

# George Beaver charged for treason -1959

By Jim Windle  
SIX NATIONS

*From a feature pull out section first published in the Tekawennake News of March 11th 2009, on the 50th anniversary of the 1959 revolution.*

George Beaver was a young teacher at Six Nations in 1959. By his latter admission, he knew very little about the history of his own people and the political landscape of those days. He was just a teacher. He just wanted to go to work and help educate Six Nations and New Credit children in the basics of reading, writing and arithmetic to help them interface with the outside world to earn a decent living as adults.

Steeped in white man's education, which excluded any reference to Six Nations aside from a novel side note, and proud of his teaching degree, all of this upheaval was too much for him to understand and seemed an embarrassment to him, so he spoke out against it all in the Brantford Expositor by way of a letter to the editor. He wanted to set a few things straight.

The letter, entitled, "How Many Support The Hereditary Chiefs?" (published below) ran March 6, 1959, and immediately made him an "enemy of the state" as it were, to the newly proclaimed restored government of Six Nations.

He described many of those reported involved with the take-over as curious onlookers who did not participate in any way. He referred to those who did as "malcontents". This brought immediate pressure on Beaver from the new Iroquois Police and its chief, Ross Powless.

Beaver was arrested, detained, and faced charges of treason under the new Iroquois judicial system. He was put on trial, and found guilty. Under Confederacy law, treason was punishable by two warnings and then by exile from the reserve. He was ordered not to repeat this offence, released and returned to his classroom, none the worse for wear.

"I was never really afraid of anything happening to me," said Beaver looking back. "I knew most of the guys involved and played basketball with many of them. I just stated my opinion as it was at that time. I really didn't know very much about what was going on. Our history was never taught in school and a lot of people, like me, had become used to the elected system. I have come 180 degrees on that opinion since then I can tell you."

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Looking back, Beaver now understands a lot more of what was going on then, and can see the significance of taking back the Council House which was the recognized seat of government at Six Nations.

Even during Beaver's trial he began to understand more than he did when he wrote the letter that caused him so much concern. He had opportunity to speak with Mad Bear during that time and soon gained an understanding of what was going on, and more importantly, why.

Mad Bear Anderson sent a runner to ask Beaver to come to the Council House one evening during the occupation to sign a paper promising he would not write another letter to the editor, which was a condition of his release. Ironic when you consider he has been a contributing columnist to the Expositor for many years since then.

Beaver knew it was only a media photo-op, but he complied with Anderson's request and freely signed the paper for the television and newspaper cameras.

"Mad Bear really knew how to use the media," Beaver recalls.

Although Beaver himself saw it all as no big deal, his arrest was used as a lightning rod by politicians, the RCMP and the media for police action against the revolt.

"I had no animosity at all for any of the men involved in my arrest, then or now," says Beaver.

Beaver began listening closer and paying more attention to what was going on around him with so many land sales taking place without the people's input or the involvement of the Confederacy. It was around that time the Band Council had sold off a good sized piece of the Glebe Land to Brantford for the construction of Pauline Johnson High School and what became Gambles Department store, most recently the old Canadian Tire plaza. There was also a deal struck with Cockshutt's for more land for expansion of the foundry.

Once Beaver had his eyes opened, he could no longer ignore what he saw and soon



*In 1959, twenty-six year old George Beaver faces the cross-examination of Wallace "Mad Bear" Anderson and Iroquois Police Chief, Ross Powless at the Council House where he was defending himself on charges of treason. Beaver had written a letter to the editor which was published in the Brantford Expositor which was critical of the hereditary chiefs system and the revolt itself. He was found guilty and ordered not to write to the Expositor again, and released. Ironically, Beaver later became a regular columnist in the Expositor and a full supporter of the Confederacy Chiefs. (Expositor Photo used by permission)*

became a supporter of the Confederacy.

"Now here we are 50 years later and it's coming around again," says Beaver. "The same issues, the same government stance. They

could all save a lot of grief by simply treating our people fairly."

See the entire feature online at [tekanews.com](http://tekanews.com) under pull down tab, "1959 Revolution."