

# **The Mohawk – Wyandot Ancestry of the Wife of Lt. John Young,**

## **Catharine Brant-Hill Kayakhon**

### **An Overview**

By

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Here follows a short summary of the present author's interpretation of the evidence in relation to the identity of Catharine, first wife of Lt. John Young (1742-1812) of the Six Nations Indian Department during the Revolutionary War, and mother to all four of his children.

### **Following the Clues from the Campbell Diary, and the Nelles Obituary**

The genealogical evidence, examined in conjunction with the available genetic data, points to a number of hypotheses in relation to the ancestry and identity of Catharine, wife of Lt. John Young.

### **Mohawk Ancestry**

The single most important genealogical source here is the **diary (published in 1793) of one Patrick Campbell**, a Scottish traveller who visited Lt. John Young on 14 February 1792. Here Campbell states that Young *was married to a squaw, sister to one of the chiefs of the Mohawke nation who succeeded Captain David*. Furthermore Campbell stated that David's son Aaron Hill did not inherit his father's role, since the *son does not succeed to the honours and titles of the family, but they go in the female line to his aunt's son*. In this case there were four "honours and titles" to be parceled out including the designations of Chief and Captain, the Bear Clan Confederacy sachem title Astawenserontha, and the chiefly name David used on a day to day basis, Karonghyontye (Flying Sky).

Thus it can be said with authority that in 1792 Young was married to a Bear Clan Mohawk woman, but the task then becomes to find further evidence of Catharine's heritage, including her parent's names and family ties.

The need to explore records and sources relating to Mohawk (Six Nations - Haudenosaunee – Iroquoian) ancestors poses certain challenges. In 1899/00 Gerin made a very poignant statement; *It is not always an easy matter to trace the genealogy of an Iroquois* (p.89). After the present author's quest of 35 years researching this subject, he can attest to the veracity of Gerin's words. Over 100 years later the task, despite the digital revolution, is still daunting.

The key to accomplishing the goal here is to determine who held the “honours and titles” of Captain David Hill in 1792. This is somewhat problematic due to the scarcity of records for the period between 1790 (the year David Hill died) and 1800. In the course of the subsequent research, various hypotheses were explored. The following conclusions were arrived at based on a balance of probabilities relating to the factual record:

Lt. John Young’s wife was **Catharine Brant Kayakhon**, the **daughter of Nicholas Brant Canadiorha and Margaret Hill Kayadontyi** of the Lower Mohawk (Ft. Hunter) Bear Clan Astawenserontha Mohawk family. Catharine was born in **1747**, and baptized 4 June 1747 at the Schenectady Reformed Dutch Church. About 1755 Catharine and family (including her parents and paternal grandparents) moved to the Upper Castle (Canajoharie) and so Catharine was an Upper Mohawk (of Lower Mohawk ancestry).

Essentially the focus was on the evidence that Catharine was a likely sister of the chief Captain Isaac Brant (Flying Sky) “Karaguntier”, not only the nephew of David Hill, but also the step – nephew of Captain Joseph Brant, whose role included messenger and translator (in the Shawnee and Delaware languages) for his uncle among the Western Indians. Isaac inherited David Hill’s formal name, Karonghyontye (Flying Sky). He was noted in many different sources for the years 1792 to 1794, a critical time in the last ditch effort to reach a peace agreement between the Indians of the Sandusky and Ohio regions (e.g., Miami, Shawnee, Delaware) and the American authorities. During one of the conferences, “Chief Flying Sky” (see below) was the focus of both a sketch and a painting dating to 1793. Alas the efforts were unsuccessful resulting in the disastrous Battle of Fallen Timbers where General “Mad Anthony” Wayne destroyed forever Indian ambitions to create a Confederacy to stop American frontier expansion. Isaac appears to have died or relinquished his office in 1794 or 1795. His four adult children were apparently residing in the Sandusky area before 1812, and ultimately moved to Oklahoma in 1835. [Click here](#) to access the detailed study.

