UNIVERSITY AND ACADEMIC

The Line of Honour: a Study Brief

Proving descent across two centuries: records, gaps and the oath.

Learning outcomes

By the end, a student will be able to	Level (Bloom)
Identify the records that prove each generation of a line	Remember
Explain why tracing down from the ancestor is often surer than tracing up	Understand
Analyse gaps in the record and what can fill them	Analyze
Compare proof of belonging under the Indian Act, a Loyalist society and the Register	Analyze
Evaluate the standard of proof a line should meet	Evaluate

Overview

A line is a chain of generations, each proved by a record: birth, baptism, marriage, census, parish register, and, at the foot, the record of the ancestor's adherence. The Register proves lines to a Loyalist Mohawk of the three villages by either sex, and takes the oath Simcoe's Proclamation set. Gaps are common; how they are filled, and to what standard, is the real question.

Primary sources

The note to Dorchester's Order, 9 November 1789

"all their children and their descendants by either sex"

Simcoe's Proclamation, 6 April 1796

"such registry has not been generally made; and as it is still necessary to ascertain the persons and families … to ascertain the same upon oath before the magistrates"

Brant's census, 1785

"Mohawk 548 … 1,843 in all"

As reported in Kelsay, Joseph Brant (1984).

Three readings

	Indian Act registration	Loyalist societies	The Register
What is proved	Descent from a registered parent, under s 6	Descent from a proven Loyalist	Descent from a Loyalist Mohawk of the three villages
By whom	The Indian Registrar	The society's genealogist	The registrar, then the oath before a justice of the peace
By which sex	By the Act's rules	Either	Either

© Mohawk's Printer for Grand River, 2026, for the Mohawk Nation of Grand River · Grand River Territory, Ohsweken. Free to copy for teaching.

The Line of Honour: a Study Brief

Historiography

Genealogy was long a private pursuit, and Loyalist descent a matter for the societies. The Register treats it as public proof: each peg a record with a Record Code, each line sworn. The question for historians is how much weight old church and Crown records can bear, and how to treat lines whose records were never kept.

Discussion questions

1. Which records are strongest for each generation, and why?
2. Why might lines through women be harder to prove, and how can that be overcome?
3. What role should oral family history play when records are missing?
4. Is an oath before a magistrate a proper part of proof, or a formality?
5. What standard should a line meet: certainty, or the balance of probabilities?
6. **Apply.** Map a five-generation line with one gap, and say how you would close it.

Further reading

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

Kelsay, 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's Printer for Grand River, 2026, for the Mohawk Nation of Grand River · Grand River Territory, Ohsweken. Free to copy for teaching.

UNIVERSITY AND ACADEMIC

The Line of Honour: a Study Brief

Assignment brief

Choose one prompt

A	In 1,500 words, propose a standard of proof for a line of descent two centuries long, and defend it against the strongest objection. Use at least three sources.
B	What role should oral family history play when records are missing? Answer in an argued essay.
C	Apply. Map a five-generation line with one gap, and say how you would close it. 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 note to Dorchester’s Order, 9 November 1789
- Simcoe’s Proclamation, 6 April 1796
- Brant’s census, 1785

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.

© Mohawk’s Printer for Grand River, 2026, for the Mohawk Nation of Grand River · Grand River Territory, Ohsweken. Free to copy for teaching.

UNIVERSITY AND ACADEMIC

The Line of Honour: a Study Brief

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.

© Mohawk's Printer for Grand River, 2026, for the Mohawk Nation of Grand River · Grand River Territory, Ohsweken. Free to copy for teaching.

UNIVERSITY AND ACADEMIC

The Line of Honour: a Study Brief

For the instructor: standards met

Universal competencies	Identify key facts and claims; Understand perspective and point of view; Analyse and evaluate evidence; Apply: what does this mean for us?. The same everywhere, whatever the curriculum.
Learning outcomes	Five outcomes with Bloom’s verbs, each matched to an activity.
Reconciliation	TRC Calls to Action 62 and 63.
Rights in education	UNDRIP arts. 14 and 15.
Primary-source practice	Each instrument quoted and attributed; readings tested against them.
Citation	Chicago Manual of Style, 17th edition.
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 primary sources, quoted precisely and read in context	Three, quoted accurately	Fewer, or quoted loosely	Missing or misread
Analysis	Weighs the readings against the documents and shows what turns on the difference	Compares the readings clearly	Describes them	Restates one
Argument	A clear judgment that answers the strongest objection	A clear, supported judgment	Thinly supported	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.

© Mohawk’s Printer for Grand River, 2026, for the Mohawk Nation of Grand River · Grand River Territory, Ohsweken. Free to copy for teaching.