



HAUDENOSAUNEE

MOHAWK - ONEIDA - ONONDAGA - CAYUGA - SENECA - TUSCARORA

HAUDENOSAUNEE DOCUMENTATION COMMITTEE

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News Release

Onondaga Nation Territory - February 29, 2008

WHTI Land Border Rules

In late December, US Congress passed a law requiring the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to wait until at least 2009 before implementing new rules for land border crossing under the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI). The new delay is a victory for the Haudenosaunee as it removes the immediate threat of a US crackdown on documentation currently issued by Indigenous peoples. DHS hopes to publish the final rule for land border crossings at the end of March. While the rule is not final, DHS anticipates that the Haudenosaunee Documentation Committee (HDC) will be pleased, given the concerns that were raised in our August 2007 comments to the Federal Register.

After publication of the final rule, DHS will seek to sign nation-to-nation Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) with all Indigenous governments interested in developing enhanced Indigenous Nation documentation that will be acceptable for border crossing. These MOUs will include provisions on information security, privacy, and confidentiality. The current Haudenosaunee Red Card and other Indigenous government issued identification documents now in use will continue to be accepted at the border for crossing into the US until at least June 2009, and possibly longer. For Indigenous Nations that sign MOUs with DHS, the acceptability of their currently issued identification cards will continue until their newly enhanced identification cards are developed and completed.

Card Manufacturers

Earlier this month, the HDC completed the final phase of its interviews with ID card manufacturers. After reviewing passport card information released by the US State Department and accessing the information gathered from bidding ID card manufacturers, the HDC was able to recommend an ID card manufacturer to the Haudenosaunee Grand Council of Chiefs. Currently, we are entering into contractual discussions with the Grand Council approved ID card manufacturer.

Washington, DC Meetings

On February 21, 2008, the HDC met with officials from DHS and the Government of Canada to reaffirm our goals: that Haudenosaunee citizens continue to travel using our own documentation, wherever and whenever we desire to. The HDC also summarized our concerns about the proposed US rule for border crossing documentation, including our insistence that travel with Indigenous identification should not be limited to any particular border crossing points or particular purposes. We also expressed the need for the US and Canada to accept our documentation for all our people, regardless of where we live or of the status of any particular Haudenosaunee nation government as federally-recognized or not.

The HDC also emphasized the need for consultations with the Haudenosaunee before any new rules or regulations are imposed and clarified that DHS has not yet conducted any such consultations thus far. Overall, the meetings were very informative and the HDC is already planning the next round of meetings with US officials in Washington, DC as well as meetings with the Government of Canada.

If you have any questions or comments please contact the HDC at the numbers above, or contact your respective nation's Council of Chiefs, Clanmothers, and Faithkeepers.