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In August 1812, General Brock and Shawnee War Chief Tecumseh, with 700 regular troops and militiamen and 700 First Nations warriors, captured Fort Detroit and more than 2,000 American troops. First Nations warriors had a reputation as ferocious fighters, which played a large role in the victories over American commanders. Such victories rallied even greater numbers of First Nation warriors to side with the British.

Despite these early victories, by 1813, pressure by the Americans caused the British to retreat towards Niagara. The final battle at Châteauguay (Battle of the Thames), in October 1813, was a bitter struggle. Under the leadership of Tecumseh, 500 First Nation warriors, including Chief Oshawa (John Naudee) from Walpole Island, put up a long and bitter resistance before being defeated by the vastly superior American forces. The unity of Western First Nations was dealt a tremendous blow when Tecumseh was killed while attempting to protect retiring British troops.

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