



Studio portrait, taken in July 1882 at Brantford, Ontario, features surviving Six Nations fighters who fought with the British during the War of 1812. Right to left are: Sakawaraton – John Smoke Johnson (b. ca. 1792), John Tutela (b. ca. 1797), and Young Warner (b. ca. 1794), LAC C-85127 ParksCanada.gc.ca

Captain William Johnson Kerr and the “first family” of the First Nations

Captain William Johnson Kerr (1787-1845) was a grandson of Sir William Johnson and Mary (Molly) Brant who married Elizabeth Brant, daughter of Joseph Brant (Thayendanegea). The Brants were considered the “first family” of the First Nations as they had many prominent members. William gained his prominence during the War of 1812 as an officer in the Indian Department. At the *Battle of Queenston Heights* he, John Brant and John Norton led the First Nations forces that pinned the Americans down on the heights. Later, also with Norton, Kerr and the First Nations forces helped stem the American attack at Fort Erie. Kerr was active at the *Battle of Beaver Dams*. He and John Brant were at the head of 100 Mohawks from Grand River who fought alongside Dominique Ducharme and a large party of First Nations fighters from Lower Canada. They used guerrilla tactics to attack the Americans from the rear along an enclosed, wooded section of the trail near Beaver Dam. Later, Captain Kerr was captured and he spent some time as an American POW. Fellow captive described him as, “a very fine young man, tall and handsome.” In later life Kerr was a magistrate and eventually a member for Lincoln in the House of Assembly. Captain Kerr’s mother-in-law Catherine Brant, named Captain Kerr’s

son, William Simcoe Kerr head chief of the First Nations Confederacy. At the time of his death, Captain Kerr was living in the house that Joseph Brant had built on Wellington Square, now Burlington, embraced by the large Brant family that has served in Canada's military through all wars. For example, Brant descendant, Lt. Cameron Dee Brant, was one of the First Nations volunteers for WWI. He died at Ypres.

Also see <http://readingandremembrance.ca/2009.html> First Nations