths of allegiance to King George III from the residents and threatened to deport and expropriate those who refused. He termed the activities of those engaged in subversive activities “treasonable.” Procter’s captured correspondence in the US Archives contains a remarkable document, an undated, unaddressed and unsigned draft, but clearly in Procter’s hand. After presenting the military and economic arguments in favour of the retention of Michigan, he identified the boundary of the envisioned Native protectorate as running from the bottom of Lake Erie westward, so as to leave Michigan and all territories beyond in the British sphere. Miscellaneous Intercepted Correspondence, *op cit*, pp. 272-76.

Shortly before his death Procter published an account of the war in the west and declared “The whole of Michigan Territory...was ceded to the British by the same capitulation. No acquisition could so effectually have secured...our alliance with the Indian nations.” [Henry Procter]. “Campaigns in the Canadas”. *Quarterly Review*, vol. 28, 1822.

In his reports to London, Brock made no mention of his commitment to the chiefs or the rationale for his cession of Michigan, although he annexed a copy of his proclamation and lobbied for the Native interest. He wrote “I have already been asked to pledge my word [to the Native leadership] that England would enter no negotiations in which their interests were not consulted. Brock to Prevost, 18 Sept. 1812, Tupper, *op cit*, 300.

²⁰ Brock to Liverpool, 29 Aug. 1812, Cruickshank, *op cit*, pp. 192-93 and Bathurst to Prevost, 9 Dec. 1812 cited in Alfred T. Mahan, *Sea Power in Relation to the War of 1812*, vol. II, (Boston: Little Brown, 1903), p. 100n.

The British delegates asserted at Ghent: “It is a *sine qua non* that...the boundaries of their [the Natives] territory should be permanently established...With regard to the extent of the Indian territory and

But, like Harrison, Brock met with Tecumseh only briefly, over a period of five days. It was the theatre commander, Henry Procter, who actually worked with him for the following year. In one post-war account, Procter would write:

Tecumseh had raised himself to the situation of a chief by his tried hardihood and the natural superiority of genius which sometimes in civilized communities and almost always, in a rude society, challenges deference from common minds. His habits and deportment were perfectly free from whatever could give offence to the most delicate female. He readily and cheerfully accommodated himself to all novelties and seemed amused without being embarrassed by them. He said that in his early youth he had been greatly addicted to drunkenness, the common vice of the Indians, but that he had found its detrimental effects and had resolved never again to taste any liquid but water. He had probably anticipated the period when he was to appear as the first man of his nation. In battle, Tecumseh was painted and equipped like the rest of his brethren but otherwise, his common dress was a leather frock descending to his knees and confined to the waist by a belt, with leggings and moccasins. He was above middle stature, the general expressions of his features pleasing and his eyes full of fire and intelligence.²¹

Tecumseh's Subsequent Movements

After the capture of Detroit, Tecumseh accompanied the British mopping up operations at the American outposts of Frenchtown and the Maumee Rapids. Shortly thereafter, he left for Indiana, and does not reappear until early May of 2013 to support Procter's siege of Ft. Meigs. This fortification was professionally designed by West Point engineers. Bristling with eighteen pounders on commanding ground with a cleared killing

the boundary line, the British government would propose the lines of the Greenville Treaty [roughly mid-way between the Ohio River and Lake Erie] as a proper basis." This demand was eventually dropped and article 9 of the finalized treaty merely "restored to the Natives all the possessions, rights and privileges which they may have enjoyed or been entitled to in 1811." Neither side enforced this stipulation as American expropriations of Native lands were actually accelerated after the war. Note of the British commissioners to their American counterparts, 19 Aug. 1814, Cruickshank, *op cit*, p. 1319 and Article 9 of the Treaty of Ghent, cited in John Russell Jr. (comp), *The History of the War*, (Hartford, CT: G and J Russell, 1815). p. 432-33.

²¹ Procter's description of Tecumseh is found in an anonymous account he wrote in collaboration with his nephew shortly before his death. Henry Procter and George Procter, *Lucubrations of Humphrey Ravelin*, (London: G. and W. B. Whittaker, 1823), pp. 338-43.

zone all around, it was massive, covering more than nine acres, the largest wooden fortification in North America. Although the siege failed, the allies did manage to capture the better part of a relief brigade from Kentucky, hastening to its defense. In late July, Tecumseh accompanied the second Ohio expedition at the head of some 3,000 warriors but a renewed attempt against Ft. Meigs proved inconclusive. Tecumseh led most of the tribesmen back to Michigan while the British force conducted a failed frontal assault on Ft. Stephenson.

