UNIVERSITY AND ACADEMIC

The Four Instruments: a Study Brief

The promise, the land, the mark and the oath, read as one chain.

Learning outcomes

By the end, a student will be able to	Level (Bloom)
Describe what each of the four instruments did, and in what order	Understand
Analyse how the four define a class by village and adherence rather than by clan, custom or band	Analyze
Explain why a registry was ordered in 1789 and ordered again in 1796	Understand
Compare readings of the mark UE as a family honour, a society's honorific, and the Crown's mark	Analyze
Evaluate what the honour of the Crown may require of an order the Crown never carried out	Evaluate

Overview

Four Crown instruments, made between 1779 and 1796, form one line. The Pledge promises; the Proclamation delivers land; Dorchester's Order marks the people and orders a registry; Simcoe's Proclamation supplies the procedure, an oath before a magistrate, because the registry "has not been generally made". The Mohawk Nation of Grand River reads the four together as defining a class, "some of the Mohawks" of three villages and their posterity, and a territory acquired by deed of gift. Others read the 1784 grant chiefly through the Six Nations and the later Simcoe Patent of 1793.

Primary sources

The Haldimand Pledge, 7 April 1779

"I do hereby ratify the same, and assure them the said promise, as far as in me lies, shall be faithfully executed"

Ratifying Carleton's promise to the Mohawks of Canajoharie, Tikondarago and Aughgugo.

The Haldimand Proclamation, 25 October 1784

"six miles deep from each side of the river beginning at Lake Erie, and extending in that proportion to the head of the said river, which them and their posterity are to enjoy for ever"

Lord Dorchester's Order in Council, 9 November 1789

"to put a Mark of Honour upon the families who had adhered to the Unity of the Empire … to the end that their posterity may be discriminated from future settlers"

Library and Archives Canada, RG 1 L1, vol. 18, p. 110.

Committee minute, 24 December 1791

"the faith of Government is pledged to the Mohawk chiefs for the two tracts mentioned above"

Canadian Archives, Series Q, vol. 329, p. 12.

Simcoe's Register Proclamation, 6 April 1796

"to ascertain the same upon oath before the magistrates in the Michaelmas quarter sessions … will not be considered as entitled … to the benefit"

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Three readings

	Canada and the courts	Loyalist societies	The Mohawk Nation of Grand River
The 1784 grant	To the Mohawk and others of the Six Nations, read with the 1793 Patent	Not their concern	A deed of gift to a class, kept from the Province by s. 109
The mark UE	A historical distinction without present legal effect	An honorific for members who certify descent	The Crown’s mark, hereditary and individual, by either sex
The registry	Long since lapsed	Rebuilt by the societies from the old lists	Never made for the class; the Register makes it now
The 1796 oath	A historical procedure	A step in the old process	The missing link: taken now before a justice of the peace

Historiography

Loyalist history has long been told through the settlers of the St Lawrence, the Bay of Quinte and the Maritimes, and the UE mark through the societies that revived it in the twentieth century. Grand River history has been told through Brant and the Six Nations. The Mohawk Nation of Grand River joins the two: it reads the Mohawk adherents of 1783 as Loyalists under Dorchester’s Order, and the four instruments as one chain. Test each reading against the documents.

Discussion questions

1. What does each instrument add to the one before? Could any of the four stand alone?

2. Dorchester’s mark passes “by either sex”. How does that differ from membership by clan, and from status under the early Indian Act?

3. Why might the Crown have wanted posterity “discriminated from future settlers” in 1789?

4. Simcoe found the registry “not generally made”. What follows, in law and in fairness, when a promised record is never kept?

5. Is a hereditary mark used today by a private society the same thing as the Crown’s mark? What would decide it?

6. **Apply.** Who today could receive the oath Simcoe directed, and what would it prove?

Further reading

In Chicago style (17th ed.), bibliography form.

Canada. *Indian Treaties and Surrenders from 1680 to 1890*. 2 vols. Ottawa: Queen’s Printer, 1891.

