

# Message from Leonard Peltier: ‘Walking on stolen land’

written by Struggle - La Lucha  
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*Leonard Peltier, member of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians [of Lakota and Dakota descent — SLL], is incarcerated at the U.S. Penitentiary in*

*Coleman, Florida, for his 1977 conviction in connection with a shootout with U.S. government forces, where two FBI agents and one young American Indian lost their lives.*

*Peltier, who is considered a political prisoner of war by many, released this Thanksgiving statement through the Leonard Peltier Defense Committee:*

The year of 2019 is coming to a close and with it comes the day most Americans set aside as a day for Thanksgiving. As I let my mind wander beyond the steel bars and concrete walls, I try to imagine what the people who live outside the prison gates are doing, and what they are thinking. Do they ever think of the Indigenous people who were forced from their homelands? Do they understand that with every step they take, no matter the direction, that they are walking on stolen land? Can they imagine, even for one minute, what it was like to watch the suffering of the women, the children and babies and yes, the sick and elderly, as they were made to keep pushing west in freezing temperatures, with little or no food? These were my people and this was our land. There was a time when we enjoyed freedom and were able to hunt buffalo and gather the foods and sacred medicines. We were able to fish and we enjoyed the clean clear water! My people were generous, we shared everything we had, including the knowledge of how to survive the long harsh winters or the hot humid summers. We were appreciative of the gifts from our Creator and remembered to give thanks on a daily basis. We had ceremonies and special dances that were a celebration of life.

With the coming of foreigners to our shores, life as we knew it would change drastically. Individual ownership was foreign to my people. Fences?? Unheard of, back then. We were a communal people and we took care of each other. Our grandparents weren't isolated from us! They were the wisdom keepers and story tellers and were an important link in our families. The babies? They were and are our future! Look at the brilliant young people who put themselves at risk, fighting to

keep our water and environment clean and safe for the generations yet to come. They are willing to confront the giant, multinational corporations by educating the general public of the devastation being caused. I smile with hope when I think of them. They are fearless and ready to speak the truth to all who are willing to listen.

We also remember our brothers and sisters of Bolivia, who are rioting in support of the first Indigenous President, Evo Morales. His commitment to the people, the land, their resources and protection against corruption is commendable. We recognize and identify with that struggle so well.

So today, I thank all of the people who are willing to have an open mind, those who are willing to accept the responsibility of planning for seven generations ahead, those who remember the sacrifices made by our ancestors so we can continue to speak our own language, practice our own way of thankfulness in our own skin, and that we always acknowledge and respect the Indigenous lineage that we carry.

For those of you who are thankful that you have enough food to feed your family, please give to those who aren't as fortunate. If you are warm and have a comfortable shelter to live in, please give to those who are cold and homeless; if you see someone hurting and in need of a kind word or two, be that person who steps forward and lends a hand. And especially, when you see injustice anywhere, please be brave enough to speak up to confront it.

I want to thank all who are kind enough to remember me and my family in your thoughts and prayers. Thank you for continuing to support and believe in me. There isn't a minute in any day that passes without me hoping that this will be the day I will be granted freedom. I long for the day when I can smell clean fresh air, when I can feel a gentle breeze in my hair, witness the clouds as their movement hides the sun and when the moon shines the light on the path to the sacred Inipi. That would truly be a day I could call a day of Thanksgiving.

Thank you for listening to whomever is voicing my words. My Spirit is there with you.

Doksha,  
In the Spirit of Crazy Horse,  
Leonard Peltier

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