On September 10, 1813, the British squadron was captured at the battle of Lake Erie and Tecumseh attended a general council to discuss future measures. Despite his initial objections he accompanied the British retreat which was overtaken by Harrison near Fairfield or Moraviantown. In the ensuing engagement of October 5, 1813, the Americans, with a numerical advantage of three to one, roundly defeated the allied force. Tecumseh was killed and henceforth, his confederacy ceased to exert a major impact on the war.²²

Tecumseh as a British Ally

On my side of the border, Tecumseh is often depicted as a faithful warrior, fighting to the last for the British King and what became Canada. On the occasion of the bicentennial, a five million dollar project was undertaken for the erection of a Tecumseh interpretive centre at the site of his death. Actually, there was nothing Canadian about Tecumseh beyond the fact that he fought alongside British troops and that he died for the Native interest on Canadian soil.

Far from being a British surrogate, Tecumseh cared little for King George or his colonies, being completely dedicated to the Native cause, the British alliance being nothing more than a means toward that end. His biographers gloss over the fact that in the fall of 1812, Tecumseh abandoned the alliance for six months, half the length of the war in the west. Some have him recruiting followers in the Deep South among the Creeks, but Procter's correspondence places him in Indiana. On receiving word of Governor

²² The most complete biography of Tecumseh is John Sugden, *Tecumseh, A Life*, (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1997).

Prevost's fall armistice and the consequent suspension of the Ft. Wayne expedition, Tecumseh had abandoned the alliance, suspicious of British intentions to stand by Brock's commitment to recover Native lands. Embarrassed, Brock wrote Procter to continue offensive operations, contrary to Prevost's instructions, whereby Tecumseh "might" be induced to return. Brock's choice of words is telling; he was uncertain when or if Tecumseh would rejoin the alliance.²³

On a related point, accounts often assert that Tecumseh was a commissioned officer in the British Army. Benjamin Lossing's account shows him wearing the red tunic of a general. British officers did refer to him as the "general" or the "Wellington" of the Indians but only as a metaphor to signify his primacy among the warriors. Gifts were occasionally exchanged between leaders and after his promotion to major general, Procter might well have presented Tecumseh with his redundant brigadier's tunic to dignify the war chief at formal dinners. But while warrior preponderance in numbers gave Tecumseh a strong voice in allied councils, Tecumseh held no military rank in the British army; nor did the tribesmen regard him in the European sense of hierarchical authority. Tecumseh was certainly not a British surrogate; he was a British ally and as such, he found common cause with the British out of necessity.²⁴

Pan Tribal Confederacy

The myth makers' inflation of Tecumseh is also evident in his depiction as the head of a pan-tribal confederacy. This is totally incorrect since his following did not consist of a coalition of tribes but of individual warriors drawn from those tribes. Thus, the notion of Tecumseh leading the entire Native body of the Northwest is incorrect since the elder chiefs overwhelmingly rejected Tecumseh's movement, considering it a lost cause. A noteworthy exception was the Wyandot head chief, Walk-in-the Water, who joined Tecumseh's movement under duress, conspired with American agents to turn on the British and was among the first to abandon the Thames retreat. Tecumseh's most ardent lieutenants were dissident younger chiefs such as Roundhead, Split Log and

²³ Brock to Tupper, *op cit*, 11 Oct. 1812, 326-27. Procter considered Prevost's orders to desist from assisting the tribesmen "an impolitic and unmanly desertion of them." [Henry Procter]. "Campaigns in the Canadas", *Quarterly Review*, vol 28, 1822. p. 414.

²⁴ Benjamin Lossing, *The War of 1812*, (New Hampshire Publishing Co., 1868).

Warrior of the Wyandot and Main Poche (Withered Hand), Blackbird and Mad Sturgeon of the Potawatomi.