Johnston, Charles M., ed. *The Valley of the Six Nations: A Collection of Documents on the Indian Lands of the Grand River*. Toronto: Champlain Society, 1964.

Kelsey, Isabel Thompson. *Joseph Brant, 1743–1807: Man of Two Worlds*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1984.

Mohawk Nation of Grand River. *The Nation and its Instruments*. National Books I. Grand River Territory, Ohsweken: Mohawk’s Printer for Grand River, 2026.

Mohawk Nation of Grand River. *The Acquired Territory Doctrine*. National Books II. Grand River Territory, Ohsweken: Mohawk’s Printer for Grand River, 2026.

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Assignment brief

Choose one prompt

A	In 1,500 words, argue whether the four instruments, read together, define a class of persons distinct from the Six Nations as a body. Quote at least three of the instruments, and answer the strongest objection.
B	Simcoe found the registry “not generally made”. Assess what follows, in law and in fairness, when a record the Crown ordered is never kept. Answer in an argued essay.
C	Who today could receive the oath Simcoe directed, and what would it prove? Write it as an argued essay that applies the readings.

Requirements

- An argument: a thesis stated in the first paragraph and defended throughout.
- At least three primary sources from the list below, quoted precisely and read in their context.
- At least two secondary sources, one of them from outside the Nation’s own books.
- The strongest objection to your thesis, stated fairly, and your answer to it.
- Footnotes and a bibliography in Chicago style (17th ed.).
- 1,500 words, 10 per cent either way, not counting notes and bibliography.

Sources you must use

- The Haldimand Pledge, 7 April 1779
- The Haldimand Proclamation, 25 October 1784
- Lord Dorchester’s Order in Council, 9 November 1789
- Committee minute, 24 December 1791
- Simcoe’s Register Proclamation, 6 April 1796

A suggested structure

- Introduction: the question, why it matters, and your thesis.
- Context: the instruments and events, briefly, in order.
- Analysis: the sources, read closely, one claim at a time.
- The objection: the best case against you, and your reply.
- Conclusion: what follows, and what remains open.

Timeline

- Week 1: choose a prompt; read the primary sources; write a one-paragraph proposal.
- Week 2: research the secondary sources; draft an outline with your thesis and the objection.
- Week 3: write the full draft; exchange with a peer for written comments.
- Week 4: revise and submit.

Format and submission

Twelve-point type, double-spaced, page numbers, your name and the prompt on the first page. Submit as your instructor directs; this sheet can also be filled in online for the discussion questions.

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Integrity

Your work must be your own. Quote and cite every source. If you use an AI tool for any part of the work, say which and how, in a note at the end.

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For the instructor: standards met

Universal competencies	Identify key facts and claims; understand perspective and point of view; analyse and evaluate evidence; apply. The same everywhere, whatever the curriculum.
Learning outcomes	Five outcomes with Bloom’s verbs, from understanding to evaluation, each matched to an activity.
Reconciliation	TRC Calls to Action 62 and 63: curriculum on treaties and Aboriginal peoples’ historical and contemporary contributions.
Rights in education	UNDRIP art. 15: Indigenous histories appropriately reflected in education; art. 14 on education.
Primary-source practice	Each instrument quoted, dated and attributed; the readings tested against the documents.
Citation	Chicago Manual of Style, 17th edition.
Universal Design for Learning	Sources, a comparison table and discussion; written and seminar responses.
Balance	Three readings side by side; the brief names its own position.
Time	One seminar of about two hours; the assignment over a week.

Assessment: the assignment

	Excellent	Good	Adequate	Needs work
Use of sources	Three or more instruments, quoted precisely and read in context	Three, quoted accurately	Fewer, or quoted loosely	Missing or misread
Analysis	Shows what each instrument adds and what turns on reading them together	Compares the instruments clearly	Describes them	Restates one
Argument	A clear judgment that answers the strongest objection	A clear, supported judgment	A thinly supported judgment	No clear judgment
Writing and citation	Precise; Chicago style throughout	Clear; minor slips	Some unclear passages	Hard to follow

This brief states the Mohawk Nation of Grand River’s position alongside others. It is for study, not legal advice.

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