



United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII)

20th session, April 19th – 30th, 2021

Meeting held virtually

Agenda Item 3: "Peace, justice and strong institutions: the role of indigenous peoples in implementing Sustainable Development Goal 16"

Intervention by the International Indian Treaty Council, presented by Board Member, Lenny Foster

My name is Lenny Foster, and I am of the Towering House clan born for Mountain Cove, originally from Fort Defiance, Arizona. I am a citizen of the Navajo Nation, and I have been a spiritual advisor for Leonard Peltier since March 1985 when I started visiting him at the United States Penitentiary in Leavenworth, Kansas. My specific duties with him have been conducting sweat lodge ceremonies and pipe ceremonies. My prayers have been to sustain his sanity, for spiritual cleansing and purification, and to help him enhance his humanity and remain spiritually strong.

Leonard Peltier is Dakota and Anishinaabe from Turtle Mountain Reservation, North Dakota. He was wrongfully convicted for the June 26, 1975 murders of two FBI special agents in Oglala, South Dakota. He has been incarcerated for over forty-five years and remains the longest-held Indigenous political prisoner in the Western Hemisphere. At seventy-six years old, Leonard remains incarcerated at the United States Penitentiary in Coleman, Florida, and his medical and health status is very poor. I am recommending that he be granted compassionate release based on his poor health. He is experiencing severe Type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, and failing eyesight. He is insulin-dependent and has an aortic aneurysm. The threat of Covid-19 is present in the United States prison system, and he needs to be released as soon as possible due to his multiple risk factors.

I feel that Leonard Peltier qualifies for compassionate release. I am, therefore, recommending that the United Nations Permanent Forum for Indigenous Issues present a resolution that concurs with this recommendation for his immediate release on compassionate release. He needs to be recognized as a foremost Indigenous political prisoner and needs to be provided the respect for his elderly condition. I am recommending that he be granted a visit from the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Francisco Cali, as well as, every opportunity for immediate release on compassionate release.

Thank you.