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**Department of History**

August 31, 2016

Dear Mayor and Council Members, City of Victoria

RE: Councillor. Ben Isitt's August 25, 2016 motion Advocacy for Clemency for Leonard Peltier.

I write to council with regard to this matter with some knowledge of the history of human rights, the general condition of indigenous people in the United States and also the specific circumstances of Leonard Peltier's arrest and extradition from Canada in 1976.

For five centuries, indigenous people in the US have suffered many injustices, including mass deportation, massacres perpetrated by government military forces and deprivation of the necessities of life and the right to practice their ancestral culture. Taken together, these acts could be said to constitute a genocide perpetrated on aboriginal people there.

Beginning in the late 1960s, partly stimulated by the deplorable conditions in which they lived and partly encouraged by the civil rights campaigns of African Americans, American Indians took up a bold effort to defend and advance their rights. In some cases, this took the form of the physical defence of their own territory against police and military forces arrayed by US and state governments.

That's the context in which Leonard Peltier in 1975 was at the Pine Ridge reservation in South Dakota, where indigenous people were defending their land against a combined Federal Bureau of Investigation and US military force of considerable size. In that confrontation, several people – Natives and non-Natives – were injured and killed. Two FBI agents were among the latter.

Accused of involvement in the death of the two agents, Peltier fled to Canada, was apprehended and extradited in 1976. As part of the extradition process, the US government submitted a crucial affidavit that was false in key details. Canadians who followed the legal process were convinced that the extradition itself was fraudulently obtained. Among them was Jim Fulton, Member of Parliament from Skeena, who in 1987 introduced a private member's bill in the Canadian House of Commons calling for Peltier to be returned to Canada.

Peltier has been in prison continuously since 1976. New evidence that has not been submitted to court speaks to Peltier's innocence in the deaths of the FBI agents. In addition, many people, including South African Bishop Desmond Tutu, have called for clemency for him. This effort has gained urgency as Peltier's health significantly deteriorates.

These and other facts lead me to endorse Councillor Ben Isitt's August 25, 2016 motion Advocacy for Clemency for Leonard Peltier.

I urge Victoria City Council to support Councillor Isitt's motion on September 8.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'LH' or similar, written in a cursive style.

Larry Hannant  
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and  
Adjunct Associate Professor  
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