Part of the misconception concerning the extent of Tecumseh's following emanates from a literal interpretation of his assertion to Harrison: "I am authorized by all the tribes...I am at the head of them all." In their Indian Department capacities, Lewis Cass and William Harrison estimated the Native population of the Northwest as ranging between 60 and 80,000. This would make for at least 10,000 warriors, yet the largest contingent ever assembled under Tecumseh's nominal leadership was 3000, a respectable number, but a still fraction of the whole.²⁵

Even the figure of 3,000 is problematic since it included some 1200 northern tribesmen who were not adherents to Tecumseh's movement, but essentially British mercenaries, providing temporary support to their traditional trading partners. Moreover, the native assemblage included hundreds of refugee tribesmen who, had been driven from Indiana by mounted American search and destroy missions to seek relative safety of the Detroit River area.²⁶

Tecumseh's own tribe, the Shawnee, illustrates the difficulties of generalizing on Native numbers. Although the Shawnee were once prominent in resisting American encroachment, the combined effects of white contact (the incessant fighting, disease and social ills like alcohol) had reduced their warrior numbers from some 3000 (during the Revolutionary War), to a mere 300. Procter observed that of these, fewer than twenty Shawnee actually followed Tecumseh. That figure included his family members, brother Tenskwatawa, son Pukinshaw and brother-in-law, Wasegaboah. The principal Shawnee chiefs, Black Hoof and Black Snake, were neutral at the outset of war, turned pro-American by 1813 and actually faced off against Tecumseh in his final battle.

So while Tecumseh was the leader of a very loose confederacy of warriors drawn from some twenty wide flung tribes (who spoke languages as different as English is to

²⁵ Tecumseh's speech to Harrison, 20 August, 1810, Esarey, *op cit*, Vol. I, p. 466 and [Procter and Procter]. Lucubrations, *op cit*, p. 339.

²⁶ The Northern tribesmen who descended on the Detroit River in June of 1813 were led by Robert Dickson. Procter to Prevost, 9 August, 1813. Library and Archives of Canada, C 679, 371.

Chinese), it was hardly a monolithic entity as the tribesmen were never homogeneous in organization or unanimous in conduct. In asserting he spoke for all Indians, Tecumseh spoke for them in the sense that he represented their collective aspirations to retain their lands and their accustomed lifestyles.²⁷

As for the extent of Tecumseh's influence over his followers, this too, has been overstated. After the first battle of Ft. Meigs, the Native contingent, numbering upward of 1200, abruptly returned to their camps for their customary post victory frolic. Procter reported that he was left with Tecumseh and only twenty warriors, leaving his besiegers actually outnumbered by the besieged. The limits to Tecumseh's control are again apparent after the battle of Lake Erie when half of the warriors assembled on the Detroit River refused to join him on the Thames retreat.²⁸

Tecumseh's Humanity

Among white observers on both sides, Tecumseh stood out from his peers for his sense of humanity in speaking out against larceny, torture and maltreatment of prisoners. But as his followers adhered to their traditional norms; they did not necessarily conform to his values.

Immediately after the capture of Detroit, the tribesmen ran amok, ransacking homes on both sides of the border, stealing over 300 horses. Although Brock and Tecumseh were on site, they were unable to contain the disorder. A similar scene played out at the American communities of Frenchtown and the Maumee Rapids. Again, Tecumseh was present but could not prevent it and even his efforts to halt the disorder met with only marginal success. Procter proposed to use the "rigour of the law" against the perpetrators but through his deputy, Major General Roger Sheaffe, Brock forcefully

²⁷ For an insightful recent assessment on the evolution of the varied Native responses to the war, see Timothy Willig, *Restoring the Chain of Friendship: British Policy and the Indians of the Great Lakes, 1783-1815*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008).

