

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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