



The National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition

President Joseph R. Biden
Cc: Ed Siskel, White House Counsel
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

December 13, 2024

President Biden,

The National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition calls on you to issue executive clemency for the release of Leonard Peltier. Mr. Peltier is a Native elder and Indian boarding school survivor, whose conviction in 1977 was without sufficient evidence and violates U.S. and international standards. For nearly 50 years, Leonard Peltier has been unjustly incarcerated, despite the repeated acknowledgement of the United States' misconduct, including false statements, forcing witnesses to lie at trial, and hiding ballistics evidence in relation to the death of the two federal agents killed on June 25, 1975.

Mr. Peltier's incarceration did not begin in 1977. In 1952, when Leonard Peltier was just nine years old, he was forcibly taken to Wahpeton Indian Boarding School. Wahpeton Indian Boarding School was a federally-operated off-reservation institution that the U.S. Department of the Interior has identified within the scope of the federal Indian boarding school initiative. From the DOI's Volume 1 report, Wahpeton Indian boarding school has been found to be inclusive to the federal Indian boarding school system which "deployed militarized and identity-alteration methodologies to assimilate American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian people—primarily children" (Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative Investigative Report, 2022, p. 7).

As a young child, Leonard Peltier endured physical, emotional, and spiritual abuse at the hands of the Wahpeton Indian School. Leonard has spoken out about how the government school cut his hair, covered him with DDT, forced him to take scalding hot showers, as well as being subject to bullying, beatings, and dehumanization. To survive, Leonard has spoken out about how important it was to sing his traditional songs and speak his language, all in secret with other Native youth.

At 80 years of age and struggling to maintain his health, Leonard Peltier should be free. Leonard Peltier should be able to live the rest of his days at his home in the Turtle Mountains in North Dakota. We stand with the thousands of individuals, organizations, Tribal leaders, boarding school survivors and descendants, and allies to end the unjust incarceration of Leonard Peltier.

On October 25, 2024, President Biden, you became the first president in United States history to formally apologize for the Federal Indian boarding school policy era. You recognized that you had a solemn responsibility and that this apology was long overdue. You claimed that this responsibility was about the restoration of dignity. By ending his incarceration, you can honor that solemn responsibility and can make steps toward restoring the dignity of Mr. Peltier, his relatives, his Tribal Nation, and Indian Country. President Biden, we call on you to use your executive authority to Free Leonard Peltier.

Sincerely,

Deborah Parker

Chief Executive Officer

Samuel B. Torres

Deputy Chief Executive Officer