

Jake Breadman

2023 UELAC Loyalist Scholarship Award Recipient

Jake Breadman is a Ph.D. student in History at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario. He has a M.A. in History from Brock University and a M.A. in Public History from Western University. Jake has published articles and book reviews in peer-reviewed journals such as *Ontario History*, *Ethnohistory*, and the *Canadian Journal of Native Studies*. He has proudly worked at some of the most significant historic sites related to the War of 1812 back home in the Niagara Peninsula: Fort George National Historic Site, Brock's Monument and Queenston Heights National Historic Site, and Old Fort Erie National Historic Site. Jake looks forward to working in public history upon completion of his Ph.D.

Jake has proposed to write an environmental history of the War of 1812 in the Great Lakes bioregion. He intends to use the War of 1812 as a case study to explore some of the major themes in environmental history, a methodological approach to writing history that assesses how non-human actors like microorganisms, animals, weather patterns, and metabolic processes impacted historical events and people. He argues that the natural environment shaped the war, and those involved, especially around the Great Lakes, the war's principal battleground. Despite the focus on non-human actors, Loyalists and their descendants will feature prominently in his study. Accounts by Indigenous warriors, like Mohawk leader John Norton, alongside the James Givins Papers at the Toronto Reference Library, the Brant Family Papers at Library and Archives Canada (LAC), and the letters, reports, and returns of Loyalist British Indian Department affiliates, such as the Butler, Claus, and Clench families in RG 10 at LAC, will show how food and drink maintained and strained relationships amongst Indigenous warriors, settlers, and soldiers. The writings of various Loyalists will be particularly helpful to determine how ordinary inhabitants were affected by the environment during the War of 1812, with specific consideration given to the Nelles, Merritt, Street, and Crysler families, all of whom have dedicated fonds at the Archives of Ontario.



Jake's fifth great-grandfather, William Walker, was a North Carolinian Loyalist who "suffered every thing but Death by the American Revolution[.]" William's sons, including Jake's fourth great-grandfather Thomas Walker, served in the 4th Regiment of Lincoln Militia during the War of 1812. Thomas's brother, Isaac, died of disease in November 1812 while serving in the militia. The genealogical research that Jake has conducted, and particularly the nature of Isaac's death, inspired him to write an environmental history of the War of 1812.