Vocabulary

*Before reading, translate these words.*

Infantryman

Regiment

Recruit

Duel

Handkerchief

Reputation

Musket Ball

Desertion

Flee

Mutiny

Indigenous

Invade

Occupy

First Nations

Native (people)

Surrender

Negotiations

Alliance

biography

Isaac Brock was born in 1785 on Guernsey Island in Great Britain. He was know as a good student as well as a great swimmer and boxer. Brock loved to learn and he studied military tactics and science. He grew into a “unusually” tall and athlete person. 188 cm was tall for the time.

At the age of fifteen, Brock joined the British army as an infantryman. In 1790, he bought the rank of lieutenant. At that time, it was normal for wealthy people to buy promotions in the army. As a lieutenant, Brock recruited his own military unit. He was promoted to captain in 1791. There is an interesting story from this time: Brock was challenged to a duel. He agreed to a duel with pistols at handkerchief length. His challenger backed off and Brock’s reputation grew. He was seen as a brave and a bully. While serving in the Caribbean, Brock became ill and almost died (1793).

In 1797, Brock purchased the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel for 3,000 pounds. It was a substantial amount as £3,000 in 1797 is worth almost £400,000 today. In his first battle commanding an army, Brock was shot in the throat by a musket ball. He was saved by the cloth around his neck.

In 1802, Isaac Brock was transferred to Canada. At this time, Canada was not yet a country. It was owned and protected by the British. Brock was stationed in Montreal. There was a problem with British soldiers deserting their positions to flee to America. Brock’s first challenges were desertions and mutiny attempts. Brock travelled to Fort George in Niagara-On-the-Lake to prevent a mutiny. Brock was promoted to colonel in 1805. He commanded the entire army in Canada.

However, the relationship between the United States and the British Empire was getting worse. The Americans invaded and took over British North American colonies while the British restricted American trade. The British forced some American soldiers into the Royal Navy. The Americans thought that the British were encouraging indigenous people to attack them. There was a strong possibility of war, but the British were occupied fighting Napolean in Europe. They also thought that a peaceful solution could be found. Brock didn’t think a peaceful deal could be found, so he strengthened Canadian defenses. In 1812, a war broke out between Canada and America.

Early in the war, Brock sent Captain Charles Roberts to attack Fort Mackinac. It was an easy victory because it was a surprise attack. First Nations tribes saw this victory and decided to help the British fight against the Americans. This was very important for the British because they were unlikely to win the war without the help of the First Nations. Americans had been attacking and taking over First Nations territories, so the natives were happy to join the British.

After being attacked in Sandwich (Windsor), Brock chased the Americans back to Detroit. He met Tecumseh there. Tecumseh was the Shawnee (First Nations) chief and a respected military official. They respected each other immediately. Tecumseh joined Brock (and Canada) in their fight against the Americans trying to take over their lands. Brock dressed the natives in British uniforms to make it seem like his army was much larger than it was. It worked and the Americans surrendered Detroit. Brock and Tecumseh took over much of Michigan. Unfortunately, they were prevented from advancing farther into American territory because of negotiations between the British and Americans.

Next, the Americans tried to invade Canada through Queenston Heights (near Niagara Falls). Brock rushed from Detroit to Queenston. Some Americans were able to cross the Niagara River. Brock ordered an immediate attack. Brock personally led the attack. He was shot in the wrist by a musket ball but continued to attack. He was shot again in the chest (heart) and fell over. He died almost immediately. The British eventually won the battle.

Brock is remembered as a great leader and successful general. He was loved and respected by Canadians as well as the First Nations people. The alliance between the British and natives ended with the death of Brock. He was the glue that held them together. The Americans would take over the Indian Territory and all of the First Nations land.

Questions

1. Where was Isaac Brock born?
2. Why was he promoted to lieutenant?
3. What happened when Brock was challenged to a duel?
4. How much did he pay to become Lieutenant-Colonel? Convert this to Korean won.
5. What were some issues that he faced when he came to Canada?
6. Why was did the Americans and British not like each other?
7. The War of 1812 is one of the most important times in Canadian history. How did Brock capture Detroit?
8. Who is Tecumseh?
9. Why didn’t Brock push farther into American territory?
10. What happened during the Battle of Queenston Heights?
11. Brock was shot three times by musket balls in his life. Where was he shot?
12. What happened to the alliance between the British and First Nations after Brock’s death?
13. Brock never liked Canadians. He wanted to move back to Europe to fight Napolean. He was also never a Canadian citizen. Why do you think Canadians consider him of the greatest Canadians?
14. What do you think would have happened if Brock didn’t die during the Battle of Queenston Heights?