²⁸ In reviewing the warriors' abandonment of the siege, Procter observed on undue reliance on them, "Our Indian force is not a disposable one, or permanent, tho', occasionally, a most powerful aid." Procter to Prevost, 14 May, 1813, Library and Archives of Canada, C 678: 261.

discouraged such intervention as it would endanger the alliance. So the Native misconduct continued, tolerated by the British as a kind of necessary collateral damage.²⁹

The warriors' unruly behavior included gruesome acts, notably the murder and mutilation of captured prisoners. The mythmakers bemoan the fact that if only Tecumseh were present at Frenchtown, during, what has been called, "the Raisin River Massacre", those estimated two dozen American prisoners would not have been murdered. But this is wishful thinking because Tecumseh's presence did not prevent a similar number being murdered during the first siege of Ft. Meigs, although he did intervene to halt the savagery. His intervention was witnessed by amazed American soldiers who would speak highly of Tecumseh's humanity. But participant John Richardson observed that the atrocities went beyond murder and scalping to include cannibalism. So, while Tecumseh abhorred such acts and made visible efforts to halt them, he was simply unable to prevent their occurrence. Tecumseh was after all, just a war chief whose vision and forceful manner vaulted him into prominence as the foremost spokesman and overall leader of the militant Native resistance movement. But by tribal norms, his role did not include actual control over his followers.³⁰

The myth-makers have added another bizarre twist to the matter of atrocities in assigning responsibility for their occurrence to Procter. Without any real evidence that Procter directed or condoned Native misconduct, they reason that as overall commander, he bore responsibility for their actions. But on this point, even his most ardent critic, participant John Richardson, affirms that Procter had tried "every possible means" to contain the savagery. For his part, Procter was not given to cruelty by nature and he had nothing to gain by such vile acts being, in fact, under direction to minimize their occurrence. In short, the prevailing notion in American writings of Procter as "the blood-thirsty agent of fiend like depravity" is utter fiction. Once again, the warriors were allied combatants, not British subordinates. It was Procter's misfortune to be denied adequate

²⁹ Sheaffe to Procter 1 Sept. 1812, Wood, *op cit*, p. 516.

³⁰ Richardson described the lurid scene of the warrior encampment: "scalps of the slain...stained and drying in the sun, dangling in the air, hung suspended from poles...together with portions of human skin...and members ...serving as nutriment to the wolf dogs." Richardson *op cit*, p. 159. He omitted the most gruesome element of the story that appeared in his earlier account, in which he declined an invitation by some Menominee warriors to take part in a stew containing human flesh! John Richardson. *A Canadian Campaign* (originally published in 1826). Simcoe, ON: Davus Publishing, 2011 p. 39.

troops, forcing his continued reliance on Native warriors whose conduct neither he nor Tecumseh could fully control.³¹

The mythmakers' selective narrative surfaces again at the battle of Brownstown, where they credit Tecumseh for leading a successful ambush but make no mention of his whereabouts when his followers scalped the dead, impaled their bodies onto stakes driven into the ground along Hull's road and murdered both of the surviving prisoners. By Drake's account, the attack on the Ft. Dearborn garrison (culminating in the Chicago Massacre) was done by Tecumseh's direction.³²

I have one final qualification on Tecumseh's humanity, one that has been missed in modern biographies. By the words of Stephen Ruddled, who knew Tecumseh well, "Tecumseh was averse to taking prisoners in his warfare." Indeed, of the numerous first-hand accounts of people who claim to have encountered Tecumseh personally, not one purports to have been captured by him. In short, while Tecumseh stood out from his peers for his relatively civilized conduct, his humanity was qualified; he took no prisoners!³³

TECUMSEH AS A MILITARY GENIUS

Tecumseh first emerged as a prominent military leader early in the war in the actions at Brownstown and Maguaga, contributing greatly to Procter's efforts aimed at

³¹ Richardson, *op cit*, p. 7.

The popularized scene in the picture "Massacre of American prisoners at Frenchtown on the Raisin River", found in the Library of Congress, shows Procter's camp in under a British flag in the background as the warriors maim, murder and scalp defenseless prisoners on the morning of 23 January 1813. The shock value of this lurid scene was deliberately harnessed in a recruiting poster issued by the US War Department that year. Secretary of War Alexander Dallas publicly stated: "While the British officers and soldiers silently and exultingly contemplated the scene, some of the American prisoners of war were tomahawked, some were shot and some were burnt," offering the incident as "irrefutable proof" that Great Britain had "violated the laws of humanity." In fact, as Procter and his troops had retreated to Amherstburg immediately after the battle of Frenchtown of the previous day, there were *no* British officers or soldiers on site as shown in the image and as stated by Dallas! The notion of any British involvement in the murders is patently false. [Alexander J. Dallas], *An Exposition of the Causes and Character of the War Between the United States and Great Britain*, (Concord: NH, 1815), pp. 56-60.

