UNIVERSITY AND ACADEMIC

The Tract: a Study Brief

What was given, how far it ran, and how the Crown’s account shrank.

Learning outcomes

By the end, a student will be able to	Level (Bloom)
Describe the extent of the 1784 grant in its own words, mouth to source	Understand
Trace the Crown’s account of the Tract from 950,000 acres to the reserve of today	Understand
Compare the grant’s measure with the straight-line surveys of 1791 to 1821	Analyze
Analyse what a surrender requires, and whose surrender binds a class	Analyze
Evaluate the Nation’s claim that the Tract is still the class’s in right	Evaluate

Overview

The Proclamation of 1784 set apart six miles from each side of the Grand, from Lake Erie to its head. Later surveys drew straight lines instead of following the river, and stopped short of the source. The Crown’s account then fell, by the Patent of 1793, Brant’s sales, the surrender of 1841 and others, to the reserve of today. The Mohawk Nation of Grand River holds that none of this bound the class to whom the land was given, which never surrendered it.

Primary sources

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”

The Simcoe Patent, 14 January 1793

“for a space of six miles on each side of the river, or a space co-extensive therewith”

The Patent the Grand River Mohawk refused.

A. Jones, plan of the upper Grand, about 1801

“The five Nations Lands Continues up the main branch to its source”

Library and Archives Canada, NMC-3109.

T. Ridout, Surveyor General, 2 February 1821

“Plan shewing the Lands granted to the Six Nation Indians … containing about 674,910 Acres”

Library and Archives Canada, NMC-3115.

Constitution Act, 1867, s. 109

“subject to any Trusts existing in respect thereof, and to any Interest other than that of the Province in the same”

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Three readings

	Canada and the courts	The Six Nations of the Grand River	The Mohawk Nation of Grand River
Its extent	As surveyed: straight lines, cut off at the Jones Base Line	Six miles each side, to the source	Six miles from each bank, to the source, as the grant reads
The surrenders	Valid in the main; remedies in money for breaches	Many invalid or unfair; claims filed in 1995	None by the class; others' surrenders cannot bind it
Today	A reserve of about 45,580 acres; the rest private land	The reserve, and claims to the rest	About 950,000 acres in right; almost none in hand

Historiography

The Grand River lands have been written about mostly as a Six Nations claim, measured in sales and surrenders and their compensation. Survey history adds how the measure itself changed, from the river's banks to straight lines. The Mohawk Nation of Grand River reads the grant's own words against both, and asks whose consent each change required.

Discussion questions

1. Why might surveyors in 1791 and 1821 have drawn straight lines? What did that do to the grant?

2. Jones wrote that the lands continue "to its source", but the Tract was cut off at the Base Line. What should decide its true extent?

3. Who can surrender land granted to persons and their posterity? Does a surrender by chiefs or a council bind them?

4. Ridout counted about 674,910 acres; the Nation counts about 950,000. What explains the difference?

5. What is the difference between land "in hand" and land "in right", and why does it matter?

6. **Apply.** Choose one town on the Tract. What would recognising the class's interest change there, and what would it leave alone?

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*. Toronto: Champlain Society, 1964.

Jones, Augustus. "A Survey of the Grand River, from the North West line, to the Forks." Map. Library and Archives Canada, NMC-3109.

Ridout, Thomas. "Plan shewing the Lands granted to the Six Nation Indians." Map, 1821. Library and Archives Canada, NMC-3115.

Mohawk Nation of Grand River. *Lands and the Tract*. National Books IV. 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, assess whether the Crown’s account of the Tract, from 1784 to today, can be squared with the grant’s own words. Quote at least three sources and answer the strongest objection.
B	Who can surrender land granted to persons and their posterity? Does a surrender by chiefs or a council bind them? Answer in an argued essay.
C	Apply. Choose one town on the Tract. What would recognising the class’s interest change there, and what would it leave alone? 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 Proclamation, 25 October 1784
- The Simcoe Patent, 14 January 1793
- A. Jones, plan of the upper Grand, about 1801
- T. Ridout, Surveyor General, 2 February 1821
- Constitution Act, 1867, s. 109

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: 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; art. 26 on lands “otherwise acquired”.
Primary-source practice	The grant, the Patent, two surveys and s. 109 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.

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