### **Wyandot Ancestry**

Based largely on the obituary of Catharine’s grandson Warner H. Nelles, there is good evidence that Catharine was also of Wyandot descent. It is recorded that Nicholas Brant was a member of the Beaver Clan / Tribe (one of the very few Mohawks to hold to this affiliation which likely came to the Mohawks via Huron - Wyandot captives). The obituary of Catharine’s grandson Warner H. Nelles indicates that in 1817 he was appointed chief of the “Beaver Tribe” and bestowed with the name Tahanata. This was a principal sachem title belonging to the Mohawk Bear Clan (Astawenserontha family), previously held by Chief Francis Cotter. In 1817 Cotter left the Six Nations Reserve with his entire family in order to join the Wyandots of Anderdon Township. He ended up in Sandusky and Kansas, and some of his children and grandchildren also moved to Oklahoma. A shortened version of the information relating to this matter is found in the above manuscript. To read the compilation of evidence in support of this hypothesis in more detail [click here](#).

## **Genetic Test Evidence**

The available DNA test data is not particularly helpful in the present quest. Firstly, Catharine Young is an ancestor who is highly admixed with European, and secondly she appears many generations ago in the family tree of descendants today. This, plus severe limitations and inconsistencies in the available DNA tests, means that this source of evidence is not particularly helpful. None the less, the present author has assembled what has been done in the way of biogeographical or Native American testing in the hope that greater precision and clarity will be available at some point in the future. Perhaps ultimately this work could, for example, pinpoint the region in Northeast Asia where some of Catharine's Mohawk ancestors originated many thousands of years ago. To view the manuscript on this subject [click here](#). [Click here](#) to access a broader study of the DNA testing completed on members of the Young family.

## **Selection of Brant and Hill Family Records and Sources**

The Brants and Hills can be traced to the mid 1600s, admirable for genealogists working in Europe let alone on the frontier of the New World. The following items may be of interest to researchers and family members:

- 1) Family tree - [click here](#).
- 2) Baptismal record of Catharine – [click here](#).
- 3) Ancestry and descendants via parents of Catharine:
  - a) Father – Nicholas Brant Canadiorha [click here](#).
  - b) Mother - Margaret Hill Kayadontyi [click here](#).
- 4) Biographical sketch of the Brant and Hill families prior to the American Revolution – [click here](#).
- 5) Biographical sketch of the Hill families prior to the American Revolution – [click here](#).
- 6) Lower Mohawk Deed of 1789 signed by many in the family of Catharine [click here](#).
- 7) Upper Mohawk Deed of 1789 signed by Kayakhon Katerin and her sundry relatives from that community – [click here](#).
- 8) Seth Newhouse list of women's and warrior's names associated with the Bear Clan Astawenserontha family ("loaned" prior to 1880 to the Dehennakarineh family) – [click here](#).
- 9) Patrick Campbell Diary entry of 1792 pertaining to John Young's wife – [click here](#).
- 10) Pen sketch by Col. Pilkington of Chief Flying Sky (Karonghyontye) in 1793 (brother to Catharine) – [click here](#).
- 11) Black and white copy of the painting by Lewis Foy of the above scene in 1793 – [click here](#).
- 12) Close up in color of Chief Flying Sky in this watercolor painting of 1793 – [click here](#).

- 13) George Martin's 1815 list of the "Principle Chiefs" of the Mohawks including Astawenserontha and the associated Tahatonne titles – [click here](#). Catharine's grandson W.H. Nelles succeeded Francis Cotter to the latter in 1817.
- 14) Painting of Catharine's uncle Captain David Hill Karonghyontye with Indian Department officer Col. Guy Johnson in 1776 – [click here](#). It should be noted that one might assume that Lt. John Young of the Indian Department may have sported a uniform similar to that of Johnson.
- 15) Close up of the face of Captain David Hill from the above painting by Benjamin West in 1776 – [click here](#). Hill's mixed European and Mohawk ancestry as noted by Campbell (see above), appears to be reflected in this depiction of his face.
- 16) Photo of presentation pistol given to Captain David Hill by the Duke of Northumberland [click here](#).
- 17) Photo of the brass plate with Bear Clan etching from above pistol [click here](#).
- 18) Photo of powder horn of Seth Kanenkaregowa (later Captain Seth Hill Astawenserontha) [click here](#).
- 19) Sketch of engraving on above powder horn [click here](#).

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