For a focused examination of the war hawks' exploitation of the propaganda value of alleged British complicity in Native atrocities, see Sandy Antal, "Remember the Raisin! Anatomy of a Demon Myth", *War of 1812 Magazine*, Issue 10: October 2008. (<http://www.napoleon-series.org/military/Warof1812/2008/Issue10>).

³² Milo Milton QuaiFFE (ed.), *War on the Detroit: The Chronicles of Thomas Vercheres de Boucherville*. (Chicago: Lakeside Press, 1940), p. 90 and Drake, *op cit*. p. 167.

³³ Stephen Rudell, *Tecumseh Manuscript*. Draper Manuscripts: Tecumseh Papers, 2 YY 120-133, Wisconsin Historical Society. p 123.

isolating Hull at Detroit. He shines most brightly at the all-important capture of Ft. Detroit, at the head of six hundred painted warriors who emerged repeatedly from the bush so as to magnify the appearance of their numbers. Their very presence was enough to make Hull capitulate.

After the capture of Detroit, the tribesmen besieged three small frontier centers in Indiana, Ft. Wayne, Ft. Harrison and Pigeon Roost, in quick succession, their close timing pointing strongly to Tecumseh's coordinating influence, especially as he sought British support for them. But as they failed, the mythmakers conveniently attribute their occurrence to his brother, Tenskwatawa, who had no influence with the tribesmen after Tippecanoe. Oddly, by trying to dissociate Tecumseh from these failures, the mythmakers have unwittingly undercut their notion of Tecumseh as the central authority in Native operations.

At Ft. Meigs, the warriors surrounded and captured the better part of Colonel Dudley's relief brigade from Kentucky. This event is often showcased as an example of Tecumseh's generalship. In fact, the movement had not been planned by Tecumseh or anyone else. It was a spontaneous response to the likewise unplanned American movement of blundering into the bush where Native warriors excelled in their favorite tactic, the ambush. Tecumseh appeared on the scene after the fighting was concluded, being on the opposite side of the Maumee River.

The mythmakers also play down Tecumseh's role in the inconclusive allied operations during the summer of 1813. At that time, the critical threat was the American fleet building at Erie, Pennsylvania. As Procter's garrison remained small, he proposed to lead a combined force against the germinating naval preparations. But Tecumseh, disagreed, insisting on a second attempt against Ft. Meigs, located in the heart of Native territory. He argued that the enemy could be decoyed out of the strong fort and decimated. As Tecumseh and the assembled 3000 warriors would consider no objective but Ft. Meigs, Procter had to comply. After this *ruse de guerre* failed, the mass of warriors abandoned the expedition and returned to Detroit. By the account of John Norton, "Among these, the celebrated Tecumseh took the lead." The American naval

preparations were left to mature undisturbed and the allies lost their final opportunity to destroy the American fleet on the stocks.³⁴

Tecumseh – The Final Chapter

The American fleet emerged onto Lake Erie and immediately cut the British supply line. The already serious food shortages, aggravated by the need to feed the warriors who with their families numbered between ten and twelve thousand, was now critical. This circumstance alone compelled the British squadron to challenge the enemy, although, ill equipped, outgunned 3:2 and seriously short of seamen. After a furious action, the entire British flotilla was captured, giving the Americans absolute mastery on Lake Erie.

This sudden turn of events rendered allied positions untenable, strategically, tactically and logistically. At the council of September 15, 1813, the Native chiefs were divided on Procter's retreat proposal until Tecumseh's violent objections molded them into a united opposition. The war chief reviewed historic British abandonments and drew attention to Brock's unfulfilled promises –of a strong military presence, that the warriors' families would be fed and clothed and most important, that lost Native lands would be recovered. As he saw no prospect of securing these lands from the Niagara front, Tecumseh considered retreat as an abrogation of the British commitment to the essential Native interest in the war. In Procter's words, "The Indians received the proposal with the utmost indignation and considered the measure as a desertion of them." Tecumseh's anger was understandable but his inability or reluctance to appreciate the consequences of the battle of Lake Erie now had a detrimental impact on subsequent allied movements. As one British participant observed, "We have cast a net that may catch us!"³⁵

³⁴ Richardson affirms that the second siege of Ft. Meigs was undertaken at Tecumseh's insistence. Richardson, *op cit*, p. 177; Carl F. Klinck and James J. Talman, (eds), *The Journal of Major John Norton, 1816*, (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1970), pp. 340-41.

