

“The Disturbances in America give great trouble to all our Nations”: Mohawk Joseph Brant Comes to London to See the King, 1776

Joseph Brant or Thayendanegea was a Mohawk war chief, interpreter, statesman, and British military leader. He studied at Eleazer Wheelock's Indian Charity School in Connecticut and became an ally of Sir William Johnson, superintendent for Indian Affairs; Johnson married Joseph's sister, Molly. With the onset of the Revolutionary crisis, Native Americans, like other residents of North America, had to choose the loyalist or patriot cause—or try to maintain a neutral stance. The Iroquois Confederacy divided but Brant and his sister led the Mohawks and most Iroquois nations into an alliance with the British. When Brant joined the new Indian Superintendent Guy Johnson in London in 1776; he became a celebrity, had his portrait painted, and met the King and Queen. But Brant had serious business too. He made clear his allegiance to the Crown but also indicated that Native Americans had distinctive issues all their own in trying to hold on to their homelands as Brant indicates in this letter to Secretary of State Lord George Germain. A decade later he would return to seek British support against encroachments on Iroquois lands by the victorious Americans.

Brother Gorah, We have cross'd the great Lake and come to this kingdom with our Superintendent, Col. Johnson, from our Confederacy the Six Nations and their allies, that we might see our Father, the Great King, and joyn in informing him, his Councillors and wise men, of the good intentions of the Indians our brethren, and of their attachment to His Majesty and his Government. Brother. The Disturbances in America give great trouble to all our Nations, as many strange stories have been told to us by the people of that country. The Six Nations who always loved the king, sent a number of their Chiefs and Warriors with their Superintendent to Canada last summer, where they engaged their allies to joyn with them in the defense of that country, and when it was invaded by the New England people they alone defeated them. Brother. In that engagement we had several of our best Warriors killed and wounded, and the Indians think it very hard they should have been so deceived by the White people in that country, the enemy returning in great numbers, and no White people supporting the Indians, they were obliged to return to their villages and sit still. We now Brother hope to see these bad children chastised, and that we may be enabled to tell the Indians who have always been faithfull and ready to assist the King, what his Majesty intends. Brother. The Mohocks [Mohawks] our particular nation, have on all occasions shewn their zeal and loyalty to the Great King; yet they have been very badly treated by the people in that country, the City of Albany laying an unjust claim to the lands on which our Lower Castle is built, as one Klock, and others do to those of Conijoharrie our Upper Village. We have often been assured by our late great friend Sr William Johnson who never deceived us, and we know he was told so that the King and wise men here would do us justice; but this notwithstanding all our applications has never been done, and it makes us very uneasie. We also feel for the distress in which our Brethren on the Susquehanna are likely to be involved by a mistake made in the Boundary we settled in 1768. This also our Superintendent has laid before the King, and we beg it may be remembered. And also concerning Religion and the want of Ministers of the Church of England, he knows the designs of those bad

people and informs us he has laid the same before the King. We have only therefore to request that his Majesty will attend to this matter: it troubles our Nation & they can not sleep easie in their beds. Indeed it is very hard when we have let the Kings subjects have so much land for so little value, they should want to cheat us in this manner of the small spots we have left for our women and children to live on. We are tired out in making complaints & getting no redress. We therefore hope that the Assurances now given us by the Superintendent may take place, and that he may have it in his power to procure us justice. Brother. We shall truly report all that we hear from you, to the Six Nations on our return. We are well informed there have been many Indians in this Country who came without any authority, from their own, and gave us much trouble. We desire Brother to tell you this is not our case. We are warriors known to all the Nations, and are now here by approbation of many of them, whose sentiments we speak. Brother. We hope these things will be considered and that the King or his great men will give us such an answer as will make our hearts light and glad before we go, and strengthen our hands, so that we may joyn our Superintendent, Col. Johnson in giving satisfaction to all our Nations, when we report to them on our return, on our return; for which purpose we hope soon to be accommodated with a passage. Dictated by the Indians and taken down by Jo. Chew. Secretary

Source: E. B. O'Callaghan, ed. *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York* 15 vols. (Albany, 1853–87): 8:670–71.