

Clans

Prepared by MBQ Research

Turtles, Wolves & Bears

Although we currently have thousands of pages of documents about the history of the Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte, references to clans (so far) are few.

Some of the earliest references to the Wolf Clan are in the Minutes of 1800. William Claus, the Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs (DSGIA), was told that the Wolf clan had replaced Captain John Deserontyon, and Claus stated: **“You also appointed Thomas, the Fiddler, a Chief of the Wolfe Tribe. Among yourselves, that may be, But I was present when the King placed Capt. John here as the Head of the Village and no one but the same authority can displace him...”** [LAC RG10 Volume 26 pp15307-54 Reel C-11,007 (pp. 15341-2)]

Later in the Minutes of 1800 Claus stated:

“It appears to me that the Wolfe Tribe have named their Chiefs in haste and anger and I have already mentioned to you that Capt. John must still be considered the Head Chief”. [LAC RG10 Volume 26 pp15307-54 Reel C-11,007(p. 15348)]

Captain Isaac Hill (Ak-no-so-tak or Anoghsoohte) referred to the three clans in one of his speeches in the Minutes of 1800: **“We the Turtle, Wolfe and Bear Tribes have consulted among ourselves and have come to a resolution never again to breed any disturbances in the Village, and on now from our hearts, determined that nothing hereafter shall be done without the Consent of the whole Village. Should any kind of news arrive among us, the Whole shall be assembled and the whole Village made acquainted with it.”** [LAC RG10 Volume 26 pp15307-54 Reel C-11,007 (pp. 15343-4)]

In 1815, William Claus informed John Ferguson (who was the Resident Indian Agent at Kingston) about two MBQ men who were to receive medals and so be recognized as Chiefs: **“By Sir Johns (Sir John Johnson, Superintendent of Indian Affairs) letter he requests that the proper Chiefs should receive the medals if those Chiefs should be Blockheads it is to be lamented but this birth right we cannot take from them & if I do not mistake the persons initialled to this disturbance by their birth are John Green of the Wolf Tribe & Joseph Smart of the Bear Tribe, these are the two men in my opinion who have the claim to the medals.”** [LAC RG10 Volume 31 pp 18415-18418 Reel C-11009]

But as to why there is no Chief named for the Turtle clan? We just don't know.

In 1830, MBQ sent a petition to the government of Upper Canada. In this petition the importance of the clans is made clear: **“Brother: You are well acquainted with the customs and manners of Indians. You are aware that all our business is transacted in Council of the three tribes i.e. the Turtle, Wolf, and Bear.”** [LAC RG10 Volume 46 pp 24219-24221 Reel C-11014]

We recently found, on a document from the Mohawk Council in 1870, a Council stamp and ribbon. It clearly states “The Mohawk Council” and “Tyendinaga”. The stamp clearly shows images of Turtle, Wolf and Bear.



[LAC RG10 Volume 362 pp.549-552 Reel C-9596]

These documents tell us that in the first century of the community clans are important but references to them are rare.

Petition of 1889

In 1889, the federally mandated elected Council had been operating at Tyendinaga for almost 20 years. Many within the community did not want the elected system. In 1889 a large portion of MBQ wanted a return to a hereditary council. In June 1889, a petition was sent to the Privy Council of Canada.

Part of the petition was a list of the hereditary titles of chiefs and six MBQ men were named to certain titles:

1. **De-ka-ri-ho-ken, Joseph I. Brant**
2. **A-yonli-wa-tha, vacant, will be filled in future.**
3. **Sha-de-ka-ri-wa-the, vacant, will be filled in future.**
4. **Sha-ren-ho-wa-neh, Charles B. Brant**
5. **De-yoen-heh-gwenh, Jeremiah Hill**
6. **Ogh-ren-re-go-wah, vacant will be filled in future.**
7. **De-he-na-Ka-ri-neh, James B. Brant**
8. **Agh-sta-wen-sr-ront-hah, David J. Powles**
9. **Sho-sko-ha-ro-wa-neh, Peter John**

[LAC RG10 Volume 2320, File 63,812-2 Reel C-11,201]

This document is currently the earliest one we have that names particular people to particular clan titles. As long as we can identify the person, we can trace back the family history and identify descendants of the female line.

For example: Peter John is listed in a Bear Clan title (for clan affiliation of titles see www.iroquoismuseum.org). He was the son of John John & Esther Claus. Esther Claus was the daughter of Dow Aronhara Claus and Catherine Penn. We can use this information to trace the female descendants of this Catherine Penn as a Bear line.

Petition of 1919

The desire to get rid of the elected council carried on into the twentieth century. In April 1919 there was another petition calling for a return to hereditary council. In this petition there is a list of hereditary titles with 9 men named as Chiefs and another 9 men named as sub-Chiefs.

1st Turtle Clan Chief		Joseph J. Brant
2nd “	“	Wellington Green
3rd “	“	Jacob Maricle
4th Wolf Clan	“	Cornelous[sic] J. Maricle
5th “	“	William J. Sero
6th “	“	Abram L. Maricle
7th Bear Clan	“	William Doreen
8th “	“	George Hill
9th “	“	Solomon J. Brant
1 sub		James N. Barnhart
2 “		Fred Sero
3 “		Ambrus Claus
4 “		Jacob Maricle
5 “		John W. Maricle
6 “		Andrew Sero

7 “ **Johnson Lewye[sic]**
8 “ **John Sero**
9 “ **John J. Smart**

[LAC RG10 Volume 7933 File 32-34 pt. 2 Mfm C-13,507]

With this list we have more chances to identify men and use family history to identify clan lines. For example: The Cornelius J. Maracle listed in a Wolf Clan title was the son of Joseph W. Maracle and Susan Brant. Susan Brant was the daughter of Oliver Smith and Jane Claus. Jane Claus was most likely the daughter of David Claus & Mary Brant. We can trace the female descendants of this Mary Brant.

Oral Tradition

Although important, documentary sources are rare. Oral tradition might be the only way clan identity is passed from one generation to the next. It is always heartening when the written and the oral sources are in harmony. But it is not always the case.

The oral history project and other interviews with elders of the Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte include some clan information. Sometimes there is no oral tradition within families.

Other Sources

Clan identification can pop up in unexpected places. There is at least one headstone on the Territory which mentions clan. With sources being so few, we are always grateful for those willing to share their clan information which in turn helps other people in search of this information.