³⁵ [Henry Procter] Campaigns in the Canadas, *op cit*, p. 430; letter of a British dragoon officer to his parents, cited in 23 Nov. 1813 issue of *The War* 23 (Baltimore weekly).

Procter's letters throughout 1813 are a litany of wants of all sorts. In the spring of that year, he complained that he could feed the tribesmen nothing but fish. The angry warriors threatened to abduct and starve the commissary officer. The provisioning situation only worsened and became acute by the fall. The shortages included money with which buy local crops. Procter's own soldiers were short of many things, having gone unpaid for up to nine months.

Procter's responsibility was to promptly remove his troops to the safety of the Niagara lines. But Tecumseh would not hear of it, throwing an already strained allied relationship into crisis. By testimony at Procter's court martial, tensions were so acute that Tecumseh threatened to produce the great wampum, symbol of Anglo-Native solidarity and cut it in two, signifying the eternal separation of the two sides. Indian Department officials reported the tribesmen as verging on hostility against their allies, prepared to extinguishing the white population on both sides of the Detroit River.

For a year, Tecumseh and Procter had worked together for the mutual benefit of the alliance. Their thrusts into Michigan, Ohio and Indiana had favored the objective of a Native homeland while securing Upper Canada and forcing Washington to commit significant resources for the recovery of what had been lost. But the battle of Lake Erie exposed the divergent priorities of the two sides and jeopardized the alliance, itself. Procter eventually secured Tecumseh's agreement to a fateful compromise, one that was far from satisfactory to either but the best of the slim options available. They would fall back on the Thames, out of reach of the American fleet and if necessary, make a stand there.³⁶

Having been present at Brock's meeting with Tecumseh, Procter understood the reasons for Tecumseh's anger which stemmed from a British strategy that had gone seriously unresourced throughout 1813, notwithstanding his urgent appeals. But he continued to depict the war chief in respectful terms, writing: "It was one more example of his talents and influence, that, in spite of their prejudices and natural affections for the

Tecumseh's documented allied council speech is found in Richardson, *op cit*, p. 205-06. But his narrative of the events just prior to the Thames retreat is distorted. In 1978, I sought to access the pertinent statements contained in the transcripts of the Procter's Court Martial but it was not to be had in North America. Through the kind assistance of Dr. W.A.B. Douglas, then Director of History at National Defence Headquarters, I had them brought to Canada from the Public Records Office, Kew England. The 450 pages of insightful testimony are now available at Library and Archives of Canada Manuscript Group 13, War Office 71. The accompanying sign out sheet reflected only five names! For all the "experts" who have opined on the Thames campaign, only two, Pierre Berton and John Sugden, had bothered to actually consult the official evidence! The details in this text relating to the events between the battles of Lake Erie and Moraviantown are drawn mainly from the testimonies of Procter, his officers and men, as well as Indian Department officials.

³⁶ It is uncertain why Tecumseh accompanied the retreat. Perhaps, he considered keeping faith with the alliance would assure that Native demands would be represented at the peace talks and they were.

seat of their habitations, he had determined a large portion of his nation to give their co-operation to the step which they had violently opposed.”³⁷

Accounts consistently depict the Thames retreat in purely military terms. In fact, it was a small migration of soldiers, warriors, local residents and the dependents of those groups that plodded up the Thames. The Native families now hoped to resettle at the forks of the Thames where Procter intended to build defenses. But before works could be thrown up, the Americans were found to be closing in number and strong in horse. So the ponderous retreat was resumed, now headed toward Moraviantown. Many of the tribesmen and their families fell away, either overtaken by their pursuers or unwilling to go further from their ancestral lands. Tecumseh’s anguished comment was telling when he exclaimed: “There is no place for us”.

