

Leonard Peltier's fate in the hands of U.S. Parole Commission

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Washington, June 11 (RHC)-- A parole hearing was held Monday for Indigenous activist and political prisoner Leonard Peltier, who has spent most of his life in prison since his unjust conviction in the 1975 killings of two FBI agents in South Dakota.

At 79 [he turns 80 in September], Peltier's health is failing, and if this parole request is denied, it might be a decade or more before it is considered again, said his attorney Kevin Sharp, a former federal judge.

Sharp and other supporters have long argued that Peltier was wrongly convicted and say now that this effort may be his last chance at freedom.

It's been about 15 years since Peltier's last parole hearing. A decision on Monday's hearing is expected within 21 days.

"This whole entire hearing is a battle for his life," said Nick Tilsen, president and CEO of the NDN Collective, an Indigenous-led advocacy group. "It's time for him to come home."

Peltier's spiritual advisor of 40 years, Lenny Foster (Diné), said: "We are hoping and praying that the parole commission will grant Leonard parole so that he can go back to his people on the Turtle Mountain

Reservation to be with his loved ones to serve out his remaining years to be with his grandchildren and great-grandchildren,” Foster told me. “He is a revered elder among the Indian community.”

Nearly 80 years old, Peltier suffers from multiple health issues and has to use a walker to maneuver the maximum-security prison. He also suffers from diabetes, blindness in one eye, and an aortic aneurysm. As with other elders, his advanced age has rendered him frail.

"Leonard Peltier is a Native American elder who poses no threat to society. He's old and broken. He has paid a price for an injustice to him, his family, and to all Native Americans. It is past time to free Leonard Peltier."

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