

# Indians aren't all the same

OHSWEKEN — I recently received an interesting letter from Peter Tensen of R2 Brantford. He enclosed a clipping of a letter which had appeared in the Expositor on June 7. In it, H. Cook of Paris made some statements which showed him or her to be quite badly informed about native people.

The letter started out by stating: "First it was Quebec saying they want their own country, and now the Indians are saying that they are not Canadians."

I should not have to point out to a reasonable person that one group of people cannot speak for all the natives in Canada. What may be fine for the Crees of northern Quebec may be totally unacceptable to the Haidas of B.C. Similarly, what may be fine and dandy for the Ojibways may not suit the Dene at all. In the 1800s history books wrote about native people as if they were all identical. They said things like "the Indian does this" and "the Indian says that." It was wrong then and it's wrong now.

Another point worth mentioning is the letter writer's use of the word "now" as if all of a sudden the native people woke up and said: "Hey, look we're not Canadians."

June 27

**Our  
Town  
George  
Beaver**



The Six Nations Confederacy has been saying that for over 200 years, for crying out loud. This was no blinding revelation brought about by Oka in the sublime summer of 1990.

Joseph Brant and the Six Nations Confederacy chiefs tried to make the same point to the new government of Upper Canada back in 1784. They said that they were allies of Britain in New York State and that they were going to remain allies in their new homes along the Grand River. Allies not subjects.

The chiefs wanted to lease their lands along the Grand River themselves so the money would come directly to them. Then they would have had funds to look after the welfare of old people and orphans. The government of Upper Canada would not agree to this very sensible proposal and fought

them at every turn. If this vision of Joseph Brant and the chiefs had been allowed there would be no reason to be sending "all those welfare cheques" that H. Cook mentions in his letter.

Mr. Tensen made a good observation in his letter. He said that if the white people had not destroyed the buffalo and if natives had full fishing and hunting rights, they would hardly need any money from the Canadian government. This is true. Buffalo were the cattle of the native people. Buffalo herds were not confined to the prairies but once roamed what is now New York State.

If you look closely at the H. Cook letter, what is being said between the lines is "let's send the Indians packing but we'll keep all the land and resources we stole from them."

I hope you will pardon me if I fail to agree that this is a sensible solution.

*Our Town is an Expositor feature that provides a forum for news and views from some of the smaller centres in the district. George Beaver is a Six Nations resident and former teacher on the Six Nations and New Credit reserves.*