At the final engagement at Moraviantown, October 5, 1813, Harrison led upward of three thousand Kentuckians against the combined allied force one third that number. Prior to the engagement, Tecumseh predicted his death and gave away his few personal possessions. Richard Johnson was vaulted to the vice presidency, on the basis of his reputation as his alleged slayer. But there is an inconsistency in the alleged facts. Johnson was wounded and removed from the battlefield early in the engagement which lasted about half an hour while the mythmakers have the tribesmen breaking off the action upon Tecumseh’s death. So, either the battle did not last half an hour, or Tecumseh was killed early or someone other than Johnson killed Tecumseh. In any event, the euphoric Kentuckians flayed the body of a warrior thought to be his while Governor Prevost’s general order had him harassing the American retreat after the battle. Dozens of conflicting accounts sprang up concerning his death and the disposition of his body. What is certain is that the war chief was killed that day, and his death gave birth to an enduring Tecumseh legend.³⁸

³⁷ [Procter and Procter], *Lucubrations, op cit*, p. 356.

³⁸ Sugden’s previous works include such figures as Francis Drake and Horatio Nelson. Not surprisingly, his work reflects the war chief in a heroic light, but uncritically repeats many of the simplistic opinions abounding in Richardson’s account. Moreover, like many before him, Sugden has missed out on Brock’s promise to the tribesmen, the rationale for the cession of Michigan as issues relative to the alliance, nor Governor Prevost’s strategic priorities as impacting on the end result.

Afterward

As much of the British force was captured at the final engagement, Governor Prevost (whose most noteworthy role in the western theatre was his inattention to it, but that is another story) ordered Procter to stand trial. The court martial paid little consideration to the Native impact on the retreat in slowing its progress and limiting its destination. When accused of failing to withdraw his troops to safety, the very measure he, himself, had intended, Procter pointed to the dictates of “honor and policy”, meaning he was bound by Brock’s promise and his government’s commitment to the Native interest. But the tribunal saw only a commander who had allowed his military judgment to be compromised. Brock’s grand scheme had gone awry and it is my American counterpart on the western theatre who summed things up nicely: “Few generals have done so much with so few while, at the same time, placing at risk so many who stood to lose all.”³⁹

Procter’s career was ruined. After the war, he returned to England and died at Bath in 1822. Shortly before his death, he reflected on the Natives’ tragic fate:

The devotion, courage and fortitude of the warlike tribes had been exerted in vain. Driven successively...they had been chased to the remotest forests...debased and thinned in numbers and strength. They have been made the victims, not the pupils of civilization. To the tribes...is the preservation of Upper Canada, in the first year of the war, mainly to be attributed.⁴⁰

Indeed, while Eurocentric accounts assert that there were no clear-cut winners in this war, the tribesmen were certainly the losers. Tecumseh’s dream of a sovereign Native state was dashed and the expropriation of Native lands accelerated while the aboriginal population was deported to bleak reservations in Kansas and Oklahoma as

One does not detract from Tecumseh’s greatness by revealing him in his full colors. Tecumseh and his followers contributed substantially to early allied successes just as they did to the adverse developments that followed. As for Procter, contrary to the prevailing (and ill informed) orthodoxy, his eventual failure was rooted in Brock’s ambitious strategy and non-resourced commitment to the chiefs plus Prevost’s inattention. Procter was as much a victim of the events as Tecumseh, albeit in different ways. Allan Taylor aptly summed up the multi-dimensional complexities associated with Procter’s dilemma as “the fatal contradiction in Procter’s thankless position.” Alan Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812: American Citizens, British Subjects, Irish Rebels and Indian Allies*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011), pp 300-01.

³⁹ Skaggs, *op cit*, p. 97.

⁴⁰ [Procter and Procter], *Lucubrations, op cit*, 324-25, 327 and 359.

wards of the state. The elder chiefs, who had rejected Tecumseh's call as futile and ruinous, were proven right. But for Tecumseh, a life of degradation was one not worth living. His heroic demise is widely represented in folklore as a "*beau geste*", akin to classical figures like King Arthur or Don Quixote.

Conclusion

The extent of Tecumseh's influence among the wide flung tribes was greater than any Native leader before or since. But beyond his reputation as "the Greatest Indian", the universality of Tecumseh's folk hero appeal stems from his uncompromising lofty ideals, his personal integrity and his selfless dedication. Even with the air brushed mythologies removed, Tecumseh stands tall.