



## No Parole Peltier Association Newsletter

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"In the Spirit of Coler and Williams"

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In this edition:

- Wealthy Native Americans
- Learn more about Native Americans
- Peltier update
- Ron's Birthday

**Dear Supporters:**

**Wealthy Tribes:** While traveling for business over the 4<sup>th</sup> of July holiday, the headline in the Miami Herald caught my eye, "Court rejects Seminole casino pact" it read. The details though hinted of more than just murky legalities and political wrangling, but of social inequity. According to the Florida Supreme Court, Governor Crist overstepped his authority by entering into a pact with the Seminole tribe to allow Vegas-style slot machines, baccarat and blackjack at its seven casinos, and at their Hard Rock restaurants (purchased last year for \$965 million). No matter how you may personally feel about gambling, the Governor's apparent greed was for the benefit of Florida residents and to grab a bunch of the winnings the residents are willing to throw across the Indian casino tables. The problem is that Vegas-style gaming is illegal in the rest of the state, so "Now the tribe will get its slot machines everywhere it wants and the state will lose hundreds of millions, if not billions, of dollars. The Seminoles will have their cake and eat it, too." But in their defense, the tribe's attorney said "The court is not in the business of telling an Indian tribe what it can do on its land with respect to gaming. The only one who can do that is the federal government." (The attorney was referring to the Department of the Interior).

So let's get this straight, are the Indians finally getting over on the government (or at least the State of Florida)? If the ruling stands, the Governor may even have to return the \$60.4 million he's already taken from the Seminole tribe.

But, of course, this isn't the further exploitation of Native Americans, after all, being a Florida Seminole isn't such a bad deal when they can share in that kind of wealth, not to mention the corporate jets and all.

It brings to mind the old realtor's expression; location, location, location. Like when you buy a house that has great curb appeal but when you try to sell it you're told "but it's on a busy corner." Sometimes you just can't win.

But why should we deny the Seminoles their right to all those millions in gambling proceeds; why should they have to share any of it with their less fortunate brethren out West whose reservations are not within the rich tourist corridors?

Ironically the Seminole tribe's official flag bears the motto "In God We Trust." It has kind of a different ring to it when seen from another point of view.

**Learn more about Native Americans:** A recent TravelSmart advertisement invited travelers to "Learn more about the lives of Native Americans, visit a reservation or a pueblo this summer: Many of the country's hundreds of reservations and numerous pueblos are open to the public." It went on to mention several; Taos Pueblo, Hopi Villages, Old Zuni mission (I've been to the cliff caves in Santa Fe's Bandelier National Monument, and they were spectacular), and, the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota where "you can learn about the culture and history of the Oglala Lakota people, which includes the Wounded Knee massacre." Yes, that's what it said, and indeed, learning about, or at a minimum, recalling the history of that seminal event in Native American history is very important; but that's the tourist attraction for Pine Ridge. Although a critically historical place, the actual site and monument of the Wounded Knee massacre is rundown and depressing. Its condition only further deepens the pain as you walk around that hollowed ground and the shame of how First Americans were treated during the onslaught of westward expansion. A visit to Wounded Knee would only benefit those who do care about Native American history and what it really means. The fact that this most sacred of sites sits in the middle of one of the poorest areas of America should be lost on no one.

**Peltier update;** Not much has happened but the folks at LPDOC still rely on the same tired rhetoric, even adding that Peltier is allegedly a "model prisoner." Perhaps the jury is still out on that point. They also add a word of

caution about public behavior to their followers “We have not and will never condone hate speech, destruction of property, and/or threats or acts of violence of any kind... You are representing me and my bid for freedom. The public looks at you before they see me or my issue.”

Good advice, but the LPDOC tells any who would listen that Peltier was “A participant in the American Indian Movement, he went to assist the Oglala Lakota people on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in the mid-1970s where, on June 26, 1975, a tragic shoot out occurred.” Perhaps somehow they are able to equate the cold-blooded murder of two severely wounded agents, to a shoot out. Although it was tragically one-sided, let’s not forget that the defenseless agents were shot in the face at point-blank range. So much for acts of violence.

Leonard Peltier sent out his annual message for the June 26<sup>th</sup> thirty-third anniversary of the slayings of Agents Coler and Williams. It is more of the same as he contorts Native American history to justify the shooting at Jumping Bull. Peltier mixes metaphors with hazy facts trying to convince us that non-Indians don’t care about him or Native American history “As long as they can keep their high standard of living our struggles mean nothing to them” he said. Leonard should be careful not to blame all that apathy on just the non-Indian (white European settlers he actually means), because there are, for example, Indian brethren (like down in Florida, and elsewhere) who are pretty well detached from Peltier and the historic struggles as well.

Peltier does make a valid point though stating of the more deserving Native Americans “We need to repair ourselves and not wait for some grant from the government to tell us or guide us in our recovery. We need to take that responsibility ourselves and mend the sacred hoop.” He’s right, in that self-reliance is crucial to their future survival. But the government still has a lot to make up to these First Americans, they can have success, but they need the help and support to move ahead and better their lives and standard of living. We owe at least that much and more to them.

**Ron Williams** would have reached his 59<sup>th</sup> birthday on July 30<sup>th</sup>. He was not able to continue his career (probably returning to his roots in southern California), in all likelihood to marry, have children and maybe by now, possibly a grandchild or two. All other things being equal he could have finished his career and perhaps, as he had plans to do, attend law school and practice law in post-retirement until reaching the point where he could sit

back, relax and enjoy his family and twilight years. That opportunity was stolen from him. His courage in the end, his brave efforts to aid his dying partner, will never be overlooked or forgotten. Our thoughts and prayers are with Ron, his family and friends.

“In the Spirit of Coler and Williams”

*Ed*

Ed Woods

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