

AMERICAN INDIAN POLITICAL PRISONER HONORED IN SANTA FE

Inspirational words from the federal penitentiary cell of one of America's most controversial political prisoners will fill El Museo Cultural in Santa Fe on Thursday, January 31, and the Railyard Performance Center on Saturday, February 2, both beginning at 7:00 pm. In the program "In the Spirit of Leonard Peltier: Visions of US Prisoner #896937-132," spoken-word performer Harvey Arden will read from Peltier's book *Prison Writings* and his play *My Life Is My Sundance*, each of which Arden edited.

American Indian Movement activist Leonard Peltier is serving two consecutive life sentences for the alleged murders of FBI agents during a 1975 shootout on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, resulting from a purported case of mistaken identity. It is widely believed that his trial was unfair due to falsified prosecution evidence, but appeals have proven fruitless. Because of the trial irregularities, Amnesty International added Peltier's name to their list of political prisoners.

President Bill Clinton moved to pardon Peltier near the end of his presidency in 2000 but changed his mind after reported threats from the FBI. Among Peltier's other supporters are Nelson Mandela, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Rigoberto Mench, the Reverend Jesse Jackson, and the Dalai Lama. Peltier was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2007.

During his 33 years of incarceration, Leonard Peltier has honed his skills as an author, playwright, and painter. Now 63, he will come before the parole board in December 2008. If parole is denied, as it has been in past hearings, he will not be eligible for another full parole hearing until 2017.

Harvey Arden, lead presenter at the Santa Fe events, was a senior staff writer at *National Geographic* when he became friends with Leonard Peltier while working on his own books about native culture, including *Wisdomkeepers: Meetings with Native American Spiritual Leaders*. At Peltier's request, he served as the prisoner's editor and publisher and is now among his main contacts with the outside world.

Emceed by Keith Rabin, "In the Spirit of Leonard Peltier" will also feature musicians and local indigenous guest presenters to be announced. Admission is free, and donations are deeply appreciated. All proceeds will go to the Leonard Peltier Defense Committee and to In Peace Productions, which will be staging Leonard's play in Santa Fe this summer.